Exploring Pragmatics and Phonetics for Successful Translation

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Abstract

Translation Studies has already started to interact with Pragmatics, as part of the inescapable interdisciplinary character which solid research in this field should take on. This paper will claim that exploring Pragmatics further from the standpoint of TS will probably provide more revealing insights and/or theoretical tools for translation research and practice. Similarly, the need to pay more attention to a discipline which has hardly been explored by translation researchers or practitioners –Phonetics and Phonology– will also be stressed. Taking into consideration the role played by phonetic features for communicative purposes in the different languages –e.g. intonation features in English *vs* Spanish– is of crucial importance in translation, for there is considerable divergence in this regard.

The exploration of these two fields will be particularly revealing about the linguistic and pragmatic differences that translators/translation researchers are constantly faced with, while providing them with some safe ground for their choices/conclusions along their complex path. This should ultimately have a positive impact on translation teaching too, contributing some valuable information and instruments of reflection in the practice of various important aspects in cross-linguistic verbal communication.

Keywords: Pragmatics, Phonetics, Translation, intonation, communicative value

Resumen

Los Estudios de Traducción ya han comenzado a interactuar con la Pragmática, dando muestra del carácter ineludiblemente interdisciplinar que debe adoptar la investigación rigurosa en esta disciplina. En este artículo se abogará por indagar aún más en el campo de la Pragmática desde la perspectiva de los Estudios de Traducción, pues probablemente dará como resultado explicaciones reveladoras y/o herramientas teóricas de utilidad tanto para la investigación como para la práctica de la traducción. De igual modo, se pondrá énfasis en la necesidad de prestar una mayor atención a una disciplina que apenas ha sido abordada por los investigadores o profesionales de

la traducción –la Fonética y Fonología–. El tener en cuenta el papel que desempeñan los rasgos fonéticos en la comunicación en las distintas lenguas –como los rasgos entonativos en inglés y en español– resulta de vital importancia para la traducción, dado que se da una divergencia considerable en este aspecto.

La indagación en esas dos disciplinas aportará luz sobre las diferencias lingüísticas y pragmáticas con que se enfrentan continuamente los traductores o estudiosos de la traducción; al mismo tiempo, les proporcionará un terreno sólido sobre el que hacer sus elecciones y conclusiones en su compleja trayectoria. Esto, en última instancia, debería repercutir positivamente también en la enseñanza de la traducción, aportando información valiosa e instrumentos de reflexión para la práctica de algunos aspectos importantes en la comunicación verbal interlingüística.

Palabras clave: Pragmática, Fonética, Traducción, entonación, función comunicativa.

1. Pragmatics and Phonetics in Translation

Ever since the British philosopher John Austin presented his view of language at Harvard in 1955, thus bringing forth the discipline of pragmatics, the study of language and language-related fields has been reshaped by a new perspective (Hatim, 2001: 181) which has also affected the theory of translation. Indeed, as the study of language in use, focusing on "the way utterances are used in communicative situations and the way we interpret them in context" (Baker, 1992: 217), pragmatics inevitably had to prove useful and relevant to the study of translation. With the "cultural turn" taken by Translation Studies as it gradually emerged as an autonomous discipline over the last four decades of the 20th century, and the parallel emergence of functional approaches to its analysis, translation has come to be considered "as a communicative event, having a particular function in a particular context" (Chesterman, 2002: 16) – a move which may be equated to the rise of functional or usage-based approaches in linguistics (e.g. the development of systemic functional linguistics in the late 1960s and 1970s – including Halliday's link between information and intonation –, cognitive linguistics, etc.). As a type of verbal communication, the understanding of translation necesarily relates to various other areas of human activity, so that it is now agreed that Translation Studies is an interdisciplinary field of study, interacting with numerous disciplines which contribute to its development. Among these, Chesterman lists (2002: 8), for instance, philosophy, history, cultural and literary studies, sociology, communication studies, linguistics, computer science, psychology, etc, and certainly, pragmatics.

"Pragmatics has become increasingly important in the study of translation" (Rosales Sequeiros, 2006: 85). There is divergence, however, as to the closeness of the relation between that discipline and translation: while some scholars propose that translation theory should actually be regarded as part of pragmatics or, in fact, of a general theory of communication, others take pragmatics as an enlightening, but not exclusive, approach to translation; finally, a third group is content to take advantage of some specific concepts of pragmatics and apply them to the study of translation (see the reviews made by Chesterman [2002: 7-10] and Hernández Cristobal [2003: 139-149]). Indeed, some key aspects of pragmatics have already received considerable attention from translation scholars (see Chesterman's list of pragmatics keywords which have already been applied to translation studies, [2002: 10]) and an important monograph already exists in the literature on translation: Leo Hickey's *The Pragmatics of Translation* (1998). Concepts such as *implicature*, *conversation cooperation*, *speech acts, perlocution/illocution*, *pressuposition* or *relevance* have proved to be extremely useful to account for many translational phenomena, since they are related to the human ability to communicate and they help us understand how the human mind draws inferences and how meaning is dynamic, being manipulated by participants in the communicative act (Baker, 1992: 217); in short, they make us see translation both as a textual and a behavioural process and, as Chesterman puts it (2002: 23), help us answer "some of the basic questions that face any translator: what is worth saying, and how best to say it".

