7

Understanding Cross-Cultural Pragmatics Through Translation of Political Speeches and Audiovisual Material

Concepción B. Godev and Matthew Sykes

Introduction

Natural languages are useful communication tools, while at the same time they can betray interlocutors because of the imprecise nature of the linguistic code. Several philosophers have remarked on this fact. In the twelfth century, Pierre Abelard proposed that reality only exists in the speakers' minds (Guilfoy n.d.), and therefore a concept as routine as what is labeled as "chair," to refer to the object used for sitting, does not reside in the word "chair," but rather it is a concept that speakers construct in their minds after extracting the common features that can be observed in a variety of chairs.

The imprecise nature of language is what often makes it inevitable to settle for approximation in the target text, unless the text is mainly

C.B. Godev (✉)
University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Charlotte, NC, USA

M. Sykes
Independent Scholar, Juana Díaz, Puerto Rico

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technical. In fact, it is when a text needs to be rendered into another language that the vague nature of language becomes most apparent. Yet the imprecision of the linguistic code seems to be overlooked by student-translators, who usually are inclined to approach the translation task with the implicit assumption that interlingual translation consists only of rendering source-language words into target-language words, as if words were tight packages of meaning.

The very notion of word as a concept is in itself deceitful to student-translators. There are patterns built into natural languages whose saliency steers student-translators into perceiving languages as a repository of labels, each of them pointing to one and only one concept. Conversely, in the student-translators' intuitive perception of how meaning operates in a language, meaning is a discrete unit that exists as a substance, in an objective form and, as such, must have a matching label in a language. This perception is the root of frequent mistranslations.

The existence of monolingual and bilingual dictionaries reinforces the idea that meaning must necessarily be organized into words, and therefore meaning is a tangible unit that can simply be labeled with one word in order to be integrated into the semantic and lexical networks that make up a language.

Writing conventions additionally reinforce the notion of a word as a single-element component with a corresponding meaning. This bias can be verified when student-translators are faced with deciding how many words there are in expressions such as "how many" or "a lot," as a synonym with "greatly." Student-translators usually perceive "how many" and "a lot" as being made up of two words, even though the meaning of "how many" and "a lot" does not equal the sum total of the meaning associated with the individual components "how," "many," "a," and "lot." When they are probed to explain the rationale behind their perception, they often are unable to explain that the reason for their perception is not semantic but visual, the result of spelling conventions that could be changed and that do not rest on semantic logic.[1]

Bugarski (1993) has shown how speakers' perceptions of language units are markedly influenced by writing systems and how the variation of those perceptions matches the variety of ways in which languages are represented in writing. Another factor that further contributes to the

impression that meaning resides in words is that a sizable portion of the vocabulary in natural languages can be matched to real-life material items that can be perceived visually, thereby creating an expectation that meaning is packaged in words. While the hypothesis about universal ways of naming body parts, proposed in Andersen's (1978) work, has been convincingly proven inaccurate in Majid's (2010) work, the fact remains that for student-translators working between Western European languages (English, German, and Romance languages), the one-to-one correspondence of lexical items that label body parts and many other areas of reality that are perceived visually reinforces the perception that translation challenges are a simple matter of consulting dictionaries.

In what follows, we will address how having student-translators reflect on the interface between the natural language code and what lies outside the code, namely, the communication aspects that depend on cross-cultural pragmatics, may make student-translators more aware of the fact that meaning construction is context bound in more complex ways than they are used to thinking and that lexical items as well as larger language units, such as sentences, need to be regarded as prompts with meaning potential (Fauconnier and Turner 2003), as opposed to containers carrying tightly organized meaning. We will explain how Relevance Theory (Sperber and Wilson 1986) and Gutt's (1998) application of this theory to translation can contribute to student-translators' nuanced approach to translation and will illustrate how student-translators in a Master's level Spanish-English/English-Spanish translation course demonstrated their ability to apply the theory to their translation solutions when translating political speeches and subtitling audiovisual material.

