The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Education

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First published 2020

ISBN: 978-0-815-36843-4 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-0-367-85485-0 (ebk)

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Developing mediation competence through translation

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Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

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Introduction[1]

Translation pervades most academic fields and everyday communication practices. Therefore, it seems reasonable to inquire into its learning potential for other fields besides translator training to achieve interdisciplinary networking. In this line, here we will explore the use of translation in learning contexts that are not exclusively related to training professional translators. This starting point suggests that distinctive traits may be discerned between what may be called translation for other learning contexts (TOLC), here defined as translation to acquire linguistic and intercultural mediation skills in fields other than translator training, and translator and interpreter training proper, that is, translation to acquire professional translator competence (González-Davies 2012, 2014, 2017). TOLC works on a continuum that spans elementary language learning and advanced language services and, so, many of its features may also cover language learning and intercultural mediation as a key aspect of translator training (see Harris ahead).

Recently, a shift from a monolingual to a plurilingual paradigm in (language) learning is increasingly becoming visible through the publication of studies and experiences that describe efficient uses of mediation skills to develop plurilingual and intercultural competence and, so, to reconcile these related disciplines.

Although translator training and language learning developed separately at first, the need for effective communication in a globalized world stimulated interest in exploring and applying the means for people with different languages and backgrounds to understand each other. Rather than relying on intuition and goodwill to succeed in managing the languages and cultures that now coexist on an everyday basis, specific skills are deemed necessary to prepare competent plurilingual speakers. This need has brought about an increase in research and observation of best practices related to the development of mediation skills, including translation literacy.

Here, we will briefly outline how ideas regarding the integration of previously known languages in foreign language learning have evolved from the grammar-translation method to an informed integrated plurilingual approach (IPA). We will then explore how the students' linguistic repertoire can be integrated in the language learning process and will finally focus

on translation as a key skill and a strategy for advancing mediation skills in fields other than professional translator training, that is, we will focus on the IPA and on TOLC

Historical perspectives

Professional translator and interpreter training advanced significantly at the turn of the 21st century. Pedagogical approaches drew mainly from education studies, psychology and foreign language learning. Translation and interpreting degrees, along with post-graduate and doctoral programmes, boomed in the 1980s and extended to most countries. At the same time, thorough research on the topic flourished. Simultaneously, new perspectives in language learning designed to incorporate the social demands of globalization and findings in neuroscience related to brain connectivity in learning processes paved the path for innovative pedagogical practices.

For centuries, however, the grammar-translation method ruled in foreign language learning. Teachers and students usually shared the same language and could relate it to the new (foreign) language through translation. However, the alleged connection between both languages (known and new) was established largely through the memorization of bilingual vocabulary lists and the translation of contrived sentences, both of which held little relation to natural everyday translation practice and certainly none to professional translation practice. In the grammar-translation – or Prussian – method, still used in certain educational settings, the sessions usually develop in the students' native language, and reading and writing are the main skills practised. The original aim was the study of literature grounded in the study of Latin and classical languages. The aim here is not to go into the history and nature of grammar-translation since this has already been done comprehensively (cf. Richards and Rodgers 1986/2014; Cook 2010), but to focus on how the approaches to the use of translation have evolved, especially since the 1980s with the rise of translation studies to finally conclude in translanguaging practices "which have emerged to refer to the more flexible use of resources from more than one 'language' within a single system, *trans*cending traditional understandings of separate languages" (Anderson 2017, p. 2, original emphasis) (cf. also Williams 1996; Bachmann-Medick 2009; García 2009; Meier 2017; Carreres et al. 2018).

Towards the end of the 19th century, scholars who favoured a paradigm based on meaningful learning and language as communication introduced the reform movement (cf. the work of Jespersen, Klinghardt, Passy, Sweet or Viëtor, for example, in Cook 2010, pp. 4–9). Here, speech and phonetics (transcriptions) were emphasized along with instruction in the foreign language. In those days, as Cook (2010, p. 5) notes, "the reformers were not excessive or fanatical in their attitude to translation, acknowledging a role for it, and allowing its judicious use. The Reform Movement resulted in the Natural Approach and the Direct Method", that is, "any teaching which excludes use of the students' own language from the classroom, whether for translation or for explanation and commentary" (Cook 2010, p. 7).

This rejection of translation was accentuated in the 1970s when the first traces of globalization entailed that native speakers travelled and taught worldwide and, so, students from different geographical, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds converged in the classrooms. Thus, the situation where the local teacher and the students shared the same languages altered. Consequently, any meaningful connections between them were relegated to the background.

