

Zimányi, K. (2017). Student perceptions of an elective introductory translation course on teacher training degrees at a public university in Central Mexico. *Current Trends in Translation Teaching and Learning E*, 4, 152–197.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF AN ELECTIVE INTRODUCTORY TRANSLATION COURSE ON TEACHER TRAINING DEGREES AT A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY IN CENTRAL MEXICO

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Abstract

The Department of Languages at the Universidad de Guanajuato in Central Mexico offers two undergraduate teacher training degree courses: Spanish as a second language and English as a foreign language. Both degrees have an elective translation course on their curriculum, which were offered in parallel for the first time in spring 2016. Although the two classes are obviously posited in the same context, that of an increasing interest in learning translation among the students as well as an upsurge in demand in translation due to the economic growth in the region, the students are quite different. Through the examination of needs analyses, self-assessment questionnaires and course evaluation surveys, this exploratory study reveals that the student profiles have a noticeable influence on the students' perception of their potential future as translators as well as the course itself. Consequently, the findings suggest that, rather than repeating the same course for the two degree programs, perhaps there should be a differentiation in syllabus design between the two programs.

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Key words: Student perceptions, Language teacher training, Elective translation course, Mexico.

1. INTRODUCTION

The variables that influence career choice are many, although personality and skills may predispose the individual toward certain professions. Knowledge of more than one language at least to some extent is certainly one of the competences that may prompt someone to work in the area of language teaching and / or translation, often with little or no prior experience and even more deficient training. While there is no doubt that there is innate aptitude (Harris, 1973, 1978; Harris & Sherwood, 1978, Toury, 1986), expertise acquired on-the-job and autonomous learning accounts for a good portion of the necessary know-how, and a series of competences are best developed in educational programs.

Such accredited courses are relatively easy to design in the case of languages of high diffusion, of official status or of high demand in a particular context. The difficulty arises when there is sudden or sporadic demand for languages of lesser diffusion and the educational system is unable to cater to the needs of market or the potential student candidates (Balogh, K., Salaets, H., & Van Schoor, 2016; Branchadell & West, 2004; Ozolins, 2000). This scenario is more common than we would like to accept: the current migrant and refugee crises is only one

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example, but one could think of less drastic, and perhaps, therefore, less visible, situations.

The enlargement of the EU was a case in example (Bhatia, 2011; Stephanou, 2006; Wagner, Bech & Martínez, 2002). Just over a decade ago, neither the central institutions (including the European Commission, the European Council and the European Parliament), nor the then Member States (especially Ireland and the United Kingdom who imposed no restrictions on the free movement of citizens of the accession countries) were prepared in terms of the emerging linguistic needs. This was a rather opportune moment for people with a certain profile to rise to the challenge and offer their services as translators, professionals, as they often identified themselves. They were young graduates often with a degree in English previously obtained in their home country that frequently included a semester-long course in translation – but rarely with a qualification in translation or translation studies.

Unsurprisingly, later some of these people have sought out educational opportunities, trained as translators and are among the most sought-after professionals in their respective jurisdictions. They are the ones who realised that training and professional development is necessary, that there are competences (Hurtado Albir, 2017; Neubert, 2000; PACTE, 2000, 2003, 2015, 2017; Prisas, 2000; Schäffner, 2004) beyond the knowledge of two languages that are essential to become a translator and that training

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involves more than a single introductory module to translation.

The objective of the course described in this article, although taught in very different circumstances on another continent, was to help students understand whether they were interested in pursuing further studies in translation on the one hand, or realise if their initial curiosity was already satisfied by this brief introduction and they were not willing or ready to consider translation more seriously (Keith, & Mason, 1987; Kelly, 2005; Kiraly, 2000; Malmkjær, 1998, 2004). The following sections will provide an overview of the context, followed by a brief discussion of the available reports on perception studies in teaching translation. Then the analysis of student perceptions primarily based on questionnaires will lead to some tentative conclusions and considerations for future syllabus and curriculum design.

