# Translation problems across the ocean: Testing a pedagogical typology in Chile and Spain

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**RÉSUMÉ**
Reconnaître les problèmes de traduction, les classer et réfléchir sur les stratégies qui pourraient les résoudre, semble être une bonne approche pédagogique pour développer la compétence stratégique dans le cadre de la formation de traducteurs. Partant de cette hypothèse, les auteurs ont conçu une typologie de problèmes de traduction et l'ont utilisée dans la formation de traducteurs pour reconnaître et résoudre des problèmes comme une tâche devant être réalisée, soit avant la traduction proprement dite, au cours des premières étapes de la formation, soit après pour les étapes avancées. Cette expérience qui a été conduite dans des universités en Espagne et au Chili a donné lieu à une étude. Il s'agissait de déterminer d'une part, si les étudiants considèrent que la TPT et l'approche didactique proposées, les aident à résoudre des problèmes de traduction, à commettre moins d'erreurs, à réfléchir sur le processus de traduction et à parfaire leurs connaissances en traductologie, et d'autre part jusqu'à quel point cela est en mesure de les aider. Cette étude conduite pendant deux années consécutives dans ces deux pays concernait des étudiants de premier et de deuxième cycle. Les résultats obtenus laissent à penser que la TPT ainsi que l'approche pédagogique sont efficaces, et que leur utilité et leur fonction diffèrent selon les étapes d'apprentissage en traduction.

**ABSTRACT**
Identifying translation problems, classifying them, and thinking about the most adequate strategies for solving them can be a useful learning approach as well as a formative assessment tool to develop strategic competence in translation trainees. Departing from this hypothesis, the authors introduced translation trainees in Spain and Chile to a specifically designed translation problems' typology (TPT) and used it to identify and solve translation problems for some years, either as a pre-translation task, for early stages of translation training, or as a post-translation task, for advanced stages of translation training. Then, a study comprising a survey and a qualitative questionnaire was carried out to find out whether and to which extent the trainees perceived this pedagogical approach and the TPT as helpful to solve translation problems, make fewer mistakes in the translation tasks, reflect upon their translation process and increase their knowledge about Translation Studies. The survey was carried out for two consecutive years in both countries within different university programmes, both postgraduate and undergraduate. The results obtained suggest that the pedagogical approach and the TPT are effective, and that their role and usefulness is different in the early and late stages of the translation learning process.

**RESUMEN**
Identificar problemas de traducción, clasificarlos y pensar sobre las estrategias más adecuadas para resolverlos puede ser un buen enfoque pedagógico para desarrollar la competencia estratégica en la formación de traductores. Partiendo de esta hipótesis, los autores del artículo diseñaron una tipología de problemas de traducción (TPT) y la utilizaron para identificar y resolver problemas, ya sea como tarea previa a la traducción en sí, en etapas iniciales de la formación de traductores, o como tarea posterior a la traducción, en etapas avanzadas de la formación. Esta experiencia tuvo lugar durante unos años en universidades de España y Chile, tras los cuales se ha llevado a cabo un estudio, que incluye una encuesta y un cuestionario cualitativo, para averiguar si el alumnado percibe que el TPT y el enfoque pedagógico resultan de ayuda para resolver problemas de traducción, cometer menos errores, reflexionar sobre el proceso traductor e incrementar sus conocimientos sobre traductología y hasta qué punto es así. En el estudio ha participado alumnado de grado y de posgrado de los dos países durante dos años consecutivos. Los resultados sugieren que tanto el TPT como el enfoque pedagógico resultan eficaces y que su utilidad y su función varían en las diferentes etapas de aprendizaje de traducción.

**MOTS-CLÉS/KEYWORDS/PALABRAS CLAVE**
problèmes de traduction, classement des problèmes de traduction, ressources pédagogiques pour la formation en traduction, formation en traduction, développement de la compétence stratégique.
translation problems, translation problems classification, pedagogical tools for translation training, translation training, strategic competence development.
problemas de traducción, clasificación de problemas de traducción, recursos pedagógicos para la formación en traducción, formación en traducción, desarrollo de la competencia estratégica

## 1. Introduction

Strategic competence (SC) is included in most of the generally accepted translation competence (TC) models (Kelly 2005, PACTE 2000 and 2018, EMT expert Group 2022). It was defined in PACTE's early TC model (2000: 101) as "all the individual procedures, conscious and unconscious, verbal and non-verbal, used to solve the problems found during the translation process." In this model, which evidences the interrelation of competences, SC is considered to govern or manage all other competences. Kelly's TC model (2005) also includes SC as a governing competence over all other competences and is defined as "encompassing all the procedures applied to carry out organizational and planning skills, problem identification and problem-solving, monitoring, self-assessment, and revision" (Kelly 2005: 85). Moreover, in Kelly's model, what is called 'transfer competence' in many other models such as PACTE's, is included in SC. This is based on Kaiser-Cooke's idea (1994: 137) that from the perspective of an expert activity, translation is primarily a problem-solving activity "which involves problem recognition as well as decision-making, since recognition of the problem necessarily precedes decisions as to the various strategies which can be taken to solve it." Problem solving and decision making are also mentioned in the TC model of the Tuning project and included among instrumental competences (González and Wagenaar 2003: 83-84). More recently, the EMT expert Group has also stressed the importance of SC when stating that TC should encompass 'not only the actual meaning transfer phase between two languages (…) but also all the strategic, methodological and thematic

competences that come into play before, during and following the transfer phase per se' (DGT 2022: 7). Developing SC in translation trainees is, therefore, one of translation training's overall goals.

Translation problems have been studied by many scholars of Translation Studies (Krings 1986; Nord 1988/2005; Bell 1991/1998; Lörscher 1991; Miremadi 1991; Kiraly 1995; Wilss 1994 and 1998; Dancette 1997; Hansen 1997; Muñoz 2000; Hurtado 2001/2011; Mayoral 2001; Deebs 2005; González-Davies and Scott-Tennent 2005; Palumbo 2009; Angelone 2010; Toury 2010; Pavlović 2010; Way 2014; Pym 2017; De la Cova 2017; Calvo, 2018; Szymyślik 2019), although the approaches are very different and there is no consensus regarding the notion and the different aspects of translation problems. There are basically two reasons for this lack of consensus. Firstly, the different perspectives from which scholars have approached the concept range from one pole of abstract, theoretical, and even philosophical perspectives (e.g., Toury 2010) to another pole of methodological, operational, and even professional perspectives (e.g., Calvo 2018). Secondly, the notion of translation problem is a complex issue, often linked to a specific model of translation process and/or translation competence model. Many scholars disagree about key elements involved, such as the importance of the translator's experience when facing a problem, the automation and speed of problem-solving, the existence of different strategies to solve the problems, or the reactivity to the context underlying the problem (De la Cova 2017). For example, regarding the importance of the previous experience or level of competence of the translator when facing a translation problem, González-Davies and Scott-Tennent argue that:

