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TEACHING TRANSLATION FROM SPANISH TO ENGLISH

WORLDS BEYOND WORDS

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APPENDIX

SELECTED STRUCTURAL CONTRASTS AND GUIDED BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. PREPOSITIONS

The correct use of prepositions is a recurrent problem when translating from Spanish to English, and it seems to be an area in which translation interference from the SL is difficult to avoid.

The relationship expressed by prepositions seems to be clustered in bundles, with similar bundles across language barriers the exception rather than the rule. To aggravate the situation, since the meanings are usually abstract relationships, a student relies heavily on translation to learn how to use prepositions. Nowhere is the student's desire to find a one-to-one correspondence between native and target language more thoroughly frustrated. (Stockwell et al., 1965: 207)

Prepositional meaning is a lexical problem, but incorrect use of prepositions also occasions grammatical problems of co-occurrence with other forms. However, grammatical descriptions are so complex as to provide little aid, and each case has to be learned separately according to the context. Prepositional verbs, prepositional phrases, and phrasal verbs have to be treated lexically, as words to be learned individually.

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2. DETERMINERS

This is another area that causes problems, but here the two languages can be contrasted to some purpose. The students should be shown the relationship between countable and uncountable nouns in English and the use of the article so as to avoid mistakes with nouns like *job* and *work*. Vázquez Ayora (1977: 4.2.3.) suggests that the Spanish tendency to intellectualize or conceptualize explains the use of the definite article in Spanish to generalize, whereas in English the zero morpheme or the indefinite article is used.

El poeta debe poseer talento.

A poet has to have talent.

El talento no se puede comprar.

Talent cannot be bought.

The English preference for the possessive pronoun where Spanish uses the definite article should be stressed. Almost any English text will provide examples.

A girl went from table to table ridding herself of her clothes. She began with her gloves. . . . Then she presented her back to Carter and told him to unhook her back lace corsets. Carter fumbled in vain at the catches, blushing all the time, while the girl laughed and wriggled against his fingers. (Graham Greene, *Our Man in Havana* [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983], p. 200)

The demonstratives *este* and *ese* often cause problems because students are usually taught *este* is *this* and *ese* is *that*. However the deictic use of *this* is very common in English and *ese* should often be translated as *this* if it is referring to something that has been introduced earlier in the text. For example, in an article about letter bombs sent to the Queen of England (in *Hola*), a new paragraph begins: *Esas misivas*, but the English translation should be *These letters*. There is a very good section in Delisle (1980: 195) on the use of the deictic *this* in English. *This* is certainly very widely used to link ideas between sentences and paragraphs and also in situations where an adverb or pronoun is used in Spanish.

Aquí Radio Barcelona.

This is the BBC World Service.

Había insistido en ello.

He insisted on this.

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3. PRONOUNS

Confusion of reference due to careless use of pronouns is one of the dangers of writing in English that is not confined to the non-native speaker.

How far the pupil will go is not the concern of the teacher and master. Hardly has he shown him the right way than he must let him go on alone. There is only one thing more he can do to help him endure his loneliness: *he* turns *him* away further from *himself*, by exhorting *him* to go further than *he himself* has done. (Herrigel, *Zen in the Art of Archery* [London: Routledge, 1977], quoted in Duff, 1981: 34; emphasis in Duff)

The students are warned to be especially careful whenever they use *it*, *they*, *them*, *that*, or *which*. However ungainly repetition is considered in Spanish, they should not avoid repetition for aesthetic reasons when translating into English. Clarity of reference should have priority. Part of the problem is that the students are used to the greater precision of Spanish pronouns. There are fifteen Spanish forms for the English pronoun *you*. *Su* is an exception in Spanish because it has four possible translations in English: *his*, *her*, *its*, or *your*.

The distinction between *whose* and *of which* does not usually pose difficulties. The same distinction between the Saxon genitive and *of* is also understood, but students should be reminded that confusion of reference may arise from use of the Saxon genitive.

It is primarily the director's fault, who clearly has . . .

It is primarily the fault of the director, who . . .

The more basic uses of the pronoun in English are fairly easily assimilated by *inversa* students, for example *lo*, which is often omitted in English.

Mi madre me lo dijo.

My mother told me.

Lo + adjective does occasionally cause problems, although it is really a problem of nominalization.

Lo interesante del caso . . .

What is interesting about the case . . .

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4. ADJECTIVES

Word order in the noun phrase can cause problems. However, mistakes often arise from having learned the differences too well, which leads to overconfident use of premodification and nouns used as adjectives. For example:

The UN Charter spirit

los diarios hablaban lacónicamente de millones de toneladas de café arrojadas al mar, de trigo quemado, cerdos quemados, naranjas rociadas con keroseno para facilitar las condiciones del mercado.

the newspapers spoke laconically about millions of tons of coffee thrown into the sea, about *burnt wheat* and *cremated pigs*, about oranges sprinkled with kerosene in order to ease market conditions.

