

USE OF TEACHING MATERIALS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSES FOR TRAINEE TRANSLATORS IN SPAIN¹

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In this article, we will present the results of a survey carried out on foreign language lecturers in Translation & Interpreting (T&I) Faculties in Spain to discover what teaching materials they use, and in what proportion, in their classes. To this end, we will present a brief theoretical overview, followed by the scope and methodology of our study. In this case, we will present the data regarding the foreign languages taught and the curricular year they are taught in, how long the lecturers have been teaching foreign language in T&I programmes and their use of textbooks and texts taken from other sources. Finally, we cross-reference the data obtained regarding materials used by curricular year and by how long the lecturers have been teaching in this particular field in order to pinpoint any salient differences. Our results aim to reflect foreign language teaching practice in T&I Faculties in Spain.

Keywords: foreign language teaching, translation and interpreter training, teaching materials used.

En este artículo se presentan los resultados de una encuesta cumplimentada por profesores de lenguas extranjeras en Facultades de Traducción e Interpretación (FTI) españolas con el fin de averiguar qué materiales docentes emplean en sus clases y en qué proporción. Se ofrecerá una breve introducción teórica, seguida de la contextualización y la metodología de este estudio. Se presentará información sobre las lenguas extranjeras

impartidas y el curso en el que se ofertan, los años de experiencia de los profesores en la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras en las FTI y el uso de manuales docentes y textos de otras fuentes. Por último, los datos sobre el tipo de material empleado en función del curso académico y los años de experiencia de los profesores en este ámbito se cruzan para determinar si existen diferencias notables. Los resultados de este estudio reflejarán ciertos aspectos sobre la práctica docente de lenguas extranjeras en las FTI españolas.

Palabras clave: enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras, formación de traductores e intérpretes, materiales didácticas empleadas.

1. THE TEACHING OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETING DEGREE COURSES

As we have argued in previous publications (Adams & Cruz-García, 2016) much less attention has traditionally been given to the teaching of foreign languages in the setting of Translation and Interpreting Studies than, for example, that of Languages for Specific Purposes, although there has been a significant increase of interest in the former over the last twenty years. Some of the groundbreaking work, at least in Spain, has come from Brehm Cripps (1996) and Berenguer (1996), from the perspective of Language Lecturers. Subsequently, Brehm Cripps and Hurtado Albir (1999: 59) describe the role of teaching the B language in Translation and Interpreting (hereinafter, T&I) training as follows: “to consolidate and perfect knowledge already acquired by students, to help them acquire new knowledge and to become more confident and fluent when using it”, to which end they propose six general objectives, broken down in turn into 22 specific objectives.

Meanwhile, from the perspective of translation lecturers, Möller Runge (2001) studied the teaching of German as a C language (the second foreign language) in Spanish T&I Faculties, based on the responses received to a questionnaire filled in by translation lecturers,

thus providing an excellent diagnosis of the main (language-related) deficiencies identified. Ranked from the most to the least common, these were: non-understanding of vocabulary; grammatical and syntactic problems; lack of confidence in language use (both in understanding and production); reading comprehension problems (lack of knowledge of textual characteristics and of reading strategies, erroneous identification of text register and difficulties when discriminating the meaning of words in context); intercultural issues and poor writing skills (a tendency to base syntax structures on those of the mother tongue).

For MacKenzie (1998:15), “language is a tool for the translator rather than the object of study”, and “teaching should concentrate on the use of the language in communication rather than on the language itself”. The future translator will also need “knowledge of text types and communication strategies in the languages and cultures concerned”. In tune with this appreciation of the need for translators to acquire textual competence, Beeby (2004) cites the following genres, or text types, as the most commonly demanded in L2 translation (into English/French) in Barcelona: technical, commercial, publicity, legal, computer manuals and tourism.

