

## New Trends outside the Translation Classroom

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### Abstract

This paper is based on the study of different elements at the University of Granada's Faculty of Translation and Interpreting and seeks to elaborate a prototype for a multilingual and accessible audio guide (audio description, SDHH and Spanish sign language interpretation). We defend a new methodology, one that focuses on teaching the translation process from previous museum-based learning experiences in the translation classroom using QR codes. Our main goal is to innovate translation-related teaching based on the new approaches acquired through learning workshop perspectives. In this sense, we will offer an ideal framework in developing the new concept of *translation learning*. This concept involves systemising a new means of learning and organising the realities of translation itself, encompassing objectives, competences, methodology and evaluation.

### Keywords

Accessible audio guide, audio description; SDHH; museum-based learning; learning workshop



## 1. Introduction

This article is the result of a teaching innovation project called *The Development of Content for a Universal, Low-Cost Cross-Platform System on the Description, Location and Guide to University of Granada (UGR) Buildings*. *DESAM* (for its Spanish-language acronym), code 12-53, developed over the past two years by the TRACCE (the Spanish-language acronym for Accessible Translation) Research Group within the University of Granada's Faculty of Translation and Interpreting.

First of all, the *DESAM* project, based at the UGR, launched both a line of teaching innovation and a line of research that develop different kinds of universally accessible cross-platform systems and devices in different languages, transmitting the description, accessibility and guide to UGR buildings. This university's Department of Computer Languages and Systems has been responsible for the elaboration of the cross-platform system. Further, this project continued with a line of universally accessible content-development (subtitling and sign language interpreting for deaf persons and audio description for visually impaired persons) in different languages (English, French, German and Arabic), which had been initiated in previous projects, like the R&D project *TACTO*. *TACTO* (its Spanish-language acronym), *Translation and Accessibility: Accessible Dissemination of Science/Science for Everyone*, with code 09-105, was launched by the TRACCE research team.

The goal of this project has not been merely to improve a situation, but also to create a product that offers an absolutely innovative service – a service that does not yet exist and is unparalleled in any other institutional building on the national or international level. Basically, it involves incorporating a series of cross-platform devices into buildings, devices that are capable of providing a location and a description of these buildings and include a simple guide through their interiors, as well as the functions (instructional, service-based, or artistic elements) of each space.

The primary objective of this teaching innovation project has been to apply different types of accessible translation (Soler 2010) to the UGR's architectural areas as instructive

tools in training Translation and Interpreting students. Likewise, the goal of rendering buildings accessible – and describing them in different languages for different purposes and objectives – presented an ideal context for the students to move beyond the classroom and experience the epistemology of the translation process first-hand. The students developed a global translation assignment that consisted of producing content toward creating a product similar to an Accessible Guide, which would serve as a final result; this guide was intended for different types of users, with particular attention to those suffering from a range of sensorial disabilities.

In this way, DESAM adopts an interdisciplinary approach in order to construct a theoretical framework that supports its research; key resources include studies on Museum Accessibility and the Socio-Constructivist Theory.

According to Museum Accessibility we must say that from their earlier role as exclusive and elitist institutions, museums are now at the service of the society and community. The museum of today is a space for communication (Hernández Hernández 1998) where the exhibitions constitute the museum message or discourse (Serrat Antolí) and the exhibited artifact "...becomes the bearer document of conceptual information" (García Blanco 1999: 20). In recent years and in line with the New Museology the Museums also start to become objects of negotiation, participation and social integration (Flórez Crespo 2006: 232).

The communicative function of museums consists of translating the scientific or artistic discourse encoded in the language of the exhibited artifacts (García Blanco 1999) to a discourse that makes the expert knowledge of the former accessible to different kinds of receivers. These museum and exhibitory discourses are multimodal, as they use different semiotic codes to construct the complete meaning, and it constitutes the source text of translation and interpretation processes that operate in museums to make them accessible to different audiences.

From this semiotic perspective, the accessible translation and interpretation (T&I) of the museographic multimodal event brings together different modalities that can be

classified into two broad categories: monomodal or monosemiotic T&I and multimodal or multisemiiotic T&I. Multimodal T&I refers to translation processes that involve more than one semiotic mode, either in the source text or in its translation.

