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Morphosyntactic and semantic behaviour of legal phraseological units. A case study in Spanish verb-noun constructions about money laundering

Abstract

This paper analyses the morphosyntactic and semantic behaviour of a sample of verb-noun constructions (VNCs, Tabares Plasencia 2012) from the corpus CRIMO (Hourani Martín and Tabares Plasencia 2016), a specialised comparable corpus of different varieties of Spanish that comprises the legislation on criminal law and criminal procedure from the Hispanic states. Our analysis revealed that topolectal variation is common despite attempts by international organisations to harmonise the terminology used in this legal subdomain. It will also be demonstrated that transformations of VNCs are pragmatically motivated and conditioned by the context. Examining these transformations reveals conventions of specialised discourse and textual genre which is why their representation in terminographical tools should be considered as they are an important means for a translator to achieve the adequacy and naturalness required for legal translation.

Keywords: Legal Phraseological Units (LPUs), verb-noun constructions (VNCs), phraseology of criminal law, phraseological transformation, morphosyntactic and semantic behaviour

1. Introduction

Systematic international approaches to the field of organised crime in legal-criminal science are relatively new even though criminal organisations have existed in the United States since the 1920s (Zúñiga Rodríguez 2010). A historic milestone in the regulation of organised crime as a global phenomenon is the Palermo Convention (i.e. the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols Thereto), a multilateral agreement backed by the UN and adopted in 2000. After coming into force,

the convention began to influence domestic legislation in the Hispanic states (e.g. criminal codes and special laws). Nevertheless, all these countries already had their own existing domestic criminal legislation pertaining to this field. Therefore, there is a profusion of terms in Spanish that are subject to variation due to topolectal factors, among other linguistic and extralinguistic causes. These terms are usually combined with other linguistic units and form a network of syntactic and notional units beyond the individual concepts designated by the terms. We refer to such combinations of units as verb-noun constructions (VNCs) following the classification of Legal Phraseological Units (LPUs) by Tabares Plasencia (2012). This paper analyses a sample of these VNCs drawn from the CRIMO corpus. This specialised comparable corpus comprises the legislation from the Hispanic states¹ pertaining to criminal law and criminal procedure, the corpus thereby being made up of different varieties of Spanish and containing approx. 2.3 million tokens. The results will contribute to the description of phraseological morphosyntactic and semantic behaviour as well as terminological variation in this legal subdomain. This investigation is part of a larger corpus-based study, the CRIMO project, that examines terminological and phraseological formation patterns, and variation due to linguistic and extra-linguistic factors. It also pays particular attention to the influence of international law on domestic legislation in the Hispanic states.

Section 2 describes the legal domain in which the study is embedded, namely organised crime. Therein we focus on the crime of money laundering. In Section 3, we will illustrate the classification of LPUs adopted in order to define and describe the VNCs. Also we will outline the corpus and present the method used for analysing the VNCs and their phraseological transformations. In Section 4 we shall present the results of the analysis of VNC while, finally, Section 5 is dedicated to the conclusions.

2. Organised crime

In this section we will first discuss the difficulties to legally characterize and define the term *organised crime* (2.1). Afterwards (2.2), we will direct our attention to the crime of money laundering.

¹ Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Spain, Uruguay and Venezuela.

2.1 The legal definition of *organised crime* and its historical development

Attempts to define *organised crime* (Sp. *crimen organizado / criminalidad organizada / delincuencia organizada*) in the field of legal-criminal science have not been especially fruitful to date. The main reason for this is the fact that this term has its origin in political and media discourse rather than legal discourse. Furthermore, as Zúñiga Rodríguez (2009, 2) points out, specific types of organised crime are encountered more frequently in some countries than in others; for example, the Mafia and similar organisations (Italy), money laundering (Germany) and terrorism (Spain).

At the same time, the term *organised crime* “coexists or clashes with other pre-existing terms within domestic criminal legislation, specifically the terms *asociación ilícita* [illicit association], *asociación criminal* [criminal association] and *asociación para delinquir* [association to commit crimes]”² (Cordini 2017, 335). The vagueness of the term as well as the variety of opinion relating to the concept of *organised crime* are evident from the numerous institutional, legal and doctrinal definitions compiled by Lampe (2018) from across the globe.

Despite this lack of conceptual uniformity, De Simone (2014, 9) identifies two main approaches to defining *organised crime*: “an intensional definition and an extensional definition”. The first involves identifying the characteristic features that are “necessarily and sufficiently” a part of *organised crime* (e.g. plurality of persons, hierarchical structure, subdivision of work among the group members); the second involves providing a comprehensive list of crimes involving criminal organisations (e.g. drug trafficking, trafficking in firearms, money laundering, human trafficking) (cf. Tabares Plasencia and Hourani Martín 2018 for further details).

