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COMMUNICATION AND MULTILINGUALISM: THE CENTRAL ROLE OF TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETING AT THE FOREFRONT

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Introductory Essay

Translation and Interpreting (T&I) are areas of inquiry supported by substantial scholarship. Outside Translation and Interpreting Studies (TIS), translation and interpreting may be known only for the practice, and may be considered by-products of language acquisition. They are, however, fields of study in their own right. This is evident by the increasing number (and variety) of the following: undergraduate and graduate programs in universities in the Americas, Asia, Australia, and Europe; doctoral programs (e.g. Kent State University, OH; SUNY Binghamton, NY; UK Translation Summer School – Manchester, England; Heriot Watt University, Edinburgh); post-doc fellowships (Research Foundation Flanders, Hampshire College – supported by a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation), specialized journals (e.g. Translation and Interpreting Studies, Interpreting, Target) and conferences (American Translation and Interpreting Studies Association; European Translation Studies); scholarly associations (ATISA, AIETI); publishing houses (John Benjamins, St. Jerome); academic books; edited collections; textbooks; encyclopedias, among others.

TIS is by nature an interdisciplinary field. It intersects with fields such as Applied Linguistics, Bilingualism, Cognitive Psychology, Communication, Cultural and Social Studies, Feminist Studies, Education, Linguistic Anthropology, Linguistics, Literature, Social and Critical Studies, Social Psychology, to name just a few (Angelelli, Revisiting 91).

Initially the study of translation was mostly rooted in literature. That was followed by a cultural turn in both translation and interpreting. In the last two decades we have witnessed a shift, from the cultural to the sociological turn (Translation and Interpreting Studies). This means that issues of agency of translators and interpreters, as well as social factors permeating the communicative and social act of translation and interpreting, are discussed in more interdisciplinary terms. The focus is not only on the translator or the interpreter, or their resulting activities, processes or products, but also on the
time and space displacements of people and texts (whether written or oral) and the consequences of these displacements (Translators and Interpreters: Geographic).

Whether we conceptualize translation as a vehicle for disseminating knowledge or culture or as a more pragmatic tool to enable access to information, and whether we think of interpreting as the work of highly specialized professionals working in the Halls of the United Nations, in a stressful case in a courthouse or a hospital, the truth is that translation and interpreting have been with us since the beginning of times. The amount of attention they have received, however, has varied greatly through time and contexts. Due to social and geographical reasons, issues in translation and interpreting have been more salient in Europe than in the United States. Times have changed however.

Currently in the United States, various associations bring together scholars, professionals and students of translation and interpreting. They are organized geographically (e.g. at the national and/or state level), by content areas (e.g. medical, court or conference interpreting; literary, scientific or machine translation, to name just a few), and targeting a specific membership such as of scholars (e.g. The American Translation and Interpreting Studies Association [ATISA] and/or professionals (e.g. The American Translators Association [ATA]).

ATISA founded by 22 scholars who gathered at Kent State University in 2000 encourages, supports, and furthers the study of Translation and Interpreting Studies. With over 150 scholars representing the five continents, ATISA holds a biannual conference where new ideas are generated, disciplinary boundaries are crossed and research on all aspects of translation and interpreting, from cognition and social action to teaching and learning, is shared (http://www.ATISA.org). ATISA publishes a peer-review journal (Translation and Interpreting Studies – TIS) that disseminates knowledge and research relevant to all areas of language mediation. It addresses broad, common concerns among scholars working in different areas of Translation and Interpreting Studies, while encouraging sound empirical research that serves as a bridge between academics and practitioners. The journal is also dedicated to facilitating communication among those who may be working on related subjects in other fields, from Comparative Literature to Information Science. In addition, TIS is a forum for the dissemination in English translation of relevant scholarly research originally published in languages other than English (http://www.atisa.org/tis-contact).

Founded in 1959, ATA is the largest professional association of translators and interpreters in the U.S. With over 11,000 members in more than 90 countries, ATA's primary goals include fostering and supporting the professional development of translators and interpreters and promoting the translation and interpreting professions (http://www.atanet.org).
In earlier times, practitioners were almost the only responsible parties for producing the discourse in translation and interpreting. They were concerned with their practice. Based on their experiences they taught and assessed translation and interpreting. As they got organized, they formed associations which, in turn, produced codes of ethics and principles of practice. Currently, researchers from various disciplines (e.g. applied linguistics, teacher education, sociology of language, educational linguistics, comparative literature or communication, to name a few) are taking an interest in T&I processes and products. Additionally we note the increase in the number of academic programs in Translation and Interpreting Studies. Moreover, we see a wide range of studies which have shed light on the complexity of the process, the products, as well as the individuals involved in them. Complex issues of interpreters’ or translators’ roles, ethics, and responsibilities, or issues of power and solidarity, of linguistic access, or pedagogy and testing, curriculum and program development, and domestication or foreignization of texts have taken center stage. Therefore, from earlier prescriptive notions based solely on a monolithic view of accuracy and neutrality derived from practice, to sophisticated theoretically-grounded and empirically-based studies that problematize these constructs, TIS has evolved significantly to become a field of study in its own right.

This special issue of Cuadernos de ALDEEU dedicated to Translation and Interpreting Studies offers the reader a wide range of theoretical and empirical issues from various perspectives. It presents eleven papers, two book reviews and poetry samples in the original and in translation.

The issue opens up with “The Role of Translation Education and ‘Humanities Plus’ in Liberal Education.” Daryl Hague recaptures recent discussions on the “what” and the “how” of liberal education which resulted in re-defining liberal education in ways that go far beyond the classic formulations of the Yale Report of 1828 and Cardinal Newman’s Idea of a University. Hague argues that the teaching of translation and interpreting within the humanities aligns perfectly with the new conceptualization of Humanities Plus.