2. THE CONTEXT

The translation course in question is offered at the BA in Teaching English (Licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Inglés, or LEI) and BA in Teaching Spanish as a Second Language (Licenciatura en Enseñanza de Español como Segunda Lengua, or LEES) degree courses at the Department of Languages of the University of Guanajuato, Mexico. As their name suggest, the two degrees at this public university focus on preparing the students to become language teachers, and the translation

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course is one of the electives along with, for example, courses in teaching young learners or reflexive practice.

Course design

The official title of the course is “Introduction to translation techniques and strategies”, although, due to the concerns explained in the introduction, a slightly different approach was contemplated with the following two main objectives:

- To give an insight into how broad translation is and move away from the text-to-text conceptualization of translation;
- To help students identify if translation is an activity they would potentially like to pursue.

Given the nature of the degree programs, the application of translation in the language classroom also had to be incorporated into the syllabus (Dollerup & Appel, 1995; Dollerup & Loddegaard, 1992, 1993; Hung, 2002; Malmkjær, 1998), that was otherwise inspired by translation training books and manuals (Hatim & Mason, 2004; Hervey, Higgins, & Haywood, 1995; López Guix & Minett, 2003; Newmark, 2003). Thus, the final list of topics is included below in Table 1.

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INTRODUCTION	TRANSLATION IN CONTEXT
Introduction I – What is translation?	Commercial & financial translation
Introduction II – Interpreting issues	Legal and political translation
BASIC CONCEPTS	Medical translation
A world of words	Scientific and technical translation
Can computers help?	Literary translation
Consider the audience	Localisation
Figuratively writing	Screen translation
THEORY VS APPLICATION	Revision and editing
A little bit of theory	
Translation in the language classroom	

Table 1. The course topics

Over the last eight years, the course has mostly been offered on the English teaching (LEI) but not on the Spanish teaching (LEES) degree. During the spring semester in 2016, it was offered on both courses for the first time, which provided an opportunity for the comparison of perceptions across the two student populations.

Student profiles

The LEES (Spanish teaching course) students are generally younger, often apply to complete their degree graduating from high school at around the age of 18-19. They study full-time, their classes are spread out over the week from Monday to Friday and they have little teaching or any other work experience. Although they are required

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to learn another language to B2 level in order to receive their diploma, there are only a few who have lived abroad and are fluent in English, the most commonly spoken foreign language in Mexico.

However, it is worth mentioning that with the industrial expansion in the area and due to an upsurge in the availability of East Asian (sub)cultural products, a growing number of students are now learning other languages, including Japanese and Korean. Their interest in translation often lies in fansubbing (Díaz Cintas & Muñoz Sánchez, 2006; O'Hagan, 2008; Pérez González, 2006) or scanlation (Valero-Porras & Cassany, 2015) and in this particular group, they had the opportunity to share the class with a South-Korean classmate who was enrolled in the BA as well as three Chinese and one French exchange students.

In comparison, as the LEI (English teaching course) was originally conceived as an in-service professional development course with already practising teachers in mind, traditionally, it attracts a wider range in terms of age. For the same reason, although this is also a full-time course with the same workload, the classes are normally taught on Fridays and Saturdays, which obviously results in higher levels of fatigue. A sizeable proportion of these students have lived in the US, they often have experience of both school systems and benefit from their knowledge of English on the job market. They see translation as a

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practical way of earning a living (Gouadec, 2007), perhaps complementary to their teaching job.

Needs analysis

Apart from our general knowledge of the students, the profile was confirmed by the results of a needs analysis carried out at the beginning of the semester. Bearing in mind the context where Spanish is the official and de facto first language and English is the most sought after foreign language, as well as the limitations of the teacher (who was unprepared to give classes in other language pairs in this context), the first question aimed to gain understanding of the students' level of written English where the following options were offered:

I can get by in everyday situations but don't feel confident in a more formal environment. (informal)

I can read anything related to my field but don't feel confident outside my area. (own field)

I can read anything, but I don't feel confident speaking or presenting my work in writing in English. (good reader)

I can read anything and speak fluently but I don't feel confident writing in English. (weak writer)

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I can read and write very well in English, but I don't feel confident speaking before an audience. (no public speaking)

I can communicate in any situation including a professional environment. (proficient)

A quick comparison of the two groups regarding their levels of English, as displayed in Figure 1., reveals that, according to their self-evaluation, out of the twelve students who answered in LEES, almost half only speaks “informal” English, a third feel they are not good writers even if they can read in English and only a quarter feel proficient. In contrast, none of the twelve respondents in LEI classified themselves in the two bottom groups and they evenly divided between good readers but weak writers and proficient written language users.

