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SOME INSIGHTS INTO THE TEACHING OF TRANSLATION

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the last few years the field of translation has gone through three major changes. First, an emphasis has been placed on the translation problems that go beyond the word and the sentence levels, that is, as in the general linguistic domain, attention has been paid mainly to translation in connection with suprasentential units of analysis. Secondly, translation has ceased to be regarded exclusively as a simple transfer of information from one language to another. Translation is not seen only as a textual operation; it is not simply a matter of isolated words. It is at present seen as an intercultural and communicative act. It is a cross-cultural event as it is quite clear that there are more factors intervening in the translation process than the inherently linguistic ones. This in fact has been considered as a "top-down" approach (Neubert and Shreve 1992) since now attention is devoted to the function and relevance of words and sentences within the text. Thirdly, Translation Studies have tried hard to become an autonomous and well-organised empirical science, with its own objectives and methodology, and independent of Linguistic Theory. In this direction, Toury (1995: 9-10), following Holmes (1970), makes a distinction between pure and applied translation; the former divided in its turn into two components: theoretical and descriptive. Moreover, translation is now conceived from the perspective of the target culture and the traditional conception of 'equivalence' as an instrument of linguistic transference is questioned. There is not only one possible translation for a given text but several and the existence of several types of equivalence should be accounted for: communicative, stylistic, structural, formal, pragmatic, semantic and textual (Rabadán 1991).

Moreover, nobody questions the importance of translation in the current world; without translators several fields such as art, politics, science, trade

would be highly constrained; moreover, exchanges and contacts between and across the different countries, communities and cultures in our planet are becoming more and more frequent. This is specially true for Spain: the consolidation of Translation Studies in Spain was favoured by Spain's joining the European Union and by its full incorporation into NATO, as well as by the creation of a network of Schools of Languages (*Escuelas Oficiales de Idiomas*) and the setting up of a series of Faculties of Translation. However, translation and interpreting were not recognised as an independent area of research until 1991 (Lonsdale 1996).

Furthermore, it should also be pointed out that the concept and role of translation in foreign language teaching have changed considerably in the last few decades. First, there was a reaction to the Grammar-Translation Method, which based its teaching methodology exclusively on grammar and translation exercises, and as a result translation was completely banned from the language teaching field. Later methods, such as the so-called structural or audio-lingual, did not greatly alter this previous trend. Nevertheless, in the last few years with the advent of the Communicative and the Task-based approaches, translation has been regarded as one of the many useful exercises and tools the teacher can use in the classroom. According to Zaro (1997), translation has become a strategy or procedure in the foreign language teaching and learning processes. Second language acquisition research has shown the importance of translation as a type of cognitive strategy students resort to in their study of the second language (Oxford 1989; O'Malley and Chamot 1990). Thus Oxford classifies it as a cognitive strategy within the general heading of "analysing and reasoning." In her view,

Translating can be a helpful strategy early in language learning, as long as it is used with care. It allows learners to use their own language as the basis for understanding what they hear or read in the new language. It also helps learners produce the new language in speech or writing (1989: 84).

In spite of the emergence of translation studies in our country and their new role in the realm of foreign language teaching, there seems not to have been enough concern with the actual didactics of translation. For some time a sort of contrastive approach has been adopted, quite limiting and constraining in nature as it only accounts for a few aspects of the translation process (Porter 1984; Parkinson de Saz 1984). However, it is also true that in the last few years interesting proposals have been put forward both in Spain (Lonsdale 1996; Mott 1996) and elsewhere (Duff 1989; Grellet 1991).

2. AIMS

The present paper aims to make a simple contribution to the teaching of translation along those lines and proposes a creative and communicative teaching of it. The principles and activities here presented form part of the material used in an optional course on translation offered to English Philology students of the first cycle at the University of Santiago. One should mention at the outstart that in this course translation is not regarded as an end in itself but as a means to improve and consolidate the students' command of the English language. The course thus differs from courses addressed to professional translators where translation constitutes an end in itself.

Three different types of sample activities are presented: a) exercises devised to make students aware of the communicative value of translation, b) tasks in which learners reflect upon the translation process and are provided tips to develop and improve translation work, and finally, c) activities conceived to make students aware of the importance of cultural and pragmatic differences found at times in the practice of translation, and designed to provide general guidelines on how to cope with them.

3. ACTIVITIES PROPOSED

3.1 FILM TITLES

3.1.1. Objectives:

– Direct and indirect translation skills practice. The translation of titles and film subtitles: factors to be considered. It is extremely important that students should understand the communicative value involved in a piece of translation.

