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Foreign Language Training
in Translation and
Interpreting Programmes


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Teaching grammar in Translation and Interpreting in Spain: the trainers' view

Abstract: As foreign language teaching in general has swung away from traditional grammar translation and audio-lingual approaches to communicative methodologies, the way in which grammar is taught has, as a general rule, become less prescriptive and more inductive. However, the fact remains that grammar plays an essential role in the accurate expression of meaning.

The teaching of foreign languages for undergraduates studying Translation and Interpreting (TI), focussing on their specific needs in the light of professional TI practice, has started to receive more attention in the literature over the last two decades, thanks to a number of experts.

In this chapter, we will present the results of a follow-up to our original 2008 study, in which we specifically focussed on how foreign language trainers in TI undergraduate programmes addressed the issue of how to ensure grammar competence on the part of their students, broken down by course year, and by B and C languages (first and second foreign languages, respectively).

Key words: foreign language teaching, translation, interpreting, grammar

1 Introduction

A number of scholars have drawn attention over the last two decades to the scant attention paid in the literature to the teaching of foreign languages for future translators and interpreters. It has been likened to, or classified as, a type of Language for Specific Purposes (Berenguer 1996; López & Tabuenca 2009; Clouet 2010; Huhta et al. 2013; Cerezo Herrero 2015; Carrasco 2016), the specific purposes in this case shaped by the needs of a would-be professional trainee translator/interpreter (Berenguer 1996, 1997, 1999; Mackenzie 1998; Brehm & Hurtado 1999; Möller Runge 2001; Beeby 2003, 2004; Álvarez González 2006; Mulligan, 2006; Clouet & Wood 2007; Cruz García & Adams 2008; Hernández Guerra & Cruz García 2009; López & Tabuenca 2009; Clouet 2010). Thus, some of the key points focussed on include contrastive analyses of the language pair (Berenguer 1996; Brehm 1996; Nord 2000; Clouet 2010; Carrasco 2016); text types and genres (Brehm 1996; Nord 2000; Kelly 2002; López & Tabuenca 2009); different registers and how utterances may have

different communicative effects (Nord 2000); documentation skills (Berenguer 1996); translation issues (Berenguer 1996; Beeby 2004); discourse analysis and specific reading skills (Berenguer 1996; Brehm 1996; Brehm & Hurtado 1999; Schaffner 2002; Trosborg 2002); more than the four traditional language skills of reading comprehension and writing, aural comprehension and speaking (López & Tabuenca 2009; Clouet 2010); and different language varieties (Clouet 2010). Some scholars consider reading to be the most important skill for translators (Barani & Karimnia 2014; Brehm 1996; Brehm & Hurtado 1999; Clouet 2010; Möller Runge 2001; Schaffner 2002; Trosborg 2002, among others), clearly in line with the traditional school of thought that translation is always, or should always be, carried out from the foreign language (B or C language) rather than into it. In this body of research, trainee interpreters' needs have received less attention than those of translators, although Adams and Cruz-García (2016, 2017) have made inroads into redressing the balance.

This study aims to shed light on how foreign language lecturers tackle the challenge of ensuring that their TI undergraduates consolidate and perfect their knowledge of grammar as applied to TI practitioner needs.

2 The teaching of foreign languages in Translation & Interpreting Degrees

The general thrust of much of the work mentioned in the introduction has been to highlight the specific foreign language-related needs of future translators and interpreters, by drawing attention to a number of key elements over and above “just knowing the language”, including contrastive linguistics; providing real world tasks reflecting the labour market; favouring practice over theory, meaning that more attention should be paid to implicit learning and that authentic (not graded) materials with different genres and text types should be used (cf. Carrasco Flores & Navarro Coy 2019). Additionally, as all acts of translation and interpretation constitute a form of intercultural mediation (Snell-Hornby et al., 1995), and all (written and spoken) texts are produced in a culturally-marked context (Nord 2003), knowledge of the culture in which they are given plays an essential part in the understanding of the source text and transfer of the meaning intended into the target language. However, Cerezo Herrero's study (2014) revealed that not all TI syllabi in Spain offered socio-cultural courses, and that those that did, paid more attention to this aspect in the B language than in the C language.

