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English language teaching and learning in a translator training programme in Spain: flexibility as a key to survival.

Abstract

The introduction of the Bologna process, among other upheavals caused to the higher education system in most of Europe, has necessarily brought about an important change in curriculum, syllabus and materials design, introducing a major focus on developing students' competence across a range of skills related to their possible future professions and to their life as responsible, socially competent citizens engaged in a life-long learning process. This requires cultural acceptance of their worthiness that, in turn, will lead to individual personal implication and involvement that need both time and an infrastructure that cannot be made available overnight and whose implementation may be hampered by lack of financial support and adequate provision of human resources. This paper addresses some of the issues involved in adapting English language syllabus and materials design in our translator training programme to the demands and philosophy of this new educational model.

La introducción tardía del Plan Bolonia en España ha ocasionado cambios importantes en la planificación de los estudios y en el diseño de materiales para la educación superior. Ha enfocado la enseñanza hacia el desarrollo de una amplia gama de competencias relacionadas con las posibles salidas profesionales de los estudiantes y con su vida como ciudadanos responsables y socialmente participativos, a quienes se les supone implicados en un proceso de aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida. Aunque, sobre papel, los objetivos del EEES son admirables y deseables, para llevarlos a cabo hace falta la aceptación cultural de su valía, y una implicación personal por parte de los ciudadanos. Cambios sociales de tal profundidad requieren tiempo y una infraestructura que no se puede construir de la noche a la mañana y su implantación se verá obstaculizada si no están provistos de la financiación y los recursos humanos adecuados. En este artículo examinaremos cómo algunos de estos temas pueden afectar

el diseño del programa y de los materiales para la materia *Lengua B inglés* en nuestros estudios universitarios en Traducción e Interpretación.

Introduction

The term 'syllabus' is variously used in pedagogical terms to describe a teaching and learning programme which may cover anything from an entire educational cycle comprising several years of study and linking different subjects across a curriculum or vertically structuring a progressive building of complexity in just one subject, to the content of a single subject or a single, self-contained teaching-learning module (Richards and Rogers, 1986). For purposes of clarity, in this paper we will refer to the design of an entire degree programme as 'curriculum', to the planning of a module of study as a 'syllabus' and to the creation of the content of that syllabus as 'materials design'.

English language syllabus design is habitually based on a structural-grammar core, which often contains a progression from simpler to more complex structures, and introduces a vocabulary drawn from corpus-based frequency data (words which appear more frequently in the language are introduced earlier, although this does not necessarily mean that they are more easily learnt in their full 'depth' (Read, 2004; Ishii and Schmitt, 2009). Commonly, this is built into theme or topic-based units which practise a range of skills, traditionally reading, writing, listening and speaking, which have now been sub-categorised and extended in the Council of Europe's *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Teaching, Learning, Assessment* (CEFR) to include written expression, written interaction, spoken expression, spoken interaction and audiovisual comprehension. Today, practically all published English language course books take a communicative approach to the teaching and learning programme they present, with the prime focus on language as a tool for communication. However, it is also important to consider in the design of translator training programmes that grammatical precision is key to both successful and acceptable communication; in a curriculum where accurate terminology is central, an over-reliance on lexis for message transmission leading to students' failure to 'notice' grammar structures (Batstone, 1994), may be an undesirable side-effect.

The introduction of the Bologna process has necessarily brought about a major change in curriculum, syllabus and materials design in higher education by introducing a principle focus on developing students' competence across a range of skills related to their possible future professions and to their life as responsible, socially competent citizens engaged in a life-long learning process. Such goals may radically alter the educational philosophy in place in some of the signatory nations and their impact on syllabus and materials design has not been presented in a way that is clear or comprehensible to many university teachers. It is necessary for all stakeholders to view these goals as worthy objectives of tertiary education programmes before they can become committed to contributing to their realisation. This involves a cultural change which, by its very nature, cannot take place rapidly. Without in-service training and adequate funding, the process of change will be further hampered and will struggle to find acceptance among those most affected: students and teachers.

