# RESEARCH ON THE DIDACTICS OF TRANSLATION. EVOLUTION, APPROACHES AND FUTURE AVENUES[1]

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## Abstract

This article aims to present the evolution of and the pedagogical approaches taken to the didactics of translation, and to suggest avenues of future research. It begins by charting the evolution of translator training and research on the didactics of translation. It then describes the characteristics of the research carried out to date, with the approaches that have been taken presented in two broad categories, specifically teacher-centred and product-oriented transmissionist approaches; and student-centred and process-oriented approaches. Next, the article describes the areas on which research has focused. Lastly, it looks at curriculum-related challenges in translator training, the most pressing research needs, and the methodological challenges and problems research must tackle.

## Resumen

El objetivo de este artículo es presentar la evolución de la didáctica de la traducción y los enfoques pedagógicos que se han dado, así como proponer perspectivas para la investigación. En primer lugar, se traza la evolución de la formación de traductores y de la investigación en didáctica de la traducción. En segundo lugar, se formulan las características de la investigación llevada a cabo, presentando los enfoques que se han planteado, agrupados en dos grandes bloques: enfoques transmisionistas centrados en el profesor y orientados al producto; enfoques centrados en el aprendizaje del estudiante y orientados al proceso. En tercer lugar, se presentan los ámbitos en que se ha centrado

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1. Translated from Spanish by Paul Taylor.

la investigación. Por último, se plantean los desafíos curriculares en la formación de traductores, las necesidades más acuciantes de la investigación y los desafíos metodológicos y problemas que tiene que afrontar.

**Keywords:** didactics of translation, action research, evolution, approaches, future research

**Palabras clave:** didáctica de la traducción, investigación acción, evolución, enfoques, perspectivas

## 1. Introduction

Translation is a very ancient activity (the earliest known evidence of it dates back to the 18th century BC) and is important in all aspects of life in society. Nonetheless, translation teaching as training for a specific profession is a relatively recent phenomenon. Such training began to appear in the 1930s and flourished after World War II. Research on the didactics of translation did not emerge until the end of the 1970s and only became firmly established at the beginning of the new millennium.

The objective of this article[2] is to present the evolution of and the pedagogical approaches that have been taken to the didactics of translation, and to suggest avenues of future research, looking at methodological aspects of conducting research and the problems it involves. The article focuses on written translation.

## 2. The didactics of translation

### 2.1. Translator and interpreter training

Translation has constantly been connected to academic higher education institutions (particularly in relation to philological studies), although not as an end in itself. It has rather constituted subsidiary support for other knowledge, chiefly as a means of honing language skills. Additionally, throughout history there have been separate instances of translators and interpreters training in response to specific social or political needs.[3] Nonetheless, the generalization and independence of translation and interpreting teaching, as training for specific professions, is a relatively recent phenomenon, one that burgeoned after World War II.

In the early 20th century, increased international interaction and technological progress led to the emergence of new kinds of translation (consecutive

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2. A briefer initial version of this text, dealing with both translation and interpreting, was published in Hurtado Albir (2018).
3. See Caminade and Pym 1998 for a historical perspective on training.

and simultaneous interpreting, dubbing, etc.), and the translation market underwent significant growth as the practice spread to all areas of knowledge. Specialized (scientific, technical, legal, financial, administrative) translation took on particular importance and demand for translations rose substantially. Numerous university centres for translator and interpreter training were established to meet society's translation and interpreting needs, including Heidelberg (1930), Geneva (1941), Moscow (1942), Vienna (1943), Graz (1946), Innsbruck (1946), Germersheim (1947), Saarbrücken (1948), Washington (1949), Trieste (1954) and Paris (1949, 1957). As time went by, such centres gradually appeared all over the world.

Translator training has evolved due to the influence of the theoretical approaches developed in Translation Studies. It has also incorporated the different types of translation that have become an established part of the labour market (public service interpreting, translation for media accessibility, localisation, etc.), as well as the other tasks professional practice involves (revision, post-editing, project management, etc.).

The level and position of translation and interpreting training, as well as their  relationship and degree of independence vary from country to country. Translator training tends to be widely available at an undergraduate degree level, whereas interpreter training is usually offered at a postgraduate level (Kelly and Martin 2009).

Additionally, specific doctorates geared to training translation researchers have gradually been established.[4] The first specific doctorate in translation and interpreting was created at the ESIT in Paris in the mid-1970s. The number of doctorates in translation throughout the world has constantly increased ever since, especially as of the 1990s, as Translation Studies has cemented its status.

