

Isabel García Izquierdo, ed. 2005: *El género textual y la traducción: Reflexiones teóricas y aplicaciones pedagógicas*. Bern: Peter Lang. 267 pp. ISBN: 3-03910-676-7

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The work here reviewed is a collection of twelve articles written by the team involved in the project GENTT (*Géneros textuales para la traducción*), financed by the *Ministerio de Ciencia y Tecnología*, which is being carried out at the *Universitat Jaume I* in Castellón. The authors, whose prime objective is to create a corpus of texts of various different genres (legal and administrative, medical and technical) in Spanish, Catalan, English and German, with a view to compiling an electronic encyclopedia, defend the importance of the concept of genre, not only in research in translation, but also in the teaching of the discipline and training of translators. Although the theory has aroused controversy and some scepticism (for example, D. Biber and E. Finnegan, in 'Uncovering Dimensions of Linguistic Variation in English: a Research Report' (1986), found that there were often greater differences within genres than across them), the research team have made genre the backbone of their work and maintain that it can play an eminently useful part in the elaboration of learning programmes and course design. To show that they do not stand alone in their positive evaluation of genre study, in their nine-page introduction the authors quote others of note, like Hurtado Albir and Hatim and Mason (10), who share similar views. Moreover, the editor herself, Isabel García Izquierdo, is not a newcomer to the field, having previously published such contributions as *Análisis textual aplicado a la traducción* (2000) and 'El género: plataforma de confluencia de nociones fundamentales en didáctica de la traducción' (2002), besides other joint efforts with members of her research team, and this theoretical approach has also received support from scholars such as Vigay K. Bhatia in 'Applied Genre Analysis: a Multiperspective Model' (2002) and John Swales in *Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings* (1990).

The compilation is divided into two blocks: the first ('Nuevos enfoques para viejos dilemas': 4 articles), starting from the idea that there is a need to define and classify different genres prior to their application in teaching programmes, deals with the theoretical problems presented by the implementation of the concept of genre in education, while the second ('Algunas aplicaciones pedagógicas': 8 articles) explains how the theory can be put into practice in the classroom and its utility in programme design.

In 'El género como espacio de socialización del estudiante de traducción científico-técnica', Vicent Montalt, reporting on his recent years of teaching experience, in which he coordinated group translation projects, emphasizes the need for translation students to familiarize themselves with the genre they are going to translate through consultation with other translators and the expert community. As he so rightly says, without this process of socialization and the concomitant acquisition of specialized knowledge, the translator will not produce a convincing final product. In the case of drama, for example, the play will not be suitable for performance on stage. However, the author does recognize the difficulty posed by the initiation of the student into this

environment, and questions to what extent the proposal is feasible in practice. After reminding us that there are certain genres that are harder to translate than others, Montalt enumerates a series of strategies for approaching specialists in the field to enlist their help.

In ‘Organización del conocimiento para la traducción jurídica a través de sistemas expertos basados en el concepto de género textual’, Ana Borja – having pointed out that law today is not a static discipline, but one which is in a constant state of flux in its struggle for improvement – discusses programmes for document management designed to generate clearly written text; this helps to alleviate the problems of the legal translator, who not only requires highly specialized knowledge but also needs to be able to provide solutions to very specific, narrowly contextualized problems. Inevitably, to their disadvantage, legal translators will always know more about translation technique than actual legal practice. Translators engaged in this work will never be experts in the law but, nevertheless, can accumulate a body of universal facts sufficient to aid them in their task. This latter opinion, however, is not accepted by all. The author ends by outlining the skills the translator should ideally command for the work proposed and provides an extensive bibliography. Unfortunately, as in some other articles in this collection, there is a lack of concrete exemplification to link the theoretical considerations to real situations.

The article ‘Reeducación y desculturación a través de géneros en traducción jurídica, económica y administrativa’ outlines the steps followed by the author, Esther Monzó, in introducing her students to the areas of translation referred to in the title. The methodology is practical (for example, the students translate certificates and letters), although one sometimes wonders whether such simple activities justify the rather florid style in which they are described: “... se llevan al aula situaciones que han aparecido ya en la socialización de los estudiantes ... De esta forma se intenta dar continuidad a las vivencias del estudiante etc...” (76).

