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EDITORIAL

## On the institutional dimensions of specialised translation in Spain

Hybridity, globalisation, and ethics

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Specialised (or specialist) translation – under its various labels – accounts for most of the volume of translated texts. Cronin (2003, p. 12) affirms that “most of the work done in translation is in the area of scientific, technical, commercial, legal and administrative or institutional translation”, and this is also confirmed by Franco (2004). Some of the varieties or modalities are well defined and have wide currency (legal translation, medical translation, scientific and technical translation, audiovisual translation, etc.), while others are being identified and researched on and constitute still provisional inroads into these areas (e.g. environmental translation, newspaper translation, maritime translation, etc.). When they become well-established, labels carry very far-reaching consequences, as a number of professional and academic aspects are organised around them – professional fees or status, academic courses, social or scholarly events, specialised dictionaries, employment opportunities, trade union concerns, to name but a few. No matter the designation or field of specialisation, instruction and research in these areas is growing day by day, along with the economic impact of some of these modalities.

Specialised translation is sometimes distinguished from general translation and sometimes, even, from literary translation. Conceivably, this is a reminiscence of the 1970s, when Translation Studies emerged as a discipline (Holmes, 1972) and researchers were mainly concerned with literary translation, a higher form of translation, as opposed to non-literary (or ‘technical’) translation, a lower form of translation. Over the last few decades, however, a more fined-grained picture has emerged, with a wealth of research on a number of specialised translation modalities, from scientific and technical translation (Wright & Wright, 1993; Gaser & Guirado, 2004; Olohan, 2016) to medical translation (Montalt & González-Davies, 2007; Crezee, Mikkelson, & Monzon-Storey, 2015; Varela & Meyer, 2016) and even

to legal translation (Borja-Albi & Prieto Ramos, 2013) and localisation (Somers, 2003; Pym, 2004; Dunne & Dunne, 2011). This plethora of publications is generating a re-evaluation of the specific disciplines and sub-disciplines, in terms of translation strategies, in/visibility of translators, translation errors, or terminology, among others. Wider perspectives are therefore needed in order to account for translational practices that are increasingly more difficult to define and categorise, more hybrid in genre and more global in nature. Regardless of whether 'specialised translation' is an appropriate term, it is indisputable that each translation project is special (and possibly specialised) in itself, and poses problems anew for translators and readership alike.

This monographic issue addresses itself to a diversity of perspectives opened up by the growing body of specialised translation. Each translation project gives insights into – and, at the same time, questions – the transnational, hybrid and institutional nature of all translated products and of translation itself as a world-wide activity. Cultural asymmetries are exposed and unveiled mainly through translation, as they signal textual and rhetorical models of different cultures. Meaning is generated through cultural dialogue (and sometimes conflict), with ensuing power differentials and ideological associations. Inevitably then, specialised translation moves clearly towards hybridity. Whether scientific, legal or medical, text 'purity' is today more problematic to ascertain, and so is, consequently, to clearly delineate the specific domains of 'legal', 'medical' or 'scientific' translation. All societies around the world are constantly in need of translated material in order to adequately serve their communicative, cultural and institutional functions. As these societies become more complex and knowledge expands and specialises, so too translation demands more accuracy and specialisation in terms of terminologies, field-specific norms, translating procedures, and so on.

This issue offers a rich and diverse panorama of contributions that, in university courses across Spain, would come under the label of *specialised translation*, and even more specific labels such as *legal translation* (Calzada; Castillo; Toledo & Conrad; Orts), *medical translation* (García Izquierdo & Montalt) or *audiovisual translation* (Sanz). Increasingly, nonetheless, as more refined analyses are produced, new labels are being suggested – *medical-legal translation* (Pajares & Alcalde), *institutional translation* (Calzada), *economic-legal translation* (Pajares & Alcalde), *audio description* (Sanz) or *environmental translation* (Bracho & MacDonald).

