

# Mapping the Thematic Landscape of Legal Translation: A Computationally Assisted Integrative Review

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Article Detail:	Abstract
<p>Received: 10 Oct 2025; Received in revised form: 05 Nov 2025; Accepted: 09 Nov 2025; Available online: 13 Nov 2025</p> <p>©2025 The Author(s). Published by International Journal of English Language, Education and Literature Studies (IJEEL). This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<a href="https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/">https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/</a>).</p> <p><b>Keywords – legal translation, integrative literature review, BERTopic, translation competence, legal interpreting.</b></p>	<p><i>This integrative literature review synthesizes existing research on legal translation to identify major thematic domains and generate new frameworks for understanding this critical field. Through systematic analysis of 139 publications from the Web of Science Core Collection (1900-2025) using BERTopic computational modeling combined with expert interpretation, six major research domains were identified: theoretical foundations and methodological approaches, competence development and training, technology integration and machine translation, legal interpreting in court and police settings, translation of culturally-embedded legal concepts, and legal translation in institutional and multilingual settings. The temporal analysis reveals exponential growth in scholarly output, particularly from 2017 onwards, with 70% of publications concentrated in the 2017-2025 period, indicating the field's rapid maturation. Research areas demonstrate strong interdisciplinary engagement, with linguistics-based approaches (75%) complemented by communication studies, humanities, and social sciences perspectives. Key findings reveal a methodological shift toward corpus-based empirical research, growing emphasis on translator competence models incorporating comparative legal knowledge, significant challenges in technology integration despite advances in machine translation, and complex dynamics in multilingual institutional contexts. The review identifies persistent gaps in assessment frameworks, technology-enhanced pedagogy, and cross-cultural conceptual translation, while highlighting the field's evolution from peripheral concern to central area of translation studies scholarship with profound implications for justice delivery and international legal cooperation.</i></p>

## I. INTRODUCTION

Legal translation has emerged as a critical domain within translation studies, representing one of the most challenging and consequential forms of specialized translation practice. As globalization intensifies cross-border legal interactions, international judicial cooperation expands, and

multilingual legal frameworks proliferate, the demand for accurate and reliable legal translation services has grown exponentially (Prieto Ramos & Guzmán, 2021; Ross & Magris, 2017). This specialized field encompasses not merely interlingual transfer but rather complex processes of mediating between distinct legal systems with fundamentally different

conceptual foundations, terminological frameworks, and procedural requirements (Jopek-Bosiacka, 2013; Wilson, 2023). The stakes involved in legal translation are particularly high, as translation errors can have profound consequences for justice delivery, affecting everything from individual rights in criminal proceedings to the implementation of international treaties and supranational legislation (Balogh & Eszenyi, 2025; Campbell & Obeng, 2024). The European Union's Directive 2010/64/EU, which mandates quality interpretation and translation services in criminal proceedings, exemplifies the growing recognition of legal translation as essential infrastructure for maintaining procedural fairness and protecting fundamental rights in multilingual legal contexts (Hara, 2017).

Despite the field's practical importance and increasing scholarly attention, significant research gaps persist in our understanding of legal translation as both an academic discipline and professional practice. While numerous studies have examined specific aspects such as terminological challenges (Chiocchetti et al., 2017; Prieto Ramos, 2021), competence development (Lesznyák et al., 2024; Prieto Ramos, 2024), or technology integration (Aldosari & Altuwairesh, 2025; Killman, 2024; Ramírez Rodríguez, 2025), the field lacks a comprehensive synthesis that illuminates the interconnections between theoretical foundations, pedagogical approaches, technological innovations, and professional practices. Previous reviews have typically focused on narrow subdomains or linguistic perspectives (Wasi et al., 2024), leaving unexplored the broader conceptual landscape that defines contemporary legal translation scholarship. This integrative literature review addresses these gaps by employing computational topic modeling combined with expert interpretation to systematically identify and synthesize the major thematic clusters within legal translation research. The review seeks to answer fundamental questions about the theoretical evolution of the field, the development of translator competence models, the impact of technological advancement on practice, and the emergence of new paradigms for understanding legal translation in institutional and cross-cultural contexts. By providing this comprehensive synthesis, the study contributes to advancing theoretical understanding

while offering practical insights for educators, practitioners, and policymakers working to enhance the quality and accessibility of legal translation services in an increasingly interconnected world.

## II. MATERIALS AND METHOD

### 2.1 Data collection

To construct a comprehensive and representative corpus of scholarly literature for this integrative review, a systematic search was conducted using the Web of Science (WoS) Core Collection. This database was selected for its extensive coverage of high-impact, peer-reviewed journals and its strong indexing capabilities within the social sciences. Specifically, the search was confined to the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) spanning from 1900 to present. The search was performed on September 29, 2025, to ensure the inclusion of the most current research. The search query was structured as a topic search (TS), targeting the title, abstract, and keywords of publications, using the Boolean expression: TS = ("legal translation" OR "legal interpreting").