> One important difference between beginner translators and experienced translators is the ability of the latter to spot a problem and to apply adequate strategies and procedures to solve it efficiently and as quickly as possible – the period between spotting the problem and solving it may go from a split second to whole days or weeks. (González-Davies and Scott-Tennent 2005: 162)

This contrasts with the opinion of Nord (1988/2005: 166), who states in her definition of translation problem that a translation problem is "an objective (or inter-subjective) transfer task which every translator (irrespective of their level of competence and of the technical working conditions) has to solve during a particular translation process." Another example of disagreement among scholars can be seen in the possible strategies —also called translation procedures, operations, techniques, or solutions— that can be adopted to solve the problems arising from the lack of a total or direct equivalent in a particular segment of a translation assignment. The points of view are completely opposed and controversial, not only in terms of types and use of the possible strategies, but also regarding their importance: many scholars keep considering translation procedures the quintessence of Translation Studies (TS), while others think of them as a theoretical anachronism (Zabalbeascoa 2000: 117).

Considering this lack of consensus, and since the aim of this article is not a theoretical discussion but the presentation of a pedagogical tool to work with translation problems in the classroom, we will just mention the definitions and models considered when designing the didactic materials presented in the following sections.

## 2. Theoretical framework

For the purposes of this article and the application of the translation problem typology, we adhere to the definition of translation problem offered by Deeb:

A translation problem is whatever presents obstacles in transferring the content of one piece of language into another whether the latter be an element (word), string of elements (clause), a phrase, a grammatical pattern or even a whole text. Of course, the degree of obstacle varies in intensity, leading one to the assumption that translation problems fall under different ranks in terms of challenge. (Deeb 2005: 3)

Additionally, Deeb (2005: 3) makes a distinction between the pre-translation and the post-translation approach to problems, which is very suitable in pedagogical terms. The former involves identifying the problem while analysing the source text before translating, while the latter implies detecting an error made because a problem was not identified. This dichotomy was already mentioned by Krings (1986: 266), who affirmed that translation pedagogy has tried "either to predict translation problems prospectively on the basis of a linguistic account of the source-language text or to identify translation problems retrospectively by an error analysis of the target-language text the subjects produced." These two approaches are in line with the two different pedagogical suggestions regarding the use of a translation problem typology made by the authors of this article, i.e., the pre-translation approach used in Spain and the post-translation approach used in Chile.

The issue of identifying a translation problem brings us to the problem-solving stages, since identifying a problem is usually the first step in this process. As Angelone (2010: 17) states: "The translation task is essentially a chain of decision-making activities relying on multiple, interconnected sequences of problem-solving behaviour for successful task completion." Angelone (2010: 20) suggests that there are three steps: problem recognition, solution proposal and solution evaluation. Dancette (1997: 86) also mentioned three steps, although they were different: "problem identification (reception of initial data, first interpretation, awareness of goals and constraints), data processing (comparisons, classifications, inferences, deductions, construction of propositions and images, transformations, and so on), and response (monitoring, revision, and decision making)."

To sum up, as Way (2014: 139) concludes, after reflecting upon the views of various TS scholars such as Wilss (1998) and González-Davies and Scott-Tennent (2005), decision making and problem solving are intertwined, because to solve a problem a decision must be made. After careful consideration of all the models mentioned, for the purposes of this article and the pedagogical implementation of the didactic materials presented, the authors choose to summarise the translation problem-solving stages in the following four steps: a) identification of a problem, b) decision on the appropriate strategies to solve it, c) solution of the problem and d) assessment and reflection (metacognitive stage).

## 3. The translation problems typology (TPT) as a pedagogical tool

Way (2014) states that classifying translation problems is important because this enables trainees to progressively acquire the necessary skills to justify their decisions and thus "decision making becomes internalized and offers the tools to better visualise, understand and justify decisions throughout training and in professional practice" (2014: 139). This is the spirit behind the Translation Problems Typology (TPT) presented here. The TPT was created to be used in the translation class as a pedagogical resource and it covers the whole translation process, following the three fundamental cognitive processes described by Angelone (2010: 17): "1) source language comprehension, 2) source-language-target language transfer of meaning, and 3) target language production." These give rise to the first three types of problems included in the TPT: comprehension problem, transfer problem, and rewriting problem. Finally, a fourth problem type

is added, the pragmatic problem, which is caused by the translation brief and/or the communicative context. By including these four problem types, the trainees can be made aware of each little step taken in the translation problem-solving process, which could otherwise be made in an automatic or unconscious way.

The TPT was also designed to help the trainees choose and reflect upon the strategies used, that is, to find the most appropriate criteria and resources (linguistic or extralinguistic) to solve the problems. For this reason, three of the four translation problem types –comprehension, transfer and rewriting problems– are divided in two sub-categories: linguistic and extralinguistic, as can be seen in Figure 1. The pragmatic problem is the only one that is not divided into the two sub-categories, because the reflection and possible research needed to solve the problem does not lie into the linguistic or extralinguistic categories. Pragmatic problems are created by the translation brief or the communicative context of the translation, thus their solution is metacognitive, since it needs reflection by the translator and, sometimes, it is necessary to talk to the client and seek clarification about, for instance, where the target text (TT) is going to be published.

FIGURE 1
**Translation problems typology (TPT)**

| |
|---|
| **1. Comprehension problem**. These problems arise when one element is not understood, and they can be either:<br>• **Linguistic** (terms, idioms, syntactic structures, cohesion, phraseology, etc.)<br>• **Extralinguistic**: cultural elements (i.e., a custom or tradition that does not exist in the target culture), encyclopaedic knowledge (i.e., general knowledge about the world and the specific vision of the world of the source language and culture) or domain-related knowledge (i.e., lack of knowledge of a concept due to the specificity of the domain: law, economics, sciences, engineering, etc.) |
| **2. Transfer problem**. These problems arise when one element may be literally translated, resulting in an incomprehensible or not idiomatic form in the target language or culture. It can also arise when the typical or traditional way of translating one element does not work in that specific context. These are problems resulting from differences between the two languages in the lexical, morphosyntactic, stylistic or textual level and can be either:<br>• **Linguistic** (false friends, idioms, syntactic structures more frequently used in the source than in the target language, punctuation used in a different way in both languages, etc.)<br>• **Extralinguistic** (cultural or domain-specific elements that may appear odd in the target culture if translated literally, e.g., non-existent customs, symbols, acronyms, or abbreviations that have different meanings) |
| **3. Rewriting problem**. These problems arise when an element of the source text seems to have been understood but is nonetheless difficult to rewrite or rephrase in the target language in an idiomatic, natural way or in the adequate mode, register, tenor, or language variety. This type of problem can be either:<br>• **Linguistic** (terms that cannot be repeated because of style, idioms that do not have a clear equivalent in the target language, nuances in meaning difficult to express in a natural way, syntactic structures or verb tenses or modes that do not coincide with those of the target language, etc.)<br>• **Extralinguistic** (for instance, finding an adequate translation or the proper translation procedure to explain, adapt, substitute, etc. cultural elements, encyclopaedic or domain-related knowledge.) |
| **4. Pragmatic problem**. These problems arise when the translation brief (implicit or explicit) implies making changes in the target text because of the potential reader of the TT, the communicative context, or some other important element. These problems can be related to intention, assumptions, or implicit elements in the source text, as well as to the characteristics of the target reader, the mode, and the communicative context of the target text. |