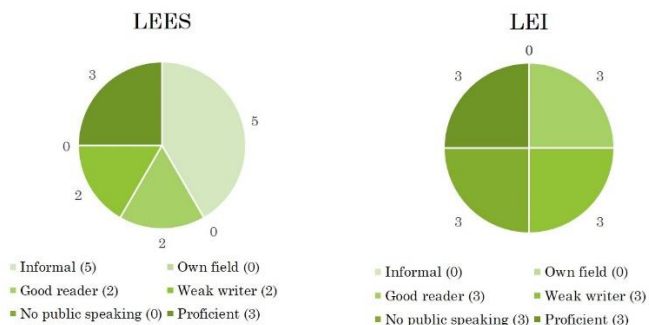


Figure 1. Levels of English in the two groups

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This may be attributed to the fact that, while the number of students who have never lived in an English-speaking country is seven in both groups, in LEES three students mentioned that they had spent brief periods and two indicated longer terms stays abroad, while in the LEI group, all five students had lived in an English-speaking country reported long-term stay.

The differences are also apparent regarding three possible reasons for taking the course. Although both groups scored high on the options “may become a translator” and “interested in translation in general”, LEES students commented that they were “interested in theory” and were hoping to “finish their degree course”, in other words, the course gave them elective credits, while LEI students pointed out that, in their opinion, the job “seemed to pay well”.

The variance in attitudes was also verified by their “special interests” section in the needs analysis questionnaire. On the one hand, the LEES students were attracted by more artistic contexts, including literature, comics translation as well as commerce and tourism, and were asking for instruction on translation theory. In contrast, LEI students were more pragmatic in their approach and were looking to “improve their reading and writing skills” as well as their “vocabulary” and asked to see “different text types”. Somewhat naively, apart from getting a “general idea”, some also indicated that they were there to “know all the translation techniques”.

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3. PERCEPTION STUDIES

Within the field of language or linguistics related education, language teaching and learning undoubtedly leads in perception studies regarding students and teachers – as well as teacher trainee students. This latter perspective is the most comparable to our case study where translator hopefuls revealed their opinion about their conceptualisation of the translator’s attributes as well as how they viewed an introductory class could help them become translators or at least decide if they were to continue training themselves in the profession.

Perceptions of learning a foreign language

As regards perceptions in language teaching, during the 1990s, Pajares (1992) and Woods (1996) paved the way for trying to understand the unobservable beliefs and attitudes teachers may hold and how these influenced their teaching practice. These two concepts along with teacher knowledge(s) (Golombek, 1998; Shulman, 1986, 1987) became to be known as BAK studies and often applied a mixed-method approach using questionnaires and observation, a welcome change in methodology. As Borg (2003) in his comprehensive review remarks

it is positive to see that teacher cognition in language teaching has generally been studied with close attention to what happens in classrooms. This may seem an

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obvious requirement for research which is ultimately aimed at developing better understandings of teaching. However, earlier work in teacher cognition had been criticised (see, for example, Kagan 1990; Richardson, Anders, Tidwell, & Lloyd 1991) for relying on paper and pencil measures of teacher cognition (e.g., questionnaire responses) without examining these in relation to practice. (p.98)

As the next natural step, a body of research developed on trainee teachers' perceptions of their teaching practice, professional identity, job expectations, professional development or training programs. The enquiries span the length and breadth of the globe, including Africa (Kagoda & Itaaga, 2013), Asia (Shaari et al., 2009), Europe (Rea & Parkinson, 1999; Trif & Popescu, 2013), Latin-America (Goodwin et al., 2015), among others, a trend that later inspired perceptions studies in other areas of language studies, including translation.