A common thread of the papers presented here is the variety of institutional dimensions and implications inherent in specialised translational activity. In spite of the ambiguity of the concept of 'institution', we are well aware that "somewhere between the commissioning of a translation project and the publishing of a translation, translators and translations inevitably become associated with an institution" (Kang, 2009, p. 141). Every single day, institutions around the world commission

and finance small- and large-scale translation projects. They also produce their own 'official' translations (e.g. European Commission, European Parliament, United Nations, WHO, governmental offices, courts, local or supra-local administrations) which define and regulate the lives of millions of people. Umberto Eco famously claimed that "the language of Europe is translation", and this may well be the appropriate motto for today's increasingly globalised world. Translation is needed for political, economic, commercial, literary or cultural reasons. All in all, for institutional reasons. Translations are also needed in order to have access to all kinds of institutions, whether legal, political, medical, administrative, or any other. Finally, any translation – whether specialised or not – is likely to influence particular institutions or the institutional order at local, national or supra-national levels.

Given its growing prevalence today, a first and fundamental aspect to be appraised is that of hybridity in terms of genre and terminology. This raises some issues concerning the current validity of compartmentalised 'specialised' types of translation. Time-old divisions or categories like scientific or technical translation, or economic, legal, institutional, administrative, audiovisual, and even literary translation, are only indicative, and delineate fields of expertise less precise every day but probably more demanding in terms of translators' training and versatility. Globalisation has not only affected the number of languages involved, or the supremacy of English as a *lingua franca*, but also the delimitation of the fields themselves. José Sergio Pajares Nieves & Elena Alcalde Peñalver (pp. 514–537) focus on medical-legal texts and financial-legal texts (English-Spanish) as instances of a hybrid text, which they define as "a structured and written communicative product containing certain characteristics [of language, culture, content and form] from two or more disciplines [or languages]" (Pajares Nieves, 2015, p. 186). Hybridity, mixture, *métissage*, *frontera* spaces (Godayol, 2000) are the order of our globalised day. 'Pure' identities, spaces, textualities – i.e. translations – are no longer to be found.

Specialisation in translation – for Pajares & Alcalde – also involves growing hybridity in terms of source and target texts, generic conventions, and teaching strategies. This should, in their view, lead to changes in course syllabi at universities and to promote interdisciplinary work with experts from different areas (medical, legal, financial, etc.). While in the past the very idea of mixture or hybridity carried negative associations, today it has "largely positive connotations as it is articulated in aesthetics or in cultural theory using postcolonial models (Bhabha, Young) and cyborg theory (Haraway). Mixed identities and creative interference are positively valued for their power to innovate and surprise, to express new emotions and ideas, to reflect changing sociocultural realities" (Simon, 2011, p. 49). For Sherry Simon, hybridity in translation deserves careful attention and research, and would include issues like plurilingualism, transculturalism, creolisation, diasporic

cultural expression, and others. In fact, “any translated text could be considered a hybrid that results from the interpenetration of two language systems” (Simon, 2011, p. 49) – i.e. a contact zone, a third space, a space-between, “an arena of active and ongoing differences, whose meanings are always in flux” (Simon, 2011, p. 50). Ezpeleta-Piorno & Borja-Albi, in analysing the complex multilingual webpages of a number of Spanish public universities with two official languages (e.g. the University of Valencia, where both Catalan and Spanish are official) suggest the term *genre ecology* to refer to “an interrelated group of genres (artifact types and the interpretive habits that have developed around them) used to jointly mediate the activities that allow people to accomplish complex objectives” (Spinuzzi & Zachry, 2000, p. 172). Both *genre hybridity* and *gender ecology* are likely to evoke the complex, evolving articulation of communicative and expressive modes that certain discourses (say medical services or university education) present in striving to respond to growing institutional pressures towards a greater degree of internationalisation and a constant adaptation to market needs.