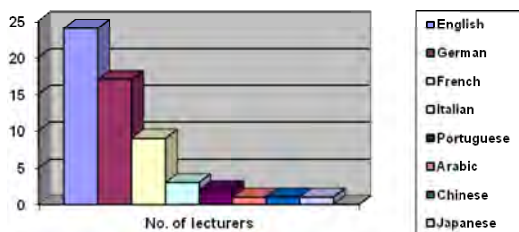
However, this same author goes on to suggest that foreign language text types used in class do not need to be entirely based on those most demanded on the professional market. For didactic reasons, she suggests the following texts as suitable for first year foreign language classes (Beeby, 2004): academic abstracts, advertisements, agony columns, business letters, CVs, editorials, film and book reviews, horoscopes, instruction leaflets, job applications, jokes, letters to the Editor, news articles, public administration documents, scientific articles and stories. She attributes to each a series of linguistic and textual competences that could be developed in class, including expressing degrees of probability, the use of the article, phrasal verbs and verb tenses, as well as textual organization and interaction, deducing information from the context, documentation, ideology, cultural differences, politeness formulae and many other interesting aspects.

2. OUR STUDY

In this context, and in the light of all this data, we set out to see the current state of affairs in the T&I faculties in Spain, to which end we sent out a questionnaire to teachers of foreign languages (B and C languages) across Spain. Their responses have given us an insight into the general situation with regards to foreign language teaching in said faculties.

The questionnaire included twelve questions, each of which was aimed at eliciting specific information. It was filled in and returned, on a voluntary, disinterested basis, by 58 lecturers from the Translation and Interpreting Faculties of 13 universities¹.

The foreign languages taught by the lecturers who returned the questionnaires, and the number of lecturers in each case, are given in the table below:



Graph 1. Foreign languages taught

Bearing in mind that, without wishing to undermine in any way the value of other languages, English is the *lingua franca par excellence* all over the world and in all fields, it came as no surprise that lecturers of this language were the most numerous amongst our respondents, followed by German and French. Although the numbers of respondents who teach Italian, Portuguese, Arabic, Chinese and Japanese might seem to be too small to be representative, the fact that their responses to other questions posed were similar to those of the more frequently-taught languages leads us to think that the teaching methodology used in these cases is, broadly-speaking, similar to that of other languages, notwithstanding the singularity of languages such as Arabic, Chinese and Japanese.

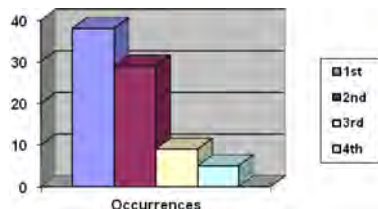
2.1 Academic year in question

Respondents were asked to specify the year in which they taught in order to reveal possible differences in teaching methodology depending on the academic year, bearing in mind the different level of accomplishment of the students as they progress in their learning process. To this end, the results of this question will be cross-referenced with those obtained in question 1 on the subjects taught (of the 38 lecturers teaching in the first year, one teaches Chinese and one other, Arabic; in both cases, the language is only taught in the first year).

The breakdown of lecturers teaching in each academic year is given below:

Academic year	Occurrences
1st	38
2nd	30
3rd	9
4th	4
Total	81

Table 1. Teaching by academic year



Graph 2. Teaching by academic year

The fact that the total number of occurrences (81) exceeds the 58 lecturers included in the survey can be explained by the fact that one lecturer will typically teach groups in different curricular years. The largest number of lecturers teaches in the first year of T&I studies; moreover, it is important to remember that some faculties only offer language classes in the first year, others in the first two years, and so on.

A breakdown by curricular year for the B and C languages yields the following results:

	First year	Second year	Third year	Fourth year
B language	17	11	3	0
C language	21	19	6	4
Total	38	30	9	4

Table 2. Foreign-language lecturers by curricular year

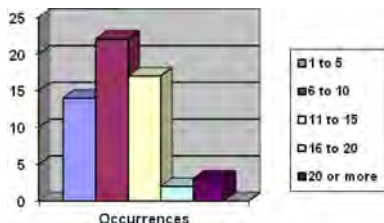
Of the 38 lecturers who teach in the first year, 17 do so in the B language and 21 in the C, while 10 lecturers teach both B and C languages.

2.2 Years of experience of foreign-language teaching in T&I

As we can see in Table 3, the degree of teaching experience in this specialist field has been classified in progressive 5-year groups.