Phonetics, on the other hand, has received sporadic and very partial attention from translation researchers and practitioners. Except for some recurrent aspects, such as those needed for the study of lip-sync in dubbing or the problems presented by phonetic dialectal traits in literary or audiovisual translation, many other phonetic features of languages – for example, suprasegmental (or prosodic) elements – and phonological concepts which would be very useful for translation analysis have hardly been explored. This has had consequences for the actual practice of translation: as Hatim & Mason point out (1997: 79), various studies carried out in Audiovisual Translation (AVT) have concluded that "social dialect is underrepresented in terms of prosodic features of speech" in both dubbing and subtitling. For their part, translation researchers also tend to forget the relevance of the phonological system of languages for their findings: to mention just one example, in an otherwise solid and interesting article on controlling illocutionary force in the translation of literary dialogue (Bourne, 2002), there is no reference to the different accentual and intonational behaviour of reporting clauses in English and Spanish, which, to my view, might have explained – even in literary discourse – some of the data observed by the author in his analysis of the translation of English report verbs into Spanish. For instance, Bourne remarks on the diverse rendering of the report verb *to say* – which appears 56 times in the novel under study – by the translator into Spanish, who has chosen

to translate it into the standard bilingual dictionary translation *decir* only on 17 occasions, preferring to introduce some variation elsewhere by resorting to various other more heavily connoted verbs – such as *aconsejar, añadir, comentar, exclamar, insistir, lamentarse*, etc. – or by simply omitting the report verb (2002: 246-7). The author rightly suggests stylistic and pragmatic reasons for these changes (2002: 248-253); but, in my view, the fact that final reporting clauses in English are commonly deaccented, whereas this is not the case in Spanish, may also explain why those 56 occurrences are acceptable in the former language but not in the latter – in which the effect would be of dull repetitiveness. Similarly, the constant subject-verb inversion he observes in the translation of these phrases (*James said* usually becoming *dijo James*) (2002: 245) may, in my opinion, be related to the fact that, in both languages, it is the subject that attracts the nuclear accent in that type of phrase, but Spanish can normally only do so by moving it to final position (see the analysis of examples in 13) and 16), in section 2 below).

The phonetic and phonological component of languages is crucial in spoken discourse, and oral texts occupy a prominent place in human communication – including translation – today. We therefore need to incorporate this field into the multidisciplinary study of translation as well as in its practice.

If we take Hatim & Mason's three dimensions of context in their pragmatic approach to translation (1990: 58), in two of them we will find several areas which could clearly be related to Phonetics and Phonology when dealing with spoken texts: briefly, speech acts, implicatures, presuppositions and text acts, included in their "pragmatic action", interrelate with intonation (the tonic syllable and tones) and sentence accentuation; and in their "communicative transaction", idiolect and dialect (social, regional or temporal) have to do, for instance, with vowel and consonant articulation, word stress, rhythm, intonation (tones and tunes), voice quality, pitch range and key – in different ways and degrees –; while tenor may be indicated through varying vowel and consonant articulations, speed of delivery or loudness.

We only need to focus on one single – but very important – aspect of suprasegmental phonetics, namely, intonation, to show how it is interconnected with the pragmatics of communication, hence important for translation too. Intonation consists of the variations in the melody – or pitch – of the voice in connected speech, which are produced by the vibration of the vocal cords. When we study it, we not only pay attention to the various rises and falls or to the differences in prominence shown by the syllables of a tone unit, but more importantly to "how speakers use this pitch variation to convey linguistic and pragmatic meaning" (Wells, 2006: 1). This is so because intonation is vital for oral communication, going beyond word level to convey meaning and frequently playing a decisive role in the information

(Mott, 1991/2005: 252). In fact, in the study of English phonetics and phonology, the nucleus of intonation is no longer defined only with phonetic criteria – as the most prominent accent in the tone unit, at which a significant change in pitch begins –, but also functionally or pragmatically – as the centre of the information, the focus, "the syllable that marks the beginning of the most meaningful portion of utterance" (Ortiz Lira, 1999: 48). Some of the most important approaches to nucleus placement in English today (see Ortiz Lira, 1999: 50-54) take contextual and pragmatic aspects into account, relating the accentability of words to their unexpectedness and resorting to information load and speakers' intention to explain how intonation reflects information structure. The following three famous quotations (taken from Mott, 1991: 247) will briefly illustrate this:

> "*Great* men are 'almost 'always *bad* men" (Lord Acton, 1834-1902).
>
> "You can 'fool *all* the people *some* of the time, and *some* of the people *all* the time, but you 'cannot fool *all* the people *all* of the time" (Abraham Lincoln, 1809-1865. Attributed words in a speech at Clinton, 8th September, 1858).
>
> " 'All animals are *equal* but *some* animals are *more* equal than *others*" (from *Animal Farm*, by George Orwell, 1903-1950)

The nuclei and accents in all three quotations reflect the contrasts established by the speakers (*great/bad* men, *all/some* people and time, and *all/some/other* animals and their degree of equality, respectively). The presence or lack of accent on certain words establishes the interplay of ideas and is closely linked to context: e.g. *animals* – referring to the addressees of that single phrase to which the pigs have finally reduced the initial *Seven Commandments of Animalism,* which had been adopted by the whole assembly of animals in their revolt against the farmer in the novel – does not require an accent for it is hardly informative in the context; on the other hand, the accent on *more* – and its lack in "equal" – in "more equal" marks the unexpectedness of the phrase and encapsulates Orwell's irony in this novel.

Just as we need pragmatics to understand the ways in which intonation is used in many European languages, a pragmatic analysis of language cannot obviate the role of this prosodic feature for both the conveyance of information and the interpretation of utterances. It is now agreed that communication is not simply a matter of a producer's encoding and a receiver's decoding a message, but rather of interpreting the speaker's meaning, which is embedded in a given social setting and inextricably linked to his/her intentions (Hatim & Mason, 1990: 91). This has important implications for translation, so more research is needed in areas that contribute to information structure and the construction and interpretation of meaning, and on how certain pragmatic concepts differ in the different languages

(Fawcett, 1997: 134). A focus of these studies should be intonation, which shows marked divergence in the use different languages make of it for pragmatic purposes.

In the following section of this paper, then, I will analyse the role intonation features have in some important pragmatic aspects of communication, in order to show that those prosodic elements of language are not simply relevant, but essential, to achieve efficient translations when the oral mode is involved in the cross-cultural process. Because of the interesting differences they show between English and Spanish, I will mainly centre my analysis on *nucleus placement* and *deaccenting*.