Student perceptions of learning translation

The last two decades have seen a timely increase in the number of studies on students' perceptions of translation both in dedicated translation training courses and in degree programs with a translation module. With regard to full-time translation course research, some, for example

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Li (2002) in the Hong Kong context, recognise the necessity of language teaching on translation programs.

On a more controversial note, it is interesting to observe that two almost contemporaneously published analyses present their conclusions from rather different perspectives. On the one hand, Vilceanu (2013) finishes on a high note with an optimistic view of the future of formative translation training in Romania. In contrast, Paradowska (2012) expresses her concern that students she surveyed failed to understand that “translation is a complex process” and she remarks that, as a consequence, “negative motivation may not be sufficient to develop translation competence” (p.74).

Fortunately, this rather gloomy view seems to have few followers, especially in the case of translation courses that are offered as a singular subject on a language degree. As Sewell’s (2004) quizzing chapter title suggests, students enrolled in language or linguistics based BA and MA programs find them quite attractive. This popularity begs the question “Students buzz round the translation class like bees round the honey pot - why?” (Sewell, 2004), and there is a call to understand the motivation behind the students’ choice as well as expectations.

With regard to the latter, a case study carried out in the Hungarian context found that “there are individual differences in terms of needs and expectations, and there is a gap between what the students think about translation,

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what they expect from these courses, and what the teachers expect” (Károly, 2011, p.74). This naiveté extends to the students’ conception of translation (ibid.), an observation shared by the author of the current study and her colleagues. Bearing the above in mind, let us now continue with the presentation of the data and analysis.

4. TRAINEE TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS ABOUT TRANSLATION

Data collection instruments

In this comparative case study of students’ perceptions of an elective translation class on two teacher-training programs in Mexico, four instruments were applied, mostly of a questionnaire design. Great care was taken to avoid the pitfalls of such data collection tools that Saldanha and O’Brien (2014) warn about in their comprehensive treatment of research methodologies in translation studies. According to the authors, the drawbacks could include the lengthy surveys taking up too much time, inappropriate phrasing of the questions, the danger of veering towards a nondescript average when answering Likert-scale questionnaires, ethical issues, a low response rate, and validity problems, among others (pp.153-162).

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Apart from the needs analysis discussed above, the students were asked to answer a 35-item questionnaire at the beginning and at the end of the course that was aimed to reveal their affinity with certain aspects of being a translator (see Appendix 1.). The 1-5 Likert scale questionnaire, based on Washbourne's (n.d.) self-survey, included statements formulated in the first-person singular in English and in Spanish respectively for the two groups, and was applied on google survey to ensure complete anonymity. It had been employed earlier with similar student populations and had proven a useful method of data collection. The main objective in this case was to complement the needs analysis to better understand the student profiles for the purposes of course design.

In addition, a simple course evaluation survey was applied at the end of the course to gauge the students' perception of the course itself. The three straightforward questions (What have you learnt in particular? What would you like to see more of? Do you have any other comments?) were formulated very openly to invite students to express their opinion. Once again, the questions were distributed on google survey to ensure anonymity.

Finally, one of the students had the opportunity to participate in both classes during the semester, thus, had a special insight into the two parallel classes. For this reason, she was asked to reflect on the two courses and to provide some supplementary feedback.

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Self-perceptions

A quick review of the numerical values of the term-start and term-end self-assessment questionnaires displayed in Table 2. reveal a certain insight into the perception of the students about themselves as translators. First and foremost, it is clear that, out of the fifteen students enrolled in each class, considerably fewer responded the term-end questionnaire than the term-start one. Especially on the English teaching (LEI) program, the response rate dropped from 80% to 46.6%, which could be attributed to either loss of interest and/or their preoccupation with term-end exams and assignments.