To refine the results and ensure the quality and relevance of the retrieved literature, several inclusion criteria were applied directly within the database search interface. The document types were limited to "Article," "Early Access," and "Review Article" to focus the analysis on substantive, peer-reviewed research contributions, excluding materials such as book reviews, editorials, and conference proceedings. The search was further restricted to publications in the English language to maintain linguistic consistency for the subsequent analysis. The time span was set from "1900 to present" to capture the entire historical trajectory of the field indexed within the database.

The initial search strategy yielded 144 publications. Subsequently, this set of results underwent a manual screening process to verify its direct relevance to the review's scope. The titles and abstracts of all 144 documents were reviewed to filter out any articles where the search terms were used tangentially or in a context not central to the practice, theory, or pedagogy of legal translation or interpreting. The human judgment phase resulted in the exclusion of 5 articles that were deemed

irrelevant to the core topic. Consequently, the final dataset for this integrative review comprises 139 publications.

## 2.2 Research method

BERTopic, a topic modeling technique that leverages transformer-based embeddings, was employed to systematically identify and extract the main thematic clusters within the legal translation literature corpus. This approach combines BERT embeddings with class-based TF-IDF and c-means clustering to generate coherent and semantically meaningful topic representations (Grootendorst, 2022). Unlike traditional topic modeling methods such as LDA, BERTopic preserves the contextual relationships between words and documents, making it particularly suitable for analyzing specialized academic discourse where terminological precision and semantic complexity are paramount.

The implementation of BERTopic in this study served as a computational aid to complement human expertise in topic identification, thereby enhancing the objectivity and comprehensiveness of the thematic analysis. The algorithm processed the abstracts of the collected papers to generate topic clusters, which were subsequently evaluated and refined through expert interpretation to ensure their relevance to legal translation studies. This hybrid approach of computational topic detection followed by human validation allowed for the systematic organization of the literature around empirically-derived sub-topics while maintaining the critical analytical perspective necessary for an integrative review. The resulting topic structure provided the conceptual framework for synthesizing existing knowledge and identifying gaps in the legal translation research landscape.

## III. DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

### 3.1 Temporal trend

The temporal distribution of the 139 publications in the legal translation corpus reveals distinct phases in the scholarly development of this field over the past two decades. As illustrated in Figure 1, legal translation research has experienced considerable growth, particularly in recent years, demonstrating the field's increasing academic recognition and practical relevance.

The early period (2001-2012) represents the nascent stage of legal translation scholarship within the indexed literature, accounting for only 12 publications (8.6% of the total corpus). This period is characterized by sporadic publication activity, with only one or two articles published annually in most years. The limited output during this phase suggests that legal translation was still emerging as a distinct area of academic inquiry, with research efforts scattered across different scholarly communities.

A notable acceleration in research activity begins to manifest in 2013-2014, with each year contributing 8 publications (5.8% each), marking the beginning of sustained scholarly attention to legal translation. This upward trajectory continues through the mid-2010s, with 2017 representing a significant milestone as it produced 17 publications (12.2% of the corpus), establishing it as one of the most productive years in the field's documented history.

The period from 2017 onwards demonstrates the field's maturation and consolidation as a recognized area of translation studies. Particularly striking is the substantial growth observed in the most recent years, with 2021 matching 2017's output of 17 publications (12.2%), followed by continued high productivity in 2023 with 14 publications (10.1%). The year 2024 stands out as the most prolific period in the corpus, contributing 22 publications (15.8%), representing the highest annual output and indicating the field's current vitality.

The data for 2025, while representing only partial-year coverage (9 publications, 6.5%), suggests that this upward trend is likely to continue. When considered alongside the search date of September 29, 2025, this figure indicates sustained research momentum in the field.

The temporal pattern reflects several broader trends in translation studies and legal scholarship. The exponential growth from the mid-2010s onwards coincides with increased globalization, international legal cooperation, and the growing recognition of translation as a critical component in cross-border legal processes. The surge in recent publications also aligns with the expansion of graduate programs in translation studies and the establishment of legal

translation as a specialized professional domain requiring dedicated academic investigation.

The concentration of approximately 70% of all publications in the period from 2017-2025 underscores the field's rapid evolution from a peripheral concern to a central area of scholarly

inquiry. This temporal distribution suggests that legal translation has achieved critical mass as a research domain, attracting sustained attention from multiple disciplinary perspectives and establishing itself as an essential component of contemporary translation studies scholarship.