In translation courses, which are the classes most frequently assigned to us, one of the most important objectives pursued is for the student to acquire not only conceptual knowledge, but also procedural and attitudinal notions in order to independently perform certain tasks. Thus, we offer an alternative teaching model to the traditional one (Fedor de Diego 2003): its primary methodological goal is to innovate in the instruction of translation through creating an ideal context for autonomously learning the epistemology of translation, as well as for developing the student's decision-making and teamwork capacities.

The UGR's different buildings have played a fundamental role in this structure by serving as the facilitators of the architectural space (the *situational macro context*) that contains the various interior spaces (the *micro-texts*) and their functions (the *macro-text*). These buildings and their interiors comprise the principal textual units from which the workflow will emerge. In the vocabulary of translation, they constitute the source text – and, in this case, a source text that is multimodal and innovative in nature. The inclusion of a guide through the buildings, following their location and description, enables users to navigate different environments, including multimodal ones.

In addition to this learning methodology, we must also highlight the effort undertaken by students in different areas: students who have endeavoured to work productively with their fellow students in other areas of the University of Granada, with the professionals and experts involved, and with users – all towards securing the success of the products in terms of their accessibility.

## 2. Objectives

The project's general objectives are the following:

- a) Learning about and spreading accessibility in public spaces.
- b) Competence training through transversality and interdisciplinary approaches.
- c) Creation and launching of new professional profiles.

Based on these general objectives, the following specific objectives also emerge:

- a) Learning how to use and manipulate new technologies in concrete mobile devices and QR codes. Given that the adapted information will be multimedia in nature, the translation for and adaptation to different users will pose a spectacular opportunity for carrying out an absolutely innovative translation process. In this way, accessibility will improve in the UGR infrastructure, making use of technology and accessible multimedia content, crystallising into directed operation at two different centres: the ETSIIT (University Technical School of Computing and Telecommunication Engineering) and the FTI (Department of Translation and Interpreting).
- b) Create a type of self-learning in translation and interpreting that emulates the job markets, simulates companies' translation strategies, and strengthens virtual education, through skill- and competence-based learning.
- c) Create samples of multimodal teaching materials on translation for universal sensorial accessibility.
- d) Move beyond the classroom as an instructional space in such a way that the student becomes aware of the fact that her learning may be conceptualised in connection with the most immediate environment, her local environment (in this case, UGR buildings), and that only in this way can an expansion into the global environment become a reality.

- e) Train professors in order to connect their research context with teaching tasks and their applicability to the information society.

Of the specific objectives delineated here, this article will focus on three – b), c) and d) – which encompass the other two and constitute the essence of the *DESAM* R&D project. These objectives were carried out in the second phase of the project, which began in the second quarter (February to June) of the 2012 academic year. Objective a) is the one developed wholly by the School of Computing team that has collaborated on the R&D project, which is why we will not elaborate further on this subject. Objective e) is present in the others, so we will discuss it as part of the analysis we undertake on each one.

In order to create a form of self-learning in translation and interpretation that emulates the reality of the job market, students in the T7 courses (specialised translation in Spanish-English, German-Spanish and Italian-Spanish) received a semi-professional translation assignment from their professors and carried out a series of individual tasks in a translation company focused on strengthening visual learning. In this sense, the students worked as a team, assuming the roles of documentalist, translator, editor and copy editor in each group; thus, the translation process resembled the actual process in all ways.

Through the trial and error method (Risku 1998), the student acquired universal translation strategies that could be extrapolated to other translation assignments. The relevance of the translation task is, therefore, a highly important factor in the development of the translation process. We believe that if the student implements a particular practice in a real context, she will more successfully confront her mission, as she will feel motivated and can apply the translation strategies she has learned.

Multimodal museum texts have been innovatively used so that students will understand the analysis and interpretation process intrinsic to the mechanisms of meaning-construction in the source text – since these texts must integrate and interpret the different semiotic resources present in the exhibition in order to access the discourse it seeks to transmit. Further, in being used as documental resources, the multimodal texts and events (Rivière 1993) enable access to knowledge and strengthen learning processes by virtue of

their similarity to processes of human perception. All of these multimodal texts have accessible multilingual content (Spanish, English, French, German and Arabic) that refer to spaces, functions, location, distribution, history and other academic information from two UGR centres.

