Didactics of the Translation of Tourism Texts in English for Students of French (‘B’ Language): A Case Study

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Abstract

The present study is about the experience and the result of the teaching of a month long seminar about the translation of tourism texts. This seminar was meant to show an overview about the technics and the typology of tourism texts in English. The target audience included fourth-year students of French language as their first foreign language (also called “B” language) and even as their mother tongue. Our goal is, firstly, to learn from this experience to make improvements in the teaching of the translation of tourism texts, taking into account that this is Specialised Translation type is one of the most common in Málaga (Spain). Our second goal is to show why Touristic Translation should be taught not only as a seminar, but as a subject itself. The framework of this study is mainly based on the results of a survey in which students were asked about the level of the languages they speak, translate and interpret, as well as about the knowledge of touristic translation.

Keywords: Tourism, Specialised, Translation, French, English, Teaching

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Introduction

Nowadays, no one has doubts about the importance of the tourism field in the world. In fact, we find that there are several international organisations devoted to tourism, i.e. World Tourism Organization (from now on, UNWTO), among others. The World Travel & Tourism Council (from now on, WTTC) even affirmed that: “Together with its research partner, Oxford Economics, WTTC produces annual research that shows Travel & Tourism to be one of the world’s largest sectors, supporting over 276 million jobs and generating 9.8% of global GDP in 2014” (WTTC, 2015: 22).

According to the UNWTO (2015), key figures of the world tourism are the following: “9% of GDP, 1 in 11 jobs, US$ 1.5 trillion in exports, 6% of the world’s exports, from 25 million international tourists in 1950 to 1133 million in 2014, 5 to 6 billion domestic tourists and 1.8 billion international tourists forecast for 2030”. The UNWTO also suggests that “France, the United States, Spain and China continue to top the rankings by both international arrivals and receipts”. Spain is the third international destination for tourist arrivals and tourism receipts. We also need to know that “Spain was 2nd in tourism earnings worldwide (and 1st in Europe) with US$ 65 billion in 2014, and 3rd in arrivals with 65 million overnight visitors” (UNWTO, 2015).

In Spain tourism is key, because it is mainly a source of employment. The same fact applies to Andalusia, that in 2015 “received 9.4 million international tourists. 11% up on 2014, which was up on 2013” (Chaplow, 2016). Taking into account all the aforementioned figures, it is needed that at the university we face this new situation the way it is experienced in real life.

We are certainly talking about the way to make people aware of this important tool to professionally engage people. If we had the chance to have a subject taught in a foreign language about tourism translation, we would feel comfortable with ourselves knowing that we are preparing our students for real job chances.

Tourism Translation

The pairing among tourism and translation is quite recent. This is why it is still difficult to find reliable terminological and informational sources of documentation. In this study and with the help of a survey –created for the specific purpose of knowing better the way students
understand tourism translation—, we will try to show what the fears and worries from our students are, always regarding the learning and training of tourism translation, as well as applying a third foreign language or a ‘C’ language.

Before that, it is important to have in mind what tourism translation means: “Podemos entender por texto turístico todo escrito dirigido al público general, y al no autóctono en especial, que informa sobre las cualidades de un lugar y sugiere su visita” (Fischer: 2004, in Martín Sánchez, 2010: 3). So there are two topics that are key to understand what tourism translation means: firstly, it is addressed to an average audience; secondly, it informs about the qualities a place has and at the same time, it suggests its visit.

Even though tourism translation and the language of tourism are quite recent fields of tourism, the number of studies published about them is increasing (Calvi, 2005; Martín Sánchez, 2010; Skibitska, 2015). To teach and learn how to translate tourist texts, we need to know what the langue of tourism is. Kelly (1997, in Beeckman, 2014 : 7) “définit un texte touristique comme n’importe quel texte publié par une organisation publique ou privée qui a pour but de renseigner tout type de visiteur ou de promouvoir une destination”. This means that it is a language used to attract potential visitors to a place. One of its key goals is to inform people.

Some of the difficulties that tourism translation presents lie in the way texts tend to make readers travel while reading them. In fact, “il turismo rappresenta quindi un terreno fertile per I traduttori ma proprio perché il linguaggio turistico risulta essere fortemente connotato sul versante culturale richiede ampie competenze linguistiche e culturali” (Mocini, 2009: 100). Some authors, like the previously mentioned, affirms that to translate tourist texts it is required to have linguistic and cultural skills. All these challenges that take part in tourism translation made us think about how students who start translating tourist text see tourism translation. Furthermore, we also need to know what problems they found while translating, their skills they commanded (and the skills they would like to improve) and what kind of texts they think were better for their future careers. This is why we built a survey offered to all of our 4th-year students of French (‘B’ Language or first foreign language); a total of 29 free willingly accepted to fulfil the survey.
The subject of tourism translation

Even though, as we have seen in previous sections, tourism plays a decisive role in the world, most Spanish Universities - and more specifically at the Translation and Interpreting Department of the University of Málaga (Spain) -, it is not still a subject itself, but we teach seminars or workshops that last around one month.