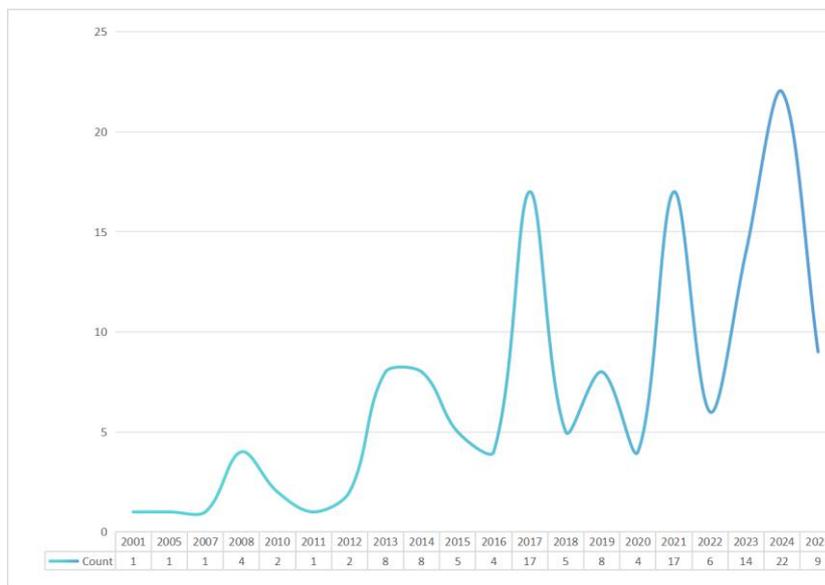


Fig. 1: The distribution of publication years

### 3.2 Research areas

The distribution of publications across Web of Science categories reveals the interdisciplinary nature of legal translation research while highlighting its primary disciplinary anchoring. As presented in Table 1, the corpus demonstrates a strong concentration within linguistic disciplines, with Linguistics (108 papers, 75.00%) and Language Linguistics (105 papers, 72.92%) representing the dominant research categories. The substantial overlap between these two closely related categories indicates that the majority of scholarly work in legal translation is approached from a linguistic perspective, emphasizing the fundamental role of language analysis in understanding the complexities of translating legal texts.

The prominence of linguistic categories aligns with the theoretical foundations of translation studies, where legal translation is conceptualized as a specialized form of interlingual communication requiring deep understanding of both source and target language systems. This categorization pattern

suggests that researchers have predominantly focused on the linguistic challenges inherent in legal translation, including terminological precision, syntactic complexity, and semantic equivalence across different legal systems.

Beyond the core linguistic focus, the distribution reveals notable interdisciplinary engagement. Communication (11 papers, 7.64%) emerges as a significant secondary category, reflecting the recognition of legal translation as a communicative act that extends beyond mere linguistic transfer to encompass broader considerations of meaning transmission and audience reception. This category likely encompasses studies examining the pragmatic dimensions of legal translation and its role in facilitating cross-cultural legal communication.

The presence of Humanities Multidisciplinary (10 papers, 6.94%) and Social Sciences Interdisciplinary (10 papers, 6.94%) categories, each representing nearly 7% of the corpus, underscores the field's engagement with broader humanistic and

social scientific inquiries. These classifications suggest that legal translation research increasingly draws upon diverse methodological and theoretical frameworks from across the humanities and social sciences, reflecting a maturing field that recognizes the multifaceted nature of legal translation phenomena.

Notably, the Law category accounts for only 7 papers (4.86%) of the corpus, which may initially appear counterintuitive given the legal focus of the research domain. However, this relatively modest representation likely reflects the disciplinary organization of academic publishing, where legal translation research is more commonly situated within translation studies and linguistics departments rather than law schools. This categorization pattern may also indicate that legal translation research has developed as a specialized

subfield within translation studies, maintaining some distance from traditional legal scholarship. The remaining categories, Anthropology (3 papers, 2.08%), Environmental Studies (2 papers, 1.39%), History (2 papers, 1.39%), and Psychology Experimental (2 papers, 1.39%), represent emerging or niche areas of inquiry.

This categorical distribution demonstrates that legal translation research has established itself as a primarily linguistics-based field while maintaining productive dialogues with adjacent disciplines. The predominance of linguistic categories, combined with meaningful representation across interdisciplinary humanities and social sciences, suggests a field that is both methodologically grounded and theoretically expansive, capable of addressing the complex linguistic, cultural, and institutional dimensions of legal translation practice.

Table 1: Web of Science categories of the published papers (≥2)

Web of Science Categories	Record Count	Percentage (%)
Linguistics	108	75.00
Language Linguistics	105	72.92
Communication	11	7.64
Humanities Multidisciplinary	10	6.94
Social Sciences Interdisciplinary	10	6.94
Law	7	4.86
Anthropology	3	2.08
Environmental Studies	2	1.39
History	2	1.39
Psychology Experimental	2	1.39

#### IV. MAJOR TOPICS

The systematic analysis of the 139 publications in the legal translation corpus through BERTopic modeling revealed eight distinct thematic clusters that capture the field’s conceptual landscape (Figure 2). The topic word scores demonstrate clear semantic differentiation across these clusters, with each topic characterized by distinctive terminological patterns that reflect specialized areas of inquiry within legal translation studies (Figure 3). The computational topic modeling results, validated through expert interpretation, converged on six major research domains that collectively encompass

the theoretical, methodological, pedagogical, technological, and practical dimensions of legal translation scholarship. These topics represent not isolated research domains but interconnected areas of investigation that together constitute the multifaceted nature of contemporary legal translation studies. The following subsections examine each of these major topics, analyzing how they have evolved, their current theoretical foundations, and their contributions to advancing understanding of legal translation as both an academic discipline and professional practice.