### 3. Methodology

The methodology used throughout the project has adhered to the following principles:

1. *Motivation*: is crucial for learning to be effective in the classroom and largely depends on professors' abilities to spark and maintain the students' interest. In the assignments that are part of this project, the professor involves the student in the translation process from the very beginning and motivates her through innovative experiences like working in a real context (different UGR buildings); working for recipients with specific needs (sensorial disabilities and tourists); and working with multimodal texts and documentation (descriptions of buildings; the art they contain, like photos, paintings and other elements), where they will learn through multi-sensoriality and experience (handling objects, using audio-visual tools, etc.). We must stress that the Faculty of Translation and Interpreting of the University of Granada is a Neoclassical Palace from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and in this sense it must be considered as a Museum because inside it there are a lot of artistic elements from the History Patrimonial.

2. *Professor as a facilitator of guided discovery*: after fulfilling the prior objective, the professor, also referred to as a guide or adviser, introduces the student to and guides her through a learning-by-discovery process based on asking questions, debate and discussing ideas (Leach and Moon 2008). Further, the professor will serve as the coordinator for the various work teams and their respective disciplines.

3. *Self-learning*: in this phase, the professor will release the student to begin a process by which she will be able to develop skills in planning, action-organising, problem-solving, and the creation and review of learning and self-evaluation strategies. Professors must maintain their role as adviser and guide during this phase and until the end of the learning process, which is the evaluation stage.

Within the framework of the Faculty of Translation and Interpreting which it is also a neoclassical Palace and therefore a sort of Museum, the project has involved – and could not have done otherwise – the participation of students from the Translation Degree, which includes various of the courses entailed in its multilingual and two-way language combination.

In order to fulfil the specific objective d) – that is, to move beyond the classroom as a learning space – we have insisted on how important it is for professors to receive training on the connection of their research context with teaching tasks and their applicability to the information society. We must also remember to raise the student's awareness on how her own learning may be conceived in connection with the most immediate environment – the local one (in this case, UGR buildings) – and that only in this way can an expansion into the global environment become a reality.

With respect to the previously mentioned courses, the following activities were carried out, both beyond the classroom and within it:

I) Beyond the classroom: the professors, along with their students, made multiple visits all over the Faculty of Translation and Interpreting, pursuing two points of view:

a) From the perspective of someone with a visual disability, the guided segments were repeated so as to verify that the source texts corresponded exactly to what was audio-described in them. Various errors were detected and corrected along the way.

b) From the perspective of tourists or visitors who wanted to know something else about an artistic element in front of them, and which they stopped to observe for the first



time. We must not forget that the Faculty of Translation and Interpreting is a nineteenth-century palace and, as such, contains many artistic heritage items. These visits were videotaped (and then uploaded onto the SAWD<sup>1</sup> platform, which is a resource for University of Granada professors) in such a way that the thematic field was covered from the very beginning. The video helped all students who missed class, but it also served as a documentation resource for the texts to be translated later. In this way, the instrumental and technical fields were largely resolved. Moreover, the interest shown by the students during the visit to the Faculty, their continual questions on the subject at hand, determined the psycho-physiological field.

II) In the classroom: In all selected classes, an identical protocol was followed during the translation process. First, students were given the source texts in Spanish in order to analyse them exhaustively. Next, the students searched for the parallel texts in the corresponding languages so as to elaborate a glossary according to the previously established norms, using the textual corpus specified by their professor. They were advised to expand this corpus by consulting other Spanish-language texts on subjects like heraldry and artistic heritage, as well as other parallel texts in English/Italian, and by using online dictionaries. Finally, a translation of technical texts was undertaken, based on the professor's assignment of an accurate translation. The assignment involved the publication of the professor-facilitated texts in English for Translation in Science and Technology A-B (English)'s class, in Italian for Scientific Translation 5 A-C (Italian)'s class, and in German for Translation in Science and Technology A-B (German)'s class in their Spanish-language online versions.

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<sup>1</sup> The SWAD (web teacher support system) technological collaboration platform at the University of Granada, which is organised as a course-management system that helps educators to create online learning communities. It promotes a social constructivist pedagogy (cooperation, activities, critical reflection, etc.).

