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Electronic resources and lexical cohesion in the construction of intercultural competence¹

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Cultural competence is one of the five components of translation competence (Nord 1991: 146). The term culture encompasses not only the products of a society as embodied in its institutions and objects, but also world views, experiences and behaviour schemata. Since the comprehension and reformulation of culture as product is one of the most difficult tasks in translation, numerous strategies for the translation of cultural references have been proposed (Ballester in press; Mayoral and Muñoz 1997; Nedergaard-Larsen 1993).

In this paper, we assume that comparable corpora on current affairs in English and Spanish contribute to the terminological and documentation tasks involved in translation, while increasing students' encyclopaedic knowledge and intercultural competence. A better understanding and management of cultural references are also achieved through the analysis of lexical cohesion in texts. As a result, we believe that the translation classroom offers the opportunity to activate both reading strategies based on the notion of lexical chain (López Rodríguez 2001) and documentation strategies involving the exploitation of electronic resources.

1. Introduction

The study of international communication across cultures has attracted the attention of many scholars since the late 1980s. For instance, it was in the late 1980s that a new subject known as British Studies or British Cultural Studies began to appear in different countries. At that time, cognitive anthropologists such as Holland and Quinn (1987) argued that culture should be understood in a broad sense, in other words, as “shared knowledge not only of a people’s customs and artefacts and oral traditions but also of what individuals must know in order to behave as a functioning member of their society”.

In the field of Translation, Snell-Hornby (1988: 40) defined translation as a cross-cultural event and culture as “a totality of knowledge, proficiency and perception”. She recognized “its immediate connection with behavior (or action) and events and its dependence on norms, whether those of social behavior or those accepted in language usage”. Her approach derives from Hönig, Kussmaul, Reiss and Vermeer (apud Snell-Hornby 1988: 40).

The relation between culture and translation is also obvious in Nord (1991), who considered cultural competence as one of the five components of translation competence, the others being linguistic competence in the native language (L1) and in the foreign language (L2), transfer competence, factual competence in sometimes highly specialised fields and technical competence for documentation.

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According to Witte (2000: 163), cultural competence encompasses the following aspects: a) the ability to become aware of what is known unconsciously; b) the ability to consciously learn what you do not know about your own culture or other cultures; and c) the ability to compare cultures in order to understand and produce behaviour that is appropriate for the context and purpose of communication of at least two participants from different cultures:

Die Fähigkeit des Sich-Bewusstmachens und Überprüfens von 'unbewusst Gewusstem' und die Fähigkeit des bewussten 'Erlernens' von 'Nicht-Gewusstem' in Eigen- und Fremdkultur(en) sowie die Fähigkeit des vergleichenden In-Bezug-Setzens dieser Kulturen zum Zweck der ziel- und situationsadäquaten Rezeption und Produktion von Verhalten für den Bedarf von mindestens zwei Aktanten aus zwei verschiedenen Kulturen zur Herstellung von Kommunikation zwischen diesen Aktanten.

Moreover, intercultural competence cannot be separated from textual competence since cultural knowledge is acquired through exposure to texts. As Bassnett (1997: xix) points out, referring to British cultures, "the study of cultures cannot simply be an examination of facts and institutions, it must also involve a study of the discourse that shape them". In that sense, we believe that intercultural competence can be enhanced through tasks which contribute to textual competence such as the exploitation of newspaper corpora and the recognition of lexical cohesion.²

Although intercultural competence has not been measured yet, we assume that it can be intuitively tested by analysing the ability to translate texts on current affairs. Such texts contain many cultural references, that is, references to place names, institutions, judicial and administrative concepts, weights and measures, coins and references to history and traditions. In this paper we briefly review two models on the strategies used in the translation of cultural references. We also show that the above-mentioned competences can be integrated in the general translation classroom to increase students' intercultural competence. In particular, we will focus on the exploitation of comparable newspaper corpora in English and Spanish and the notion of lexical chains because we believe that both can help construct intercultural competence.

2. Strategies in the translation of cultural references

Among the strategies used in the translation of cultural references or *culturally-marked textual segments*, Mayoral and Muñoz (1997: 143) mention the following:

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

² López Rodríguez (2001: 585) defines lexical cohesion as the repetition of lexical units in the paradigmatic and syntagmatic axis that creates texture and enables the reader to perceive the text as a conceptual unit.

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 (in press) adopts the model to the didactics of translation from English to Spanish using the film *American Beauty*.

