FOUR MODELS AND A CHALLENGE
Past, present, and future of translator training programs in Argentina
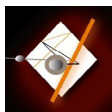
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Argentina has a long-standing tradition in translator training (Granero de Goenaga, Brígido, Celi, Lupotti, Maccioni, & Toniolo, 2008)[1]. This article has two purposes. On the one hand, it seeks to describe four translator training models prevailing in Argentinean universities, especially at Comahue, Córdoba, and La Plata universities (Arrizabalaga, 2010; 2012). I will discuss the application of such models in relation to the students' foreign-language training prior to and throughout their undergraduate education. On the other hand, I will present a new translator training model that aims to develop research skills in students, which might foster under-

graduate education in research. The need to build students' research competence is backed up by the fact that translation studies [TS] is, at present, a vacant research area in the country (Hurtado Albir, 2003; Mayoral Asensio, 2001).[2]

Argentina has been dominated by strictly linguistic graduate teaching models. Upon close inspection, the curricula of the translation programs in the above mentioned universities are all based on the same theoretical concerns, namely

1. genre description,
2. terminology,
3. translation techniques,
4. discourse analysis.

Each of these concerns is in turn related to a specific translator training model, i.e.,

1. the *communication model*,
2. the *information model*,
3. the *sequential model*,
4. the *linguistic model*.

The *communication model* implies working with descriptions of generic formants, which can vary according to cultural contexts, or language register. The *information model* is a terminology-bound teaching framework that relies on the study of word-formation and word choice depending on text-types and language register. The *sequential model* emphasizes the role of translation techniques in each step of text composition, and throughout the phases of translation commission.

In the *linguistic model*, translation patterns are dictated by discourse segmentation and language strategy detection, as in the classification of frequent collocations and grammar structures.

The use of these four models is a direct response to the officially monolingual status of Argentina, where foreign languages are acquired through "laboratory experience" (Castro, García Álvarez, Monteserin, 2010). Most foreign language students in the country attend 50-minute classes twice a week over a period of four to five years. The syllabi in undergraduate translation programs are markedly aimed at training students in the specifics of phonetics, grammar and use of foreign languages. Consequently, university professors face the extra challenge of having students learn and polish the foreign language in their translation classes, integrating different language pairs—English > Spanish, or French > Spanish, and others—into classes.

As a consequence, there is a deplorably narrow margin for students to acquire competences other than the linguistic one—the ability to carry out research being one of those. In order to subvert teaching-learning practices fixated on the development of linguistic competence, a different translator training model needs to be implemented. I call this the *knowledge model*. Its application will lead students to perform and analyze translation using "a language informed by TS."

The knowledge model involves case description with TS categories. It starts with exploratory tasks of source text recognition, moving to the production of a target version. In the knowledge model, the analyst—student—view is focused on

1. market—functional—demands that account for the production, circulation and consumption of translations,
2. criteria of acceptability of translations as products that meet the expectations of consumption niches,
3. identification of translation products as independent from source language versions.

I claim this to be the standing position from which TS should be introduced in translator training programs in the country (Hurtado Albir, 2003).

Developing critical thinking informed by TS theories is key to training students in doing research in the field (García Izquierdo & Verdegal, 1998). Only by familiarizing students with categories and methodologies proper to TS can we expect to enlarge the number of competent, qualified translation scholars in Argentina.

The urgency of tailoring translation curricula in keeping with the knowledge model responds to

1. a notorious absence of scientifically informed metalanguage on the part of students discussing their own production,
2. unwanted use of categories and theoretical frameworks from fields other than TS—in translation programs!—(Mayoral Asensio, 2001),
3. TS being a vacant research area in the country (as explained above),
4. Argentina's marginal position in TS theory production worldwide (Granero de Goenaga et al., 2008).

Needless to say, the knowledge model is not without challenges. In its implementation, several issues of the Argentinean education system and of the international TS scientific community need to be addressed. These include

1. administrative, budgetary, and ideological aspects falling within the realm of university policies (Coiçaud, 2008),
2. the absence of a dominant research paradigm in TS (Mayoral Asensio, 2001; Moya, 2004),
3. the blending of "conceptual" and "contextual" didactics (Páez, 2007).

Only by tackling such issues at a local level can we expect to meet teaching and research needs on the global arena. ■

Notes

[1] Translators graduated from Comahue, Córdoba or La Plata universities often face no difficulties finding a job. Graduates at large claim that their education is highly priced in the US and Europe—if they go to work abroad—and even if they stay at home and work as in-house translators for either local or international clients. A visit to the translation company Eriksen Translation, Inc. shows that university educated Argentinean translators are perfectly qualified for coping with the demands of the translation market (see at http://www.eriksen.com).

[2] In Argentina, vacant research areas can be indicated by the National Scientific and Technical Research Council [Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (CONICET)] standards. As a matter of fact, CONICET is the most prominent research agency in the country, promoting research in areas which are statistically vacant, and with less than three CONICET affiliated researchers for each translation department at Comahue, Córdoba, and La Plata

universities, for instance. This, in turn, sheds light on the fact that TS does not "stand on its own" in this agency, i.e., TS "falls within" the large KS2 category for Literature, Linguistics and Semiotics. So if a CONICET affiliated TS researcher specializes in, for example, literary translation, he has to "reposition" his work either in the field of literary studies, linguistics, or semiotic studies.

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