Most of the articles in this issue emphasise the importance of *institutional* translation – whether translation by/for institutions, the impact of translation on institutions, or the institutional dimensions of translating. María Calzada (pp. 465–490) addresses the translation of international texts at an institutional level. This researcher presents the European Comparable and Parallel Corpora Speeches (ECPC) Archive – containing speeches of three European chambers: The European Parliament, the British House of Commons and the Spanish *Congreso de los Diputados* – and the possibilities it offers for micro- and macro- corpus-based research. These texts come from parliamentary parallel and comparable texts (in English and Spanish), and constitute excellent ways of doing research into the plurilingual nature of international institutions. The uses of large corpora of translated texts (whether parallel or comparable) and the ‘methodological synergy’ offered by a combination of quantitative and qualitative analytical techniques (CADS – i.e. Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies – see Hardt-Mautner, 1995; Baker, Gabrielatos, Khosravini, Krzyzanowski, & McEnery, 2008; Santaemilia & Maruenda, 2014) have led to “to a better understanding of translation phenomena, and helped raise awareness of what is involved in translating” (Bernardini, Stewart, & Zanettin, 2003, p. 3).

Calzada’s article asserts the importance and relevance of institutional (translated) texts for global discourses and ideologies, and underlines the essential fact that key signifiers in global politics or economy are negotiated at transnational and institutional levels through the workings of translation. The position of English as the world *lingua franca*, the (linguistic or translational) consequences for the EU of a post-Brexit scenario, or the “foundational multilingualism” of EU institutions (Koskinen, 2008, p. 28) are some of the issues that need to be addressed in the

near future. Globalisation has an economic, technological, cultural and linguistic impact leading to international homogeneity or internationalism of specialised languages and terminologies. Through this literal, homogenising translational practice the logic of a globalised English language has been entering non-English cultural milieu over the last few decades. Rigorous, large-scale analyses of the advantages and/or disadvantages this logic is likely to bring about are especially needed today.

Six articles (Castillo; Toledo & Conrad; Sanz; Bracho & MacDonald; Ezpeleta-Piorno & Borja-Albi; Orts) specifically address more local ways of institutional response to greater intercultural communication. **María Pilar Castillo Bernal** (pp. 491–513) reviews critically the new procedure to obtain the qualification of sworn translator and interpreter in Spain, comparing it with the now extinct academic process within translation and interpreting degrees. Sworn translators constitute a peculiar sort of translators, appointed by the Spanish administration to translate documents that will be officially valid before any Spanish administrative or judicial department. They are, then, officially appointed to ensure the success of multilingual communication in (local) institutional settings. **María Cristina Toledo Báez** and **Claire Alexandra Conrad** (pp. 559–591) examine the legal and administrative English used in the informational pamphlet of the Spanish Ministry for Home Affairs to explain to international protection applicants the 12/2009 Act on the right to asylum and subsidiary protection. This is part of the institutional effort to explain home affairs for an international audience –i.e. to explain the local for a global audience. These authors aim to identify the linguistic and discursive elements which hinder the comprehension of a legal text, thus providing a simplified (translated) version based on the Plain Language Movement evaluated by means of Flesch Reading Ease Formula.

Also as part of an institutional effort to ensure readability and legibility of written texts, **Isabel García-Izquierdo** and **Vicent Montalt** (pp. 592–610) analyse text comprehensibility for patients at public healthcare services in a corpus of Fact Sheets for Patients (FSPs) in Spanish as used in a real setting in Spain. Starting from the premise that patient-centred information (and texts) should be clear and unambiguous, and that this may affect their perception of health services and their efficiency, the stated aim of the paper is to help writers and translators to improve comprehensibility when dealing with FSPs. Thus, social commitment is presented as a “defining value” of this research. **Llum Bracho** and **Penny MacDonald** (pp. 440–464) explore the question of the visibility of the translator in a corpus of Catalan-language environmental texts. These texts are mainly commissioned by the administrations, as well as by associations, businesses or the press. What is clearly observable is that Catalan language (and Catalan-language translators) are trying to survive within the pages of institutional multi-language webs. In