No of years	Occurrences
1 – 5	14
6 – 10	25
11 – 15	14
16 – 20	2
20 - ...	2
Total	57

Table 3. Years of foreign-language teaching experience in T&I Faculties



Graph 3. Years of foreign-language teaching experience in T&I Faculties

We believe that the degree of experience may well be very relevant. A lecturer who has recently started teaching in this field may have a background in T&I or in Philology, which is a variable that we did not explore in our questionnaire and which would have helped us to establish the extent to which holding a degree in T&I or one in Philology or Modern Languages conditions whether or not translation-related methodologies are used. However, a lecturer who has studied any of the degrees mentioned could, over time, include specific translation- or interpreting-related elements in their foreign-language teaching. In this case, the majority of the lecturers had been working in this field for between 1 and 15 years, while the group with 6-10 years' experience was the largest. It will be of specific interest to see whether foreign-language teachers orient their work more towards translation and interpreting as they become more experienced (i.e. over time), or whether the figures remain constant.

For clarity's sake, we should point out that the total number of respondents is 57, because one of the subjects did not answer the question.

2.3 Teaching material used in class

In the following question, lecturers were asked about the materials used in class, as follows:

In your classes:

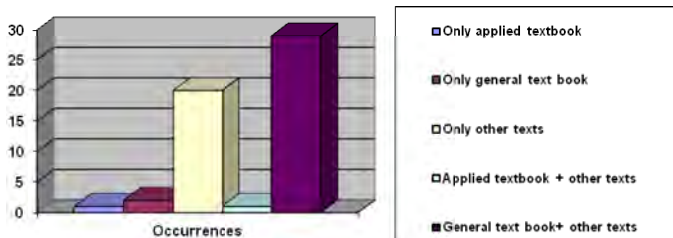
- a. Do you use a textbook?
- b. Do you use texts taken from other sources? If so, what types of text do you use? (e.g. press articles, tourism, literary, etc. texts)
- which do you consider to be the most suitable for your language classes? Why?
- c. Do you combine the options given in a) and b)? If so, fill in sections *a* and *b* and indicate the approximate percentage use assigned to each option. (textbook %, texts taken from other sources %).

This question aims to shed light on the type of methodology used. If teaching/learning is oriented towards foreign language acquisition in general contexts, using only popular or commonly-used textbooks, the methodology is less likely follow a clear Translation and Interpreting approach and will thus not fully cover the real needs of would-be professionals in these fields. On the other hand, if the teaching/learning approach is based on the use of texts taken from different fields of knowledge, or if a combination of the two source materials is used, undergraduate T&I students' needs are more likely to be covered, although the extent to which this is so will depend on the degree of variety of texts used in class. Language teachers who base their classes exclusively on a teaching/learning manual applied to translation and interpreting,

Table 4 presents the results reflecting the number of foreign-language teachers who base their classes exclusively on a teaching/learning manual applied to translation and interpreting, those who only use general-context-based textbooks, those who rely entirely on texts taken from other sources and those who use a mixture of several approaches.

Material used	Occurrences
Only applied textbooks/manuals	1
Only general textbook(s)	2
Only other texts	19 (+2)
Applied textbook + other texts	1
General textbook + other texts	35
Total	58

Table 4. Material used in the teaching/learning process



Graph 4. Material used in the teaching/learning process

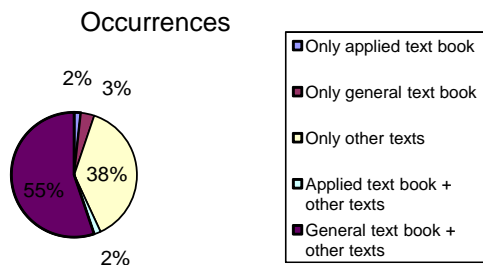


Chart 1. Material used in the teaching/learning process

As the table shows, only two of the lecturers who participated use a textbook that has been specifically designed to teach foreign languages within a translation training programme, one of which combines its use with that of texts taken from different sources. This perfectly reflects the scarcity of material specifically devised for translator training. It is quite likely that in a survey carried out among teachers of languages for specific purposes to discover what kind of teaching material they use in their classes, we would find significantly different results, given the large amount of material that has been published in this area. It is hardly surprising here that lecturers resort to textbooks that at least organise knowledge and skills in progressive sequences, using them as the basis around which to articulate learning processes in the classroom.