Many of the authors cited have contextualized their research in the light of earlier models for the general teaching of languages, dating back to the

grammar translation model, in which command of grammar was paramount and very few, if any, other factors were taken into consideration. Subsequent developments in methodology have made considerable progress to bring language learning in line with the demands of modern society. Some might say that the pendulum has swung a little too far, given that undergraduates, well-versed in today's communicative approach, and often convinced that watching British or American series in the original language, be it on TV, Netflix, Youtube or other platforms, is tantamount to “practising their English skills” can be hard pushed to systematically apply grammar rules when writing or speaking English, not to mention understanding and being able to explain the dos and don'ts of basic syntax and morphology. Beeby's words (1996, 101) reflect the frustration of many language teachers in TI undergraduate courses:

Previously, the first-year language teacher could enjoy the pleasant task of activating passive language skills with students who had little experience of participating in communicative situations in English. Today, students have been taught to “communicate” at school and to talk to English speakers in Spain and abroad. Therefore, the first-year language teacher is obliged to concentrate on the more formal aspects of the language.

Thanks to the work of these experts, this field is now making up for lost time. However, a recent study by Carrasco Flores and Navarro Coy (2019), based on information gleaned from the Teaching Guides published online by 23 Universities in Spain offering Translation and Interpreting undergraduate degrees, concludes that only a limited amount, if any, of the theoretical approach outlined in the literature referred to above is actually being put into practice. Most were found to follow what the authors term an “English for General Purposes (EGP)” approach, four combined EGP and ESP (English for Specific Purposes) approaches and only one adopted a complete ESP approach. Out of these five degrees, only one appeared to use a published coursebook specifically designed for translation purposes, while the others appeared to use only grammar and linguistics reference books. Accordingly, even though five universities appeared to cater for TI students' particular needs, only one university specified the materials used, in this case Brehm's (2007) coursebook for English. In this sense, despite the fact that the literature advocates an approach based on the specific needs of TI professionals, the results from this study suggest that most Spanish universities train students following an EGP approach, which may leave some of the TI-related needs unmet.

3 The importance of grammar

Grammar, understood as “language study dealing with word forms (morphology), word order in sentences (syntax) and now often language sounds (phonology)”, (Collins Concise English Dictionary 1980) may be considered the basic building block of a language, and plays a crucial part in both the understanding and production of a language. It is a necessary, although not of itself sufficient, requisite for the understanding of the meaning of a text, as other situational, context-based factors will also come into play in the final meaning construed. In the case of translators and interpreters, working at the interface between at least two different languages, there is also the very real danger of interferences creeping in, particularly from their mother tongue into their second or third language. The well-known concept of “false friends” is often assumed to pertain to the field of semantics, and particularly to lexical units (Chatzopoulou 2017), but can equally well be found both in syntax, hence the need for contrastive linguistics. Although we have found no studies comparing the frequency of this type of mother tongue interference in translation students with that of interpreting students, we have been able to ascertain that foreign language lecturers in TI programmes in Spain overwhelmingly favour written skills over their aural/oral counterparts, which may be leaving students less well prepared to activate their B and C language skills when listening and speaking, as compared to when reading and writing (Adams & Cruz-García 2016).

Whether we consider written or spoken skills, the study of grammar for translators and interpreters is inextricably linked to its usage. Whereas other fields of study may view a correct theoretical command of grammar rules (and their corresponding exceptions) as a learning outcome in itself, for trainee translators and interpreters, this is a necessary but not remotely sufficient requisite. Their knowledge of grammatical tenets is only valid insofar as they are able to apply said knowledge to the understanding of the source text and production of the target text. As Ruzicka Kenfel affirms (2003), a pragmalinguistic approach to the use and understanding of grammar is required, to ensure an appropriate interrelation of linguistic and extralinguistic knowledge, grammatical and communicative competence, to which end, grammar teaching in TI settings has to concentrate not only on the grammatically correct, but also on the pragmalinguistically appropriate. Disassociating grammatical structures per se from their corresponding context may help students consolidate their grammatical competence, but will require contextualization so that they can see how said structures convey meaning once embedded in texts.