The short article ‘La implementación del concepto de género textual en los corpus electrónicos para traductores’, by M<sup>a</sup> Amparo Alcina Caudet, points out the usefulness of corpora for the translator in that they provide concrete evidence of linguistic patterning, thus overriding the traditional intuitive, inevitably subjective, observations and assumptions of linguists. Computers are now also useful in classifying text genres and therefore of great use to the translator, who can limit searches to specific text types. One particular strength of this article is that section 8 provides windows of text management programmes like WordSmith and Workbench which demonstrate how information can be filtered through various on-screen options (106-110).

The second part of the volume (‘Algunas aplicaciones pedagógicas’) opens with an article by Isabel García Izquierdo, ‘El género y la propia lengua: el español de especialidad’, in which she quite rightly insists on the importance of a high degree of proficiency in the first language (*lengua propia*) as fundamental to the development of competence in translation, and claims that this necessary linguistic skill can be acquired through the analysis of different text genres, which display prototypical structures and distinctive macrostructures. Section 3 of the article is a useful report on a practical exercise undertaken by students who were given a file of material containing examples from various different genres whose phraseology and terminology they were required to analyse and construct a glossary from, among other tasks.

'La noción de género en la planificación de la docencia de la traducción de la primera lengua extranjera', by Pilar Ezpeleta Piorno, is an explanation of the importance of genre study in the training of translation teachers. The article lists areas where novice translators might benefit from genre analysis; however, it fails to get beyond *principios metodológicos* and the lack of exemplification leaves one wondering what the theory expounded might actually translate into in practice.

The following article, by Silvia Gamero Pérez, 'El género y la traducción de la segunda lengua extranjera: alemán', stands in stark contrast to the previous one through its much more practical bent. The author first explains how textual genre is exploited both in writing and reading (161):

Los hablantes de una lengua utilizan esquemas prediseñados que facilitan la elaboración de textos; de este modo, no tienen que crear un texto absolutamente nuevo cada vez que se enfrentan a una página en blanco. Por su parte, los lectores de los textos se apoyan durante su proceso de comprensión en los esquemas que tienen interiorizados; así, la comprensión es más rápida y más eficaz (161).

Then, having emphasized the fact that different textual types require different translation strategies (for example, footnotes and interpolated comments are not appropriate in children's stories), the author provides a very useful and detailed example of a translation class based on a set of assembly instructions in German. She lists a whole series of questions that might be asked in order to check understanding, including those concerning the contribution made by photographs to the comprehensibility of the instructions and regarding the characteristics of the kind of text under observation. As a development of the basic exercise, students are required to find three parallel texts on the web in a stipulated amount of time.

In the following contribution, 'La traducción transgénica en la clase de inversa', which is also of a highly practical nature, Steve Jennings reports that, if initially students hold the widespread view that there is no reason why translation into a foreign language (*inversa*) should be any more difficult than translation into the native one (*directa*), they soon come to realize just what a demanding assignment it is. However, *la inversa* does have advantages, too, notably the fact that the translator can understand the source text with relative ease. Furthermore, mastery of the native language is an aid in identifying points of contrast in the foreign language, the important areas of contrast between two languages being syntax, lexis and rhetoric.

The author recognizes the greater syntactic flexibility of Spanish as compared to English with its strict SVO sequencing. Whereas Spanish juggles more with word order to focus on different elements of the sentence, English resorts to strategies such as use of the passive or middle voice. The mobility of the nuclear stress in spoken English might also have been mentioned here as an important phenomenon to be taken into account in the translation of direct speech. Regarding lexical contrast, Jennings refers to the case of *false friends*, which may become less 'false' if adopted into the host language with one or more of their original meanings (Sp. *correr un programa* < Eng. *run a programme*; Sp. *error fatal* < Eng. *fatal error*) (179). With reference to the rhetorical differences between English and Spanish, the author mentions the tendency for Spanish texts to be longer than the corresponding English ones, the different placement of the key sentence of a

paragraph in the two languages, and the use of repetition as a cohesive device in English.

The third part of this article illustrates how to get students to transform a Spanish source text into various English texts of different genres (recipe, novel of fantasy, Powerpoint presentation). To provide a basis from which to work, the teacher is supposed to offer first of all a parodical translation of the original text in a computer-type language, rather like Javascript. For the novel of fantasy genre, the students are encouraged to use Germanic words like *behold*, *partake* and *summon*.