Additionally, the 'Threshold Level' document (van Ek 1975), launched by the Council of Europe, set the foundations for the communicative approach that still predominates today and is characterized mainly by interaction, the focus on everyday language use, student autonomy, task-based learning and project work. Many aspects of this student-centred pedagogical

framework can be applied to the IPA and TOLC. However, there is a crucial conceptual gap between both approaches related to the monolingual assumption supported by the premises underlying the so-called natural and communicative approaches, mainly: (1) L2 = L1, i.e. a second language should be learned in the same way as children learn their first one; (2) the L1 should not be used because it causes irreversible interference; and (3) the aim of the foreign language learner is to master the foreign tongue, so a native speaker is the best teacher.

Thus, in the communicative approach languages are kept in strictly separated compartments, the teacher eventually provides the correct answer and sets the learning outcomes, and 'Foreign Language Only' learning environments are favoured so that the potential contact areas between other languages and cultures are seldom explored.

Most government regulations backed this 'Foreign Language Only' principle, a widely accepted practice also demanded by students and parents in schools and institutions. In its heyday, to ensure its implementation by teachers, absurd situations sometimes occurred where cameras were placed in classrooms by Heads of Study, or where non-native teachers from the same community as their students translated their names and pretended that they could not speak the students' language. Thus, a puzzling situation ensued in which students with access to, at least, one other language, were compelled to think and act monolingually in the foreign language classroom, allegedly, in order to become plurilingual speakers.

Nowadays, international mobility has brought forward the need for linguistically prepared citizens, preferably with developed mediation skills (e.g. oral and written translation, or intercultural competence). Moreover, findings in neuroscience related to connectivity in the brain and a growing awareness of the key role played by heritage languages regarding identity issues, now favour research and best practices to explore the potential contact areas between languages and disciplines. The shift from "shared-L1 classrooms" to "mixed-L1 classrooms" (Anderson 2017, p. 2) has triggered the need for research to elucidate how to make the most of the new situation and suggest optimal translanguaging practices (cf. Cummins 1984, 2008, 2018; Corcoll 2011; Corcoll and González-Davies 2015; González-Davies 2017; Meier 2017; Wilson and González-Davies 2017).

Certainly, the monolingual paradigm is being questioned as more and more informed evidence is brought to bear to show that the spontaneous use of prior knowledge ('own' and 'previous' languages) on the part of the learner is a natural learning strategy. Clearly, translation stubbornly remained amidst this monolingual approach as is ratified time and again in surveys sent out to gauge the use of translation by teachers and students (cf. Macaro 2001; González-Davies 2002; Pym et al. 2013). Teachers' responses coincide in reflecting misgivings for not following the principles of the communicative approach which had shaped their professional training, for not regarding themselves as bilinguals, and for fearing that their students' progress would be hampered by interference problems if they allowed other languages in the classroom. Most teachers relate 'use of translation' to translating the odd word or grammatical form, or to using the mother tongue in the classroom, and cannot imagine creative and communicative uses. On the other hand, the students have no qualms in expressing that they use translation as a learning strategy in general. The situation may be summarized as follows (Hall and Cook 2013, p. 27):

> Overall, therefore, our study suggests that teachers' attitudes towards own-language use, and their classroom practices, are more complex than are often acknowledged . . . It seems that there is a potential gap between mainstream ELT literature and practice on the ground, a gap that should prompt further investigation of this central practice within English language teaching.

This setting also brought about a power struggle between native and non-native teachers with the latter at the losing end. In the IPA these differences may be smoothed out, as now linguistically competent teachers with strong translanguaging skills are required, whether native or non-non-native.

The practical reconciliation between translation and foreign language learning was pioneered by Alan Duff (see *Further reading*). An increasing number of authors followed his path and have published best practices based on research around translation in language learning, as will be seen in the next section.