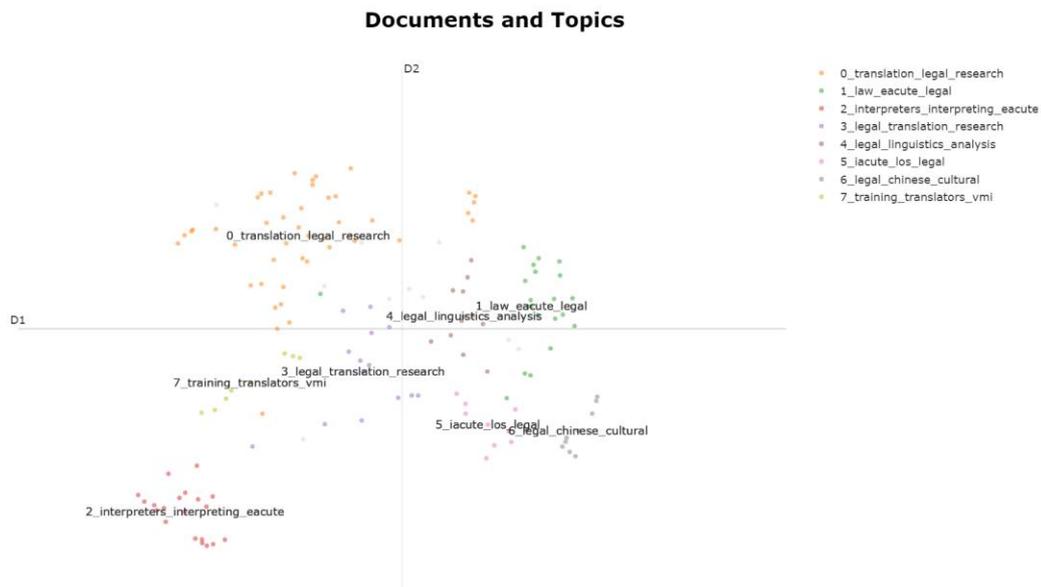


Fig.2: BERTopic documents and topics

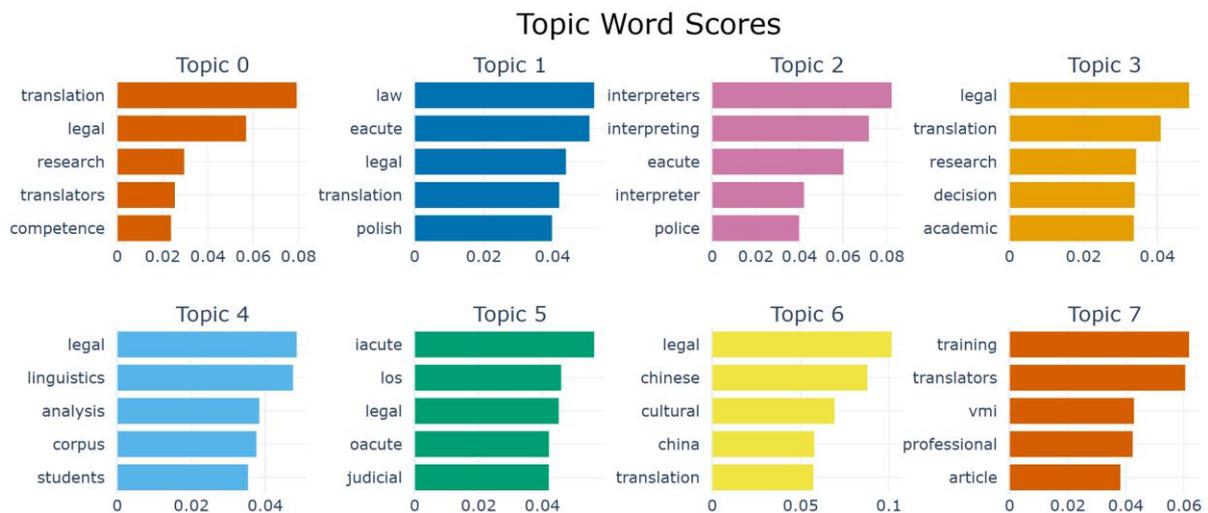


Fig.3: BERTopic topic word scores

#### 4.1 Theoretical foundations and methodological approaches

The theoretical landscape of legal translation has evolved significantly, with scholars increasingly adopting interdisciplinary approaches that bridge translation studies, comparative law, and sociolinguistics. Recent research demonstrates a clear methodological shift from predominantly qualitative to quantitative approaches, with corpus-based methods emerging as the dominant research paradigm (L. Biel & Engberg, 2013). This transformation reflects the field’s maturation and its

growing emphasis on empirical evidence to support theoretical claims about legal translation phenomena.

