Teaching Translation from Spanish to English

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Published by University of Ottawa Press


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FOREWORD

Now that the twentieth century, the era of translation, is coming to a close, there is no doubt that Translation Studies is fully established as a discipline of its own. Recent theoretical research has shown that translation is not only a textual operation, but also an act of communication and a cognitive process. Therefore, translation research should start from this triple perspective and, fortunately, can now count on a minimum theoretical foundation based on discourse analysis of comparative texts, the translator's cognitive processes, and the factors that intervene in translation as an act of communication. These approaches are often taken in isolation or as mutually exclusive; however, in my opinion, only by integrating them can our discipline advance. Teaching Translation from Spanish to English: Worlds beyond Words is situated within this integrating line of research, taking into account not only the internal relationships between original text and translated text, but also the relationships between text and context, and the cognitive processes involved.

James Holmes' 1972 classification of Translation Studies\(^1\) is beginning to be a reality. At that time the three separate branches described by Holmes—theoretical, descriptive, and applied—were only just emerging. To a certain extent, Holmes was a prophet, who foresaw the future of our discipline. Both theoretical and descriptive translation studies have multiplied in recent years, but perhaps the advances have been fewer in applied translation studies (translation teaching, translation in language teaching, and translation criticism and evaluation).

Given the worldwide importance of translation and translator training, and the rise of Translation Studies, translation teaching has not developed as fast as one might expect. Most of the publications in translation teaching have been either contrastive (which identify learning problems in translation training with problems of a contrastive nature), or theoretical with a few practical exercises (which

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confuse learning problems in translation training with problems of translation theory). Thus, translation teaching still lacks clearly defined learning objectives and a specific methodological framework. Jean Delisle has been a pioneer in developing translation-teaching methods based on learning objectives which go beyond contrastive linguistics. He proposes a heuristic methodology with one main objective for the student—to discover the principles necessary for a correct development of the translation process.

I believe that the most important challenge facing translation-teaching research is defining general and specific learner objectives for direct and inverse translation, and for each branch of specialized translation (technical and scientific translation; economic, legal, and administrative translation; audiovisual translation; and literary translation). At the same time we have to develop appropriate methodologies and learning activities aimed at achieving these objectives. Of course, we still have a long way to go and we need empirical research into the acquisition of translator competence at different levels that will help us to define learner objectives and methodologies more clearly. This research will help us to distinguish between problems of translation (i.e. the problems of a professional translator) and the problems of learning to translate (i.e. the problems of an apprentice translator). It will also help us to separate the learning objectives in the beginner stages of translation training from the different branches of specialized translation and from inverse translation.

Allison Beeby’s book should be seen as an advance in this field, defining specific learner objectives and a methodological framework. It fills an urgent need for teaching methodologies that avoid the pitfalls outlined above, teaching proposals for translation between Spanish and English, and, above all, specific teaching methodologies for translation into the foreign language. Translation theorists have concentrated on translation into the mother tongue (considered the only “real” translation) and have ignored translation into the foreign language despite its importance in the work market and the fact that it is taught in most translator and interpreter training centres. The specific nature of the inverse translation process, which implies greater difficulties in the reformulation stage, is reflected in the specific nature of the work market that tends to be confined to standardized or static text types, such as commercial or legal texts, and conversation interpreting. Thus, teaching inverse translation should be distinguished from teaching direct translation by giving full importance to the specific nature of the process and the market.

Teaching Translation from Spanish to English: Worlds beyond Words is important because it fulfils a real need in translation-teaching methodology, due to the absence of research into inverse translation. This book demonstrates the specificity of translating into the foreign language and proposes interesting and varied teaching

strategies. It has the further merit of proposing a theoretical framework that integrates process and product, and a teaching methodology that is designed to achieve learner objectives. I am sure that the proposals made here will be of great use to translator trainers and trainees.

Amparo Hurtado Albir
Barcelona, March 1996