We have mentioned that some scholars in the field of language training for would-be translators and interpreters mirror the traditional view that these activities should always be carried out from the foreign language into the mother tongue. While it is true that large multi-national organisations such as the EU or the UN, and many professional bodies (such as the The Institute of Translation and Interpreting and the International Association of Conference Interpreters [AIIC]) frown upon working from the mother tongue into a B language, professional translators may be called on to do so, for a range of different reasons, including their language combination, market factors and their relationship with the client, among others. As Pym said, almost two decades ago, “it is no longer enough to translate in one direction well, nor indeed to specialise in one particular field” (Pym 1992, 78). On these occasions, command of grammar will play an essential part in the production of a correctly worded text.

In fact, some scholars highlight the advantages of maximum comprehension of the source text when it is in the translator/interpreter’s mother tongue, and, as Stewart (2000) points out, when the B language in question is English, a less culturally marked target text may actually constitute an advantage, given that English is the *de facto* lingua franca in so many parts of the world, and is therefore understood and spoken by many as their second or third language. These users of the translated text will appreciate a clear, correct version that is easy to understand across the spectrum:

[...] native speaker competence in the TL [...] may occasionally prove to be a hindrance, since the L1 translator may tend to use a more country- and culture- specific, less internationalised English. This may turn out to be tough going and therefore discouraging for large numbers of those readers whose mother tongue is not English, which would defeat the object of the exercise” (Stewart 2000, 217).

If we turn our attention to interpreting, two of the graduate profiles established for TI degrees in Spain, linguistic and cultural mediators, on the one hand and dialogue, and liaison interpreters on the other,¹ will always have to be able to work both from their B and C languages into their mother tongue and from the latter into at least their B language (Adams & Cruz-García 2017), thus requiring not only perfect understanding of what they hear, but also a correct rendering of said message in their B language. In order to ensure appropriate preparation

1 Two of the graduate profiles established for undergraduate degrees in TI in Spain by the *Libro Blanco*, published by the Spanish Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (ANECA), 2004.

for bilateral dialogue interpreting, students need to be trained in, and practise using correct grammar structures both in the listening and speaking components of their B language usage, as well as written forms.

And the very nature of English as the lingua franca makes it essential that all graduates from TI programmes be able to both write and speak English correctly, regardless of their subsequent career path. These skills are no longer considered an added advantage in the broader job market, rather they have become given requirements, particularly in a service-driven economy like Spain's, in which tourism constitutes such a large percentage of annual GDP. The UNWTO's annual review of tourism highlights published in 2019 (giving figures for 2018) shows Spain to be ranked second, behind France, in terms of the number of foreign visitors receiving 83 million visitors, as opposed to France's 89 million, and ahead of the USA's 80 million. It also ranks second, this time behind the USA, in terms of earnings, with tourism contributing 74 billion dollars to the Spanish economy, as compared to 214 billion for the USA, and ahead of France (67 billion).

4 Our study

Against this backdrop, we decided to follow up an earlier survey of lecturers teaching foreign languages as B or C languages in TI faculties in Spain, to see how they approach the teaching of grammar in their classes. Replies were received from 54 lecturers from Translation and Interpreting Faculties at 16 universities.

Tab. 1 gives the breakdown by language:

Tab. 1: Number of lecturers by foreign language

Foreign language	Number of lecturers
English	23
German	16
French	7
Italian	3
Portuguese	2
Arabic	1
Chinese	1
Japanese	1
Total	54

Respondents were asked to specify the year in which they taught in order to reveal possible differences in teaching methodology depending on the academic year, bearing in mind the different level of accomplishment of the students as they progress forwards in their learning process.