Corpus linguistics has proven particularly valuable for examining both local phenomena, such as terminological patterns and phraseological units, and global characteristics of legal genres and discourse structures (Prieto Ramos & Cerutti, 2023; Seracini, 2021). The application of corpus methods has enabled researchers to identify systematic patterns in legal translation that were previously difficult to detect through traditional qualitative analysis. For instance, studies have revealed how translated EU legal texts exhibit distinct linguistic

features that differentiate them from non-translated national legal texts (Bajčić & Dobrić Basanež, 2021), demonstrating the emergence of what scholars term “Eurolects” - supranational varieties of legal language shaped by translation processes (Ł. Biel, 2023).

The integration of comparative law methodologies has enriched theoretical understanding by providing frameworks for analyzing how legal concepts transfer across different legal systems (Jopek-Bosiacka, 2013; Simonnæs, 2013). This interdisciplinary approach recognizes that legal translation is not merely interlingual transfer but also involves translation between legal systems with different conceptual foundations. The theoretical framework of legal transplants has proven particularly relevant, as it illuminates how legal concepts migrate across jurisdictions through translation processes (Kusik, 2025; Wang, 2010).

Sociological approaches have also gained prominence, with researchers applying Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus and capital to understand the professional dynamics and power relations within legal translation practice (Monzó-Nebot, 2021; Vidal Claramonte, 2013). These theoretical frameworks have revealed how translators’ professional identities and decision-making processes are shaped by their position within the legal and translation fields, challenging traditional notions of translator neutrality and invisibility.

#### **4.2 Competence development and training**

The cultivation of legal translation competence has emerged as a central concern in the literature, with researchers working to define the specific knowledge, skills, and competencies requisite for effective practice in this specialized domain. Multi-componential models of translation competence have been adapted to address the unique requirements of legal translation, incorporating elements such as comparative legal knowledge, institutional awareness, and cultural competence alongside traditional linguistic and translation skills (Prieto Ramos, 2024).

Recent studies have emphasized the importance of thematic competence, defined as specialized knowledge of legal systems, procedures,

and concepts, as a fundamental component of legal translation competence (Lesznyák et al., 2024; Soriano Barabino, 2023). However, research has also revealed significant challenges in developing this competence, particularly given the diversity of legal systems and the complexity of legal concepts. Studies examining translation training programs have identified substantial variation in how legal knowledge is incorporated into curricula, with many programs lacking systematic approaches to developing students’ understanding of legal systems and comparative law (Solová, 2015).

Pedagogical research has explored various strategies to developing legal translation competence, including the use of authentic materials, collaborative learning methods, and technology-enhanced instruction. Corpus-based training approaches have shown particular promise, enabling students to identify textual patterns and conventions in legal discourse while developing their ability to produce functionally appropriate translations (Ł. Biel, 2017; Nebot, 2008). Task-based learning methodologies have also proven effective, allowing students to engage with realistic translation scenarios while developing both linguistic and extra-linguistic competences (Orozco-Jutorán, 2024; Rodríguez-Castro & Sullivan, 2015). Assessment of legal translation competence remains a significant challenge, with researchers highlighting the limitations of traditional error-based evaluation methods when applied to legal texts (Phelan, 2017). Studies have revealed substantial inter-rater variability in assessment, suggesting the need for more sophisticated evaluation frameworks that account for the functional and communicative dimensions of legal translation rather than focusing solely on linguistic accuracy.

The relationship between formal training and professional competence has been examined through studies of practicing legal translators, revealing complex patterns in how educational background, specialization, and experience contribute to translation quality (Prieto Ramos & Guzmán, 2024). While specialized legal translation training provides clear advantages, experience and subject-matter knowledge can partially compensate for training deficits, highlighting the importance of continuing professional development in this field.

### 4.3 Technology integration and machine translation

The incorporation of technology into legal translation practice has brought about substantial changes the field, with machine translation (MT) emerging as both an opportunity and a challenge for legal translators. Research examining the application of MT to legal texts has revealed both the potential benefits and significant limitations of current systems when dealing with the complexity and precision requirements of legal discourse (Killman, 2024; Ramírez Rodríguez, 2025).