LEES (15 Students)			LEI (15 Students)		
	Start	End		Start	End
	(15/15)	(11/15)		(12/15)	(7/15)
Min	2.6	2.94	Min	2	3.05
Max	4.55	4.54	Max	4.68	4.5
Ave	3.78	3.95	Ave	3.84	3.93

Table 2. Numerical values for responses to the term-start and term-end questionnaires

Furthermore, it is apparent that, on average, the students scored very similar values in terms of their identification with being a translator. This means that on a 1-5 Likert scale they averaged just below 4 when grading their view of statements such as “I often naturally find myself mediating between groups of friends or relations, “interpreting”.” It is also evident from Table 2. that in both classes there was a slight increase in their

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identification with the translator's attributes: from 3.78 to 3.95 in the case of LEES students, and from 3.84 to 3.93 regarding their peers in the LEI group. These results seem to indicate that they are not overconfident about their skills and competences as translators, but they show some belief in their capabilities, which can be considered a positive outcome of the class.

When examining the lowest and highest values, the picture is somewhat more nuanced. From the minimum results, it is clear that the student with the lowest affinity toward translation at the end of the term in each class scored considerably higher than the student with the corresponding lowest score at the beginning of the semester. However, given that the survey was completely anonymous, there is no way to confirm if the two values belong to the same student, especially in the LEI group where there were three people who did not reply to the survey at the beginning and eight who did not respond at the end of the semester. Therefore, our optimism should be restrained and perhaps in the future personal codes could be assigned to the respondents to allow for cross-referencing the results. Nevertheless, such measures should be applied with great care so as not to compromise the students' anonymity.

What may be more significant in terms of the course objectives is the highest individual scores in the two groups which seem to have declined, albeit by very little, in both cases. This may be ascribed to the teacher's efforts

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to raise awareness of the translator’s qualities, competences and responsibilities. Such results can be corroborated by the comments the students made on the course in general as seen in the section on “course perceptions” below.

Semester start		
	LEES (15/15)	LEI (12/15)
Least popular	<p>I have a good verbal memory and repertoire in my mother tongue.</p> <p>“Foreign” languages don’t feel so foreign – I have good intuition for what is expressed even if each and every word is not known.</p> <p>I can avoid editorializing or outright censuring material with which I disagree.¹</p>	<p>“Foreign” languages don’t feel so foreign – I have good intuition for what is expressed even if each and every word is not known.</p> <p>I don’t usually collapse or give in under pressure.</p> <p>I network whenever necessary to get things done.</p>

¹ Out of courtesy for readers who do not read Spanish, the Spanish-speaking students’ answers appear in English.

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Semester start		
	LEES (15/15)	LEI (12/15)
Most popular	I like talking about language itself: its nuances, devices and peculiarities.	I'm sensitive to others' cultures and take delight in sharing and celebrating differences with the uninitiated.
	I am an attentive reader with a receptive mind.	I can put myself into another's mind set; I can empathize.
	I'm sensitive to others' cultures and take delight in sharing and celebrating differences with the uninitiated.	I don't "fit" in only one language or culture; I am "wider" than the language I learned at birth.

Table 3a. Least and most popular statements selected by the students at the beginning of the semester.

As for the same exercise at the end of the term (Table 3b.), it is worthy of note that the same statements are found among the LEES students' choices, where the lack of good memory in the second language is also repeated. The inclusion of being proud work as translators is a positive response to the course that apparently helped shape their potential professional identity. A similar approach can be observed among the most popular statements in the LEI group in their choice of feeling responsible for the work they produce and submit with their signature. However, it could be somewhat worrying that they do "not like writing", an obvious activity for translators.

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Semester end		
	LEES (11/15)	LEI (7/15)
Least popular	<p>“Foreign” languages don’t feel so foreign – I have good intuition for what is expressed even if each and every word is not known.</p> <p>I have a good verbal memory and repertoire in my mother tongue.</p> <p>I am a good salesperson for products I believe in, such as myself and my work.</p>	<p>I can avoid editorializing or outright censuring material with which I disagree.</p> <p>I have a good verbal memory and repertoire in my primary adopted tongue.</p> <p>I like writing.</p>
Most popular	<p>I’m sensitive to others’ cultures and take delight in sharing and celebrating differences with the uninitiated.</p> <p>I would be proud to work in the language industry (translator, project manager, localizer, editor or terminologist) and would be a good ambassador of the field to those outside it.</p> <p>I am always open to technology as a possible resource.</p>	<p>I am actively learning second and/or third languages.</p> <p>I am conscientious; I am detail-oriented; I hesitate to put my name on what I am not satisfied with.</p> <p>I don’t “fit” in only one language or culture; I am “wider” than the language I learned at birth.</p>

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Table 3b. Least and most popular statements selected by the students at the end of the semester.