2. Nucleus placement and deaccenting as means of pragmatic value

Intonation plays an important accentual function in English (apart from the attitudinal, grammatical, discourse (or cohesive), psychological and indexical functions – see Wells, 2006: 11-12): it highlights the words which are significant to the meaning of the utterance, therefore working as useful signals to the informativeness of the different parts of the message. Accents, then, fulfil a pragmatic role by signalling focus: "The accentual pattern of an utterance (including the nuclear accent) is the physical manifestation of the focus of the utterance" (Ortiz Lira, 1999: 54); this, in turn, implies that lack of accent on a constituent usually indicates that the speaker has decided to treat that material as not focused (García-Lecumberri, 1995: 105), i.e., as not important to the message in the given context. One of the words accented in the tone unit will receive the greatest prominence and thus become the *nuclear accent* or *tonic syllable*; in neutral circumstances, or more specifically, in "broad focus" – i.e., when all the information is new, in focus –, the tonic syllable will usually fall on the last important word, the last accent in the tone unit. But what interests us here is that this will normally be the word which the speaker considers most informative, newsworthy, unpredictable (Ortiz Lira, 1999: 54). In the following example (from Mott, 1991: 277),

1) If you *must* touch things, ‘please put them ‘back where you *found* them.

the nucleus on *must* in the first clause both signals the speaker's annoyance and the addressee's insistence on the action, condensing the pragmatic function of this part of the utterance (criticising what seems to be an irritating innate tendency in the listener).

Conversely, information which is out of focus will usually be *deaccented* in English: items which would normally receive an accent in connected speech "lose" it when

they contain given information. (Phonetically speaking, words which are deaccented will not receive pitch prominence, but they will still be more prominent – through loudness – than the *function words* in that portion – like prepositions, pronouns, conjunctions, etc, which are usually *un*accented –; deaccented words will therefore serve as rhythmical beats of the utterance). At the same time, "deaccenting also implies moving the nuclear accent onto an item which is thus accented by default", as Ladd explained when he first contributed his notions of *deaccenting* and *default accent* to a theory of nucleus placement in English back in 1979 (see Ortiz Lira, 1999: 56-7). This negative device through which English intonation signals givenness in information structure – and which some phoneticians refer to as the Anaphora Rule (see Mott, 1991: 236 & 264) – places that portion of the message in the background, indicating its lack of relevance, either because it is physically present in the context (like "touch things" in the example above, denoting an action which seems to be rather obvious in the context), or has been mentioned in the discourse (Ortiz Lira, 1999: 57) – see more examples in 4) below.

There are several significant issues here which relate intonation to pragmatics and hence to translation, as will be analysed in the following subsections and in section **3** of this article.

2.1. Speaker's choice

Nucleus placement and deaccenting are actually a matter of speaker's choice, so that when we say that something is "interesting" or "important" *vs* "predictable" or "already known", we actually refer to what the *speaker considers* to be particularly so. As Halliday explained, it is the speaker that decides to present something "as not being already available to the hearer" or, conversely, "as already known or assumed" (see Ortiz Lira, 1999: 57). García-Lecumberri's experiments on English intonation with English informants clearly proved Halliday's, Ladd's and Bolinger's view that "reasons for focusing have to do with speaker's choices as to how to treat information rather than a simple division between what is actually old and new information" (García-Lecumberri, 1995: 166).

As the following very good example provided by Brian Mott (1991: 244) illustrates, deaccenting and default accent may be exploited by speakers in very subtle ways in order to be ironic, create humour, criticise, etc:

2) The Queen said she was *glad* to be in Manchester, and then the *Duke* made a joke / and then the Duke made a *joke*.

The nuclear accent (in italics) will fall on a different item in the second clause depending on whether the speaker is implying that, by saying she was glad to be in Manchester, the Queen was joking (in which case "made a joke" would be deaccented, so *Duke* would receive the nucleus by default and in order to contrast with the Queen's joke) or not (in which case, the nucleus would fall on the last important item, *joke* – the Duke having made a joke out of the blue). As will be explained later, Spanish would express this difference by resorting to syntantic focusing rather than to intonation devices, for instance: 'y luego fue el Duque el que contó un chiste (/ bromeó)' *vs* 'y a continuación el Duque contó un chiste'. (The translations provided in this article are meant to illustrate the points discussed in the different sections; there is no implication whatsoever that these are the only – or the best – possible translations into Spanish, which would obviously depend on many other factors, such as the precise context or function of the given target text.)

2.2. Broad/narrow focus and coherence

Nuclearity and deaccenting are therefore important cohesive devices in English, clearly distinguishing between the concepts of "newness" and "givenness", by means of what is termed by some British phoneticians as *broad* and *narrow focus*: as opposed to broad focus, in which there is presupposition as to the most important item –the last lexical item– (Mott, 1991: 241), in narrow focus the message contains both new and given information; that is, only a portion of it is in focus (Ortiz Lira, 1999: 54-5) and the nucleus will fall on the focused constituent:

3) *Broad focus*: The president's decided to submit his *resignation*.
   Narrow focus: (-What sort of day have you had?) –I've had a *rotten* day.

Default accenting can be seen as a combination of foregrounding and backgrounding (García-Lecumberri, 1995: 125), contributing, together with deaccenting and with neutral nucleus placement, to the coherence of an oral text act. English intonation, then, plays an important discourse function: the intonation pattern of an utterance reveals –and depends on– the interplay of ideas in that particular utterance and with those of previous utterances in the same communicative situation.

