

A PROPOSAL FOR A COURSE ON THE HISTORY OF TRANSLATION FOR A HUMANISTIC TRANSLATOR TRAINING¹

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Abstract

History of Translation should be considered a fundamental issue and one of the founding areas in the formative years of a translator. Within the teaching–learning process, the prospective translator has the opportunity to expand his/her worldview and learn how to handle the tapestry of encyclopedic knowledge which will allow weaving the texts with artistic skills and real craftsmanship. This constitutes the main objective of my proposal. The approach I take here extends beyond the introduction of chronological distribution divided into major historical periods. In each of them, I analyze the historical, sociological and political contexts based on texts and biographies which enable highlighting the real actors of the translation process. Finally, this approach leads toward the analysis and comments on the texts, those being the product of reflections on the translators' work. Thus, I propose a circular vision of the History of Translation, starting with a debate on the iconographic symbols which show clearly the translator's activity and, subsequently, drawing the circle mentioned previously, across the areas of context, actor and text.

Resumen

La formación humanística inherente al traductor tiene uno de sus pilares en el conocimiento de la historia de la disciplina. En el proceso de enseñanza–aprendizaje, el futuro traductor tiene la oportunidad de ampliar su cosmovisión y aprender a manejar la lanzadera del telar de conocimiento enciclopédico que le permitirá tramar sus textos con artesanal y artística destreza, siendo éste uno de los objetivos de nuestra propuesta. Para ello, optamos por una didactización de contenidos, cuya metodología permita un aprendizaje constructivo en el que, en primer lugar, tras unas pinceladas presentadas a través de una selección de imágenes que hacen visible la actividad traductora, se propone una distribución cronológica por grandes periodos históricos, basándose en conocimientos culturales previos. En cada uno de dichos periodos, se analizan los contextos histórico–sociales y políticos a través de los textos; para adentrarse después en las biografías, sacando a la luz a los actores del proceso traductor; y, por último, se lleva a cabo el análisis, debate y comentario de los textos de los traductores, bien producto de la reflexión sobre su quehacer o bien de la reescritura y recepción de su obra. Así, pues, proponemos una visión circular y constructivista de la historia de la traducción que hace el recorrido mencionado por contexto, actor y texto tejiéndolos en un telar común, donde el hilo conductor de la historia de la traducción forma la trama del tapiz.

Keywords: History of Translation. Historical research. Context. Translator. Text.

Palabras clave: Historia de la traducción. Investigación histórica. Contexto. Traductor. Texto.

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1. Introduction

Some years ago, the proposal to teach a translation history course in a postgraduate program in translation, and the reduced number of lecture hours of the course led me to reflect on what content should be included in the syllabus and how it should be taught in order that students – regardless of the area of expertise they chose for their future careers– could make the most of a fundamental area for their humanistic training which, unfortunately, is not always given the consideration it deserves within the curricula. This reflection made me structure the translation history course in an ascending series of steps –like a Tower of Babel– starting from what is culturally known and then using discussion and brainstorming so that students could take an active role in class and, once new knowledge was acquired through the lectures, they could gain new insights when analyzing the different thoughts on translation throughout history. The goal of this methodology was to arouse students’ curiosity and promote research on different aspects of translation history.

The high number of students in the course and their diverse geographical, cultural and academic backgrounds –many of them did not have any previous knowledge of language studies or translation although they all shared a common interest in reading– offered, *a priori*, the opportunity to pool ideas and bring together very different perspectives according to the students’ previous training and the particular worldview of the place where they had studied. From this starting point, I tried to create a course on the history of translation which was appealing enough to interest such a heterogeneous and Babel–like group of students who shared the common goal of becoming translators. A challenge, no doubt, but one that could be met considering that translation history is without a doubt a central aspect for the humanistic training of translators. This idea has been dealt with by recognized translation historians such as Vega (1994:13–57; 1996–1997a:71–85), Delisle (1995, transl. 2005; 2003:221–235) and Santoyo (1999), among others. Vega and Delisle have even pointed out mistakes made by modern translation scholars, such as Mounin, who, due to lack of knowledge about translation history, fails to establish correct periods in translation theory.

It should be noted that, this being a translation history course within an postgraduate program taught in Spain in which students translate from six different languages into Spanish, the cultural role played by Spain in the history of the discipline is given special emphasis. Nevertheless, and due to their historic importance, relevant events in translation history in other geographical areas are also covered in this course. Doing otherwise would be distorting the history of a human activity as old as mankind itself. Besides, when deciding which content should be taught and how, my aim was to make up for the scarce bibliographical references that, as a general rule, English, German or French–speaking translation historians have made to the work carried out by great Spanish scholars, translators and translation theorists throughout the history of the discipline. Another important goal was to make those young prospective translators aware of the value of the research on translation history carried out by Spanish scholars, such as Menéndez Pelayo, who is still a role model for translators nowadays in the 100th anniversary of his death.

2. First step: images that make translation visible

When asked why projecting images as a first step to talk about translation history, one can find many reasons for doing this. Firstly, because looking at history through art is no doubt

appealing, as noted by García de Cortázar (2007: VIII) following Voltaire's advice, for whom the secret of not being boring was not to say everything. Images provide the opportunity to present content through suggestive hints.