Cross-Cultural Pragmatics

One key element of cross-cultural pragmatics that student-translators tend to overlook is the notion of cultural scripts, which are "tacit norms, values and practices widely shared, and widely known (on an intuitive level) in a given society" (Wierzbicka 2010, 43). These scripts include, but are not limited to, notions and expressions of formality and informality, modesty and immodesty, politeness and impoliteness, as well as

directness and indirectness. Different cultures have distinct scripts for various types of speech acts, such as complaints, requests, and apologies, to name a few. These differences have been analyzed by Clyne (1994), who has described how employees of various cultural backgrounds working at companies in Australia go about making complaints, requests, apologies, and small talk.

The way language is used by a particular group of people, in many ways, reflects the cultural values of that group. For example, English discourse patterns tend to reflect Anglo-Saxon cultural values such as independence and autonomy, and therefore tend to avoid the use of the bare imperative when making requests, thereby communicating respect for the addressee's freedom of choice; conversely, speakers of other languages such as Polish, for example, rely heavily on the use of the imperative to influence others while their directness is not perceived as rudeness (Wierzbicka 2003).

Cross-cultural pragmatic issues can be particularly tricky when it comes to film subtitling. Hatim and Mason (1997/2000), using Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory as a framework, show how markers of politeness evident in the source-text dialogue of a film do not always make it to the target-language subtitles. As a result, the target-language audience may be left with a different impression from that of the source-language audience (Hatim and Mason 2000). Following up on the work by Hatim and Mason, Guillot (2010) points out the capacity that subtitles have to alert foreign audiences to socio-linguistic elements of the source culture. Specifically, she discusses how subtitlers render source language shifts between the French *tu/vous* pronominal forms of address into target-language subtitles that reflect these relational shifts.

Moreover, differences also exist on the macro-textual level beyond languages favoring certain grammatical structures over others. For instance, when examining writing tendencies among speakers of English and German, Clyne (1994) found that English essays tend to be more linear in structure, while German academic texts feature a circuitous style. This difference in linearity reflects differences in cultural values concerning intellectual style.

All of these examples show how language and culture are intertwined. Therefore, the challenge for student-translators is to understand the

intricacies of this bond between language and culture so their understanding may guide their ability to imagine in what ways speakers from two different cultures would deliver the same message.

In the section that follows, we will discuss how Relevance Theory can serve as a framework for student-translators to gain insight into pragmatic aspects of natural language communication in general and the implications of cross-cultural pragmatics for the student-translator's task.

Relevance Theory as a Framework for Educating Student-Translators

As mentioned earlier, it is not unusual for student-translators to approach the translation task as if the lexicon that makes up a text were a collection of containers where meaning is tightly organized. Weber (2005) has remarked on this approach on the part of student-translators and he calls for a transformation of translation pedagogy such that the inferential nature of communication through natural language becomes more salient in the dynamics of teaching. Using Sperber and Wilson's (1986) Relevance Theory as a framework for translation is one way to achieve this, as it accounts for this inferential nature of communication.

Natural language communication is riddled with pragmatic elements that are just hinted at in the micro- or macro-level in the language code. The subtle role of these elements can be appreciated in one's native language when they lead to misunderstandings or communication breakdowns, but these pragmatic elements pose even more of a challenge when communicating across different language codes.

According to Sperber and Wilson (1986), successful communication is the result of "achieving the greatest possible cognitive effect for the smallest possible cognitive effort" (vii). In this case, cognitive effect refers to comprehension of the speaker's intended message, while cognitive effort involves all of the cognitive processes taking place in the listener's mind during the decoding and inferencing stages. Rather than explicitly stating the entire message that the speaker wants the listener to understand, the speaker uses natural language as a sort of linguistic shorthand to provide

an ostensive stimulus (clue) for the listener. The listener then decodes the stimulus and makes an inference as to the speaker's intended meaning based upon the context. The success of communication often depends on how well speakers package the message they are intending to convey. The idea is that speakers provide a good enough clue so that listeners can easily understand what speakers are trying to communicate, given the context. It is important to note that all of this is predicated on the Principle of Relevance, which states that the speaker's message carries in itself the presumption that it is worth the cognitive processing effort on the part of the listener. In other words, before beginning to decode the stimulus, the listener assumes that the message will be worth processing, that is, that the message will be relevant. As soon as listeners arrive at a suitable meaning that makes sense based on the context, they will stop expending cognitive effort. Next, let us examine how this applies to translation.