**Ezpeleta-Piorno & Borja-Albi's** article (pp. 636–661), public universities in territories with two official languages (e.g. Catalonia, Valencia or the Balearic Islands, with Spanish and Catalan) are revealed to be more aware of the importance of multilingual webpages as basic instruments for attracting students and funding, both public and private. But while the authors acknowledge that there is a “revolution taking place in the creation of multilingual web content in public institutions and private companies” (p. 657), it is yet to be seen whether translators will play any role at all in that revolution. The article by **María Ángeles Orts Llopis** (pp. 611–635) reminds us of the benefits of pre-translation analysis in order to grapple with the ideological underpinnings of a legal text. The author carries out a contrastive study of two small corpora of legal op-eds in English and Spanish (from two quality papers, *The New York Times* and *El País*), focusing on the evaluative dimensions of affect, judgment and appreciation (see Martin & White, 2005). A thorough analysis of evaluative language in news stories on legal matters may offer relevant clues for the identification, construction and rewriting of the institutional discourses present in the dailies.

As can be seen from these six articles, research into legal or institutional translation has reached in Spanish universities an age of maturity and a certain degree of recognition, as manifested in an important number of undergraduate and graduate courses. Seminal publications on legal translation (English-Spanish) by Alcaraz Varó (1994), Álvarez Calleja (1995) or Borja-Albi (2000) have paved the way for a plethora of contributions on a variety of aspects. Particularly noteworthy are those publications revolving around sworn translation (*traducción jurada*, in Spanish) by authors – like Mayoral (1999)– who have extensively written on e.g. the official translation of academic, educational or court-related documents; legal vs sworn translation; translating methodologies; fidelity or (in)visibility; examinations and certification procedures; professional aspects such as fees or legal protection; and so on. Official exams and certifying practices are a source of concern for both translation students and professionals alike. Sworn translators are needed to deal with official documents due to, among other things, the shortage of public translation staff and the growing demands of documents generated by migrants and tourists. **Castillo Bernal** ends her paper with a call for a “regulated training and qualification process for sworn translators and interpreters, in order to guarantee quality and dignity in this profession” (p. 509).

The articles by **Toledo & Conrad** and **García Izquierdo & Montalt** share a concern with language and translation – as used by public institutions – as (possible) tools for democratisation of public life and services, be they available to asylum seekers or hospital patients. The struggle to demand more transparent and simplified communicative practices from institutions has its origins in the United Kingdom, with the *Plain English Campaign*, born in 1979 in order to eliminate



“gobbledygook, jargon and misleading public information” (<http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/about-us.html>), and with countries like the United States, Canada or New Zealand following suit shortly after. Meanwhile, in recent years, according to Williams (2011, p. 149), “in the EU there has been widespread debate about reforming its drafting style, even if results so far have been disappointing.” Both articles also feature mixed or hybrid forms of specialised language. Institutional texts for social services are indeed a living proof of the growing hybridity of institutional communication practices as they include an amalgam of legal, administrative, medical, or business terms. Of special relevance here is the growth in public awareness about the role of institutional language and translation as tools at the service of citizens.