Another major reason for starting a translation history course in a visual way is the enormous influence of the current media and technological environment on the way we see the world and its circumstances, a world where one needs to first 'see' rather than 'read' to 'get' the message that is being conveyed. Thirdly, images can help students understand to what extent sometimes they do not see all that a picture can tell them about the landmarks in social, cultural and translation history. Considering the number of credits given to translation history courses in the curricula, this can be a good way to introduce students to a discipline whose content encompasses, chronologically speaking, several millennia.

Due to space limitations, a selection of only twenty images is presented here. The first ten of them aim at activating the knowledge stored deep down the black box of students' memory. When the images are projected, the floor is first given to students, who are asked to express ideas and concepts related to the projected image through a brainstorming exercise. Refreshing the meaning of these ten images aims at consolidating knowledge and broadening the students' humanistic worldview.

The second ten images aim at raising awareness of the importance of translation history and its main events, the relevance of translators as cultural and language bridge-builders, the roles they have played in the history of culture, the history of oral and written translation, and the research on translation history.

Below is the list of twenty images mentioned above. Then, some of the students and lecturer's related ideas and questions will be presented.

2.1. *Selection of twenty slides to be projected in class*

1. *The Tower of Babel*, engraving by Gustave Doré (1833–1883), at *The Doré Gallery of Bible Illustrations*, Chicago, 1891.
2. *Sumerian tablet*, cuneiform writing (c. 2100 BC) and *Code of Hammurabi* (1760 BC), Pergamon Museum, Berlin.
3. *Rosetta Stone* (196 BC), British Museum, London, and sculpture of the *Seated Scribe* (c. 2400 BC) Louvre Museum, Paris.
4. Busts of *Herodotus* (480 – 425 BC), *Aristotle* (384 – 322 BC) and *Cicero* (106 – 43 BC).
5. Monuments to the physician and philosopher *Ibn Rushd* (1126 – 1198) and to the philosopher *Maimonides* (1135 – 1204), in Cordoba, Spain.
6. Miniature of *King Alfonso X the Wise with a scribe. Libro de los juegos [Book of Games]*. Library of the Monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial (Madrid).
7. Bust of *Étienne Dolet* (1509–1546), in the gardens of Orléans City Hall, France.
8. Miniature of *St. Jerome in his study*, in *Postillae perpetuae in universam S. Scripturam*, by Nicholas of Lyra (1270–1340), Library of the convent of St. Anthony of Padua, Barcelona.
9. Fresco representing *St. Jerome dictating to his monks*, Monastery of San Isidoro del Campo, Itálica (Seville).
10. Monument to *Johannes Gutenberg* (c.1399–1468), in Mainz, Germany.
11. Page of the *Complutensian Polyglot Bible* (1502–1517), initiated and financed by Cardinal Cisneros.
12. Selection of illustrations from the edition of *Don Quixote* illustrated by Antonio Mingote, published by Planeta, Madrid, 2005 [Revised edition, with introduction and notes by Martín de Riquer].
13. Page of the *vocabularies of Amerindian languages* commissioned to Celestino Mutis by King Charles III of Spain, at the request of Catherine II of Russia; Royal Library, Royal Palace of Madrid.
14. Title page of the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, Madrid, 1873.
15. Monument to *Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo* (1856–1912), by Mariano Benlliure, in Menéndez Pelayo House Museum and Library, Santander.

16. Photograph of *Aurelio Espinosa Pólit Library* (1894–1961), in Quito, Ecuador.
17. Frames from the films *Judgment at Nuremberg* (1961), *La niña de tus ojos* (1998), *Lost in Translation* (2003), *Spanglish* (2004), *The Interpreter* (2005).
18. *Portrait of Xingjian Gao*, first Chinese Nobel Prize winner.
19. *Website of Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes* www.cervantesvirtual.com
20. *Website of the research group HISTRAD*

The work to be done with the projected images is structured as follows: students are asked three questions about each image, namely, what they can see in the image, what they know about it or what it suggests to them. In the case of one of the most well-known iconographic symbols of translation, the Tower of Babel (slide 1), practically all students, regardless of where they come from, can identify the object, but few or none of them can determine when this biblical story took place or which of the Old Testament books contains this story (Genesis 11:1–9) and what exactly is told in it. This gives the lecturer the opportunity to explain the story of the Tower of Babel and its meaning. Then students are asked to carry out some tasks, such as the following:

- Buy an issue of the cultural supplement *Babelia* (produced by the Spanish newspaper *El País*) and find a review of a translation.
- Look up an issue of the Chilean journal of art and culture *Babel* published between 1939 and 1951, which has been digitalized and is available online, and find the names of at least two translators.
- Look for biographical information about George Steiner and find the reason why he called one of his works *After Babel*.
- Search for biographical information about Gustave Doré, the author of the engraving projected, and find out which other major works in literature he illustrated, interpreting a written text using a language that was different from the original.

From slide number 4, which shows the busts of Herodotus, Aristotle and Cicero, it is Aristotle who is more easily identified by students – maybe because he is the first scholar’s name from Antiquity that the brain is able to retrieve from its hard drive. Whatever the reason is for recognizing the great Greek thinker, doubts appear when a question is raised: ‘What was his profession?’ The most common answer is a simple ‘a philosopher’. Here it is necessary to highlight the thinker’s all-encompassing worldview, since Aristotle, like a Leonardo of Antiquity, wrote about mathematics, geography, physics, zoology, ethics, politics, and philosophy, among other things. It is necessary to focus on the thinker and his work now, as it will help students understand how fascinating and successful his scientific works were among the translators of the schools of Baghdad, Cordoba and Toledo.