Ernst-August Gutt (1998) was the first to apply Relevance Theory to the field of translation. He begins by distinguishing between the descriptive and interpretive uses of language: "A language utterance is said to be used descriptively when it is intended to be taken as a true state of affairs in some possible world. An utterance is said to be used interpretively when it is intended to represent what someone said or thought" (44). He goes on to give the following example:

(a) Melody: Fred and Judy have got a divorce.
(b) Melody: Harry said, "Fred and Judy have got a divorce." (44)

In (a), we have an example of the descriptive use of language; Melody is presenting her statement to describe a true set of events. In (b), we have an example of the interpretive use of language; Melody is not necessarily saying that it is true that Fred and Judy have divorced, but rather is restating what she heard from Harry. According to Gutt, translation falls under the interpretive use of language, and therefore a translation should interpretively resemble the source text in all relevant aspects. This means that the translation may end up looking quite similar to or different than the source text, depending on how the translator assesses the needs of the audience in relation to the parameters provided by the initiator of the translation project.

Additionally, Gutt addresses contextual issues in translation. He says, "by translating a text for a target audience with a cultural background other than that envisioned by the original writer, the translator is, in effect, quoting the original author 'out of context'" (49). When contextual issues arise, rather than completely adapting the target text to suit the target culture's context, he suggests that the translator can increase relevance by providing background information for the reader. Similarly, Weber (2005) suggests that Relevance Theory allows students to think outside of the text itself when it comes to communication problems. When communication failures arise, Relevance Theory "motivates the translator to ask, Does the problem lie in the text itself or in what the reader brings—or fails to bring—to bear on its interpretation?" (70).

Relevance Theory articulates the roles and interactions among the elements of natural language communication in ways that can prove useful in translation pedagogy. Understanding the inner workings of natural language communication enhances the student-translators' ability to visualize or imagine the contextual effects of their translation on their target audience. It does not matter if a student is translating an instruction manual, a website, a political speech, or subtitling audiovisual material; by keeping in mind the notion of relevance for the target audience, student-translators may be able to carry out their task more effectively.

Continuum Between Audiovisual Texts, Political Speeches, and Literary Texts

One consideration that guided the decision to have students translate political speeches and audiovisual material[2] in the course described below was that these types of texts present many opportunities to observe the interplay between the linguistic code and pragmatics, and therefore students could use these opportunities to consider how this interplay affected their translation decisions.

Another advantage to audiovisual scripts and political speeches is that they usually generate a high level of interest among the students.

Audiovisual scripts include familiar genres that students find easy to relate to at an affective level. In the case of political speeches, the close-to-reality quality of the genre appeals to students' interest. The students also welcome the opportunity to tackle the translation of genres that are seldom integrated in translation curricula. On the one hand, the conspicuous absence of audiovisual translation, which Díaz-Cintas (2004) noted over ten years ago, continues to be the reality of many translation programs. On the other hand, the translation of political speeches as a pedagogical approach to translation is not mentioned in translation curriculum research, yet the translation of political discourse is among the fastest-growing fields (Bassnett 2014). Again, in this case, the course offered a unique opportunity for students to experiment with texts that exposed them to new challenges.

Translating audiovisual material and political speeches also made it possible for students to observe the connection between the experience of translating literary texts and these other genres. Indeed, they came across challenges that they perceived as similar to the ones they had encountered when carrying out literary translation. This intuitive perception of continuity between these three types of texts is grounded in the fact that in these types of texts, student-translators often have to work at constructing the message in situations when the linguistic code merely provides a few clues that hint at the intended message. In the continuum of text types, audiovisual translation and political speeches are closer to literary texts than is apparent at first glance. This is because of their poetic nature, which renders them as texts that place a heavy cognitive demand on translators, as they first have to process the message by creating in their imagination a plausible scene that can guide their interpretation of the source text, and then their rendition of their interpretation in the target text. These texts are also intentional in creating syntactical, phonetic, and semantic patterns whose purpose is to draw the attention of the audience. The presence of the poetic function in public speaking has been thoroughly researched by Clark (2009). He makes compelling arguments to show many parallels that can be drawn between prosodic, syntactical, and semantic patterns used in Old English oral poetic tradition and public language to the point that he considers public language "a species of poetry" (105).

