

The Knowledge Model and the Give-And-Take of Instruction and Research: An overview of translation training programs in Argentina

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Abstract/Résumé

En Argentine, quatre modèles didactiques ont dominé la formation des traducteurs : le modèle de communication, le modèle informationnel, le modèle séquentiel et le modèle linguistique (Arrizabalaga, 2012a). Cet article a pour but, dans un premier temps, de décrire les programmes de formation des traducteurs de trois universités d'état parmi les plus renommées du pays — Université nationale de Cordoba (Cordoba), Université nationale de La Plata (Buenos Aires) et Université nationale du Comahue (Rio Negro) — de manière à 1) rassembler les sujets selon les compétences en traduction qui y sont cultivées, et 2) identifier les modèles de formation à la traduction prévalant dans chaque université. Dans un deuxième temps, il présentera le modèle de connaissance comme un gageur dans la formation des traducteurs, notamment en rapport avec le développement d'un enseignement axé sur la recherche en Traductologie. Finalement, il laissera la place à quelques réflexions sur la mise en œuvre des modèles de formation des traducteurs dans les différents niveaux de formation, à savoir : niveaux débutant, intermédiaire et avancé.

Keywords/Mots-Clés

Translation studies, training programs, didactic models, knowledge model, research

I. Preliminary words

In Argentina, the translation training arena has been dominated by four didactic models, namely the communication model, the information model, the sequential model and the linguistic model (Arrizabalaga, 2012a). Each of these models is linked with theoretical concerns on genre description, terminology, translation techniques and discourse analysis, respectively.

The communication model focuses on descriptions of generic formants at variance with cultural contexts or language register. The information model is based on terminological analysis and centers on the study of word-formation and word choice in accordance with text-types and language register. In the sequential model the role of

translation techniques is reasoned out in the steps of text composition and throughout the phases of translation commissions. In the linguistic model translation patterns are sorted out using either discourse segmentation or the classification of frequent collocations and grammar structures.

In this article, I will firstly describe the translation training programs in three of the most renowned universities country-wide, Universidad Nacional de Córdoba [National University of Córdoba, NUC], Universidad Nacional de La Plata [National University of La Plata, NULP] and Universidad Nacional del Comahue [National University of Comahue, NUCo].¹ With this I seek to i) group subjects according to the translation competences which are being cultivated, and ii) identify translation training models prevailing in each university.

It is important to clarify that the notion of competence² I am using serves the specific purpose of identifying skills or areas of knowledge where practical abilities of trainees are tested: i) language skills in Spanish; ii) language skills in the foreign language which is part of the language pair in translation; iii) encyclopedic knowledge about the culture and history of communities speaking the foreign language (in the case of NULP, of the mother tongue as well), and iv) knowledge about Linguistics-related disciplines, such as Semantics or Terminology, and translation skills (interpretation being included in them).

Furthermore, in this article I aim to show that the four models that dominate translation training programs at Córdoba, La Plata and Comahue universities are inclined towards the cultivation of skills in both the mother tongue (see previously, i) and the foreign language (see previously, ii), to is to say, towards the construction of linguistic competence.³

1 The webpages of all three universities can be visited at <http://www.unc.edu.ar/> for NUC; <http://www.unlp.edu.ar/> for NULP; <http://www.uncoma.edu.ar/> for NUCo.

2 This is worth noticing since in TS competence has become an “umbrella” word. To a large extent, the work of Spanish translation scholar Amparo Hurtado Albir and the PACTE group has contributed to a homogeneous view of the concept and its classifications. Nevertheless, there is no uniform understanding of what *competence* points to in TS. Widely speaking, this is also the case with much terminology that is coined by translation scholars – *technique*, *procedure*, *strategy* are but three examples of that, not to mention translation *types* (see Arrizabalaga, 2011; Hurtado Albir, 2003; Mayoral, 1999; Moya, 2004).

3 See Appendix 1. The bar chart offers a contrastive view of the emphasis on competences in all three universities.

Secondly, I will present the knowledge model as a challenging option in the field of translation training, especially in connection with the development of research-oriented instruction in Translation Studies [TS].

The knowledge model involves case description with TS categories starting with exploratory tasks of source text recognition, and moving to the production of a target version. In the knowledge model, the analyst (student) view is focused on i) market (functional) demands that account for the production, circulation and consumption of translations, ii) the criteria for acceptability of translations as products that meet the expectations of consumption niches, iii) the identification of translation products as independent from source language versions.

Thirdly, I will make some considerations about the application of translation training models in the different stages of translation training programs, i.e. propaedeutic stage, middle stage, and advanced stage.