One of the underlying ideologies that gave rise to the Bologna process was the political desire for a unified education system that would allow comparability of higher education qualifications across Europe and would promote mobility throughout the EU, both for students during their degree programmes and later as qualified professionals who make up the workforce (Bologna Declaration, 1999; Tauch, 2004). However, if we consider that the process began in 1999, it can clearly be appreciated that the Europe for which the model was originally destined was patently different from the unbalanced and struggling union we have today. At that time, seeming prosperity, rapid economic growth and high levels of employment and consumerism indicated that the possibility for free movement for all citizens throughout Europe, both as students and as workers, was a realistic possibility rather than a utopian ideal. Today, in a vastly different political and socio-economic arena, we find that, in Spain, we are in the very first stages of implementing study programmes whose requirements in infrastructure and whose final outcomes are no longer linked to the society for which they were designed. The possibility of adapting them to meet those needs may be so hampered by the bureaucratic processes of national quality assurance agencies as to render initiating such a process, at best, daunting. In this climate of minimal funding and professional overload, it has mostly been left to university teachers to find their own way through the quagmire of new legislation and expectations in order to bring some kind of coherence

and positive attitude to an ideal which, at the outset, may not have coincided with their educational culture or professional profile.

Over the last decade, it has become increasingly apparent that educational culture and the differences in values placed on the theory and practice of education cannot be changed by legislation alone (Huisman and Van der Wende, 2004: 355). Differences in degree systems persist: the undergraduate and master's degree cycle in Europe may take, for example, 3 + 2 years (France, Italy or Germany), 4 + 1 (Spain) or 3 + 1 (UK). Crucial to these policy decisions was the system in place prior to the Bologna agreement; in Spain, it would have been politically uncomfortable to change from the *licenciatura* (a four-year degree programme) to the new *grado* and claim this to be an equivalent if it only took three years to complete it, hence the 4 + 1 design for undergraduate and master's degrees. However, this has led to difficulties in enrolling students from other European countries on master's degree programmes because they do not have the required number of credits from their undergraduate programme to qualify for entry.

There are also marked differences in the expectations of tutors and evaluators across different cultures. In a presentation given at the Language Testing Forum (University of Warwick, 2011), Carol Sedgwick compared the approach to the research and writing of six MA theses from two European countries. She found that, depending on the cultural traditions of the educational settings, the requirements and guidance of tutors and the expectations and subsequent assessments of evaluators differed between educational cultures. The local contexts of the tutors constrained creation and writing, while the assessors were guided by the values of characteristics they perceived in repositories of academic work on the thesis topics, with these often coming from Anglophone publications.

Similarly, Green et al. (2002) identified a potential conflict between the global and local focus of the Bologna Declaration:

> The Declaration provided a common vision for change and suggested a clear set of goals and principles, leaving little ambiguity about why European universities

> should change or what direction those changes should take. The leadership challenge, then, is to translate the European agenda into a meaningful local one.

It is possible that the political implications of this challenge may have been too great a risk for some governments to take. The economic recession now taking place in several European countries provides a new scenario in which it is possible for state education departments to rapidly implement drastic changes to higher education systems, seemingly justified by economic necessity, but which may also harbour an underlying political agenda.

Additionally, in Spain, current unprecedentedly high levels of unemployment among young people (over 50% of 18-25 year-olds not in education are without work), combined with government cutbacks in more costly vocational training courses, has led to a huge rise in demand for university places. This has meant that in many degree programmes (especially those in Humanities and Social Sciences), students who in other circumstances and conditions would not have chosen this academic path in their lives, are struggling to find meaning and motivation in our classrooms. The situation is further complicated by the autonomous learning and small tutor group philosophy which is the corner-stone of the Bologna Declaration, but which cannot be implemented in our current socio-economic conditions due to lack of financing for such resources. These students find themselves in large groups, with little individual attention or feedback available from teachers, where demands are made on them to organise and structure their own study time and to be discerning about the sources they use as input for their academic development. For young people, from the so-called Generation Z, who were born in an era of mass information and technology and who are highly dependent on immediate feedback (of the type provided by all kinds of technology), on the easy and instant availability of second chances, and on an abundance of accessible information from multiple sources which all appear equally valid, these expectations are disjunct from their experience. The frustration this produces is also commonly shared by their teachers who find them at best inattentive, and at worst disrespectful. The possible consequences of this scenario become evident when we consider that student satisfaction is a key player in the quality assurance system on which the solvency and survival of degree programmes within the Bologna Process depends.

This is the panorama that currently faces many teachers and faculty managers in our higher education system; a situation that is not insurmountable if we employ creative thinking and flexibility in our approach, but which is compromised by the pressure of time that is required to carry out research and produce quality publications if we are to survive, maybe even prosper. In addressing some of these issues, we will focus on our own specific circumstance in adapting English language syllabus and materials design to the demands and philosophy of the new educational model set out in the Bologna process, for our translator training programme at the Faculty of Translation and Interpreting, Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. At the same time, we will examine the impact of integration into the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) on the different groups involved and consider both the strengths and potential weaknesses that may be built into our syllabus design and which it will be necessary to address if we are to succeed in creating a study programme that provides adequate academic input, addresses professional and life skills, and drives forward the language learning and acquisition processes, at the same time as remaining manageable in terms of the extra demands placed on teaching staff.