(1) Strategies used in the translation of culture-bound problems (Ballester 2001)

	Culture-bound problems	Translation strategy
	SL-culture-oriented translation	Identity: <i>Media Monthly</i> → <i>Media Monthly</i> Explication + identity: <i>Media Monthly</i> → la revista <i>Media Monthly</i> Imitation (literal translation): Ninth → Noveno
	General	Explication: <i>Miracle-gro</i> → abono Paraphrase: Ninth → Primer curso de enseñanza secundaria en EE UU
	TL-culture-oriented translation	Cultural adaptation: Ninth → 3º de ESO

By presenting these models in the classroom, students can easily perceive that there is more than one correct translation, though evidently some translations are more adequate than others. They also notice the central position occupied by explication and paraphrase. 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 the search and analysis of texts containing cultural references, the management of the terminology they contain, the exposure to many real examples of translation, and the awareness of the way a particular cultural reference can be translated in different situational contexts.

3. Methodology

Our methodology integrates two textual approaches: corpus analysis and the study of lexical cohesion. The first approach is based on the use of comparable and parallel corpora to translation didactics (Maia 1998, Gavioli and Zannettin 1998, López Rodríguez, in press) and cultural studies (López Rodríguez, in press).

In López Rodríguez (ibid.), we show the potential of newspaper corpora in the training of translators and interpreters.³ We describe an activity in which the second year students of our Faculty of Translation and Interpreting in Granada designed their own bilingual corpus of newspaper texts of 12,000 words and analyzed it order to identify ortotypographical conventions, cultural references and the strategies used in the translation of cultural references. The electronic version of the corpus was analyzed with 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 used this software to detect what we called search structures, more specifically, 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. Through this activity our students dramatically increased their ability for documentation (technical competence), their factual competence—since they acquired many specialized terms—, their cultural competence and their transfer competence.

Considering that intercultural competence includes and is increased by textual competence, it is necessary to combine corpus analysis with another text-based approach which focuses on lexical cohesion. In López Rodríguez (2001), we apply corpus linguistics to medical terminology in order to identify lexical chains, in other words, sequences of single-word

³ In fact, newspapers contain a great amount of translated material such as translated statements of foreign figures and celebrities, reports from news agencies, etc.

and/or multi-word lexical units, which are formally and semantically related, spanning a topical unit of the text (Morris and Hirst 1991: 22-23). We show that conceptual activation is linked to lexical cohesion and the activation of lexical chains in texts.

To our mind, it is possible to apply this methodology in the detection, understanding and management of political terminology, and in the activation of our students cultural knowledge and reading strategies.

4. Textual analysis to facilitate the comprehension and translation of cultural references

For our purpose, we use a bilingual newspaper corpus about Northern Irish Politics compiled by our students. In the corpus, which is both in electronic and paper format, the English section contains 19,664 words, and the Spanish section, 17,381. Several texts from the corpus are given out to students and the following exercises are proposed:

ACTIVITY 1

Read quickly (2 minutes) each of the texts. While you skim the text, underline the keywords that might make up the main lexical chains of the text.

ACTIVITY 2

List the lexical chains you have identified. Name them with one of the keywords you have underlined.

To check that students have understood the notion of lexical chain and have identified relevant lexical chains, the teacher represents a fragment of one of the texts in a special format: words belonging to the same lexical chain are marked with the same colour. For instance, the lexical chain *NATIONALIST* is marked with green and includes lexical items such as *Adams, Sinn Fein, republicans, Gerry Adams, IRA, Mr Adams, republican, Sinn Fein president, Sinn Fein, Nationalists*.

(2) Text in which lexical chains are marked with different colours.

Agreement in tatters, Adams tells Sinn Fein
Republicans looking to build up electoral support

Gerry Adams issued a clear signal yesterday that there was no prospect of the IRA agreeing to disarm when he warned that the Good Friday agreement was now "in tatters".

At a special conference in Dublin, Mr Adams said that republicans were looking to a new phase in which they would build up their electoral support to make it easier to resist unionist demands.

"If the Good Friday agreement is lost because the British government caved into unionist demands, one thing is certain," the Sinn Fein president said. "At some point in the future, a new agreement will be negotiated."