II. Three Argentinean universities

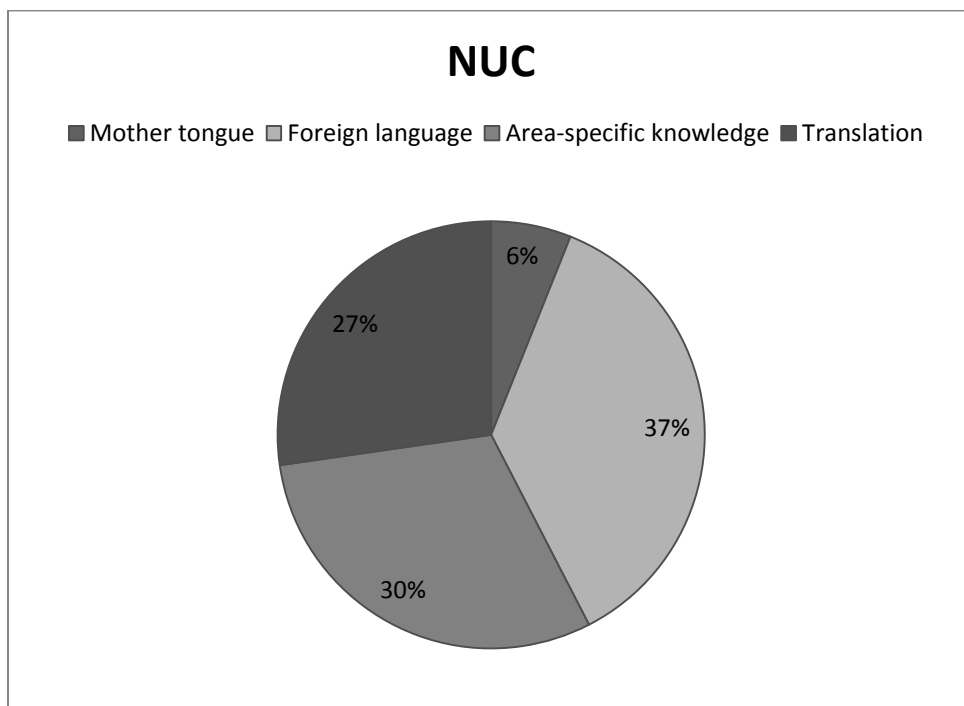
2.1 National University of Córdoba

NUC offers a five-year translation training program in four different language pairs: English > Spanish, French > Spanish, German > Spanish and Italian > Spanish.⁴

If subjects are grouped according to the type of competences that are being fostered, we can see that instruction in the foreign language is assigned an extensive amount of time and effort. The pie chart below shows the subject-competence relation at NUC.

⁴ The curriculum presented in this article is currently being “updated.” Much debate has been going on around the needs to provide instruction that meets the expectations of an increasingly demanding and ever changing translation market. What with the regular assessment from the Ministry of Education and a recent agreement signed by the School of Foreign Languages and the United Nations Organization, a full revision of the curricula started early in 2012. More information about the impact that training interpreters for the UNO can have in the translation training programs can be found in the School newsletter *Entrelenguas*(4, 24) at <http://www.lenguas.unc.edu.ar/entrelenguas/>.

Chart 1



Foreign language acquisition prior to entering universities is a “laboratory experience” for the vast majority of students in translation training programs country-wide (Arrizabalaga, 2010, 2012b; Castro, García Álvarez, Monteserin, 2010). The NUC curricula show that, in order to cope with the flaws that students have in translating, training centers on acquiring linguistic skills in the foreign language.

Of course, this implies attributing translation flaws to the foreign language level of students, and not to other variables, such as teaching-learning strategies and more generally, translation training models. What is more, content selection and class material and exam design could also be held under consideration and found to be the very sources of the problems diagnosed in students’ performance.

In the following table I briefly describe curricular contents and assign each subject a translation model. Such descriptions are meant to apply to all language pairs: English > Spanish, French > Spanish, German > Spanish and Italian > Spanish. But roughly speaking, the attribution of contents and the recognition of a prevailing model are founded on the English > Spanish translation training program.

It is important to clarify that even though the curricular structure is the same for all language combinations, the contents of subjects in different programs can vary since there is “freedom of choice” for each program in the School. I fully understand that a thorough description of NUC translation training programs would demand a discussion of contents and models in the different language pairs. On the other hand, I am well aware that programs are undergoing extensive revision with a view to updating and tailoring them to the demands of quite distinct student populations (see Note 4).

In the right-hand side column of the table I provide a bird’s-eye-view idea of the contents and the organization of each syllabi; the model with which the subject is “labeled” is also mentioned.