And finally, to complete the educational unit, a student evaluation phase was implemented in the following ways:

- Through direct observation of students in the classroom, making note of anything considered important (general or specific aspects of each student, the pertinence of her questions, problem-solving skills, etc.).
- Through analysing the translations produced by each work team.
- Through observing the level of objective-fulfilment, likewise considering other important aspects like the level of interest shown in the activity undertaken.

#### **4. Results**

The Project DESAM can be defined as a methodological experiment that has gathered students from different areas of knowledge and levels of access to that knowledge. This phenomenon in itself already implies, among other factors, a substantial need for adaptation to the educational setting. Further, the project involved working with mixed groups from different disciplines, incorporating working methods as diverse as the applied sciences, social sciences, and humanities. Each area, according to socio-constructivism has contributed its own conception of the tasks' content and distribution. In the same way, and with a view to the professionalization of the students' self-learning, both students and professors will make contact with the direct users of their products, remember that in the socio-constructivist theories there were three elements which act with a close relationship, the teacher, the student and the topic to be learned. As we explained in the theoretical framework the socio constructivist theories try to make the process of learning in translation making the students participate in the experience has partly involved taking on all phases of the translation process in a real labour environment – from the assignment of the translation to the submission of each complete text – simulating, at all levels, the real relationship between translator and client.

In this way, they have entered a semi-professional realm, and they have had to adapt to the concrete needs of a user for whom the translation task will be carried out – which is why the job's quality and success will be continuously evaluated. All of this is enough of a guarantee to affirm that the project involves highly rigorous measurement tools to prove the students' educational evolution.

In fact, from the methodological perspective, the project is based on the collaboration between the University of Granada, companies focused on access to the media (Aristia Producciones and Espectáculos), and two associations of people with sensorial disabilities: the regional administration of ONCE (the Spanish-language acronym for Spain's National Organisation of the Blind) in Granada and the FAAS (Andalusian Federation of Associations of the Deaf).

Synergy has increased among research groups, increasing impetus for applied research. Although the initial objective is that the proposed works should be simple ones, the challenge of applying knowledge acquired and adding innovation implies an incentive for research on access-related subjects for professors and students. Moreover, an evaluation of the project's output was undertaken during its execution and on its conclusion. Most of the information necessary for conducting this evaluation and reframing was obtained through a) team meetings, b) standardised records, and c) multilateral contacts. Further, in order to analyse the quality and results of the knowledge transmitted and acquired by the students, periodic evaluations were conducted on basic information related to the subjects in question, as well as on the techniques being used.

### *External Evaluation*

At the end of the project, and based on the documents produced by each group, another document will be created to narrate the experience. It will describe the results to groups at

other centres so they may appreciate its exportability and usefulness in their own work environments.

However, the key measurements of the external evaluation will focus on two aspects: (a) professional evaluations, and (b) user evaluations.

With respect to the professionals' evaluations, various companies in the sector have been contacted on multiple occasions; the idea is that they offer their evaluation in exchange for travel costs, if they are based outside of Granada, and for sharing the results.

The second form of evaluation has been undertaken by following the study methodologies of museum visitors. The goal of this evaluation is to collect the experiences, opinions and needs of people with functional, sensorial, visual, and auditory diversity regarding the accessibility of the buildings in general and of the ones we present in particular.

The subject sample for the study will, in principle, contain a single prerequisite for participating in this evaluation: the participants must either have a functional sensorial disability, to varying degrees, or must come from a different culture and/or speak a different language from those offered.

Thus, the subjects have been divided into three groups: (a) individuals with a visual disability, (b) individuals with an auditory disability, and (c) individuals from a different culture or language.

As the final step of the *DESAM* R&D project, which will be carried out in the coming months, surveys will be conducted and, in order to facilitate contact and encourage participation in the study among individuals with this profile, we will make contact with organisations and associations of people with sensorial disabilities: the ONCE (regional administration for the ONCE in Granada) and the FAAS (Andalusian Federation of Associations of the Deaf) in Granada; and the company Signovisión, the directors of

which were presented with the project and asked to support the implementation of the studies. Further, pilot tests were carried out with small groups of subjects, the goal being to verify the comprehensibility, relevance, and appropriateness of the content, formulation and duration both of each question and of the survey itself.

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