According to Lampe (2007, 104), the frequent use of the term *organised crime* can be traced back to 1919 and the founding of the Chicago Crime Commission, made up of lawyers, bankers, businessmen and other professionals. This Commission pursued a reform of criminal law. At the time, *organised crime* referred to a criminal class whose business was based on illegal activity. Subsequently, the term has been applied more broadly and within an ever larger geographical framework: criminal gangs, syndicates and organisations with gangsters and racketeers, who followed the orders of the crime

² All translations of quotations in Spanish are ours. We are also responsible for the literal translations of Spanish terms that can be found throughout the text in brackets or parentheses.

bosses in the 1930s; criminal groups engaged in illegal betting and gambling throughout the United States in connection with the Italian-American ethnic group and the Mafia in the 1950s. According to Ruiz Díaz (2015, 35-36), the term first gained academic currency when it was popularised by Cressey (1969) in his book *Theft of the Nation. The structure and operations of organized crime in America*. From that point on, the term *organised crime* acquired a transnational character. Cordini (2017, 339-342) indicates that transnationality, as an element of organised crime, has been subject to more pronounced development since the 1990s. This led to the inclusion of the concept *organised crime* within the international regulatory framework, principally by the UN. Here, the Palermo Convention is the most important agreement³.

In the legal literature (cf. e.g. De Simone 2014, 9), it is considered that, with the adoption of the Palermo Convention, the legal concept of organised crime was clarified and harmonised through the creation of the term *organised criminal group* (Sp. *grupo delictivo organizado*), defined in Art. 2:

Article 2. Use of terms

For the purposes of this Convention: (a) “Organized criminal group” shall mean a structured group of three or more persons, existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes or offences established in accordance with this Convention, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit. (Palermo Convention 2004)

Furthermore, agreements and rules relating to the fight against organised crime and how it should be defined have been adopted by EU institutions and corporate bodies (for further details, see Tabares Plasencia and Hourani Martín 2018). The most relevant legal instrument was the *Joint Action of 21 December 1998 adopted by the Council on the basis of Article K.3 of the Treaty on European Union, on making it a criminal offence to participate in a criminal organisation in the Member States of the European Union* (no longer in force as of 10/11/2008). Here, *criminal organisation* is defined (Art. 1) as follows:

³ The *Convention against Transnational Organized Crime* entered into force on 29 September 2003 and was signed by 147 States. This convention was further supplemented by three protocols (referred to as the Palermo Protocols): The *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children* (entered into force on 25 December 2003); The *Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air* (entered into force on 28 January 2004) and The *Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, their Parts and Components and Ammunition* (entered into force on 3 July 2005).

Article 1

Within the meaning of this joint action, a criminal organisation shall mean a structured association, established over a period of time, of more than two persons, acting in concert with a view to committing offences which are punishable by deprivation of liberty or a detention order of a maximum of at least four years or a more serious penalty, whether such offences are an end in themselves or a means of obtaining material benefits and, where appropriate, of improperly influencing the operation of public authorities. The offences referred to in the first subparagraph include those mentioned in Article 2 of the Europol Convention and in the Annex thereto and carrying a sentence at least equivalent to that provided for in the first subparagraph. (Council of the European Union 1998)⁴

2.2 Money laundering within the framework of organised crime

In this section, we will focus on the crime of money laundering taking into account its international regulation (2.2.1) and the description of the concept and the terminological diversity in its designation in Spanish (2.2.2).

2.2.1 International regulations

According to España Alba (2016, 51), although money laundering is as old as money itself, throughout history it is the associated crime (e.g. terrorism, drug trafficking) that has been prosecuted or punished rather than the actual money laundering itself. Originally, it was linked to drug trafficking. Later, it became associated with terrorism or crimes which require a significant amount of resources within an international framework. Urbaneja Cillán (2018, 218) emphasises this point: “Currently money laundering is a pre-eminently transnational criminal phenomenon that affects most states and regions worldwide more or less intensively regardless of their economic, legal or political character”. Until now, conventional instruments and the so-called *soft law*⁵ have contributed to the fight against this sort of crime at an international level. The Palermo Convention, the most important international treaty in this regard, is the first agreement which punishes money laundering as an autonomous crime, regardless of the assets’ origin. It regulates a set of legal measures against the methods that international criminal organisations use to channel the proceeds of their criminal activity into legal markets.

⁴ It is noteworthy that the essential characteristics of the legal concept *organised criminal group* in the Palermo Convention largely correspond to the concept of *criminal organisation* in this Joint Action. The Palermo definition seems to have been heavily influenced by the EU text.

⁵ *Soft law* refers to the body of international decisions and consensus, that influences international discourse in producing certain effects in relation to the development, formation, interpretation and enforceability of international law and domestic legislation in individual states, regardless of its formal legal force.

Alongside these conventional rules, money laundering has been regulated through instruments of *soft law* such as the *Statement of Principles on Prevention of Criminal Use of the Banking System for the Purpose of Money-Laundering* issued by the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision (1988) and the *40 Recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force*⁶ on Money Laundering (updated February 2012).

2.2.2 Terminological difficulties relating to the legal concept of money laundering

As España Alba (2016, 52) stresses, the origin of the concept of *money laundering* (see Table 1 for the Spanish designations) is linked to gangsters like Al Capone and Bugsy Moran. According to Gelemerova (2011, 31-32): [They] “opened up laundrettes in Chicago to clean their ‘dirty money’. It is possible that during the 1920-30s, the time of Al Capone, police officers coined the term ‘money laundering’ referring to criminals trying to justify their earnings, specifically from alcohol trade during the Prohibition era”.

Like *organised crime* (Sp. *crimen organizado*), this term is not technical and has its origins in the US underworld (Blanco Cordero 2015, 86).