Table 1

Years	Subjects	Descriptions
First Year	Introduction to Translation Studies	A selection of translation models and theories is introduced. Both in theory and in practice translation is tackled from an intralinguistic point of view, i.e. intergeneric and intralectal translation is the object of reflection. The knowledge model prevails.

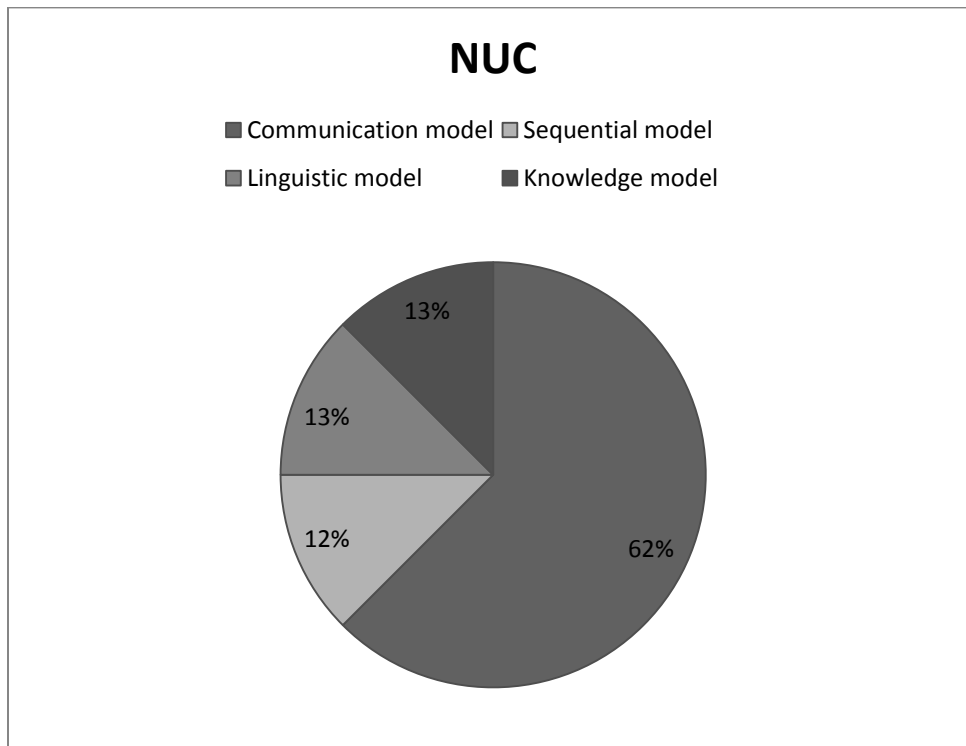
Second Year	Translation Methods	<p>Translation methods and techniques are introduced and then recognized and practiced.</p> <p>The linguistic model prevails.</p>
Third Year	Technical Translation	<p>Different genres in which “technical” language is used are introduced and confronted. Afterwards, a simulation of the phases of translation commissions are “role-played,” all of which includes the implementation of computer assisted translation tools. Cf. Scientific Translation.</p> <p>This sequential model prevails.</p>
	Commercial Translation	<p>A collected selection of genres related to Marketing and Commerce is introduced; translation is proposed from the point of view of contrastive analysis of generic formants, cultural referents, and administrative systems.</p> <p>The communication model prevails.</p>
Fourth Year	Legal Translation	<p>A collected selection of legal genres is introduced; translation is proposed from the point of view of contrastive analysis of generic formants, cultural referents, and administrative systems.</p> <p>The communication model prevails.</p>

Fifth Year	Literary Translation	<p>Translation “problems” typically found in literary discourse are spotted on a group of renowned authors. The “challenges” consist of providing solutions in the mother tongue and accounting for the translator’s decisions. Cf. Journalistic Translation.</p> <p>The communication model prevails.</p>
	Journalistic Translation	<p>Texts from different mass media are picked and translated. The “challenges” consist of providing solutions in the mother tongue and accounting for the translator’s decisions. Cf. Literary Translation.</p> <p>The communication model prevails.</p>
	Scientific Translation	<p>Different genres in which “scientific” language is used are introduced and confronted. Afterwards, a simulation of the phases of translation commissions are “role-played,” all of which includes the implementation of computer assisted translation tools. Cf. Technical Translation.</p> <p>The sequential model prevails.</p>
	Introduction to the Practice of Interpretation	*

* Interpretation is a “practice-oriented” subject. Due to the fact that interpreting is a highly stressful activity that requires a tremendous amount of training, the syllabus for this subject is meant to sensitize students about the practice of interpretation and its challenges.

