



Dictionary Review

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Spanish-English Dictionary of Law and Business 2nd Edition, Revised, Corrected, and Expanded

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The very much awaited second edition of Thomas West's *Spanish-English Dictionary of Law and Business* has been received with open arms and excitement. As with the first edition, this dictionary fills many needs when translating from Spanish into English. In his preface, West mentions that he saw the need for a new edition because important laws in many Spanish-speaking jurisdictions have been replaced since the publication of his first dictionary of law and business. The new edition also includes legal language used in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, making this the first bilingual law dictionary, to my knowledge at least, to incorporate this language region.

Unlike the previous version of this dictionary, the second edition is available only as a soft-cover. However, it is printed on very good quality paper. The font has been reduced, but the type is very clear and makes up for the reduction in size. (Initially, I longed for the larger font, but there is nothing a good pair of glasses cannot solve.) Looking up terms does not present a problem since entries are listed alphabetically. The entry indicates where the term is used, although this does not necessarily mean that the term is used exclusively in that country.

Content

While at first glance there appear to be filler words that can be found easily in many other dictionaries, the reader will appreciate the breadth and scope of the definitions West offers for these supposed "filler" items. Definitions will always be extremely helpful in aiding the translator to understand the document being translated, and the information contained here really sets the entries apart from what can be found in many other sources. Here are two examples of the types of defini-

tions offered for what one would initially think of as filler words.

padre father

padre adoptante/adoptivo adoptive parent (SYN) *arrogador Bol, padre adoptivo padre putativo* putative father

Padres de la Constitución framers of the Constitution, Founding Father (SYN) *poder constituyente, autores de la Constitución Pue*

juez judge (DEF) Spanish – language documents often refer to *el juez*, where the English-language document would refer to "the court."

The second term above seems like one of those that would be really easy to find anywhere, but in West's dictionary it is followed by a listing of 81 different types of judges in Spanish-speaking countries followed by the corresponding term in English! At the risk of being repetitive, I find these entries extremely useful, especially since the mention of special judges is very common in legal documents and it can be difficult to establish the English equivalent.

To highlight the detail and thought placed in this reference work, I will mention that there are four pages dedicated to the term *derecho* (law, rights) and its modifiers, as well as for the term *bien/bienes* (property). Another term that might initially seem easy to find in any dictionary, *deuda* (debt), includes 51 specific kinds of debt after the initial entry. And those are not the only terms that have been defined extensively.

Here is another example of the valuable information to be found in the definitions West provides in this dictionary.

obligación de medios best efforts obligation (DEF) An obligation to use one's best efforts to achieve the purpose of the contract as opposed to an *obligación de resultados*. For example, attorneys have an *obligación de medios* when they represent clients, not an *obligación de resultados*. In other words, they must do their best to represent their clients, but are not obligated to win the case for them. (SYN) *obligación de actividad*.

Without the definition, you would tend to doubt the translation even though you might go with the term. With it, a translator can see how it applies to the document at hand.

Also very helpful are the examples of usage in which you see the term or phrase in context together with the English translation. For example:

en rebeldía in default (*De no concurrir el actor o el demandado a la audiencia de conciliación, se procesará en rebeldía*. If the plaintiff or the defendant fails to attend the settlement hearing, a default judgment will be entered.)

There were no obvious typographical errors found in this dictionary. It is a very thorough and well thought out collection of terminology found in legal and business documents from Latin America and Spain. The addition of terms from Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic is welcome. As pointed out by West in the preface, the legal Spanish used in those jurisdictions is often a literal translation—from the English in the case of Puerto Rico, and from the French in the case of the Dominican Republic—making translation more challenging.

This edition does not include an English into Spanish section, which is a resource I miss. Of course, if you have a vague idea of what the term could be, you can always check if there is something similar in the Spanish section to see if that might lead you down the right path.

Overall Evaluation

In spite of the fact that this is a dictionary intended for reference, I find that it is also entertaining to read. I consider it to be much more than just a reference in which to look for an elusive term. This work becomes a learning tool when you go through it

page by page and find many terms that can increase your legal and business vocabulary, whether translating or interpreting. Overall, I consider this to be an excellent dictionary and a must for any translator or interpreter specializing in legal and business documents from Spanish into English.

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