The rationale for separating linguistic and extralinguistic problems is that the sources for doing the research to find the solution of the problems in the two cases are very different. Let us see an example. Figure 2 shows two paragraphs of a text written in English.

**Extract of the novel *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, by John Buchan**

> My flat was at the first floor in a new block behind Langham Place. There was a common staircase, with a porter and a liftman at the entrance, but there was no restaurant or anything of that sort, and each flat was quite shut off from the others.
> (…) I was just fitting my key into the door when I noticed a man at my elbow. I had not seen him approach, and his sudden appearance made me start.

If beginner translation trainees are asked to translate this text, the linguistic comprehension problems that might arise, such as not understanding 'a man at my elbow' or 'made me start' can be solved looking at a general monolingual dictionary in the source language, where the definition of their wordings will be enough for the trainee to understand their meaning. However, an extralinguistic encyclopaedic comprehension problem such as 'Langham Place' will not be solved looking up in a dictionary. In this case, the trainee might realise that Langham Place is a name of a street, and s/he can even know that it is in London, where the novel takes place, because of the context or by consulting a map of London at Google maps, for instance, but that is not enough to understand the text, because the next sentence implies that Langham Place is referring to more than just a street name. Otherwise, the conjunction 'but' in the next sentence and the assumption that there should or could be a restaurant in a block of flats would not make sense. To solve this problem, a search on an internet browser is necessary, and then the trainee will discover that there is a famous hotel called Langham Place in London and that allows her/him to understand the text.

Once these linguistic and extralinguistic elements have been understood, the same elements might be classified as transfer, rewriting and/or pragmatic problems. For instance, the usual way to translate "start" into the target language would not be adequate in this context. Therefore, if in doubt, this word becomes a linguistic transfer problem, and a bilingual dictionary should be consulted, searching for the adequate translation of this atypical meaning of "start" into the target language.

Another example would be "a man at my elbow", which maybe is understood by the trainee but might not be easy to express in a natural, idiomatic way in the target language, because of the literary style and the register of the text, for instance. In this case, this expression becomes a linguistic rewriting problem, and can be solved consulting a thesaurus or a combinatory dictionary in the target language, or maybe rephrasing several times and thinking about the most natural/idiomatic solution and, if in doubt, consulting a monolingual corpus in the target language to see the target language expression's frequency of appearance, the most common contexts and registers where it appears, and so on.

Regarding "Langham Place", for the reader to understand the second sentence and the "but", the trainee needs to decide if some information that is obvious and implicit to the British reader -that Langham Place is a hotel- should be added in the target text, and if so, in what form: inside the sentence, as a footnote, etc. This is a pragmatic problem and cannot be solved by searching on the internet or consulting any lexicographic tool, but reflecting, thinking in a logical way and taking into account the translation brief: where the translation will be published, who the most likely target reader will be, what kind of knowledge this reader will have, and so on. To sum up, Figure 3 shows different suggested strategies to solve each type of problem, with a view to reduce the time devoted by trainees to unfruitful or unreliable searches.

FIGURE 3
**Recommended translation problem-solving strategies according to problem types**

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|---|
| **Suggested strategies to solve comprehension problems**:<br>• **Linguistic**: look the element up in monolingual lexicographical resources in the source language; ask a native speaker; identify the textual structure, the thematic progression, and the cohesion of the information; distinguish main ideas from secondary ones; apply logical reasoning; pay more attention to the content than the form; identify the facts present in the text.<br>• **Extralinguistic**: search for the element in monographs, encyclopaedias, atlases, databases, internet; ask a native speaker, subject-matter expert, or source language expert; search for parallel texts. |
| **Suggested strategies to solve transfer problems**:<br>• **Linguistic**: look up in dictionaries of doubts or critical/comprehensive bilingual dictionaries; consult monographic comparative works between the two languages involved; consult parallel and/or monolingual corpora in the target language to check how idiomatic and frequent the use of lexical or grammatical elements is, as well as their most usual contexts.<br>• **Extralinguistic**: ask native speakers of the target language; gather information to increase the cultural and encyclopaedic knowledge; search for parallel texts in the target language; internet searches to check the existence of customs, traditions, or certain elements in the target culture. |
| **Suggested strategies to solve rewriting problems**:<br>• **Linguistic**: ask yourself how the element causing the problem is said in that communicative situation, that is, 'put yourself in the author's shoes', have in mind the target reader, reproduce the text aloud, paraphrase the same units in different ways, search for spontaneity, be suspicious of words and structures of dubious naturalness in the target language. Look the element up in monolingual lexicographical works of the target language (regulatory, common usage, thesaurus, combinatory and collocation dictionaries), corpora, writing and text production handbooks, style guides, grammar manuals and parallel texts, so that you can produce an idiomatic target text which uses the adequate language variety, register, mode, and tenor. It is recommended to carefully read parallel texts originally written in the target language, belonging to the same genre and text type, and with the same degree of specialisation, that is, targeted at the same type of audience.<br>• **Extralinguistic**: consider the most appropriate criteria in terms of target text function and target reader expectations, use some of the translation procedures. Look the element up in monolingual encyclopaedic, specialised, or cultural lexicographical works of the target language, corpora, and parallel texts. |
| **Suggested strategies to solve pragmatic problems**: Ask the translation initiator (the client, the translation agency…) for clarification in case the translation brief is implicit and could potentially involve changes in the TT, or also in case the brief is explicit, but some aspects are not clear. Put yourself in the target reader's shoes; ask a potential reader to read your translation. Analyse the translation brief, the TT textual and communicative function, and the target reader expectations. |

## 4. Examples of use of the translation problems typology in the classroom

The hypothesis behind the present study is that, from a pedagogical viewpoint, identifying problems and thinking about how to solve them is an important aspect of the translation process, as it helps trainees become aware of how they translate, giving them hints about the origin of some of their mistakes when translating, and thus helping them find a possible and appropriate solution. This, in turn, favours reflection upon their translation practice.