Course perceptions

As mentioned regarding the analysis of the self-assessment surveys above, from the maximum scores of the students it appears that some may have gained awareness about the translator's work. This seems to be echoed in the final comment section that was left as wide open as possible. In their response to the question “Do you have any other comments?”, the three students from the LEI group who shared similar sentiments.

“Great class but translation is not for me, I think.”

“I enjoyed the class, but I think I would not like to be a translator.”

“I really like this course. It was helpful, and I learnt more about the work of the translator.”

While obviously, in no way is it the objective of the course to discourage students from pursuing a career in translation, it could be considered a desirable outcome that students understand their real calling. This was better expressed by the LEES students whose response to the same question is far more discerned.

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“I think it’s a very good introductory course to the field.”

“It was a pleasure to take this subject. It helped me learn about the difficulties and the possible situations a professional translator may encounter. I think I have a lot more to learn, both in terms of the two languages involved and regarding ethics. But it has been very stimulating.”

“The class was very interesting, although it seemed that in some cases we didn’t have enough time to cover certain topics.”

“It would be interesting to know a little more about the theory of translation and read the authors who write about it.”

“I think I was expecting more theory in some areas, but we would’ve needed more time to cover so much.”

In the main, these students seem to have comprehended the complexity of the field of translation and realised that if they would like to become translators, they will need more time to study, to delve into the nitty-gritty of the profession. In this case, the course appears to have met its objective both in terms of widening the students’ scope of

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understanding regarding what translation is and making them consider carefully if they were going to continue in pursuing this career.

Fortunately, this has also been confirmed through the responses the students in both group gave to the two remaining questions. Their answers to “What have you learnt in particular?” seem to corroborate that the course was not given in vein. In the LEI group, while some of the answers were quite generic:

“That translation is more complex than I thought.”

“Translation is not as easy as I was expected it would be.”

“That translation is more difficult than one thinks.”

a few students actually got to the core of the matter:

“Techniques when translating. Things that must be avoided when translating into another language”

“I have learnt about the different kinds of translation and the tools that translators can use when they work.”

“Now I’m aware of how technical the

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work of a translator may be, in terms of all the different linguistic aspects that come into play when translating. I also got a wider perspective of translation as a professional field, and of the specific difficulties related to different types of translation.”

The Spanish teacher trainees had comparable experiences. Although once again, we find a non-specific response:

“What is difficult is to carry out translations as a professional.”

Most of the respondents were quite detailed in their answers. Two of them remarked on the wide variety of translations that they had not been aware of that existed, neither the complexity each involved.

“I learnt that there are different fields of specialization and that there are much more tools that help the translators in the work than I thought.”

“I learnt about translation more in detail, which seems interesting to me as I didn’t know that there were so many different types of translation and all of them so elaborate.”

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Another followed suit and added the importance of ethical issues:

“I think that all aspects are important, even the ones that we don’t want to specialize in personally, cause each on has their own responsibilities. We should consider more the ethics behind it, they seem to be a very important part of the profession.”

Yet another student commented on the tools translators can use in their daily work:

“I gained a general view of translation. The most important thing for me was that I discovered the different types of tools that a translator could use. The course helped me understand the basic concepts of translation and the translator’s work.”

Someone was grateful for practical advice:

“The everyday workings of a translator; for example, practical advice on good posture, knowledge of market rates, the difficulties of finding work, etc.”

Others made more theoretical observations, specifically in terms of the concept of equivalence and functionality or the consideration of the target audience / client:

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“In particular, I learnt about the problem of equivalence. I was interested in the strategies that translators apply when there is no direct equivalence between the languages.”

“The most important part for me was to learn that the translation has to be adjusted according to the target.”