Studies evaluating MT performance on legal texts have consistently shown that while general-domain MT systems have achieved remarkable improvements, legal translation presents unique challenges that current technology struggles to address adequately (Aldosari & Altuwaresh, 2025; Kit & Tak, 2008). The highly specialized terminology, complex syntactic structures, and system-specific concepts that characterize legal texts create particular difficulties for MT systems, often resulting in translations that lack the precision and reliability required for legal purposes. However, research has also identified promising applications of MT in legal translation workflows, particularly in post-editing scenarios where human translators work with machine-generated drafts (Quinci, 2024). The effectiveness of this approach depends heavily on translator competence and the quality of the initial MT output, with experienced legal translators better able to identify and correct MT errors while maintaining efficiency gains.

Prompt engineering has emerged as a significant area of research, with studies exploring how carefully designed prompts can improve MT output quality for legal texts (Aldosari & Altuwaresh, 2025). This research has shown that incorporating translation brief information and domain-specific instructions can significantly enhance MT performance, suggesting potential pathways for improving technology-assisted legal translation. The pedagogical implications of MT integration have also received attention, with researchers exploring how translation training programs should adapt to prepare students for technology-enhanced practice environments (Li et al., 2023).

### 4.4 Legal interpreting in court and police settings

Legal interpreting represents a foundational component of legal translation studies, with research demonstrating the complex challenges interpreters face when mediating communication across linguistic and cultural boundaries in high-stakes legal contexts. The field has witnessed increasing attention to the quality and professionalization of interpreting services, particularly in criminal proceedings. The European Union's Directive 2010/64/EU has served as a catalyst for professionalizing legal interpreting across member states, though implementation varies significantly depending on national contexts and language needs. Research comparing Belgium and Hungary reveals that different EU countries adopt divergent approaches to establishing legal status, official registers, codes of conduct, training certification, and remuneration systems for legal interpreters (Balogh & Eszenyi, 2025). This regulatory fragmentation highlights ongoing challenges in standardizing interpreter qualifications across jurisdictions, despite shared commitments to ensuring defendants' rights to interpretation.

The courtroom setting presents unique challenges for interpreters who must navigate complex power dynamics while maintaining professional neutrality. Studies examining interpreter-facilitated discourse in district courts demonstrate that interpreters are often tacitly imbued with considerable power, which they exercise through speech acts including "questioning, scolding, and persuading" designed to regulate the communicative conduct of non-professional court participants (Campbell & Obeng, 2024). This generates essential inquiries regarding interpreter impartiality and professionalism, as such interventions may impinge on litigants' liberty and their ability to interact with judicial institutions according to their preferred methods of communication. The tension between facilitating efficient proceedings and preserving defendants' autonomy remains a persistent ethical dilemma. Furthermore, research on procedural justice in interpreter-mediated interviews reveals that interpreters' presence, behavior, and interpreting decisions can undermine equitable treatment during

these encounters, even as they simultaneously enable communication between police and non-English speakers (Howes, 2019).

Research on interpreting quality has increasingly employed experimental methodologies to assess performance across different modalities and language pairs. A notable study involving 70 interpreters working with Arabic, Mandarin, and Spanish in simulated police interviews found that simultaneous interpreting mode produced better results than consecutive interpreting, regardless of language, particularly for precision in stylistic elements, effectiveness of conversational rapport indicators, and adherence to established interpretation procedures (Hale et al., 2022). This challenges conventional assumptions about consecutive interpreting superiority in legal settings. However, quality extends beyond modal considerations to encompass pragmatic competence, particularly in rendering offensive, profane, or vulgar language. Research demonstrates that experienced qualified interpreters maintain higher levels of pragmatic equivalence when interpreting offensive language, whereas less experienced interpreters tend to tone down or omit such content to protect hearers or save face (Hale et al., 2020). The capacity to accurately convey the intention and effect of source language utterances while achieving equivalent impact in the target language emerges as a critical competence marker. Additionally, studies examining discourse markers in interpreter-mediated police interviews reveal how pragmatic alterations in interpreters' linguistic outputs affect contemporary police interviewing techniques, with substantive pragmatic interference potentially disempowering interviewees (Gallai, 2017). These findings collectively emphasize the necessity of developing interpreters' pragmatic competence alongside linguistic skills, while also educating legal professionals about interpreting complexities.

The accessibility of interpreter training remains a significant barrier to professionalization, particularly for interpreters from new and emerging language backgrounds who lack access to university or vocational programs. A pilot project in Australia operationalizing mentorship standards for under-trained or untrained interpreters demonstrated the potential applicability and utility of structured

professional development combined with ongoing mentorship (Lai & Gonzalez, 2025). The two-stage approach that comprised tailored professional development courses followed by sustained mentorship showed promise for improving interpreter competence in court and tribunal settings. However, the viability of such initiatives requires substantial organizational resources and financial support from judicial systems and relevant parties, as well as reconceptualizing interpreter employment models. Similarly, research examining language service providers in Australia reveals an uneven pattern of capacity-building initiatives, with some agencies undertaking trainer roles not historically expected of them, particularly for Aboriginal and new and emerging languages (Stern & Liu, 2019). Although the scope of such endeavors remains limited and aspirational in many cases, they represent important steps toward addressing training gaps that formal education systems have not filled.