This pie chart reveals that the communication model monopolizes the scene at NUC. Moreover, the linguistic model is not used altogether, and it is worth noticing that the knowledge model is currently being implemented in the subject “Introduction to Translation Studies.” This model was firstly introduced in 2010, and has proved to be quite successful in raising students’ awareness about the technicalities of the discipline, and the challenges of translating (see also Arrizabalaga, De la Vega, 2011).

Chart 2



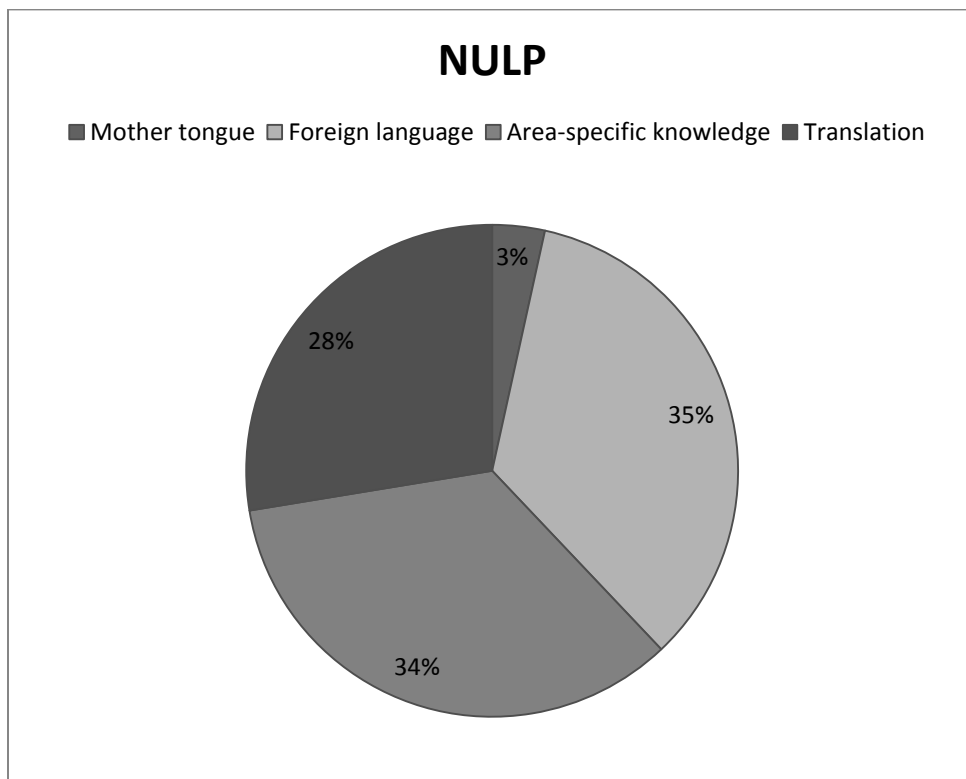
The analysis of the NULP translation training programs comes next, and it follows a similar sequence.

2.2 National University of La Plata

NULP holds a five-year translation training program in two language pairs: English > Spanish and French > Spanish.

The pie chart reveals the subject-competence relation at NULP.

Chart 3



A revision of competences allows us to see that the curriculum at NULP evolves markedly around foreign language training. The program is also strongly oriented towards the cultivation of area-specific knowledge.

In the table below translation models are identified according to curricular contents and teaching strategies. As it has been previously stated, in the translation training program at NULP there are two language pairs, English > Spanish and French > Spanish. As in the case of NUC description, the following depiction is expected to be comprehensive of both degrees.

Table 2

Years	Subjects	Descriptions
First Year	*	
Second Year	*	
Third Year	Commercial and Legal Translation 1	A collected selection of genres related to Marketing and Commerce, on the one hand, and of legal genres, on the other, is introduced; translation is undertaken from the point of view of contrastive analysis of generic formants, cultural referents, and administrative systems. The communication model prevails.
Fourth Year	Literary Translation 1	A selection of literary genres is discussed in order to find out what challenges the literariness of each text could pose. Fragments of different pieces of fiction are translated and the translation decisions are accounted for based both on critical perspectives on fiction and market demands. The communication model prevails.

	Technical-scientific Translation 1	The syllabus presents a selection of genres in which “technical” and “scientific” language is typically found; generic formants and types of discourse are studied from a contrastive point of view. The communication model prevails.
	Commercial and Legal Translation 2	See Commercial and Legal Translation 1.
Fifth Year	Literary Translation 2	See Literary Translation 1.
	Technical-scientific Translation 2	See Technical-scientific Translation 1.
	Interpretation	**
	Professional Residency	***

* Notably, it is only after their first two years at university that students start their formal instruction in translation.

