Teaching Translation from Spanish to English

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Translation teachers are obliged to work within three different frameworks: the theoretical framework of the “subject” they are teaching; the methodological framework related to education in general and to how people learn; and the classroom framework, which includes the constraints of one particular pair of languages, and of one particular set of students within a certain geographical and historical context. Teachers have to decide how to use the guidelines provided by theory and methodology in order to teach a content and a skill in a particular context (in this case, translating from Spanish to English in the 1990s). Thus, teachers make theoretical and methodological choices in the context of their teaching situation.

In this book, translation theory is approached from the perspective of searching for guidelines that will provide the tools needed by the teacher to help students to learn the skill of translating from their own language to a foreign language. The starting point is similar to that adopted by Mildred Larsen: “The aim of the book is not to argue linguistic theory but to present tools which help translators” (1984: 26).

However, this does not mean any theory will do if it serves our purposes. If the theory is not reliable, the tools will be unreliable. Ernst-August Gutt argues that even if our concerns are eminently practical, “theoretical assumptions are important in that the value of the tools suggested depends on the validity of the framework in which they are developed” (1991: 82).