Of the 19 lecturers who report that they do not use one specific textbook, two explain that they draw on a variety of teaching books and grammar exercises. Others, meanwhile, clarify that what they select and use from other sources are texts belonging to a range of types. It could be argued that the first group, by compiling material from different textbooks, are, in a sense, using their own, “customised” textbook, and it is important to bear this in mind as their response, claiming to use “only other texts” is, to some extent, misleading.

We can see that 37 of the 58 lecturers surveyed use a general (or non-applied) textbook for their foreign-language classes. Two of them use only the textbook, while the remaining 35 combine it with texts taken from other sources, albeit to different extents.

Material used	Occurrences
General textbook more than other texts	20
Texts more than general textbook	7
Texts and general textbook in equal proportion	7
Proportion of use not indicated	1
Total	35

Table 5. Lecturer preference for combined use of material

Among those who combine the use of a textbook with texts taken from other sources, 20 rely more on the textbook than on the use of other texts, while seven use both types of teaching material in equal proportion and seven dedicate less time to the textbook than to other types of text. One of the lecturers gave no details as to the proportion of usage attributed to each type of material, although s/he reported using them both.

One of the lecturers' responses showed a combined use of textbook and texts taken from other sources in the lower course taught, but that s/he uses only other texts as the students move up to the next year in which s/he teaches. This explains why the "only other texts" row of the table reads 19 + 2. These are the only answers that point to a differentiated choice of class material depending on the academic year (and therefore, we could deduce, on the students' command of the language and/or familiarity with a more translation-based approach to foreign language learning).

The breakdown of the text types mentioned by the lecturers surveyed is given below:

Text type used in class	Occurrences
Press articles	42
Literary texts	34
Tourism texts	15
Promotional texts/advertising	8
Songs	6
Scientific texts	5
Historical/humanistic, economic, legal texts	4
Medical texts, dialogues, administrative texts	3
Comics, instructions, business letters, classified ads, leader articles, films	2
Others	1

Table 6. Text types used in class

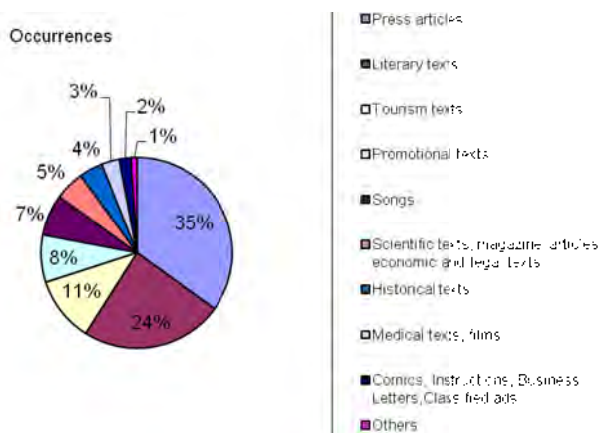


Chart 2. Text types used in class

In order better to understand the above table, we should bear in mind that the classification of literary texts includes novels, poetry, essays, short stories and plays (theatrical dialogues). The “Others” box, meanwhile, included crosswords, medical prospectuses, encyclopaedia entries, philosophical, artistic, sports and academic texts, film scripts, personal letters, biographies and e-mails.

Other interesting information gleaned about this aspect of foreign language learning/teaching includes the fact that six of the lecturers surveyed responded that they used parts of other general language textbooks or grammar books, two of the lecturers surveyed used all text types except for literary texts, five of the lecturers surveyed mentioned texts from the Internet, two of whom did not specify exactly what type of text, so this information was not included in the table, and three of the lecturers surveyed underlined the importance of using genuine texts that were not adapted to take into consideration the characteristics of the student group.

Thus, we can see that aspects mentioned include the use of texts from the Internet as valuable sources of information, a lesser incidence of literary texts (perhaps because they are deemed to be too complex for student use in foreign language classes) and the frequently-occurring reference to the use of genuine, non-adapted texts, among others.