For instance, let us say trainees are asked to translate a given text and then, later, receive the translation marked, with the mistakes underlined. The trainees are learning that they made some mistakes and can probably see the type of some of them -misspellings, failure to understand the source text and so on. However, the information received, and the reflection fostered, are not necessarily linked to the translation process, that is, they do not necessarily make the trainees recall when every specific mistake originated or how it came about. Therefore, this approach does not prevent the same type of mistake from reoccurring. The hypothesis behind the use of the TPT is that if an exercise identifying a translation problem and considering the most adequate way to

solve it is undertaken, this can help trainees be aware of the potential mistakes that could be avoided. This can also help trainees understand more broadly their own translation process and use better strategies and information sources to solve the problems saving time, as well as preventing many mistakes from occurring, because they become accustomed to identifying problems that could otherwise be overlooked.

Based on these assumptions, the authors of this article have been introducing trainee translators to translation problems and their classification -through the TPT- and then using this classification either as a pre- or post-translation task. The former approach is described in section 3.1. and consists in using the TPT to identify and solve translation problems with beginner trainees. The latter approach is described in section 3.2. and consists in using the TPT with advanced translation trainees to reflect upon the proposed solutions and the processes already carried out in translation tasks.

After using these two approaches for two years, the authors carried out a study, including a survey and a follow-up questionnaire which is presented in sections 4 and 5. The aim of the study was to see whether and to which extent the pedagogical approach described here and the use of the TPT were perceived by trainees as helpful to solve translation problems, to make fewer mistakes in the translation tasks, to reflect upon their translation process and to increase their knowledge about Translation Studies.

### *4.1. Example of use of the TPT as a pre-translation task at an early learning stage*

The didactic unit presented here is designed for university beginner translators from English into Spanish in their first year of training. The TPT is used with a pre-translation approach, as part of the preparation to translate the text.[1]

Figure 4 reproduces a text analysed in class, where many possible potential translation problems are identified. The trainees never receive a copy of the text with the problem types highlighted, this is only done here to give examples of the possible translation problems of different types that can be detected in the text, and which will obviously vary from one trainee to another, according to their previous knowledge, cultural background, etc. In fact, some elements can cause different problems at different stages of the translation process or cause different problems for different trainees. For instance, in the second line of the text shown in Figure 4, "100m" is marked as an extralinguistic rewriting problem, thinking of a trainee that understands that "m" is used for "millions" in the source text and doubts how to write in Spanish "100 million", because the combination of numbers and letters to express a number is not usual in Spanish. The convention in Spanish is to write either all in numbers (*100.000.000*) or all in letters (*cien millones*). However, "100m" could also be a comprehension problem for a trainee who does not know what "m" stands for, or a transfer problem, for a trainee who thinks of leaving the "m" in Spanish. This would not work in Spanish because "m" in this language is used for "meters".

FIGURE 4
**Fragment of a text with translation problem types highlighted. Text reproduced with permission of *The Economist* ©.**

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[1] To see a more thorough explanation of the whole didactic unit, see Orozco-Jutorán, 2016.

AN UNACCEPTABLE WEAPON
**If the United States were to decide that landmines, like biological and chemical weapons, are <u>beyond the pale</u> (CL), the world would listen**
The particular horror of <u>anti-personnel landmines</u> (CED) is that their power to kill and maim survives the fighting. More than <u>100m</u> (RE) mines lie undetected in more than 60 countries, tearing the limbs off perhaps <u>20,000</u> (TE) passers-by each year. New mines <u>are laid faster than old ones can be</u> (CL) cleared. Next month in <u>Geneva</u> (CEE) governments will be trying, once again, to rewrite the <u>United Nations</u>' (CEE) feeble 16-year-old rules on these pernicious weapons. They will once again find it difficult. An earlier meeting ended in stalemate with some wanting the weapon to be banned, others keen to leave matters as they are for a generation or two, many pursuing a range of compromises. This time, however, if <u>America</u> (CEC) were to <u>weigh in,</u> (CL) renouncing the use of mines and supporting the two dozen countries that urge a ban, the result might be different.
It could happen. The wounding of three <u>American</u> (TE) <u>servicemen</u> (TL) in Bosnia may have helped to concentrate <u>American</u> (TE) minds. But the unease goes well beyond this. There is, in <u>America</u> (CEC) and elsewhere, a move towards more sophisticated, less indiscriminate weapons.
<u>Yet</u> (CL) anti-personnel landmines are still being used, in vast numbers. China, for instance, not only has them <u>planted</u> (TL) the length of its borders but sells them to an eager market in the developing world. Nothing will bring this trade to an abrupt stop. <u>Hence</u> (CL) the <u>argument</u> (TL) for compromise, to <u>phase in</u> (RL) changes that may be acceptable to everyone on the long route to the "<u>eventual</u>" (TL) ban that many countries accept. It is proposed that a <u>metal tag</u> (CED) should be attached to <u>plastic mines</u> (CED) to make them detectable, and that mines outside <u>delineated fields</u> (CED) should be manufactured to self-destruct within a limited time, <u>say,</u> (TL) 30 days.

Codes used for the different translation problem types (underlined):
Comprehension:
      Linguistic (CL)
      Extralinguistic: cultural (CEC), encyclopaedic (CEE), domain-related (CED)
Transfer:
      Linguistic (TL)
      Extralinguistic (TE)
Rewriting:
      Linguistic (RL)
      Extralinguistic (RE)

The translation problems task is developed over several sessions and the objectives are to identify the text's translation problems, classify them according to the TPT and solve them using the documentation resources available -that have been learned in previous didactic units.

In session 1 trainees are introduced to the TPT (Figure 1), and to the recommended translation problem-solving strategies according to the problem (Figure 3). Both problem types and recommended strategies are thoroughly explained and there is a class debate to ensure trainees understand them.

In session 2 trainees are asked to detect, in the same text analysed in the previous task, which can be seen in Figure 4, five problems of different types.

In session 3, the trainees are asked to find a specific strategy and a possible solution for the five problems detected. Then, trainees are given a week to submit a table like the one shown in Figure 5, where they need to fill in the five problems detected, their type, the strategy used to solve it and a possible solution.

Finally, in session 4, trainees receive their tables back with comments by the trainer and discuss any possible questions or doubts concerning the activity, problem types, strategies, reliable documentation resources and so on.