This case, students had the same number of direct and indirect translations. Taking into account that the introduction day (1st day), they had a chance to introduce themselves to others many of them were too shy, we decided to divide them into different groups so that they prepared oral presentations in the foreign language.

A total of 29/34 students from that group agreed to participate in filling the survey and they had some things in common: they had French as ‘B’ language (or first foreign language) and English as ‘C’ language (or second foreign language).

Results from the survey

From now on, we will offer the results from the surveys in the order they appeared.

![Ages of the students.](image)

All the surveys show that students had the same ‘B’ (second) language (French) and the same first ‘C’ (third) language (English). Just in four cases, students let us know that their second ‘C’ language was Modern Greek.
1) Time spent on learning English. As can be seen, most of the students say that they have spent a total of ten years learning English.

![Figure 2. How many years the students have been studying English](image)

2) Official Certificates of English

![Figure 3. Number of students who have obtained an official certificate of English.](image)

According to the graphic, most of students do still not have an official certificate of English. However, among those who got it, levels range this way:
3) ‘B’ Language or first foreign language

The number of students who obtained an official certificate of their ‘B’ language (French) remains low, but it is higher than the one of the official certificate of their ‘C’ language (English). If we compare both results and taking into account that 29 students accepted to be...
interviewed, we realize that there are just ten people who got their certificate of French and seven who obtained a certificate of the English language.

4) The skills I command of the English language are:

![Bar Chart](chart1)

*Figure 7. Skills students command of the English language*

Figures show us that students are quite satisfied about their reading as well as writing skills (both implied written texts). However, the listening skill seems to be quite balanced among students. According to themselves, the skill that they still do not command is the speaking part. Let’s compare now with their needs.

5) The skills that students think they need to improve:

![Bar Chart](chart2)

*Figure 8. Skills to improve.*

It is remarkable the huge contrast among the written and the oral skills once again. There is coherence regarding the reading skills, because students affirm that they command it and this is why they think they do not need to improve. This fact also applies with the writing skill.
Nevertheless, when we compare both figures regarding the speaking skill, we can appreciate that the need to improve their spoken English is bigger than the command they considered they had.

6) Tourism translation is general or specialised?

According to our students, tourism translation can be general, specialised or even both.

![Bar chart showing distribution of responses to the question of whether tourism translation is general, specialised, or both.](image)

*Figure 9. Tourism translation: general, specialised or both?*

Most of them affirm that we talk about another type of specialised translation (21 students). However, six students thought that it is a type of general translation and just two suggested that tourism translation could be general and specialised at the same time.

Among the ways the found to justify their answers, we divide them in three groups:

- Arguments that proved it is a general translation type: it involves different topics. Some students affirmed that there are no many research papers about tourism translation, others remembered the fact that it is not a specific subject itself in their degree and others mentioned that tourism language does not exist, because it belongs to the general language, they both share same grammar and structures, but sometimes, depending on the field it refers to: sport tourism, health tourism, etc., only in those cases, it takes some specific terms of the field it relates to.

- Arguments that proved it is a specialised translation type: it has a specific style and own terminology focused on the field of Tourism as a discipline, it is a very developed field, its appellative function, the translator is required to command some specific techniques to face this type of translation, because it belongs to a specific field, among others.

- Arguments in favour of the dichotomy (general & specialised) applied to translation: it has a specific goal, but it can be about several topics. As we have previously seen, some students think that it can be general, because they do not see as many differences from the general language as in other fields of translation like Law, Medicine, etc., where the uses
of specific terminology and structures are clearer. However, it can also be specialised when we approach to another field, i.e. while translating a menu (Gastronomy), a contract of a trip (Law), among others.

7) Main features of tourism translations are:

Students, once they were taught about Tourism Translation, thought that it is characterised by the following items:
- To attract the attention of potential guests.
- To involve communicative, explanatory and informative texts.
- For being an interdisciplinary type of translation that involves leisure, culture, economy, among others. It is quite similar to the advertising language.
- To be a poetic language that is full of adjectives and proper nouns.
- For applying many adjectives, exclamatory sentences and for attracting the tourist.
- For having a big amount of cultural items that make the task of a translator even harder.
- For its clear and precise language.
- To have an appealing syntax towards the reader.
- For being attractive, showing pictures and being about cultures.
- Because of its extensive vocabulary.
- For letting the translation of topics and texts related to tourism.
- To have terms of different fields.
- To have specialised terminology, simple syntax, appealing and informative language.
- Because of its accessibility. These texts are meant for an average audience. It does not focus on a specific type of reader, or at least, not on a small group of them.
- To have an esthetic structure in order to attract potential tourists.
- For being dynamic.
- For being multidisciplinary: Geography, Economy, History, etc.
- For being the kind of specialisation that requires a really detailed and hard work on the translation, taking into account that the result (the translation itself) will be international.
- For needing a deep documentation process.
- To show metaphors, double senses, exaggerations, etc.
- To try to sell a place/dish, etc.: marketing.