– Expand students' vocabulary and reinforce their grammar.

3.1.2. Level: Intermediate/Advanced

3.1.3. In class

a. Students are first given a list of film titles organised in two columns, one in English and the other in L1. (See worksheet 1.)

b. In pairs, they are then asked to match the corresponding titles.

3.1.6. Worksheet 3

Here are some of the titles and translations provided by the students in our group.

TITLE IN LI	TRANSLATION PROPOSED	STUDENT'S NAME
<i>El día de la bestia</i>	<i>The Day of the Beast</i>	A.R.M.
<i>El amor tiene dos caras</i>	<i>The two faces of love</i>	M.R.V.
<i>El amor perjudica seriamente su salud</i>	<i>Love is a disease</i>	B.M.V.
<i>Los peores años de nuestras vidas</i>	<i>Young people, love and sex</i>	J.M.S.R.
<i>Libertarias</i>	<i>Brave women</i>	E.P.Q.
<i>Tesis</i>	<i>Thesis</i>	M.R.C.
<i>Boca a boca</i>	<i>Mouth to Mouth</i>	S.M.M.
<i>Cruzando la oscuridad</i>	<i>Crossing Darkness</i>	M.C.T.D.
<i>Volver a empezar</i>	<i>A New Beginning</i>	E.R.M.
<i>Airbag</i>	<i>Airbag</i>	J.S.M.
<i>Tacones lejanos</i>	<i>Distant Heels</i>	A.B.N.N.
<i>Jamón, Jamón</i>	<i>Ham, Ham</i>	L.M.P.H.
<i>Nadie hablará de nosotros cuando estemos muertos</i>	<i>Death silences everyone</i>	J.C.P.A.
<i>El bosque animado</i>	<i>Soul in Torment</i>	A.P.N.
<i>La mano negra</i>	<i>The Black Hand</i>	M.N.C.
<i>La flor de mis secretos</i>	<i>My Secret Flower</i>	A.B.N.N.
<i>Escondido en la memoria</i>	<i>Hidden in the memory</i>	M.C.T.D.
<i>El avión del presidente</i>	<i>Air Force One</i>	S.R.A.
<i>Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios</i>	<i>Mad Girls</i>	I.C.R.
<i>Todos los hombres sois iguales</i>	<i>* Every man are the same</i>	I.C.R.
<i>El amor perjudica seriamente la salud</i>	<i>Love is bad</i>	A.B.F.G.
<i>El efecto mariposa</i>	<i>The magic of the butterfly</i>	M.F.C.
<i>El amor perjudica seriamente la salud</i>	<i>* Love damage seriously the health</i>	M.G.O.
<i>Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios</i>	<i>* Women on the verge of a nervous' attack</i>	M.J.L.G.
<i>Tacones lejanos</i>	<i>Far high-heeled shoes</i>	M.J.L.G.
<i>El día de la bestia</i>	<i>The Antichrist's Day</i>	D.L.C.
<i>Brujas</i>	<i>Witches</i>	B.P.L.

3.1.7. Worksheet 4

COMMENTS AND TASKS:

- a. * Means that there is something wrong and that it should be corrected.
- b. Find a film which has been given more than one translation and explain which one of them is the most suitable in your opinion.
- c. "Airbag" is the title of a Spanish film. No translation has been provided for it. How do you feel about using English words for Spanish film titles? Is it positive, negative?
- d. List at least five words that have been directly borrowed from English into Galician/Catalan/Basque/Spanish.
- e. Make up a list of five words that occur in the English versions and that you were not familiar with. Provide their meaning.
- f. Choose from the list one of the films you have already watched and explain in three lines what it is about.

3.2. ACTIVITIES WHERE LEARNERS REFLECT UPON THE PROCESS OF TRANSLATION

3.2.1. Objectives

- To make learners reflect upon the process of translation and upon the skills involved in it.
- To provide students with a series of general guidelines on how to set about translating a text.
- To promote and develop student autonomy in the learning of translation skills.

3.2.2. In class

- a. The teacher explains to the students that in today's session they are all going to reflect upon the process of translation and the skills involved in it.
- b. The teacher then asks the students to discuss in pairs what translation means for them. What does the process of translation consist of? Is it just a

simple transfer of information from one language to another? What factors and variables are present in it? This is followed by a general discussion.

c. The teacher now gives out the first part of a questionnaire for the students to read. (See worksheet 1.)

d. Students fill in the questionnaire.

e. This is followed by a general class discussion.

f. The teacher then hands out the second part of the questionnaire and asks them to read it and fill it in. (See worksheet 2.)

g. General class discussion followed by a summing-up. The teacher lists general conclusions on the board

3.2.3. Worksheet 5

THIS ACTIVITY IS INTENDED TO MAKE YOU REFLECT UPON THE PROCESS OF TRANSLATION AND UPON THE SKILLS INVOLVED IN IT. ANSWER THE QUESTIONS AS CAREFULLY AS POSSIBLE. IN SOME CASES THEY ARE RELATIVELY OPEN QUESTIONS SO THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS.

