TRANSLATION IN THE L2 CLASSROOM: A CASE STUDY*

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ABSTRACT

The role of the translation exercise has been much criticised in the SLT literature although there are some signs now indicating that such an unfortunate situation is about to change. The aim of this paper is to favour that change, thus contributing to speeding up the methodological acceptance of the translation exercise. In the first pages, we present some theoretical considerations justifying our position, which will be later summarised in five different research questions. These we will try to validate by analysing two questionnaires and one translation paper that twenty 4th year students of English at the Universidad de Oviedo were presented with. Results were encouraging in that they unquestionably support 4 of those 5 questions, thus leading us to openly defend the thesis that translation does have a role to play in SLT; a role that is out there for the teacher to discover and for the student to profit from.

KEY WORDS: translation, applied linguistics, SLT methodology, English, Spanish.

RESUMEN

El papel del ejercicio de traducción ha sido muy criticado en la literatura de enseñanza de segundas lenguas aunque actualmente existen signos que indican que tan desafortunada situación está cambiando. La finalidad de este artículo es favorecer dicho cambio contribuyendo a acelerar la aceptación del ejercicio de traducción en el campo metodológico. Comenzamos presentando algunas consideraciones teóricas como justificación de nuestra posición que serán después sintetizadas en cinco cuestiones que intentaremos validar mediante el análisis de dos cuestionarios y de un ejercicio de traducción realizados por un grupo de veinte estudiantes de 4º curso de Filología Inglesa de la Universidad de Oviedo. Los resultados fueron alentadores pues claramente confirman cuatro de las cinco cuestiones, lo que nos llevará a defender abiertamente la tesis de que la traducción tiene un papel que jugar en la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras, papel que el profesor debe descubrir y del que el estudiante se podrá beneficiar.

PALABRAS CLAVE: traducción, lingüística aplicada, metodología, inglés, español.

Translation has long languished as a secondary technique in the Second-Language teaching (SLT) world due to its association with the traditional grammar-translation method (Larsen-Freeman 24; 39; Ek; Sánchez 150). However, it is

our aim in this paper to suggest that some traditional techniques —including some grammar practice and, why not, translation— might be re-adapted and made use of in the Second Language (L2) classroom. Such a view was already put forward by Ladmiral and Moirand in the 1970s and today translation and its use in the L2 classroom do seem to be gaining increasing appreciation amongst experts within the framework of the new integrated approach as defended by Sánchez (252-262) (See also Moirand; Pym; Koutsivitis; Mott; D'Hulst; Valdeón, "New Approach" & *Textbook*; Alonso & González; Gémar; Königs & Kaufmann).

Although possibly not a novel contribution, this approach maintains a holistic conception of language and claims that communication takes place not only orally but also in the written form, thus unambiguously promoting the four skills. In this light, translation —understood as the transposition of a given message from one language into another— finds automatic justification in the L2 classroom.

Furthermore, translation may be seen as a communicative means of practising those grammar points previously seen in class (Königs & Kaufmann 19). Thus conceived, such grammar practice will never become as tedious as the typical structural exercises and, besides, it will require the student's constant attention, for, unlike drills or fill-in-the-gap exercises, translation will always allow choice and creativity in the student's use of grammar.

Seen as grammar practice, translation could always be fought by those who, like Krashen, focus on acquisition and reject learning[1] However, Königs & Kaufmann show that most of the decisions adopted by students when translating are not "logical"; rather, they are normally based on thoughts of the kind "this sounds better than that" (16). Mondahl & Jensen go further and claim that translation helps students make use of all sorts of knowledge (101): they will use their experience-based knowledge[2] in normal circumstances, when they do not encounter any difficulty, resorting to their most conscious (declarative[3]) knowledge when they face a problem. Besides, we cannot forget that addressing learning[4] is perfectly legitimate since it has been proved that conscious knowledge (learning) may become unconscious knowledge (acquisition) (Ruiz de Mendoza).

[1] These two terms must be understood here in the way Krashen uses them (10). For him, the former is "a process similar, if not identical, to the way children develop ability in their first language." It is, therefore, a "subconscious process", since we are "generally not consciously aware of the rules of the languages we have acquired. Instead, we have a 'feel' for correctness", he claims. The latter term, on the contrary, refers to "conscious knowledge of a second language, knowing the rules, being aware of them, and being able to talk about them."

[2] I.e., automatic, unconscious, totally internalised.

[3] Which implies hierarchical, organised, propositional networks; it is, therefore, analysed knowledge, which can be consciously accessed.

[4] As understood by Krashen.

Apart from purely grammatical aspects, translation might also be extremely useful as a technique to adequately teach and practise vocabulary (Valdeón, "New Approach" 241). In this regard, it has been suggested that most L2 students tend to learn new vocabulary by establishing simple, fixed interlingual associations of the kind "casa/house" or "noche/night" (Séguinot 70; Prince 485) which invariably cause them to use newly-learnt words in the wrong context. Why do most learners, then, insist on resorting to this technique when it is not as efficient as one might wish? The reason is as simple as this: the establishment of binary associations of the kind "casa/house" —as opposed to the appropriate internalisation of a term, assimilating its different contextual uses— implies far less effort on the part of the learner, as we shall see presently.

However, by presenting vocabulary in a given context, i.e. in a text —even when that text is to be translated— we may help the learner acquire new vocabulary in a more effective way, for the text:

– provides the learner with cues to remember the word.
– presents a linguistic and sociological reality isolated words cannot offer.
– fosters easier memorization and retrieval, as follows from the so-called "trace theory" (Carrera 227-228; see also Chastain 26).

Therefore, there are reasons to assume that, after reaching a given level, the learner —having firmly-established semantic relationships between the different lexical items in his/her mind and a considerable syntactic command— will find it easier to learn vocabulary through context, which will automatically result in his/her better lexical command of the L2 (Prince 487-488).

As a result, translation might well foster the student's frequent use of what De Groot & Comijs call "conceptual memory", which involves not only definition accuracy but also word imageability and context availability.

Another point to be made is that language and culture are closely connected to the extent that both can be regarded as two different sides of one and the same reality. That is to say, language should not be isolated from its underlying culture.[5] Accordingly, this opens up new paths for SLT to follow in the sense that context —in its widest sense— becomes essential in this new framework: we understand that for someone to be truly competent, proficient in an L2, s/he must also be culturally-competent. Translation being not only an interlingual but also —and most importantly— an *intercultural* activity (Biojout & Chiappa 77; Mott 20; Polezzi 73; Rocha Barco 402; Schweda Nicholson 44; Valero, "Modes" 562; Gémar 499;

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[5] And we believe this also applies to the so-called world languages such as English. Although certainly the closest we can get to a *lingua franca*, there is nothing such as an "international English". This means that, especially at certain levels, students should be made aware of the existence of its different regional varieties, not forgetting the culture-bound vocabulary these are inevitably linked to.

Mizón & Diéguez 77; Silva 228; Valero, "Contrastive Linguistics" 143; St-Pierre 423), it goes without saying that its use in the L2 classroom should then be highly advisable. Through it, learners would become aware of how close/distant two different languages/cultures are in *every* possible sense.[6]

Interlingual/intercultural closeness/distance leads us to the question of cross-linguistic interference (CLI), which certainly is a factor to be taken into account, affecting not only "traditional" (phonological and phonetic, semantic, lexical, syntactic) aspects of language but also some other —not quite so well-known— culture-specific areas, such as conceptualisation[7] and pragmatics (Odlin). Thus, these last two concepts give rise to what we might call "conceptual" and "pragmatic[8]" transfer.

Translation being an interlingual/intercultural activity, we believe it will prove extremely useful for the student to realise the dangers of transfer *in all its possible dimensions*. However, it must be said that, in principle, it need not foster transfer[9] any more than other writing activities do since it is a focused activity (implying that the student will concentrate on his/her output, avoiding transfer as much as possible) (Odlin 146-147). Besides, there are ways of presenting translation in a pleasant, low-anxiety environment (thus helping the student work in the best affective conditions possible). To achieve such aims we must foster interest in the learner (which could be done by using real texts dealing with culturally-relevant topics) and prevent his/her feeling anxious in class (by encouraging participation and self-correction, avoiding the figure of the all-knowing teacher and promoting the view of translation as a choice).[10]

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[6] It must be stated here that we cannot see why some authors (vid. Escobedo) most actively encouraging the presentation of language in context still refuse to admit this dimension of the translation exercise.

Yet, some other authors (e.g. Laurian) take the opposite position and propose using complex cultural material —such as humour— for translation.