This can perfectly be illustrated with the way intonation signals givenness, helping listeners draw appropriate inferences, which are essential for their understanding of the message. As was mentioned above, information might be considered as given because it is recoverable from the context either situationally (when it can easily be related to the non-linguistic context) or linguistically (when it is repeated in the discourse, either through the same term, through a synonym or any new word being used to

refer back to the same reality). The following examples show these different cases (italics signal the nuclear accent – which actually falls on the primary-stress syllable in polysyllabic words, but I will here mark the whole word for clarity' sake –; deaccented items have been reduced in size):

4) -This is a *poisonous* snake! (producing a snake from a bag in front of a group of people) (Mott, 1991: 242).
   -Which *numbers*? -Numbers *nine* and *thirty*-nine.
   -They've bought a new *car*! -It looks like a very *classy* motor.
   -Doesn't he *know*? -I've told the fool *twice*!
   -Do you get on well with your *cousins*? -I'm friendly with *most* of my relations.

It would be obvious to the people present that the animal produced from the bag is a snake, so there is no need to accent the word, let alone place the nuclear accent on it; this is then moved to the really new information in the given context. Similarly, *numbers* and *nine* need not be accented the second time they appear; nor does the speaker accent *motor*, *fool* or *relations* for s/he is using these new terms to refer to given information. What interests us here is that it is precisely the deaccenting of *fool* that allows the hearer to draw the appropriate inference and know that the speaker is not referring to a different person from that referred to in the question. "The ability to identify references [...] and entities is essential for drawing inferences and for maintaining the coherence of a text" (Baker, 1992: 230) and this is here enabled by intonation. This prosodic element must therefore be counted among the various factors, linguistic and non-linguistic, "which can contribute to or detract from the coherence of a text" (Baker, 1992: 253), and translators should do well in acknolwedging this role when translating to or from the English language.

Spanish behaves rather differently here. To convey marked focus, this language resorts to juggling with word order or to introducing lexical particles, for the position of the nucleus is not so flexible as it is in English. Besides, deaccenting is not so common either, so given information – repeated items or paraphrastically repeated and situationally given information, etc. – is usually accented in Spanish (García-Lecumberri, 1995: 194-196, 336). Ortiz Lira (1994) "explains the accenting of given information by positing that given information in Spanish falls within the scope of focus" (García-Lecumberri, 1995: 197). This language therefore prefers pronominalisation, deictics and elision to avoid making given information too prominent, which implies that the expression of givenness often depends on whether syntactic or lexical means allow it. Compare the translations of some of the examples above:

5) –¡Esta es una serpiente *venenosa*! (moving the newsworthy adjective to rheme, nuclear, position – which coincides with the usual syntactic wording of this phrase – helps to make "serpiente" less noticeable too.)

-¿Qué números?) -El ø *nueve* y el treinta y *nueve*. (the second occurrence of "números" can be elided, but the second "nueve" must stay and it will receive the nuclear accent in any case.)

(-¿No lo sabe?) -¡Al idiota ese/A ese idiota ya se lo he dicho dos *veces*!
(placing 'idiota ese/ese idiota' in theme position and, most importantly, the deixis in the disparaging use of the demonstrative, make it clear that it is referring back to the same subject as the question).

What a translator into Spanish should be aware of is that not reflecting the value of the deaccented source-text item by means of some lexical or syntactic device in the target text may produce a different pragmatic value: eg., in the last example, "Ya se lo he dicho al idiota dos veces" would keep the critical tone but it would now not be directed to the same person referred to in the question but to somebody else who probably knows him, so the locutionary act of the utterance will have changed.

The principle of deaccenting which is so strong in English sometimes also allows the hearer to *predict* information, as Mott illustrates with the following example (1991: 265):

6) Liverpool ˏ*three*, ˋ*Arsenal* three.

As soon as we hear the pitch change which makes *Arsenal* the nucleus of the second part, we know what the result of the football match was, for this focus on *Arsenal* indicates that the following number will be deaccented, so the game must be a draw. Thus, deaccenting and narrow focus together help to anticipate confirmation or denial of expectations. (Incidentally, this is also the case in other varieties of English, like North American English. Despite the fact that more research is needed on the differences relating to sentence stress and the uses of tones between these varieties – see Celce-Murcia et al [1996: 369-370] –, and that there is some noticeable divergence in the relationship between certain tones and some sentence types as well as in the use of pitch range [ibid, 370], what is unquestionable is that using prominence to mark focus and deaccenting given information are common to these two important varieties of English – see the chapter on "Prominence and Intonation in Discourse" in North American English [1996: 175-220]).

In Spanish, the repetition of the score in the above example would not usually be accompanied by deaccenting and both scores would therefore receive a nuclear

accent, so the function of prediction does not seem to be associated to these intonation devices in this language:

7) Liverpool ˏ*tres* - Arsenal ˋ*tres*.

2.3. Context

This is another crucial pragmatic factor determining intonation and hence meaning. Context refers not just to the actual setting and participants of the communicative act, but also to the co-text and linguistic conventions of the language involved in it (Baker, 1992: 238). As we saw in the above cases of deaccenting, the *cognitive environment* – as Gutt prefers to call the context – "includes information that can be perceived in the physical environment, information that can be retrieved from memory [...] and furthermore information that can be inferred from these two sources" (Gutt, 1991: 26).

Nucleus placement is highly determined by this pragmatic variable in English, as the following contrast illustrates (from Schmerling, 1975, in Ortiz Lira, 1999: 62):

8) -This is the *doctor* I was telling you about.
-This is the doctor I was *telling* you about.

While the first utterance would be the neutral pattern – since in relative clauses the nucleus normally falls on the antecedent, "irrespective of the condition of new or given of the information in the clause, and the length of it" (Ortiz Lira, 1999: 61) –, the second would be the more likely of the two in the context of a hospital. It is important for a translator from English to grasp the neutrality –or non-emphatic nature- of each of these sentences depending on the setting in which they are used.