Designations		Legal system ⁷
blanqueo de	CAPITALES	ES, PA, EU
legitimación de	(CAPITAL bleaching/legalisation) ⁸	VE, CR
lavado de	ACTIVOS (ASSET laundering/laundry and bleaching)	AR, CL, CO, DO, EC, HN, PE, UY
lavado y blanqueo de		CL
lavado de	DINERO	CL, CU, GT, PY, PR
blanqueo de	(MONEY laundry/bleaching)	UN
Ø	BIENES	Ø

⁶ “The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is an inter-governmental body established in 1989 by the Ministers of its Member jurisdictions. The objectives of the FATF are to set standards and promote effective implementation of legal, regulatory and operational measures for combating money laundering, terrorist financing and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system.” (<http://www.fatf-gafi.org/about/>).

⁷ For the identification of individual countries and international organisations, we use the ISO 3166-1 alpha-2 codes. Mexico has not been included in the table because this particular criminal offence is classified there as *operaciones con recursos de procedencia ilícita* (‘operations with resources of illicit origin’), but there is no mention of *bleaching*, nor of *laundry*, nor of *legalisation*.

⁸ These are literal translations of the Spanish terms.

	(GOODS Ø)	
lavado de	DINERO, BIENES O ACTIVOS (MONEY, GOODS OR ASSET laundrying)	NI
lavado de	DINERO Y ACTIVOS (MONEY AND ASSET laundrying)	SV
lavado de	DINERO U OTROS ACTIVOS (MONEY AND OTHER ASSETS laundrying)	GU
legitimación de	GANANCIAS ILÍCITAS (ILLEGAL GAINS legalisation)	BO

Table 1. Designations in the Spanish-speaking world for the concept *money laundrying*

As Table 1 shows, the terminological diversity in the designation of this phenomenon in Spanish is considerable. We also find significant differences if we make an interlingual comparison: IT. *riciclaggio di denaro* ('money recycling'); FR. *blanchiment d'argent or de capitaux* ('money or capital bleaching'); PT. *branqueamento de capitais* ('capital bleaching'); DE. *Geldwäsche* ('money laundrying').

In legal literature, the term *money laundrying* is also controversial. The debate is focussed on the question of whether the money used to conceal an implicit tax offence must necessarily be of illicit provenance. Aránguez Sánchez (2000, 32) points out that the concept would imply "that the illicit assets are inserted into legal economic circulation". In the opinion of Bajo Fernández (2009, 13), the Spanish term *legitimación de activos* ('asset legalisation') would ensure greater clarity in relation to the concept, which should be defined as "the stratagem of a subject possessing money beyond the control of the financial authorities and inserting this money into the financial and economic system, concealing an implicit tax offence and, when applicable, the criminal origin of the assets". According to Abel Souto (2011, 209-210), the expression *blanqueo de capitales* ('capital bleaching') in Spanish law has a metaphorical character. It lies between the technical-legal laxity of *blanqueo* ('bleaching') and the precision that is sought with the second element, *capitales* ('capital'). Blanco Cordero (2015, 93), for his

part, indicates that money laundering is a “process by which criminal revenues are inserted into an economic system while maintaining the appearance of having been acquired legally”.

3. Methodology

Keeping in mind terminological differences in relation to classifying LPUs (Kjær 1994, 2007; Tabares Plasencia 2012; Biel 2014; Pontrandolfo 2016), it is necessary to summarise briefly the classification we have adopted to define and describe the VNCs. More specifically, we base our analysis on the proposal by Tabares Plasencia (2012). From the perspective of applied linguistics and translatology, this proposal attempts to simplify the LPU categories used in the specialist literature and includes phraseological phenomena from the subsentential as well as the sentential and suprasentential levels (see *infra*). Its applicability has been demonstrated using texts from different legal domains in the language combination Spanish – German (Tabares Plasencia and Batista Rodríguez 2014; Ivanova and González de León 2014; Hourani Martín 2017).

After introducing the classification of LPUs in Section 3.1, we will describe the corpus of analysis (3.2) and the method used for identifying VNCs (3.3). Section 3.4 is dedicated to the description of the analysis of the VNCs’ phraseological transformations.

3.1 Legal Phraseological Units (LPUs)

Tabares Plasencia (2012, 314-315) criticises the unreserved application of terminology (*collocation, idiom, etc.*) and phraseology of non-specialised language when classifying and describing the LPUs. This is due, on the one hand, to considerable formal and semantic inconsistencies (cf. Tabares Plasencia and Pérez Vigaray 2007, 568-569; Tabares Plasencia 2012, 320-321). On the other hand, it is because LPUs in specialised legal texts have certain characteristics that are not present, or not present in the same way, in non-specialised phraseological units. This is not so much a question of creating new meaningless terms rather than of avoiding the connotations of some terms that are not applicable to LPUs (see Tabares Plasencia and Batista Rodríguez 2013, 76). Thus, based on the approach of Gouadec (1994), who regards *stereotypicity* and *specificity* in a specialist domain as essential properties of specialised phraseological units, Tabares

Plasencia adopts the concept of a phraseological *matrix* and proposes the following definition for LPUs:

A chain of lexical and/or grammatical words, that usually but not essentially includes a (mono- or pluriverbal) term and has a degree of fixation, conventionality and usage in such a way that it is prototypic and specific, that is, recognizable as specialised knowledge unit⁹ in the different text types of legal discourse. (Tabares Plasencia 2012, 321)

These specialised knowledge units are obvious to law experts and are key elements in understanding and producing law texts adequate to the linguistic conventions in a language at a specific point in time and in a particular legal system.