[7] I.e., the way native speakers of a particular language-culture encode actions and events (Kellerman 138-139), find lexical realisations for certain concepts and not for others (Königs & Kaufmann 18) or even present telling peculiarities in their use of what Danesi calls "metaphorical competence" (222-223). These linguistic idiosyncrasies are also transferable (Kellerman 137; Nickel 243; Ramiro et al. 102ff).

[8] For an overview of some relevant research fields in pragmatics, see —amongst others— Atkinson; Blum-Kulka; Jessner; Kobayashi & Rinnert; Saito & Beecken and Schweda Nicholson.

[9] The "myth" of translation's fostering transfer has always been one of the most often quoted drawbacks held by experts against its inclusion in the L2 classroom.

[10] I.e. we must promote the image of translation as a non-binary exercise in the sense defended by Pym. Although students are not usually aware of this, the truth is that translation exercises go far beyond the typical fill-in-the-gap exercises from the heyday of structuralism and behaviourism. Unlike those, translation is essentially non-binary: "[a] binary error opposes a wrong answer to the right answer; non-binarism requires that the target text actually selected be opposed to at least one further target text which could also have been selected, and then to possible wrong answers. For binarism, there is only right or wrong; for non-binarism there are at least two right answers and

If we take all this into account, not forgetting to mention that students doing a translation exercise openly admit that they use words, expressions and structures they would otherwise avoid (Kobayashi & Rinnert 197-200), we cannot but draw the conclusion that translation must be a tremendously positive activity for L2 students to profit from.

This said, we will now try to draw some evidence supporting our arguments, providing the reader with the results of an experiment carried out in October 1998, in which we analyse the translations of a group of 4th year University students of English.

1. ANALYSIS OF TRANSLATIONS BY 4th YEAR STUDENTS OF ENGLISH

1.1. INTRODUCTION

In this section we will endeavour to add further support to the thesis that translation has an important role to play in SLT. In order to do this, we have sought the opinions of a group of 4th year students of English by means of questionnaires relating not only to their opinion about translation exercises but also about their English language lessons in general so that there was no possible way for them to know that our main interest lay in their opinion about this specific kind of exercise. Moreover, we have analysed as exhaustively as possible the results of a translation exercise they were asked to do in class.

The thesis to be evaluated here can be summarised in the following research questions:

Q1. Can translation help the students practise those grammar points they have already seen in class or in previous years?
Q2. Does translation make the student use complex structures and vocabulary s/he would otherwise avoid? If so, does it help them practise vocabulary in context?
Q3. Given the relationship between language and culture, and translation being an intercultural activity, it should offer students the chance to check by themselves the fact that becoming proficient in an L2 implies much more than learning a set of rules and vocabulary: translation involves a target text (TT) that must belong to a polysystem (different from that of the source text [ST]) the student must be familiar with if s/he wants to produce a truly idiomatic, natural-sounding text.

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then the wrong ones." (Pym 282). This author also predicts that "non-binarism" is to enter the language class at anything beyond the most basic levels (283).

Q4. Can translation be motivating and be practised (and corrected) in low-anxiety conditions, so that students may be able to perform and profit from it in the best possible circumstances?

Q5. Is there any evidence that translation does not encourage language transfer to the extent it was thought to do?

1.2. METHOD
1.2.1. *Participants*

The informants we have selected for our study are 4th year students of English Philology (English Studies) at the University of Oviedo. Consequently, all of them are assumed to have quite a good command of English.

1.2.2. *Procedure*

Students were given 30 minutes to fill in a questionnaire whose questions they were asked to answer as honestly as they could (See Appendix A).

Such questions had a dual aim, thus providing us with —first— some variables we used in the process of selection of the people we wanted to work with and —secondly— some relevant data for our research.

On the following day, the students were given a carefully-chosen text, which they were told to translate into English, together with a second questionnaire they were asked to fill in only after finishing the translation exercise. This time, they were allowed a whole hour to hand in both the translation paper and the questionnaire (the text, a possible translation, Questionnaire No. 2 and the full list including the students' answers appear in Appendix B).

Apart from two minor modifications (the elimination of a term deemed too difficult plus the substitution of the word *scones* for the more general *bollos* in an attempt to elicit the former from our students), the text is the same that can be found in the source quoted. It is, therefore, a *real* text, presenting the student with a *real* communicative situation.

The second questionnaire was designed to help us interpret the data obtained after practising a close analysis of the students' output. Finally, it must be said that we decided to use Spanish in our questionnaires so that the students would find it easier to express themselves, avoiding the typical yes/no answers.

1.3. ANALYSIS

These are some of the results from Questionnaire No. 1 which we consider to be worth pointing out here. First of all, it must be said that we started working with a group of 39 4th year students of English, most of whom had already been to some English-speaking country, although never for a significantly

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long period. Additionally, a vast majority had received extra tuition of some sort and no significant differences were found in the number of years they had been studying English. Consequently, the population can be considered to be quite homogeneous.

30 students state that it is important (or very important) to know the culture of the country whose language they are studying. In addition to this, answers to question No. 23 show that 31 students intuitively consider that there is a close relationship between language and culture. Proficiency in one seems to lead to proficiency in the other, and this could be used as a factor favouring motivation. In actual fact, according to question No. 22, 35 students declare to be interested in some English-speaking country, although —generally speaking— their knowledge about its culture is not great at all.

It is significant that only one student finds translation to be especially anxiety-causing, although s/he also says that there is nothing wrong with it: s/he just feels it should be introduced in earlier years. Taking into account that the translation classes our students have been exposed to have been designed to encourage participation and self-correction, even when active participation is widely avoided by the students, our data suggest that the teacher's tolerance of other versions, together with the student's self-correction, is appreciated by the learner, who thus finds him/herself in a relatively low-anxiety environment.

Finally, as regards the relationship between correction and affective aspects, there seem to be qualitative differences between correction of written and oral work. In the latter, affective factors seem to play a minor role. Besides, no one admits not paying attention to his/her corrected exercises.

In the light of these data, we will now proceed to analyse the translations done by our students. Even if the population is quite homogeneous already, we feel that it would be advisable to apply further selection criteria to exclude those students whose data might invalidate our research. At the same time, by reducing the scope of our study we can also reach a higher degree of accuracy.[11]

The requirements we wanted our students to meet are the following:

1. They must speak no other language (either as an L1 or as an L2) or, at most, one more at a beginner's level.[12]
2. They must have obtained good or very good results in Spanish[13] in earlier years.

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[11] Many authors are in favour of narrowing the scope of their studies to a completely homogeneous population (vid., inter al., Perdue, Porquier, Beacco, Granger, Königs & Kaufmann, Mondahl & Anker Jensen).

[12] Thus, we could restrict the possibility of transfer in the translation exercise.

[13] It has been argued that those who obtain better results in their L1 seem to do better in foreign languages). Besides, it is essential in the translating task (Olshtain et al. 38; Mott 13; Benítez 44; Santoyo 15-18; Gémar 496; Ramiro et al.; Valero, "Contrastive Linguistics").

3. They must write, at least, acceptably well in Spanish.[14]
4. They must consider that translation is a valuable activity in the L2 classroom[15] (or, at least, they must not express the opposite view).
5. They must not consider translation classes to be especially stressful.[16]

The number of students meeting these conditions amounted to *20*, which we consider to be a sufficiently representative sample. Therefore, it should be clear that *from now on we will only refer to the output of those 20 students*. Having previously arranged the names of the 39 students alphabetically, we assigned a number to each of them —from 1 to 39—. The 20 students whose translations we will consider in the following pages were given the following numbers: 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 19, 22, 24, 26, 27, 28, 31, 33, 38 & 39.

As already noted, the reader may find the text, together with a possible English version plus the results from questionnaire No. 2, in Appendix B. Needless to say, our own personal version is just one of the many possible ways of translating this text. We have chosen this because, on the one hand, we believe it manages to reflect the obvious British flavour quite accurately (we have tried to follow Toury's Polysystem Theory[17] and produce a TT which could be integrated in the target polysystem reasonably well). On the other hand, the English version follows quite closely the syntactic pattern of the ST so that both ST and TT might be compared. We have however accepted many other versions as long as they 1) were linguistically possible and 2) did not deviate too much from the meaning of the original message. Finally, it must be said that cases of difficult nuances and unusual structures were supervised by a group of three native speakers.