Designing a syllabus based on competences

In an educational model based on competence and, consequently, the assessment of levels of competence, it is clearly essential to put forward a theoretical definition of what we understand by the term 'competence' in the different areas covered by a programme of study. To the contrary, we will be in danger of limiting ourselves to describing the tasks which we propose as either a route to knowledge acquisition (teaching) or as a measure of performance (testing), thus confusing the tasks themselves with the combination of underlying knowledge and implementation strategies necessary to carry them out. This lack of definition of terminology and imprecision in its use is one of the areas most in need of attention in the implementation of the Bologna Process in higher education in Spain.

The concept of 'competence' within the field of education has grown from the developments in research into language learning and acquisition. One of the earliest expressions of the concept of communicative competence in language teaching and learning can be found in Hymes' (1971) attempt to distinguish two knowledge sets:

grammatical competence (the knowledge of the rules of a language) and sociolinguistic competence (the knowledge of the use of those rules). Widdowson (1978) continued to develop this idea with his description of the difference between 'usage' (knowledge of the linguistic system) and 'use' (ability to employ this knowledge in effective communication). Later, Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983) described communicative competence as grammatical competence (knowledge of the rules of grammar), sociolinguistic competence (knowledge of the rules of use and of discourse), strategic competence (knowledge of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies) and discourse competence (verbal and nonverbal communication strategies that may compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or insufficient competence). Bachman (1990) and Bachman and Palmer (1996) proposed a model of communicative language ability based on language competence, strategic competence, and psychophysiological mechanisms and were the first to also take into account the way in which these various components intertact with each other and the context in which language use occurs. A later addition to our understanding of communicative competence is Chaloub Deville's (2003) proposal for an interactional competence model which includes 'ability – in language user – in context'.

Thus, the attempt to describe and define 'competence', in this case, language competence, has developed over time with contributions from different researchers who have built on each others' arguments to move forward in understanding and knowledge creation. Their work has also provided a theoretical base on which to construct language teaching and learning syllabuses. In a wider setting, it seems that Competence Based Education has used the differentiation of the ideas of 'knowing something' and knowing how to implement that knowledge to achieve certain goals or to carry out tasks. However, the theory of how these knowledge bases or sets are acquired, how they interact in the observable performance of tasks and how they may thus be taught and measured is not well-documented. Tiana et al. (2011) state that "Competences constitute a kind of learning located between behaviour and abilities." and also that "…defining learning in terms of competences highlights the need to acquire knowledge in a way that can be mobilised in task resolution." However, the precise nature of that location and the process that might be involved in this knowledge acquisition remain elusive. Gonczi (2010) tends towards a definition of an integrated model of competency, based on

knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes displayed in context. Context is a key concept here since its scope avoids the necessity to include in the description of 'competence' features such as emotions, social components or motivation which have formed part of other models. Such features are, by nature, more unstable and are subject to a greater degree of variation than the other attributes, and it is helpful to consider them as part of a given context.

The *Libro Blanco* published by the Spanish National Quality Assurance Agency outlining the basic guidelines for the curriculum design of the undergraduate degree in Translation and Interpreting (*Grado en Traducción e Interpretación)* lists the key competences that are to be developed. Examples of these include 'fluency in foreign languages' (*dominio de lenguas extranjeras*), 'command of strategies and terminology for specialised translation' (*dominio de técnicas y terminología de la traducción especializada*), 'ability to work in a team' (*capacidad de trabajo en equipo*) or 'posess a wide cultural knowledge' (*poseer una amplia cultura*). Some of the transversal competences enumerated are 'critical reasoning', (*razonamiento critico*), initiative and entrepreneurial spirit (*iniciativa y espíritu emprendedor*) and 'ablility to apply knowledge to practice' (*capacidad de aplicar los conocimientos a la práctica*), amongst others. Pérez-Cañado (2009) states that in EHEA study programmes

> Competencies such as critical thinking skills or the ability to synthesize and analyze should be developed, and the move should be made towards a self-directed, autonomous learning where students' independence, involvement, and participation are fostered.

All of these are indisputably desirable goals, but to date, there is no description available of just what underlying factors or features may be involved in the outward demonstration or performance of these skills and how they may interact with one another or with particular contexts. This necessarily places limitations on the way they may be incorporated into teaching-learning programmes and also how they may be measured as outcomes of these programmes through the performance of tasks.