After giving students some brief biographical information on these three classical authors, they are given tasks which will allow them to consolidate this new knowledge and link it to the history of translation. The tasks are as follows:

- Finding answers to the following questions about Herodotus, a great example of a *homo viator, homo scribens*: Why was the fifth century BC important for Athens from the point of view of politics and cultural patronage? What were the reasons for historian Herodotus’ many travels? What relationship can there be between Herodotus’ thirst for knowledge and the humanistic training of translators?
- Regarding Aristotle, students have to answer this question: What kind of institution was the School of Athens? During the Renaissance there is a renewed interest in Classical Antiquity, so students are asked to find the iconographic representation of this institution of the classical age in the works of Renaissance painters.
- And, concerning Cicero: Which works did he write and why is *Orator* a basic text whose reading is highly advisable for literary translators?
- Consulting the introductory studies of the following translations: a) Herodotus: *Historia*, translated into Spanish by José M. Floristán (2010), Fuhrmann, Manfred: *La teoría poética de la Antigüedad. Aristóteles–Horacio–Longino*, translated into Spanish by

Alfonso Silván (2011) and regarding Cicero's *El Orador*, the introduction by the Spanish translator, Eustaquio Sánchez Salor (2008).

In order to apply what is learned in this first step of the process, in step number four – section five of this paper – a fragment of Cicero's *De optimo genere oratorum* (in Vega 1994: 77) will be included among the texts selected for analysis and class discussion.

In slide number 9, students can see the frescos showing scenes of St. Jerome's life (c. 347–420) in the monastery of San Isidoro del Campo. One of the scenes in the monastery represents the man considered the patron saint of translators in the Western world – the International Translation Day is celebrated on the feast of St. Jerome. The reason for choosing this image and not one where the saint can be easily identified – either because he is wearing cardinal's clothes or because he is in the desert of Chalcis as a penitent, translating Biblical texts – is that it helps completing the biographical information about St. Jerome, a task started with the projection of slide 8. In this image, St. Jerome is wearing the monastic habit and is surrounded by monks to whom he is dictating, and a door is being opened. Through it appears someone who does not belong to the monastery. This scene shows the moment when in Bethlehem St. Jerome receives a letter from one of his many correspondents, and brings the lecturer the opportunity to talk about St. Jerome's letter to Pammachius on the best method of translating. The reason for choosing an image from the former Hieronymite monastery in Seville is that there were two monks from the Hieronymite order in this monastery who later embraced the Reformation, Cipriano Valera (1532–1602) and Casiodoro de Reina (1520–1594). This provides the opportunity to deal with the Reina–Valera Spanish translation of the Bible, nicknamed *Bible of the Bear*, and with the life of translators in the 16th century, for whom translating was at times a high–risk profession. This aspect is analyzed in depth with the projection of slide 7, showing the bust of the French translator and humanist Étienne Dolet, burnt at the stake after being found guilty of heresy. Using the image in slide 8 showing St. Jerome in his study in a miniature of the so–called Nicholas of Lyra's Bible, the old Bible translations are analyzed using several papers by Jesús Cantera (1995: 53–60; 1997: 101–107; 1999: 107–124) that students should have previously read in order to have a class discussion.

The tasks to be carried out about the scene showing St. Jerome dictating to his monks include the following:

- Finding out when International Translation Day (September 30th) was instituted by UNESCO
- Finding information about when the Bible started to be translated into vernacular languages using the quoted papers by Cantera, which will have been previously handed in to students.
- As the students in the class come from diverse geographical backgrounds, they are asked to work in small groups and discuss if there is a figure viewed as a translation icon in Eastern cultures as happens with St. Jerome in the Western world. If so, who is this person and why is he/she important?

So far only three examples from the first ten projected images have been analyzed. As noted above, the second group of ten images aims at introducing aspects which are not so easily recognizable by postgraduate students, especially for those not having done a degree in translation. That would be the case of slide 12 (the illustration from *Don Quixote*), which is used to discuss the different interpretations of the same text made by different translators, as well as some examples of intersemiotic translation throughout the history of the discipline. At this point, as a way to consolidate knowledge, this is linked to the Bible illustration by Gustave Doré which has been previously analyzed.

Slide 13 provides an opportunity to deal with the important task carried out by missionaries who wrote *grammars and vocabularies* of Amerindian languages, and with the role of translators in different fields of knowledge, including lexicography. Students are then told to read a paper written in French by Van Hoof (1996–1997: 17–26) or chapter 8 of the Spanish

translation of Delisle's *Translators through History* (2005: 191–202), since it includes Van Hoof's paper on translators as dictionary writers in Spanish.

Slide number 14 shows the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*. The projection of this image opens the debate on the interesting issue of censorship and the consequences it has had throughout the history of translation, as well as the strategies used by editors and translators to escape censors. At this point an analysis of the revision and editing of translated works is done, and particular cases of works which underwent censorship processes are discussed. One of these cases is a censorship process that took place after the issuance of a Decree by Philip II of Spain in 1558, called *La Orden que se ha tener en imprimir los libros* [Rules to be followed when printing books]; other cases deal with the censorship of the works written by Russian author and translator Boris Pasternak, or with book censorship in Nazi Germany in the 1930s as a way to show students that culture has suffered inquisitorial persecution all over the world throughout history.

