

English language teaching in translator training in Spain: a cross-sectional study

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Abstract

Despite the fact that the literature on translation competence and translator training explicitly advocates specific language training for translator and interpreter students, no concrete frameworks providing guidelines on how this training should be approached have been created. This paper explores the current situation of this language training in Translation and Interpreting undergraduate programmes in Spain by analysing the syllabi and materials used in their EFL courses. The results obtained from this study shows that universities use a limited number of specific materials, general and commercially available EFL teaching materials being the norm. In this sense, there seems to be an apparent lack of awareness of such specific language needs, which suggests that students' needs are not completely met.

Keywords: translator training; translation competence; English for Translation and Interpreting; materials analysis.

Resumen. *La enseñanza del inglés en la formación de traductores en España: estudio transversal*

A pesar de que la literatura sobre competencia traductora y la formación de traductores aboga explícitamente por una formación lingüística específica, no existe ningún marco que proporcione directrices acerca de cómo enfocar esta formación. El presente trabajo ofrece una visión de la situación actual de esta formación en los grados en Traducción e Interpretación en España a partir del análisis de sus guías docentes y de los materiales que se utilizan en las asignaturas de inglés como lengua extranjera. Los resultados obtenidos muestran que las universidades usan un número limitado de materiales didácticos específicos, ya que la mayoría utiliza únicamente

libros de texto de inglés general. En este sentido, parece haber una falta de conciencia de estas necesidades lingüísticas específicas, lo que sugiere que los estudiantes no cuentan con una formación que satisfaga del todo sus necesidades.

Palabras clave: formación de traductores; competencia traductora; inglés para Traducción e Interpretación; análisis de materiales.

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1. Introduction

Nowadays, it is widely accepted that Translation Competence (TC) is a key element and the ultimate goal of translator training (Schäffner & Abad 2000; Hurtado 2001; PACTE 2003; Cerezo Herrero 2013, 2015). This competence, which accounts for the manifold skills, competences and knowledge necessary to translate, has received much attention in the last few years. Yet, the number of studies devoted to analysing the ways in which this construct can be operationalised in translator training is scarce. In fact, no frameworks providing specific guidelines on how this macro-competence should be developed have been established. As a result, there appears to be a limited number of teaching materials seeking to develop the translator trainees' bilingual competence according to their target needs.

Moreover, given the specific language and communicative needs of translator trainees, the language training that they need to be exposed to has been identified as a type of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) (Berenguer 1996; Cerezo Herrero 2015; Clouet 2010; Huhta *et al.* 2013; López & Tabuenca 2009; Nord 2005; Carrasco 2016), which we have coined *English for Translation and Interpreting* (ETI). Although the literature clearly advocates the specificity of this training, only very few endeavours in creating actual teaching materials have been made, these consisting generally of a list of (more or less vague) objectives and descriptions of the types of competences and knowledge that these prospective professionals need to develop (see Álvarez González 2006; Beeby 2003, 2004; Berenguer 1996, 1997, 1999; Brehm & Hurtado 1999; Clouet 2010; Clouet & Wood 2007; Cruz García & Adams 2008; Hernández Guerra & Cruz García 2009; López & Tabuenca 2009; Mackenzie 1998; Möller 2001; Mulligan 2006). Accordingly, there seems to be a bibliographical void in terms of teaching materials or specific guidelines to be followed in the language classroom (Brehm 2004; Cerezo Herrero 2015).

Considering the abovementioned scenario, the aim of the present paper is to explore the current situation of EFL courses in Translation and Interpreting undergraduate programmes in Spain to find out whether they follow a general or an ESP approach, which will ultimately confirm if universities are catering for students' needs.

2. The key features of English for Translation and Interpreting

As argued above, given the specific language and communication needs of translation and interpreting trainees, it seems that ETI should be considered an ESP. According to Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998), any ESP programme should try to meet specific needs of the learner, make use of the underlying methodology and activities of the disciplines it serves, and focus on the language and skills appropriate to these activities. Accordingly, the ultimate goal of an ETI programme should be to develop TC (Schäffner & Abad 2000; PACTE 2003; Cerezo Herrero 2013, 2015).