## 2.2. *The evolution of research on the didactics of translation*

In the second half of the 20th century, while translation was experiencing a boom and becoming established as an independently taught discipline, translators' working methods underwent gradual modernization. They started to encompass not only the tools used but also the actual concept of translation, as the need for communicative translation that could meet target audiences' requirements grew ever clearer. At the same time, Translation Studies was

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4. See *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer* 3 (1), a special issue published in 2009, on training in research.

consolidating its status. Despite all that progress, however, and in contrast to similar disciplines (e.g. the didactics of languages), there was no comparable development of a specific didactics of translation. It was not until the second half of the 1970s that interest in matters related to didactics reached significant levels. Didactic research thus began, developing especially as of the mid-1980s and becoming firmly established in the new millennium. An overview of the evolution of research on the didactics of translation follows.[5]

*The beginning of research*

Wilss' (1976, 1977) and, in particular, Delisle's work (1980)[6] can be considered groundbreaking contributions to the early research on translator and interpreter training. Delisle has the merit of being the first author to call for a didactics of translation centred on the translation process in students and based on learning objectives and an active methodology. He has clearly explained (Delisle 1980: 15) the lack of research prior to then, the reasons behind it and the need for advances in reflection on methodology:

> Du point de vue de la didactique, on s'est surtout préoccupé jusqu'ici du contenu des programmes, de la durée des études, des conditions d'admission et d'autres questions semblables liées à l'organisation générale des cours. Le moment semble venu de pousser plus loin la réflexion sur la méthodologie des séminaires pratiques parallèlement au rodage des programmes. Cet aspect particulier et important de la pédagogie de la traduction ne semble guère avoir retenu l'attention des chercheurs, si l'on en juge par la rareté des publications consacrées à ce sujet.

Delisle stated that while general curriculum-related matters (the subjects to be included in training, the duration of studies, etc.) had so far been the main concern, the time to develop reflection on didactics further appeared to have come. He also raised a series of questions of great relevance to didactics (Delisle 1980: 15):

> …la traduction (ou correction) d'un texte en groupe au cours d'un séminaire est-elle la meilleure façon d'enseigner cet art de réexpression ? Peut-on faire mieux que de remettre aux étudiants des textes à traduire dont on sanctionne les erreurs ? Combien de ces erreurs découlent d'un manque de

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5. In an editorial entitled "On the Launch of ITT" in the first issue of *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer*, Kelly and Way (2007) list the most representative works on the didactics of translation and interpreting written until then. Like that editorial, this article omits the many handbooks for students which deal with specific language combinations.
6. This book stems from the doctoral thesis he submitted at the ESIT in 1978.

méthode ? N'est-il pas possible de jumeler l'enseignement de la traduction à l'apprentissage de la rédaction ? Sur quels critères objectifs pourrait-on évaluer la difficulté d'un texte à traduire pour un groupe donné d'étudiants afin d'établir une progression dans l'enseignement ? Quelles sont les difficultés communes à tous les textes d'un même genre ? Un véritable manuel de traduction est-il concevable ? Quelle forme pourrait prendre un enseignement pratique plus systématique ? Quelles sont les aptitudes fondamentales autres que linguistiques requises pour arriver à traduire convenablement ? Comment serait-il possible de développer ces aptitudes ? L'étude de la traduction se confond-elle avec celle de la linguistique contrastive ? Quels sont les rôles respectifs de l'enseignant et des étudiants dans un cours-séminaire de traduction ?

Delisle's twelve questions raised issues of fundamental importance to the didactics of translation, specifically the limitations entailed by merely focusing on the end product of translation and penalizing errors; the lack of systematization in translation teaching; the need for an active methodology with pedagogical strategies for varying the roles of teachers and students; the need to identify the skills required to be able to translate (besides language skills); the characteristics of the texts to be used at each level and how to establish their progression; and assessment criteria. Almost forty years later, many of those issues have yet to be properly resolved.

Delisle proposed an active methodology centred on students and the translation process. Other works from around the same time which stressed the importance of focusing on the translation process are Seleskovitch and Lederer (1984, 1989) and Hurtado Albir (1983, 1984).

From another angle, the work in which Nord (1988/1991) applied functionalist theory to the didactics of translation is also groundbreaking.

*The development of research*

Numerous collective volumes, sets of conference proceedings and special issues of journals on translation teaching have been published since the mid-1980s, including Wilss and Thome (1984), Larose (1988), Krawutschke (1989), Koustas (1992), Dollerup and Loddegaard (1992), Dollerup and Lindegaard (1994), Dollerup and Appel (1996), Hurtado Albir (1996a, 1999), and García Izquierdo and Verdegal (1998).

Growing interest in translator training in the mid-1990s resulted in the publication of many monographs by individual authors, notable among which are those of Delisle (1993), Kussmaul (1995), Kiraly (1995), and Robinson (1997).

*The consolidation of research*

Since the year 2000, the didactics of translation has been firmly established as a specific field of research within applied Translation Studies (Holmes identified it as such in 1972; see Holmes 1988). The research undertaken, given its nature, is *action research*, i.e. that which practitioners carry out on their own practice to improve it (Lewin 1946)[7].