Needless to say, there is always room for improvement in a course design, thus answers to the question What would you like to see more of? are useful indicators of possible uncovered needs of the students. It came as somewhat of a surprise that in this respect there was quite a divide between the two groups. LEES students were critical that they were hoping for some more theory in the class:

“I would’ve liked to see more theory. It was a very practical course, which is good, but a little bit more theory wouldn’t have killed us.”

“I would like to know more theory.”

“I would’ve liked more balance between theory and practice. To read more about translation theory.”

Sure enough, “a little bit more theory would not have killed them”, which perhaps goes hand in hand with their

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desire to know more about literary translation – as well as the global favourite, audiovisual translation, in perfect congruence with their wishes identified in the needs analysis at the beginning of the course.

“I would like to learn more about audiovisual translation.”

“Literary and audiovisual translation.”

“Literary translation, to know more about how not to lose the meaning of the original work.”

Two out of the eleven respondents to this questionnaire mentioned other areas of translation: one asking for more information on CAT Tools and the other a greater knowledge of interpreting.

“I would like to know more about the tools (corpus linguistics, terminology banks and translation memories).”

“Obviously, this is a growing field, especially in interpreting.”

Although one student out of the seven in the LEI group also mentioned interpreting,

“How to take notes, when interpreting.”

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the majority focused on the practical side of translation.

“I’d like to have more practical translation assignments and to do a little more of theoretical reading as well. Text oriented discussions would be a good addition to class dynamics.”

“Have different practices with the different techniques.”

“Only more exercises to practice each translation category.”

“I would like more practice and translation techniques.”

The difference between the two groups is quite apparent: while the LEES students are asking for more theory, the LEI students are requesting more practice. This may owe to their predisposition, as discussed in the student profile section above. However, it may also be an indication that perhaps there could or should be two courses, one on translation theory and another one dedicated to techniques and strategies. The increase in the number of hours does not necessarily have to imply a rigid separation of the two areas, rather, that one course could focus perhaps on the analysis of examples from various theoretical perspectives, while the other would concentrate on a

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problem-based approach supported by some theoretical underpinnings.

Comparative individual reflection

Finally, the reflections delivered by the individual student confirm that the classes ran in parallel, which lends validity to this case study. She mentions that, generally, the courses were similar in their structure, the types of activities involved and the feedback:

“in terms of the topics covered, the way they were presented (first the explanation then the translation exercise), the group activities and the feedback, etc.”

However, she did notice some differences, particularly with reference to the students’ attitude. As mentioned in the student profile, the LEI students work almost full-time and attend classes at the weekend, which explains their tiredness.

“The first difference I noticed was the different personalities of the students. In the LEI group, I felt that all the students were really quiet or reserved, they just listened and received the information; the LEES group seemed more at ease and, maybe that’s why, they participated more. [...]

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Maybe it was because of the timetables, as the LEI students mostly arrived late, from work, and tired, and the LEES class was in the middle of the day, and some of the students only came to take this class, so they weren't tired of other activities."

Furthermore, she remarked that the foreign exchange students lent a special perspective to the LEES class that enriched the learning experience.

"I think that in the LEES class it was great to have the foreign students because they gave a different perspective, and it was richer because we could learn about translation in other countries. It was also obvious in the group presentations, because when there was a foreign student in a group, they always took centre stage."

It should be noted that these students work in their second and third languages, which could serve as an example to the local learners and encourage them in their effort to learn more than one foreign language. It also opens their horizons to other cultures and language use, an obviously welcome complement to the course syllabus.

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5. CONCLUSIONS

While juggling all the needs and wants of the students as well as the market demands in our context is not an easy task, it seems that the course fulfilled its objective in raising the students' awareness regarding the complexity of translation. Through the analysis of three types of questionnaires applied in the spring semester in 2016, students of the Spanish and the English teacher trainee courses provided an insight into their perceptions on translation and the elective introductory translation subject offered at the Department of Languages at the University of Guanajuato.