The context also explains the different prosodic behaviour of verbs of belief and saying in English, which usually depends on whether the proposition introduced by them was finally accomplished or not (Ortiz Lira, 1999: 70):

9) -I thought it would *rain*. ("but the sun is shining").
-I *thought* it would rain. ("and it's actually pouring down")
-(-That was Peter on the phone.) -Ah, yes. He *said* he'd call.
(-Hasn't Peter arrived yet?) -He said he'd *phone*.

As these examples show, when the speaker's expectations have been confirmed, the words expressing them are deaccented (in smaller size) since they refer to facts/

ideas which have become background information in the context, so the nucleus is displaced to the verb of belief or saying. On the contrary, if the speaker's expectations have not been proved right, the proposition is treated as new information and receives the nuclear accent. The interest of this prosodic behaviour for translators is twofold. First, it is clear that the intonation pattern is vital in order to interpret the intended meaning of this type of utterance in an English oral source text. Secondly, the translator will have to be aware of the means used (if any) by the target language to express these pragmatic values; Spanish, for instance, would here resort to different verbs or verbal tenses, idiomatic phrasing and illocutionary particles, rather than to intonation, to express confirmation or denial of expectations. Eg:

10) (*denial*): Pensaba que iba a llover (*or* Pensé que llovería/iba a llover).
(*confirmation*): Ya sabía yo que iba a llover. (*or* Ya me parecía a mí que iba a llover.)

As Mott & Mateo explain (2009: 375), as opposed to English *think*, Spanish *pensar* "normally anticipates the idea that the speaker's expectations have been proved wrong". These examples clearly reveal that the speaker-intended interpretation is, as Gutt puts it, "highly context-dependent", so "it is easy to understand why a change of context can change the whole meaning of an utterance" (1998: 49) and, we could add, also the intonation pattern acting as a signal to that other meaning.

2.4. Predictability and informativity

Not only expectations and context interplay with intonation in English, but also the question of how predictable and informative (a portion of) our message is. "A text is seen as the realization of choices made from among sets of options. [...] The less probable and predictable a choice is, the more informative and interesting it is. Conversely, choices which are wholly predictable are uninformative and uninteresting" (Bell, 1991: 167-8). These are precisely the factors which govern accentability and nuclearity in English, as the "semantic model" of nucleus placement theories explains (Ortiz Lira, 1999: 52-3):

11) -I have a *point* to make. *vs* I have a point to *emphasize*.
-I'm going to take the *dog* for a walk. *vs* I'm going to take the dog to the *vet*.

According to D. L. Bolinger (Ortiz Lira, 1999: 53), highly predictable words are unlikely to be accented (e.g. *make* and *for a walk*), while unpredictable words (*emphasize* and *to the vet*) are likely to carry accent and therefore receive the nucleus if they are in final position. Notice that the predictability of a word will have to be established in each particular context. Apart from these noun + infinitive constructions, a similar

prosodic behaviour can be seen in the common intonation patterns of transitive verb + noun + adjective/participle structures and in the so called *event* or *presentation sentences* in English, all of which receive the nucleus on the noun – contrary to the tendency for it to fall on the last lexical item – if the following adjective or verb are fairly predictable in the given context:

12) He left the *door* open.
   Keep your *eyes* shut.
   Dinner's ready!
   The *prisoners* have escaped!
   The *postman*'s coming.
   The *doctor*'s called.
   The *phone*'s ringing.
   Your *zip*'s undone.

Some phoneticians do not agree (e.g. Mott, 1991: 239), however, with resorting to predictability or semantic richness to explain these exceptions to the nuclear accent rule, preferring, like Cruttenden (1997), to base them on the greater accentability shown by English nouns over verbs and adjectives. This would account for cases in which the nucleus also falls on the noun (object or subject) in spite of the fact that the final verb or adjective collocating with it is not so predictable as are the predicates in the above examples:

13) The *pope*'s been shot!
   The *cat*'s disappeared.
   Our *house* is on fire!

Whatever view we take in the phonetic analysis of these constructions, what is important for us here from a translational point of view is to bear in mind that, although they are exceptions to the last lexical item rule governing English nucleus placement, these intonation patterns are the unmarked or broad focus versions of all these sentences: that is, a translator of an English oral text should be able to interpret them as neutral, non-emphatic –the emphatic non-neutral versions being precisely those which receive the nucleus on the last lexical item: "The phone's *ringing*" (denoting impatience); "Keep your eyes *shut*" ("not open"); etc. Secondly, s/he must be aware of the linguistic divergence that may be shown by the target language in this regard. Thus, since the tendency in Spanish for the nucleus to fall at the end of the tone unit is very strong (García-Lecumberri, 1995: 173 & 181; Mott, 1991: 264-5), the neutral pattern of these constructions will be, for instance:

14) Dejó la puerta *abierta*.
    Mantén los ojos *cerrados*.
    etc.

The following example by Ortiz Lira (1999: 60) clearly illustrates the different behaviour between these two languages:

15) Put the *plates* to warm.
    Pon los platos a *calentar* / Pon a calentar los *platos*.

As was explained above, Spanish often resorts to syntactic focusing (e.g. inversion) in order to highlight the word which the speaker considers most newsworthy. Interestingly, event sentences in Spanish illustrate both the strong tendency in this language for the nuclear accent to fall in final position and the preference – which it shares with English in this case – for the subject of these sentences to receive the nucleus; this can only be made possible through subject-verb inversion, which is in fact the natural, unmarked, pattern of these utterances in Spanish:

16) ¡Han huido los *prisioneros*!
    Ya viene el *cartero*.
    Ha venido el *médico*.
    Suena el/Llaman al *teléfono*.