Then, students are given a frequency list—ordered by frequency and alphabetically—produced with Wordsmith Tools in which function words and general words not relevant to the topic (*day, time, etc.*) have been eliminated. This list has also been lemmatized. Students carry out the following activity:

ACTIVITY 3

Using the frequency list of the corpus, take a look at the terms whose frequency is over 0.05%, and associate those belonging to the same lexical chain. Finally, include them in a table like the one below, which represents the lexical chain *PEACE*:

(3) Lexical chain *PEACE*

PEACE	61	DISARMAMENT	15
AGREEMENT	51	DEAL	14
GOOD FRIDAY	33	TALKS	12
PROCESS	29		247
ACCORD	16		
CEASE-FIRE	16		
ceasefire(6),ceasefires(2)			

Students also recognized other lexical chains, for which we specify their most frequent lexical units:

- *PEOPLE AND INSTITUTIONS: unionist, government, republican, Sinn Fein, party, loyalist, people, police, catholic, protestant*
- *VIOLENCE AND VIOLENT GROUPS: IRA, violence, bomb(s), arms, weapons, terrorist(s), attack, army*
- *PLACE NAMES: Northern Ireland, Ulster, Irish, British, Belfast, Drumcree*
- *PROPER NAMES OF PEOPLE: Mr, David Trimble, Gerry Adams, Blair, Mandelson, John Hume*
- *POSITIONS: leader, member, minister, prime minister, secretary*

Considering that these lexical chains can be divided into subchains, a new activity is proposed:

ACTIVITY 4

Choose one of the three most representative chains and divide it into subchains. Identify their components by scanning the paper version of the corpus in search of keywords and checking their frequency by means of Wordsmith Tools. Using this program, you can also generate concordances around search structures, in other words, around particular expressions that trigger cultural references and formal conventions, and suggest new search structures.

Here is a good example of a search structure for eliciting information about organizations and positions:

(4) Concordances around *Ulster**

ULSTER*	
1	aming and reconstituting the Royal Ulster Constabulary . "The community
2	ohn White, a leading member of the Ulster Defence Association , politica
3	said, for a splinter group of the Ulster Defense Association , which cl
4	d only after intervention from the Ulster Democratic party , allied to t
5	paraphernalia, but members of the Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF) and Lo
6	orce show of strength was under an Ulster Freedom Fighters banner. The
7	Fein, is a participant in the new Ulster Government set up by the pact
8	eland announced the restoration of Ulster home rule subject to the appr
9	ent, to win that argument and save Ulster unionism from its worst self-
10	ough. After discussions with the Ulster Secretary at Stormont , he cla
11	hreatened to resign if a return to Ulster self-government was not appr
12	." But Orangemen Jim Rodgers, an Ulster Unionist councillor , was heck
13	aped in February. On May 27th the Ulster Unionist Council backed David
14	since the Good Friday accord, the Ulster Unionists have grown increasi
15	ctivity timed to coincide with the Ulster Unionist leader David Trimble
16	TURN TO AUTONOMOUS GOV'T The Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) Executiv
17	after a meeting of the 800-strong Ulster Unionist Council , said yester
18	t." The funeral came a day after Ulster Unionist leader David Trimble
19	rately with representatives of the Ulster Unionist Party , Sinn Fein and
20	ld ask that they be called off." Ulster Unionist MP Willie Thompson,
21	seen as vindicating the stance of Ulster Unionist party leader David T
22	his paramilitary organisation, the Ulster Volunteer Force . The grass wa

Some of the search structures suggested by students are: *party, wing, Irish, Northern Ireland, leader, group, secretary or minister*. In order to analyze the concordances around search structures such as *Ulster* or *Party*, the following exercises are suggested:

ACTIVITY 5

Try to guess the meaning of the expressions in bold (*Royal Ulster Constabulary, Ulster Defence Association, etc.*) by paying attention to their linguistic context. In the paper version of the corpus, look for co-referent expressions which might belong to the same lexical chain.

ACTIVITY 6

Check the meaning of unknown expressions in reference works and write your own definition of the terms.

ACTIVITY 7

Include the cultural terms of the subchains of your choice (see activity 4) in a table. The table should include not only the keywords themselves but the multi-word lexical units they form.

Here is a small illustration of the analysis carried out by the students in Activity 7. In the lexical chain *VIOLENCE AND VIOLENT GROUPS*, students recognized three subchains: *TERRORISTS IN GENERAL, NATIONALIST TERRORIST GROUPS* and *UNIONIST TERRORIST GROUPS*.