The projection of slide 17 allows the lecturer to give students a glimpse into the history of interpreters and their role in the history of mankind, highlighting the fact that these language mediators have participated in trade and political relations since time immemorial.

This first glimpse at translation and interpreting as essential acts of communication will be further developed in a later step of this learning process in which students will read a paper about this issue (Vega 2004: 81–108).

The last images to be projected show the results of research on translation history from very different perspectives and aim at arousing students' curiosity about going into the hidden secrets of history. Slide 20 shows the presentation and *raison d'être* of the research group HISTRAD, directed by Professor Miguel Ángel Vega Cernuda, whose main goal is to conduct research on translation history in Spain and Spanish America. Showing students the documentation available on this area, be it translators' biographies or papers on reception or on translation history, contributes to promoting the interest in this discipline, and also to raising students' awareness of the important research work carried out by the teaching staff at universities.

3. Second step: Chronological division according to the great periods of history and their contexts

The first look at translation history presented as a kind of collage in the previous section is only a 'sketch' giving a hint of how the 'finished picture' will look like. After that, the second step in this learning process is concerned with a chronological division of periods in translation history according to the great periods of history. However, this option is not the only one; it is also possible to use a classification based on geographical areas or, as proposed by Ruiz Casanova (2000:12) a division based on the chronological periodization of literature, since "[...] translation is just another act of literature-making in a language. As an operation consisting in *transferring* a text into another language, translation shares the historical knowledge of the languages and literatures it works with [...]". Ultimately, the goal here is to have a basis to contextualize translators' biographies, their work, their thoughts on translation and the reception of their works in order to link different historical, literary or political events with translation. For example, Delisle (1995, trans. 2005) takes an original approach that is far from a historical or literary periodization: he organizes the history of translation according to what its protagonists – translators – did, paying special attention to their contribution to the history of culture. Thus, he divides the chapters in his book as follows: 'Translators and the Invention of Alphabets', 'Translators and the Development of National Languages', 'Translators and the Emergence of National Literatures', 'Translators and the Dissemination of Knowledge', 'Translators and the Reins of Power', 'Translators and the Spread of Religions', 'Translators and the Transmission of Cultural Values', 'Translators and the Writing of Dictionaries', and finally 'Interpreters and the Making of History'.

The approach I take here is, above all, an educational one. Taking into account the characteristics of the students doing this translation history course, choosing an initial division based on the great historical periods is unfortunately due to the gaps in many students' cultural

knowledge. Also, I honestly believe that this division can provide a better basis to later deal with contexts, translators and texts.

As noted before, regardless of the criterion used to contextualize the object of study dealt with here, the most important thing is to have a basis that can help students link different events together, because the ability to link ideas contributes to broadening their worldview, to expanding their mental horizons, and therefore, to improving the humanistic knowledge they need as translators. After the brief introduction to some relevant events in translation history through the images and tasks given to students in step one of the process, it seems clear that students can contextualize facts better when they can resort to historical background information. Thus, a chart summarizing the traditional division of the great periods in history will enable a large number of students to start building new knowledge upon better-consolidated cognitive schemas, as well as helping the lecturer start a constructivist learning process. In this course, history is divided –with its corresponding subdivisions– into four big periods:

- a) Antiquity, subdivided into Eastern cultures and ancient Greece and Rome.
- b) The Middle Ages, subdivided into the Early and High Middle Ages, and the Late Middle Ages. Both periods are in turn organized into Eastern and Western cultures.
- c) The Early Modern Period, subdivided into the 15th and 16th centuries, and the 17th and 18th centuries.
- d) The Late Modern Period and the Contemporary Era, subdivided into the 19th century, and then the 20th and 21st centuries.

The next step consists in giving students a small corpus of texts where there they can find clear references to the historical and social, political, literary, economic or scientific contexts in which translation has taken place. Using these texts, students will be able to analyze one or several translation contexts within a specific timeframe. Due to space limitations, only one example of each of the contexts above mentioned will be provided here.

3.1. Historical and political context through translators and texts

The text included in this section (General Archive of the Indies, State Section, catalogue number 61 N36) is a request letter addressed to the governor of the province of Maracaibo, the captain general of the corps of engineers, citizen Vasseur. The letter was signed in Maracaibo on June 18th 1802 by the Minister Provincial of the Franciscan Order, Friar Francisco Javier Cuvillán. In the letter, he requests that the jewels and ornaments kept in the Franciscan convent of Santo Domingo be transferred to other convents of the Order, for that convent had been occupied by the French and was being used as a military hospital. The original text written by Father Cuvillán including the list of jewels and ornaments is in French. Its translation into Spanish, by Friar Josef Martín Román, ends with a paragraph certifying that the translated version is equivalent to the original document.