Without further ado, we will now proceed to give an account of the errors students made in their translations. Except for some evident cases —obviated in our analysis— in which the erroneous output was actually a performance error, we will not go into the traditional question of whether these deviations from the norm are actually "errors" (i.e., deviations caused by deficiencies in the learner's competence) or "mistakes" (which have their cause in memory or confusion and do not,

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[14] Discoursal features are, to a large extent, culturally-determined. This means that those features present in English will differ from those in Spanish. However, such differences depend on how distant/close the two cultures involved are. Since English and Spanish are not particularly distant —if compared to English and Japanese, for instance— it is also to be expected that if someone finds it difficult to follow the Spanish written discourse conventions, s/he will also have problems with their counterparts in English written discourse.

[15] It is only reasonable not to expect great results from someone who believes translation to be especially tedious or useless.

[16] This variable follows from the importance that is usually given to affective factors.

[17] Even though Toury's theories apply mostly to literary translation and we acknowledge that functionalist approaches (Nord, *Text Analysis & Translating*; Vermeer) may seem more versatile, we believe that the former's may well find application in our context.

therefore, affect competence), since such a task would be beyond the scope of the present work. We will, therefore, use either term indistinctly.

Two more questions should also be taken into account in this section. First of all, the classification of errors has been arbitrary —as all classifications are (Valdeón, "New Approach" 24)—. Therefore, we have followed our own, which may be justified as follows:

First of all, we have devised a group of errors we have called "lexical" rather than "semantic" (term used by Valdeón, "New Approach", for example). By lexical errors we understand those errors involving lexical entries, that is, words or expressions that are lexicalised. Such errors will be listed in order of appearance.

Secondly, another subdivision is that of syntactic errors, which —for ease of exposition— we have divided into subgroups sharing the same characteristics.[18]

Further divisions include morphological and what we have termed "spelling and formal" errors. Then come the "pragmatic" and "discoursal" errors. Next in our list are "semantic" errors, all of which affect meaning without exception. The reader might be surprised to find errors involving the wrong use of tenses, aspect or mood within this category, but the truth is that the version provided by the learner in these cases includes a sequence which is possible in English but with a different meaning.

In the last place we have listed those errors involving the wrong use of prepositions and connectors. Such errors might also have been considered discoursal or even syntactic. However, their peculiarities and the difficulties students generally must overcome when dealing with such lexical items seem to justify our setting them apart.

The reader should also be aware that we have occasionally included what might perhaps look as a single error under different labels: if, for example, one person writes "*mermelade" meaning "jam" we consider that there are two different errors involved: lexical (the student has chosen the wrong term) and formal (it is not "*mermelade" but "marmalade"). On the other hand, when more than one error of the same kind (e.g. reluctance to use nouns as premodifiers) appears in the output of a given student, that error is only counted once.

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[18] However, errors within each subgroup will also be presented following their order of appearance in the ST. This will also be the case with other subgroups belonging to other kinds of errors. It should also be stated here that the basic reasons why the different errors have been put in their respective groups have been drawn from Quirk et al. and Leech & Svartvik, although other —somewhat more theoretical— sources have also been consulted for those —rare— cases in which descriptive linguistics does not offer a satisfactory explanation.

1.3.1. *Error analysis*
1.3.1.1. Lexical errors[19]

TABLE 1			
ERROR	CORRECT	NO. OF OCC.	TOTAL
1 gastronomy	cuisine, food	11	11
2 topic	cliché	15	16
bromide	cliché	1	
3 islandians[20]	islanders	1	12
island people[21]	islanders	4	
island inhabitants	islanders	5	
people[22]	islanders	2	
4 to put into practice	to open	1	14
the starting out	the opening	1	
to put to/in work	to open	3	
the putting to work	the opening	1	
the functioning	the opening	1	
the starting (point) to work	the opening	2	
the start working	the opening	1	
the beginning	the opening	3	
the establishment	the opening	1	
5 the Canal of the Mancha	the English Channel		13
the Mancha's Canal	the English Channel		
the la Mancha Channel	the English Channel		
the Mancha channel	the English Channel		
(el) Canal de la Mancha	the English Channel		
the Mancha's Channel	the English Channel		
Mancha Channel	the English Channel		
6 extinguished (ADJ)	extinct, almost extinct	1	8
extinguishing (ADJ)	extinct, almost extinct	3	
extincted	extinct, almost extinct	1	
extincting (ADJ)	extinct, almost extinct	1	
to extinguish	to disappear	2	
7 infusion	beverage, drink	9	11
tea drink	beverage, drink	1	
camomile	beverage, drink	1	

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[19] A total of 279 lexical errors have been detected in the students' output. Due to obvious space restrictions, only the most frequent ones (i.e. those presenting 8 or more occurrences) will be reproduced here.

[20] We have accepted the expression "people from the Island" because —although not at all lexicalised— it emphasises *the* Island, which might be understood as Great Britain.

[21] Although possible, the aim was to elicit the precise term. In other circumstances, it would not have been counted as an error.

[22] Too vague.

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8	bites	snacks, delicacies, titbits	4	11
	scraps	snacks, delicacies, titbits	1	
	ø	snacks, delicacies, titbits	1	
	pieces	snacks, delicacies, titbits	1	
	bits	snacks, delicacies, titbits	1	
	sweets	snacks, delicacies, titbits	1	
	delicatessen	snacks, delicacies, titbits	1	
	desserts	snacks, delicacies, titbits	1	
9	Sandwiches	scones[23]	1	14
	sweet bread(s)	scones	2	
	toasts	scones	2	
	loafs	scones	1	
	(small) pieces of bread	scones	2	
	loafs of bread	scones	1	
	bread	scones	3	
	rolls	scones	1	
	pastry	scones	1	
10	cakes	pies	14	19
	ø	pies	1	
	tars	pies	2	
	tarts	pies	2	
11	dried fruits	nuts	2	13
	plum	nuts	1	
	almonds, peanuts...	nuts	1	
	dry (-) fruits	nuts	5	
	ø	nuts	3	
	ø fruits	nuts	1	
12	tasteful	tasty	7	9
	good[24]	tasty	1	
	appetitious	tasty	1	
13	pottery	china	2	14
	ø	china	3	
	porcelain	china	8	
	porcelain dishes	china	1	
14	overweighted	overweight	3	8
	overweighty	overweight	1	
	fatter	overweight	1	
	having got	having put on	1	
	some kilos added	some extra kilos	1	
	unwished	extra	1	

[23] We have also accepted "cakes" as a general term including scones.
[24] Too general.

1.3.1.2. Syntactic errors[25]

a) Errors involving mistaken categories

	ERROR	CORRECT	NO. OF OCC.	TOTAL
	TABLE 2			
1	no much	not much	5	5

b) Errors involving syntactic functions

	ERROR	CORRECT	NO. OF OCC.	TOTAL
	TABLE 3			
1	"There is..." (so) it is	"There is..." is	5	5

c) Errors involving word order

	ERROR	CORRECT	NO. OF OCC.	TOTAL
	TABLE 4			
1	we almost all	almost all of us	1	1
2	it would be not appropriate	it would not be...	1	1
3	understand how light is the English lunch	how light the English lunch is	1	1
4	with one kilo more	one more kilo	1	1

d) Errors involving Agreement

	ERROR	CORRECT	NO. OF OCC.	TOTAL
	TABLE 5			
1	everybody have	everybody has	1	1

e) Errors involving structure

	ERROR	CORRECT	NO. OF OCC.	TOTAL
	TABLE 6			
1	an almost everybody known topic	a topic known by almost everybody	1	1
2	So + ADJ + Npl	Such + ADJ + Npl	4	
	Npl + so + ADJ + like	Such + ADJ + Npl	1	6
	So + ADJ + Npl + such as	Such + ADJ + Npl	1	

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[25] Altogether, we have detected 140 syntactic errors, far too many for us to make a detailed list here. However, since syntactic errors are more diversified than their lexical counterparts, we will make a selection including not only those with a higher number of occurrences but also some others which, due to their nature, might well interest the reader.