Research approaches and key findings

Little research was carried out on the grammar-translation method or on the communicative approach and its forerunners:

> So successful were the Direct Method criticisms of [Translation in Language Teaching] TILT that . . . from the 1990s until very recently, there has been virtually no discussion of it in the mainstream language literature. It is not that it was considered, assessed, and rejected, with reasons given for that rejection, but rather that it was simply ignored.
>
> *(Cook 2010, pp. 20–21)*

In the 20th century, two periods of research may be differentiated regarding the use of the L1(s) in foreign language learning: before and after the 1990s (Widdowson 2003; Cook 2010; Corcoll 2011). In the first case, research was usually carried out to observe and describe if and when the L1 was used, and was typically followed by proposals to abolish its use for different reasons. In the second, a "climate for revival" emerged with the positive recognition of bilingualism and the emergence of a "postmonolingual condition" (Cook 2010, p. 37). Indeed, after the 1990s, research has largely leant towards observing how, when and why the L1(s) are used, and trying to pin down their actual contribution to language learning. The emphasis now is not on whether plurilingualism is detrimental but on how translanguaging practices can be implemented in an informed way, a sea change in the focus of research on plurilingualism and its applications.

In the IPA translation is considered to be both a process and a product of communication. As a process, translation is defined as "a dynamic process of communication" (Hatim and Mason 1990, p. 223). As a product, an appropriate translation is "any text that is accepted in the target culture as being a translation" (Chesterman 1997, p. 59). To differentiate it from code-switching and use of the L1(s), it is defined as an informed change of linguistic or cultural code applied consciously to an explicit primary source text, whether verbal or non-verbal (González-Davies 2014, p. 11).

At present, research around translation in language learning *per se* is still scarce. However, studies are emerging in the light of linguistic mediation as expressed, for example, in the CEFR *Companion Volume with New Descriptors* (2018, p. 175):

> Translation or interpretation, a paraphrase, summary or record, provides for a third party, a (re)formulation of a source text to which this third party does not have direct access. Mediation language activities, (re)processing an existing text, occupy an important place in the normal linguistic functioning of our societies.

This perspective refers directly to language brokering practices carried out continuously by travellers, businesspeople, academics, migrants and their children, and many others in diverse contexts such as education, healthcare or community interpreting. Other kinds of non-professional translation take different forms such as crowdsourcing on the Internet, that is, "the practice of obtaining needed services, ideas, or content by soliciting contributions from a large group of people and especially from the online community rather than from traditional employees or suppliers" (Merriam-Webster 2019); volunteer translation used for translation of post-catastrophe emergency messages; fan-subtitling of TED talks or YouTube; humanitarian translation work (cf. 'Translators without borders'); or commercial and open-source software projects such as the translations of literary sagas and popular TV series. However, with no training and with mistaken notions regarding the simplicity of translation, this activity has often led to a proliferation of erroneous transfers and howlers. Research into all these points is closely related to the IPA in that it aims at affording appropriate skills for efficient linguistic mediation.

An integrated plurilingual approach (IPA) to language learning

Once we stop pretending that we do not have a previous language (or languages) and shift our beliefs to embrace research on brain connectivity, we can openly explore natural plurilingual practices in formal and informal social and pedagogic contexts, and a whole new teaching and learning perspective opens up. This shift also entails doing away with the requirement to attain a native speaker level as the final aim of language learning is to work towards developing proficient mediation skills that enable efficient communication between people from different languages and cultures.

The IPA distinguishes between multilingualism and plurilingualism in that it takes the former to refer to the coexistence of languages and cultures, although in separate mental compartments. Inversely, the main aim from a plurilingual standpoint is to help teachers implement practices to move away from teaching languages separately and, rather, favour establishing connections to the students' real linguistic repertoire and identities, progressing towards "reimagining [Foreign Language] classrooms as translingual environments" (Anderson 2017, p. 8). This is in line with the approach adopted by the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) in the 2001 edition and now revisited and confirmed in the *New Companion Volume*: "plurilinguals have a single, inter-related, repertoire that they combine with their general competences and various strategies in order to accomplish tasks" (2018, p. 9).

The IPA principles for research and best practices draw mainly on Cummins´ common underlying proficiency model or interdependence hypothesis (1984), which is in opposition to the interference hypothesis upheld by the direct method. Cummins argues that, although the visible surface of each language differs, underlying (meta)cognitive knowledge and know-how makes connections between the languages possible (for example, phonological, syntactic, textual, stylistic or lexical aspects). Specifically regarding translation, he challenges what he calls the 'No Translation Assumption' (2007, p. 222) and ratifies at a later stage that "the argument is that translation has a role to play within a broadly defined communicative approach as a means of enabling students to [. . .] communicate in powerful and authentic ways with multiple audiences in both L1 and L2" (2008, p. 65). Also, his distinction between Basic Interactive Communication Skills (BICS) and Conversational Advanced Linguistic Procedures (CALP) (Cummins 1979, 2005) brought about a substantial change in understanding how and when the transfer of underlying knowledge and skills acquired in one language can benefit the acquisition of another.