Tabares Plasencia's classification of LPUs contains three categories:

1) *Grammatical chains with prepositional function and formulaic adverb phrases*. In this group, there are two types of units at the subsentential level. On the one hand, units that function as prepositional groups with variable elements and are filled out contextually (many times, with terms). On the other hand, units consisting of regularly repeated formulaic fragments that do not usually allow variable elements. Examples of these categories in Spanish are: *a (los) efectos de* ('for the purpose of'), *a favor de* ('in favour of'), *con arreglo a* ('in accordance with') (grammatical chains); *a un solo efecto* ('on single effect'), *con plenas facultades* ('in full possession of his/her faculties'), *de pleno derecho* ('in their own right') (formulaic adverb phrases)¹⁰.

2) *Verb-noun constructions*. These comprise the most important group due to their frequency of occurrence in legal texts and the fact that they transmit by themselves more specialised legal knowledge than other LPUs (Kjær 2007, 509; Tabares Plasencia 2015, 582). These units are composed of a verb and a terminological unit¹¹ (mono- or multi-word term) that acts as the terminological nucleus (TN)¹² of the VNC and fulfils the syntactic function of a subject, direct object or prepositional complement. These LPUs frequently undergo morphosyntactic transformation. Examples in Spanish include:

⁹ Term coined by Cabré (2002).

¹⁰ These and following examples are drawn from a corpus of notarial acts analysed by Tabares Plasencia and Batista Rodríguez (2014).

¹¹ According to Cabré and Estopà (2005, 77) a *terminological unit* is a lexical unit, the structure of which corresponds to a single lexical unit or is the product of the lexicalization of a syntagma. It has a specific meaning in its associated specialised area and forms a necessary part of that area's conceptual structure. Although the terminological units are the actual terms, the authors prefer this designation to distinguish them from *specialized phraseological units* and *specialized morphological units*.

¹² *Terminological nucleus* is used according to Bevilacqua (2004, 16). The author points out that the terminological nucleus represents a node of knowledge in the structure or conceptual map of the specialised field, is a noun or nominal phrase and has a referential character. Within the VNC the TN can function as subject, direct object or prepositional complement to the construction's verb.

otorgar escritura ('to grant a public deed'), *formalizar el/un acto* ('to formalise the/an act'), *revocar el/un poder* ('to revoke the/a power of attorney').

3) *Formulaic texts*. They are units at the sentential or suprasentential level that include formulaic legal sentences as well as textual frameworks. Formulaic sentences can sometimes present a minimal amount of linguistic variability. Textual frameworks consist of framework expressions or matrices that are usually filled with variable elements (such as LPUs in categories 1 and 2), specific information or both¹³.

3.2 A brief description of the CRIMO corpus

The study of the actual behaviour of the phraseological units is carried out using CRIMO, a specialised comparable corpus containing different varieties of Spanish. CRIMO is comprised of legal texts from the different Hispanic states relating to criminal law and criminal procedure and currently contains 2,230,916 tokens. The focus is on the fundamental sources of the law in these domains, i.e. international agreements, EU treaties, EU directives and regulations, and domestic criminal legislation relating to the Hispanic states and American regional organisations in their current consolidated version. It is a synchronic corpus covering the period from 2000 (the year in which the Palermo Convention was adopted) to 2018.

However, the compilation of CRIMO is not yet finished. One of the most important problems faced when compiling legal corpora is the normative dispersion. In the present case, the regulation of new legal criminal entities as enacted in international law has not always been incorporated into Hispanic criminal codes but many of these crimes have

¹³ Examples:

Leo a los comparecientes (esta/la presente) escritura, previa su renuncia del derecho a hacerlo por sí, que les advierto que tienen, y la aprueban y firman conmigo, el Notario, que DOY FE de su contenido y de que va extendida en (...). ('I read out the current deed to the persons present, prior to their renunciation of the right to do so by themselves, and they approve and sign it with me, the Notary, who ATTESTS its content and its issuance on ...').

NÚMERO XXX (PROTOCOL NUMBER XXX)

COMPRAVENTA (CONTRACT OF SALE)

En (nombre de la localidad de otorgamiento), mi residencia, a (fecha de otorgamiento). ('In [town name], my residence, [date of grant]').

Ante mí (nombre y apellidos del notario), Notario del Ilustre Colegio de (sede geográfica del colegio profesional...). ('Before me [first and last name of notary], Notary of the Society of Public Notaries of [location of the Society]...').

been regulated by specific domestic criminal legislation. Therefore, the design of CRIMO aims to include such regulations from the states in question¹⁴.

3.3 Analysis of verb-noun constructions (VNCs)

The program used for both compilation and analysis is Sketch Engine (Lexical Computing CZ s.r.o. n.d.). Thus, starting from the assumption that VNCs are composed of a verb and a terminological nucleus (TN) that acts as subject, direct object or prepositional complement of that verb, the first step in the selection of units for analysis is the identification of the TN. In terminological orientation studies (see Bevilacqua 2004, 25-26), the phraseological analysis and processing strategy usually starts from the TN because, as Lorente Casafont (2002, online) points out, phraseological verbs only acquire specialised value “when they appear in context with a terminological unit” (see Goźdz-Roszkowski and Pontrandolfo 2017 for different techniques used to study legal phraseology from a corpus perspective).