The Translation Course

The translations cited below were authored by eight graduate students enrolled in the second year of their Spanish M.A. program at UNC Charlotte. The course was one of the graduate-level workshop courses offered to students in the translation concentration of the Spanish M.A. program. The focus of this course is flexible from semester to semester, as many different text types and approaches to translation can be included under the general name "Workshop on Literary and Cultural Topics," which allows instructors to structure the workshop by focusing on themes and translation tasks of their choice. When this semester-long course was taught in 2013, the chosen approach was to work in class on the Spanish-English and English-Spanish translation of literary prose, political speeches, and audiovisual material while having Relevance Theory, and specifically Gutt's application of Relevance Theory to translation, as the main framework that guided the student-translators' reflections on the translation process.

The Final Translation Project[3]

For the final project, students could use one of the following four options: (1) Translating a political speech, (2) Translating a literary text, (3) Translating audiovisual material, and (4) Writing a critical comparison between a source literary or audiovisual text and its corresponding target text. The samples included below come from students who chose options 1, 3, and 4. The source text of each of these semester-long projects included some 2000 words. The instructor reviewed a draft of the projects mid-semester, at which point the students had completed about 50 percent of the work.

The students could choose between authoring the project alone or working with a co-author. If they worked with a co-author, their project could include two types of text, for instance, half of the project could consist of translating a political speech and the other half could focus on translating audiovisual material. Students had the choice of translating from English into Spanish or vice versa.

Students translated speeches by Fidel Castro, Francisco Franco, Salvador Allende, and Hugo Chávez, and audiovisual material that included the script of documentary *La casa de todos los libros*, about the National Library in Madrid, and the screenplays of the TV series *Sons of Anarchy*. One student analyzed the source and target text of TV series *Downton Abbey*.

One requirement of the final project was that the students had to document how they made their translation decisions and how these decisions were informed by the theory discussed in class. They documented their translation process by footnoting the target text. Throughout the semester, the students were exposed to procedures on how to reflect on their translation process through four venues: (1) In-class discussion of Gutt's work, (2) In-class discussion of in-class translations, (3) Review of sample reflections produced by student-translators from previous courses, and (4) Mid-term comments from their instructor on a draft of their semester-long translation project.

Student-Translator's Reflections

One central goal to the dynamics of translation courses is for student-translators to hone their translation proficiency by having them carry out actual translations of real texts. But it is equally important to have these translators-in-training reflect on theory that may be useful to inform their translation process, even in cases when a student-translator's intuition may be exceptionally good. The ability to reflect on the translation process and to explain or describe this process endows translators with additional control over the resulting target text, as the translator is able to question, analyze and consider the merits of different translation solutions. In what follows, we describe and illustrate with samples how student-translators in a Master's level translation course reflected on their translation process and the results that they achieved. These samples were chosen because they clearly showcase how student-translators can learn to blend theory and practice if a course is structured so that they are guided through the process of theory-informed translating.

Tables 7.1–7.7 feature sample translations by student-translators and their reflections on the translation process. The samples show the lines in

the source text flagged by numbers preceded by the letter "L," which stands for "line." This line flagging is mapped onto the target text in order to facilitate the discussion of the texts whether in or outside of class. The superscripted numbers in the target text point to the original footnotes, as numbered in the projects, where the students describe their thinking and decision process about translation solutions.

1. *Content analysis of Table 7.1*

The translation solution for "Comandante en jefe" goes through two stages. The first stage is informed by drawing exclusively on the code, without considering other aspects involved in natural language communication. At a later stage, the student-translator considers the cognitive environment of the potential reader, imagining that this is a reader raised in the USA, and realizes that "Commander in Chief" will require an unnecessary amount of cognitive effort to process compared to the term "President." Therefore, the student decides to adopt the term "President."