3	$N_1 + of + N_2$ $N_1 + (made)\ of + N_2$ $N_1 + with + N_2$ $N_2\text{'s} + N_1$ $[\ ]_N + N + [\ ]_N$	$N_2 + N_1$ $[\ ]_N\ [\ ]_N\ N$		16
4	[served...], it is easy...	[served...], it makes it easy...	10	10
5	makes easy (to) understand	makes it easy to understand	3	3
6	the day has been started	the day has started	3	3

f) Errors involving subcategorisation features

	TABLE 7			
	ERROR	CORRECT	NO. OF OCC.	TOTAL
1	risk to + INF	risk + ing	4	5
	risk yourself to + INF	risk + ing	1	
2	the risk to + INF	the risk of + ing	1	1
3	to go away the country	to go away from, to leave	1	1
4	resign	resign yourself	1	1
5	let + N + to INF	let + N + INF	1	1
6	resist to	resist + ing	1	1
7	renounce of + ing	renounce + N	1	1
8	forgo + to INF	forgo + N	1	1

g) Errors involving articles

	TABLE 8			
	ERROR	CORRECT	NO. OF OCC.	TOTAL
1	the English gastronomy	English gastronomy	7	10
	the English food	English food	3	
2	the tea [meal]	tea	7	7
3	an English pottery	English pottery	1	15
	A tea	tea	14	
4	the + Npl [food]	Npl	8	8
5	British/English lunch	the British/English lunch	5	6
	English cuisine	the English cuisine	1	

1.3.1.3. Morphological errors

a) Errors involving inflectional affixation
a.1) Number

	TABLE 9			
	ERROR	CORRECT	NO. OF OCC.	TOTAL
1	nuts + N	nut + N	1	2
	strawberries + N	strawberry + N	1	
2	more kilo	more kilos	1	3
	mushroom	mushrooms	1	
	sausage and mushroom	sausages and mushrooms	1	
3	lunches	lunch	2	2
4	any other fruits	any other fruit	1	1

a.2) Verbal inflection

	TABLE 10			
	ERROR	CORRECT	NO. OF OCC.	TOTAL
1	knowns[26]	knows	1	1

b) Errors involving derivational affixation

	TABLE 11			
	ERROR	CORRECT	NO. OF OCC.	TOTAL
1	u $\left(\begin{array}{c} n \\ m \end{array}\right)$ polite	impolite	3	3
2	disconsidered	inconsiderate	1	
	unconsiderable	inconsiderate	1	
	disconsider	inconsiderate	1	4
	unconsiderate	inconsiderate	1	

1.3.1.4. Selection of spelling[27] and formal errors (in order of appearance)

	TABLE 12			
	ERROR	CORRECT	NO. OF OCC.	TOTAL
1	Πgrastronomy[28]	gastronomy	1	1
2	english	English	2	2
3	caracterized	characterized	1	
	charachterized	characterized	1	3
	charactirized	characterized	1	
4	continent	Continent	13	13
5	Πextintion	extinction	3	3
6	Πestinguished	extinguished	1	1
7	Πstablishments	establishments	1	1
8	Πcattering	catering	1	1
9	Πtinny	tiny	1	2
10	Πban	bun	1	1
11	porcelaine	porcelain	4	5
	porcelane	porcelain	1	
12	Jasmin	jasmine	2	
	jazmin	jasmine	7	12
	jazmine	jasmine	2	
	jassmin	jasmine	1	

[26] Although included here, we must acknowledge that this could simply be a performance mistake.

[27] All those errors marked with Π could also indicate mispronunciation on the part of the learner.

[28] Although included here, this might well be a performance mistake.

13	Πmermelade	marmalade	3	3
14	Πfulled	filled	1	1
15	Πsausaces	sausages	1	
	saussages	sausages	6	8
	Πsusagges	sausages	1	
16	wheight	weight	1	
	Πweigh	weight	1	2

1.3.1.5. Pragmatic and discoursal errors

a) Cohesion

TABLE 13			
ERROR	CORRECT	NO. OF OCC.	TOTAL
1 It is served..., it is easy...[29]	Served...,it makes it easy to...	1	1

b) Level of usage

TABLE 14			
ERROR	CORRECT	NO. OF OCC.	TOTAL
1 maybe$_{coll}$	you might	1	1
2 don't$_{inf}$ forgo$_{for}$	do not forgo	1	1

c) Language use[30]

TABLE 15			
ERROR	CORRECT	NO. OF OCC.	TOTAL
1 eggs with bacon	bacon and eggs	10	17
eggs and bacon	bacon and eggs	7	
2 day by day	day after day	1	1
3 in extinction	in danger of extinction	6	6

[29] The two sentences, thus presented by the student, lack cohesion in that there is no clear relationship between them.

[30] All the errors included under this label share some common features: they involve groups of words which usually appear together and in a given order. Thus, they could be considered to be instances of lexical collocations. However, some of them may not be fully lexicalised in spite of their extreme frequency. That is why we have chosen to group them under the somewhat safer label "language use".

1.3.1.6. Selection of semantic errors[31]

a) Aspect

TABLE 16				
	ERROR	CORRECT	NO. OF OCC.	TOTAL
1	we { speak / talk / refer }	we are { speaking / talking / refering }	5	5

b) Correct syntactic structures with the wrong meaning

TABLE 17			
ERROR	CORRECT	NO. OF OCC.	TOTAL
1 to understand that [...] { is / *be }	to understand why [...] is	10	10 (out of them, 2 use the subj.)

c) Misinterpretation of the ST

TABLE 18			
ERROR	CORRECT	NO. OF OCC.	TOTAL
1 Channel = umbilical cord[32]	umbilical cord = Channel Tunnel	12	12
2 (scones) filled with	scones with	1	
(scones) covered with	scones with	2	
(scones) made with	scones with	1	7
strawberry jam and fresh cream rolls	scones with	1	
(cakes) of strawberry jam	scones with	2	

1.3.1.7. Errors involving prepositions

TABLE 19			
ERROR	CORRECT	NO. OF OCC.	TOTAL
1 in English food	about	4	4
2 thoughtless for us	of	1	1

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[31] Apart from the categories listed under this heading, several errors were also spotted involving the wrong use of tense, both tense and aspect, and mood. However, given that their number of occurrences is very low, we have chosen not to include them here.

[32] We must express our surprise at the incredibly high number of students who actually interpreted the metaphor "umbilical cord" as referring to the English Channel. Looking at the Spanish text, it is true that syntax does not help much to disambiguate meaning. However, this is a problem that simple cultural background knowledge should have solved.

3	well-known for	to	1	
4	mistaken with	for	1	1
5	served on	in	1	1
6	accompanied with	by	5	6
	accompanied of	by	1	
7	composed by	of	2	2

1.3.1.8. Errors involving connectors

TABLE 20				
	ERROR	CORRECT	NO. OF OCC.	TOTAL
1	in fact	of course	2	2
2	so that as	as well as	1	2
	as much as	as well as	1	
3	overall	above all, especially	1	3
	even though	above all, especially	1	
	furthermore	above all, especially	1	

1.3.2. *Other considerations*

The table below shows the overall distribution of the different kinds of errors we have distinguished. To be noted is the high percentage of lexical errors.

TABLE 21							
	LEX.	SYNT.	MORPH.	FORM. & SPELL.	PRAG.	SEM.	PREP.	CONN.
%	45.81	22.98	2.62	11.98	4.43	8.37	2.62	1.14

It might now be interesting to see to what extent these errors may have been caused by cross-linguistic interference (CLI). Since this is a controversial question, we have only taken into account those errors in which more or less obvious evidence seems to suggest they might have been caused by transfer and not by any other process. They appear in the following table compared to the total number of errors committed by our students:

TABLE 22		
	TOTAL NUMBER OF ERRORS	ERRORS CAUSED BY CLI
Lexical	279	104
Syntactic	140	93
Morphological	16	2
Formal and spelling	73	33
Pragmatic	27	24
Semantic	51	18
Prepositions	16	8
Connectors	7	0
TOTAL	609	282

According to the data provided above, 46.30% of the errors made by the students in their translation exercise were caused by CLI.

We have also felt that some sort of statistical treatment of the data provided hitherto was necessary.[33] Thus, we thought it appropriate to submit them to significance tests with a twofold aim: first of all, we wanted to know whether the differences between the kinds of errors we have distinguished, as suggested by their different number of occurrences, were indeed significant. Secondly, it was also important to see whether that significance could also apply to the ostensibly different degrees of influence of CLI on the linguistic areas distinguished above.

In the first case we have applied the so-called Wilcoxon Test for paired data (a non-parametric test) (vid. Domènech i Massons). Since we are dealing with multiple comparisons, Bonferroni's Adjustment was used.

