

Billions and trillions in U.S. Spanish

New York, NY - August 10, 2020 - The Research Institute of United States Spanish (RIUSS) calls on the country's Spanish-language media to use the terms approved by the Real Academia Española (RAE) and the Academia Norteamericana de la Lengua Española (ANLE) regarding the translations of "billion" and "trillion." These terms are again prominent in the government's economic relief messages to taxpayers due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Correct translations included in the DLE

Since 2012, eight years ago, the Diccionario de la Lengua Española (RAE.ES) included these two entries in its lexicon (our translation into English):

billón

Del fr. *billion*, de *bi-* 'bi-' y la t. de *million* 'millón'.

1. m. Un millón de millones, que se expresa por la unidad seguida de doce ceros.
2. m. EE. UU. Mil millones, que se expresa por la unidad seguida de nueve ceros.

trillón

Del fr. *trillion*, de *tri-* 'tri-' y la t. de *million* 'millón'.

1. m. Un millón de billones, que se expresa por la unidad seguida de 18 ceros.
2. m. EE. UU. Un millón de millones, que se expresa por la unidad seguida de doce ceros

Background

This standard was recommended and validated by the North American Academy of the Spanish Language (ANLE) in an urgent consultation with the U.S. government in 2009. The problem arose because the traditional translation of "trillion" is "billón," and it was determined that the best way to avoid confusion was to trace the English terms.

The Academy recognized that "billón" and "trillón" are part of the common vocabulary in use in the United States and assigned a second meaning to both words with the geographical mark "EE.UU." (USA), thus incorporating these two words that are calques of the English ("estadounidismos") and are still not recognized by the Spanish-language media. In addition, the standard was registered and published on digital.gov, a government website focused on improving online information services in Spanish. However, translations for Spanish-speakers in the United States today still respond to linguistic approaches of the international Hispanic standard, at the expense of the reality of the Spanish language in this country.

RIUSS published its first bilingual statement on this topic: [Trillions for Anglos and Billions for Hispanics?](#)

Examples

Examples of terminology used in some Spanish-speaking media that ignore or are unaware of the RAE, ANLE and the government's own standard for U.S. Spanish can be found here:

[Telemundo](#) - [El Diario](#) - [Univision](#) - [La Opinión](#)- [Chicago Tribune](#) - [El Nuevo Herald](#)

RIUSS and "estadounidismos"

Founded in 2015 and based in New York, the Research Institute of United States Spanish, Inc. (RIUSS), aims to consolidate the linguistic identity of Spanish speakers in the United States through the study of written and formal uses of the language. In 2012, the Real Academia de la Lengua Española (RAE) incorporated the word "[estadounidismo](#)" into its dictionary, thus recognizing that U.S. Spanish has its own identity at the same level of other Spanish-speaking countries.