Table 7.1 Translation of Fidel Castro's speech segment and student's reflection

Source text	Target text
[L1] Reflexiones del Comandante en Jefe	**[L1–2]** The Cuban **President**[a]'s Reflection on the US Republican Candidate
[L2] El candidato republicano	
[L3] (Primera Parte)	**[L3]** (Part one)
[L4] Estas reflexiones se explican por sí mismas.	**[L4]** These reflections are self-explanatory.
[L5–8] En el ya famoso supermartes, un día de la semana en que numerosos Estados de la Unión … (Castro)	**[L5–8]** On the already famous Super Tuesday, the day when numerous states … (Student A 2013)

[a]*Student-translator's reflection*: I chose to change "comandante en jefe" from "commander in chief" to "president." In Schäffner's (1997) "Strategies of Translating Political Texts," she states that since the target text is for a different culture, it is okay to change terminology to what the target culture more frequently uses. Although in the context of the United States our president is also our commander in chief, we most commonly refer to him/her as president. The translation solution is in line with the notion of minimizing cognitive effort on the part of the target reader. Minimizing cognitive or processing effort is one of the features identified in Relevance Theory as crucial for effective communication (Gutt 2014). (Student A 2013)

2. *Content analysis of Table 7.2*

The student-translator considers two solutions, namely "Latin American" and "Hispanic American." She reflects on how her own cognitive environment may color the target text in a way that was not intended by the author of the source text. Consequently, she takes into consideration the possible motives of the source-text author to use "Hispanoamericanos" and decides to adopt a term that will require more processing effort for readers raised in the USA. But she finds this effort justified in order to keep the author's implicit intent of conveying a connection between Spain and its former colonies in the American continent.

This student-translator also reflects on Gutt's advice that translators may have to accompany their translations with an explanation about translation decisions in order to elicit the contextual effects intended by the translator.

Table 7.2 Translation of Francisco Franco's speech segment and student's reflection

Source text	Target text
[L25] Entrañables Relaciones con los Países Hispanoamericanos y Portugal (Franco)	**[L25]** Close Relations with **Hispanic American**[a] Countries and Portugal (Student B 2013)

[a]*Student-translator's reflection*: I chose to keep the term "Hispanic American" instead of "Latin American" because of Franco's beliefs. Though "Latin American" is the politically correct term in America, it would be putting the ideology in which I was raised in the translation. By using "Hispanic" I am keeping with Franco's strong belief that Spain is the mother country of "castellano" and all Spanish-speaking countries. This decision is based on the theory of Critical Discourse Analysis, which puts an emphasis on connecting texts with historical contexts and ideologies. Here I'm trying to reconstruct the original intended meaning by taking into account the power relations and historical background of the Franco dictatorship. By referencing reasons of historical context for my translation solution, I'm following Gutt (2014), who points out that "the practice of translators to explain their 'translation principles' in a foreword makes good sense in our relevance-theoretic framework and could probably be used more widely to make translations successful" (193). I'm also realizing that the Relevance Theory principle of processing effort (106) holds true in my translation solution, even if apparently it may seem otherwise, because the effort of processing "Hispanic American" is the minimal effort necessary on the part of the readers so the intended contextual meaning is elicited in their minds. (Student B 2013)

3. *Content analysis of Table 7.3*

The reflection on omitting or keeping the term "comrade" ponders on contextual effects that may or may not be lost depending on what solution is adopted. This reflection demonstrates awareness of how translators' own bias, which is part of anybody's cognitive environment, may have unintended consequences for the target reader.

4. *Content analysis of Table 7.4*

These student-translators' reflection provides insight on their awareness that meaning is often just hinted by the language code. They are uncertain about whether or not explicitation may be needed in order to elicit the contextual effects that may lead the target reader to the intended meaning.

5. *Content analysis of Table 7.5*

This student-translator had the task of subtitling a documentary. This type of translation job is only possible by selecting the essential meaning

Table 7.3 Translation of Salvador Allende's speech segment and student's reflection

Source text	Target text
[L53] Lo he dicho: Mi único anhelo es ser para ustedes el compañero presidente. (Allende)	**[L53]** I have said it before: My only wish is to be your **comrade president**.[a] (Students C and D 2013)