For the selection of the TN subject of this paper, we have followed the criminal categories stipulated in the Palermo Convention and have chosen the crime of *money laundering* and its topolectal variants (see Table 1). For the selection of the VNCs under analysis, we have focused on qualitative criteria, in particular their relevance to the legal domain.

3.4 Analysis of phraseological transformations

From a translational perspective, studying phraseological transformations is of special interest because, as Humbley (1993) already pointed out in the early nineties, it is really the transformational constraints of phraseological units that create most problems for those learning a specialised language or having to translate specialised texts. Therefore, it is necessary to insist on the importance of the paradigmatic and syntagmatic dimensions in terminology and terminological studies. The traditional lexicographical works dedicated to legal language have so far only taken into account the syntactic aspects and all the phraseological phenomena with their possible and verifiable transformations in part and in a totally unsystematic manner.

¹⁴ Due to the normative dispersion mentioned, we have frequently found it necessary to turn to doctrinal works in which the laws in force in the countries in question are compiled.

Our study of phraseological transformations is based on the analysis of the syntagmatic and paradigmatic dimensions of VNCs in Tabares Plasencia and Pérez Vigaray (2007) and their systematisation in Hourani Martín (2017). First, it is established whether there is a categorical variation of the verb, in the form of nominalisation or adjectivisation, or whether the verb appears without changes to its morphological category. These would be the forms without paradigmatic transformation. Here are included all those cases in which the VNC appears in its base form (Hourani Martín 2017; Tabares Plasencia and Ivanova 2017), namely the form in which the syntactic functions of the unit remain stable and present no alteration in the scheme [subject + verb + object or prepositional complement]. This category is specifically created to house all those forms of VNC in the active voice as opposed to passivisations within syntagmatic transformations whose syntactic scheme places emphasis on the object of the action. Moreover, within syntagmatic transformations the verb is not the only element that can undergo syntactic changes. This is also true for the TN in the case of pronominalisation or relativisation, although these have not been recorded in our analysis, as we will see below.

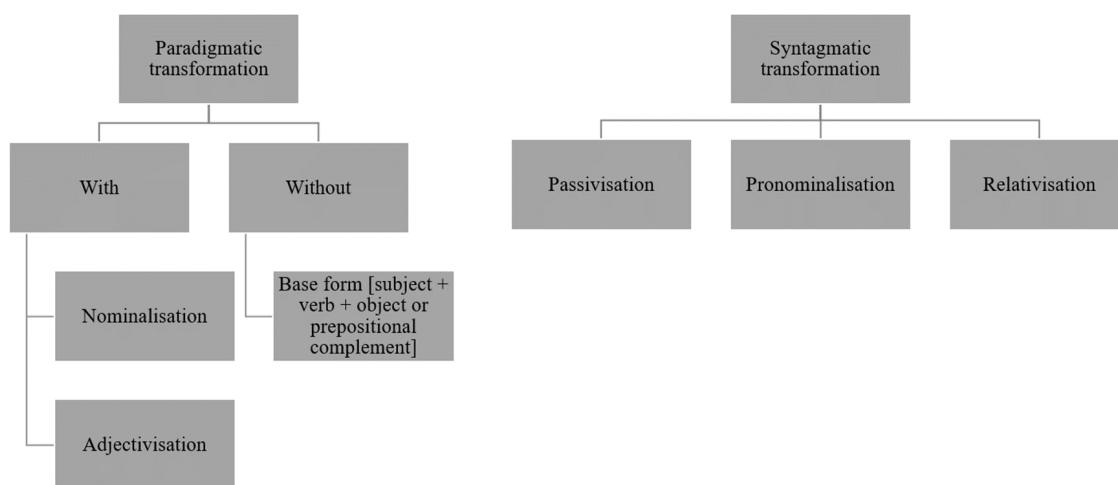


Figure 1. Phraseological transformations

4. Results

4.1 Topolectal variation: *blanqueo de dinero* ('money bleaching')

Despite attempts by international and supra-regional organisations to harmonise not only the law but also the terminology used in this legal subdomain, it has been observed that this has not always worked out as anticipated (Tabares Plasencia and Hourani Martín

2018). In this case, *blanqueo de dinero* ('money bleaching'), a term coined by the UN, is a reflection of an existing topolectal variation as the terminology referring to this crime was already established in the legal systems studied (see Table 1).

As can be seen from Table 1, the designations in Spanish, which are all denominative variants according to Freixa (2002, 2005)¹⁵, have been grouped according to both the nucleus of the multi-word term and the deverbal noun that determines it. Although this noun derives from the nominalisation of a verb, it has already been lexicalised as a term in legal language and has spread to other specialist areas (such as economics) and to the general language. The degree of fixation of the multi-word term is such that the nucleus is not even omitted when the elision would be acceptable for contextual reasons, as the following example shows:

Los capitales, bienes o haberes objeto del *delito de legitimación de capitales* serán decomisados o confiscados. (003_VE)

4.2 Transformations of VNC

Once the TN variants were identified from the corpus data (see Table 1), the contexts in which they appeared were isolated: 458 contexts in total. Although the limited number of these contexts does not allow us to draw irrefutable conclusions about the use of this term in combination, a qualitative study of the contexts reveals two relevant points:

1. On the one hand, the use of the VNC *blanquear* ('to bleach') / *lavar* (to launder') / *legitimar* ('to legalise') + TN has not been found in the corpus. That is, the phraseological verbs *blanquear* and *lavar* are not used in the regulations as such – for example **el que blanquee/lave dinero, será castigado con la pena...* [**Whoever bleaches/launders money is liable to be punished with...*]. In the case of *legitimar*, its semantic breadth ('convertir algo en legítimo' ['to make something legal'] DLE s.v.) gives rise to use with multiple transformations in other contexts but never in reference to *money laundering*. These results could be explained by the legislator's interest in highlighting the result of the criminal action rather than the criminal activity per se.