#### **4.5 Translation of culturally-embedded legal Concepts**

The translation of legal concepts deeply rooted in cultural contexts represents one of the most theoretically and practically challenging areas of legal translation, fundamentally involving questions of conceptual equivalence, untranslatability, and the relationship between legal systems and linguistic representation. Research examining the translation of *mahr*, the obligatory financial gift in Islamic marriage, into Polish demonstrates how culturally-specific legal concepts lacking direct linguistic equivalents pose significant challenges (Bieganowska, 2025). Analysis of academic texts and public discourse reveals a prevailing dependence on lexical borrowing accompanied by diverse modification strategies, though recurrent translation errors that conflate *mahr* with traditional Polish matrimonial frameworks underscore potential hazards of semantic misrepresentation. This investigation contends that foreignization approaches, characterized by maintaining *mahr* in its source language form while providing explanatory contextualization, most effectively safeguards juridical and cultural authenticity, thereby enriching wider scholarly conversations regarding the cross-disciplinary methodologies essential for rendering

culture-bound legal terminology within the progressively interconnected global landscape. This case exemplifies how translation strategies must navigate competing demands for accessibility and accuracy while respecting source culture legal frameworks.

The challenge of conceptual incommensurability across legal systems extends beyond specific terminology to encompass fundamental disparities in how legal concepts are epistemically embedded within different legal cultures. Examining equivalence of substantive law concepts between common law and civil law jurisdictions reveals that conceptual understanding depends on familiarity with particular legal systems, creating barriers when communicative events span disparate legal cultures (Wilson, 2023). From a semiotic perspective, legal concepts constitute elements of tripartite meaning constructs derived from specific legal systems, making effective communication dependent on unity of meaning that may be disrupted when participants' legal-cultural backgrounds differ fundamentally. This theoretical framework highlights how translation of legal concepts involves not merely linguistic transfer but rather complex processes of negotiating conceptual frameworks, with potential impacts on court proceedings and legal service provision. The functional methodology employed in comparative law aligns closely with the principles of the functional approach advocated in legal translation. Both methodologies are designed to address discrepancies in terminology and facilitate the accurate transmission of intended meaning across diverse legal systems.

Historical cases of legal concept translation illuminate how political, cultural, and power dynamics influence translation strategies and outcomes. Research examining Yan Fu's Chinese translation of "natural law" in Montesquieu's *The Spirit of Laws* demonstrates how translators reinterpret Western legal concepts from religious and ethical dimensions, establishing dynamic dialogues between different legal-cultural systems (Zhuang, 2024). This historical case reveals how legal translation serves as a site for negotiating cultural identity and philosophical traditions, with translators' lexical choices reflecting broader societal needs for cultural exchange while maintaining

distinctive interpretive frameworks. Similarly, examination of legal concept translation in colonial contexts, such as the translation of Western law into late Ming and early Qing China, reveals how textual difficulties and political forces shape intellectual engagement between legal traditions (Zhang et al., 2024). These historical analyses demonstrate that legal translation has long functioned as a mechanism for legal transplantation and cultural transformation, with translators serving as crucial mediators in processes of legal modernization and cross-cultural legal development.

Contemporary manifestations of conceptual translation challenges appear in various contexts, from international criminal law to indigenous rights litigation. The translation of "genocide" in Cambodia as *prolai pouch-sas* illustrates how a single legal term can acquire double meanings appearing in different political and legal settings, with authoritarian translations differing from international legal interpretations yet resonating with population experiences (Emde & Keo, 2025). The duplicity becomes part of contestations between liberal and illiberal approaches to peacebuilding and transitional justice, highlighting how translation choices carry significant political implications. Research examining indigenous territorial ontology translation in Mexican legal proceedings reveals challenges and limits of judicial knowledge when disputing different rationalities and epistemologies regarding territory, grievances, and rights within legal spaces (Bravo Espinosa & Sierra Camacho, 2024). Cultural and legal translation of indigenous knowledge through anthropological expert reports enables non-Western legal knowledge production in judicial fields, though with varying success in achieving meaningful dialogue across epistemological frameworks. These cases collectively demonstrate that translating culturally-embedded legal concepts necessarily involves engaging with power relations, competing epistemologies, and the politics of recognition.

#### **4.6 Legal translation in institutional and multilingual settings**

Institutional legal translation, particularly in international and supranational organizations, presents unique challenges stemming from multilingual legal frameworks, multiple authentic language versions, and the need to ensure uniform

interpretation across linguistic boundaries. Research mapping multilingual text production at the EU, UN, and WTO reveals interconnected textual genres performing law-making, monitoring, and adjudicative functions, with significant interinstitutional variation reflecting each legal order's features (Prieto Ramos & Guzmán, 2021). The EU demonstrates prominence of hard lawmaking with high proportions of drafts and input documents, while the UN and WTO show larger translation volumes in monitoring procedures. The systematic mapping provides empirical foundations for analyzing legal translation practices in international settings and informing translator training and quality management approaches tailored to institutional specificities.