A breakdown by curricular year for the B and C language yields the following results:

Tab. 2. Foreign language lecturers by curricular year

	First year	Second year	Third year
B language	19	10	2
C language	22	19	5
Total	41	29	7

The fact that the total number of occurrences (77) exceeds the 54 lecturers included in the survey can be explained by the fact that one lecturer will typically teach groups in different curricular years. The largest number of lecturers teaches in the first year of T&I studies (41), followed by the second year (29) while just 7 give classes in the third year. This is coherent with the concentration of foreign language teaching in the first three years of TI degrees in Spain, where they are normally planned to ensure language competence before translation and interpreting subjects are introduced. As such, some faculties only offer languages classes in the first year, others in the first two years, and so on.

Of the 41 lecturers who teach in the first year, 19 do so in the B language and 22 in the C, while 10 lecturers teach both B and C languages.

4.1 Results

The specific question posed in our survey reads as follows: "how do you ensure students' learning or consolidation of grammar in the foreign language in your subject(s)? (If you teach in different academic years, specify in which years you apply which of the following options)."

Participants were given the following options:

- a) Some classes are entirely dedicated to grammar.
- b) Grammar issues are covered as they come up in the texts used in class or those that the students produce.
- c) Students study grammar independently and check any queries with their teacher.
- d) Other (specify):

The overall responses to this question are presented in Tab. 3:

Tab. 3. Approaches to grammar learning

Factors	Occurrences
Some classes are entirely dedicated to grammar	8
Grammar issues are covered as they come up in the texts used in class or those that the students produce	22
Students study grammar independently and check any queries with their teacher	0
Other	1
B, d	1
A, b, c	4
A, b	5
B, c	5
A or c depending on the year	1
Varies by B or C language	5
No answer	2
Total	54

The results of this table are determined, as some of the lecturers who responded to our questionnaire explained, by whether the classes constituted the teaching of the first or second foreign language (B and C, respectively). Another relevant factor is that some lecturers teach the theoretical component for one academic year or group of students and the practical component for another. Hence, these lecturers' responses tended to reflect the following combinations: a b, a b c, b c.

In Tab. 4, we can see the responses broken down by academic year:

Tab. 4. Approach to grammar learning by academic year

Factors	1st year	2nd year	3rd year
Some classes are entirely dedicated to grammar	8 (19.51)	4 (13.79)	0
Grammar issues are covered as they come up in the texts used in class or those that the students produce	18 (43.90)	11 (37.93)	0
Students study grammar independently and check any queries with their teacher	0	0	1 (14.28)
Other	0	0	0
B, d	0	1 (3.44)	0
A, b, c	2 (4.87)	2 (6.89)	0
A and b	4 (9.75)	2 (6.89)	2 (28.57)
B, c	3 (7.31)	2 (6.89)	1 (14.28)
Varies by B or C language	4 (9.75)	5 (17.24)	2 (28.57)
No answer	2 (4.87)	2 (6.89)	1 (14.28)
Total	41	29	7

As observed in Tab. 4, classes dedicated solely to grammar correspond only to the first and second years, with the highest percentage given for the first year. In these two first years, moreover, respondents reported very similar levels for the second option (Grammar issues are covered as they come up in the texts used in class or those that require further explanation). The only solo option observed in the third year is independent study.

The combination a, b and c occurs, once again, only in the first and second years, underscoring the need to pay attention to foreign language grammar in the earlier stages of translation training. Thus, although students have to study grammar independently, follow-up takes the form of specific grammar classes concentrating specifically on aspects of grammar that appear in the texts that are used in the classroom.

Third year practice shows a higher incidence of the combination of a and b, observed to a lesser extent in the first and second years, while the combination of b and c is seen in the first three academic years. No specific grammar courses are scheduled but as special cases arise, they are explained in class and students spend some time studying them in their own time, as independent learning tasks. The highest percentage here can be seen in the third year.