Both languages, then, seem to focus on the information provided by the nouns in this type of utterance, but whereas English signals this focus by moving the nucleus of intonation from its usually unmarked position, Spanish resorts to syntactic movement, by placing the grammatical subject in the position which enables it to receive the nuclear accent. This different behaviour can also be seen in the alternatives each language shows to syntactic focusing (achieved by means of the cleft sentence) for highlighting or expressing contrast. The English alternative to the cleft sentence – which receives the nucleus on the focused item- is to simply move the nucleus to the item we want to highlight and leave the basic syntactic pattern intact; this is in fact commoner than syntactic focusing. On the other hand, Spanish moves the item to final position so that it can receive the nucleus of intonation. Compare the alternatives in each language for this example of grammatical focusing taken from Ortiz Lira (1999: 70):

17) (-What a fabulous watch Peter gave you)
    -*Beautiful*. But it was *Paul* who gave it to me. / But *Paul* gave it to me.
    -*Precioso*. Pero fue Paul quien me lo *dio*. / Pero me lo dio *Paul*

2.5. Illocutionary force

The above is especially evident in the next pragmatic concept that we can relate English intonation to: the indication of illocutionary force in speech acts. This notion of Searle's and Austin's (which, together with the *propositional content* –or *locutionary act*– and the *perlocutionary force* –or *perlocutionary act*– make up a speech act [Bell, 1991: 174-178; Hatim & Mason, 1990: 59-62]) is the real driving force of communication since it contains the *speaker's intentions*, the *function* the speech act is intended to have, so it is also vital for translation. As the propositional content does not by itself indicate what the illocutionary force of a speech act is, there are several questions which a translator may ask him/herself here (Bell, 1991: 174): among them, "how do we make utterances count as particular speech acts?"; "how do we recognize what kind of a speech act a particular utterance is?" and "how are we to cope with the fact of differences in realization of 'the same' speech act from language to language?".

These questions all relate to intonation, for, among the various *illocutionary cues* –or linguistic and contextual indicators which convert the proposition into a speech act (Bell, 1991: 175 and Mateo Martínez, 1995-1996: 80, 82)–, we must count this suprasegmental feature of the language. Intonation guides the receiver to the interpretation intended by the speaker of an oral text. In fact, "in English, intonation is one of the most important focusing devices, probably not more important than elision and pronominalisation, but more frequent than clefting or fronting" (García-Lecumberri, 1995: 91). Notice the following examples (from Mott, 1991: 247), in which nuclear placement signals contrast:

18) It's not that *I* don't like it; *nobody* seems to like it.
Some days, we eat at *home*, but *other* days we eat *out*.
I don't love *you*; I love *him*; in *fact*, I *adore* him.

Besides, it is very common for illocutionary indeterminacy to be dissolved by prosodic features: nucleus placement and tones frequently function together as indicators of the most probable illocution intended by the speaker (Gutknecht & Rölle, 1996: 173-4). Compare (ibid, 169):

19) I may come tomorrow.
>> I ˇ*may* come tomorrow. ("it's a possibility")
>> I may come *to`morrow.* ("I'm free tomorrow" or "I'm allowed to")

Contrast and emphasis are indicated through narrow focus often in combination with particular tones:

20) -It was ˇ*my* idea. ("not yours") *vs* It ˇ*was* my idea. ("of course it was; why are you implying it wasn't?")

I'm going to the `*cinema*. (neutral meaning) *vs*

`*I'm* going to the cinema. ("you can do whatever you like; this is what I'll do")

The contrast may be of a grammatical nature, as when intonation distinguishes between sentence and non-sentence adverbials in English (unaccented as opposed to accented), or between the different values of *any*-words (unaccented in broad focus while accented in marked tonicity). Compare the following examples from Ortiz Lira (1999: 68, 69):

21) -John speaks ˇ*English* naturally. *vs* John speaks English `*naturally*.

-(You say that Alan is the only one who can solve my problem.)

Do you think you could `*talk* to him then? *vs*

-(I'm told that Alan will be in on Tuesday.)

Do you think you could talk to him `*then*?

-I don't think I'm *for*`*getting* anything. (neutral) *vs*

-How many times do I have to *tell* you! I'm not forgetting `*anything*! (impatient)

Spanish, on the other hand, behaves quite differently in most of these cases. There is general agreement (and García-Lecumberri's experiments seem to prove it) that "intonational focus is a more common mechanism in English than in Spanish" (García-Lecumberri, 1995: 334). Although focus can also be conveyed by nuclear displacement in Spanish (ibid, 332), as has already been illustrated this language usually shows preference for means such as adverbial particles, syntactic movement, emphatic pronouns, idiomatic phrasing, etc, to express marked focus –the nuclear accent normally falling in final position in all cases. Thus, the most natural and likely versions of the examples of contrast in 20) (in a similar context) would probably be:

22) -Fue idea *mía* (or: La idea fue *mía*) *vs* Claro/Sí que fue idea *mía*.

(Me) voy al *cine*. *vs* Yo voy al *cine* (or: "Al cine voy *yo*", depending on the degree of contrast)

Notice also that the distinction between sentence and non-sentence adverbials is usually established by a different syntactic position in this language (initial position for the former being the commonest); and that, since indefinites –both negative and non-negative– are always accented in Spanish, the marked version of the example in 21) would be signalled by means of an idiomatic particle denoting the impatience –initial

'que'– (together with a wider pitch range on *nada*, which would receive the nucleus in both cases anyway):

23) -Por supuesto/Naturalmente que John habla *inglés*. *vs* John habla inglés con *naturalidad*.

-Entonces, ¿podrías hablar con *él*? *vs* ¿Podrías hablar con él ese *día/entonces*?

-Me parece que no me olvido de *nada*/no me he olvidado *nada*. *vs* ¡Que no me he olvidado *nada*!

Deaccenting usually also intervenes in the conveyance of contrast in English. On the other hand, since this is not a common phonetic process in Spanish (see García-Lecumberri, 1995: 332, 336), this language tends to prefer elision of repeated items to make a contrast clearer (for the nucleus may fall on the element we are not contrasting). See the following example from Mott (1991: 236):

24) -Do you want a room *with* a bath, or *without* a bath?