I hereby certify that this is a faithful and legal translation of the documents in French which were given to me to this end by our Very Reverend Father Minister Provincial Friar Francisco Xavier Cuvillan and which I have verified with the original document. In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand in Maracaibo on this fifteen day of August 1802 (signature) Josef Martín Román

Upon reading this document, several questions arise. On the one hand, its date may seem an early one, since the Venezuelan War of Independence took place between 1810 and 1823, but it should be noted that the revolutionary processes which led to the war were already under way in 1797. On the other hand, students may find it surprising that religious men were the authors and translators of this type of administrative texts. However, there are many examples of administrative translation within religious orders, since the direct contact with the authorities often meant using languages other than Spanish. For instance, all bulls were systematically

translated in convents, and bulls were not always about religious matters, even if their issuing institution was a religious one. Besides, this is a document using specialized language that a non-religious translator may have not been able to handle. The list of jewels and ornaments included in the document is as follows:

[...] a gilded silver monstrance, a chalice with its gilded paten, an aspersorium with a silver aspergillum, a silver thurible with its incense boat and spoon, three pairs of wine vessels with their plates and a silver bell, a silver glory assembled on an iron base with forty-three plates, fifteen complete chasubles, two stoles, four complete dalmatics, three capes, eight albs, seven surplices, a box of corporals and purificators, nine altar frontals made of crimson taffeta [...]

The interest in translating French texts grew exponentially with the Spanish American wars of independence. Therefore, when studying the reception of French works in those countries or the biographies of their translators, the political environment which favored the proliferation of translations from and into French will have to be taken into account. On this side of the Atlantic, the analysis of a historical and political context and its connection with translation can be done by studying the situation of translation in the different European courts (Fernández Sánchez and Sabio Pinilla 1999: 72), from the point of view of international relations (De Bernardo et al. 2011), or from the perspective of translation in war periods.

3.2. *Historical and literary context through translators and texts*

The text chosen to analyze a specific historical and literary context is included in a book by Pajares Infante (2010) in which the author deals with the English novel of the 18th century and the great success it achieved both in England and in other countries for being mainly targeted at middle-class people:

[...] the historical data known so far reveal a significant increase in the number of readers. The data also show that the well-known circulating libraries, where one could hire a book for a reasonable price, were very successful [...] the evolution and development of the English novel, the wide variety of subgenres and their quantitative and qualitative importance. Looked down on at first for being considered a vain and useless form of entertainment, it was not many years later that the novel became the most demanded genre among European readers [...] it was French critics, authors and translators who helped the English novel become known in all the Continent, and people like Prévost, Voltaire, Rousseau, Le Tourneur, Diderot, and many others were the great promoters of eighteenth-century English novelists and the people who best appreciated their work. (Pajares Infante 2010: 4–16)

After taking a look at a list of works by eighteenth-century authors such as Jonathan Swift, Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding, Laurence Sterne, Walter Scott, Tobias Smollett, Oliver Goldsmith, Robert Bage, William Goldwin, Horace Walpole, Mathew Lewis, Anne Radcliffe, Jane Austen, and other nineteenth-century writers like Mary Shelley, the Brönte sisters, and Henry James, among many others, the question is: What was translated into other languages of all this rich literary production in English? Working in groups, students whose language combination is English-Spanish have to find an answer to this question consulting the bibliography available on this area. Students whose working languages are French and Spanish or having other language combinations are asked to answer this question by doing literature searches in the complete works by Juretschke: *España y Europa. Estudios de crítica cultural* (2001), or in the work by Lafarga, Palacios and Saura (2002).

In line with the above, María Luisa Tobar's work (2012: 112–113) provides an interesting example of a translator's contribution to the dissemination of foreign literature works in a specific historical and literary context: Italy in the first half of the 20th century. Her text revolves around the figure of the writer and translator Elio Vittorini, who no doubt contributed to widening the parameters of the literary canon in the Italian polysystem:

[...] his work as a translator plays a crucial role within a cultural project whose goal was to introduce and make foreign literature known in Italy in order to promote the process of renovation and modernization of Italian culture and literature. The fascination Vittorini exerted on young people in the 1940s and 1950s is really due to his continuous endeavors to promote culture, both in its production and dissemination processes, rather than to his work as a writer [...] A bright and original translator, Vittorini deserves credit for arousing Italian people's interest in American literature and culture [...]

3.3. *Social and historical context through translators and texts*

The example used here to analyze a specific social and historical context that shows the work done by translators in that specific chronotope is based on a paper by Lourdes Arencibia (1996–1997: 27–40). In her work, Arencibia deals with the important role played by nineteenth-century Cuban literary gatherings in promoting the interest in foreign literary works and, as a result, in their translation. The translation of these works was possible thanks to the invaluable patronage of people like Domingo del Monte (1804–1853), who selected and purchased foreign literary works, which, once translated, he revised, printed and edited himself. These translations were circulated in the literary salons, where they were discussed and evaluated. The text below comments on the translation process of Charles Comte's *Traité de Législation*, done upon request of Domingo del Monte:

The translation of Comte's book is about to be finished, and it is copying the drafts that is taking longer; yesterday I agreed with Valle to ask Osés to make the writing a bit clearer and to start sending materials to the North, since having someone smart over there who can correct the trial printings can avoid mistakes with some letters and make the most of our time [...] he is working hard in the translation of Comte's work, which will soon see the light with the help of little German Osés (Del Monte 1834, quoted in Del Monte 1822–1845, vol. I: 342).

Eventually, this translated work was viewed as highly subversive and it was deemed convenient not to publish it in Cuba since it could have led to the uprising of black slaves. This shows that a particular social and historical context can sometimes promote translation and other times disapprove of it.