Over time, many models of TC have been put forward in an attempt to account for its nature and components (Beeby 1996; Bell 1991; Delisle 1980; Hurtado 1996, 1999, 2001; Kelly 2002; Lowe 1987; Muñoz Martín 2014; PACTE 2001, 2003, 2015; Presas 1996; Pym 1992, among others). One of the most widely known and accepted models is the one by PACTE (2003, 2015), a group conducting empirical-experimental research into written translation which maintains that TC is made up of five subcompetences (namely bilingual, extra-linguistic, instrumental, knowledge about translation, and strategic) and psycho-physiological components. Among these components, the bilingual competence has been identified as one of the most important within the overarching structure, mainly for two reasons: 1) translation is an activity between languages and then "(it) begins and ends with language" (Delisle 1980: 41); and 2) the language-for-translator classroom has been acknowledged as a perfect environment for developing TC, as it does not only develop the bilingual competence,¹ but also extra-linguistic, professional and strategic competences (Clouet 2010, among others).

Unfortunately, as Brehm (2004) aptly notes, the teaching of foreign languages to translators has received insufficient attention, for "[w]hen it comes to publications specifically addressing the issue of translation-oriented foreign language teaching, only a few, scattered forays into the subject have been made" (p. 11). Nowadays, we can still observe that such lack of attention is palpable (Hernández Guerra & Cruz García 2009; Cerezo Herrero 2015). In fact, Hernández Guerra and Cruz García (2009) argue that:

La enseñanza de lengua extranjera en las facultades de Filología Inglesa y de Traducción e Interpretación no siempre contempla esos rasgos definitorios a pesar de que los objetivos globales de ambas titulaciones difieren entre sí. Esto queda paten-

1. This competence receives different names, namely communicative competence, bilingual competence, language competence, and linguistic competence.

te en el hecho de que tradicionalmente la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras en las facultades de Traducción e Interpretación ha adoptado una metodología que, en ocasiones, no presenta grandes diferencias respecto a la metodología empleada en las facultades de Filología, centrandó su atención en la comunicación oral y escrita en contextos generales. No obstante, en los últimos años ha surgido un interés creciente por la especificidad del alumnado de la titulación de Traducción e Interpretación y, consecuentemente, por la definición de una metodología adecuada a sus necesidades formativas, basadas en las circunstancias reales en torno al mercado laboral de la traducción y la interpretación. (p. 17)

Therefore, Hernández Guerra and Cruz García (2009) and Cerezo Herrero (2015) agree that the main problem of foreign language teaching in translator training has been its tendency to rely on English for General Purposes (EGP) approaches without taking into account students' language needs as prospective translators and interpreters, which is mirrored in the scarcity of methodologies or teaching materials.

As regards the key features of the translator's bilingual competence, numerous studies have offered some guidelines on how to approach language-for-translator courses, mainly in the foreign language. The results obtained from these studies point out that these courses should focus on contrastive analyses of the language pair (Berenguer 1996; Brehm 1996; Nord 2000; Clouet 2010; Carrasco 2016); on different text types and genres (Brehm 1996; Nord 2000; Kelly 2002; López & Tabuenca 2009); on different registers and how utterances may have different communicative effects (Nord 2000); on documentation skills (Berenguer 1996); on translation issues (Berenguer 1996; Beeby 2004); on discourse analysis and specific reading skills (Berenguer 1996; Brehm 1996; Brehm & Hurtado 1999; Schäffner 2002; Trosborg 2002); on more than the four traditional language skills (López & Tabuenca 2009); and on different language varieties (Clouet 2010). Furthermore, reading has been identified as the most important skill for translators (Barani & Karimnia 2014; Brehm 1996; Brehm & Hurtado 1999; Clouet 2010; Möller 2001; Schäffner 2002; Trosborg 2002, among others).

In this sense, we may conclude that the teaching of English to translator and interpreter trainees should aim at developing TC, studying language from a contrastive perspective, providing real world tasks reflecting the labour market, and favouring practice over theory, meaning that more attention to implicit learning should be paid and that authentic (not graded) materials with different genres and text types should be used.

3. Exploring the approach of EFL courses in translator training in Spain

Before analysing the Spanish panorama concerning the approach of EFL courses in Translation and Interpreting undergraduate programmes in Spain, it is worth having a look at the guidelines offered by the *Libro Blanco del Grado en Traducción e Interpretación*² by the ANECA (National Agency for Quality Assessment

2. Available at <http://www.aneca.es/var/media/150288/libroblanco_traduc_def.pdf>.

and Accreditation of Spain). These guidelines provide a general overview of how Spanish universities are supposed to arrange this study programme (see Table 1, our translation):

Table 1. Contents and competences offered by the ANECA for teaching English in Translation and Interpreting undergraduate programmes in Spain (p. 120)

Contents	Skills and competences
– Language norms.	– Analyse, assess, create and revise all types of texts and identify language variation and textual function.
– Language variation: dialects, sociolects, jargon, registers and technolects.	– Analyse and synthesise all types of text and discourse.
– Textual analysis and synthesis.	– To apply critical thinking.
– Written composition.	– To learn autonomously.
– Technical written composition.	
– Textual models.	
– Textual revision.	
– Contrastive and communicative aspects of <i>Lengua B</i> and <i>C</i> .	