Tab. 5 presents the responses broken down by B & C languages:

Tab. 5: Approach to grammar teaching by B/C language

Factors	B Language	C Language
Some classes are entirely dedicated to grammar	3 (10.71)	10 (28.57)
Grammar issues are covered as they come up in the texts used in class or those that the students produce	14 (51.72)	15 (42.85)
Students study grammar independently and check any queries with their teacher	0	0
Other	0	1 (2.85)
B, d	1 (3.57)	0
A, b, c	2 (7.14)	2 (5.71)
A and b	2 (7.14)	3 (8.57)
B, c	3 (10.71)	2 (5.71)
Varies by academic year (a, c)	1 (3.57)	0
No answer	2 (7.14)	2 (5.71)
Total	28	35

Only one of the two lecturers teaching the B language in two different academic years took this criterion into consideration, while none of the ten C language lecturers reported any distinction by academic year.

Although class sessions dedicated exclusively to the teaching of grammar are observed both for the B and C languages, this option is used to a greater extent in the C language. This is logical, bearing in mind that it constitutes the students' second foreign language, and that many of them will have started learning it from scratch as part of their undergraduate degree.

The percentages of combinations a, b and c, and b and c are higher in the B language than the C language, indicating that independent study of grammar is more prevalent among B language students. This result is coherent with their greater command of the first foreign language; their enhanced familiarity with grammatical issues makes it easier for them to study more in-depth details and to perfect their command of grammar in their stronger language than in their weaker one.

Tab. 6 shows the breakdown by foreign language studied:

Tab. 6: Approach to grammar teaching by foreign language

Factors	English	German	French	Italian & Portuguese	Chinese, Japanese & Arabic
Some classes are entirely dedicated to grammar	2 (8.33)	3 (18.75)	1 (14.28)	2 (40)	0
Grammar issues are covered as they come up in the texts used in class or those that the students produce	9 (40)	6 (37.5)	3 (42.85)	3 (60)	2 (100)
Students study grammar independently and check any queries with their teacher	0	0	0	0	0
Other	1 (4.16)	0	0	0	0
A, b, c	3 (12)	0	1 (14.28)	0	0
A and b	2 (8.33)	2 (12.5)	1 (14.28)	0	0
B, c	3 (12.5)	1 (6.25)	1 (14.28)	0	0
B, d	1 (4.16)	0	0	0	0
Varies by academic year (a, c)	1 (4.16)	0	0	0	0
Varies by B or C language	2 (8.33)	3 (18.75)	0	0	0
No answer	0	1 (6.25)	1 (14.28)	0	0
Total	24	16	7	5	2

The languages in which most classes are dedicated exclusively to grammar are Italian and Portuguese, followed by French and then English. The group comprising Chinese, Japanese and Arabic reported no results here, which is surprising given that they belong to distant language families with significant differences in terms of grammatical structure and use compared to the students' mother tongue or even with the first foreign language studied. This group of languages opted solely for dealing with grammar aspects as they arise in the texts used in class (b) and, in fact, presented the highest percentage for this option, followed by Italian/Portuguese, French, English and German.

Combinations of approaches can also be observed here. In English and French, a combination of the first three options in more or less equal proportions is common place. The a/b combination is most used in the teaching of French and German, implying that self-study of grammar by the students is not used in the teaching of grammar.

4.2 Discussion

The methodology used when teaching a foreign language for trainee translators and interpreters must necessarily take into consideration the specific needs of these professions. Although in some other cases, a communicative approach favouring fluency over accuracy may be deemed appropriate, this cannot be the case for TI undergraduates, as both their written and aural comprehension of source texts, and written and oral production of target texts, depend on the correct decoding and encoding of the language used. For future translators and interpreters, the languages they study and acquire are the basic tools of their trade, to enable at least two different parties to communicate, with the translator and/or interpreter acting as a mediator. It goes without saying that in both cases, correct use of the language(s) in question is a basic prerequisite for quality; it is the difference in the learning objectives in each case that has led us to carry out a study of this type.