Additionally, the IPA draws on 'multi-competence', a concept coined and updated by V. Cook as "the overall system of a mind or a community that uses more than one language"

(2016, p. 2). His aim is to study how the acquisition of more than one language seems to favour an expanded cognitive capacity that goes beyond the linguistic sphere to encompass and connect other aspects of learning. These capacities may include an efficient use of lower and higher order thinking skills, i.e. remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating (Bloom 1956, revised in Anderson and Krathwohl 2001) and high-level cognitive proficiency related to the awareness and control of language resources. Consequently, the positive implications of plurilingualism clearly override possible drawbacks such as interference or delayed production.

Furthermore, recent research into the functions of the brain seems to support these plurilingual approaches to learning languages (e.g. The Human Connectome Project and ongoing related work on the Language Connectome 2009; or Kovelman et al. 2008, amongst others). Learning a language can also physically change brain structure and adjust perception through the creation of new neural paths. This may relate to both the spontaneous and planned connections established between previously known and new languages.

Finally, the focus on translinguistic conceptualization, that is, the ability to express and connect the same concepts efficiently in different languages (Corcoll and González-Davies 2015) informs the didactic sequences in IPA where verbal, non-verbal, and multimodal model texts guide the learner to create their own texts through meaningful plurilingual tasks and reflective questions, thus favouring student agency. The IPA framework includes two components to create a natural and realistic plurilingual and translanguaging environment (Esteve and González-Davies 2017):

1 A didactic model for plurilingual education that helps teachers inform their practices.
2 A formative intervention model that helps teachers appropriate the didactic model in a meaningful way (building on their agency) through an adjustment of perceptions.

The practical application of this working framework implies the acceptance of both planned and spontaneous plurilingual utterances and tasks around an informed use of L1, TOLC, LIT (literary identity texts), and PBCS (pedagogically based code-switching, Corcoll 2011). Our research process explores how cross-curricular plurilingual connections can be best implemented in foreign language learning through an integrated treatment of all languages, including first and heritage languages, and also in content subjects, for example, in the CLIL mode (Content and Language Integrated Learning).

A case study (2017–2018)

To illustrate our research on the IPA as it is carried out in schools, I will present a specific case study embedded in our six-year formative research project (2013–2019) carried out in several Spanish regions that addresses the transformation of monolingual practices into plurilingual practices in eight schools. Specifically, as part of this case study, we piloted new descriptor scales for 'plurilingual comprehension' and 'building on plurilingual repertoire' from the 2016 draft version of the extended CEFR illustrative descriptors for Mediation Strategies to explore these three research questions:

1 Can effective learning material be designed to foster the students' plurilingual and pluricultural competence based on the CEFR descriptors?
2 Are the CEFR descriptors useful to foster an IPA to language learning?
3 Are the CEFR descriptors helpful for an IPA syllabus design and assessment?

These aims were also in line with our global research, namely, to favour the development of plurilingual and intercultural competence by integrating them in the plurilingual tasks; to observe and develop student agency by recording and analyzing the students' perceptions and performance regarding the tasks; and to develop teacher agency by analyzing the teachers' perceptions and performance regarding the tasks and their potential inclusion in the general subject curriculum.

Participants

The team for this case study comprised six researchers, three of which are also schoolteachers who combine professional and academic projects, thus providing valuable insights grounded on everyday practice. Three schools from differing socio-economic backgrounds and two communities (Barcelona and Sabadell) were involved with students from primary and secondary education.

Instruments for data collection

We observed the use of descriptors during task performance against a checklist. We also analyzed the recordings of student task performance and informal focus group discussions, and the teachers' comments extracted from feedback questionnaires provided by the Education Policy Division of the Council of Europe. Following our sociocultural approach to research, unpredicted descriptors that had not been contemplated in the CEFR document were added after the analysis.

The task

The task that was finally agreed upon consisted of a real-life communicative situation in which two or three students collaborate to solve an issue through consensus. Special emphasis was laid on the fact that the situation should be sufficiently rich and well planned for the students to use all their linguistic resources (linguistic repertoire and non-verbal communication). A touristic text in two languages (different from the foreign language(s) they are studying and from the official school languages) was handed out. The subject of the text for primary education was "A Visit to the Barcelona Zoo", whereas the subject for secondary education was "A Day in Paris". Both texts gave information about various events and services (e.g. food), including prices. Students were also given a map of the zoo (primary) or Paris (secondary), respectively. The task was to plan a day at the zoo or in Paris on a very restricted budget.