We can now present the reasons the lecturers gave as to why they considered the text types mentioned as suitable for use in class:

- Press articles were considered to be those that trainee translators would be most likely to have to work with in the future. They also help students to broaden their knowledge of current cultural, social and political affairs, and are therefore ideal for first-year undergraduates. They help to increase students' vocabulary in the foreign language as well as giving an overall vision of the language in question from a range of documentary sources. The vocabulary and language used in this type of text is generally very widely used, up-to-date, authentic and varied, reflecting colloquial daily usage as well as tendencies in language use and formal, more educated registers. They reflect the reality of the society they depict, are constantly renewed in line with the latest usage, cover a very wide range of subjects and mirror the changing nature of the language.
- Literary texts were deemed to require a wide knowledge of vocabulary, an awareness of subtle nuances in the understanding of the source text and its translation, as well as requiring students to reflect on their knowledge of Spanish (the target or A language here). Other reasons cited for using literary texts included the frequency with which future translators would come across them and that they served as a good basis for presenting cultural aspects of the country in question or for the exchange of ideas and opinions in class.
- Tourism texts, meanwhile, include frequently used vocabulary and expressions and are relevant for practising translation as they constitute a text type that will often need to be translated.
- Promotional texts were considered simple and therefore suitable for first-year undergraduates. The language used is representative of current usage and the contents of the texts present aspects of the culture of the country in question as well as encouraging the exchange of ideas and opinions in class.

- Scientific texts and instructions were considered useful mainly in preparation for the types of text that students would have to master and translate once they started working.

Some lecturers stated that the use of all kinds of texts is both useful and necessary, given how important it is for students to get used to working with any type of text for their future career in translation; it is therefore beneficial for them to be exposed to a wide variety, so that they pay attention not only to grammar structures, but also to cultural and stylistic elements, among others. So the choice of text type depends on the subject matter in question and the specific pedagogic objective.

We should point out that one lecturer indicated that instructions, business letters, tourist leaflets and leader articles, among other types, are very useful for language teaching in this context because L2 translations (into the foreign language) of these types of texts are often commissioned. The specific interest here lies in the fact that this was the only respondent who mentioned the need to prepare students to translate not only into their mother tongue, but also into the foreign language, in line with the specific market demands s/he is familiar with.

Several lecturers explained that they choose between the different text types they normally use in class according to students' profiles and their level in the foreign language, always bearing in mind their real future professional needs.

Others used the grammar points being worked on in class as their starting point when selecting texts to be used. Thus, a text is deemed suitable for a particular lesson if it includes the grammar issues covered in the theoretical part of the course.

Moreover, texts that include cultural references and cover subjects that the students are interested in are also deemed pertinent. In this sense, texts that enable students to further their knowledge of cultural aspects are particularly valuable as cultural knowledge tends to be one of their greatest failings.

2.5 Use of material by academic year

If we cross-reference these results with those regarding the academic year in which their subjects are taught, we find that the academic year is not a determining factor for those lecturers using only texts. As Table 7 shows, this choice of material, that of texts taken from a variety of sources with no recourse to a textbook, is observed in all academic years, from the first right through to the fourth year.

	First	Second	Third	Fourth
Only texts	8 (21.62)	11 (36.66)	4 (44.44)	2 (50%)
Balanced combination	4 (10.81)	4 (13.33)	1 (11.11)	0
Higher % of book than texts	14 (37.83)	11 (36.66)	2 (22.22)	2 (50%)
Higher % of texts	7 (18.91)	3 (10)	2 (22.22)	0
Only a specialized handbook/textbook	1 (2.7)	0	0	0
Combination specialized handbook/textbook and texts	1 (2.7)	0	0	0
Only a general textbook	2 (5.4)	1 (3.33)	0	0
Total	37 ²	30	9	4

Table 7. Material use by academic year

Of the eight first-year lecturers who only use texts, five solely use literary, press or humanistic texts in general; of the 11 second-year lecturers who only use texts, eight only use literary, press or humanistic texts in general; of the four third-year lecturers who only use texts, three only use texts taken from the press. Of the two fourth-year lecturers who only use texts, one uses solely texts from the press, while the other uses this type of text most of the time.

The information given in the table shows that the sole use of texts taken from sources other than (text) books increases by academic

year. However, the relevance of this datum may be conditioned by the fact that only a few fourth-year lecturers responded to the questionnaire.