FIGURE 5
**Table to be filled in and submitted by trainees**

| Source text fragment where the problem is | Problem type | Strategy used to solve the problem | Solution found |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | | | |
| 2 | | | |
| 3 | | | |
| 4 | | | |
| 5 | | | |

### *4.2. Example of use of the TPT as a post-translation task at an advanced learning stage*

This translation problems task is developed over several sessions with advanced translation trainees that are on their eighth semester, as a post-translation exercise. The objectives are to choose some translation problems; to classify them according to the TPT; to describe them, and, finally, to justify the solution proposed by explaining the strategies and resources used.

The course starts with the translation and revision of several texts during the first four weeks. Once the trainees are well-involved in the translation process and familiarised with the subject area (legal-economic), they are prepared to undertake the post-translation exercise on translation problems.

In sessions 1 to 4, trainees are introduced to the TPT (Figure 1) and to the recommended translation problem-solving strategies (Figure 3). Both problem types and recommended strategies are explained and discussed by means of examples. These examples are extracted from translations of prior courses and from the texts translated in this same course before this didactic unit. Trainees thus realise that translation problems have always been present in the translations they did previously, and that in most cases they have been able to offer a suitable solution. This helps trainees to familiarise themselves with this typology.

In sessions 5 to 10, trainees receive new texts to be translated and after the revision in class they are asked to choose at least 2 translation problems they faced when translating it and complete the Classification Table (CT) that can be seen in Figure 6. The CT includes key data such as the problematic element of the source text, problem type, description of the problem, theoretical basis for the proposed solution, and solution adopted in the target text. This systematic approach helps trainees become more aware of their translation process, develop critical thinking skills, and incorporate TS metalanguage into their justifications.

FIGURE 6
**Classification Table (CT) and instructions given to trainees to fill it in**

| **ST** | Quote the whole sentence, or paragraph if necessary, and highlight the translation problem. |
|---|---|
| **Type of problem** | Classify the problem according to the TPT |
| **Description of the problem** | Describe the problem in terms of impediments to convey the meaning of the ST, obstacles to translate the author's intentionality, challenges posed by textual and genre characteristics or the translation draft, etc. |
| **Theoretical basis for the proposed solution** | Provide support for the solution proposed by integrating theory from translation studies with grammatical, linguistic, or pragmatic approaches. Your writing should include technolect, translation techniques, references to parallel texts, definitions from monolingual/bilingual dictionaries/encyclopaedias, databases, assessment by domain experts, and any theoretical knowledge used or acquired. |

| TT | Quote the whole sentence, or paragraph if necessary, and highlight where the solution to the problem is. |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

During these sessions, every time a new text is introduced, 20 minutes are devoted to discuss the 'candidates' for translation problems. Since trainees have already translated and revised the text with the trainer's guidance, they are familiar with the problematic elements. Initially, the trainer completes—together with the trainees—the classification table (CT). This is done repeatedly over these 5 sessions with immediate feedback from the trainer, until trainees have enough confidence to complete the table by themselves.

In sessions 10-12, trainees continue working in pairs or groups of three to complete the CT. Then they are asked to share their work with the class in a presentation and the trainer offers feedback, making some recommendations and providing the necessary corrections to meet the requirements set up in the CT. In this way, using the TPT becomes a regular task in the translation process.

## 5. Samples for the survey

To introduce the study carried out, firstly the different groups of trainees that constituted the sample are presented. They come from two different universities, in Chile and Spain, with different backgrounds and contexts:

### 5.1. Groups 1 and 2, from Spain

The Faculty of Translation and Interpreting of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, in Spain, offers a Bachelor's degree in Translation and Interpreting and also several Master's degrees, one of them being the Official Master's degree in Translation and Intercultural Studies.

The Bachelor's degree is four years long and follows the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) guidelines, with an organisation of 60 ECTS credits per year. The Master's degree in Translation and Intercultural Studies is one year long, in which trainees take 60 ECTS, and also follows the EHEA guidelines.

The first group where the TPT was used is made up of the trainees of a compulsory translation subject called 'Introduction to translation from B to A language' that is taken in the first year of the Bachelor's degree and consists of 6 ECTS credits. These trainees are mostly 18 and 19 years old. They work from their B language (English) into their A language (Spanish). In the study, this group is referred to as group 1.

The second group where the TPT is used is made up of the trainees of a compulsory subject called 'Translation methodology' that consists of 3 ECTS credits and is part of a 15-ECTS module called 'Fundamentals of Translation, Translation Studies and Intercultural Studies' in the masters' degree. These are mostly 23 to 26 years-old Chinese trainees. In this subject, trainees do not actually translate; they are only introduced to the methodology of translation, and they do not work in a specific language combination. The examples used in class are in Chinese, English and Spanish, since they have a good command of all three languages. In the study, this group is referred to as group 2.

Therefore, the first group is an undergraduate, Spanish first university-year group working with their B-A language combination, whilst the second group is a postgraduate group of Chinese trainees working without a specific language combination. The common feature between the two groups is that they are both at an early stage of their translation learning process and thus the TPT

is used as a pre-translation task. Both groups participated in the survey that is described in section 5, for two consecutive years, 2021 and 2022.

### 5.2. Groups 3 and 4, from Chile

Undergraduate programmes in Chilean universities are typically designed to be completed in four or five years of full-time study, and there are 12 (Araya, 2022) universities currently offering translation programmes across the country.

The Instituto de Literatura y Ciencias del Lenguaje at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso (PUCV) offers a Bachelor of Arts in English Language and a Professional Degree of English-Spanish Translation after completion of nine semesters in the Translation Programme.

The undergraduate trainees who used the TPT are in their fourth and fifth year of university (eighth and ninth semester, respectively) and are generally aged between 20 and 24. The first study group from Chile attends the Legal-Economic Translation course in the eighth semester. In the study, this group is referred to as group 3, and they participated in the same survey that was conducted in Spain, also for two consecutive years, 2021 and 2022.

The second study group from Chile conducts a professional placement in certain institutions requiring translation services. During this last semester, trainees combine real translation work in a company or institution with academic activities, including the preparation of a final report on their placements. The translation placement report includes presenting five translation problems collected from the 20,000 words they must translate. In the study, this group is referred to as group 4. Since this is the more advanced group and the one that works more thoroughly with the TPT, this was the group that was considered best to elicit qualitative data and therefore they were asked to answer a qualitative questionnaire that will be described in the following section.