The great increase in publications devoted to the didactics of translation is testimony to the boom in research. They include both collective works, such as those of Schäffner and Adab (2000), Hung (2002), Baer and Koby (2003), González Davies (2003), Tennent (2005), Balliu (2005), Kearns (2006a), Kiraly *et al.* (2013), Kiraly (2015) and Venuti (2016), and monographs by individual authors, such as those of Kiraly (2000), Colina (2003), González Davies (2004) and Kelly (2005).

Additionally, series of handbooks have been published. Examples include Routledge's Thinking Translation series (launched in 1992), which includes handbooks on translating different languages (Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Russian, Spanish) into English (Hervey and Higgins 1992, etc.); the Interpreter Education series (Gallaudet University Press) on interpreter training (launched in 2000); and the *Aprender a Traducir* series (Universitat Jaume I), comprising handbooks on the subjects that are part of translator and interpreter training (launched in 2004).

A study conducted by Yan *et al.* (2015) highlights the importance that research on the didactics of translation has acquired. The study analyses the articles published in English in ten Translation Studies journals between 2000 and 2012. Of a total of 2,274 articles, it identifies 323 on translator and interpreter training, 61.61% of which deal with translator training, 26.63% with interpreter training, and 11.76% with both. The study's authors divide the articles in question into the categories of teaching (72%), learning (18%) and assessment (10%).

The appearance of specific journals is evidence of the consolidated status of research. Such journals notably include *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer* (ITT), published since 2007 and now an essential medium for the dissemination of research on the didactics of translation and interpreting; *Redit*, published since 2008; and the *International Journal of Interpreter Education* (IJIE), published since 2009.

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7. In relation to action research in Translation Studies, see, among others, Pym 2002, Cravo and Neves 2007, Hubscher-Davidson 2008, Piotrowska 2013 and Massey *et al.* 2015.

Research activity has also been disseminated in specific international conferences. Three international conferences on translator and interpreter training were held in Elsinore (Denmark) in 1991, 1993 and 1995, and their proceedings form a trilogy coedited by Dollerup in 1992, 1994 and 1996. A fourth conference in the same series took place in Hong Kong (Hung 2002). Elsewhere, the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona's PACTE group has been organizing didTRAD since 2012.

## 3. The different approaches to research

Research on the didactics of translation has given rise to different approaches, which have evolved from teacher-centred and product-oriented transmissionist and prescriptivist approaches to approaches more invested in keeping with current pedagogical thinking, in that they focus on students and the translation process (table 1).

<div align="center">Table 1. Approaches to the didactics of translation</div>

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| Teacher-centred and product-oriented transmissionist approaches<br>- Traditional translation teaching<br>- Contrastive approaches<br>- Focus on theoretical content |
| Student-centred and process-oriented approaches<br>- Focus on the translation process<br>- Objective-based training<br>- The translation task and project-based approach<br>- The social constructivist approach<br>- Competence-based training<br>- Focus on professional aspects. *Situated learning* |

### 3.1. Teacher-centred and product-oriented transmissionist approaches

These proposals are related to traditional translation teaching or focus on contrastive or theoretical aspects.

*Traditional translation teaching*

I refer here to traditional translation teaching descended from traditional language teaching and its use of translation (*grammar-translation methods*). This approach is used in both translation handbooks and classroom teaching practices.

This is a teacher-centred approach in which the design of translation teaching is believed to consist in merely bringing texts together, without a need for clear selection criteria. It often involves an underlying literalist concept of translation (revolving around transcoding linguistic elements) and confuses teaching translation with teaching languages. In many cases, furthermore, no distinction is made between the teaching of direct translation (into L1) and that of inverse translation (into L2), despite the nature of each of them meaning that they require different learning objectives and methodological approaches.

An important characteristic of traditional translation teaching is its focus on results rather than on the translation process. Handbooks generally suggest an equivalent (just one, in most cases), and it is common for classes to revolve around the teacher putting forward correct solutions and penalizing errors. Students are given proposed solutions but do not discover the causes of their errors or, more importantly, the process they should follow to find appropriate solutions by themselves when performing other translations.

Additionally, the approach has methodological shortcomings. The traditional "read and translate" is the only methodological instruction used. Despite classes and handbooks being organized on the basis of translating texts, there is a huge void where the objectives and methodology of the teaching involved are concerned. What learning objectives are to be fulfilled? What criteria should be used to select texts? What progression should be established? What pedagogical work must the teacher plan to enable students to translate the texts? These questions remain unanswered.

*Contrastive approaches*

Contrastive studies (of languages and of texts), related to linguistic approaches to translation, have also been considered a translation teaching method.