**Bracho & MacDonald** add another classic concern to the list of topics reviewed – i.e. that of the invisibility of translators, popularized by Venuti (1995), in reference to Anglo-American literary translators. This invisibility is a consequence of translators’ subordinate position in the cultural system, and is “partly determined by the individualistic conception of authorship that continues to prevail in Anglo-American culture” (Venuti, 1995, p. 6). Since he put forward this idea, Venuti has generated endless debates about the re-evaluation of the figure of the translator (mainly literary) and about whether a greater degree of visibility would be beneficial for the translating profession. Closely connected with the traditional axiom of translators’ invisibility are the time-old requirements that translations be transparent and objective, which betrays the ideological positioning that translation is an unproblematic transcoding process. For most contemporary researchers, though, translators “must of necessity engage with the multi-dimensionality of texts, languages and cultures” (Cronin, 2013, p. 500). The article by Bracho & MacDonald also illustrates a dark side of the global village – that of the subordination (and almost exclusion) of minority – or “less translated” (Branchadell, 2004) – languages like Catalan in the production and dissemination of institutional texts. In the case of Catalan, Branchadell identifies issues of “cultural and political subordination” (Branchadell, 2004, p. 7) as well as of linguistic inequality, which arises when comparing “the status of regional or minority languages like Catalan, with no official status within European institutions, and the status of official languages like Finnish, which are lesser-used (and less translated) compared to working languages like English and French” (Branchadell, 2004, p. 12). Venuti (1995) seems to offer scope for anti-hegemonic and anti-imperialist positions, since translation may offer the opportunity for cultural resistance and change. The survival of a minority language like Catalan may well depend on the opportunities afforded by the translation of institutional texts.

The last paper, by **Raquel Sanz** (pp. 538–558), analyses audio-description (AD), which is closely linked to institutional efforts to make cultural products



available and accessible to people who are blind or visually impaired. Sanz explores the challenges AD presents for translators/audio describers/adaptors in films in order to determine how the same visual cultural reference can be described in two languages and from two different cultural perspectives (in this case, English and Spanish). The audio describer can be rightly described as an interpreter, mediator, a cultural bridge. Traditionally ignored in academia and in research, AD (audio description for the blind and partially sighted), together with SDH (subtitling for the deaf and hard-of-hearing) are “becoming part of our daily audiovisual landscape and attracting the interest of many scholars and practitioners” (Díaz Cintas & Anderman, 2009, p. 2). Over the last few years, a growing social awareness towards people with sensorial disabilities, as well as new legislation on the matter, have been expanding considerably the horizons of AD as a professional activity and as a source of university research. Besides, its social acceptance has been growing significantly, as a consequence of its being routinely incorporated in the TV or DVD markets, in cinemas, websites or in the teaching materials in all languages.

Although AD is fundamentally an intralinguistic activity, its processes can be likened to those of translation, in terms of the analysis of source and target texts, the selection of linguistic structures, and the choices of transference strategies. For Snyder (2008, p. 192), “[t]o a great extent, audio description can be considered a kind of literary art form in itself, a type of poetry. It provides a verbal version of the visual whereby the visual is made verbal, aural, and oral.” What is undeniable is that AD is generating new modes of translation, as well as new ways of seeing and understanding audiovisual products. And it is also, perhaps more importantly, helping millions of individual people overcome all sorts of disabilities and asymmetries.

We are confident that the articles presented in this issue will serve a dual purpose: on the one hand, documenting increasingly refined and more specialised areas of translation activity, in Spain and elsewhere; and on the other hand, fostering interdisciplinary evaluations of the transnational, hybrid and institutional dimensions of (specialised) translated products, with ensuing ethical and ideological consequences.

Although literary discourse and translation still enjoy more prestige and popularity (see Rogers, 2015), ‘specialised’ translation, in its growing diversity and hybridity, is far more important in terms of economic activity. And, what is perhaps more relevant, the rich array of ‘specialised’ translations (legal, medical, economic, audiovisual, administrative, scientific, technical, and lots more to come in the future) have important institutional dimensions, as they are instrumental in generating (and strengthening) justice, fairness and ethical attitudes in the world. “Because translators are among the chief mediators between cultures,” – Tymoczko (2009, p. 184) claims – “their work has important geopolitical consequences that

demand ethical self-awareness and self-scrutiny.” Besides linguistic-cultural or terminological analyses, it is also worthwhile investigating the social functions of specialised translation (in courts, police stations, prisons, hospitals) as well as its contribution to health, well-being, safety, or human rights (see Rogers, 2015).

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