# Training translators to learn from news report corpora: the case of Anglo-American cultural references[1]

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*Translation and intercultural studies can benefit from the use of comparable and parallel corpora (Maia 1998, Gavioli and Zanettin 1998, López Rodríguez 2000). The analysis of the keywords and collocations found in English and Spanish corpora of news reports may shed light not only on linguistic patterns and regularities but also on the way references to organizations, positions and professions, forms of address and quotations are used in original and translated texts. By elaborating their own corpus and recognising how these expressions shift from the source to the target text, students of translation become aware of cultural differences and develop translation skills to bridge the knowledge gap between the readership of the ST and the TT. Students also become familiar with the practice of style guides conventions.*

## 1. Introduction

Many studies have emphasized the possibility of applying corpus linguistics to translation didactics (Maia 1998, Gavioli and Zannettin1998). The use of comparable and parallel corpora not only contributes to learning autonomy but also help students find adequate words for a particular text type. As Zannettin (1994: 109) points out,

> ... translators need to be able to see patterns and regularities both within a language and across languages. To produce adequate texts in the target language, a translator is faced with the task of finding 'the right words' and the 'right way' to put things for a certain type of context.

Apart from providing adequate and acceptable expressions in the target text, corpora can be exploited in cultural studies, as shown in Stubbs (1996). By recognising syntactic patterns, collocations and keywords in the LOB corpus and the Bank of English, Stubbs explores the ideology masked by language. In this direction, López Rodríguez (2000) analyses the keywords and collocations found in a corpus of Spanish and British newspaper articles on primary education in order to elicit the most salient values in both the British and the Spanish educational systems. In this research, we noticed the potential of newspaper corpora in the training of translators and interpreters[2], and, consequently, we

started to apply corpora to the general translation classes in the Faculty of Translation and Interpreting of the University of Granada.

When designing and using newspaper corpora, our second year students keep up with current affairs, see real examples of translation and gain familiarity with cultural references and the ortotypographical conventions of style guides. To that end, we help them identify linguistic patterns whose cotext might be very informative for the identification of ortotypographical conventions, cultural references, and the strategies used in the translation of such cultural references. We will call these expressions *search structures*. The extraction of search structures follows previous research in terminology by Meyer and Mackintosh (1996), who propose the use of *knowledge probes* to extract superordinate terms, and Pearson's (1998) formulation of terminographic definitions based on such expressions.

In this paper, we revise some models on the translation of cultural references and describe an activity aimed at detecting conventions, cultural references and translation strategies by compiling and analyzing corpora in the general translation classroom.


## 2. The translation of cultural references

The translation of cultural references has drawn the attention of many scholars[3]. Cultural references include place names, institutions, judicial and administrative concepts, weights and measures, coins and references to history and traditions.

Mayoral and Muñoz (1997: 143) offer a cognitive approach to the translation of *culturally-marked textual segments*, and present a typology of strategies, i.e. protocols to adopt adequate solutions in the translation process, which is understood as a decision-making process. We have added examples concerning Britain and the United States.

1.  **Established translation:** House of Commons → Cámara de los Comunes
2.  **Validated translation**: Bachelor of Arts → Licenciatura
3.  **Functional translation**: Federal spending → gasto público
4.  **Borrowing:** Bachelor of Arts → Bachelor of Arts
5.  **Paraphrase**: Bachelor of Arts → Título correspondiente a estudios universitarios de 4 años de duración.

6. **Combination of resources:** Bachelor of Arts → Bachelor of Arts [título correspondiente a estudios universitarios de 4 años de duración

7. **Omission**

8. **Creation** (calque, cognate or morphological translation, and creation of new words)**:** First class → Primera clase; Welsh Office → Oficina Galesa.

According to this study, the choice of strategy should take into account the reader's knowledge of the target culture, the relevance of the concept in the target culture, the existence of previous translations, the text type, the skopos, the type of translation and the style of the translator (ibid: 154-155).

Nedergaard-Larsen (1993) presents a more simplified model in which the strategy followed depends on the proximity either to the culture of the source language or to the culture of the target language. Ballester (2001) adopts the model to the didactics of *Translation from English to Spanish* using the film *American Beauty*.