Of all the forms of contrastive studies of languages, *comparative stylistics* is that which has been most explicitly formulated as a method for teaching translation. Its pioneers are Malblanc (1944)[8] and Vinay and Darbelnet (1958), and other relevant works include Vázquez Ayora (1977), Scavée and Intravaia (1979) and Legoux and Valentine (1989). Comparative stylistics applies internal stylistics work to comparative analysis and, with the idiosyncrasies of each such piece of work in mind, suggests new language comparison categories, in which regard the translation *procedures* (or *technical procedures*) proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet (1958) are of particular note. However, those *proce-*

8. A second revised edition was published in 1963.

*dures*: (1) are comparisons that focus on results without explaining the process (the way of *proceeding*) involved in achieving them; (2) are decontextualized comparisons of isolated units; and (3) establish set solutions by proposing a single equivalence. These considerations have serious repercussions for didactics, as students might think that proposed equivalents are directly interchangeable in the two languages involved and neglect to seek context-based solutions (*dynamic equivalents*). Such approaches also have pedagogical shortcomings, in that objectives are limited to questions of differences between the two languages, while the methodology is limited to exercises based on using or detecting such differences. For didactics, their interest lies in them providing not only a framework for distinguishing between two languages but also a metalanguage for identifying different types of translation solutions, in addition to them honing language skills.

Of greater interest are studies (e.g. Baker 1992) that introduce contrastive considerations from the viewpoint of how texts function (elements of coherence and cohesion, text typologies), reflecting real translation practice more closely. However, such studies do not cover all the types of translation problems translators encounter (linguistic, cultural, pragmatic), and they too focus teaching activity on results. Comparative studies of texts are part of the range of instruments available to teachers for organizing course content but are not a comprehensive solution for the design of learning objectives and do not provide a methodological structure for teaching.

*Focus on theoretical content*

Another approach to didactics has been to focus on the theoretical aspects of translation. There are handbooks and syllabuses that solely deal with such aspects, or combine *theory* and *practice*, or include a *theoretical* part with *practical applications* (e.g. Larson 1984, Tatilon 1986, Newmark 1988).

Prioritizing theoretical content entails the risk of confusing the acquisition of translation competence, which is basically *procedural* knowledge (know-*how*), with the acquisition of *declarative* knowledge (know-*what*) and *explanatory* knowledge (know-*why*), which are more typical of training for translation researchers.

Such approaches also fail to define learning objectives. They address linguistic, theoretical and, in some cases, methodological matters but do not establish objectives related to the difficulties that learning to translate involves. They have methodological shortcomings too, in that they propose neither

criteria for selecting texts nor activities for teaching students how to translate them, and lack considerations on progression and assessment.

## 3.2. *Student-centred and process-oriented approaches*

The previous approaches have been developed alongside others that, in keeping with current pedagogical thinking, give students an active role and focus teaching firmly on them, promote their autonomy, encourage interaction between all a group's members (*cooperative learning*), and emphasize performing real tasks that are part of professional translation. Such approaches have paved the way for curriculum design to integrate all the key aspects of the education process (objectives, competences, sequencing, methodology and assessment). The most important approaches of the kind in question are presented below.

*Focus on the translation process*

Since the 1980s, many authors have advocated focusing didactics on the translation process. In the words of Delisle (1980: 16):

> Enseigner à traduire, c'est faire comprendre le processus intellectuel par lequel un message donné est transposé dans une autre langue, en plaçant l'appren- ti-traducteur au coeur de l'opération traduisante pour lui en faire saisir la dynamique.

In their book *Interpréter pour traduire* (1984), Seleskovitch and Lederer assume a pioneering role in a chapter entitled "L'enseignement de l'interprétation"[9] by stressing that interpreter training should revolve around students learning a method and grasping principles for working through the translation process, rather than around acquiring reusable equivalences: "Le discours traduit en classe doit servir à l'acquisition de méthodes et non à celle d'équivalences réutilisables" (1984: 181).

Along the same lines, in relation to translator training, Hurtado Albir (1983: 36) states that:

> … la pédagogie de la traduction ne peut pas être fondée sur la mémorisation de paires d'équivalences. Elle doit viser, au contraire, à promouvoir leur recherche par l'élève en faisant porter l'effort pédagogique sur un développement correct du processus de traduction…

Gile (1995: 10) expresses this pedagogical perspective well:

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9. The chapter in question includes texts that had already been presented or published in 1965, 1973 and 1981.

> The idea is to focus in the classroom not on results, that is, not on the end product of the Translation process, but on the process itself (…) the process oriented approach indicates to the student good Translation principles, methods and procedures.

*Objective-based training*

As indicated earlier, Delisle (1980) brought about a major advance in the didactics of translation when bemoaning its lack of systematization and highlighting the need to look for pedagogical strategies (see section 2.2). He broached the necessity of heuristic pedagogy and an active, student-centred methodology which would lead trainees to discover the principles they should follow to carry out the translation process properly.