Special attention should be paid to the distinction in meaning between adjectival premodification and postmodification in Spanish. For example, *mismo* is particularly tricky.

Que la misma noche que Jesús fue traicionado . . .

The same night he was betrayed . . .

Llegó hasta el misímismo dormitorio de la soberana.

He got as far as the Queen's very own bedroom.

La reina misma abrió la puerta.

The Queen herself opened the door.

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5. NOUNS

Vázquez Ayora (1977: 4.2.6.) warns translators into Spanish of the dangers of *el abuso del sustantivo* when translating from English. *El abuso del verbo* in English is not really a problem in *inversa*. On the contrary, the students tend to use nouns and adjectives with greater flair and precision than they do verbs, and they have to be encouraged to develop the use of a greater variety of verbs expressing opinion, feeling, and movement, and of strong verbs with high semantic content. Grammatical nominalization of other parts of speech is easier in Spanish than in English, and this may cause problems.

el otro

the other one

lo mío

mine

la del pelo largo

the one with long hair

English can only nominalize adjectives to refer to a group of people belonging to a certain category.

¡El pobre!	The poor thing!
Los pobres	The poor
Lo malo es . . .	Unfortunately . . .

Furthermore, in the case of *the poor*, *the sick*, *the lonely*, and so on, the adjective is not fully nominalized, as it cannot take the plural morpheme. Mistakes are also made with nouns that are singular or uncountable in one language and plural in the other. Even quite advanced students still err with *news* and *people*, particularly when they are combined with the problem of agreement in the noun phrase.

This sort of news
 These kinds of people
 This type of advice

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6. VERBS

a) Tense

Stockwell gives a form-to-form comparison of English and Spanish verb forms, but then goes on to say, "The preceding examples illustrate a basic fact of language comparison: differences between languages cannot be accurately and clearly established through translation alone" (Stockwell et al., 1965: 130).

It is essential for students to learn how to use the English tense system in context in a monolingual situation. If they make mistakes when translating due to interference from the SL, they must go back to an intermediate cognitive stage and work out the time references in the TL. The examples given by Brinton et al. (1981: 202) show how important context is in deciding which tense to use in English.

SPANISH

Present tense

En un clima de tensión que se agrava cada minuto viven los 18.000 habitantes.

Y nada sale en la prensa de toda la Unión Soviética sin que él lo lea.

Regalan primero el álbum y luego venden cromos.

Llevo tres días intentando hablarle.

Imperfect tense

Conforme me alejaba de las últimas calles del pueblo y entraba en las más concurridas, que conducían a la plaza, me sentía alegre.

Un incidente estuvo a un paso de originar un estallido cuando se pagaban salarios atrasados.

visitaba Madrid con bastante frecuencia de noche soñaba

En los años que llevaba de vivir en México . . .

ENGLISH

Present continuous

The 18,000 inhabitants are living in an atmosphere of constantly mounting tension.

Present perfect

Nothing is published in all the Soviet press unless he has read it.

Present simple

First they give away the album and then they sell the stamps.

Present perfect continuous

I have been trying to talk to him for three days.

Past simple

As I left behind the outskirts of the village and reached the busy streets which led to the square, I felt my spirits rise.

Past continuous

A disagreement almost caused an outbreak of violence when overdue wages were being paid.

"Used to" past

I used to visit Madrid quite frequently.

"Would" past

At night I would dream.

Past perfect continuous

In all the years I had been living in Mexico . . .

The grammatical context is essential in order to establish the translation equivalents of some words. For example, Spanish students often have difficulty distinguishing *bored* and *boring*, *dead* and *killed* unless the *ser/estar* contrast is pointed out to them.

Juan <u>está</u> aburrido.	John is <u>bored</u> .
Juan <u>es</u> aburrido.	John is <u>boring</u> .
<u>Estaba</u> muerto a las nueve.	He was <u>dead</u> at nine.
<u>Fue</u> muerto a las nueve.	He was <u>killed</u> at nine.

The most common mistakes of verb tense made by students are those in which English makes a distinction between the present perfect and the past simple or requires a continuous tense. These points have to be revised in the translation class or referred to the language teacher.

b) Mood and Modals

The use of the English modals (*can, could, be able to, may, might, should, ought to, must* and *need*) is quite difficult for Spanish prose translators. Often, the choice of modal depends on subtle psychological factors. Extensive reading in English and student exchanges are the best ways of developing sensitivity to these factors. The Spanish subjunctive forces them to look for alternatives as it cannot be “transcoded” into English. In most cases, there are several possibilities open to them. Depending on the context, *hablara* might be translated by *might speak, would speak, speak, spoke, were speaking, to speak, speaking*.

c) Voice

The English passive is usually assimilated fairly well by the students, once they are aware of its importance in formal and technical texts. In the *directa* class they have already been warned against *el abuso del pasivo* in Spanish. Care must be taken with cohesion when using the other impersonal voices in English. Spanish students, like their English counterparts, sometimes begin with *one* and then change to *you* and back again, all in the same paragraph.