** See “Introduction to the Practice of Interpretation” at NUC.

*** See “Technical Translation” and “Scientific Translation” at NUC.

Since the communication model is invariably present at NULP, there seems to be no need to use a chart to depict any differences.

In the coming section, the NUCo translation training program will be presented, and after that, I will shortly discuss a contrastive bar chart of translation training curricula at the three universities.

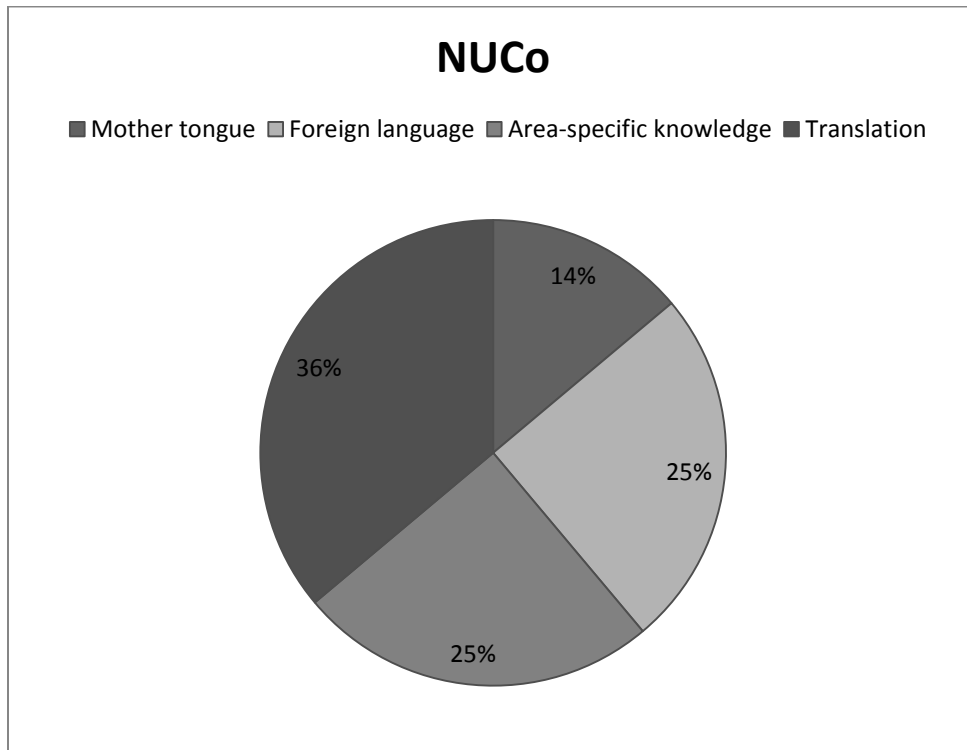
2.3 National University of Comahue

NUCo⁵ offers a four-year English > Spanish translation training program.

The subject-competence relation at NUCo shows that the proportion of subjects devoted to cultivating the translation competence is at its best considering the three university curricula.

Chart 4

⁵ This has been launched as the “new” curriculum for NUCo English > Spanish translation training program. Although this recently created curriculum has not been enforced yet, the so-called “Plan 499/2011” is meant to cope with the demands of a highly specialized and digitalized translation market. More information about its implementation, the graduates’ profile and its impact can be found at <http://fadelweb.uncoma.edu.ar>.



Since the “Plan 499/2011” curriculum has not been enforced yet, the conduction of most of the subjects in the translation competence area is described in relation to how they have been taught in the “old curriculum.”

Table 3

Years	Subjects	Descriptions

First Year	Introduction to Translation	<p>Reading comprehension techniques for a collected selection of genres are introduced. Discourse is analyzed to raise awareness of translation transfers and challenges.</p> <p>The linguistic model prevails.</p>
Second Year	Translation and Translation Studies	<p>The specifics of the General Theory of Terminology are introduced in order to provide tools for the analysis of genres which are particularly dealt with in Literary Translation, Technical Translation and Scientific Translation.</p> <p>The information model prevails.</p>
Third Year	Legal Translation I	<p>A collected selection of legal genres is introduced; translation is proposed from the point of view of contrastive analysis of generic formants, cultural referents, and administrative systems. Cf. Commercial Translation.</p> <p>The communication model prevails.</p>