Delisle's proposals (Delisle 1980, 1993) focus on introductory training in written translation, putting forward learning objectives and activities for achieving them. In his 1980 publication, he suggests learning objectives such as establishing the difference between transcoded equivalents and translated equivalents; being able to extract a text's key notions; performing lexical exegesis; understanding textual organicity; and various specific objectives related to contrasts between English and French. In his 1993 handbook, he establishes the difference between general and specific objectives and sets out eight general objectives that break down into fifty-six specific objectives (many of them related to contrasting English and French). His general objectives are related to the metalanguage of introductory training in translation; basic documentation for translators; the work method; translation's cognitive process; writing conventions; lexical difficulties; syntactic difficulties; and composition difficulties.

Other works have built on Delisle's groundbreaking proposal. Centring on the teaching of inverse translation from Spanish into English, Beeby (1996) proposes learning objectives consisting of acquiring the necessary metalanguage; understanding the stages of the translation process; achieving advanced reading skills in the source language; being able to write grammatically correct and pragmatically adequate texts in the target language; using basic documentation techniques; keeping up work habits; acquiring knowledge of the typographical, lexical, syntactic and discourse differences between the source and target languages; achieving familiarity with text types; expanding knowledge of pragmatic and semiotic differences between the source and target cultures; and improving oral communication skills for professional use.

With a focus on introductory training in direct translation, Hurtado Albir (1996b) proposes four types of general objectives (which break down into

thirty-three specific objectives), namely methodological objectives (for grasping basic methodological principles of the translation process), contrastive objectives (for understanding the fundamental contrasting elements of the source and target language), professional objectives (for assimilating the way in which professional translators work) and textual objectives (for mastering the fundamental strategies for translating different types of texts). On the basis of that proposal, general and specific learning objectives are established in Hurtado Albir (1999) for various subjects involved in translator and interpreter training, specifically language teaching for translators; introductory training in direct translation; translation between mother tongues; technical and scientific translation; legal translation; literary translation; audiovisual translation; and interpreting.

*The translation task and project-based approach*

The task and project-based approach is a methodological framework that arose in language teaching. Its main aim is to give curriculum design scope for the integration of all its different elements, i.e. objectives, content, methodology and assessment. It conceives of didactic design as a set of *tasks* that students must perform. An important aspect of this approach is the distinction it makes between *preparatory* tasks and *final* tasks, with the former laying the groundwork for the latter to be carried out.

The task and project-based approach is applied to introductory training in translation in Hurtado Albir (1992, 1996b), and to the different subjects involved in translator training in Hurtado Albir (1999). In this approach, teaching units are organized on the basis of different types of tasks that prepare students for one or more final assignments (translation in a particular genre, for instance). A range of instruments are used to design tasks, including source and target language texts, and translations to be analysed, compared, revised or corrected; questionnaires; contrastive exercises, exercises related to documentary sources, etc.; worksheets to be completed; support texts and information sheets for conceptual aspects; and translation process recordings (Hurtado Albir 1996b, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c). The tasks involved, besides translating texts, are varied. Examples include the following (Hurtado Albir 2015b: 14-15):

— Tasks for preparing to translate texts: pre-translation tasks (analysing the source text), gist translation (summarizing the source text in the target language), extended translation (expanding on the source text's information in the target language), comparative translation analysis

(analysing different translations to identify errors and correct solutions), translation revision, translation correction (identifying errors).
—  Tasks for acquiring knowledge: reading support texts and information sheets, debates (in classrooms or online), parallel text analysis.
—  Writing different types of reports: on the translation profession, on cultural aspects, on the translation of a text (commented translation), etc.

The handbooks in the Aprender a Traducir series (Universitat Jaume I) follow the approach in question. See, for example, Gamero (2005) and Hurtado Albir (2015b) on introductory training in translation; Borja (2007) on teaching legal translation; and Jiménez (2012) on interpreting.

Other authors who have applied this approach include González Davies (2003, 2004) and Li (2013). González Davies (2003) proposes tasks for teaching the translation of audiovisual, scientific, IT, legal, economic, literary and educational psychology texts. She goes on (González Davies 2004) to distinguish between three types of procedures, namely *activities* (brief exercises for practising specific points), *tasks* (chains of activities with the same overall aim and an end product) and *projects* (multi-competence assignments that enable students to engage in pedagogical and professional activities and tasks geared to an end product). Li, meanwhile, proposes six task cycle stages, specifically pre-task, task, reporting, analysis, revising and reflection.

Tasks can vary in length and number. A *project* encompasses different learning objectives and features greater sequentiality. Translation projects (with larger-scale final tasks, such as translating a film) are of particular relevance to specialized subjects. See, for example, Kiraly (2000, 2005, 2012), Marco (2004, 2016) and Li *et al.* (2015) in relation to the use of projects in translator training.

As a flexible methodological framework, the task and project-based approach allows for the integration of elements of training methodologies such as problem-based learning, case studies, cooperative learning, situated learning and the flipped classroom. It is also open to the inclusion of competence-based training.

*The social constructivist approach*

Drawing on constructivist theories of learning, Kiraly (2000) has proposed a social constructivist approach to the didactics of translation, the cornerstone of which is *collaboration* between students and teachers. He advocates changing their roles, with students taking responsibility for their own learning and teachers acting as guides and creating situations in which students can develop

their professional skills. His proposal is thus different from the traditional teaching model, the focus of which is the transmission of knowledge, and seeks to transform students.