8) While translating touristic texts, the difficulties students have found, lied mostly in:
- The language direction: indirect translation.
- The lack of documentary/terminological sources of information.
- Its specific terminology.
- The cultural references.
- The poor knowledge of one or both languages involved in the process of translation.

9) According to most part of our students, a professional of tourism translations should…
   1. have good language skills.
   2. be able to inform herself/himself properly (documentation process).
   3. have the translation skill.
   4. have a deep knowledge of both cultures.
   5. be decisive.
   6. be used to every type of texts that belongs to the tourism field.

10) In the tourism translation, the fields that students find more interesting for their future careers are:
- Trips
- Gastronomy
- Hotels
- Museums
- Monuments
And the types of texts they would like to translate are:

- Websites
- Brochures
- Tourist guides
- Journals
- Menus

Conclusions

This study shows the ways students think about tourism translation. Among the results we have found and analysed, we discover that the writing and reading skills are the ones that they command the best, but it does not happen the same to the listening and speaking skills.

Most of them agreed that tourism translation is a specialised translation, taking into account its lexicon and its goals: to inform and to attract people for visiting destinations/restaurants/monuments/expositions, among others.

Among the texts they prefer to keep on working on, we find that most of them chose menus or brochures about gastronomical terms and other students argued that a better option was the fact of translating websites, because internet is a commonly used tool. This way we match tourism and new technologies.

These results help us reflect on the way we are teaching tourism translation. It has been surprisingly high the number of students who wish to improve their speaking skills. One of the reasons why it is not still a skill they can command derives from the fact that after their two first years of learning four subjects of foreign languages and their cultures, when they attend translation lessons they do not try to communicate in the foreign language. For this reason, we need to keep on working in this direction, in order that our students could soon feel more comfortable about their spoken English (in this case), taking into account that it is their second foreign language. Translation and interpreting lessons are those where we apply the knowledge of all the languages we learn, so it should not be allowed to use just one language in classroom, taking into account that when one translates or interprets, two different languages are used.
References


Appendix

Corpus: Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age:</th>
<th>Year:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘B’ Language:</td>
<td>‘C’ Language(s):</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. How many years have you been learning English? ________________________

2. Do you have any official certificates of English? Yes. / No. Which one?

3. Which is the level of your ‘B’ language? _______________ Do you have any official certificates?

4. The skills I command are: (make a cross in the relevant box/boxes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>Speaking</td>
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</table>

5. The skills I need to improve are: (make a cross in the relevant box/boxes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>Speaking</td>
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</table>

6. Tourism translation is general/specialised. Why?

7. Main features of tourism translation are:

8. While translating touristic texts, the difficulties I have found, lied in: (the language direction: direct/indirect translation, the lack of documentary/terminological sources of information, among others) and the reasons are:

9. To make professional tourism translations it is necessary that the translator should (please put the following items in the order you find more appropriate and besides, add other requirements you think that are needed):

   - have good language skills.
   - have the translation skill.
   - be able to inform herself/himself properly (documentation process).
10. In the tourism translation, the fields I find more interesting for my future career are (and why):

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

______________________________

Author

Concepción Mira Rueda earned her first B.A. in Translation and Interpreting (Spanish-English, German, Italian) in 2005 and her second B.A. in Translation and Interpreting (Spanish-French) in 2011 from Málaga University (Spain). She graduated from Consejería de Turismo, Comercio y Deporte, Junta de Andalucía (BOJA núm. 69; Sevilla, 11 de abril 2006). She received her Ph.D. in Translation and Interpreting (with high honors) from the University of Málaga in December 2008. Her research started in 2005. During 2009, she collaborated in the project of Hum892 called La contratación turística electrónica multilingüe como mediación intercultural: aspectos legales, traductológicos y terminológicos (Junta de Andalucía and the University of Málaga). That year, she graduated from Euroeditions (European Foundation for Information Society and e-Government). She collaborates with other research groups as a translator. She has published many articles, reviews and glossaries in four different languages in renowned national and international journals. She combines her work as a foreign languages teacher in Málaga University with translating and researching. Concepción's research fields range from general and specialized translation to interpreting, terminology, (technologies in) language teaching and contrastive linguistics.