	<p>Technical Translation</p>	<p>The syllabus presents a selection of genres in which “technical” language is typically found; generic formants and types of discourse are studied from a contrastive point of view. Cf. Scientific Translation.</p> <p>The communication model prevails.</p>
	<p>Commercial Translation</p>	<p>A collected selection of genres related to Marketing and Commerce is introduced; translation is proposed from the point of view of contrastive analysis of generic formants, cultural referents, and administrative systems. Cf. Legal Translation.</p> <p>The communication model prevails.</p>
	<p>Computer Assisted Translation</p>	<p>*</p>

Fourth Year	Literary Translation	<p>The syllabus presents a succession of Literary Studies critical paradigms and a selection of genres related to each of them. The terms of critical analysis conveyed by each paradigm are expected to provide tools for the analysis of literariness. Mirroring or replicating “solutions” are the third stage of this “genre-based” cloze reading technique.</p> <p>The communication model prevails.</p>
	Scientific Translation	<p>The syllabus presents a selection of genres in which “scientific” language is typically found; generic formants and types of discourse are studied from a contrastive point of view. Cf. Technical Translation.</p> <p>The communication model prevails.</p>
	Legal Translation 2	See Legal Translation 1.
	Legal Translation 3	See Legal Translation 1.
	Workshop for Court Assistants	*

	Interpretation	**
	Professional Practice	***

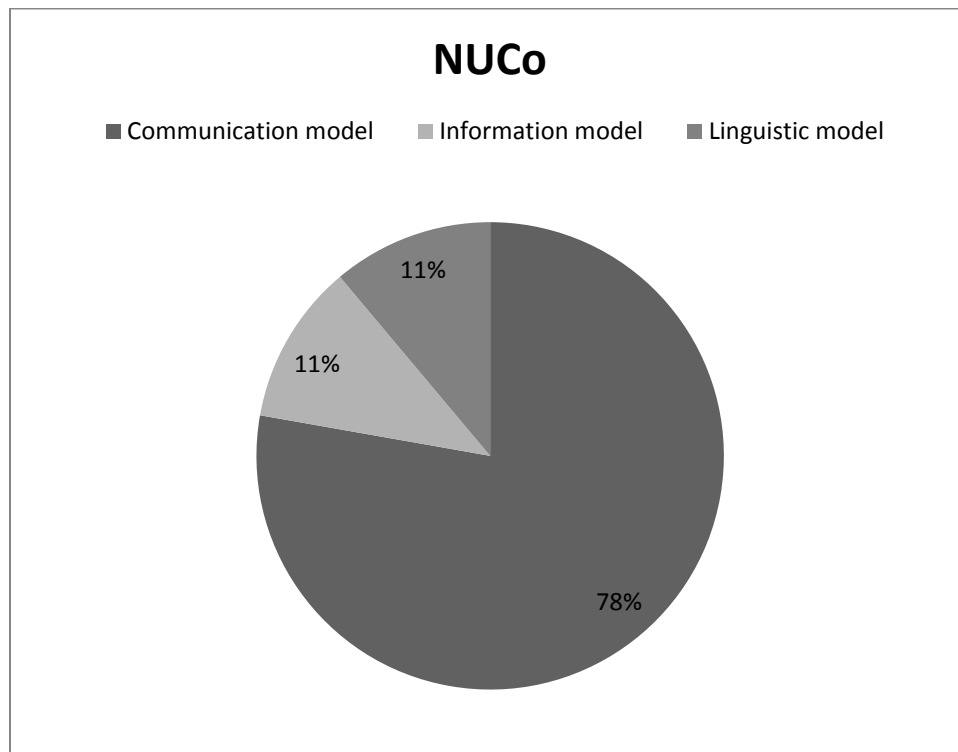
* “Computer Assisted Translation” and the “Workshop for Court Assistants” wait to be introduced in the “Plan 499/2011” curriculum. Since they have not been taught, it is too early to “identify” these subjects with a model.

** See “Introduction to the Practice of Interpretation” at NUC, and “Interpretation” at NULP.

*** “Professional Practice” is a student residency. Students are expected to “design a commission,” and work on the translation of a text of their choice with the guidance of a tutor (see “Technical Translation” and “Scientific Translation” at NUC, and “Professional Residency” at NULP).

This pie chart reveals that the communication model dominates the translation training arena in the NUCo degree. On the other hand, one can also notice that the sequential model is not implemented at all in this program.

Chart 5



In **I.Preliminary words**, I briefly presented the models that dominate the translation training arena at my selection of Argentinean universities. The purpose of this article is neither to provide an exhaustive description of any of these models, nor to test their success – especially that of the knowledge model – in the conduction of translation-specific subjects at any of the three universities. I have merely intended to show that – out of all five models – the knowledge model proves not to be hegemonic.⁶

III. The knowledge model

3.1 Relevance and sustainability of the knowledge model

¹² See Appendix 2. The contrastive bar chart pictures the use and position of translation training models in the three universities.