Implementation

Each teacher carried out the implementation plan in their schools. Permissions to use and release the material were requested and granted by parents and the schools. Two phases were followed in all cases. In the collaboration phase, the students were asked to undertake the task by explaining their thinking process aloud (in any language(s) that they chose) while they wrote their plan down jointly in English (the target language, in our case). In the exchange and discussion phase they explained to another team the day that they had planned in English. The students were recorded on task and a focus group of student-participants was also recorded at two of the schools (one for primary and one for secondary). This is the text designed for primary education:

You are going to the zoo and you want to see many animals and do many activities. You also need to have lunch and a drink. You have ten euros each and a map.

Bienvenus au zoo de Barcelone! Vous voulez voir beaucoup des animaux et vous amuser bien? Alors, il faut s'organiser parce qu'il y a beaucoup de choses à faire. On va visiter les animaux de la ferme. Elle est ouverte de 12.00 à 13.30. Ensuite, on va connaître les pingouins et on va leur donner à manger. Ils sont là de 11 a 13.30. Vous pouvez voire comment les éléphants font du sport le matin (de 10 à 12).

Es ist Zeit, aufhören zu essen. In der Cafeteria können wir ein Sandwich für 5 Euro, ein paar Kartoffeln für 3 Euro und eine Flasche Wasser für 2 Euro kaufen. Wir können auch Eis für 3 Euro bekommen. Wir bekommen die Löwen und Tiger zu sehen, wo sind sie?

Results

The three research questions could be answered positively, with nuances. The sensitizing activities were effective and presented recurring characteristics. For example, all final performance was carried out in the target language (English), thus contradicting the interference hypothesis. Also, collaborative and distributed learning were clearly crucial for success as they allowed for an active use of previous knowledge and for the creation of a ludic motivational atmosphere. The fact that problem-solving revolved around a real-life situation was highly valued by the students. The reflection sessions were beneficial to fostering student agency through reflective action. In accordance with other projects carried out previously, we observed that, contrary to common belief, proficiency and age did not affect performance regarding plurilingual and pluricultural competence.

These were the CEFR (2016) descriptors that the students finally used when carrying out the tasks:

Plurilingual comprehension

- A2 Can understand short, clearly written messages and instructions by piecing together what he/she understands from the versions in different languages.
- A2 Can exploit easily identifiable vocabulary (e.g. international expressions, words with roots common to different languages – like 'bank' or 'music') in order to form a hypothesis as to the meaning of a text.
- B1+ Can recognize similarities and contrasts between the way concepts are expressed in different languages, in order to distinguish between identical uses of the same word root and 'false friends'.
- B1+ Can exploit his/her knowledge of contrasting grammatical structures and functional expressions of languages in his/her plurilingual repertoire in order to support comprehension.

Exploiting plurilingual repertoire

- A2 Can use words and phrases from different languages in his/her plurilingual repertoire to conduct a simple, practical transaction or information exchange.

Spoken translation of written text (sight translation)

A2 Can use simple language to provide an approximate translation of very short texts on familiar and everyday themes that contain the highest frequency vocabulary; despite errors, the translation remains comprehensible.

B1 Can provide an approximate spoken translation of clear, well-structured informational texts on subjects that are familiar or of personal interest, although his/her lexical limitations cause difficulty with formulation at times.

B1+ Can translate straightforward, factual texts that are written in uncomplicated, standard language, although a tendency to adhere to both the structure and the formulations of the source text results in passages that may read awkwardly.

Facilitating collaborative interaction with peers

B1 Can collaborate in simple, shared tasks and work towards a common goal in a group by asking and answering straightforward questions.

B1+ Can collaborate on a shared task, for example formulating and responding to suggestions, asking whether people agree, and proposing alternative approaches.

These are the unpredicted recorded descriptors added during the analysis. Some could be found in the CEFR document (2016), but had not been included in the original checklist, and others were added from results yielded by previous IPA research projects.

Mediating a text

- Translation and paraphrasing prevailed during the task
- Breaking down complicated information
- Visually representing information
- Linking to previous knowledge
- Summarizing

IPA descriptors

- Silent reading previous to task.
- Noticing descriptors (i.e. PL and PC awareness or connecting moments).
- Increased self-confidence voiced for problem-solving.
- Reflective learning: expressions of difficulty, enjoyment, perceptions of progress, and distributed learning.