¹⁵ Freixa (2002, 2005) describes *denominative variation* as the same concept having several designations. *Conceptual variation*, on the other hand, consists of conceptual changes in the same term. The author uses the term *denominative variation* to avoid the problem that occurs when trying to differentiate between *synonyms* and *variants*. Denominative variation entails graphical, morphological or morphosyntactic changes in a term while synonymy involves lexical changes, which, in multi-word terms would affect either the nucleus or its determiners.

2. On the other hand, the VNCs occur in the discourse having undergone diverse transformations, depending on where the legislator focuses attention during the drafting process. We used an onomasiological approach to group the VNCs, i.e. we structured them according to the description of their shared meaning. Because of their relevance in the legal domain at hand, we have studied the occurrences of the TN variants when combined with verbs referring to the following thematic areas: (1) the ‘action of the crime’ (*cometer* ‘to commit’, *incurrir en* ‘to incur in’, *realizar* ‘to carry out’), (2) the ‘action by authorities to deal with crime’ (*prevenir* ‘to prevent’, *combatir* ‘to combat’, *controlar* ‘to control’, *luchar* ‘to fight’, *reprimir* ‘to repress’, *perseguir* ‘to persecute’) and (3) the ‘judicial activity’ (*enjuiciar* ‘to prosecute’, *juzgar* ‘to judge’, *sentenciar* ‘to sentence’, *fallar* ‘to rule’, *condenar* ‘to condemn’).

4.2.1 *Cometer* / *realizar* + TN / *incurrir en* + TN

In this group, the TN acts as a direct object of the verbs *cometer* and *realizar* and as a prepositional complement to *incurrir en*.

The VNC *cometer* + TN, as can be seen from Table 2, occurs more frequently without paradigmatic transformation, namely as the base form of the VNC, with a percentage of more than 62%. This fact is fundamental, since the absence of passivisation and the preference for the base form of the VNC (Examples 1 and 2), indicates the legislator's willingness to maintain, in most cases, an actor.

Analysed unit	ES
	Cometer (delito de) + TN
Forms without paradigmatic transformation (no/% ¹⁶)	10 / 62,5%
Paradigmatic transformations (no/%)	6 / 37,5%
Total (no/%)	16 / 100%

Table 2. Distribution of VNCs in the CRIMO corpus

(1) Los sujetos obligados deben prestar especial atención a cualquier transacción o grupo de transacciones independientemente de su cuantía y naturaleza, cuando se sospeche que los fondos, capitales o bienes provienen o están vinculados, o podrían ser utilizados para *cometer delitos de legitimación de capitales*, acto terrorista o financiamiento al terrorismo o cualquier otro delito de delincuencia organizada. (003_VE)

(2) Constituye circunstancia agravante, cuando el sujeto activo, desde un establecimiento penitenciario donde se encuentre privado de su libertad, *comete* en calidad de autor o

¹⁶ Absolute amounts and percentages are given in all cases.

participe *el delito de tráfico ilícito de drogas, lavado de activos, trata de personas, terrorismo, extorsión o secuestro*. (001_PE)

In the two examples given, we can observe that *cometer delito de* ('commit crime of') appears just once in the coordination and is not repeated for each determiner of crime (i.e. *acto terrorista* 'terrorism', *financiamiento al terrorismo* 'terrorism financing', etc.) but rather silenced in this context. Estopà Bagot (1999, 169) refers to this type of constructions as *hidden units* and defines them as constructions that are not explicitly manifested by discursive anaphora¹⁷. In these units, therefore, the nucleus, the complement or a part of the latter is deleted and the remaining components are coordinated in copulation or disjunction or by using other grammatical resources such as specification, comparison, condition or attribution (ibid. 1999, 169-174). However, examples of silencing are not only restricted to the TN; they can also affect the verb when, for example, the TN belongs to the same semantic or thematic family. In these cases, VNCs are counted and analysed separately.