-¿Quiere una habitación con *baño* o sin *baño*? OR: ¿Quiere una habitación con o sin *baño*?

As Mott notes, accenting the preposition and deaccenting the repeated item *baño* would be used for very special emphasis (not just for normal contrast) in Spanish, probably adding a note of impatience to the communicative exchange:

25) -Me ha dicho sin *baño*, ¿verdad?

-He dicho *con* baño.

Other features of intonation also play an important role in English as illocutionary cues; briefly:

-the division of speech into tone units to distinguish between types of clauses; e.g. defining *vs* non-defining relative clauses (Mott, 1991: 259):

26) |The ʻboys who were on the ʻburning ˇ*ship* | were ˋ*saved*|

|The ˇ*boys* | who were on the ʻburning ˇ*ship* | were ˋ*saved*|

-or to mark different relationships between clauses and phrases, which may imply different communicative values, as this example adapted from Tench (2011: 145) illustrates:

27) |The ʻgirl ʻcalled Mr. ʻHiggins a ˋ*gentleman*. |

|The ʻgirl ʻcalled Mr. ˋ*Higgins* | a ˋ*gentleman*. |

-or the essential role performed by tones as signallers of indirect speech acts, converting a statement into a question or an exclamation, making a question act as a request, etc (see Bell, 1991: 174-181). Notice the following examples (Mott, 1991: 260):

28) 'Wasn't it ˏ*funny* (question) / 'Wasn't it ˋ*funny* (exclamation)
A. You betrayed us. B. ˏ*I* did (question: "are you sure it was me?") *vs*
B. I ˋ*did*. (statement: "You are right".)

Moreover, pitch patterns help to regulate conversational behaviour, telling the hearer whether the speaker is questioning, challenging, advising, encouraging, being ironic, etc, or what kind of response is expected, as is the case with the tones of question tags –a rising tone will indicate that the speaker is requesting factual confirmation of his/her statement and a falling tone will be used for softening one's statement, inviting the listener to join in the exchange, etc.:

29) There are coming on ˋ*Tuesday*, ˏ*aren't* they?
It's a waste of ˋ*time*, ˋ*isn't* it?

There are also other pragmatic aspects of communication to which intonation contributes significantly: several intonation elements – such as deaccenting or certain tones, like the fall-rise – may work together with context to help the hearer recognize a *conversational implicature* intended by the speaker (see Baker, 1992: 227); deaccenting is also an important *presupposition* trigger, since it is applied by speakers on their judgements about what they share with receivers, i.e, about the *shared knowledge* – or "assumed familiarity" (as Hatim and Mason prefer to call it, 1990: 92) – of the communicative act, or to provoke or exert power over hearers, assigning presuppositional status to knowledge which is in fact unknown (Fawcett, 1997: 120); the link of narrow focus and deaccenting with the concept of pragmatic *relevance* is also quite obvious; and the influence of tones on the encoding of *politeness* is unquestionable. But there is no space here to analyse these aspects and I will devote the concluding section of this article to the application of the description presented above to translation.

3. Phonetics and pragmatics: some safe ground for successful translation

Is the information presented in the previous section actually relevant to Translation Studies or is it just an instance of contrastive analysis? If we consider "translation as an instance of verbal communication" – following the main link between our field and

pragmatics – (Rosales Sequeiros, 2006: 86) and if, as was seen above, intonation is at the centre of pragmatic meaning – showing what information is new and what is known, signalling how sequences cohere or contrast in spoken discourse, organizing speech into units which are easy to perform and to process, and indicating the illocutionary force of utterances, i.e. their communicative value – then, this suprasegmental element of language cannot be disregarded by those taking part in – or studying – a translation process in which an English oral text is involved, either at the source or at the target pole. My claim is that not only translation researchers and professional translators but also translation teachers would gain fresh and illuminating insights for their work by paying more attention to the role of prosodic features in oral communication.

As Rosales Sequeiro very rightly states (2006: 88), "research at the micro level allows us to understand and predict the potential problems faced by translators in the process of translation, and thus alert practitioners to possible solutions". Rosales is referring to the pragmatic study of certain discrepancies between the languages which helps us determine, for instance, "when direct translations are not possible" or "why certain discrepancies recur in translation" (2006: 88). Some of these discrepancies, at least between English and Spanish, may be accounted for because of the different functions performed by intonation, as was seen in the analyses in section 2.

The role attached to intonation for pragmatic value differs from language to language. While all languages have systems to indicate what is important or unimportant and to distinguish between "new" and "old", the mechanisms used to do so are many and varied (Knowles, 1998: 104). And speech acts are not universal at the level of illocutionary force (Bell, 1991: 183), let alone the means to convey it, since these are context- and language-specific. In an enlightening article, Hervey (1998) distinguishes between three categories of illocutionary cues and sentential markers, which each language seems to be oriented to when conveying illocutionary function: *illocutionary particles* (which seem to be preferred by, e.g., German), *intonation* (to which English is clearly oriented) and *sequential focus* – or word order – (which predominates over the other two categories in, e.g., Hungarian) (Hervey, 1998: 15-17).

The examples in section 2 have made clear that the mechanism through which English signals focus by moving the nucleus of intonation, and information structure through deaccenting (thus distinguishing between newness and givenness), is not parallelled in Spanish. Although tones are also used in Spanish to signal the relationship between clauses and phrases in a text, in much the same way as in English – e.g. falling tones indicating that a sentence is completed while rising tones informing that the speaker has not yet finished what s/he wants to say –, information structure is predominantly indicated in this language through cohesive particles and syntactic devices. According to this, and despite the fact that intonation can highlight words in

Spanish too – in combination with word order or alone – (García-Lecumberri, 1995: 185), this language would be placed along with German and Hungarian in Hervey's tendencies regarding illocutionary cues, since it seems to be both a *particle-oriented* and a *sequential-focus-oriented* language (1998: 16-7).