A. Here is a list of strategies that you may use when carrying out a translation. Read them carefully and be prepared to discuss them with your teacher and with the whole class.

1. Read the title (and the subtitle) of the text and try to predict its content, that is, quickly call to mind anything you may know about the subject.
2. Glance at the text to get an idea of the subject matter.
3. Read the text through from beginning to end.
4. Try to guess where the text has come from (newspaper, magazine, book, leaflet, brochure); this will help you to determine the medium of expression used (written/spoken language), its format (letter, article, literary text, cooking recipe, journalistic text, advertisement, etc), tone (formal, neutral, informal, colloquial, slangy) and style (use of long/short sentences, concise, long-winded, etc) as well as the author's purpose.
5. If you come across any unknown words, try to work out their meaning from context clues. Do not get stuck with one word or expression.

B. What are your strategies for doing translations? Try to add new ones to those listed above.

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.....

.....

C. What pitfalls do you fear as a translator? Choose five from the following list and arrange them in order of importance. You may add other of your own.

1. Wrong word-order
 2. Too literal a translation
 3. Too liberal a translation
 4. Inappropriate vocabulary
 5. Overly long sentences
 6. Lack of ease with colloquialisms
 7. Grammatical errors (which?)
 8. Unnatural sounding English
 9. Difficulties in conveying the right or complete meaning
 10. A line-by-line or word-by-word translation instead of one based on the sentence or paragraph as a whole.
 11. Problems with interpreting parts of the translation. Is the author really trying to say this?
-
-
-

3.2.4. Worksheet 6

A. HERE ARE SOME TIPS TO HELP YOU IMPROVE YOUR WORK. WHICH DO YOU CONSIDER MOST HELPFUL? CAN YOU ADD ANY OTHERS TO THE FOLLOWING LIST?

- a. Work with good dictionaries (mono- and bilingual). They are a worthwhile investment. You should also consider using bilingual glossaries with word distinctions (e.g. *Cambridge Word Selector*) and a grammar.
- b. Keep a word and expression bank under subject headings. Make a note of items you have picked up while reading English-language texts or going over translations in class. For example, you may decide on a vocabu-

lary bank relating to different ways of cooking food, from the most general to the most particular (*cook, boil, simmer, fry, bake, roast, barbecue, etc.*).

c. Record the subtitled English language films which are broadcast late on weekdays and particularly on Saturday on *TVG, La 2* and other television channels. Then pay close attention to how the dialogues have been translated and when you are not sure about something, check it with your teacher or in a dictionary/grammar.

d. Read and compare bilingual texts, such as

- Penguin Bilingual Readers,
- the *Iberia* magazine (from their local office),
- Spanish/Galician/Catalan/Basque translations of books you already own in English,
- tourist information leaflets and brochures; and—
- multilingual labels on food, beauty products, instructions on electronic devices, etc.

Remember to be critical. The translations you pick up may be badly done. However, you can learn a lot from both good and poor-quality work.

e. Keep record sheets with sentences or phrases containing the mistakes you commonly make as well as their correct translation. For instance, you may want to record how the word order changes in certain texts.

f. Pay close attention to false friends or words which have a different meaning in English. E.g. *actual* in English means *real* while in Spanish it means *current, present-day*.

g. When you are not completely sure about something in your translation, ask yourself "How would I say this in everyday Spanish/Galician/Catalan/ Basque/English?"

As regards section B of the questionnaire, that is, the strategies used by students for doing translations, the results obtained confirm the list of strategies presented in the previous section, section A. One student explains this as follows:

First, I read the text quickly in order to know the topic. Then I look up the terms I'm not acquainted with in the dictionary. I next write these new words on a piece of paper. I read the text again trying to understand the different ideas, that is to say, its contents. Once I've done this, I am ready to start with the translation of the text.

Our informants also stressed the importance and usefulness of dictionaries: they usually start with a bilingual dictionary and if they still have problems with the translation, they resort to monolingual ones.