The events which have taken place in this country regarding black people make it dangerous to publish anything about them on the island of Cuba, especially now that England has freed its slaves. Therefore, a work which does not only attack slavery but also presents the full scope of human rights and shows that they belong to colored people as much as to white people [...] as far as its translators are concerned, they are not going to clash with only one of the social classes in Cuba, but with all of them, because even the poorest family has one or two slaves. Word will spread that a book has been published to cause the black to rise against slavery, and, without reading it, people will loathe its authors (Del Monte 1834, quoted in Del Monte 1822–1845, vol. I: 370)

Although the example used here deals with the literary gatherings in nineteenth-century Cuba, it should be noted that these gatherings in literary salons had been very dynamic in Europe as from the 17th century, and as from the 16th century in Italy. In this regard, suffice it to recall the scholarly salons organized by Vittoria Colonna, to mention just one example. Many of these literary salons were run by women, as explained by the author and translator Von der Heyden-Rynsch (1992) in a monograph devoted to this social, cultural and literary activity.

The overarching goal of arousing students' interest in doing research and broadening their knowledge is sought in this unit by presenting literary gatherings and salons in a very attractive way. Students are encouraged to find information about specific literary gatherings, such as for instance, the ones held at Café de Pombo or at Café Gijón, both in Madrid, and then asked to write a short report on how these places worked, who took part in the literary gatherings, whether translators attended those gatherings or not, and if there was a specialized publication associated to these literary gatherings in which translations were reviewed.

The list of contexts to be studied can cover a wide range of fields of human activity related to translation in different periods. For instance, if the author to be studied was Friar Luis de León and his translation of *The Song of Songs*, it would be interesting to study the situation of translation in Spain in the 16th century as the historical and economic context in which this author lived and worked. The economic and academic framework of this author and his work could also focus on the flourishing book printing industry in the university town of Salamanca during the Renaissance, which came about with the settlement in Spain of big families of enterprising foreign printers such as Juan Pulman, whose keen eye for business helped no doubt to expand the translation market (Robben 1990: 53–61).

On the other hand, should the lecturer decide to include a specific historical and scientific context, the history of translation in the field of medicine (García Bravo 2004: 24–42) or pharmacy (Van Hoof 1999: 27–44) could also be analyzed. All in all, there are many possibilities when choosing contents and turning them into class materials for the humanistic training of prospective translators. This wide array of possibilities offers the lecturer the opportunity to change the content and topics to be studied from one academic year to the next depending on how homogeneous or heterogeneous the group of students is.

4. Third step: analysis of translators' biographies through history

The next step in this course focuses on translators' biographies, and includes not only leading figures of translation, as Delisle did (2003: 230), but also those translators who wished to remain anonymous, many times for security reasons, and those whose work is not so well-known to people because translation was a complementary activity to their main occupation – which was directly or tangentially linked to writing –, as is the case of the once archivist of the National Library of Spain, Lorenzo González Agejas. There is no doubt that the main protagonists of the history of translation are translators: without their work –carried out upon other people's request for political, literary, economic, scientific or social reasons, through patronage pursuing cultural prestige, or as a personal decision to translate a text– it would be impossible to build the history of translation for it would have no foundations or *raison d'être*. In this connection, from the other side of the Atlantic, Arencibia (1995:53) says the following:

History is the Great Narrator that tells us who, what, how, when, where and why about the human race and their world. For translators and interpreters, going back over the marks left by their profession over time, identifying those who left a mark and knowing their thoughts on the discipline in the different circumstances they went through is much more than a curious thing to do: it means being face to face with one the most ancient, representative and thought-provoking human activities devoted to the useful task of communication through the ages [...] on this side of the pond, just like on the other one, it was translators and interpreters' job to transmit and perpetuate the historical memory of ideas and events [...].

Translation historian Balliu (1995: 9) highlights the leading role played by translators in history, and says that “The translator, just like any other actor in social life, belongs to a time and a sociological and cultural setting. And not only is he a part of that setting, but he is also committed to it through his creative work”.

Thus, in this step of the teaching–learning process, students are encouraged to consult bibliography on translators, including biographical dictionaries from different countries, works about translators (Delisle and Woodsworth 1995, 2005), bibliographical catalogues (Menéndez Pelayo 1876; Palau and Dulcet 1923–1945; Pellicer and Saforcada 1778), works on translation history (Santoyo 1999; Ruiz Casanova 2000), historical dictionaries of translation (Lafarga and Pegenaute 2009), articles in monographs (Corredor Plaja 2012), specialist journals, databases, websites of research groups on translation history, and also proceedings of translation conferences.

Firstly, students are given a brief list of translators from different periods in history and they are asked to answer the following questions: Who translated? Where? Why? For whom did he/she translate? What did he/she translate? Secondly, students are asked to consult the website of the Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes and find some of the texts rendered by the

translators on their list, or find the names of translators of written works which are closer to their cultural interests. The main goal of this activity is that, after reading a translated text, students answer the question of how a specific translator approached his rendering work. This also serves as an introduction to translation criticism: after a debate held in class, students will be asked to hand in a critical review of the translation they read. Their translation criticism work will be later discussed in a feedback session in which students will be shown the close link between history and translation theory, and how the translator's decisions when rendering a text into another language can be related to the context where the text was translated and to the type of text. At this point of the process, and if students have made the most of the course so far, they would be better prepared to analyze texts on translation theory and to understand translators' thoughts on the discipline throughout history.