Kiraly puts forward an *empowerment* model based on student autonomy, multi-directional interaction between students and teachers, and real collaborative translation projects that reflect professional translation practice. It can thus be considered *situated learning*, entailing active involvement in authentic, experiential learning. Kiraly proposes the *constructivist workshop* concept as an alternative to translation classes.

The premises of the constructivist approach to learning underlie most proposals for student-centred and process-oriented translator training.

*Competence-based training*

*Competence-based training* (CBT), a continuation of objective-based training, began to be applied to translator and interpreter training at the turn of the millennium (Kelly 2005, Hurtado Albir 2007, 2008, 2015a, 2015c, etc.).

CBT's foundations lie in constructivist learning theories. Curriculum design revolves around competences in this approach, which features an integrated model of teaching, learning and assessment, resulting in the *operationalization* of the competences corresponding to a curriculum.

The term 'competence' has many definitions. They all concur that a competence is a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes, and stress that having a competence is inseparable from exercising it (being able to *act*). Yániz and Villardón (2006: 23), for example, propose the following definition:

> Una competencia es el conjunto de conocimientos, habilidades y actitudes necesarios para desempeñar una ocupación dada y la capacidad de movilizar y aplicar estos recursos en un entorno determinado, para producir un resultado definido.

Cano (2015: 23) suggests that having a competence involves: (1) integrating knowledge (being able to select and combine knowledge appropriately); (2) using the competence (having it and exercising it are inseparable); (3) acting contextually (an individual is competent in a specific context); (4) learning constantly (dynamism); and (5) acting independently (taking responsibility for decisions and an active role in implementing them).

An important aspect of CBT is the distinction it makes between *specific* (or *discipline-related*) *competences*, which are inherent to a particular discipline, and *general* (or *transversal*) *competences*, which apply to all disciplines. CBT is geared to a holistic type of training that combines both kinds of competences.

Each discipline must identify the general and specific competences that define it.

According to CBT, a description of the relevant *professional profile* is vital for establishing a university curriculum's competences. It is thus important to conduct labour market studies to identify prevailing and emerging best professional practices for each profile, as well as the knowledge and skills it requires.

Hurtado Albir (2007, 2008) proposes six categories of specific competences for translator training (based on her earlier proposal of learning objectives; see Hurtado Albir 1996b, 1999), namely methodological and strategic competences; contrastive competences; extralinguistic competences; professional competences; instrumental competences; and competences for solving translation problems in different text genres. These categories of competences need to be contextualized and defined according to the professional profile and subject involved. Hurtado Albir also makes a proposal regarding competence operationalization, encompassing: (1) a competence's definition; (2) a competence's elements, i.e. observable behaviours that are part of it and can be used as *indicators* for establishing each level's learning outcomes and for assessment; (3) associated content; (4) possible tasks for competence acquisition (methodology); and (5) assessment procedures. This operationalization makes it possible for curriculum design to integrate all the key components of the education process.

In 2009, the European Master's in Translation (EMT) proposed six types of competences, namely language competence; intercultural competence; information mining competence; technological competence; thematic competence; and the model's central competence, translation service provision competence.

*Focus on professional aspects. Translation in situation and situated learning*

Some authors emphasise the importance of professional aspects. Vienne (1994) does so in his situational approach, in which he stresses the need to translate texts in their real communicative situation and according to authentic commissions already completed professionally by the teacher, who takes on the role of a client. Gouadec (2003) also advocates such an approach.

Mention should also be made of proposals that apply the premises of *situated learning* (derived from *situated cognition theory*) to translator training. Situated learning holds that knowledge has to be presented in an authentic context that would normally involve it, and thus stresses the need to establish pedagogical procedures (tasks and projects) that facilitate transition to real

professional practice in translator training (see, for example, Kiraly 2005, and González Davies and Enríquez Raido 2016).

These ideas highlight a growing concern for employability in training. That concern is also reflected in the 1986 *Memorandum* of the BDÜ (Bundesverband der Dolmetscher und Übersetzer), which contained recommendations for organizing translator and interpreter training programmes to meet the demands of the profession. This was built upon in the 1990s by the POSI (Praxisorientierte Studieninhalte für die Ausbildung von Übersetzern und Dolmetschern) project, sponsored by the FIT (Féderation International des Traducteurs), the aim of which was to align translator and interpreter training more closely with professional practice. Also worthy of note is the EGPS (European Graduate Placement Scheme) project (2012-2015), which was designed to improve the job prospects of holders of master's degrees in translation.

## 4. Areas of research

Research has focused on different areas, the most important of which are presented below.

(1) Development of general guidelines for curriculum design in translator training: objectives, competences, subjects involved in training, content, etc. E.g. Hurtado Albir 1999, Kelly 2005, Kearns 2006b, Li 2012.