The results obtained after the application of these two tests are provided in Table 23 below (note: S = significant; N S = non-significant):

TABLE 23					
		TOTAL	CASES	Z_w	Z_p
LEX-SYNT	Ranks +	209	19	3.89 S	5.64 S
	Ranks -	1	1		
LEX-MORPH	Ranks +	210	20	3.93 S	1.95 N S
	Ranks -	0	0		
LEX-FORM	Ranks +	210	20	3.93 S	1.24 N S
	Ranks -	0	0		
LEX-PRAG	Ranks +	210	20	3.93 S	5.19 S
	Ranks -	0	0		
LEX-SEM	Ranks +	210	20	3.93 S	0.27 N S
	Ranks -	0	0		
LEX-PREP	Ranks +	210	20	3.93 S	1.02 N S
	Ranks -	0	0		
LEX-CONN	Ranks +	210	20	3.93 S	
	Ranks -	0	0		
SYNT-MORPH	Ranks +	210	20	3.93 S	4.06 S
	Ranks -	0	0		
SYNT-FORM	Ranks +	169	17	2.98 N S	2.98 N S
	Ranks -	21	2		
SYNT-PRAG	Ranks +	209	19	3.89 S	2.33 N S
	Ranks -	1	1		
SYNT-SEM	Ranks +	180	17	3.42 S	3.85 S
	Ranks -	10	2		
SYNT-PREP	Ranks +	210	20	3.92 S	1.30 N S
	Ranks -	0	0		
SYNT-CONN	Ranks +	190	19	3.83 S	
	Ranks -	0	0		
MORPH-FORM	Ranks +	5	2	3.63 S	2.38 N S
	Ranks -	185	17		

Morph-Prag	Ranks +	28.5	3	2.12 N S	4.83 S
	Ranks -	107.5	13		
Morph-Sem	Ranks +	14	1	3.03 N S	1.74 N S
	Ranks -	139	16		
Morph-Prep	Ranks +	49	6	0.22 N S	2.29 N S
	Ranks -	56	8		
Morph-Conn	Ranks +	65	9	1.38 N S	
	Ranks -	26	4		
Form-Prag	Ranks +	163	17	3.39 S	3.90 S
	Ranks -	8	1		
Form-Sem	Ranks +	103.5	11	1.84 N S	1.11 N S
	Ranks -	32.5	5		
Form-Prep	Ranks +	168.5	17	3.63 S	0.35 N S
	Ranks -	2.5	1		
Form-Conn	Ranks +	190	19	3.84 S	
	Ranks -	0	0		
Prag-Sem	Ranks +	22	4	2.59 N S	4.51 S
	Ranks -	131	13		
Prag-Prep	Ranks +	63	9	1.91 N S	2.82 N S
	Ranks -	15	3		
Prag-Conn	Ranks +	146.5	16	3.43 S	
	Ranks -	6.5	1		
Sem-Prep	Ranks +	154.5	15	3.01 N S	1.06 N S
	Ranks -	16.5	3		
Sem-Conn	Ranks +	163	16	3.40 S	
	Ranks -	8	2		
Prep-Conn	Ranks +	62	10	1.87 N S	
	Ranks -	16	2		

Up to now we have been dealing with data obtained from the translation exercises done by the students. Before actually interpreting them, we will provide the reader with the results obtained from Questionnaire No. 2 (see Appendix B).

Question No. 1:
– 15 students found the text to be difficult / very difficult.
– 2 students found the text to present the average degree of difficulty they are accustomed to.
– 3 students found it easy.

Question No. 2:
– All (20) students encountered vocabulary problems. **6** of them make it clear that they resort to L1 transfer as a communicative strategy in such cases (one of them arguing that s/he feels insecure when s/he departs too much from the ST; and another arguing that s/he tends to follow literal translation lest s/he should be penalised if she did otherwise).

Question No. 3:
– 6 students acknowledge that they came across some syntactic difficulties. **2** of them clearly refer to the participial structure, claiming that the text includes sentences that are too long and not too well connected.

Question No. 4:

When asked whether their knowledge of British culture had been of any use, answers went as follows: 13 students found it useful, whereas 4 of them did not believe it to be too useful and 3 did not find it useful at all.

Question No. 5:

These students consider their knowledge of British culture to be:

TABLE 24	
ANSWER	(No. OF STUDENTS)
normal	(16)
low	(3)
lower than they believed it was	(1)

Note: when comparing the results from this question and those obtained in Question No. 22 from Questionnaire No. 1 we realised that 2 students actually change their definition of their own British cultural level in the sense that they lower it after translating our text.

Question No. 6:
According to the students, the topic of our text is:

TABLE 25	
ANSWER	(No. of STUDENTS)
interesting	(15)
not too interesting / not interesting at all	(5)

The reasons given by those who found it interesting could be summed up in the following statement: the text teaches us interesting British cultural aspects. Moreover, one person claims that it teaches us a large number of unknown terms, whereas some other person states that it makes him/her remember terms s/he had in his/her subconscious.

As for the 5 students who did not find the text interesting, the reasons they give could be summed up thus: the text deals with stereotypes; tea is also drunk in Spain; food is not an interesting topic.

2. DISCUSSION

What first strikes the reader when analysing the data provided so far is the incredibly high number of errors caused by the wrong choice of vocabulary. Students felt this and all of them acknowledged having problems with it.

We must conclude, therefore, that our students' lexical competence presents important gaps. It is clear that the terms that caused problems could have been avoided had the students been told to do any written exercise other than translation. Translation, then, is useful in the sense that it fosters the use of problematic

terms that would otherwise be avoided and consequently not fully acquired by the student.

This explains the high percentage of lexical errors caused by transfer, since transfer is a common communication strategy the learner resorts to whenever s/he faces some problems in the process of putting across a given message. This implies that transfer will also appear in other writing tasks and certainly in oral speech, in which factors such as lack of time, anxiety and stress will arguably favour CLI.

But translation also has an extra benefit in the sense that it will help the student internalise those terms of which s/he still has an imperfect knowledge. Let us mention some illustrative examples: one person, for instance, wrote the word "jar" meaning "jam". This may indeed indicate that the process of retrieval of his/her phonological representation for this particular word was somewhat problematic because the term in question was not properly internalised. On some other occasions, confusion is prompted not only by phonological but also by morphological similarities. For example, two people use the verbs "light up" and "outline" for "highlight", which suggests that the learner's knowledge of the target word is quite imperfect, although s/he has a general idea of its morpho-phonological structure.

Finally, translation can help the student realise the dangers of associating an L2 term with a fixed L1 translation. Data suggest, for example, that most students believe that Sp. "tarta" and Eng. "cake" are equivalent terms, so that whenever one of them appears the other will be produced automatically. Something similar happens with Sp. "perdonar" and Eng. "forgive". The association between both terms seems to be so strong in some students that they believe them to be perfectly interchangeable terms, not taking into account that "perdonar" may have different meanings depending on the context. As we have already stated, this is a very common strategy among students because it implies less effort on their part. Translation exercises, therefore, make students see how words are actually used in their context, thus complementing in an essential way their otherwise imperfect learning strategies.

Translation may also be a great help from a grammatical point of view. Texts for translation might be selected according to the grammar points that are being studied or that the teacher is interested in practising. In this regard, translation exercises present certain advantages that ordinary (i.e. not text-based) grammar exercises lack:

– Translation will make students practise not only one but several grammar points within the same exercise.
– Translation provides a particular context in which students may use the syntactic structures they have learnt.
– Since it provides a context, students will generally consider translation to be far more interesting (and less boring) than ordinary grammar exercises.

The grammar points we thought our text could help students practise are the following:

- Participial clauses (and the danger of misrelated participle constructions), which students study in their 2nd year.
- The use of nouns as pre-modifiers (which is introduced in their third year).
- The use of articles (which is one of the first grammar points they study in their 4th year).

Although most students claimed to have had vocabulary problems exclusively, six of them acknowledged that they had also encountered syntactic difficulties (two of them clearly referring to the participial structure). This suggests that grammar aspects did cause some problems to them and this was indeed the case. In fact, the three points enumerated above caused problems and errors which rank amongst those most frequently repeated. Very few people actually took into account that a participle must refer to a preceding/following subject. Practically every single student proved to be reluctant to use pre-modifying nouns within a larger NP. And most of them provide evidence that the use of articles in English is far from easy for them.

Apart from these problems, there also appeared many other minor mistakes which prove that our learners' competence has gaps which are 1) hardly predictable and 2) very difficult for us to bridge by means of ordinary grammar exercises which usually focus on very specific points.

Having said all this —and to sum up— we can indeed claim that our first two research questions can be answered in the affirmative: translation helps the student practise grammar points and vocabulary, providing a context for them both.

As far as our third question is concerned, we have defended that translation is, by definition, an intercultural activity. Since the text we have selected deals with a British cultural institution (even if somewhat stereotypically and in passing), it provides the student with at least some details and arouses in him/her memories that could help him/her make use of his/her cultural knowledge and —ultimately— become more culturally-competent.