Delving more into academic translation/interpreting programs Miguel Jiménez Crespo discusses the importance of translation competence in “Building from the Ground up: On the Necessity of using Translation Competence Models in Planning and Evaluating Translation Programs.” Given the increasing needs for professional translators, the author discusses the emergence of translation programs and the principles underlying their design. He compares the Spanish and American context and argues for the need to make the acquisition of translation competence central to the outcomes of translation programs.
Discussing a specific area of translation such as advertising, José Dávila Montes explores the various contributions on translation of advertising and the intersection with translation theory. In his article entitled “La traducción de publicidad: Propuestas metodológicas desde una perspectiva cognitiva y de linguística de Corpus” the author argues for the use of corpus linguistics as a research methodology to study the complexities of discourse and persuasion when more than one language is involved.

At the intersection of Translation and Interpreting Studies lies the work of María Manuela Fernández Sánchez’ “Sobre un eslabón clave en la historia política y militar: una perspectiva traductológica.” The author argues for the importance of Translation and Interpreting Studies, specifically historiography, as an interdisciplinary lens to complement or review canonical studies and enhance findings produced in the social sciences. The author researches the professional and personal life of three interpreters who worked in highly confidential meetings during the first decades of the Cold War.

In “El camino hacia la profesionalización de los intérpretes en los servicios públicos y asistenciales españoles en el siglo XXI” Maribel del Pozo takes us to Spain. The author provides a sociolinguistic description of the country as well as of the immigrant groups that have settled in the country. She explains the various linguistic needs of immigrant groups and the profile of interpreters who provide assistance. The article shows the challenges Spain faces in meeting linguistic needs, considering the critical nature of the current budgetary climate, in settings such as the courts, the hospitals, and government agencies.

Moving from the immigrant context in the country to the immigrant context in Catalonia, in “Interpretación en los servicios públicos y/o mediación intercultural: la realidad de los profesionales que trabajan en el contexto catalán” Mireia Vargas-Urpi analyzes the roles of two professional groups: language interpreters and cultural mediators. Using ethnographic interviews, she explores the responsibilities and dilemmas faced by Chinese/Catalan/ Spanish interpreters and Chinese Cultural mediators. The author concludes that the border between these two professions is not always definite since many times roles are interchanged. In light of these issues, she discusses the pedagogical implications of this research in the education of interpreters.

Also within the Spanish context, in “Quality of Interpreting in Criminal Proceedings in Spain under European Directive 2010/64/EU” María Jesús Blasco Mayor shows how the provision of court interpreting in most Spanish regions has not been carried out by professionals who graduated from translation/interpreting academic programs, but rather by outsourcing. This in spite of the fact that: 1) the new European Directive states that every defendant has a right to good quality interpreting, and 2) the proliferation
of translation and interpreting degrees in Spanish universities. Her paper addresses these issues in the light of a number of initiatives that have come from different stakeholders regarding the professional regulation that is needed in the Spanish legal context.

Focusing also on interpreting, but this time in the classroom, Marta Arumi Ribas and Lara Domínguez Araújo co-authored “Sobre la necesidad de investigar la evaluación en el aula de interpretación: ejemplo de un estudio de caso.” The authors argue for the need to examine the testing processes and products used in the interpreting classrooms in order to see the benefits that rise from the dialogue between research and pedagogy. The new discoveries in empirical research are implemented in interpreting classrooms and, as a result, testing procedures and products are improved.

Moving from assessment in the interpreting classroom to translation and interpreting program design, Carmen Valero Garcés discusses issues related to the design of a graduate program in “Formación de traductores e intérpretes en una sociedad multicultural: el programa de la Universidad de Alcalá, Madrid.” She argues for the central role that translators and interpreters have in a multicultural and multilingual society. Her article describes an interdisciplinary MA program in Community Interpreting and discusses its strengths within academic and market contexts.

On a similar topic and taking us back to the US context, Ola Furmanek discusses issues related to the design and implementation of a health care interpreting program in “The Different Faces of Interpreting Education in the United States.” The author argues that, although interpreting programs are on the rise in U.S. academia, they are offered randomly across the country and present little coherence as far as educational sequence and consistency. Based on the case of a project developed and implemented in North Carolina, she proposes a comprehensive and complementary approach to interpreting education in the United States.

The last paper in this collection discusses how interpreting courses reconstruct themselves to face financial constraints. Christian Degueldre and Claudia V. Angelelli’s study entitled “Implementing new Technologies in the Teaching of Interpreting” reports on data collected during a three-year study of teaching simultaneous and consecutive interpreting in a public university in California. Current financial issues faced by universities (e.g. budget cuts, program merging/closure, hiring freeze) resulted in fewer resources and thus, the need to “be creative.” This study demonstrates how interpreting instructors, asked to teach simultaneous and consecutive interpreting (outside conference settings) in academic environments that do not have laboratories equipped with simultaneous booths and teacher console, have taken advantage of technology to cope with limited resources.
As it will become evident to the reader, the collection of papers in this special issue of Cuadernos de ALDEEU allows us to take a deeper look at translation and interpreting, their complexities, challenges and possibilities. Given the diversity of our world, the immediacy of communication, and the technological advancements the need for translation and interpreting is concrete. The time for us to consider it seriously is now.
WORKS CITED

Angelelli, Claudia V. *Re-visiting the Interpreter’s Role*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 2004


ATA. http://www.atanet.org

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