As can be observed, most contents, skills and competences are rather general and vague. The reason for this, however, may lie in the fact that these are basic guidelines that each university has to adapt according to their reality and identified needs. The problem that arises then is that each university has too much freedom to decide to which aspects attention should be paid, and how these contents and competences are to be developed and approached.

3.1. Universities

Currently, there are 24 universities that offer a Translation and Interpreting undergraduate programme in Spain. These are as follows:

Table 2. Universities that offer a Translation and Interpreting undergraduate programme in Spain (2015-2016 academic year)

Community/Region	University
Madrid	Universidad Alfonso X el Sabio
	Universidad de Alcalá
	Universidad Autónoma de Madrid
	Universidad Complutense de Madrid
	Universidad Pontificia de Comillas
Andalucía	Universidad de Córdoba
	Universidad de Granada
	Universidad de Málaga
	Universidad Pablo de Olavide, Sevilla

Community/Region	University
València	Universitat d'Alacant
	Universitat Jaume I, Castelló de la Plana
	Universitat de València
Cantabria	Universidad Europea del Atlántico, Santander
Castilla y León	Universidad de Salamanca
	Universidad de Valladolid
Aragón	Universidad San Jorge, Zaragoza
Galicia	Universidade de Vigo
Murcia	Universidad de Murcia
Basque Country	Universidad del País Vasco
Palmas de Gran Canaria	Universidad de la Palmas de Gran Canaria
Catalonia	Universitat de Vic
	Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona
	Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona

3.2. Data collection process and procedure

The type of information gathered from the syllabi of each course is illustrated in Table 3:

Table 3. Datasheet to collect information from each university

University	
Degree Name	
EFL Name	
Credit Value	
Materials	
Approach	
Linguistics Course	

In order to complete this table, we accessed the websites of all the degree programmes and downloaded the syllabi of the 2015-2016 academic year. First, the names of the university and the degree were introduced in order to have a general idea of what the degree was concerned with. Second, the name of each EFL course and its credit value were inserted. Next, the materials (basic bibliography) and the approaches followed by these were noted following an EGP (English for General Purposes) vs. ESP (English for Specific Purposes) dichotomy, based on whether materials were general (i.e. not tailored-made) or specially designed or compiled for specific translator-interpreter related purposes. Consequently, those courses relying solely on commercially available ELT course-books or grammar and vocabulary reference books qualified as EGP, whereas those with explicit reference to any of the components of the distinctive features

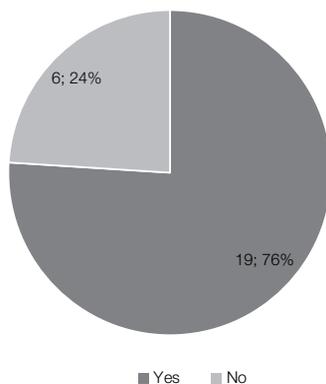
of ETI addressed above were considered ESP. This procedure was replicated for every EFL course in the degree programme. Finally, we specified –on a yes/no basis– whether a(n) (Applied) Linguistics course was offered –the reason for this being the fact that many aspects and objectives are intrinsically related to linguistic knowledge *per se* and thus may be addressed in linguistics courses. The lack of these courses then might point to a lack of attention to explicit linguistic knowledge/training.

3.3. Results

The number of universities offering a degree in Translation and Interpreting (or the like) came to 24, although there were actually 25 degrees due to the fact that the Universidad Pontificia de Comillas offers two degrees (one specialising in global communication and the other in a third foreign language). The total number of EFL courses came up to 93.