If syllabus and materials design is to be based on a theory of competency, it will also be necessary to distinguish between the product and process of learning. Competences

presented as performance descriptors constitute desirable outcomes of a teaching-learning programme but do not describe the processes necessary to attain them. In order to develop a syllabus and the materials that will be used in it, we need to focus on the description of the developmental stages through which these outcomes may be achieved.

Assessment

It is also essential that the assessment process that will be used both during and at the end of the teaching-learning programme is built into it from the start, both in terms of the components of the syllabus that will be subject to assessment (e.g. class attendance and participation, tests, assignments, final examination) and the weighting that each of these will be given. The assessment formats chosen also require prior consideration; will the tests and assignments evaluate competence in speaking, writing, reading, etc.? Will the evaluations necessarily be individual or will they include group assessment? Will all the assessment be carried out by the teacher/examiner or will students be involved in the assessment of their own and their peers' work? How, if at all, will the assessment of assignments differ from that of tests or examinations? How may the process of learning and acquisition of both language and competences be assessed, as opposed to looking only at the product of that process?

Consideration of such questions is essential if we are to move forward in the evaluation of the acquisition of competences and the full integration of our study programmes into the EAHE. Extensive research has been undertaken into testing language acquisition, but the acquisition of transversal and systemic competences, essentially related to the development of professional skills and of responsible citizens in a tolerant, diverse and democratic society is an area that is sparsely documented and still requires investigation, especially with reference to a higher education, rather than a vocational training, setting.

In part, the complexity of attempting to evaluate competences and the extent to which they have been acquired arises from the lack of definition of a construct of the competences we wish to measure. For the *Lengua B* subjects in the undergraduate degree in Translation and Interpreting, a total of 131 competences are listed as the

objectives to be developed through the materials delivered in 30 ECTS credits over two academic years. Thirty-three of these are objectives for the 6-credit subject, *Lengua BIII*. The abilities that underlie competences such as 'Know how to establish interpersonal relationships', 'Recognise and respect multicultural diversity' or 'Possess critical reasoning', have not been described and therefore attempting to measure them through the performance of tasks is necessarily a subjective, teacher-centred, process which cannot be standardized. Furthermore, since teaching-learning programmes generally attempt to identify progressive stages of development, we would be required to somehow identify and describe what constitutes the different levels of acquisition for each of the competences listed in our syllabus. It is also arguable that competence is not stable over time and that individuals develop many competences during their lifetime, but these may come and go depending on the frequency with which they are used and the level of need that a person has to implement them at different stages of their life.

In order to address this complex issue, it might make more pedagogical sense to place emphasis on the assessment of the outcomes of the teaching-learning programme, which can be much more easily described in terms of the specific content that is included in the syllabus and the materials, and on the learners' ability to apply the knowledge they have acquired to contexts other than those which were presented in the learning tasks. This, in effect, may be said to be a generic description of competence; the ability to apply knowledge acquired in a particular context to a resolve a task in another, different, context. In this way, specific outcomes of tasks aimed, for example, at the ability to work autonomously may be assessed by the degree of completion achieved, the details recorded, the resources used, etc. without claiming that being able to carry out this particular task is generalisable to the acquisition of the competence 'ability to work autonomously'. Specific learning outcomes are logically related to 'learning goals' which, in turn, are much easier to make explicit in terms of syllabus and materials design. They can also be more easily contemplated in progressive stages than the concept of acquiring a competence (or 131 competences).

Programming

A requisite of EHEA study programmes in Spain is a rigid prior timing plan for the entire content of the subject. This is a double-edged sword in the designing of a syllabus; it is advantageous in that it aids horizontal coordination, since all teachers

involved know how they should pace their classes ensuring that all groups receive similar input, and it also helps with transversal coordination because other subject teachers have easy access to information about content that may be essential input for students in order to progress in a different area of the curriculum. However, the disadvantage of this rigidity is that it allows limited scope for adapting to unforeseen circumstances of any nature (ranging from the need for further development and consolidation of any particular input, to a bank holiday falling on the day a class was timetabled). Generally, on paper, syllabus contents appear more compact; in the real life scenario of the classroom, it is common to find that everything takes longer and there is a tendency for even experienced teachers to include far too much content in their syllabus and consequently find it impossible to reach the end or to cover all the material they have projected in their plan. We have recently collected evidence for this from First Year students from one of our undergraduate degree programmes in answers to Quality Assurance questionnaires within our *Plan de Acción Tutorial* (Student Support Programme). Students reported that a large amount of content was hastily presented at the end of the course, causing pre-exam anxiety. This was corroborated by the minutes of a teacher coordination meeting which recorded that the content included in the syllabus had been more than could be covered given that students were starting this foreign language from scratch. It is difficult to know how to address this issue: if we reduce the planned content on paper, our subject may seem 'weak' and therefore may not be valued by the different stakeholders. If we produce a syllabus which looks solid and wide-ranging on paper, we are in danger of inducing high levels of stress, both in ourselves and our students, in our attempt to finish it. It is also fundamentally dishonest to publish a syllabus which cannot feasibly be covered in the time available.