(1)

| | Culture-bound problems | Translation strategy |
|---|---|---|
| ↑ | SL-culture-oriented translation | Identity: Media Monthly → *Media Monthly* |
| | | Explicitation + identity: Media Monthly → la revista *Media Monthly* |
| | | Imitation (literal transl.): Ninth → Noveno |
| | General | Explicitation: Miracle-gro → abono |
| | | Paraphrase: Ninth → Primer curso de enseñanza secundaria en EE UU |
| ↓ | TL-culture-oriented translation | Cultural adaptation: Ninth → 3º de ESO |

With this model, students can easily perceive that there is more than one correct translation, but some translations are more adequate than others. They also notice the central position occupied by explicitation and paraphrase. Although these procedures are considered the most appropriate ones to achieve interlingual equivalents (Moya (2000: 18), they are not often used by pupils. Moya (ibid: 18) describes different linguistic resources to add information about cultural references in the translated text. Added information appears in bold.

1. **Determinación del nombre propio mediante:**

**Elemento genérico o definidor:** El último número de la **revista** *Progressive Architecture* [...]

**Determinación de la procedencia:** [...] rito que se celebra cada diez años en la ciudad **india** de Goa

**Especificación de tendencia política, religiosa, ideológica:** El **conservador** Partido Nacional Unido de Sri Lanka (isla de Ceilán)

**Valoración personal:** [...] la gente del MIT (el **prestigioso** Instituto Tecnológico de Massachussets) [...]

**Componente clasificador:** La revista **erótica** estadounidense *Penthouse* estará disponible [...]

**Metalenguaje:** [...] era candidato ideal para que se le aplicara la ley **conocida** como *three strikes and you are out*, expresión que se toma prestada del béisbol para indicar que se está eliminado a la tercera falta [...]

**Referencia temporal:** Según una encuesta publicada ayer por el **semanario** irlandés *Sunday Press* [...]

2. **Disyuntiva con 'o', 'o sea', 'es decir', 'que es...', 'algo así como...', 'una especie de...'**

   Atentos a la última investigación de *The Lancet*, **especie de Biblia médica de actualidad** [...]

3. **Yuxtaposición entre paréntesis o entre rayas**

   [...] el virus Ebola (**nombre de un río de Zaire a cuyas orillas se detectó la primera epidemia en 1976**)

4. **Aposición**

   Una encuesta publicada ayer por el diario *The Miami Herald*, **el más vendido y el más influyente de la ciudad**, refleja una marcada diferencia [...]

5. **Nota dentro del texto**

   Cerca de la Universidad de Cracovia está Wavel, lugar casi mágico para los polacos y donde tuvo lugar la recepción oficial del [...]. **Sobre el pequeño promontorio a orillas del Vístula, el Wawel es la antigua ciudadela-fortaleza, típica de esta zona de invasiones recurrentes, donde se yerguen el castillo real y la catedral**

6. **Sinonimia**

   **IBM** centrará su estrategia de negocios en el desarrollo [...]. **La empresa norteamericana** trabaja en "cómo conseguir dar el salto siguiente en Internet" para convertir esta red en [...].

7. **Combinación de varias de las técnicas anteriores**

   **La multinacional estadounidense** IBM anunció ayer [...]. **La compañía informática** facturó unos 18.100 millones de dólares entre julio y septiembre [...]

The models reviewed illustrate the most frequent strategies used in the translation of cultural references. Considering that our undergraduates tend to overuse some of them such as borrowing and creation, the presentation of these models in the classroom is not enough. The teacher of translation should engage students in activities involving exposure to many real examples of translation and awareness of the way a particular cultural reference can be translated in different situational contexts.

## 3. Using corpora in the translation of cultural references

In this section, we describe an activity aimed at making students widen their strategies for the translation into Spanish of cultural references related to Britain and the United States, while developing their critical awareness.

### 3.1. Compiling a comparable and parallel corpus

Students have to compile a bilingual corpus of newspaper texts of 12,000 words. To that end, they look for English texts about a subject of their choice (elections, economy, trade unions, peace processes, international relations, etc.), and contrast them with their translation or adaptation into Spanish or with original Spanish texts about the same subject. Most of the texts gathered are available in electronic format either in CD-ROMs (*El Mundo*, *The Times, The Guardian*) or in the Internet. There are links to the electronic versions of newspapers from these webs: http://ajr.newslink.org, http://cvc.cervantes.es, http://www.el-castellano.com and http://www.efe.es.