As far as paradigmatic transformations are concerned, the only group present in CRIMO is the nominalisation based on the suffix *-sión* (*comisión*) (Example 3):

(3) La persona que realice acciones tendientes a incriminar falsamente a una o más personas en la *comisión del delito de lavado de activos*, será sancionada con pena privativa de libertad de uno a tres años. (001_NI)

With regard to the VNC *incurrir en* + TN and *realizar* + TN, the former is recorded in CRIMO on one occasion in its base form (Example 4), while the latter appears on two occasions in its nominalised form (Example 5):

(4) Toda persona que viole cualquiera de las disposiciones de los incisos (e) al (g) del Artículo 3 de esta ley *incurrirá en el delito de lavado de dinero* el cual será delito grave y convicta que fuere será sancionada con pena de reclusión por un término fijo de veinte (20) años. (002_PR)

(5) Cuando el autor actuara comercialmente o como miembro de una banda formada para la *realización continuada de lavado de dinero*, la pena privativa de libertad podrá ser aumentada hasta diez años. (001_PY)

4.2.2 *Prevenir, combatir, controlar, luchar contra, reprimir, perseguir* + TN

The most frequently observed group of contexts has been identified in the semantic field of 'action by authorities to deal with crime'. The variety of verbs, whose most frequent variant is *prevenir*, is particularly apparent within this group. However, only those VNCs

¹⁷ The author even points out that these hidden units could be considered a type of discursive variation within a text (Estopà Bagot 1999, 170).

with more than 3 contexts have been extracted (Table 3). In all cases, the TN acts as a direct object of the VNC, except in the case of the VNC *luchar contra* + TN, where it acts as a prepositional complement.

	ES						
	Prevenir + TN	Combatir + TN	Controlar + TN	Luchar contra + TN	Reprimir + TN	Perseguir + TN	Total (no/%)
Forms without paradigmatic transformation (no/%)	5 / 13,9%	5 / 71,4%	Ø	Ø	Ø	Ø	10 / 16,7%
Paradigmatic transformations (no/%)	31 / 86,1%	2 / 28,6%	5 / 100%	5 / 100%	4 / 100%	3 / 100%	50 / 83,3%
Total (no/%)	36 / 100%	7 / 100%	5 / 100%	5 / 100%	4 / 100%	3 / 100%	60 / 100%

Table 3. Distribution of VNCs in the CRIMO corpus

In relation to their manifestation within discourse, only two possibilities have been found: forms without paradigmatic transformation, i.e. the base forms of construction, and forms transformed paradigmatically, specifically by nominalisation¹⁸. The latter is the most frequent manifestation, comprising 83% of the contexts found. With the exception of the VNC *combatir* + TN, where the percentage of forms without paradigmatic transformation is greater, all the extracted variants present almost exclusively in their nominalised form, specifically the *nomina actionis*: *prevención* ‘prevention’, *combate* ‘combat’, *control* ‘control’, *lucha contra* ‘fight against’, *represión* ‘repression’ and *persecución* ‘persecution’ + TN. This confirms a general tendency to use deverbal nouns in the Spanish legal language that has been pointed out by other authors (see Alcaraz Varó and Hughes 2002, 30-31; Henríquez Salido and de No Alonso-Misol 2005, 93; Pontrandolfo 2016, 133), since the nominal category, due to its capacity for abstraction and condensation of information, constitutes the best instrument for transmitting specialised content.

Another relevant aspect, as can be seen from Examples 6 and 7, is the coordination of VNCs, characteristic of legal language in general and legislative texts in particular. This drafting mechanism, which gives rise to hidden units, is used as an instrument both to guarantee the disambiguation of legislative discourse and to achieve the “all-

¹⁸ In the case of the verb *prevenir*, one example of syntagmatic transformation (passivisation) has been found. Due to its low frequency, it is not included in the table, but can be seen in Example 8.

inclusiveness” effect referred to by Bhatia (1993, 102); that is, it responds to a function of precision and “serves as a useful tool for making legislative statements all-inclusive” (ibid. 110).

(6) Los sujetos obligados deberán asegurarse que las disposiciones relativas a la *prevención y control de legitimación de capitales* y financiamiento al terrorismo contempladas en esta Ley, sean aplicadas a las sucursales y subsidiarias ubicadas en el exterior. (001_VE)

(7) Los órganos centralizados de prevención tendrán por función la intensificación y canalización de la colaboración de las profesiones colegiadas con las autoridades judiciales, policiales y administrativas responsables de la *prevención y represión del blanqueo de capitales* y de la financiación del terrorismo, sin perjuicio de la responsabilidad directa de los profesionales incorporados como sujetos obligados. (001_ES)

4.2.3 *Enjuiciar, juzgar, sentenciar, fallar, condenar* + TN

Due to the low number of examples (11 in total) of this last group, referred to as ‘judicial activity’, we have not analysed the frequency of the contexts in a table. Nevertheless, the results are noteworthy, since we have only found syntagmatic and paradigmatic transformations.

Within the syntagmatic transformations, only passivisation has been recorded. Specifically, only cases of the passive with *ser* have been found, where the TN can act either as a patient argument (Examples 8, 9), due to the legislative interest in emphasizing the object of the verbal action, namely the object that must be instructed, above the other contents of the sentence, or as a prepositional complement to the verb (Examples 10, 11, 12), where multiple TNs share the same verb, for which the legislator places the focus on the subject submitted to instruction¹⁹. The study of syntagmatic transformations has revealed an interesting case of variation in syntactic verb government between Hispanic legal systems. As Examples 8 and 9 show, verbs such as *sentenciar* or *enjuiciar* appear in Nicaragua or Bolivia with a non-human undergoer (*el delito será enjuiciado y sentenciado* ‘the crime will be judged and sentenced’), whereas, in the Spanish legal system, these could only appear with a human undergoer (cf. Van Valin 2005, 2007).