Our challenge here, then, is to distinguish clearly between tasks that students can research, carry out and correct outside the classroom, making use of virtual learning environments, and classroom activities that benefit from face to face interaction and which require greater teacher support than it is feasible to give on-line. Since the EAHE requires from 40-60% of student study to take place autonomously, we need to carefully construct the framework for these learning activities in order to develop skills that will allow students to become more independent and self-reliant, to help them to identify legitimate information sources and to develop strategies whereby input sources other

than the teacher are used for language acquisition (developing life-long learning skills). However, there is also a danger in trying to set up too many activities on virtual platforms without first considering how these will be assessed, what kind of feedback is required and from whom. This forms part of the issue of assessment which, as discussed above, must be considered at the outset of the design of a syllabus and not thought of as simply an end-point that can be dealt with at later stage.

A proposal for the design of teaching-learning materials focused on the development of competences

The description of the following tasks attempts to demonstrate how we might base the design of English language teaching materials, oriented towards an undergraduate translator training programme, on a process approach. At the same time, we will try to focus explicitly on developing competences in both language and professional skills. The materials referred to in this section are specific to the subject *Lengua BIII*, a first semester subject in the second year of the study programme, aimed at a B2+ level on the CEFR.

In the first example of a teaching-learning unit, the focus for language acquisition is on the pronunciation of numbers and figures in English, the language used to express statistical information and the names and abbreviations used for international organisations. In a speaking activity, students are firstly required to discuss in pairs how they usually react when they come across a large number, a date or statistical information in a text they are reading in English. It is common to find that most cannot automatically read the numerical information in English and that they do not stop to work out how to pronounce it, but rather glide over it or read it to themselves in their first language (L1). It is pointed out that whilst this may not cause any immediate problem for private reading or even when translating, it will be totally unacceptable for interpreting; this raises students' awareness of possible future professional situations and helps to encourage their interest in the area of Mathematics which Humanities students often shy away from.

The next stage is to introduce two lists of numbers, figures, statistics and numerical expressions in English (Appendix I) and ask students to work in pairs or small groups to

see whether they can pronounce what is written. In this way, the students have already begun the cognitive process of working on the numbers before being presented with the answers for correct pronunciation. It is also interesting for them to note that the answers are not finite and that there is sometimes quite a big difference between what is written and what is pronounced.

Students are then asked to focus on a specific task in the Spanish-English translation equivalents for expressing percentages, with particular attention to the use of articles (e.g. '*Un 66% de los estudiantes aprobarán el examen*': *'Ø* 66% of [the] students will pass the exam*'; 'El 50% de los puestos de ordenador están ocupados*': *'Ø* 50% of the computers are in use'). This exemplifies the extent to which translation tasks into the foreign language can assist in language acquisition, especially when they are not used to 'replicate' grammar structures but to contrast them.

Students remain in groups in order to work on a translation of global statistics of gender inequality. Since the text is compiled from multiple sources, it is necessary for them to firstly carry out a task designed to lead them to investigate the meanings of the abbreviated forms of the different organisations in their L1 (e.g. in Spanish, *ILO*, *MSC*, *AI*, *PNUD*, etc.) before attempting to translate them. This develops both the linguistic and communicative competence of future translators by raising awareness to parts of the text which may at first seem insignificant since they are not actually 'words', but merely cited as sources. This can lead to them being overlooked in the translation process and consequently left in the form that they appear in, in the source text. The translation task itself then links in with other instrumental and transversal competences concerned with language acquisition and with broadening an understanding of the world, of the tremendously privileged place Western societies occupy in it, and of the imbalance in the worldwide production and use of resources, as students translate statistics about the situation of women worldwide in the areas of work, poverty, health, education and politics.