These tendencies should not be ignored in the study, the practice or the teaching of translation: on the one hand, because those different linguistic devices which languages use to endow a sentence with its illocutionary force are crucial for the correct interpretation of the source text, as they guide us to the pragmatic meaning (or communicative value) of the speech act; on the other hand, because resorting to the illocutionary cues commonly used by a particular target language is a necessary strategy to make our target text not simply a "correct" or "precise" one but, equally important, a *plausible* one, as Hervey rightly suggests (1998: 23), a feature which is particularly important in the reception of many target texts – in particular, audiovisual ones, which are today a frequent object of translation.

The translation may therefore imply using different means – from different linguistic areas – to turn sentences into speech acts, to signal focus or to achieve coherence in a text act. This is something which should be borne in mind in the decision-taking process of translation and emphasized in translation teaching, so that future translators are more sensitive to the resources afforded by the languages involved in the cross-cultural/linguistic process. I will here borrow and adapt Juliane House's (2001: 65) suggestion of applying a "cultural filter", based on contrastive pragmatic studies, to translation: on the same lines, cross-linguistic/pragmatic analyses focusing on intonation – like the one I attempted above – cast light on linguistic differences and diverging preferences for illocutionary cues, providing us with the basis for an "appropriatenes filter"; this will enable us to choose options that fall within the target language users' sense of what is textually and linguistically appropriate and which make a plausible target text, for an important demand "to be made for a translation is its basic pragmatic appropriateness" (House, 2001: 57).

Resorting to devices which are not typical of the target language will not only detract from the "plausibility" of our translation "as a 'normal' target language text" (Hervey, 1998: 23), but it may also have other undesired effects of pragmatic consequence. The translator may "eliminate certain interpretations of the original from the target text" or "even inadvertently give rise to other interpretations which are not derivable from the original text" (Baker, 1992: 228). The strategy may also lessen the naturalness of our translation, a property frequently required in oral texts, not just for stylistic reasons but because of the immediacy and complexity which normally characterize their reception. Not following the target receiver's linguistic expectations will also make the text less accessible to him/her, as Baker clearly explains: "Unless

motivated, a deviant configuration at any linguistic level (e.g. phonological, lexical, syntactic, textual) may block a participant's access to the conventional meaning of the words and structures used and can directly affect the coherence of a text" (Baker, 1992: 250). This, finally, also implies increasing processing cost on the part of the target receiver.

This has obvious implications for the practice of translation, for the evaluation of target texts – particularly in terms of their acceptability – and certainly for translation training. I will again borrow House's recommendations "on teaching translation pragmatically", when she claims:

> It is necessary to follow a cognitive approach to the teaching of translation. Even though translation is a practical skill, it can be better mastered with full cognitive awareness of, and comprehensive knowledge about, socio-cultural differences and similarities relevant for the translation of a text (House, 2001: 72).
>
> I would substitute "phonological" for "socio-cultural" in House's quotation for the purposes of this article. Raising students' (and our own) awareness of the functions of suprasegmental features in the different languages and teaching/ practising transfer skills which involve reflecting on possible problematic areas in this area and on the effects of the various means at our disposal in each language will provide them/us with more solid grounds for the choice of translation strategies. Sensibly, House also proposes incorporating "interactive introspection" in the classroom, in the form of thinking-aloud activities (2001: 73). She suggests this for the cross-cultural transfer problems studied in her article, but I also consider it vital for the type of issue tackled here, and not only in the case of translation teaching, but in the act of translating itself: thinking aloud, judging our choices orally, is essential whenever an oral text is involved at either end of our translation activity.

By studying the linguistic organization of languages and the rules that govern successful communication in them, we can more safely predict what the effects of our translations will be on the target receivers and avoid undesirable results like those suggested above. It will also enable us to devise strategies like those recommended by Hervey for the conveyance of illocutionary function, ensuring that our target texts "are not unnaturally devoid of properties considered stereotypical of the target language" (1998: 23): i.e. giving preference to illocutionary particles when translating into *particle-oriented* languages; to intonation when translating into, e.g., English; and to sequential focus when our target language is one like Hungarian. Becoming sensitive to the tendency prevailing in our target language should therefore be an important step towards successful translation.

Obviously, as Hervey himself suggests (1998: 23), these recommendations should only be taken as "a strategic approach to translation", applied in a reflective manner and with care, in order to avoid stereotypical excesses. In any case, since intonation is such an effective and common means of pragmatic value in English, it should be among the options and alternatives considered in translation to and from this language, not only in translation produced in the oral mode (e.g. interpretation or dubbing) but also when the process implies a change in the communication channel, as is often the case in AVT –e.g. subtitling, surtitling– or even when it involves the reception or production of texts in written form which are to be delivered or imagined as oral texts –e.g. drama scripts or dialogues in novels.

I hope to have shown the relation of intonation to translation, via its pragmatic function in communication. Knowles has stated that "the road to success for translators and interpreters must be to accord their highest priority to the resolution of all cruces appertaining to 'old' versus 'new'" (1998: 111); one of the vehicles driving us along that road should be suprasegmental phonetics, which intertwines not just with those two pragmatic concepts but with all the other aspects mentioned above. Moreover, the way prosodic features are exploited for communication is part of our expectations about the organization of language – which seem to be quite strong (Baker, 1992: 250). Keeping these in mind in the translation process will no doubt help us produce plausible, pragmatically efficient, and reliable, target texts. "Translations often differ from the original texts as a result of the communicative processes experienced by the translator during the interpretation of the original text and the rendering of his/her interpretation in the target text" (Rosales Sequeiros, 2006: 88). The varying roles attached to intonation are often at the heart of these discrepancies. Further exploration of phonetics and pragmatics should therefore prove revealing about the linguistic and pragmatic differences that translators/translation researchers are constantly faced with, while providing them – and translation teachers – with some safe ground for their choices/conclusions along their fascinating and complex path.

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