Based on the needs analyses, the course evaluation surveys, the term-start and term-end self-surveys regarding the students' understanding of themselves as translators and one student's reflexive contribution, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- The course in general was successful in achieving the double objective of introducing students to the complexity and variety of translation and of helping them decide whether they would like to pursue translation as a career.
- There seems to be interest in following up on this introductory module with a deeper examination of both theoretical and practical issues.

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- However, it is apparent that the students on the two BA programs have distinct priorities: while the Spanish teacher trainees would prefer to delve into theory and explore literary, audiovisual and comics translation, the English teacher trainees would rather concentrate on pragmatic issues that could prepare them for attending to the growing demand due to the industrial expansion in the region described in the context section at the beginning of this paper.

As regards the course syllabus, the findings could have the following implications:

- There could be an increase in the basic conceptual content with a more transparent application to practice.
- The in-class and homework exercises should be designed based on a process approach to guide the students through the procedures using a variety of techniques and strategies.
- In a relation to the above, the syllabus could be reconsidered to take a problem/process- (rather than content-) based approach (Fox, 2000; Gile, 1993; Lee-Jahnke, 2005).
- Finally, the course should perhaps include exercises on writing skills (although this strictly speaking falls outside its scope).

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In terms of the course design for the two undergraduate programs, we are left with more questions than answers:

- Could / should there be a translation theory module offered?
- Could / should we collaborate with the Department of Letters (Literature) to offer a course in literary translation?
- Could / should we cater for specific needs, tastes or demands?

As we continue with localised research projects, case studies both at undergraduate level, for example, now that the course is offered jointly between the two BAs, as well as on the recently established postgraduate diploma course in translation, we aim to draw on international best practice in teaching translation and to adapt it to our context. Growing interest among the students, fuelled partly by youthful intellectual adventures into exotic realms and partly by a desire to make a decent living, gives us hope that we will have the opportunity to improve our recipe.

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APPENDIX SELF-ASSESSMENT SURVEY

I like discovering and building vocabulary, phrases and awareness of text conventions.

I enjoy “detective work”, filling in missing pieces of information.

I have a wide range of subjects of interest to me, and work toward having more interests.

I like talking about language itself: its nuances, devices and peculiarities.

“Foreign” languages don’t feel so foreign—I have good intuition for what is expressed even if each and every word is not known.

I’m sensitive to others’ cultures and take delight in sharing and celebrating differences with the uninitiated.

I can put myself into another’s mindset; I can empathize.

I have a good command of my mother tongue and its grammar.

I don’t usually collapse or give in under pressure.

I am patient and do not look for quick fixes or the “path of least resistance” while troubleshooting.

I know how to delegate; I am not afraid to ask for help.

I am conscientious; I am detail-oriented; I hesitate to put my name on what I am not satisfied with.

I am always open to technology as a possible resource.

When I convey the ideas and/or words of others it does not threaten or disable my own sense of self.

I have an earnest desire to communicate and to aid communication.

I have a good verbal memory and repertoire in my mother tongue.

I have a good verbal memory and repertoire in my primary adopted tongue.

I am a good salesperson for products I believe in, such as myself and my work.

I make educated decisions and commit boldly, without second-guessing myself.

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I like writing.

I am an attentive reader with a receptive mind.

I value the cohesion—the “flow”—of a piece of writing, and can sense, and fix, disjointedness.

I often naturally find myself mediating between groups of friends or relations, “interpreting”.

I don’t “fit” in only one language or culture; I am “wider” than the language I learned at birth.

I am actively learning second and/or third languages.

I am a “list-maker” or “list-user”.

I can find what I need by researching the most appropriate reference books and online sources.

I can avoid editorializing or outright censuring material with which I disagree.

I am accurate and value accuracy.

I am punctual and value punctuality.

I can work alone without seeking distraction.

I network whenever necessary to get things done.

I am aware of rhetorical (persuasive) aspects of a text when I read, the purpose behind it, the audience intended, and the reaction expected from me as its reader.

I consider myself emotionally self-aware and “emotionally intelligent.”

I would be proud to work in the language industry (translator, project manager, localizer, editor or terminologist) and would be a good ambassador of the field to those outside it.