The knowledge model hints at describing cases with TS categories. To begin with, students are asked to run exploratory tasks of source text recognition. This requires that they clear up five main characteristics of a given written piece, which can be tested on a simple grid: i) the linguistic functions that dominate the text, ii) the “model reader” that will potentially “use” the text, iii) the purpose that guided text production, as it has been carried out by the author, iv) what would – generally speaking – be considered acceptable concerning text form and content, v) in opposition to the latter, what would be gauged as unacceptable in terms of form and content in a given text. Next, students focus on the production of a target version using a similar grid; point iii) centers on the different agents of the translation circuit, be them translators, desk-top publishers, or project managers.

Translation procedures and TS models and theories should be chosen as cornerstones for both theoretical and practical instruction in translation. I believe that the risk that is otherwise run is presenting a degree program and a whole discipline as dominated by practice – contradictory as it may sound!

Thus I claim the knowledge model to be the standing position from which TS should be introduced in translation training programs in Argentina (Cf. HurtadoAlbir, 2003). Only by familiarizing students with categories and methodologies proper to TS can we expect students to develop critical thinking and reason out their practice using the specialized language of the discipline.

Given that it evolves around TS theories and models, the knowledge model might on the other hand be tilted as detached from the needs of the “labor market.” Before this piece of criticism on the usefulness of the model, three crucial arguments arise.

Firstly, whereas it is of the utmost importance to give practice the space it needs in order to train students to produce translations up to quality standards, it is equally mandatory to foster reflection on practice. It is in this light that a disciplinary metalanguage has to be cultivated. The technical precision with which the object of study of any given field of knowledge is named and thus constructed has been naturalized to such an extent that none of us would expect differently when listening to a doctor speak about a condition, or an accountant talk about market behavior. Consequently, and in order to keep up with today’s competitive labor standards, any

translation training program should have as its basis a theoretically informed orientation.

Secondly, the knowledge model gives students a whole body of hints about how and why translated versions have become industrialized products in nowadays translation market; this, in turn, guides students into an ethics of action in the labor field.

Thirdly, it is one of the strongest points of this article that TS has to be brought into the limelight by educating students to do research. As it has been previously stated, this starts with aiding them to approach their object of study by using a metalanguage informed by TS categories. Only by doing this will they be able to prepare for the research niches which are yet to be explored and exploited. This leads us into the consideration that the research arena is nothing but one more market field, with an administration, a budget and a politics of its own, just like any other “labor market.”

The knowledge model being the option which is more highly informed by categories pertaining Translation Studies, it should be the one to be applied and tested in all translation-specific groups of subjects so as to boost the visibility of the discipline in the eyes of the local academia. This will in turn help to cope with a number of hindrances that researchers have to overcome, to name but a few i) the fact that research projects and scientific production is not necessarily assessed by translation scholars, ii) the lack of budgetary resources assigned to TS, since it is not recognized as an “independent” area of knowledge.

In the next section I will introduce some points of discussions about the application of translation training models in the different stages of translation training programs, i.e. propaedeutic stage, middle stage, and advanced stage.

IV.All models considered

Following, I will elaborate shortly on the models under discussion, and I will argue how they can be linked with translation specific subjects in the curricula. In order to do this, I will group the subjects in all three universities in four groups: propaedeutic group, technical-scientific group (middle-stage training), legal and commercial group, and literary group (advanced-stage training). With this I aim to identify i) groups of

translation-specific subjects, and ii) connections among such groups and translation training models.

As I said before, the communication model is exploited whenever “translation problems” (HurtadoAlbir, 2003: 279) are identified after close inspection of generic formants. “Translation solutions” (Cf. HurtadoAlbir, 2003: 289) are mostly suggested, and are either accepted or rejected depending on what is expected and assessed as natural, and thus acceptable, in the target language context and in a given register.

In the propaedeutic stage of translation training, identification of generic formants not only educates students in how and why a written piece becomes – to put it roughly – a recipe and not a bank account balance. With technical-scientific and legal or commercial materials students are encouraged to unveil differences in generic formants in the source and target languages. Attention often concentrates in cases in which transfers are possible and could lead to translation mistakes. The communication model prevails in all subjects dealing with literary texts in my selection of curricula. Syllabi undertake a list of genres including Prose, Drama and Poetry. Even if all three make for (three) units or modules, they may unfold into segments following the criteria of artistic movements, translation problems, or the binary “written / oral fiction.”