The compilation of the corpus takes place out of classroom time. However, during one session of 90 minutes, students have access to reference works such as Encarta, style guides (*Manual de Estilo de El País*, *Libro de Estilo de ABC* or *The Independent Style Guide*) and to some sites about Spanish usage[4].

The need to follow conventions is stressed by asking them to follow a style sheet and to hand in the assignment in its electronic and paper versions as required in a professional environment. The texts in electronic format contain tags informing about the source, date, text type and author of the text, so as to make the corpus reusable.

Two more sessions of 90 minutes are devoted to the use of lexical analysis software such as Wordsmith Tools. This program facilitates the detection of the most frequent collocations and keywords in English and Spanish and of suitable equivalents for translation segments. Students are asked to search for particular expressions that trigger cultural references and formal conventions, and to suggest new search structures.

### 3.2. Extracting cultural references, translation strategies and conventions

The teacher suggests search structures that cover some translation problems not solved in bilingual dictionaries, for example, the translation of forms of address and quotations. In

the following table, we present instances of cultural references related to British and American organizations and public offices and some expressions leading to them in concordances such as the ones for *británic\** and *leader\**. Their translations in the Spanish press relies mainly on explicitation.

(2)

| SEARCH STRUCTURES: ORGANIZATIONS, POSITIONS / PROFESSIONS | |
|---|---|
| TO:<br>• Proper name<br>• President, leader, a top, chief, director, prime minister, PM, minister, secretary, deputy, coordinator, spokesman, chairman, official, speaker, officer, representative, member of, MP, congressman, responsible, in charge of, candidate<br><br>• Party, parliament, Congress, Labour, Conservative, Liberal, Democrat, Republican, feder\*, state, department, office, loyalist, unionist, group, association, administration, institute, centre, center, organization, union, wing, headquarters, court, government, executive, Cabinet<br>• Called, known as | TT:<br>• británic\*, \*americano, anglosajón, inglés<br>• Proper name in English<br>• Presidente, líder, destacado, jefe, director, ministro, secretario, vice\*, coordinador, portavoz, funcionario, encargado, diputado, parlamentario, miembro, representante, encargado, responsable, candidato<br>• Partido, congreso, feder\*, esta\*, departamento, ministerio, grupo, asociación, administración, instituto, centro, organización, sede, unión, ala, tribunal, gobierno, ejecutivo<br><br>• Llamado, denominado |

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1   nas desde 1990.  El anterior primer ministro británico, el conservador John  Major, se
2    ", en referencia a la decisión del ministro británico para Irlanda del Norte, Peter Ma
3   esiva descentralización de la Administración británica, los parlamentos autónomos de Gal
4   da hace un año.    Según informaba la cadena británica BBC desde Freetown, y confirmaba
5    a los 98 años mientras dormía, la novelista británica Barbara Cartland era ya una leye
6   uxemburgo denegaron así la razón al Gobierno británico , que había recurrido la directi
7   con cuatro comandos de marines.  El ministro británico de Defensa, Geoff Hoon, anunció
8   más de los sindicatos    El Nuevo Laborismo británico considera el término socialista
9     Un responsable de Transporte de la central británica General Workers Union (Unión Gen
10  tiz en su interpretación. El primer ministro británico, Tony Blair, señaló que se trata
11   el comisario para Relaciones Exteriores, el británico Chris Patten; y el primer minist
12   de mañana con la dirección, los sindicatos británicos se mostraron ayer preocupados p
13  vos de seguridad con el retorno del Ejército británico a las calles de Belfast. Salvo e
14   a una decisión de Jack Straw,  el ministro  británico del Interior, que consideró que
15    una crisis profunda".   "Tanto el Gobierno británico como la dirección del Partido Un
16  unes es uno de los organismos del Parlamento británico donde se proponen y debaten dife
17    Congreso de la Confederación de Sindicatos británicos votó ayer abrumadoramente a fav
18  os puntales de extremada tensión, las tropas británicas estaban en sus cuarteles desde
19  bido «crímenes de guerra», según un diputado británico que visitó la zona rusa atrapada
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1   aback at the arrival at Drumcree of loyalist leader Johnny Adair, who brought with him
2   rom angry Britons.   William Hague, the Tory leader, said 206,000 manufacturing jobs ha
3   y and "centralise" its structure, the Labour leader told delegates at the TUC conferenc
4    the Sinn Fein president, and David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionist, emerged grim
5   al gesture by the IRA to enable the unionist leader David Trimble to claim some kind of
6   33 people died. Another is reputed to be the leader of the Orange Volunteers, responsib
7   lence, again pointing out that the Sinn Fein leader, Gerry Adams, never did. But he did
8    outcome is a personal victory for UUP party leader David  Trimble, who had threatened t
9   nd Office, the SDLP member Brid Rodgers, her leader, John Hume, and even the ecumenical
10  dicating the stance of Ulster Unionist party leader David Trimble, who went into govern
11   symbolic defeat at the hands of the miner's leader Arthur Scargill last week when the L
12  et been able to persuade John Taylor, deputy leader of the parliamentary party, to back
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The search expression *británic\** highlights many productive translations: "primer ministro británico, Tony Blair" (Tony Blair), "Nuevo Laborismo británico" (New Labour), "ministro británico para Irlanda del Norte" (Secretary of State for Northern Ireland), "diputado británico" (MP), "Confederación de Sindicatos británicos" (Trade Union Congress). It also illustrates the Spanish ortotypographical conventions prescribing the use of capital letters in "Gobierno británico" when referring to the executive. As to *leader*, it triggers many references to political parties.