I read the text once or twice and if it's difficult, I read it again. Then I start translating sentence by sentence with the help of a bilingual dictionary. If some sentences are somewhat confusing or not clear, I then use a monolingual dictionary. Finally, I read the translation and I sometimes make the last changes.

Other strategies suggested by the students were the following:

- Thinking very carefully about the writer's real intention before starting with the actual translation.
- Doing a mental translation first of all and then putting it down on paper.
- Underlining difficult terms and expressions.
- Looking for synonyms, trying to find the best words and lexical items that suit the context.
- Examining carefully the form of the unknown words in the hope of making connections with already known ones.
- Working with different draft copies till the final version is ready.

With respect to section C of the questionnaire, that is, the pitfalls students fear as translators, the results do not differ from what was expected. The three most students chose were in this order: too literal a translation, difficulties in conveying the right or complete meaning, and problems with the interpretation of parts of the translation. Numbers 5 (line-by-line translation instead of one based on the sentence or paragraph as a whole) and 3 (overly long sentences) were the ones that were mentioned least.

For section A of worksheet 6, which dealt with the tips to improve translation and develop translation work more autonomously, there seems to be almost unanimous agreement on the usefulness of both mono- and bilingual dictionaries together with the reading of bilingual texts and working with subtitled English films. Learners are also aware of the difficulties caused by false friends and consequently they stress their importance. The learning

aids to improve and expand the students' vocabulary, such as the use of word banks and record sheets with the most common mistakes do not appear to be very common as they come last and last but one in order of importance. Other supplementary tips added by the students to the list given were: practice English with a native speaker because in that way "it's easier to remember things," and listen to music and try to understand the lyrics. One of the students questioned even gives more details about the way this can be done in the classroom by suggesting "the use of song books with the lyrics in English but with the corresponding translations in Spanish (Metallica, Iron Maiden)."

3.3. TRANSLATION AS A MEANS OF UNDERSTANDING AND BECOMING AWARE OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

3.3.1. Objectives

– To make students aware of the importance of cultural differences that occasionally make their appearance in the practice of translation and to provide general guidelines on how to cope with them.

– To make learners consider pragmatic features as part of the translation process.

3.3.2. In class

a. The teacher selects a text where certain cultural differences can be seen, for example in the use of polite forms, the different types of food, what people say/do when visiting friends or when meeting someone for the first time, how people answer the phone, the use of gestures to mean things such as money, OK, come here, insults; situations where people kiss or shake hands, the kind of questions you can ask people you do not know very well, etc. (See worksheet 7.)

b. Students are asked in groups of four or so to spot the features that attract their attention in particular and that differ from their own linguistic and cultural background.

c. The whole class discusses the issues presented by the different groups.

d. Students are then asked to translate the text bearing in mind the points raised in the general class discussion.

In the first text, addressed to students at intermediate level, Spanish students would have problems with the translation of certain forms such as *Can I help you?* (line 1) and the use of *please* and *thank you*, which is much more common in English than in Spanish/ Galician/Catalan/Basque. The transla-

tion of certain dishes and drinks, which are typically British—*baked potatoes* and *roast beef* (line 5), *rump steak* (line 7), *Cornish pasty* (line 11), *beans*, *onion rings* and *green salad* (line 13), *shandy* (line 15), *coffee with cream* (line 23)—as well as certain measure units—*pint* (line 17)—would also pose certain translation problems. Furthermore, certain conventions, which are common in British culture, as for instance the inclusion or not, according to the restaurant, of a service charge in the total price of the meal should be borne in mind.

In the second text, specially designed for students at advanced level, the translation problems might derive from various references to British Christmas traditions and celebrations which do not necessarily have a counterpart in Catalan/Basque/Galician/Spanish. This may be the case of words such as *Christmas cracker* (line 1), *stocking-full* (line 2), *Claus* (line 13), *Christmas Eve* (line 14), *Boxing Day* (line 17). Furthermore, as this text was extracted from the newspaper *The Sun*, other translation problems may have their origin in wordplay typical of journalistic advertising: the use of *yule* instead of *you'll*, *santastic* for *fantastic*, the contrast between two senses of the verb *tuck*, *tucking in* (line 18) with the meaning of eating enthusiastically and *tucked inside* (line 21), meaning *folded in*, *Duper Golas* for *Super Goals*, etc.

3.3.3. Worksheet 7 (intermediate level)

At a restaurant

Waiter: Good afternoon. Can I help you?

Rob: Have you got a table for two, please?

Waiter: Yes, sir. Over here, by the window.

Waiter: Here's the menu.

5 Anne: I'll start with baked potatoes, please, and then I'll have roast beef.

Waiter: I'm sorry, Madam, there's no more roast beef.