(5) Lexical chain *VIOLENCE AND VIOLENT GROUPS*

Terrorists in general (134)

TERRORIST , terrorists	23
DISSIDENT , dissidents Dissident republican(s) 9 Catholic dissidents 4 Dissident groups 2	29
ARMY	21
PARAMILITARY , paramilitaries Catholic paramilitary groups 2 Loyalist paramilitaries 2 Protestant paramilitaries 2	21
GROUP Splinter group 9 Paramilitary group 5 Terrorist group 4 Loyalist group 3 Dissident group 2 Outlawed group(s) 2 Republican group 2 Clandestine group 1 Underground group 1	40
	134

Nationalist terrorist groups

IRA Real IRA 35 Provisional IRA 5 Continuity IRA 2 IRA statement 4	148
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PROVISIONAL , provisionals	13
IRISH REPUBLICAN ARMY	12
PROVOS	5
IRISH REPUBLICANS	4
32-COUNTY SOVEREIGNTY MOVEMENT	1
IRISH VOLUNTEERS	1
IRISH CITIZEN ARMY	1
IRISH NATIONAL LIBERATION ARMY	1
IRISH REPUBLICAN PRISONERS WELFARE	1
	187

Unionist terrorist groups

VOLUNTEER , volunteers	16
UFF	15
UVF	13
LOYALIST VOLUNTEER FORCE	7
ULSTER FREEDOM FIGHTERS	7
ULSTER DEFENCE ASSOCIATION	3
ULSTER VOLUNTEER FORCE	2
UDA	2
ULSTER DEMOCRATIC PARTY	1
COMBAT 18	1
ORANGE VOLUNTEERS	1
RED HAND DEFENDERS	1
	69

In the same way as search structures can be used to fill in the lexical chains, it is possible to use search structures in the Spanish section of the corpus so as to cover some translation problems not solved in bilingual dictionaries. For example, in order to check the way

newspapers have translated the names of political parties, we can use the following expressions: *partido*, *asociación*, *portavoz* or *líder*.

(6) Concordances around *Partido*

PARTIDO	
1	an recibido, los dos ministros del Partido Democrático del Ulster (DUP)
2	nza". En cuanto al presidente del Partido Democrático del Ulster (UDP)
3	t. El miembro de la Asamblea del Partido de Unión Progresista (PUP) -
4	utado en la asamblea local para el Partido Progresista Unionista (PUP) ,
5	David Trimble, jefe del principal partido protestante, Unionista del N
6	cíficos, advirtió hoy el líder del Partido Unionista del Ulster (UUP),
7	. Mientras, el sector radical del Partido Unionista del Ulster (UUP) h
8	ia unionista", personalizada en el Partido Unionista del Ulster y el mi
9	sin embargo, de la aceptación del Partido Unionista del Ulster (UUP),
10	David Trimble, líder del moderado Partido Unionista del Ulster y minis
11	o principal del Ulster y líder del Partido Unionista del Ulster (UUP),
12	McManus, concejal de Antrim por el partido republicano Sinn Fein, señal

In any case, we have to be critical of the translation proposed because journalists are not translators and might make mistakes or be inconsistent as we can see in lines 1 to 4. There is a mistake in lines 1 and 2, where inexplicably *Partido Democrático del Ulster* has two acronyms: *DUP* or *UDP*. If we take a look at the original concordances, we can see that there are two different unionist parties with similar acronyms: the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), and the Ulster Democratic Party (UDP). Therefore, the translation for *Democratic Unionist Party* should have been *Partido Unionista Democrático*. The same occurs with the clumsy translation *Partido de Unión Progresista* (lines 3-4) for *Progressive Unionist Party (Partido Unionista Progresista)*. Our advise then to detect those mistakes is keeping the concordances in English next to the ones in Spanish.

5. Conclusions

In this paper we have described an activity designed to foster students' intercultural competence and encyclopaedic knowledge by using comparable corpora on current affairs in English and Spanish and by identifying lexical chains. We have shown that cultural competence is best increased by connecting it to other types of competence. Apart from increasing learning autonomy, 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.
- It increases the reading skills of students by making them read non-linearly (skimming and scanning).
- It is a preparation for specialized translation, since some newspaper articles contain specialized vocabulary.
- It increases intercultural competence by connecting it with other competences such as factual competence about specialized domains, linguistic competence, transfer competence and technical competence. In particular, it increases students' ability in terms of documentation and terminology skills and makes using new technologies easier.
- It can shed light on the nature of the translation process and of the most frequent translation strategies.

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