[a] *Student-translator's reflection*: Originally, it was decided to either foreignize the phrase "compañero presidente" or somehow ignore the notion of "comrade" because of the negative connotation this word has for a large group of Americans. However, after some debate and some reflection on Munday's (2007) "Translation and Ideology: A Textual Approach," it was decided that ignoring the socialist rhetoric found in the source text would not help the target reader to reconstruct what Allende meant to convey and would reflect personal bias on the part of the translator. Also, the target audience is assumed to be familiar with Chilean politics and history, and therefore should already be familiar with Allende's ideology. (Students C and D 2013)

Table 7.4 Translation of Hugo Chávez's speech segment and student's reflection

Source text	Target text
[L 56] El Caribe, los pueblos de nuestra América, ganaron con la victoria del pueblo venezolano. (Chávez)	**[L 56]** The Caribbean and all the people of our Latin America won with the **victory of the Venezuelan people**[a]. (Students F and G 2013)

[a]*Student-translator's reflection*: In light of Gutt's (2014) notion of translation as "interlingual interpretive use" (105) and that of "resemblance" between the source and target text, we hesitated about whether or not explicitation was warranted to convey the intentions of the speaker in using the phrase "victory of the Venezuelan people." We understood the speaker's intent to equate "victory of the Venezuelan people" with the notion of victory of socialist ideals. In considering the cognitive effects on readers of the translation, we wondered whether their cognitive environment could help them infer the intended implicit meaning or whether this inference was even important for the target reader. (Students F and G 2013)

Table 7.5 Translation of documentary *La casa de todos los libros* and student's reflection

Source text	Target text
[L10] […] pero en sus depósitos hay casi treinta millones de documentos	**[L10]** […] but it has about 30 million documents[a]. (Student H 2013)

[a]*Student-translator's reflection*: The main purpose of subtitling a documentary is to ensure that "the audience will receive the essential facts with aesthetic concerns being of lesser importance" (Pettit 2004, 37). As it was discussed in class in reference to Gutt's (2014) application of Sperber and Wilson's (1986) Relevance Theory to translation, the communicative situation provides the hints so that I, as a translator, weigh the level of resemblance that is necessary or affordable for communication with the viewer to be successful (Gutt 2014, 233). In L10, I omitted the notion "en sus depósitos," literally "in its collection" because I considered that its omission did not risk losing any essential information, as the general context made it evident that the documents referred to were those kept in the library's collection. (Student H 2013)

units because the linear dynamics of reading on a motion-screen imposes limits on the amount of text that can be displayed on a subtitle. On average, subtitles need to show a maximum of some 64 characters split in two lines of 32 characters each and are displayed for six seconds (Wissmath et al. 2009, 115). The student-translator's reflection indicates she is aware that the quality of her translation depends on her ability to select only the details that are the most contextually relevant.

6. *Content analysis of Table 7.6*

These student-translators' projects consisted of subtitling an excerpt from a TV series, whose script was highly colloquial, into Spanish. The student-translators' awareness of the source text's colloquial style guided their intuition to detect that "This is about business" was possibly too colloquial a phrase to work in Spanish when translating it literally, a remarkable observation given that these students were translating into their second language and the phrase was not used in a metaphorical way. These student-translators demonstrate that they are keeping track of the target reader's cognitive environment and the negative impact of a code-driven translation on that environment. Their reflection's reference to cognitive effort illustrates their awareness that a good translation is one that gets the message across without undue strain on the part of the reader or listener.

7. *Content analysis of Table 7.7*

For her project, this student-translator analyzed the Spanish subtitles generated by translation software. She reflects on how, for the time being, machine-translators cannot understand metaphor because they lack the ability to both imagine contexts and connect them. The machine-translator can only do a code-driven translation. So, anything that is not coded, that is, anything that the machine-translator has to infer, is lost in its translation.