María Calzada Pérez's contribution, 'Vygotsky, Wordsmith y GENNT: corpus y herramientas electrónicas en la clase de traducción general', expounds Vygotsky's theory of the students' path to independence from their maestros, which, according to Vygotsky, takes place in four stages, and then attempts to show how this learning hypothesis can be seen to unfold in the practical context of students studying a medical subcorpus of GENNT with WordSmith Tools. Having first mentioned Skinner as one of the best known exponents of educational psychology in the twentieth century, Calzada then proposes that there are other experts in the field, e.g. Vygotsky, whose work is also brilliant, and presents a summary of Vygotsky's theory of the zone of proximal development (*zona de desarrollo próximo* or ZPD), citing Allan's definition of it as "the distance between this potential to perform a task independently and the learner's actual ability to do so" (189). The four stages through which the learner passes are: (i) heavy reliance on help from others (ii) greater self-confidence and more selective requests for help (iii) independence and abandonment of ZPD (iv) return to ZPD and renewed entreaties for assistance.

Two criticisms that could be levelled at this article are: (i) the tables showing that the commonest words in texts, even in the medical genre, are grammatical items (199, 200) might have been reduced to just a few examples in order to make the point less verbosely; (ii) the more appropriate lists of lexical collocations with the English noun *disorder* (203-4) are rather spoilt by several typographical errors, a fault which, unfortunately, mars other parts of the article, too.

Cristina García de Toro's short article entitled 'El género y la traducción de textos administrativos español-catalán' proposes a classification of administrative text types with a view to its use by translators rendering Castilian texts into Catalan. Her proposal, she claims, is more ambitious than preceding attempts. The main parameters for categorization are (1) the author (e.g. an appeal or application from a citizen, a notification from an authority) and (2) the function of the text (e.g. mandatory, granting permission, etc.).

The penultimate contribution is signed by three authors: Vicent Montalt, Pilar Ezpeleta and Cristina García de Toro. The article, 'El género textual: un concepto transversal e integrador en el diseño de asignaturas de traducción y lenguaje científico-técnicos', reports on the creation of an anthology of scientific and technical texts for use at the *Universitat Jaume I*. The project was part of a wider scheme to provide corpus materials aimed at improving the teaching and learning of translation skills in various languages. The authors underline the importance of a holistic view of education, in which curriculum planning is not conducted on a subject-by-subject basis, but integrates individual subjects so that materials can be shared and adapted to the needs of individual teachers and courses. Thus the students will learn more and better. To

achieve these aims, textual genre can play a significant role as an interface between different subjects, as far as the teaching and learning of translation is concerned. The second half of the article is taken up with questions of methodology and selection of materials.

The last article in this collection is 'Parámetros genológicos en la estructura y planificación de un curso de traducción especializada' by Andreu Beltran Zaragoza. It provides a detailed exposition of all the formal requirements for translating a medical text (linguistic competence, a methodical approach and the application of logic, etc.) and quite sensibly suggests that the process of comprehension by the students has finished when they are able to paraphrase the original. As sixty hours is obviously insufficient for a student of translation to achieve mastery of the field of medicine, the author asked his students to concentrate their efforts on the study of texts concerned with one specialization, urology. Although the bulk of the article is intelligent and to-the-point, it seems unnecessary to state that:

Toda traducción supone el desarrollo por parte de un individuo de un proceso mental que le permite efectuar la transferencia desde el texto original hasta la producción de un texto de llegada. Este proceso mental consiste, en lo esencial, en comprender el sentido que transmite un texto para luego reformularlo con los medios de otra lengua (263).

The volume of articles on the whole suggests useful translation strategies to the reader and provides much food for thought for translation teachers. However, some of the articles do not go beyond theory to praxis. Theoretical description should not be unaccompanied by the necessary exemplification and proof of successful practical application to support it and testify to its validity. Indeed, greater exemplification would make for more interesting, convincing reading. Moreover, there is a considerable amount of overlap in the articles, at least as regards objectives, which produces a feeling of déjà vu as one moves on from one contribution to another in the anthology. This repetition could have been avoided by more careful editorial planning, assigning the specific areas to be covered more rationally to the various authors.

Sometimes, one wonders just how successful the particular theories expounded can be without the essential foundation: high academic standards among the students (which cannot be universally guaranteed today and is giving increasing cause for concern among all teachers, especially those involved in the area of language). Nevertheless, if this initial and essential requirement is fulfilled, there is no doubt that much of the methodology outlined in this volume, which brings translation students into contact with authentic idiom generated by native speakers, cannot fail to improve the learners' linguistic skills and awareness.

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