(2) Design of specific subjects. Examples include:

- Introduction to translation (e.g. Delisle 1980, 1993; Hurtado Albir 1996, 2007, 2008, 2015a; Robinson 1997; Colina 2003; Gamero 2005; González Davies 2004).
- Inverse translation (e.g. Beeby 1996, Roiss 2008).
- Technical translation (e.g. Bedard 1987, Durieux 1988).
- Scientific translation (e.g. Montalt 2005, Montalt and González Davies 2006).
- Legal translation (e.g. Borja 2007).
- Business translation (e.g. Li 2013, Li et al. 2015).
- Audiovisual translation (e.g. Díaz Cintas 2008).
- Literary translation (e.g. Marco 2002a, 2002b, 2016; Navarro 2013).

(3) Methodological aspects. This kind of research is cross-cutting in nature and underlies many of the proposals referred to in other areas: preparing teaching

units, tasks, group dynamics, etc. E.g. Hurtado Albir 1996, 1999; González Davies 2003, 2004; Kelly 2005.

(4) Assessment criteria and procedures. E.g. Martínez 2001; Varela Salinas 2006; Way 2008; Colina 2008; Angelelli and Jacobson 2009; Orlando 2011; Galán-Mañas and Hurtado Albir 2015; Hurtado Albir and Olalla-Soler 2016; Pavani 2016; Huertas and Vine 2018.

(5) Technology use in translation teaching and learning: blended learning in translator training (e.g. Galán-Mañas 2009; Galán-Mañas and Hurtado Albir 2010); electronic corpus use in translator training (e.g. Rodríguez-Inés 2008, 2010; Monzó 2008); and online translation teaching (e.g. Kenny 2008).

(6) Aspects related to translation competence and its acquisition: how transla-tion competence works and is acquired (e.g. Schäffner and Adab 2000; PACTE 2003, 2014, 2015; Hurtado Albir 2017); the implications of directionality (e.g. Kelly *et al.* 2006); and the acquisition of specific competences (e.g. Pinto and Sales 2008, in relation to documentation competence).

## 5. Avenues of future research

Despite the progress made in recent years, there is still much work to be done. So, what are the curriculum-related challenges facing translator training at present and what are the most pressing needs in terms of research on didactics?

### 5.1. Curriculum-related challenges in translator training

The curriculum-related challenges currently facing translator training are chiefly a consequence of: (1) changes in the translation profession; (2) constant academic and professional mobility in present-day society; and (3) pedagogical and technological advances in recent decades.

It is therefore necessary to design curriculums that can:

(1) Meet the social and professional demands of each social context. There is no such thing as a universal curriculum design. Each context has its own translation-related needs, and training should be primarily geared to satisfy-ing them. It is thus essential that market studies be conducted periodically in each context to help establish the most sought-after professional profiles and language combinations. By analysing social needs it is possible to clearly identify the purpose training must fulfil and define the competences it ought to develop.

(2) Adapt to the characteristics of today's changing, global society. In our globalized world, furthermore, curriculum design needs an international outlook that must be incorporated into training, as the translation market has also undergone globalization. Present-day society is constantly evolving, and training must therefore reflect that, including tools that can prepare future translators for lifelong learning; hence the importance of *learning to learn*.

(3) Be recognized internationally. Owing to increasing academic and professional mobility, the international recognition of curriculums needs to be a straightforward process. The creation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) is a good example of the need in question.

(4) Adapt to new pedagogical models, which advocate competence-based training; the integration of teaching, learning and assessment; and autonomous, polyvalent, lifelong learning.
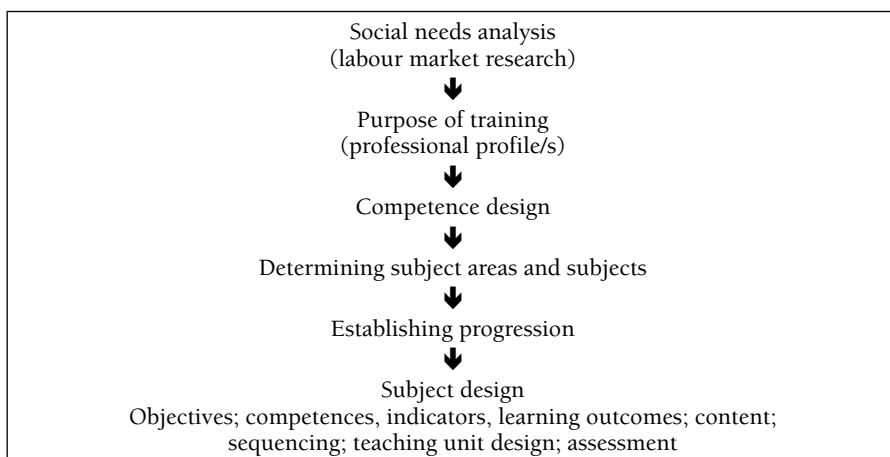
(5) Establish a progression in learning. Unlike other disciplines, translation does not have a common description of competence levels. Language teaching, for example, has the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Such a description would provide a common framework for translator training and professional translation, making it easier to compare different grading systems. It would also serve as a guide for creating translation syllabuses, managing assessment, producing handbooks and teaching materials, issuing official certificates, recognizing and validating academic qualifications, and establishing academic and professional profiles and professional quality control guidelines. See the PACTE group's *Establishing Competence Levels in the Acquisition of Translation Competence in Written Translation* research project (*NACT*, based on its initials in Spanish) (PACTE 2018, 2019).