The use of a balanced combination of a general foreign language textbook and other texts remains more or less stable across the first three academic years. In all years, the highest percentages are found in the “Higher % of book than texts”, with the first and second years yielding very similar results. As far as the “Higher % of texts” is concerned, the first year scores highest, followed by the second and then the third. Only in the first and second years is a specific foreign language textbook aimed at future translators used.

2.4 Material used and foreign language teaching experience in T&I

Cross-referencing the results of materials used with the years of experience in teaching foreign languages to trainee translators gives the following breakdown:

Material used	1 - 5 yrs	6 - 10 yrs	11 - 15 yrs	16 - 20 yrs	20 - yrs
Only texts	4 (28.57)	8 (32)	6 (46.15)	1 (50%)	0
Balanced combination	2 (14.28)	4 (16)	1 (7.69)	0	0
Higher % of textbook	7 (50)	8 (32)	3 (23.07)	1 (50%)	1 (50%)
Higher % of texts	1 (7.14)	3 (12)	1 (7.69)	0	1 (50%)
Only specialized manual/textbook	0	1 (4)	0	0	
Only general textbook	0	0	2 (15.38)	0	0
Combination specialized manual and other texts	0	1 (4)	0	0	0
Total	14	25	13ⁱⁱⁱ	2	2 56

Table 8. Material used broken down by years of experience in the field

It is worth pointing out that the four lecturers who have between one and five years' experience in this field and have responded that their classes are based on texts taken from sources other than a textbook, focus exclusively on literary and tourism texts and those taken from the press. Exactly the same can be said for four of the eight respondents with 1-10 years' experience, while two of the six respondents with 11-15 years' experience use only literary texts and those taken from the press.

From the information given in the table we can see that the percentage of exclusive use of texts from other sources rises in line with the years of teaching experience in this specific field and then drops off as we reach the upper end of years of teaching experience. The proportion of respondents with a balanced use of textbook and texts is very similar in groups 1 and 2, while a preference for a general language textbook can be seen particularly amongst the group with least teaching experience in this field and that with the most (20+ years). The use of texts drawn from sources other than textbooks was most prominent in the respondents with 6-10 years' experience of teaching foreign languages for translators.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of our survey on foreign language teaching in Translation and Interpreting undergraduate degrees in Spain reveal a number of interesting findings in terms of actual practice. The largest number of our respondents teaches in the first year of T&I studies, which is a logical result given that some faculties only offer language classes in the first year, others in the first two years, and so on. In terms of the number of years' experience teaching in this field, the group with 6-10 years' experience was the largest. More than half of our respondents use a general (non-applied) textbook in class, in almost all cases complemented to different extents by texts taken from other sources. The most popular types of text used in foreign language classes were press articles, a wide range of literary texts and tourism texts. The sole use of these types of texts increases by academic year, although any notion that this is a set pattern needs to be attenuated by the fact that the incidence of foreign language

classes tends to fall off in the second half of the degree course. Finally, it was the group of lecturers with 6-10 years' experience in this field that made the most extensive use of texts drawn from sources other than textbooks.

These results might suggest that new, or less experienced, lecturers tend to rely on non-specific textbooks, the contents of which are duly structured around clearly sequenced grammar questions. It could also be the case that those who have been teaching for the longest have not adapted their class materials to take into consideration the specific needs of T&I students, given that this is a relatively new field of study. Some of them may not have received specific T&I training themselves. However, further research into their own previous training would be required in order to draw firmer conclusions in this regard.

NOTES

¹Alicante, Autónoma de Barcelona, Europea de Madrid, Felipe II, Granada, Jaime I, Málaga, Pompeu Fabra, Salamanca, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Valladolid, Vic and Vigo.

² It should be noted that although the total number of lecturers with first-year classes is 38, as we have seen in Table 1, Table 7 gives a total of 37, as one of the respondents did not indicate the proportion with which s/he combined materials.

³ In the column of lecturers with 11-15 years' experience, the total number is 13 rather than 14 (which is the actual number of lecturers within that range) because one respondent did not specify the proportion in which s/he combines the use of a general textbook with texts taken from other sources.

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