Table 7.6 Translation of TV series *Sons of Anarchy* and student's reflection

Source text	Target text
[L 254] This is about business, old man.	**[L 254]** Lo que me importa es el negocio[a], viejo. (Students I and J 2013)

[a]*Student-translator's reflection*: A translation closely following the source text would be something along the lines of "Esto se trata de los negocios." But this phrasing, although grammatically and lexically correct, requires more effort to process than the chosen solution, which is more frequent in Spanish to convey the targeted idea. The translators' choice was guided by the principle of relevance tenet that an optimal condition for communication to occur implies minimizing cognitive effort on the part of the target reader (Gutt 2014, 122). (Students I and J 2013)

Table 7.7 Translation of TV series *Downton Abbey* and student's reflection

Source text	Target text
She may be my aunt, but she is a **dark horse**.	Ella es mi tía, pero es un **caballo oscuro**[a]. (Student K 2013)

[a]*Student-translator's reflection*: The segment "caballo oscuro," instead of "misterio," illustrates the limitations of machine translation once meaning goes beyond the most literal sense of a language. Machine-translators lack the ability to understand the pragmatics of metaphor and its variability across languages. This is a matter that Gutt (2014) frames within Relevance Theory by explaining that such examples of miscommunications are the result of "a mismatch in context: a given utterance is interpreted against a context different from the one intended by the communicator" (77). (Student K 2013)

The sample reflections discussed above show that the student-translators were able to: (1) Explain their decisions, (2) Show awareness of why a code-driven translation often does not work, (3) Demonstrate pragmatic awareness of how the target audience's interpretation of the message is contingent upon their cognitive context and cognitive effort, and (4) Integrate the literature pertinent to the students' projects. On average students made 20–35 such reflections in their final projects. These reflections showed both that they understood how pragmatics works in natural language communication and how the role of pragmatics impacts the translation process.

Conclusion

Weber (2005) points out that student-translators are often exposed to text-type taxonomies, translation techniques, discussions of semantics, morphology and syntax, but seldom are these students engaged in systematic discussions of the role of pragmatics in natural language communication. The student-translators' projects whose samples have been discussed here were the result of a course that emphasized an understanding of both how natural language communication works and the key role that pragmatics plays in natural language communication in general, and in interlanguage communication, specifically. The course emphasis on approaching translation as a communication puzzle whose solution lies beyond any particular technique shaped how students reflected on their translation solutions.

The translations and the student-translators' reflections shown above drew on Gutt's (1998) application of Relevance Theory to translation, a theory that emphasizes the notion that interlingual communication may be best understood in terms of the principles that operate in natural language communication, irrespective of any specific language. These reflections contribute to enriching the discussion on how Gutt's ideas shed light on translation theory and pedagogy. Contrary to Malmkjær's (1992) evaluation of Gutt's proposal as a theoretical approach that can offer little in terms of practical value, the students' insight into the translation process was guided by Gutt's application of Relevance Theory to translation as a communication event. The value of Gutt's ideas lies in the fact that the student-translators enrolled in the course were able to appreciate how a good translation depends on having insight into the principles of successful interlingual communication in general, regardless of the translation technique or approach chosen, to carry out that task of communicating with the target audience.

In addition to thinking about translation solutions from the perspective of a communication event, the course also provided the opportunity to experiment with translating text types such as political and audiovisual texts, which are seldom represented in translation curricula in the USA. These texts proved valuable not only for the high level of interest that they generated, but also because they lend themselves to the observation of the role of pragmatics. Additionally, they can potentially serve as a bridge into literary translation, which student-translators usually find challenging, in part because of their lack of understanding of the role of pragmatics in the interaction between literary texts and their readership.

Notes

1. The authors recognize the cognitive advantage associated with linking single-words to concepts/objects, especially from the perspective of operating within only one language as opposed to between languages. However, when working across languages, student-translators' bias of looking for meaning within single-word boundaries is often a disadvantage.

2. The audiovisual material discussed in this course comprised feature films, television series, and a documentary.
3. Readers may contact the authors at cgodev@uncc.edu to request final project instructions or any other type of course material, or to send inquiries.

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Concepción B. Godev (Ph.D., The Pennsylvania State University) teaches courses in translation studies and Spanish linguistics at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. She has taught graduate courses on translation of political discourse, subtitling, and pragmatics. Her research focuses on pedagogical aspects of translation and second-language acquisition.

Matthew Sykes (M.A., University of North Carolina at Charlotte) is a former Spanish post-graduate fellow at UNC Charlotte. He is now an independent scholar and currently serves as the Mission Adventure Teams Director at Camp Caribe in Juana Diaz, Puerto Rico. His research interests include Spanish linguistics, translation, and second-language acquisition.