It is useful to emphasize alternatives to the passive for translating the Spanish reflexive.

La policía se ha lanzado a la búsqueda de . . .

The police have launched a search for . . .

Se fríe la cebolla, se añade el tomate. . .

Fry the onion and add the tomato . . .

Attention should be paid to the ambiguity inherent in verbs like *se engañan* and *se felicitaban*. The context should clarify whether the translations is *They deceive/congratulate themselves* or *They deceive/congratulate each other*.

Los más fuertes se atribuyen mutuamente la responsabilidad.

The strongest blame each other.

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7. ADVERBS

Adverb placement in English is somewhat elastic; it is even more so in Spanish. Charting and comparing the patterns and contrasts is an extremely complex task, involving not only adverb, but verb and noun, classification. This task has not yet been accomplished and is not attempted in the present study. (Stockwell et al., 1965: 202)

Further research has been carried out on the use of adverbs in English since that was written, but the results show even greater complexity (e.g., Greenbaum, 1969). Certainly, the position of adverbs is difficult in prose translation, although Spanish and English do have many features in common.

Vázquez Ayora points out the dangers in *directa* of translating all the *-ly adverbs* in English by *-mente adverbs* in Spanish, because Spanish often prefers *prepositional phrases*. The opposite is not a serious problem in *inversa*.

Some basic guidelines can be of use to students. The difference should be understood between style or attitudinal disjuncts and manner adjuncts. The adverbial in the SLT should be classified accordingly so the distinction will be made between disjuncts and adjuncts. A general rule could be to put speech disjuncts at the beginning of the sentence.

Frankly, I was speaking under pressure. (attitudinal disjunct)

I was speaking frankly under pressure. (manner adjunct)

In written English (which cannot rely on prosodic elements to clarify ambiguity), adjuncts of manner in transitive sentences usually come after the subject-verb-object, while Spanish prefers to keep the adverb close to the verb.

Habla	bien	el español.	He	speaks	English	well.
V	Adv.	O	S	V	O	Adv.

Another favourite position of the adverb in English, which is impossible in Spanish, is between the auxiliary and the verb (aux.-adverb-verb).

I've already been. He's always eating. I had completely forgotten.

Adverb-subject-verb in English is restricted to the verbs *come*, *go*, and *be*, and the adverbs *here*, *there*, *now*, *then*.

Here he comes. There I was.

The negative precedes the verb in Spanish, but follows the auxiliary and the verb *to be* in English. Occasionally, the double negative in Spanish may cause problems.

No le dije nada. I didn't tell him anything.

Some of the more mobile adverbs should be discussed in detail when problems arise in a translation as should subject-verb inversion after a negative or limiting adverb.

Only is often misplaced. The rule is that *only* should be placed near to the word it qualifies.

He was only joking. Only he was joking.

At the beginning of a sentence inversion is necessary.

Only at this stage could man . . .

Not only . . . but also has to be used with care. If there is one verb followed by two dependent clauses, *not only* follows the verb, but if there are two verbs *not only* must precede the first verb. In the second example, below, the word order should be *not only represent*.

The concept of stimulus control *replaces* the notion of referent with respect *not only* to responses which occur in isolation . . . but also to those complex responses called sentences. (B.F. Skinner, *About Behaviourism*, quoted in Duff, 1981: 69; emphasis in Duff)

The three categories of human sounds—noise, music and speech—*represent not only* spheres of differentiation in our perception of sonic events but also point to different groups of specialists who deal with unique aspects of the world of sound. ("Soundscapes," *UNESCO Courier*, 1976, quoted in Duff, 1981: 69; emphasis in Duff)

The Spanish expressions *cada vez más* and *cuanto más* are usually translated by the comparative form of the adverb in English.

iban espaciándose cada vez más.

were getting less and less frequent.

Cuanto más se ven empujados . . . más arriesgan.

The more they feel under pressure . . . the more they are willing to risk.

As can be seen from the length of this section, the subject is very complex and has to be studied in the context of the sentence as a whole.

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8. CONJUNCTIONS

If a text is conceived as a map that represents the cognitive concepts, or world vision, of the writer, conjunctions, connectors, or link words can be seen as signposts that signal the way the writer wants the reader to relate what is said to what has been said before and to what is going to be said. Correct meaning and emphasis depend not only on word order, but also on balance, and this balance is to a great extent determined by conjunctions. Textual cohesion is reinforced by conjunctions.

