

Translation as social action: a study of academic documents (Spanish-English)

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ABSTRACT

The lack of information available about the role that translations play in the recognition of academic qualifications provided the starting point for this thesis. In Spain, sworn translators perform this important social task with little or no direction from the authorities and often in isolation due to the lack of a national professional association. In this study I start by describing the sociocultural context surrounding academic degree certificates in Spain and the UK, analysing the documents in both countries from the perspective of Comparative Education, Comparative Law, Critical Discourse Analysis, Comparative Textology and Sociology. I then describe the role of official sworn translators with regard to the translation of degree certificates and present the results of an empirical study which required the translation of two degree certificates by 53 professional translators and the analysis of a questionnaire concerning the translation of these documents in Spain. Finally, I propose a comprehensive research model for studies of this type which may be applied to other documents and social practices.

KEYWORDS: academic documents, critical discourse analysis, empirical study, legal translation, sworn translators.

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