As to syllabus design, the descriptors could be integrated ecologically into the customary syllabus for planning, teaching, identifying, and assessing the students' plurilingual competence. Their explicit use favoured a change in mindset, as this transcription from the teachers' feedback indicates (Teacher 3):

> External influences have always made them think that they should be thinking in the language of the class and not mixing languages. . . . What I found most striking was the fact that they seemed to be pleasantly surprised at their own plurilingual and pluricultural competences, despite the fact that they appear to use them on a daily basis.

All the teachers stated that they would include this kind of task and approach in their syllabus, not just in the English (target language) classroom, but for all the language classes. They found it surprising that descriptors for social and affective skills and strategies, which they deem to be crucial at these educational levels, had not been included explicitly in the CEFR document. Finally, they all agreed that the participation of school principals had been crucial.

Impact on the participants

Regarding teacher's perceptions, two relevant aspects related to teacher agency helped the teachers progress towards appreciating the potential and benefits of a plurilingual approach:

1 *Reflective action*: Reflecting on and piloting the descriptors contributed to raising their own and their learners' awareness of the concepts being addressed in those descriptors:

> The descriptors contributed to design better activities as the teacher could establish learning aims according to the different descriptors. Therefore, the assessment criteria were very coherent/explicit and, as a result, the way to promote the plurilingual competence became clearer. (Teacher 2)

2 *Shifting beliefs*: The students' plurilingual competence became gradually self-evident as the task developed and unexpected thoughts and actions surfaced. In one teacher's words:

> Students are expected to use English with English-speaking teachers on an everyday basis, so for them it was a novelty to be given space to talk in another language in my presence. Given that not all students have a similar L1 they initially had to negotiate which language they would use to carry out the activity, on occasions this was in English. Initially they were concerned when confronted by languages which they knew little of (French and German), but all found that they were able to identify some words which they recognised as similar to other more familiar languages to build meaning and to help them complete the task. (Teacher 1)

As to the students, they verbalized an increasing self-awareness of their own progress, that is, they evolved from a perceived challenge to enjoyment and success as they gradually became used to connecting the languages they were working with, as exemplified in this exchange (third primary):

TEACHER 3: I'm not sure what these things are? What do you think? Oh, Eis. What can Eis be? What's it in English? Eis, Eis. . .
3P_LSG (2): Gel ['Ice' in Catalan] . . . Ice-cream! [smiles]

Their intercultural competence also made an occasional appearance, as we can see in this excerpt (fourth secondary):

4ESO_SP (6): Champs Elysées is a street like. . . [hesitates] Paseo de Gracia! where all the fancy stores are.

As to the pedagogical framework, an effective implementation of collaborative and distributed learning allowed the students to work fruitfully on the plurilingual mediation skills:

TEACHER 1: Was it useful doing it as a group?
4ESO_SP_Students (all): Yes, yeah, much, much. . . . We had ideas and we put them together and we made the plan . . . and maybe someone knew the words, like, in that language, like, and the other one knew other words and when you put it together it makes, like, sense . . . so being alone it could be more . . . more difficult and . . . less funny.

Most teachers needed time and gentle guidance to move from the monolingual to the plurilingual approach to language learning. On the other hand, many teachers were appreciative of our explicit intervention because they could finally name and speak frankly about what they had been doing intuitively in their classes with little or no institutional support.

Pedagogic approaches and methods

The grammar-translation method adopted a transmissionist pedagogic approach, in consonance with the mainstream pedagogical approach in most disciplines, including translator training. In this approach the teacher selects the material and imparts knowledge while the students offer a translation that is only deemed correct if it coincides with that of the teacher, very much like a traditional session for translator trainees where the translation is corrected following the "who'll take the next sentence (WTNS) approach" (Kiraly 2005, p. 110).

On the other hand, although not in theory, but extensively in practice, the communicative approach disallowed the use of translation, despite the overwhelming evidence of its actual use by both teachers and students, albeit mainly for understanding, (decontextualized) testing, or contrastive analysis techniques. In any case, neither its complexity nor interactive potential are present in resource books for teachers or in student textbooks, increasingly with a few exceptions (see further reading).