### 6. Study design

To see how useful the trainees consider the TPT, a survey and a qualitative questionnaire were designed and administered. The survey, described below, was administered for two consecutive years (academic years 2020-21 and 2021-22 in Spain and academic years 2021 and 2022 in Chile) to groups 1, 2 and 3. The qualitative questionnaire was applied in 2022 to group 4, in Chile, and was expected to provide qualitative data to triangulate with the quantitative data obtained in the survey.

The four questions of the survey were designed to test the four hypotheses: whether the pedagogical approach explained in the previous sections and the use of the TPT is perceived by trainees as (1) helpful to solve translation problems, (2) helpful to make fewer mistakes in the translation tasks, (3) helpful to reflect upon their translation process, and (4) helpful to increase their knowledge about Translation Studies. Besides testing these hypotheses, the survey also aimed at comparing the use of the TPT as a pre-translation task, with trainees at an early stage of the translation learning process (groups 1 and 2), and as a post-translation task, with trainees at an advanced stage of their translation learning process (groups 3 and 4).

The survey consisted of a set of questions, in a Google form format, and the trainees in groups 1, 2 and 3 were sent a link to the form by e-mail, so that they could answer the questions anonymously. The survey carried out was a non-interventional study and always keeps anonymity, therefore ethical approval was not required. In the e-mail sent, as well as in the Google form,

trainees were thoroughly informed about the purpose and the implications of the study and the fact that their participation was completely anonymous and on a volunteer basis.

The questions of the survey were five, the first four were multiple choice, and they can be seen in Figure 7. For each question, the trainees were asked to indicate whether they agreed with the statement using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = totally disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree or 5 = totally agree).

FIGURE 7
**Multiple choice questions asked in the survey regarding the use of the TPT**

| Q1. Using the TPT has been helpful to solve translation problems. |
| Q2. Using the TPT has been helpful to make fewer mistakes in the translations that I did from then on. |
| Q3. Using the TPT has helped me to reflect upon how I usually translate. |
| Q4. Filling in the table used in class after being introduced to the TPT increased my knowledge about Translation Studies. |

After these four questions, there was a fifth, open-ended question: "Would you like to add any comment or suggestion regarding the usefulness or the way of using the TPT in the translation classes?" This extra question was designed to help clarify and validate the previous answers since open-ended questions provide more information, and more useful and contextual feedback from respondents (Schuman and Presser 1979). On the other hand, it was thought that it could build a bridge between the survey and the qualitative questionnaire, facilitating the analysis and triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data.

The qualitative questionnaire administered to group 4 consisted of six open-ended questions, as can be seen in Figure 8.

FIGURE 8
**Questionnaire with open-ended questions applied in Chile**

| Q1. Was it easy to understand this Translation Problem Typology that has 4 sections and 2 subsections (linguistic and extralinguistic), from the first time you were introduced to it? |
| Q2. Once you understood and assimilated this typology, can you describe how you actually use it to identify and classify a translation problem when you find it? |
| Q3. Do you think it would be also useful to identity and classify translation problems before you start translating it, instead of doing this only after you have translated the text? |
| Q4. Do you think the repeated use of this typology in some classes of Legal-Economic Translation and during the Translation Placement/internship has helped you to access or gain theoretical knowledge of Translation Studies? |
| Q5. Do you consider that identifying and classifying the translation problems helps you to enhance the quality of your translations? |
| Q6. Do you agree with the following statement? "The use of a typology of translation problems should always be included in the translation courses of any translation training program" In case you agree with the statement, please elaborate. |

This qualitative questionnaire was designed to elicit data about the perception of the trainees regarding (1) how effective the pedagogical approach used to introduce and explain the TPT was; (2) the way the TPT is applied; (3) whether this approach should be also adopted in a pre-translation stage -since this questionnaire was only passed to trainees in group 4, who used the TPT as a post-translation task; (4) if the use of the TPT increases or mobilises their knowledge

about Translation Studies, (5) whether the use of the TPT contributed to improve the quality of their translations; and (6) the interest of introducing this pedagogical tool in translation training programmes.

## 7. Data obtained

### 7.1. Survey results

Regarding the survey, which was sent to trainees in groups 1, 2 and 3 for two consecutive years, a mean of 83% of the trainees answered the questions. This total percentage is broken down as follows:

– Group 1: Undergraduate trainees in Spain, using the TPT with pre-translation approach: 76%.
– Group 2: Postgraduate trainees in Spain, using the TPT with pre-translation approach: 91%.
– Group 3: Undergraduate trainees in Chile, using the TPT with post-translation approach: 82%.

Charts 1, 2, 3 and 4 show the survey results, comparing the answers to each of the four multiple choice questions of the three trainee groups. For each question, the trainees were asked to indicate whether they agreed with the statement using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = totally disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree or 5 = totally agree).

For the sake of clarity, for each of the three groups, the means of the answers obtained in years 1 and 2 were calculated, and this is the number that can be seen in each chart. This system allows to show the results for each group in only one column and thus the answers of the three groups can be compared in a simple chart. The datasets including all the answers to the surveys for each year and group can be consulted online.

CHART 1
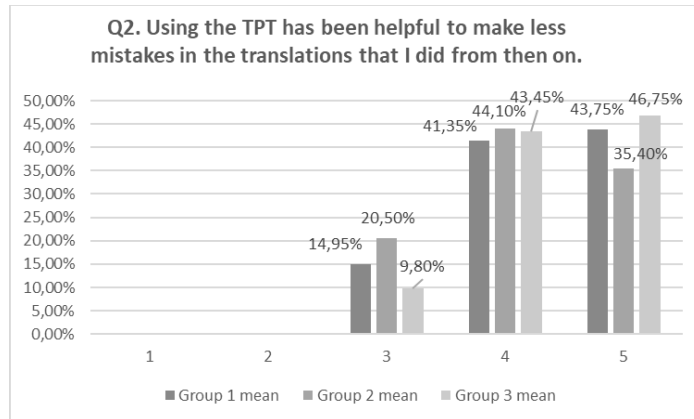**Comparison of answers to question 1 by the three trainee groups**
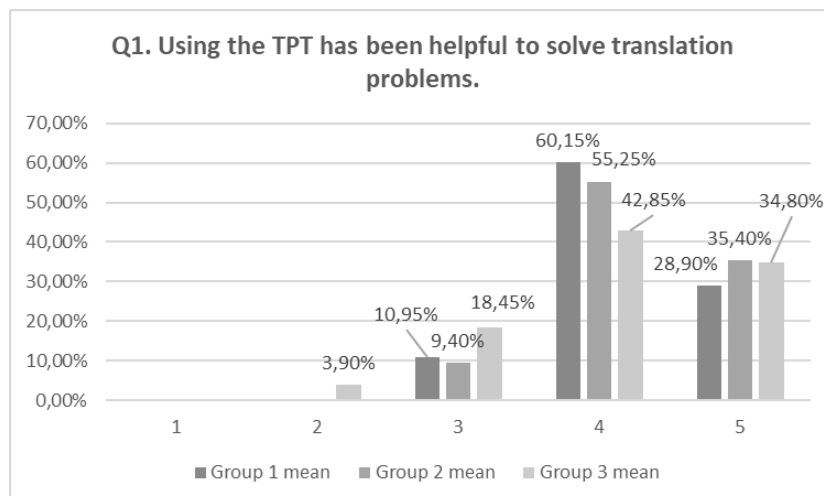