From a quantitative perspective, the data compiled in the datasheets yielded the following results:

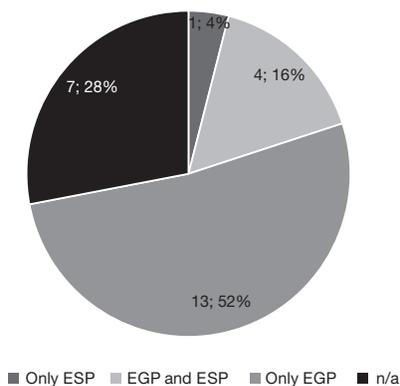
Figure 1. Number of Translation and Interpreting degrees offering a(n) (Applied) Linguistics course in Spain



Out of these 25 degrees, 19 (76 %) offer a(n) (Applied) Linguistics course. This indicates that most degrees develop linguistic knowledge through the EFL courses, which mainly focus on language skills and thus –more often than not– explicit training is neglected. Consequently, in general universities appear to be aware of the fact that explicit linguistic knowledge is essential for developing TC. A balance between explicit and implicit linguistic knowledge is desirable though, for we should not solely foster language skills in order to communicate efficiently, but also to show how language may be analysed in order to make communication more effective and ensure that appropriate translations are satisfactorily achieved. After all, as we mention above, translation is an activity between languages and thus finds many explanations at the linguistic level.

As regards the place that universities occupy on the EGP-ESP continuum, the following results were obtained:

Figure 2. The EGP-ESP continuum of ELT courses in Translation and Interpreting undergraduate programmes in Spain



As can be observed from Figure 2, out of the 25 degrees, only one offers a whole ESP training: the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. A rather limited number of universities (16 %) combines EGP and ESP approaches to language teaching; a high percentage of universities (52 %) relies solely on EGP materials, which confirms that overall EGP approaches to language teaching are the norm and thus students' needs are not completely met. It could be argued that the number of universities which do not offer this information might yield different results and these might generate a different picture; nevertheless, even if these universities were found to offer –only ESP or both EGP and ESP– the conclusion would still be that a higher number of universities rely solely on an EGP approach. Anyhow, the analysis of the datasheets reveals that most of these courses are not ESP-oriented in that most contents and competences are rather general and official examinations-oriented.

From a more qualitative viewpoint, we can observe that the high percentage of degrees that only offer an EGP approach points to a lack of awareness regarding the specificities of this language training. In fact, although the syllabi of numerous courses feature extra study materials that focus on grammar and vocabulary from different perspectives, most of them are exclusively based upon the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) descriptors, which only account for general language standards. It should be noted, though, that the guidelines offered by this framework are not inappropriate *per se*; rather, they should be used as a reference and adapted to the translation scenario so that they become more relevant and supportive of the translator trainee's needs.

Among the universities that appear to consider the real idiosyncrasy of this training, we can highlight the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB), the Universidad Alfonso X el Sabio (UAX), the Universidad de Granada (UGR), the

Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (ULPGC), and the Universitat Pompeu Fabra (UPF). As can be observed in Table 4 below, most of the language courses offered at these universities include cultural, contrastive, discursive, pragmatic, and sociolinguistic aspects, which better reflect the wider scope of students' needs.

The case of the UAB is of particular interest since it is the only university that offers an entire ESP approach throughout all its courses. Unfortunately, their syllabi do not specify any materials aside from grammar and reference books. What these documents do mention is that special attention is paid to contrastive analysis and that students start with a B2.1 level (in Language B I) and finish with a C1.1 level (in Language B IV) according to the CEF. The other four universities begin with an EGP approach and then provide ESP training. In the first years of the degrees, these universities use general, commercially available coursebooks in their English language courses, and in the final courses more ESP-like contents and objectives are pursued by means of specific or adapted materials.

As some authors point out (Berenguer 1997; Cruz García & Mulligan 2004; Cerezo Herrero 2015, among others), ELT for translator trainees should begin with a general approach so that students are guaranteed a springboard of previous knowledge and develop satisfactory competence in the foreign language. Subsequently, they should follow an ESP approach in which more specific objectives are pursued so that they develop their communicative competence in accordance with their future needs. According to this premise, the most adequate contexts as regards the teaching of ETI are those of the UAX, the UGR, the ULPGC, and the UPF. At the UGR language training begins with a general approach and becomes more specific in the latter courses when materials deal with text typologies and their linguistic features, varieties of English, pragmatic aspects such as speech acts and irony, and cultural factors affecting language. However, these aspects are presented through general language materials. In the case of both the UPF and the ULPGC, language training also begins with a more general approach by means of general, commercially available textbooks, and then becomes more specific as the courses progress. The only scenario that specifies commercially available ESP materials is the UAX, which uses Brehm's (2004) coursebook *Targeting the Source Text: A Coursebook in English for Translator Trainees*.