Moreover, some forms of address (i.e. Mr, Lord) and quotation marks co-occur with references to professions and organizations as can be seen in (3). The concordances selected show that translations into Spanish omit the forms of address except for the title of Lord. We can also see a wrong translation for "Science minister", which should not be translated using a cognate (ministro de Ciencia). The word "minister" used in a British context is a false friend of the Spanish "ministro", and in many cases "secretario de Estado" or "un alto cargo del Ministerio de Ciencia" may act as functional equivalents.

The linguistic context around the end quotation mark puts forward differences in the conventions used in English and Spanish, not only in the position of the comma but also in the great variety of verbs of speech used in the Spanish press as opposed to publications in English.

(3)

| SEARCH STRUCTURES: FORMS OF ADDRESS AND QUOTATIONS (DIRECT SPEECH) | |
|---|---|
| TO:<br>• Mr, Mrs, Ms, Lord, Dr, QC, prof<br>• ," | TT:<br>• Lord, Dr, prof, D.<br>• ", |

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1    g of whole people will also remain banned. Lord Sainsbury, the Science Minister with re
2    s proper salaries."   The science minister Lord Sainsbury of Turville said: "Fifty key
3     después de que el responsable de Ciencia, Lord Sainsbury, admitiera en una entrevista
4    algún mal. Al conocer las declaraciones de Lord Salisbury, grupos religiosos y de defen
5    n a anunciar su posición hasta septiembre, Lord Salisbury adelantó que los ministros de
6    ña después de que el ministro de Ciencias, Lord Salisbury, admitiera en una entrevista
7    cer for the commando corps of British Adm. Lord Louis Mountbatten, uncle to Prince Phil
8    iones para contrastarlas con la opinión de Lord Alton y los grupos religiosos, por eso
9    ufrimiento entre la población civil. Ayer, lord Judd, el jefe británico de una delegaci
10     Russian military," said delegation leader Lord Judd.  Western nations have expressed c
11    human life for the purposes of cloning.'  Lord Alton, the pro-life peer, has described
12   h touched many people around the world."   Lord St John of Fawsley, her friend for 40 y
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1   ious if this will be Al Gore's last stand as well," said Bush spokesman Dan Bartlett.
2   Nd well-being of all those who have been detained," Mr Annan said. The corpses believ
3   lice and the ambulance crews are dazed with shock," he said. Confirming that seven pe
4     break up the crowd and it actually was tear gas," Mr Ramsey said. "It did disperse
5   lly have become more violent since the ceasefires," Jim McDaid told the National Ass
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1    elo en los 7.000 años próximos puede ser inevitable", afirma el profesor Howard Conw
2    se halla sólo a 75 kilómetros". "Eso está muy lejos", replicó el embajador. Era la úl
3    artes no pueden llegar a un acuerdo en esta ocasión", decía un escueto comunicado del
4    le una respuesta directa a menos que me la pregunte", añadió. "Utilizo palabras como
5    orense "siempre ha apoyado a la UE sin ninguna duda", por lo que le definió como "un
6     condiciones de llegar a un acuerdo en este momento", ha asegurado Crowley.
7    Cosas iban a ser políticamente difíciles de aceptar", afirmó el responsable comunitar
8    S no podemos decir a los Estados cómo deben hacerlo", advirtieron desde la Comisión.
9    Imas semanas vamos a trabajar en ponerlo todo junto", explicó. "Esto se supone que pe
10   Toda Europa a convertirse en una generación perdida", dijo el profesor Philip James,
11   Opeo basta para convertirle a uno en un anti alemán", argumentó Chevènement. El ex pr
12    Fein responsabiliza a Mandelson de la "peor crisis", según palabras de Adams, que at
13   estará al frente.  "Va a haber un cambio de guardia", manifiestan las fuentes consult
14       "No creemos que vaya a salir algo nuevo de allí", admitieron las fuentes, "en est
15   tarán inferiores al objetivo establecido por el BCE", destacó el portavoz de Bruselas