(6) Incorporate newly created translation technologies. Training must prepare future translators to make effective use of specialized search engines, assisted translation tools, text alignment tools, tools for managing accounts and quotes, etc. It should develop students' ability to adapt to new documentation resources and technological tools, given how fast they change.

(7) Incorporate teaching and learning technologies (e-learning, m-learning). Like all disciplines, the didactics of translation needs to be capable of benefiting effectively from such technologies.

With the above in mind, the didactics of translation must be able to answer all the questions that curriculum design poses in any discipline: (1) *who is to be taught* and *in what circumstances*? (learning needs analysis); (2) *what is the purpose of the teaching involved*? (definition of competences and objectives); (3) *what is to be taught*? (content selection); (4) *how is teaching to be carried out*? (methodology design); (5) *with what progression*? (sequencing); and (6) *with what result*? (assessment procedure design). Answering those questions will make it possible to properly follow the steps (shown in figure 1) that curriculum design ought to involve.

Fig. 1 *Steps in curriculum design*

Social needs analysis
(labour market research)
⬇
Purpose of training
(professional profile/s)
⬇
Competence design
⬇
Determining subject areas and subjects
⬇
Establishing progression
⬇
Subject design
Objectives; competences, indicators, learning outcomes; content;
sequencing; teaching unit design; assessment

## 5.2. Research needs

To tackle the curriculum-related challenges described previously, the aspects on which research is most urgently required are, in our view, as follows:

(1) Conducting market studies and, as a result, defining different professional profiles (taking not only existing but also emerging practices into account), with a view to adapting training to the market's needs and the technological tools in use.

(2) The periodic assessment of training programmes, to guarantee their efficacy and their appropriateness to the social needs of each context.

(3) The definition of translation teachers' competences and of needs in terms of training the trainers.

(4) Establishing levels of translation competence, so as to improve assessment and the suitability of the progression involved in teaching and facilitate academic and professional mobility.

(5) Establishing assessment procedures (assessment tasks and rubrics), so as to be able to measure competence levels reliably and make progress where diagnostic assessment, formative assessment and self-assessment procedures are concerned.

(6) The application of teaching and learning technologies to translator training, promoting an active methodology that encourages student involvement and cooperative learning.

*5.3. Methodological challenges and problems involved in research*

If research on the didactics of translation is to be real *action research* capable of transforming pedagogical practice in translator training, solutions must be found to the curriculum-related challenges described and the research needs arising from them. In our opinion, meeting those research needs primarily entails: (1) establishing a dialogue with pedagogy and with pedagogical research in similar disciplines; (2) applying the results of empirical research on how the translation process works and on translation competence and its acquisition; and (3) advancing in the collection of information on didactic proposals' results to verify their efficacy.

In that respect, it is very important that progress be made, as indeed it has in recent years, in the use of qualitative and quantitative methods that allow for the collection and analysis of data that support the validity of didactic proposals. A range of data collection techniques and instruments could be used, including direct observation; audio, video and computer recordings; interviews; questionnaires; students' output; diaries (kept by students or teachers); and discussion groups. That entails producing specific data collection and analysis instruments, as well as encouraging replication among researchers, so as to enhance the scope for generalizing results.

Research, however, is not without its problems. The didactics of translation lacks a tradition of empirical research comparable to that of other disciplines. The main consequence of this is a lack of validated specific data collection and analysis instruments, which is a hindrance to research. Additionally, systematic

reviews of studies undertaken, which would allow for overall estimates regarding the state of research, are few and far between.[10] Lastly, research is also being held back by the unawareness of the importance of didactic research often encountered in institutions and in the scientific community. Nonetheless, didactic research is the best way in which research in Translation Studies can be applied and transferred to society, as it guarantees better training for future translators, equipping them to adapt to social demands and innovations and achieve excellence in the practice of the profession.

Research on the didactics of translation has evolved greatly since its emergence in the 1970s, particularly in recent years. Today, didactic proposals are not just being made; it is now the case that empirical data are being collected to better adapt them to the reality of the context in which they are to be applied and empirical testing is being used to validate them. We are, therefore, on the right track.

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10. See, for example, the study carried out by Yan *et al.* (2015).

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**BIONOTE / BIONOTA**

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