It is important that students work on this task in small groups and for the teacher to emphasise that the reason for doing so is to focus on the process of the translation rather than the product. We have often observed a tendency in group work for students to

divide texts into smaller chunks, with each one responsible for translating only 'their part' in order to finish more quickly. This product-oriented approach counters the intention of the activity to develop competence in the negotiation of meaning and in collaborative team work, so it is necessary to clearly establish at the outset the time that the task is expected to take. This is, of course, flexible, but related tasks such as more extensive research and peer revision can also be encouraged. Through these, students experience the desirability of checking a URL before clicking on a search result in order to judge the reliability of their sources and of seeing how readers react to their text. They become aware that they need to reformulate their translation if the reader reaches for the source text in order to interpret the meaning of the target text (this is especially effective if there are Erasmus or other exchange students in the group).

As well as teacher assessment for this task, self and peer assessment can be used through the implementation of standardised formulae in the form of self-assessment sheets containing several sections that refer to different aspects of the translation task. In these, students are firstly asked to note their information sources (with URLs) and to say why these were useful or misleading. In other sections they record structures and lexical items that they have encountered, aspects of the task that they have learned from or found particularly useful, corrections and alterations made to the translation after revision and the reasons for those changes, how well they feel their group worked as a team and how they functioned as an individual within that team. If self- and peer-assessment procedures such as these are used frequently throughout the study programme, they can encourage the development of competences such as the ability to discriminate valid information sources, the ability to objectively and constructively review their own and other people's work, the ability to understand how teams work (it is not necessary to have worked in a successful team for this) and how group dynamics can be improved, the ability to observe the learning process and, especially, the ability to recognise the relationship between commitment to a task, the final outcome and the sense of achievement on its completion. All of these are of fundamental importance in the development of professional skills and life values and are therefore necessary components of a competence-based syllabus adapted to the EAHE. They are also all elements whose external assessment by a teacher or examiner poses a serious challenge in terms of objectivity and 'fairness' and therefore it can be seen how self-assessment

naturally forms an essential and integral part of the syllabus design. At the same time, it relieves some of the teacher's assessment workload and transfers responsibility to the students for their learning process, making it easier to evaluate as a process rather than a mere product.

An autonomous study task that is added to this unit for further language development is uploaded to a virtual classroom in the form of listening, reading and writing tasks where students are required to match the information given in a BBC news broadcast[1] to diagrams of statistical trends and to focus on specific vocabulary used to describe them (e.g. 'fluctuate', 'sharp rise', 'slow decline', 'level off'), to describe information presented in the form of a graph, and to consider how this information would be expressed in Spanish. A specific grammar focus is also given with practice in the different forms that are used in English to express future time. These are tasks that can be assessed through tools available in virtual learning platforms such as Moodle which, once the necessary initial time investment in learning how to use them effectively has been made, greatly facilitate the work of the teacher. They can record scores and provide feedback to both students and teachers instantly and, through them, it is also possible to redirect learning and provide further opportunities for task completion, within a limited time-scale selected by the teacher, so that students can achieve pass scores. The teacher can set the number of marks that are deducted for a second attempt and the computer programme can randomly re-order the appearance of questions to avoid memorisation of answer selection. This can reduce the time teachers spend on holding re-sit tests and re-marking them, and also guide and reinforce student learning in required areas. One of the challenges for us in continuing to develop our teaching competences is to become efficient in the use of these tools, not least because they can greatly reduce the most tiring and time-consuming part of our workload.

Our second example of a teaching-learning unit which develops a range of competences through language learning tasks is based on the theme of internet use and abuse, cyber-harassment, and bullying or harassment in different social settings. As an introductory activity, students in pairs or small groups are asked to discuss what kinds of things might people become addicted to and to draw up a list which all students then contribute to consolidating on the board. A personal focus in then introduced by asking them to

answer a questionnaire about their own use and possible degree of addiction to internet (Appendix II). This engages with their personal and familiar world, providing a connection with the world of the classroom task and a powerful reason to search for ways to express their meaning in the foreign language. Subsequently, tasks are introduced involving vocabulary that describes negative emotions and also scientific investigation into addiction. This is followed by a reading task based on an article about internet addiction with comprehension questions to confirm understanding. Through all of these tasks, students' may develop both linguistic competence through awareness of differences in style and register for different text types and also awareness of the potential destructive outcomes of emotional, physical and psychological addictions.