Conjunctions reflect the rhetorical purpose of the writer and help the reader to interpret the text. Argument lines often follow different patterns in Spanish and English. English texts tend to use more argumentative conjunctions than Spanish texts, that is, there are more sign posts in English to indicate the direction of the text. There are no fixed rules for the position of conjunctions in the sentence. However, in English texts the signposts tend to be more visible. For example, conjunctions in initial position are more frequent in English than in Spanish (see Teaching Unit 28).

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9. SENTENCES AND PUNCTUATION

Many of the problems of word order in the sentence have been discussed in preceding sections. Word order is more rigid in English than in Spanish. The English pref-

erence for the subject-verb-object sequence makes it difficult to translate Spanish inverted word order to mark emphasis at the beginning of the sentence.

No puede dejar de causar desasosiego la lectura de las razones . . .

Más allá de los argumentos concretos . . .

Precisamente por la importancia decisiva que . . .

Lo más probable era . . .

Basta leer . . .

(*El País*, 16 Apr. 1987)

Emphasis at the beginning of the sentence in English can be marked by using *that* followed by inverted word order. However the structure is rather archaic and cannot be used too frequently.

That Kipling's work is often flawed no admirer would deny, and Wilson's conclusion is that the flaw is due to fear of self-knowledge. (*The Listener*, 17 Nov. 1977)

The relater *que* is compulsory in Spanish whereas in English *that* is often omitted. If it is never omitted, the resulting style is unwieldy in English. English texts that are translations tend to maintain all the *thats*.

Espero que venga.

I hope (that) he comes.

Punctuation rules in the two languages also differ. English is more generous with commas and prefers a period instead of a colon or a semi-colon, so sentences are usually longer in Spanish. This is due to the Spanish tendency toward articulation and subordination, as opposed to that of English toward juxtaposition and co-ordination.

Lean el texto antes de traducirlo.

Read the text and translate it.

In Spanish, it is very common to begin a sentence or follow a semi-colon with *y* or *pero*. In English, *and* or *but* are not normally used in initial position if the text is formal.

Un tercer paso lo constituye la integración de la producción agrícola y artesana en la economía socialista, *a través de* la formación de cooperativas que resuelvan o por lo menos amortigüen la falta de economías de escala en sectores tan fragmentados; *y que al propio tiempo* vayan imprimiendo una mentalidad de organización y planeamiento, *y* solidaridad con los demás sectores del sistema.

The third stage is to integrate agricultural and craft production into the socialist economy. *This is achieved* in these greatly fragmented sectors by forming co-operatives that, at least in part, make up for the absence of economies of scale. *At the same time*, these co-operatives help to create a receptive attitude toward organization and planning, *as well as* solidarity with other sectors of the economy.

Tamames (1980)

The rules for the use of capital letters are different in Spanish and English, but the differences are quite straightforward and do not cause undue interference. More capitals are used in English, for example, days of the week, months of the year, titles and headlines.

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10. PROSE

Certain contrastive generalizations have been made about Spanish and English prose (e.g., Vázquez Ayora, 1977; García Yebra, 1983). Some of these differences have already been mentioned and others require a more profound study than is possible here. The main ones are:

ENGLISH	SPANISH
nominal predominance	verbal predominance
synthesis	analysis
visual presentation	abstract presentation
repetition	variation

Different languages express reality differently, and this may affect the organization of paragraphs, techniques of description, persuasion, negation, and so on. However, depending on the *skopos* of the translation, there are limits to the extent to which a translator can adjust the SLT to the TL's preferences.

For the conference translator there is a further and very significant reason for keeping the original order whenever possible. Documents are frequently discussed sentence by sentence. It may be impossible to locate a phrase or passage if it has been turned upside down in the translation. (Fuller, 1973: 66)

It is the translator's duty to transmit the meaning of the SLT. Therefore, if confusion of reference occurs easily in English through lack of gender case endings, the translator should be reconciled to using repetition and redesignation techniques. For example, the use of the deictic *this* is based on the visual presentation of English.

The fascination of translating and teaching translating is that translation reflects so many of the imponderables about thought, language, society, and culture. There is no such thing as a final, authorized translation. Each generation has to write its own history books and its own translations. However, it is difficult to disagree with Edmond Becke's conclusions in his preface to the translation of Erasmus's *Colloquia* in 1519.

For some heretofor submytting themself to servytude, have lytle respect to the observance of the thyng which in translatyng is of all other most necessary and requisite, that is to saye, to render the sense and the very meanyng of the author, not so religiously addicte to translate worde for worde for so the sense of the author is sometimes corrupted and depraved, and neyther the grace of one tongue nor yet of the other is truly observed or aptlie expressed. (Quoted in Kelly, 1979: 45–6)

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