Conversely, the IPA approach considers that student agency is strengthened by collaborative learning, based on socio-constructivist premises. The students work within didactic sequences designed to help them progress along their Zone of Proximal Development through reflection activities embedded in plurilingual tasks (Esteve and González-Davies 2017). The main aim

is to provide them with academic and social skills that set the basis for lifelong learning to become, not necessarily native speakers, but competent plurilingual speakers. This process, in turn, aims at the development of their self-concept (identity) as learners. Here, I will outline a specific plurilingual pedagogic approach in line with this new perspective: TOLC

Translation for other learning contexts (TOLC)

Translation is a key mediation skill whose complexity is not usually dealt with even in (well-intentioned) plurilingual approaches to language learning, where the students are asked simply 'to translate'. This may be (unconsciously) in accordance with the extended belief that bilinguals may engage in 'natural translation' effortlessly. Harris (2017) put forward a cline to gauge the level of translation competence that can be developed in different contexts depending on the aims and context of the speakers:

- *Natural translators*: people who translate without having had any training. They function through intuition rather than following translation norms and strategies.
- *Native translators*: people who have acquired translation skills through observation and experience in informal contexts.
- *Expert translators*: formally trained translators who lack experience in the industry.
- *Professional translators*: people who translate for a living. They may have been trained in a formal setting and be accredited, or they may be advanced native translators.

This scale is especially useful to situate TOLC in the learning process. If we align natural and native translators with Cummins´ BICS stage in language learning, and expert and professional translation with the following stage, CALP, the need for explicit scaffolding instruction to lead the way from one stage to the next is self-evident. This may be provided by TOLC, which we situate between the native and the expert levels. TOLC speakers can be described as language users who can apply natural plurilingual practices in an informed way after acquiring translanguaging skills and strategies in formal contexts

In this case, the use of translation is far from the grammar-translation method. TOLC works with transferrable skills rather than language combinations, thus providing a reliable working frame for this new outlook since it favours activities that go beyond straightforward text translating for a set language combination. Rather, in TOLC, the complexity of translation as a dynamic process of communication is dealt with explicitly: on the one hand, findings in research on the development of translation competence in translator training are taken into account. On the other, activities and projects are designed to include both specific reflection and action around an informed use of translation and translanguaging, while working on communicative interlinguistic and intercultural production, reception, mediation, and interaction (CEFR 2018) (see the preceding descriptors, for instance). Thus, translation here goes far beyond its use to check on-the-spot comprehension or syntactic and lexical points in tests, to become a key translanguaging scaffolding activity to develop plurilingual competence.

In TOLC, an acceptable translation (1) keeps the message and effect of the source text, (2) clearly displays use of translation strategies and appropriate resourcing to solve transfer problems, and (3) keeps to the target community conventions and to the assignment. So, here, translation can be used as a means to introduce, reinforce or revise language and concepts related to a given topic through activities such as oral translation (i.e. interpreting), (guided) sight translation, bilingual readings, the creation of decision grids to justify translation choices, discussion around the translation of poems, songs or humour, and other collaborative tasks, all

of which can be adapted to the CEFR descriptors at different levels (for more teaching ideas, see *Further reading*).

Besides, following Jakobson's classification of types of translation (1959/2000) activities need not be reduced to translation between different languages (i.e. interlinguistic translation). They can also be designed for transference between different variants of the same language, for example, between Brazilian or Peninsular Portuguese (i.e. intra-linguistic translation), or to practise multimodal translation (i.e. inter-semiotic translation, from road signs or emojis to text and vice versa). Finally, the tasks help to improve the following three macro-competences (González-Davies 2004, pp. 131, 217), which can be expected from both language learners and translation students:

- *Linguistic competence*. This includes written and oral knowledge of the source and target languages, as well as an awareness of potential interference between them (e.g. false cognates).
- *Encyclopaedic knowledge*: This includes knowing about the subject in hand, from specific terminology to conceptual and cultural knowledge.
- *Transfer knowledge*. Here, specific translation strategies such as domestication or explicitation come into play (see below). It is mainly in the command of these that natural translators can access the expert stage.

All the preceding implies that specific pedagogical scaffolding is needed to bridge the languages. Accordingly, we have developed two main syllabus designs (Esteve and González-Davies 2017; González-Davies 2017):

A Integrating the translation (as TOLC) tasks ecologically in the language learning sessions when required, in coherence with the topics and contents developed there.
B Introducing translation (as TOLC) in Project Work alongside the language learning sessions.

An example for model A: *cultural references: domesticate or foreignize?*

Develop your intercultural awareness by choosing between domesticating or foreignizing strategies when dealing with cultural references. That is, in the first case, adapt the text to the target readers' culture and, in the second, keep the source culture's 'foreign' flavour, thus highlighting the differences so that we can learn about the other culture.