The fact that in our study, carried out in the Faculties of Translation and Interpreting in Spain, the option "Grammar issues are covered as they come up in the texts used in class or those that the students produce" was the most widely used in the first and second years suggests that, in this context, grammar tends to be studied within the framework of specific texts. It would therefore be the text (and its content) that constitutes the core foreign language learning element, with grammar tending to be relegated to a secondary role. At the same time, although this option emerged as the preferred practice both in the learning of the B and C languages (first and second foreign languages, respectively), it was more widespread in the B language. It is clear that students will have a better command of their first foreign language and will therefore be better able to understand the texts they work on. In fact, some Translation and Interpreting Faculties hold specifically designed entrance examinations in order to guarantee that incoming first-year students already have a minimum level of their B language; these exams may also act as a deterrent for those students with too low a level. A student with advanced knowledge of one foreign language can be expected to be both more willing to and better able to learn a second foreign language. However, the results of our study do not seem to indicate

as significant a difference in approach to teaching the B or C language as one might have expected. As far as the different languages are concerned (English, French, German, Italian/Portuguese, Chinese/Japanese/Arabic), this dominant tendency prevails, regardless of the specific language. In short, our results indicate a general tendency in these Faculties of Translation and Interpreting towards a functional learning of grammar, insofar as it constitutes a means towards consolidating the understanding of texts used in the classroom.

5 Conclusions

This initial exploration of how grammar, one of the main building blocks of understanding of and expression in a foreign language, be it the B or C language, is taught, and by extension learnt in Translation and Interpreting undergraduate programmes in Spain reveals a tendency to explain and reinforce knowledge of grammar aspects as they arise in the texts used in class. This underscores the specific nature of foreign language training in this context, in which command of all languages concerned has to be functional rather than theoretical. In line with previous research that has shown that lecturers, in practice, favour comprehension over production and written skills over their spoken counterparts, future research would help to inform a further balancing of the weighting of these skills, both in preparation for the translation and interpreting subjects these trainees will be taking in the second half of their degrees, as well as for their future professional careers, whether they focus entirely or partially on translation and/or interpreting, or on other areas in which they need to call on their applied knowledge of the foreign languages studied.

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Subtitling in language teaching for trainee translators and interpreters

Abstract: This paper deals with the active use of intralingual subtitling in English as a didactic tool that can benefit trainee translators and interpreters in their language learning process as well as in the development of strategies that will be relevant in their future work as translators and interpreters. More specifically, this study focuses on text synthesising through reduction strategies. A description will be given of a class session where the students were asked to produce intralingual subtitles (English-English) for audiovisual material that required a considerable exercise of synthesis in order to be appropriately subtitled.

Key words: language teaching and learning, trainee translators and interpreters, intralingual subtitling, reduction strategies

1 Introduction

Subtitles and subtitled material have been widely used in the language classroom over recent decades, either in the form of interlingual (standard) or intralingual (bimodal) subtitling, as detailed in Gambier (2007). Interlingual subtitles are those which involve the use of two languages (the original or source language and the target language), while intralingual subtitles involve only one language. In turn, interlingual subtitles can be classified into two categories: on the one hand, those resulting from the translation from the foreign language (L2) into the mother tongue (L1); on the other hand, those resulting from the translation from L1 into L2, also known as inversed subtitles.

Intralingual subtitles are commonly used in Spain in order to make audiovisual texts accessible for the deaf and those with hearing impairments and are also the kind of subtitles traditionally employed in the learning and enhancement of a foreign language. The difference between the subtitles in the contexts mentioned is that subtitles in the first case provide not only the dialogues of the characters of the audiovisual programme but also information about the different types of sounds which are relevant for the understanding of the plot (e.g. sound effects and paralinguistic information), while those used for language training purposes only account for the content of the dialogues.