Before actually dealing with the consequences that the lack of cultural competence may bring about, we will briefly state that this intercultural aspect of translation can certainly be used by the teacher in order to keep his/her students interested in what they are doing, so that they might actually enjoy their task and profit much more from it.

In this regard, results from Questionnaire No. 2 confirm those obtained in questionnaire No. 1: an overwhelming majority of students consider that the text they were presented with was interesting precisely because it teaches them some British cultural aspects. Texts such as this one, therefore, might be used to introduce new cultural aspects to the students, not necessarily from Britain but also from other English-speaking countries. Thus, the students' "cultural baggage" will be increased on the one hand and, on the other, texts could present an enormous variety of topics which could be selected depending on the teacher's and the students' preferences in order that translation classes could be varied and more or less interesting for most of the students taking part in them. Moreover, translation's intercultural dimension will help students understand those other countries better,

thus forming in them that notion of cultural relativism that every student of Humanities should always bear in mind.

This cultural competence, essential as it is, is not sufficiently enhanced in our L2 classrooms. As we have seen, not even one of our students acknowledged that s/he had a good level of British culture after translating the text proposed. Not only that: two students actually defined their cultural competence in more modest terms than the ones they had used *before* translating the aforementioned text. This *low* cultural competence may be the reason why *seven* students found that their (low) knowledge of British culture was not a great help (or no help at all) during the translation process.

As we have suggested above, this deficient cultural competence manifests itself in certain mistakes that we will now comment on. To start with, it is clear that certain lexical errors could have been avoided had the students' cultural competence been greater. In fact, lexical errors are those the students have more frequently made. As the Wilcoxon Test indicates, differences in the number of occurrences, when comparing lexical errors with those belonging to any other category, are *always* significant.

In this case it is difficult to understand how a 4th year student of English, having passed a course in British History and Civilisation two years before, might talk about the "British Islands" and not the British Isles.

Far more astonishing is that *thirteen* students did not know that what the Spanish refer to as "Canal de la Mancha" is the "English Channel" in English. We certainly never expected to come across so many different versions of the name combining the Spanish "Mancha" and the English "Channel" or "Canal", which —incidentally— shows that they cannot see the difference between the last two terms, either.

The only "tricky" word that we included in the text was "bollos", which we chose to insert instead of the original "scones" to see how many students realised that the Spanish word actually referred to those delicious little cakes that are always present in a good cream tea. Needless to say, not even one of them used the word. However, we accepted "cakes" (after all, scones are cakes) and "buns", which were the closest options.

If problems with "scones" were to be expected, those with "jam" were not. However, some students do not seem to know the word, let alone the difference between jam and marmalade. Far more problematic was the word "cake", which many students used instead of the more accurate "pie".

A higher level of cultural competence would certainly have resulted in a lower number of collocational errors, which we have included under the label "pragmatic and discoursal errors". Just to mention one example, it is most improbable that any of our students might have heard/read the words "eggs" and "bacon" in any order other than "bacon and eggs". This kind of pragmatic error does not hamper communication but it will certainly make the student sound "awkward" to the ear of a native speaker.

Finally, this rather deficient cultural baggage has been the direct cause of some semantic errors or, more specifically, misinterpretations of the ST. We must

admit that the text might not be a literary masterpiece but we believe that it is perfectly clear that the metaphor "umbilical cord" refers not to the Channel, as many students interpreted, but to the controversial Eurotunnel.

In this same way, some students proved that they were not familiar at all with cream tea by saying that scones (or whatever word they used to refer to them) were filled, covered or made with strawberry jam, when scones have no filling or coating of any sort.

As follows from above, we may now quite safely say that our third question can also be answered in the affirmative: proficiency in an L2 requires not only purely linguistic but also cultural knowledge on the part of the learner. And translation, as an intercultural activity, may help him/her practise these aspects and become aware of the fact that language and culture, far from being distinctly separated, are closely connected.

As for our fourth question, we have seen that data clearly indicate that most students found our text interesting. This means that the selection of the appropriate topic is decisive if we want students to enjoy (and not simply "suffer") their task.

Besides, results from Questionnaire No. 1 seem to indicate that translation classes may actually be carried out in low-anxiety conditions: only one student out of 39 selected it as the activity that makes him/her feel most anxious. As we have already suggested, this might be related to the kind of translation class they are accustomed to: one in which it is not the teacher but the students themselves —guided, of course, by the teacher— who, through participation and self-correction, agree on a final version. The teacher, offering and accepting alternative versions whenever possible and being especially careful not to hurt anyone's feelings through correction,[34] can gain the student's confidence and create a pleasant environment in which students enjoy what they are doing and, most importantly, learn from it.

Finally, as regards Question No. 5, we must admit that L1 transfer is an important factor to be taken into account. To what extent translation fosters it is something we cannot venture to say now for it would imply making a comparative analysis which is not a goal in this work. However, there are reasons to believe that translation, being a "focused" activity and when practised in a low-anxiety environment, does not encourage CLI as much as it was originally thought to do.

Nevertheless, data show that 46.30% of the errors made by our students may be explained by resorting to the concept of transfer, although —as Mateo points out— this is a risk that is worth taking if we bear in mind all the other benefits that translation may provide (99ff). Moreover, it might also be beneficial for the student to become aware of the danger of transfer so that s/he could gradually understand how L1 and L2 are, in fact, two distinct linguistic (and cultural)

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[34] We must bear in mind that this correction takes place orally and, therefore, —according to the results obtained in our first questionnaire— is much more likely to affect the student's affective filter.

systems, independent from each other and generally governed by more or less different rules.

We found it somewhat surprising that 66.428% of the syntactic errors considered in this analysis may be seen as caused by transfer —in fact, as our statistical analysis clearly shows, syntactic transfer is *significantly* more important than lexical, morphological and semantic transfer—, since current theories suggest that there are reasons to believe that syntactic CLI is not quite so powerful as it was thought to be (Odlin 111). Of course, some other explanations (including developmental error theory) could be found for some cases, but the fact remains that transfer is a possible explanation for them.

On the other hand, our data are very much in keeping with the latest theories stating that transfer is especially important in pragmatics (Blum-Kulka). Thus, 88.88% of the pragmatic errors detected in our students' texts are undoubtedly caused by transfer. It could therefore be argued that negative transfer is *significantly* more important in the area of pragmatics than in other fields such as lexis, morphology and semantics, not forgetting orthography and other formal aspects of language.

Thus, data suggest that CLI, even though it is not the only cause of error, still plays an important role in L2 learning/performance and affects some areas that had remained largely unnoticed until very recently.

3. CONCLUSION

It has been our aim in this paper to show that traditional techniques and exercises —and more specifically, translation— should not be unduly disregarded simply because they bring back memories from old-fashioned, discredited methods. As we have suggested throughout these pages —and as Mateo wisely puts it— translation exercises may be perfectly compatible with the main principles governing the communicative approach (101-106): first of all, because writing skills are part of the student's communicative competence; and secondly, because translation may be seen as a real communicative situation, in which the student faces a real message —as the text we proposed was— s/he has to convey to a potential speaker of the TL. There is, therefore, a clear information gap the student has to fill in by resorting to all his/her L2 knowledge.

The text will, of course, have to be long enough so as to provide a relevant context for the student. Thus, s/he will be able to practise vocabulary and syntactic structures in their context, exploring unknown nuances and possible differences between them. Furthermore, the student's output will also have to be pragmatically adequate (i.e. it should be expressed as idiomatically as possible, showing coherence and using the register that would best fit that same situation in the target culture [TC]), which seems to cause many problems among advanced students of English.

The question of pragmatics leads us towards culture in general, an aspect that —as we have seen— should not be disregarded in SLT. By carefully choosing the texts for translation we may provide our students with relevant (and real) mate-

rials showing important aspects of the TC,[35] which advanced students of English, and especially those taking English Studies, should always be familiar with. Texts, however, should never be too specific, since we are not training translators-to-be, at least in principle. Translation may also be used as a final activity to round off a series of sessions dedicated to the presentation of some topic or cultural aspect, with the essential vocabulary required. Additionally, these texts may also foster discussion if the topic they deal with is interesting enough, as Mateo points out (114).