Anne: Oh, all right, then. I'll have a rump steak.

Waiter: How would you like your steak?

Anne: Rare, please.

10 Waiter: And for you, sir?

Rob: Cornish pasty, for me, please.

Waiter: Vegetables, sir?

Rob: A few beans, onion rings and a green salad, please.

- Waiter: Would you like something to drink?
- 15 Anne: Could I have a shandy, please?
Waiter: Certainly, madam.
Rob: I'll have a pint of lager, please.
...
- Waiter: Is everything all right?
Anne: Oh yes, excellent, thank you.
- 20 Rob: Very good.
Waiter: Would you like some coffee?
Anne: Yes, please. I'd like a cappuccino.
Rob: I'll have a coffee with cream, please.
...
- Waiter: Can I give you a little more coffee?
- 25 Anne: No, thank you.
Rob: Yes, please.
Rob: Could you bring us the bill, please?
Waiter: Here it is, sir.
Rob: Is service included?
- 30 Waiter: VAT is included but not the service, I'm afraid.
Rob: OK. Thank you

3.3.4. Worksheet 8 (advanced level)

NEW YEAR TV GUIDE NEXT WEEK plus free goes on both Lottos

- We've got a cracker of a Christmas lined up for Sun readers next week. We are playing Syndi Claus again with a stocking-full of FREE goes on the week's two lotto draws.
- 5 You get 20 free goes on the midweek Christmas Eve draw—ten with the card in your Wednesday paper and ten with the Christmas gamecard we gave you earlier this month.
And there's ANOTHER 20 free goes on Saturday- ten with the card inside Saturday's TV SuperGuide and ten with the Christmas gamecard.
There's lots, lots more in store for you next week.
- 10 Yule love Monday's paper with its 24-page Duper Golas pullout—stuffed like a turkey with all the weekend's in-depth soccer reports, results and league tables.
There'll be Claus for celebration across the land for our Tuesday and Christmas Eve editions—featuring all the very best news, features and

- 15 sport.
There will be no Sun on Christmas Day—but we will be back with another knockout paper on Boxing Day.
And don't forget when you're tucking into your Christmas dinner, to leave plenty of room for another festive feast—your sensational Saturday
- 20 Stonker Sun.
Tucked inside will be the TV SuperGuide with complete telly listings for the New Year.
So stick with your Sun—it's just santastic.

(*The Sun*, Saturday, December 20, 1997).

4. CONCLUSIONS

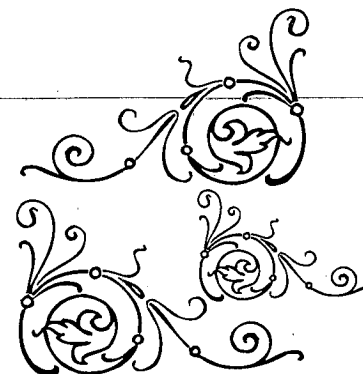
The activities presented in the previous pages are simple examples of what I consider a creative way of teaching translation. As was stated in the Introduction, translation is seen as being much more than a mere transfer of information from one language to another; consequently, the teaching of translation should not be based exclusively on a series of dull and boring exercises in which the students' role is mostly passive and limited to a simple manipulation of language. The process of translation is much wider in scope than that. Students should participate directly in the translation class by selecting the material to be worked on and even deciding jointly with the teacher on the kind of activities they will be doing. Finally, students should be made aware of the fact that there are more factors involved in the translation process than the linguistic ones. The translation course as part of the English Philology degree could thus help to consolidate language skills as well as being a useful means of teaching students the importance of the communicative and intercultural values of texts. 🎁

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THE PASSIVE AS A STYLE MARKER IN EARLY MODERN ENGLISH:

EVIDENCE FROM THE HELSINKI CORPUS

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I. INTRODUCTION

The passive is commonly regarded as a specific style marker in Present-day English (henceforth PE),¹ since one of the factors that determines the choice of a passive over an active clause is linguistic style. The aim of this paper is to examine the stylistic function of the passive in Early Modern English (henceforth EModE) with a twofold purpose: firstly, to ascertain whether the passive voice also has a stylistic significance in that period, and, secondly, to discover the factors which determine the preference for *be*-passives in formal registers. For this twofold purpose, the computerised *Helsinki Corpus of English Texts* has been used.

The analysis of the EModE corpus is offered in section 3; nevertheless, before proceeding to examine the linguistic evidence, a few words seem in order concerning the functions, whether stylistic or other, usually assumed to be associated with the passive in PE. This is done in section 2.