(8) El delito de lavado de dinero, bienes o activos es autónomo respecto de su delito precedente y será prevenido, investigado, enjuiciado, fallado o sentenciado por las autoridades competentes como tal, con relación a las actividades ilícitas de que pudiera provenir, para lo cual no se requerirá que se sustancie un proceso penal previo en relación a la actividad ilícita precedente. (001_NI)

¹⁹ These contexts are a clear example of hidden units, since the verbs *sentenciar*, *condenar* and *enjuiciar* accompany all the TN of the enumeration.

(9) Se ratifica que el *delito de la legitimación de ganancias ilícitas* es autónomo y *será* investigado, *enjuiciado y sentenciado* sin necesidad de sentencia condenatoria previa, respecto a los delitos mencionados en el primer párrafo. (001_BO)

(10) La ejecución de la pena privativa de la libertad se cumplirá en el lugar de residencia o morada del condenado cuando haya cumplido la mitad de la condena y concurren los presupuestos contemplados en los numerales 3 y 4 del artículo 38B del presente código, excepto en los casos en que *el condenado* pertenezca al grupo familiar de la víctima o en aquellos eventos en que *fue sentenciado por* alguno de los siguientes delitos: genocidio; contra el derecho internacional humanitario; desaparición forzada; secuestro extorsivo; tortura; desplazamiento forzado; tráfico de menores; uso de menores de edad para la comisión de delitos; tráfico de migrantes; trata de personas; delitos contra la libertad, integridad y formación sexuales; extorsión; concierto para delinquir agravado; *lavado de activos* [...]. (001_CO)

(11) Tampoco *quienes hayan sido condenados por* delitos dolosos contra la Administración Pública; delitos contra las personas y bienes protegidos por el Derecho Internacional Humanitario; delitos contra la libertad, integridad y formación sexual; estafa y abuso de confianza que recaigan sobre los bienes del Estado; captación masiva y habitual de dineros; utilización indebida de información privilegiada; concierto para delinquir agravado; *lavado de activos*; soborno transnacional [...]. (001_CO)

(12) *Serán juzgados* por jurados de conciencia *los procesos por delitos* que conocen los Tribunales Superiores de Distrito Judicial en primera instancia y que se enumeran a continuación: 1. Homicidio doloso, salvo que se trate de actividades propias de terrorismo, secuestro, extorsión, sicariato, asociación ilícita, pandillerismo, integrantes o miembros de una pandilla, narcotráfico o *blanqueo de capitales* o que se haya suscitado el hecho en concurso con otras conductas delictivas. (002_PA)

Finally, within the group of paradigmatic transformations, it has been possible to observe the adjectivisation (Example 13) and the nominalisation (Example 14) of the verb, maintaining in both cases the required preposition (*por*).

(13) El juez o tribunal ordenará también el decomiso de los bienes, efectos y ganancias pertenecientes a una *persona condenada por* alguno de los siguientes delitos cuando resuelva, a partir de indicios objetivos fundados, que los bienes o efectos provienen de una actividad delictiva, y no se acredite su origen lícito: [...] i) *Delitos de blanqueo de capitales* [...]. (001_ES)

(14) El hecho se comete respecto a investigaciones o *juzgamiento por los delitos de* terrorismo, tráfico ilícito de drogas, *lavado de activos*, secuestro, extorsión y trata de personas. (001_PE)

In all the cases studied, the tendency to incorporate transformed VNCs is justified by the supra-national and universal character of the texts of the CRIMO corpus, as well as the legislator's willingness to give a greater degree of abstraction, universality, distancing and depersonalisation to the discourse.

5. Conclusions

This analysis has highlighted a number of trends that will need to be quantitatively corroborated using a larger corpus including all specific normative texts on the subject as well as other textual types. The partial conclusions drawn so far are as follows:

Firstly, denominative variation between the different legal systems studied has been confirmed. In the specific case studied, variation is even present in the two components of the multi-word term that constitutes the TN of the VNC. Thus, attempts by international and supra-regional organisations to harmonise not only the law but also the terminology are limited by the preference of national legislators for deviating, in some cases, from the influence of foreign regulations.

Secondly, the description of the phraseological transformations of VNC is fundamental to the detection of habitual and recurrent patterns that reveal the conventions of the specialised discourse and the textual genre in which they are inserted. As has been observed, the transformations are pragmatically motivated and conditioned by the context. On the one hand, passivisation places emphasis on the TN. At the same time, it fulfils the function of depersonalizing the statements, gives them a universal character and distances or hides the agent from the action. A significant fact is the wide use of the passive with *ser*, whose presence in the studied domain differs from the general language or from other legal domains where the preference of the passive reflexive (*se* passive) has been verified (e.g. Hourani Martín 2017 for the legal subdomain of climate protection). On the other hand, nominalisation of the verb decontextualises not only the “real moment of the locution” (Azpiazu 2004, 64), but also condenses a large amount of information while hiding the agent and giving the text an impersonal character.

Finally, we believe that it is very important to collect the transformative possibilities of VNCs in terminographical tools intended for use by translators. In order to achieve the naturalness and adequacy required for legal translation, it is not only necessary to use a corresponding VNC functionally in the target language, should that be possible, but also to embed it in the communicative context following the conventions of the specialised discourse and the textual genre in which it is inserted. Thus, as in the general language (Corpas Pastor 2000, 120-121), the existing differences in the morphosyntactic parameters (syntactic complementation patterns, phrasal functions and transformational possibilities) of the phraseological units can be one of the causes of partial equivalence between two languages and language varieties.

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