Translation exercises, therefore, are much more than simple activities designed for students to practise vocabulary and grammar. The inevitable influence the ST exerts on the student makes him/her use terms and structures s/he might have otherwise avoided, which is positive since this helps him/her consolidate his/her knowledge. The problem comes, of course, when negative transfer appears. However, transferred structures and vocabulary may be extremely useful for the student in that s/he may grow aware of the danger of false friends and structures that may be similar in both languages but are used differently. An illustrative example of this is the sentence "[...] se hace fácil comprender que el almuerzo inglés sea tan ligero" from our text, which some students rendered as "[...] understand that the English lunch is so light", a structure which —although possible and completely parallel to the Spanish original— presents obvious semantic differences.

We believe that the translation exercise can have its benefits optimised if correction takes place in class. By encouraging participation and self-correction, students can find themselves discussing[36] among equals, the teacher acting as a guide in the background. This "witness" position allows him/her to evaluate not only his/her students' mistakes/errors but also what they manage to do right —alternatively, as we have done in this case, translation papers may well serve as a perfectly legitimate source for error analysis, a tremendously useful tool for both researcher and teacher to profit from—. S/he can intervene to decide on a given version proposed by someone —always justifying his/her decision— and to encourage participation when the group is too shy.

The teacher, therefore, will have to prepare the translation in advance. Occasionally, however, especially if s/he is not a native speaker, there will appear certain cases in which s/he will not be able to provide an immediate answer. The fact that s/he should be open to several possible renderings and that, occasionally, s/he might not be sure about a certain point, makes the figure of the teacher more accessible to the student, who thus gains confidence. In short, this conception of the translation exercise might help to create a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere for students to enjoy learning and teachers to enjoy teaching and —why not— learning, too.

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[35] Another possibility which should also be considered is presenting texts which are representative of the source culture; thus, the students will have to make an extra effort and try to see the world from the point of view of an L2 speaker if they want to produce a minimally natural, good-sounding target text.

[36] Translation exercises, therefore —thus conceived— make students practise their oral skills while they justify their own versions.

APPENDIX A

<small>Cuestionario</small> No. 1

1. Nombre (puede ser falso).
2. Sexo
3. Edad
4. Nacionalidad
5. Lengua materna
6. ¿Conoces otros idiomas? Si es así, indica cuáles y qué nivel tienes de cada uno.
7. Nacionalidad/ idioma materno de tus padres o tutores. En caso de que éste no sea el español, ¿conoces esa lengua? ¿Cuál es la lengua que se habla normalmente en tu casa?
8. Años de estudio de inglés.
9. ¿Qué nivel de inglés crees que tienes?
10. ¿Considerarías que has obtenido buenos resultados en las asignaturas de Lengua Inglesa que has estudiado a lo largo de la carrera? Si has repetido alguna, por favor, indícalo. Puedes también incluir la calificación de Inglés III si lo crees procedente.
11. ¿Consideras que se te ha dado bien la lengua española —o cualquier otra lengua que sea tu lengua materna— como asignatura hasta ahora?
12. ¿Acudes o has acudido alguna vez a academias de inglés, clases particulares, EOI o similares? ¿Cuánto tiempo?
13. ¿Ves o solías ver frecuentemente televisión o vídeos en inglés? ¿Escuchas la radio en inglés?
14. ¿Lees mucho en inglés? (Aparte de las lecturas obligatorias para tus diferentes asignaturas, se entiende).
15. ¿Por qué estudias inglés en estos momentos? ¿Cuál es tu meta, si la tienes?
16. ¿Has estado (o vivido) alguna vez en un país de habla inglesa? Indica cuántas veces y cuánto tiempo. Si has vivido allí, indica si fue desde tu nacimiento/ pequeña infancia o no, y el tiempo que pasaste allí.
17. ¿Qué te parece más difícil: hablar o escribir y redactar en inglés?
18. ¿Consideras que redactas bien en español? Por favor, comenta si tienes algún problema del que seas consciente.
19. Como estudiante de inglés (señala lo que más se aproxime en tu caso. Si no te identificas con ninguna de las opciones, puedes añadir lo que consideres más conveniente):

    – aspiras a hablar un inglés lo más perfecto posible, nativo o cuasi-nativo.
    – te conformas con mejorar poco a poco, sin saber qué nivel vas a llegar a alcanzar.

– intentas mejorar exclusivamente para aprobar la asignatura.
– ni siquiera te habías planteado hasta ahora la cuestión.

20. Evalúa las siguientes actividades, de común uso en las clases de inglés de esta facultad, de acuerdo con la utilidad que consideras que tengan (independientemente de que se te den bien o no). Por favor, en caso de evaluar alguna positiva o negativamente, especifica por qué:

– ejercicios de comprensión oral.
– ejercicios de comprensión escrita.
– redacciones.
– dictados.
– traducciones al inglés.
– ejercicios de gramática y vocabulario.
– otros (enumerar)...

21. De todas las pruebas enumeradas, ¿Cuál(es) te parece(n) más "agresiva(s)"? Es decir, con cuál(es) te sientes más incómodo a la hora de participar en ellas. Por favor, intenta especificar por qué. Ten en cuenta que la metodología puede variar de profesor a profesor.
22. ¿Te atrae especialmente algún país de habla inglesa? ¿Consideras que tienes un alto conocimiento de su cultura? ¿Te parece eso importante?
23. ¿Consideras que el dominar el inglés ha cambiado o influido en tu vida para algo? Si es así, ¿en qué sentido?
24. ¿Encuentras importante la participación en clase? ¿Por qué?
25. ¿Participas habitualmente? Si no lo haces, es

– por timidez.
– porque casi nadie participa.
– porque el profesor/a me impone respeto.
– porque no quiero que mis compañeros piensen que quiero presumir.
– por otras razones (especificar).

26. Imagina que éste es el primer año que recibes clase de inglés en esta licenciatura. ¿Cómo te gustaría que se desarrollasen o que estuviesen enfocadas las clases?
27. Consideras que cuando cometes errores en el discurso hablado,

– no deberían corregirte porque no sirve de nada.
– no deberían corregirte porque te resulta incómodo.
– deberían corregirme siempre.
– hay maneras y maneras de corregir.
– aprecio que me corrijan, pero no me gusta que me interrumpan.
– otros (especificar).

28. Consideras que cuando cometes errores por escrito (no sólo faltas de ortografía, sino también errores gramaticales, de registro, "collocations"...),

– no deberían corregirte porque no sirve de nada
– no deberían corregirte porque no sueles prestar demasiada atención a las correcciones
– no deberían corregirte porque así sólo se resalta lo que está mal. Es muy desalentador
– deberían corregirte todos los errores
– se debe seleccionar los errores más importantes
– otros (especificar)

APPENDIX B

TRANSLATE THE FOLLOWING TEXT INTO ENGLISH:

LA HORA DEL TÉ

"*No hay mucho que destacar en la gastronomía inglesa*" es un tópico que casi todos conocemos. Pero sería desconsiderado olvidarnos de algo que ha caracterizado a estos isleños que siguen hablando de "el continente" aun después de la puesta en funcionamiento de ese cordón umbilical del Canal de la Mancha. Hablamos por supuesto del *tea*, un lujo cotidiano que cada día es más difícil de disfrutar. Una comida en extinción —no debe confundirse con la tradicional infusión que puede seguir tomándose a las cuatro en la mayoría de los establecimientos— con bocados tan deliciosos como los bollos con mermelada de fresa y nata fresca, las tartas de frutos secos, manzana o cualquier otra fruta, así como los diminutos pero sabrosos sandwiches de pepino o salmón ahumado. Correctamente servido en porcelana inglesa y acompañado por un té de jazmín, *earl grey* o cualquier otro que se pueda desear, se hace fácil comprender que el almuerzo inglés sea tan ligero, sobre todo si se ha comenzado el día con el tradicional desayuno de huevos con *bacon*, salchichas y champiñones. Aunque se arriesgue a abandonar el país con algún kilo de más, no se resigne a perdonar ni una sola "hora del té".

Adapted from *VIAJAR*, No. 116 (March 1995).

ENGLISH VERSION

TEA TIME

That "*there is not much to highlight about the English cuisine*"[37] is a cliché almost everybody knows. But it would be inconsiderate of us to overlook something that has characterised these islanders who keep talking about "the Continent" even after the opening of that umbilical cord[38] in the English Channel. We are of

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[37] We have also accepted those versions including no "introductory that" as long as they did not provide a double subject. Another possibility might well imply making two separate sentences: *"There is nothing to highlight about the English cuisine"*. This is a cliché...