The class materials for the task above also include papers about specific translators readily accessible to students –either because they are available online or because the university where the course is taught has a well-equipped library that offers specialized literature– so that they can complete the task of studying some translators' biographies. Authors like Vega Cernuda 1995a; Martínez Manzano 1995; Vega Cernuda 1995b; Guzmán Guerra 1995; Vega Cernuda 1996–1997b; Vega Cernuda 2005–2006; and Coriasso 2005–2006, among others, together with research groups like HISTRAD, have among their bibliographical and research output interesting papers on the lives, translated works and thoughts on the discipline of translators who have somehow left a mark in translation history. This task contributes to raising students' awareness of the importance of translation in the history of culture, and at the same time, it helps broadening their knowledge about the reception of works and authors through translation.

5. Fourth step: Text analysis and discussion

In this section there are three basic works which will provide the basis for the analysis and discussion: *Textos clásicos de teoría de la traducción* (Vega Cernuda 1994), *Aproximación a una historia de la traducción en España* (Ruiz Casanova 2000) and *Sobre la traducción: textos clásicos y medievales* (Santoyo Mediavilla 2011).

When the lecturer gets to the fourth and last step in this teaching–learning process, the students will have received information and training that started with images representing landmarks in translation history, then moved on to the analysis of different contexts and texts, and subsequently dealt with translators' biographies and work. Thus, at this stage, the student will be better trained to analyze and reflect on translators' thoughts on the discipline throughout history. Now is time to have a look at the ideas of Cicero, St. Jerome, Boethius, Maimonides, Roger Bacon, Leonardo Bruni, Alonso de Madrigal, Luther, Juan Luis Vives, Étienne Dolet, Friar Luis de León, Dryden, Alexander Pope, Bretinger, D'Alembert, August Wilhelm Schlegel, Schleiermacher, Walter Benjamin, Rudolf Pannwitz, Svetlana Geier, among many others. Some of them have had a great relevance in history; some have had a smaller impact, maybe because the scope of reception of their work was limited to a specific group of people, but they have also contributed in their own small way to the development of translation and translation studies through prologues and forewords. A recently published paper (Schrader–Kniffki 2012) has brought to light the interesting reflections of several literary translators interviewed by the paper's author. These reflections revolve around the meaning of translation to them, how they find inspiration and the problems they encounter in the translation process, thus placing the translator in the epistemic center of translation.

The text fragments to be analyzed and discussed are presented together with an idea that helps to guide the analysis. As a way of example, only five text fragments will be included here; nevertheless, as happens in all the steps in this proposal for a course, the content can be changed or expanded:

1. Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 BC) *De optimo genere oratorum* (46 BC) (in Vega 1994:77) “Sobre la utilidad de la literatura clásica en la formación del traductor” [“On the usefulness of classic literature in translator training”]

[...] But as there was a great error as to the question, what kind of eloquence (Attic) that was, I have thought that it became me to undertake a labour which should be useful to studious men, though superfluous as far as I myself was concerned. For I have translated the most illustrious orations of the two most eloquent of the Attic orators, spoken in opposition to one another: Æschines and Demosthenes. And I have not translated them as a literal interpreter, but as an orator giving the same ideas in the same form and mould as it were, in words conformable to our manners; in doing which I did not consider it necessary to give word for word, but I have preserved the character and energy of the language throughout. For I did not consider that my duty was to render to the reader the precise number of words, but rather to give him all their weight. And this labour of mine will have this result, that by it our countrymen may understand what to require of those who wish to be accounted Attic speakers, and that they may recal them to, as it were, an acknowledged standard of eloquence [...]²

2. St. Jerome (c. 347–520), Prologue to the Books of Solomon, translated from Hebrew (in Martino 2007: 459) “Sobre la belleza de los rasgos estilísticos” [“On the beauty of style features”] and “Sobre la actualización” [“On retranslation”].

[...] If anyone is more pleased by the edition of the Seventy Interpreters, he can have it from us previously amended, for we do not create new things in order to destroy the old ones. And yet, when he will have read them carefully, he will realize that our texts can be better understood, that they have not been corrupted by being poured into a third jar, but, having been poured into the cleanest jar straight from the press, have better preserved their authentic flavor [...]

3. Maimonides (1135–1204), Letter to Ibn Tibbon (1199) (in Vega 1994: 87) “Sobre las equivalencias” [“On Equivalence”] and “Sobre las tendencias deformantes” [“On distorting tendencies”]

[...] You are thoroughly fitted for the task of translation, because the Creator has given you an intelligent mind to understand parables and their interpretation, the words of the wise and their difficult sayings [...] The translator should first try to grasp the sense of the subject thoroughly, and then state the theme with perfect clearness in the other language. This, however, cannot be done without changing the order of the words, putting many words for one word, or vice versa, and adding or taking away words, so that the subject be perfectly intelligible in the language into which he translates [...]³

4. Friar Vicente Solano Machuca (1781–1865) *La Guerra Catilina* (pp.142–143) “Sobre la función de la traducción” [“On the purpose of translation”]

[...] It is very difficult to render a written text into another language; so much so that according to several wise critics, it is easier to write a good book than it is to translate skillfully. It is commonly said that Mr. So-and-so can translate from English, French, Latin, and so on, as if translation was the easiest job that has ever existed. Besides the knowledge of languages, translating means making the dead and those who are far away speak a language that they never spoke: it means grasping their ideas, putting oneself in their place and conveying in another language what maybe the original language could not express. In a word, it is the ultimate effort of human ingenuity: an extraordinary gift that nature has profusely distributed amongst men [...] My intention was to express the author’s thoughts in order to create a popular work and not a literature classic. This is why I have omitted so many language notes which Sallust’s translators and analyzers

² Translation into English included Marcus Tullius Cicero, *The Orator, A Dialogue Concerning Oratorical Partitions, and Treatise on the Best Style of Orators*, trans. C.D. Yonge (Digireads.com Publishing, 2009). Accessed from <http://http://books.google.com/> on 2013–08–05.