While training could arguably commence with a more general approach so that students reach a good command of the foreign language in more general contexts and subsequently this knowledge is transformed and adapted to meet the needs of the translation scenario, we also opine that following an ESP approach from the very beginning could develop students' communicative competence overall while catering for students' target needs by presenting or paying attention to more specific aspects pertinent to the translation content. Actually, this seems to be the case of the UAB, whose language training adheres –for the most part– to the general guidelines offered by the literature. First, it starts with a B2 level, thus consolidating students' previous knowledge and a more solid command of the language, and then works on the C1.1 level in the last course, where more aspects dealing with pragmatics are tackled and more proficiency in language use is achieved. Moreover, since all courses pay attention to contrastive aspects of the

language pair, students develop their contrastive awareness and linguistics-applied-to-translation skills. In this sense, it could be said that this university provides a more adequate learning context (completely ESP) whereby students' needs are more satisfactorily met from the beginning, which might ultimately result in a more adequate development of TC overall.

Table 4. ELT materials at the universities that combine EGP and ESP training

University	First course(s) (EGP)	Final course(s) (ESP)	Availability of ESP materials
UAX	Heydermand, E. & May, P. <i>Complete PET Student's Book</i> . Cambridge: CUP. May, P. & Thomas, A. <i>Complete PET Workbook</i> . Cambridge: CUP.	Brehm, J. (2004). <i>Targeting the Source text: a Coursebook in English for Translator Trainees</i> . Publicacions Universitat Jaume I.	Yes
UGR	Kerr, P. & C. Jones (2007). <i>Straightforward. Upper Intermediate. Student's book</i> . Macmillan. Norris, R. (2008). <i>Straightforward. Advanced. Student's book</i> . Macmillan.	Books on English sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, text types, English for business, and science and technology. Thus, contents are established according to all the previous materials.	No
ULPGC	Clandfield, L. & Robb, R. (2011). <i>Global Upper-Intermediate</i> . Oxford: Macmillan.	The last course uses grammar and vocabulary reference books as well as specialized dictionaries. Contents and objectives address discursive and contrastive aspects of English and Spanish, and different fields of expertise are addressed.	No
UPF	Materials only include grammar and vocabulary reference books. Contents also deal with an introduction to morphosyntax, sociolinguistics and sociocultural aspects.	No specific materials are specified, but contrastive, discursive and cultural aspects are addressed by means of grammar and vocabulary reference books.	No

4. Conclusion

In this paper we have analysed the Spanish panorama in terms of how English language courses in Translation and Interpreting undergraduate programmes are approached in order to confirm whether or not there is actual awareness of these students' specific needs. Currently, there are twenty-five Translation and Inter-

preting undergraduate programmes in Spain, most of which follow a complete EGP approach. Four degrees were found to combine EGP and ESP 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 students' particular needs, only one university specified the materials used –the UAX– which uses Brehm's (2004) coursebook. In this sense, despite the fact that the literature overtly states that the teaching of English to translation and interpreting trainees should be approached from an ESP perspective, the results from this study provide evidence that most universities train students following an EGP approach, thus their needs not being completely met.

The results of the present study suggest that much remains to be done in order to offer Translation and Interpreting students an appropriate training which caters for their specific language and communication needs. Although we are aware of the fact that ETI is a fairly new approach to language teaching which still remains underresearched, we hope that this study can help raise awareness on its particular features and on the importance of approaching it from an ESP perspective.

As regards the limitations of the study, it is worth noting that several universities did not specify the materials they use. However, the competences and contents displayed in their syllabi did not seem to reflect much awareness of this specific language training. Furthermore, there might be cases in which lecturers make use of materials they themselves have compiled or designed and whose existence is not reflected in the aforementioned documents. It may also be the case that some instructors use EGP materials but with a more specific approach in class. Either way, these two instances go beyond the limits of this study and would need consumption materials analyses.

Accordingly, future studies could analyse the materials used at these universities to find out the extent to which these specific needs area really catered for, especially Brehm's (2004), the self-proclaimed "first coursebook on English for translation trainees". Future investigations could also compare content and consumption analyses as well as explore other contexts. Finally, interested parties could venture to create a framework of reference for analysing and developing ETI materials including the specific competences and skills that translation and interpreting trainees ought to develop.

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