[38] We have decided to preserve the metaphor, since it is an idiosyncratic feature of the author. Besides, although it is not a standard metaphor at all, its meaning would be perfectly clear for an English speaker.

course referring to tea, a daily luxury which, day after day, is growing more difficult to enjoy. An almost extinct[39] meal —not to be confused with the traditional beverage you can still have in most establishments at four— with such delicacies as scones with strawberry jam and fresh cream, nut, apple or any other fruit pie, not forgetting the tiny but tasty cucumber or smoked salmon sandwiches. Properly served in English china and accompanied by jasmine tea, earl grey or any other you could possibly wish, tea[40] makes it easy for us to understand why the English lunch is so light, especially if the day has started with the traditional breakfast of bacon and eggs, sausages and mushrooms. Even at the risk of leaving the country somewhat overweight,[41] do not forego the pleasure[42] of a single "tea time."

Cuestionario No. 2 (a cubrir inmediatamente después de haber realizado la traducción)

1. ¿Te ha parecido fácil/ difícil esta traducción? ¿Por qué?
2. ¿Cuáles han sido aquellos puntos que más dificultad te han causado? ¿Cómo los has resuelto?
3. ¿Tienes alguna duda sobre algo que hayas hecho, o sospechas que algo está mal? Por favor, indícalo y justifica si puedes por qué has escrito lo que has escrito.
4. Hablando ahora en concreto del vocabulario del texto, comenta brevemente si te ha causado problemas y explica qué te ha llevado, en casos difíciles, a utilizar el vocablo que hayas escogido en cada caso.
5. ¿Te ha servido de algo tu conocimiento de la cultura británica? ¿Consideras que éste es alto/normal/ bajo?
6. ¿Te ha parecido interesante el tema? ¿Por qué?

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[39] Here we have applied an oblique translation technique turning a prepositional phrase into an adjective. However, "a meal in danger of extinction" is also possible (but not "a meal in extinction", as many students wrote in their translations).

[40] The impersonal construction is not possible in English if we have chosen to keep the participial structure at the beginning. We have, therefore, decided to introduce "tea" as the subject of the main clause so that the initial participle could be interpreted as referring to it and the structure of the ST would be altered as little as possible.

[41] We have also accepted expressions of the kind "with some extra pounds / kilos... on" since —although not common at all— they are grammatically correct.

[42] We believe that the expression "do not forego the pleasure of" is equivalent to "no se resigne a perdonar..." and definitely more idiomatic than "do not resign yourself to...".

TABLE 26			
STUDENT	Q1	Q2	Q3
2	- Bastante fácil (no mucho vocabulario desconocido)	- Vocabulario - Intentar buscar sinónimos	
4	- Bastante difícil (vocabulario)	- Vocabulario - Intenta buscar sinónimos	- Mancha's Canal
5	- Difícil (vocabulario)	- Vocabulario - Paráfrasis y transferencia	- Sabe que "jazmín" y "pepino" han sido transferidos
7	- Difícil (vocabulario)	- Vocabulario de la comida - Sinónimos/ paráfrasis	- Vocabulario relacionado con la comida
8	- Difícil (vocabulario/ frases largas)	- Frases largas - Subordinación	- Frases largas (los ejemplos que incluye están bien, sin embargo)
10	- Fácil (sintaxis fácil)	- Vocabulario - Paráfrasis/ espacios en blanco	- "it's an almost everybody known topic"
11	- Difícil (vocabulario)	- Vocabulario relativo a la comida - Sinónimos	- Cada vez que se aleja del T.O.
12	- Difícil (sintaxis: frases largas, no bien conectadas entre sí)	- Sintaxis y algunas palabras - Sinónimos	- "dry-fruit": transferencia consciente - Postmodifica "tarta" porque duda que pueda llevar 3 premodificadores
14	- Un poco difícil (vocabulario, frases largas)	- Vocabulario - Transferencia/ paráfrasis	- Transferencia consciente en "dried fruits" y "hummed salmon"
16	- Difícil (vocabulario)	- Vocabulario - Espacios en blanco	- Starting point to work - Island inhabitants
19	- Fácil (exceptuando algunas palabras)	- Vocabulario - Se inventa palabras	- Da a entender que establece relaciones bilaterales entre términos inglés-español
22	- Un poco difícil (vocabulario)	- Vocabulario - Sinónimos/ expresiones "con significado parecido"	- "Después de la puesta en marcha de…" - (lo hizo demasiado deprisa, sin tiempo a pensar)
24	- Dificultad normal (una oración difícil: "[servido…]")	- Vocabulario - La oración en Q1 (re-estructurándola)	- Algunas palabras - La oración en Q1
26	- Difícil (vocabulario)	- Vocabulario - Buscando equivalentes	- Algunas expresiones
27	- Algo difícil (sintaxis)	- Vocabulario - Sinónimos	- La 2ª oración es demasiado larga y tiene problemas de vocabulario
28	- Difícil (vocabulario)	- Vocabulario - Sinónimos	- "Canal de la Mancha"
31	- Difícil (estructuras largas y vocabulario difícil)	- Estructuras (acortándolas, cambiando los límites de las oraciones) - Vocabulario (equivalentes) (No está seguro/a de haberlo empleado bien)	- Gastronomía: "food" - Porcelana: "pottery" - Bollos: "cakes"
33	- Difícil (vocabulario)	- Vocabulario (intentando encontrar otras palabras)	
38	- No muy fácil (vocabulario, sintaxis)	- Sintaxis (reestructurando)	- "Pepper" - "Loaf" - "Cordom" - "Scented"
39	- Normal (vocabulario)	- Vocabulario: equivalentes - Sintaxis: impersonales, utilizando la 2ª persona	

	TABLE 27		
STUDENT	Q4	Q5	Q6
2	- Sí - Transferencia consciente (estrategia de comunicación)	- Hace uso de su cultura británica - Nivel normal	- Interesante (porque trata de las costumbres inglesas)
4	- Sí - Intenta buscar sinónimos	- Hace uso de su cultura británica - Nivel normal	- Interesante (porque trata de la cultura británica)
5	- Sí - Paráfrasis/ transferencia	- Hace uso de su cultura británica - Nivel normal	- No interesante (es un tópico)
7	- Vocabulario - Sinónimos/ paráfrasis	- Hace algo de uso de su cultura británica - Nivel bajo	- No interesante (es un tópico)
8	- Sí - Transferencia/ avoidance	- No hace uso de su cultura británica - Nivel bajo	- Interesante (nos acerca a la cultura británica)
10	- Sí - Paráfrasis/ espacios en blanco	- No hace mucho uso de su cultura británica - Nivel normal	- No interesante (el té se toma también en España)
11	- Vocabulario relacionado con la comida - Sinónimos	- No hace uso de su cultura británica - Nivel normal	- Interesante (ha recordado nombres que tenía en el subconsciente)
12	- Sí - Lo que mejor suena en el texto	- Hace uso de su cultura británica - Nivel normal	- Interesante
14	- Sí - Tiende a la traducción intuitiva por temor a una evaluación negativa	- Hace uso de su cultura británica - Creía que era más alto del que es tras hacer esta traducción	- Interesante (por la cantidad de términos comunes que desconocemos)
16	- Sí - Espacios en blanco	- No hace mucho uso de su cultura británica - Nivel bajo	- Interesante (es una forma de conocer la cultura británica)
19	- Sí	- Hace uso de su cultura británica - Nivel normal	- Interesante (nos acerca a la cultura británica)
22	- Sí - Parafrasear/ transferencia consciente	- Hace un poco de uso de su cultura británica - Nivel normal	- Hasta cierto punto: es un tema muy tópico
24	- Sí - Sinónimos	- Hace uso de su cultura británica - Nivel normal	- Interesante (aprendemos sobre la cultura británica)
26	- Sí - Recurriendo a términos más generales	- Hace uso de su cultura británica - Nivel normal	- Interesante
27	- Sí	- Hace uso de su cultura británica - Nivel normal	- Interesante (te acerca a la cultura inglesa)
28	- "Coffee houses"	- Hace uso de su cultura británica - Nivel normal	- Interesante (aporta conocimiento mayor del país)
31	- Ver pregunta 2	- Hace bastante uso de su cultura británica - Nivel normal	- Interesante (me enseña algo de la cultura británica)
33	- Sí (vocabulario muy específico, difícil de sustituir)	- No hace uso de su cultura británica - Nivel normal	- Interesante (relacionado con la cultura británica)
38	- Sí (nota que ha perdido vocabulario básico que antes conocía)	- Hace poco uso de su cultura británica - Nivel normal	- No muy interesante (no le interesa el tema de la comida)
39	- Sí - La metáfora - Nombres de comidas	- Hace uso de su cultura británica - Nivel normal	- Interesante (es un tema muy británico)

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