Firstly, please think of a tree: i.e. if I say the word 'tree', what image comes to your mind? Now translate the following text in pairs or groups of three and justify your choices. Depending on the translation assignment (see the decision grid), you will choose one solution or another.

TEXT (*Mr. Pip*, Lloyd Jones, 2006/2008, p. 114 – situated on the Bougainville Island in Papua New Guinea)

> "*Gist*. This word needs explaining. Mr. Watts put it this way. 'If I say tree, I will think English oak, you will think palm-tree. They are both trees. A palm and an oak both successfully describe what a tree is, but they are different trees.' "

When first faced with a text rich in cultural references, it may be useful to draw a 'decision grid' to write down possible translation strategies and solutions. Suggested reading: Haywood et al. (2009) and González-Davies and Scott-Tennent (2005). Let's apply this to your translation process and the product of *Mr. Pip* by Lloyd Jones: 'Palm-tree, Oak or Pine-tree?'

Decision grid. Example for the cultural reference 'Palm-tree':

Challenge	*Possible translations*	*Assignment*	*Final* justified *solution*
Palm-tree	1 Palm-tree 2 Palm-tree, a native tree species in Bougainville 3 A native tree 4 A pine-tree (Mediterranean) 5 An oak-tree 6 (. . .)	I am translating a children's story to be published in Spain and have been commissioned by the publisher to adapt the text to the children's culture.	Pine-tree (domestication)

Sample for model B: *curated crowdsourcing*

Try your hand at translating literary texts before the official publications come out and then compare your work with that of the professional translators. You may also compare your translation with those done as literary crowdsourcing, that is, online amateur translations of a popular book carried out typically by fans.

Before starting your translation, read the book and decide (only) on the cultural strategies: e.g., domestication or foreignization. If the book chosen is not the first in the series, you may analyze the strategies and solutions published in the previous books, discuss them and follow them (or not, if you can justify more appropriate translations). To help with the process and achieve an informed outcome, use decision grids. When the published translation comes out, check and modify your text as necessary, or keep your own translation if you think it is more accurate.

Conclusions and future directions

Due to the cross-disciplinary nature of translation, here I have argued that its study can go beyond its representation as a professional activity. Also, that despite its pervasive presence, it is still generally simplified and related only to the interlinguistic written mode in classrooms.

I have first explored how language teachers and learners have engaged in the use of translation, especially since the end of the 19th century up to the present day, exploring the evolution of related beliefs and practices from academic and pedagogic perspectives. Then, I have suggested why translation should have a place as a natural skill in language learning to cope with our plurilingual contemporary world. I have outlined possible theoretical standpoints and subscribed to a connectionist plurilingual paradigm in opposition to a monolingual stance that compartmentalizes knowledge and languages.

I have also presented a case study where these standpoints have been explored and analyzed. The specific proposal to introduce translation as a key mediation skill is TOLC, which can be aligned with Harris' progressive scale for translator competence levels and with Cummins´ classification of language learning skills as a scaffolding framework to help students

become competent plurilingual speakers as they progress from the natural to the expert translator level.

I have suggested a few tasks and projects to optimize the use of translation as a skill in itself and as a key learning strategy despite efforts to banish it from the language learning process. These tasks have been designed as part of a humanistic and socio-constructivist pedagogical environment that requires plurilingually competent teachers.

To end, a question to be explored further: What happens when we reject natural plurilingual practices that are used extensively outside formal learning contexts? How can this position be justified? Further studies will surely throw light on the potential linguistic and cultural intersections within our complex communication systems and, specifically, on the role of translation to understand and bridge the variations, thus enabling us to communicate more efficiently.

Further reading

Carreres, A., Noriega-Sánchez, M. and Calduch, C. (2018) *Mundos en palabras: Learning Advanced Spanish Through Translation*. London and New York: Routledge.

Cummins, J. and Early, M. (2014) *Big Ideas for Expanding Minds*. Toronto: Pearson Education Canada.

Duff, A. (1989/1994) *Translation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

González-Davies, M. (2004) *Multiple Voices in the Translation Classroom*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Kerr, P. (2014) *Translation and Own-language Activities*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

All these books include practical teaching ideas for translation informed by research and observation of best practices.

Related topics

agency, intercultural citizenship, translator training, primary and secondary education, higher education, translation in schools

Note

1 This work was supported by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness under Grant Ref. EDU2012–38452, 2012–2015 and Grant Ref. FFI2015–63741-R, 2016–19.

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