By firstly looking at cyber-harassment on social networks, the second part of the unit focuses on different forms that harassment and bullying can take and how these may be dealt with. This is an important social issue which has special significance for the fourth year work placement (12 ECTS credits) and also for later professional life. Through a reading task, linguistic competence is developed by focusing on structures, expressions and textual devices used for giving advice and instructions in English. Students are then asked to collaboratively write possible definitions for the terms 'bully', 'victim' and 'bystander'. In Spanish, there is no obvious equivalent for 'bystander' in this situation: in dictionaries, we find equivalents such as *transeúnte*, *persona inocente*, *testigo inocente*, which contrast quite markedly with the meaning in this context. This task can therefore have a direct impact on developing translation students' awareness of how language itself forms part of the culture of a society, shaping the way people think; they can experience directly how developing intercultural competence involves not only knowing factual information about other cultures, but also experiencing how they conceive the world.

The following task involves listening to a song, *Black and Purple*[2], written and performed by two Canadian school students for an anti-bullying campaign. Music is a powerful way to engage our students' attention because it can trigger the involvement of different forms of intelligence which are directly connected to their emotions and thus provide an experience which goes beyond the cognitive processing of a text such as the one about how to deal with bullying previously presented in the task about ways of

giving advice. Students firstly carry out a gap-fill task as they listen to the song (Appendix III), with the gaps focusing on content words that are associated with the feelings and emotions involved for the different participants in an act of bullying. The lyrics of the song are open to various interpretations and the students are asked to participate in an on-line discussion forum where they present their own understanding of the song and discuss other students' contributions. Here, various transversal competences are involved such as interpreting texts, critical reasoning, respecting others and empathising, all of them triggering the development of language competence in postulating, agreeing, disagreeing, presenting alternative views, empathising with others' experiences, etc.

A final task that can be done outside the classroom and that encompasses all the transversal competences, is to write an acrostic poem using any of the words BULLY, VICTIM or BYSTANDER. By this stage, students should have acquired an accumulation of cognitive, language and emotional experience related to this important social issue. The writing of poetry can be a liberating way for learners to express themselves since it is free from many of the constraints of grammar structures and they can use the words they have learnt in new or unusual combinations with an immediacy of images that is not common to composition writing or critical commentary. Finally, the poems can be published in the on-line forum and commented on by other students in the group. These tasks and forums may be teacher, peer or self-assessed, or a combination of these may be used, but, because of the nature of the tasks, the assessments will mostly focus on the transversal competences that have been developed rather than on cognitive ones.

Conclusions

Trainee translators need to acquire and continue to consciously develop a range of different competences in order to carry out their profession: intellectual and cognitive competences in the form of linguistic and textual competence, specific competences in the use of technological tools, the implementation of documentation and terminology processes, team work and cultural and intercultural knowledge and understanding. Also, unique to the role of a translator or interpreter is making communication possible not between oneself and another, but between others; this requires the development of

transversal competences such as the ability to adapt to new situations, and to be empathic and creative. As Kate Grenville observes in her award-winning novel *The Lieutenant*, "The names of things, if you truly wanted to understand them, were as much about the spaces between the words as they were about the words themselves. Learning a language was not a matter of joining *any two points* with a line. It was a leap into the other." The ability to become the other is the overriding competence that will distinguish a successful translator and, possibly, an emotionally stable, responsible, participative citizen.

In order to make the acquisition of these competences possible for our students, as teachers we also have to be flexible and creative in adapting our syllabus and materials design to changing circumstances. These include the nature of our students as a social group whose interest can be engaged if our teaching approach presents materials in such a way as to make them accessible to them, at least in the initial presentation of the tasks. We will also need to adapt to our new socio-economic context which means that, in state higher education at least, the available infrastructure and staffing will definitively eliminate the idea of the small tutorial group as a utopian concept that was never achieved; it will be necessary to develop strategies to deal with a greater teaching load and larger numbers of students who require feedback and assessment while at the same time retaining quality standards. Some of the proposals and examples above have attempted to show how these issues may be dealt with, especially those concerning self- and peer-assessment and the use of virtual learning environments to alleviate the amount of time spent on teacher correction.

Finally, it will also be necessary for us as teachers to apply flexibility in our approach to interpreting and achieving the educational requirements of the EHEA. A step towards this may be to cease in our attempt to evaluate the acquisition of competences themselves and to instead set learning goals that will have expected or desired learning outcomes which can be described in a syllabus and subsequently assessed. Many challenges will face state-run universities in Spain over the next few years and it will only be possible to meet them by taking a flexible and creative approach to our teaching.

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Appendix I.