³ Translation into English from “The ‘Copenhagen Maimonides’ – a short introduction”. *The Royal Library: National Library of Denmark and Copenhagen University Library*. Accessed from <http://www.kb.dk/en/nb/samling/js/ch37intro.html> on 2013–08–05.

like to write; it was enough for me to include some notes related to morals and politics, which are the object of this translation.

5. Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo (1856–1912). Prólogo a los Poemas de Heine (1883) (in Vega 1994:268). “Sobre la traducción de poesía” [“On the translation of poetry”]

[...] Eminent beauty is not the one that philologists keep for their own enjoyment, nor the one that is lost due to an extra or missing adjective, but the one that resists all the hands that sculpt and reproduce it, and because of its universal and human origin, this beauty is also conveyable and vague to a high degree, and it is at the same time the most translatable and the most untranslatable of all artistic creations. It is not the sound of words that is translated, but their echo in a man’s soul, which is what matters. The rest, anyone with a poetic sense will easily guess [...]

The hours devoted by translation history students to reading and reflecting on texts is coupled with class discussions on the ideas expressed and/or suggested in the texts, and with different assignments, which include written analyses of text form and style, searches for biographical information of authors–translators, and a review of a work on translation written by a translator.

This block of content finishes with further literature searches in anthologies. This is thought not as a directed activity but as student independent work. Students are asked to find texts in which other translators express their thoughts on the discipline and write three brief essays with their personal opinion on the ideas expressed in such texts. Should they disagree with those ideas, they must try to refute them, providing grounds for their arguments. In addition, students are encouraged to consult bibliographical catalogues, databases, the Historical Dictionary of Translation in Spain [*Diccionario histórico de la traducción en España*], journals on translation history or journals on translation where special attention is paid to translation history for further support for their arguments. This activity helps making students aware of the number of different translations of a same work or how many works by an author have been translated into other languages, which instills in students an appreciation for the value of the translator’s work.

6. Fifth step: Conclusions

The structure of the course proposed here allows the lecturer to modify the course content, although always within a common framework of reference. Thus, the lecturer may change the initial photographs to give an overview of the history of translation and interpreting, the tasks to be carried out by students, the texts to be analyzed and discussed, or the translators whose biographies and work will be studied. This also allows lecturers to expand their mental horizons, to be more dynamic in their classes and to stay up to date with the latest research and publications. As new researches are published, lecturers will be able to choose new materials and adapt their content –turning it into teaching material– to the needs of each academic year. The bigger the cultural knowledge of the lecturer, the more the students will be able to learn from the course.

Exchanging opinions, suggesting ideas connected to the images used in step one, and the subsequent discussion about them provides an opportunity to reflect on the work of translators throughout history, and also contributes to consolidating new knowledge built on what students already know or remember in a better way. This proposal for a course on translation history enables an arithmetic progression in the teaching process and a geometric progression in the learning process.

The tasks students have to carry out in each of the blocks or *steps* of this course, which have been specified in the different sections of this paper, are worth 25 marks. It is necessary to obtain at least 13 points in each block to pass the course. The final mark is the result of adding up the marks obtained in each of the four blocks or steps proposed here.

Although the approach taken here may *a priori* seem too comprehensive to be carried out in practice, the course deals with translation history in a series of brush strokes which start as a kind of ‘sketch’ and whose goal is, once the ‘painting’ is finished, to promote reflection and discussion on the steps taken, and also to foster reading and writing. On the one hand, reflecting

on the texts that have been read improves comprehension, as Cicero stated in *The Orator* (2008: 29–49):

[...] I lay down this position, that there is nothing of any kind so beautiful which has not something more beautiful from which it is copied, as a portrait is from a person's face, though it can neither be perceived by the eyes or the ears, or by any other of the senses; it is in the mind only, and by our thoughts, that we embrace it [...] there is nothing more fertile than genius, especially of the sort which has been cultivated by study.⁴

On the other hand, this course should encourage students to write. The result of a great deal of reading practice should be writing, as Pope Damasus told St. Jerome, who worked as a papal secretary for language issues in Rome between the years 382 and 384 before devoting himself fully to the translation of the Bible. Lecturers should encourage students to first read as much as they can and then write, since the practice of writing will in time contribute to improving their style and their ability to express themselves in writing and to translate properly.

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⁴ English translation included in Marcus Tullius Cicero, *The Orations of Marcus Tullius Cicero*, trans. C.D. Yonge (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1913–21). Vol. 4. Chapter: *THE ORATOR OF M. T. CICERO. ADDRESSED TO MARCUS BRUTUS*. Accessed from <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/734/87665> on 2013–08–05.

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BIONOTE / NOTA BIOGRÁFICA

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