16   ra siempre en  Alemania. Me veo viviendo en Londres", comentó el director ejecutivo d
17   n figuras internacionales extremadamente respetadas", defendió el ministro británico
18    republicana y sus autores están hoy en el Gobierno", señaló David Jones, portavoz de
19   tuguesas islas Azores, "no se tomó ninguna decisión", puntualizó el jefe de la diplom
20     abría problemas. Contra los niños no tenemos nada", manifiesta Meimaj. Doce meses d
21   ast. "El Acuerdo de Viernes Santo está hecho trizas", denunció el presidente del Sinn
22   jico a manejar una silla de ruedas, si no a caminar", declaró Merger, según una cita
23    iles. "Aquí todo el mundo viene a ver a esta gente", se queja el jefe de MSF, "es
24   ra siempre en  Alemania. Me veo viviendo en Londres", comentó el director ejecutivo d
25   e la cumbre: "Se han logrado avances significativos", insistía Clinton con tono res
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Once students are familiar with a methodology that combines the use of traditional reference works with the exploitation of corpora, they have to choose 15 translation problems. For each problem, they have to think about possible translation strategies, extract concordances and specify the following information:

1. Entry term posing a translation problem
2. Definition and source of definition
3. Paragraph containing the term
4. Translation of the paragraph: the one you found and/or your own proposal from the comparable texts of your choice
5. Comment about the translation problem and its solution, for example, the way a Spanish newspaper has translated a cultural reference, different denominations for the same reference, translation inconsistencies related / unrelated to stylistic reasons, cases of explicitation, omission of information…

## 4. Conclusions

In this paper we have described an activity designed to foster learning autonomy in the translation classroom by using corpora. We have focused on the identification and translation into Spanish of British and North American cultural references. This type of activity has the following advantages for students, researchers and teachers of Translation:

- It contributes to the learning of cultural references and illustrates the strategies used by journalists in the translation of cultural references with special emphasis on explicitation, functional translation and paraphrase. It is also of help for the learning of formal conventions.
- It increases the motivation of pupils, who choose the subject.
- It is a preparation for specialised translation, since some newspaper articles contain specialized vocabulary.
- It increases students' ability in terms of documentation skills and makes using new technologies easier.

Newspaper corpora provide an enormous variety of examples of translation even if journalists are not professional translators. Journalists are often good writers who have an important social influence, and if their translations are seen under a critical perspective, they can shed light on the nature of the translation process and of the most frequent translation strategies. When cultural references and their translation are extracted with the right search structure, they help students become aware of the manner and the extent to which information is added in the translation of cultural references. In any case, they realize that any decision depends to a great extent on the expected reader, the main translation strategy adopted and the translator's knowledge.

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**Notes**

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[2] In fact, newspapers contain a great amount of translated material such as translated statements of foreign figures and celebrities, reports from news agencies, etc.

[3] For a review of these, see Mayoral (2000).

[4] We mostly visit the following sites: *Departamento de Español Urgente de la Agencia EFE* (http://www.efe.es), *Centro Virtual Cervantes* (http://cvc.cervantes.es) and *Página del Idioma Español* (http://www.el-castellano.com).