Can you pronounce the following numbers and figures in English?	***Can you pronounce the following phrases and expressions with numbers in English?***
a) 1,255 b) 1.255 c) 0.627 d) 335 BC e) 200 AD f) the 1900s g) 1801 h) 2 + 3 = 5 i) 209 + 112 = 321 j) 2 x 3 = 6 k) 15 x 42 = 630 l) 6 ÷ 3 = 2 m) ⅔ n) ¼ o) 4^2 p) 7^3 q) 12^{th} r) 8^{th} s) $1.18bn (£751.3m) (etc.)	a) a 10km race b) a £5 note c) he was born on 25 January 2001 d) The Olympic Games took place in London in 2012 e) £1.20/kilo f) The carpet measures 140cm x 100cm g) How many wives did Henry VIII have? h) 66% applicants will be admitted to university i) 8/10 owners said their cats preferred it. j) WaveRider hypersonic jet aims to travel at 4,300mph (6,900km/h) k) 219,000,000 viewers watched the Games on NBC networks l) My mobile number is 635 016 244 m) Chelsea won 3 – 0 n) The tennis score is 15 – 0 o) The temperature outside is 0º C (etc.)

Appendix II.

INTERNET QUESTIONNAIRE

To assess your level of addiction to internet, answer the following questions using this scale:
1 = Rarely 2 = Occasionally 3 = Frequently 4 = Often 5 = Always

1. Do you find you stay on-line longer than you intended?
2. Do you neglect household chores to spend more time on-line?
3. How often do you prefer the excitement of the Internet to intimacy with your partner?
4. Do you form new relationships with fellow on-line users?
5. Do others in your life complain to you about the amount of time you spend on-line?
6. Do your studies or your grades suffer because of the amount of time you spend on-line?
7. Do you check your e-mail before something else that you need to do?
8. Do you become defensive or secretive when anyone asks you what you do on-line?
9. Do you block out disturbing thoughts about your life with soothing thoughts of the Internet?
10. Do you find yourself anticipating when you will go on-line again?
11. Do you connect to the internet on your mobile phone in order to feel in touch with the rest of the world?
12. Do you fear that life without the Internet would be boring, empty, and joyless?
13. Do you snap, yell, or become annoyed if someone bothers you while you are on-line?
14. Do you lose sleep due to late-night log-ins or the inability to switch off the computer?
15. Do you feel preoccupied with the Internet when off-line, or fantasize about being on-line?
16. How often do you find yourself saying "just a few more minutes" when on-line?
17. Have you tried to cut down the amount of time you spend on-line and fail?
18. Do you try to hide how long you've been on-line?
19. Do you choose to spend more time on-line over going out with others?
20. Do you have feelings of depression or anxiety when you are off-line, which go away once you are back on-line?

After you've answered all the questions, add the numbers you selected for each response to obtain a final score. The higher your score, the greater your level of addiction and the problems your Internet usage causes. Here's a general scale to help measure your score:
20 - 49 points: You are an average on-line user. You may surf the Web a bit too long at times, but you have control over your usage.
50 -79 points: You are experiencing occasional or frequent problems because of the Internet. You should consider their full impact on your life.
80 - 100 points: Your Internet usage is causing significant problems in your life. You should evaluate the impact of the Internet on your life and address the problems directly caused by your Internet usage.

After you have identified the category that fits your total score, look back at those questions for which your scored a 4 or 5. Did you realize this was a significant problem for you?

Appendix III.

Black And Purple

He has to stand up and be strong
To show everyone he belongs
She has to fight to live her life
She has to hide her pain inside

And everyone is scared of him
But that's the way that he's gotta live
Do you think she feels his pain
There's no justice in this game

And when they fall asleep at night
They know the morning won't be bright

'Cause they are living in a hell
Yeah they're trapped inside themselves

But is it worth everything that they said it would be
Has he become the enemy
Will she ever live in a world of peace
He's gotta wash away the black burdens he feels
She's gotta cover all the purple scars that she can heal

She makes that girl feel so small
She can't hear her silent cries at all
And it is wrong to let down their guard
'Cause in this world you can't have a heart

His days are long he wants to die
'Cause he knows that he's a different guy
When will he take off his mask and leave everything to the past
Leave it in the past – leave it in the past

(There was a time) Oh life was so much easier then, I know
(A memory left behind) I can't remember what it's like
(I worked so hard)Trying to make everyone look up to me
But as hard as I try only black and purple bruises
Ache behind my eyes ache behind my eyes

And it wasn't worth what they said it would be
I became the enemy
Am I gonna live in a world of peace
'Cause I washed all the black burdens out of me (out of me)
Yeah I healed all the purple scars everyone could see
I found me