The answers to question 1, which was designed to see how helpful the TPT was to solve translation problems according to the trainees' perception, show some similarities and slight differences between the three groups. The most common answer for the three groups was "4- I

agree" (60%, 55% and 43% of the answers in groups 1, 2 and 3, respectively) followed by "5- I totally agree" (29%, 35% and 35%), then "3- I neither agree nor disagree" (11%, 9% and 18%). There were no "1-I totally disagree" answers in neither of the three groups and only 4% of the answers in group 3 were "2- I disagree". Adding the percentages of the answers "I agree" and "I totally agree" in each of the three groups (89%, 91% and 77%) suggests that most trainees found the TPT helpful to solve translation problems.

CHART 2
**Comparison of answers to question 2 by the three trainee groups**



The answers to question 2, which was designed to see how helpful the TPT was to make fewer mistakes in the translation tasks according to the trainees' perception, show some similarities and some differences between the three groups. The most common answers for the three groups were "4- I agree" (41%, 44% and 43% of the answers in groups 1, 2 and 3, respectively) and "5- I totally agree" (44%, 35% and 47%). These percentages were followed by the answer "3- I neither agree nor disagree" (15%, 20% and 10%). There were no answers of "1- I totally disagree" or "2- I disagree" in neither of the three groups. Adding the percentages of the answers "I agree" and "I totally agree" in each of the three groups (85%, 79% and 90%) suggests that most trainees found the TPT helpful or very helpful to make fewer mistakes in the translation tasks.

CHART 3
**Comparison of answers to question 3 by the three trainee groups**
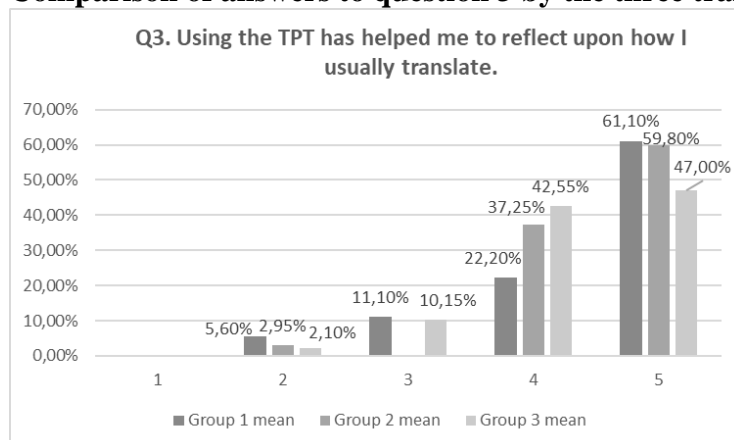
The answers to question 3, which was designed to see how helpful the TPT was to reflect upon their translation process according to the trainees' perception, show some similarities and some differences between the three groups. The most common answer for the three groups was "I totally agree" (61%, 60% and 47% of the answers in groups 1, 2 and 3, respectively), followed by "I agree" (22%, 37% and 43%), then "I neither agree nor disagree" (11% in group 1 and 10% in group 3) and, finally, "I disagree" (6%, 3% and 2%). Adding the percentages of the answers "I agree" and "I totally agree" in each of the three groups (83%, 97% and 90%) suggests that most trainees found the TPT helpful or very helpful to reflect upon their translation process.

CHART 4
**Comparison of answers to question 4 by the three trainee groups**
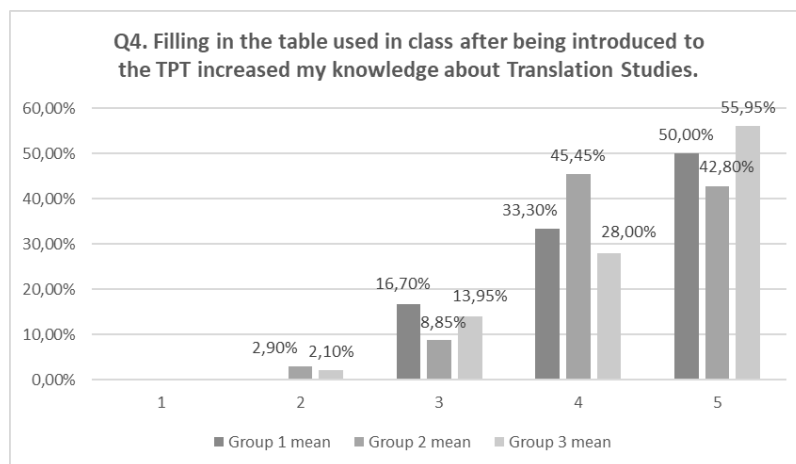


The answers to question 4, which was designed to see how helpful the TPT was to increase their knowledge about Translation Studies according to the trainees' perception, show some similarities and some differences between the three groups. The most common answers for the three groups were "I totally agree" (50%, 41% and 56% of the answers in groups 1, 2 and 3, respectively) and "I agree" (33%, 45% and 28%). The answer "I neither agree nor disagree" was chosen by 17%, 9% and 14% of the trainees in groups 1, 2 and 3 respectively, while "I disagree" received no answers in groups 1, 3% in group 2 and 2% in group 3. Finally, there were no answers of total disagreement in neither of the three groups. Adding the percentages of the answers "I agree" and "I totally agree" in each of the three groups (83%, 86% and 84%) suggests that most trainees found the TPT helpful or very helpful to increase their knowledge about Translation Studies.

Finally, the open, optional question included at the end of the survey ("Would you like to add any comment or suggestion regarding the usefulness or the way of using the TPT in the translation classes?") was answered by 20% of the trainees, and the group which provided more answers was group 3, the undergraduate trainees in Chile, using the TPT with a post-translation approach. The comments of trainees from all three groups could be summed up in two categories:

– The TPT was useful and functional (80%).
– The TPT was interesting, and its use widened my view of what translation is (20%).