The European Union's multilingual legal framework, with its principle of equal authenticity across 24 official languages, represents perhaps the most ambitious multilingual legislative project globally, generating substantial research attention. Studies examining EU legal translation reveal fundamental tensions between aspirations toward uniform interpretation and practical challenges of reconciling 28 member states' legal systems into coherent law (Čavoški, 2017; Jopek-Bosiacka, 2013). Selecting English as the source language for translating European Union legislation introduces significant challenges, particularly in harmonizing the distinct characteristics of civil law systems with those rooted in common law traditions. Furthermore, the task becomes increasingly complex when addressing the translation of terminology and technical language unique to the EU's legal framework and institutional context. Research on the evolution of Polish Eurolect demonstrates how institutional translation creates hybrid legal languages that become increasingly standardized yet maintain distance from national legal usage (Ł. Biel, 2023). The Eurolect shows better alignment with national legal variety in its mature post-accession stage, particularly for genre markers, though fossilization of some patterns contributes to ongoing hybridity. These dynamics illustrate how institutional multilingualism generates new linguistic varieties that mediate between supranational and national legal frameworks.

Terminology management emerges as a crucial quality assurance element in institutional legal translation, with dedicated terminological databases serving as essential resources for translators. Research examining institutional translators' use of resources reveals that specialized knowledge of legal sources constitutes a competence marker, with translators prioritizing monolingual lexicographic tools over bilingual alternatives and regarding primary legal documents as more dependable compared to institutional terminology databases or prior translation outputs (Prieto Ramos, 2021). These patterns confirm specialization indicators while highlighting terminological database limitations for ensuring legal accuracy. Comprehensive quality assurance frameworks for multilingual legal terminological databases must address workflow, product, and staff levels, considering persons, processes, products, services, and dedicated tools (Chiocchetti et al., 2017). However, even well-designed terminological databases cannot fully address conceptual challenges arising from legal system differences, requiring translators to engage in comparative legal analysis alongside terminological research.

The role of translation in multilingual lawmaking processes, particularly co-drafting practices, has received growing research attention. Historical analysis reveals that sophisticated multilingual legislative drafting existed in Switzerland decades before Canadian co-drafting practices typically cited as the origin of such methods (Dullion, 2023). The legislative framework within Switzerland characteristically encompasses collaborative multilingual endeavors conducted in both German and French languages, with political factors contributing to Italian integration as the third official language. Understanding this historical precedent contributes to critical approaches recognizing that contemporary co-drafting concepts emerged in specific historical and political contexts rather than representing universally applicable best practices. Research examining foreignizing versus domesticating strategies in EU legislative text translation finds evidence of mixed approaches, with foreignization particularly visible in nominalization overuse and abbreviation translation (Bajčić & Dobrić Basaneže, 2021). These findings challenge assertions

that normative text translation should be primarily foreignizing to express legislative intention, revealing complex strategic choices translators make in institutional multilingual contexts.

## V. CONCLUSION

This integrative literature review has revealed that legal translation has evolved from a peripheral concern within translation studies to a sophisticated field of inquiry characterized by theoretical complexity, methodological diversity, and significant practical implications. The systematic analysis demonstrates how the field has matured through the integration of corpus linguistics methodologies, comparative legal frameworks, and interdisciplinary approaches that bridge translation studies, law, and sociolinguistics. The six major thematic clusters identified through computational topic modeling collectively illustrate the multifaceted nature of legal translation as both an academic discipline and professional practice. However, this review also exposes persistent gaps in the literature, particularly regarding the theoretical reconciliation of competing translation strategies, the development of comprehensive quality assessment frameworks that extend beyond linguistic accuracy, and the need for more comprehensive understanding of how power dynamics and ideological considerations shape translation decisions in legal contexts.

The exponential growth in research output reflects the field's increasing recognition as essential infrastructure for global legal cooperation, yet this expansion has not been accompanied by corresponding theoretical consolidation or methodological standardization. While technological advances, particularly in machine translation and corpus-based analysis, have provided new tools for both research and practice, fundamental questions about translator agency, cultural mediation, and the politics of legal knowledge transfer remain underexplored. The dominance of linguistic perspectives in the literature, while providing valuable insights into terminological and discourse-level phenomena, has arguably limited engagement with broader questions about law's relationship to language, culture, and power that are central to understanding legal translation's role in

contemporary multilingual legal systems. Future research should prioritize theoretical integration across disciplinary boundaries, develop more sophisticated models of legal translation competence that account for cultural and institutional literacies, and examine how legal translation practices both reflect and constitute relations of power in an increasingly interconnected but legally fragmented world.

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