## 7.2. *Qualitative questionnaire results*

As for the qualitative questionnaire, 80% of the trainees completed the questions in great detail. Trainees particularly highlighted the pedagogical utility of the TPT as part of their professional university training, and how it helped them to strengthen their translation competence. Here is a summary of the answers for the questionnaire, including personal appraisals and some suggestions:

- Q1: All trainees agreed that at first it was not easy to differentiate among the first three categories. However, as they were given more and more examples and started to apply the TPT in their own translations, classify the problems became an easier task. Suggestion: include more examples at the beginning.
- Q2: 90% of the trainees explained they followed the same step by step process: identification, analysis, description, classification of the problem with the TPT to finally offer a solution.
- Q3: 90% of the trainees indicated that it would be useful and more beneficial because it would enhance the productivity and quality of the translation process. Three trainees, however, emphasised the fact that translation problems are easier to identify during the translation process or during the revision.
- Q4: Except for one negative response, the rest of the trainees agreed that the use of the TTP helps to remember and think critically about translation studies and theory. Three trainees particularly stressed that this pedagogical exercise helps to defend their decisions with more grounds, to better understand theoretical concepts and to assign greater importance to TS than before.
- Q5: All trainees strongly believed that using the TPT helped them to enhance the quality of their translations, to become more aware of the mistakes, and that the TPT not only helps to understand the translation problems, but also provides other procedures to reach a high-quality translation.
- Q6: All trainees agreed that this translation approach to analyse and address translation problems should be part of any training course. The following answer sums up appropriately the trainees' remarks: "It would be beneficial not only for trainees, but also for trainers, for they will be able to give feedback based on a practical theoretical guide of a translation problem" and because "answers like 'it doesn't sound right to me' will change to, for example, "it is a linguistic transfer problem".

## 8. Conclusions

The analysis of the data obtained in the survey suggests several conclusions. First of all, if we add up the percentages of answers indicating total disagreement with the four questions asked in all groups and years, which is 0%, the percentage of answers indicating disagreement (that goes from 0% to 5%, the mean being 1,6%), and the percentage of "neither agree nor disagree" (that goes from 0% to 20%, the mean being 12%), the result is that only a mean of 13,6% trainees disagree or are not sure whether the TPT is helpful for solving translation problems, making fewer mistakes in the translation tasks, reflecting upon their translation process and increasing their knowledge about Translation Studies. This is confirmed by the addition of the percentages of answers indicating total agreement with the four questions asked in all groups and years (that goes from 29% to 61%, the mean being 45%) and agreement (that goes from 22% to 60%, the mean being 41%). This addition indicates that a mean of 86% trainees agree or totally agree that the TPT is

helpful for solving translation problems, making fewer mistakes in the translation tasks, reflecting upon their translation process, and increasing their knowledge about Translation Studies.

This data is also supported by the answers obtained to the fifth question of the survey, since all answers received were positive and indicated the usefulness or interest of the TPT, and by the answers received to the qualitative questionnaire, where the answers were again positive and provided different insights into the usefulness of the TPT. This first conclusion is encouraging and suggests that the TPT is a useful pedagogical tool for the translation class.

Secondly, looking at the specific percentages of the answers to each of the multiple-choice questions of the survey separately, we can see that there are interesting differences in the trainees' perception of the usefulness of the TPT for the four elements that were inquired: solving translation problems, making fewer mistakes in the translation tasks, reflecting upon their translation process, and increasing their knowledge about Translation Studies.

The clearest difference is that there is only one question to which there are no answers of disagreement or total disagreement at all in any of the groups or years, and that is question 2, regarding the relationship between the use of the TPT and making less mistakes in the translation tasks. This suggests that this is one of the most useful features of the TPT according to the trainees' perception, both used as a pre-translation task and a post-translation task. This suggestion is reinforced by the answers to the fifth question of the qualitative questionnaire ("Do you consider that identifying and classifying the translation problems helps you to enhance the quality of your translations?"), where all trainees said that it helped enhance the quality of their translations and some of them mentioned specifically that it helped them make less mistakes.

From the pedagogical point of view, this invites to research further into the co-relation between working with the detection/solution of translation problems in class and the felt sense of security of trainees regarding making less mistakes in their translations. An interesting idea could be to research whether this sense of security leads to effectively making less mistakes, which could be verified via a repeated measurement study, for instance.

Another important difference that can be pointed out is that the question of the survey that received most "totally agree" answers from all three groups of trainees in all years was the third one, regarding the helpfulness of the TPT for reflecting upon their translation process. The percentages of total agreement were 61% in group 1, 60% in group 2 and 47% in group 3. This suggests that this would also be one of the most useful features of the TPT according to the trainees' perception, with some interesting differences when the TPT is used as a pre-translation task or a post-translation task. In the answers of groups 1 and 2, where the TPT was used a pre-translation task, the "totally agree" percentages were the highest of all four questions, whilst in the answers of group 3, where the TPT was used a post-translation task, the most prominent "totally agree" percentage was to question 4 (related to the increase of their knowledge about Translation Studies), which received a 56% of answers, seven points higher than this groups' answers to question 3. This makes sense, since the trainees of group 3 where advanced translation trainees and thus were able to integrate the use of the TPT in their wider experience and perspective of translation. Again, this is clearly reinforced by the answers to the qualitative questionnaire, were trainees of group 4, all advanced trainees, mentioned in all cases that the TPT had been helpful both to reflect upon the translation process and to increase or at least recall their knowledge about translation.

Finally, regarding the usefulness of the TPT to solve translation problems, the results obtained suggest that there are also differences in the perception of trainees depending on the use of the TPT as a pre or post translation task. Although there were not any answers of "total disagreement" in any group or year, it is interesting to see that in groups 1 and 2 there were no "disagreement"

answers at all, whist in group 3 there was a 4%. This seems to suggest that using the TPT as a pre-translation task (groups 1 and 2) leads to the trainees' perception that it helps to solve problems more than when the TPT is used as a post-translation task (group 3). This would make sense, because in the latter case the translation has already been finished and the problems have already been solved, whether they were well solved or not. These compared results seem to point to the pre-translation approach being more helpful as a practice-oriented tool to solve problems and the post-translation approach being more helpful as a reflection-oriented tool. This could be of help for trainers intending to use the TPT in class when deciding whether to use it as a pre or post translation task.

In conclusion, with this article we hope to contribute to translation training by offering a pedagogical tool, the TPT, which seems to have several advantages, either with a pre-translation or a post-translation approach, according to the trainees' perception. We believe it can help trainees detect and solve translation problems, allow them to reflect on their own translation process, thereby providing the decision-making process with a theoretical foundation, as well as help them to make fewer mistakes in their subsequent translation assignments. We also believe that it can be easily used in any culture and language combination and university program, both pre- and post-graduate.

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