The information model resorts to terminological analysis; translation problems are detected depending on the use of terminology and specialized languages, and cases are oftentimes explained with categories from the General Theory of Terminology. This model seeks to understand translation solutions through descriptions of word-formation and word choice at variance with text-types and language register.

In subjects at the early stages of translation training using terminological analysis can result in a number of sensitizing activities for students, especially considering a disquieting and generalized claim that students are increasingly showing that they can master but one language register in their mother tongue. As a matter of fact, professors hold the opinion that students can express by using only a colloquial or informal register, and that they “write just like they speak,” more often than not transferring the writing codes standardized by digital technologies and communication within social networks. Students use the same type of language that is acceptable in chatting, twitting, inscribing messages on social network walls, or sending phone messages. With technical, scientific, legal and commercial texts pondering on word formation and word

choice sets students thinking upon translation problems and providing translation solutions on a lexical and, alternatively, a morphosyntactic level. Thus, students tend to proceed in quite a similar manner as they do in applying the communication model. If we consider literary translation the information model offers a useful tool to diagnose poetic or fictional exploitation in the source language, and to reproduce it in the target language.

The sequential model explores the particularities of translation commissions, especially in the circuits of translation pools and large translation projects. Attention concentrates on three factors: i) the different roles played by agents ranging from desktop publishers to project managers, ii) the phases of translation commissions, and iii) the succession of steps taken in text composition.

In propaedeutic subjects in translation training programs the usefulness of the sequential model is limited to illustrating what the everyday working life of a freelance translator can be like, as much as the working environment and atmosphere of “blue collar” translators. As for the other three groups of language-specific translation material, the sequential model can prove to be of great utility. Actually, it is the sequential model – if any out of the five translation training models typified and discussed in this article – that gives students “a taste” of what the translation market is like. The sequential model is specially meant to train students how to act and react, how to behave and relate with others in the social pyramids and amidst the knowledge hierarchies of the market in general, and the translation market in particular.

Another advantage of resorting to the sequential model in advanced stages of translation training is that students are shown that not only the production of technical, scientific, legal and commercial texts has been industrialized, but literary translation has entered the translation industry, bears the traits of tandem production. Consequently, exposing students to translation production guided by the laws of offer and demand can show that all types of language-specific translation material bears the traits of serialized and chain production (see 3.1).

When the linguistic model is applied discourse is segmented, and frequent collocations and grammar structures are classified. This is meant to detect translation patterns which repeatedly occur in target language versions, which will eventually set standards or normalize procedures among translators.

In the propaedeutic stage of education the linguistic model can help sensitize students into the peculiarities of language use, and mainly into how they can establish the standards for what is considered an acceptable translation, or target-language-oriented translation. In later periods of translation training, when technical, scientific, legal and commercial texts are translated, this model works similarly to the information model, so much so for literary translation.

As I have already stated, the linguistic model is an undeniable asset in the Argentinean context considering that it meets multiple needs. It is a tool both to train students in the foreign language which is part of the language pair involved in translation, and to sensitize advanced students in the particularities of specialized languages and their implementation on target language versions.

In the knowledge model, students are driven to develop their own perspectives on i) market demands that account for the production, circulation and consumption of translations – this can invariably be backed up by Functionalism or the Theory of Polysystems –; ii) the standards that translated products are expected to meet so as to be marketed in different consumption niches; iii) the recognition of translation products as independent from source language versions.

In the propaedeutic group of translation-specific subjects, the knowledge model can be applied given that students can rely on a number of language-specific subjects to ensure training in the foreign language and their mother tongue. Since the knowledge model leads students to reason out translated versions and their own translation practice with TS theoretical frameworks, it falls short of backing up Argentinean students' needs to strengthen their linguistic competence once they enter university. As to the rest of texts – i.e. technical, scientific, legal, commercial, and literary –, the knowledge model gives space for reflection informed by TS theories and models, and in so doing it functions quite similarly to the sequential model. That is to say, the application of both the knowledge and the sequential models serves the purpose of proving that all text types are subject to industrialized production within a market governed by the forces of translation offer and demand (see 3.1).

V. Final considerations

In this article I have shown that:

- in three of the most renowned Argentinean universities, developing linguistic competence both in the mother tongue and the foreign language is a key point to content selection in the translation training programs;
- the communication and the linguistic models prevail;
- the knowledge model is an unexplored option (Cf. Arrizabalaga, 2012a).

All three points must be borne in mind when it comes to understanding administrative, budgetary and ideological aspects of local university and academia policies. With the approach of a period of updating and renovation of curricular design, we have to remain attentive to the give-and-take of instruction and research in the translation training field in Argentina.

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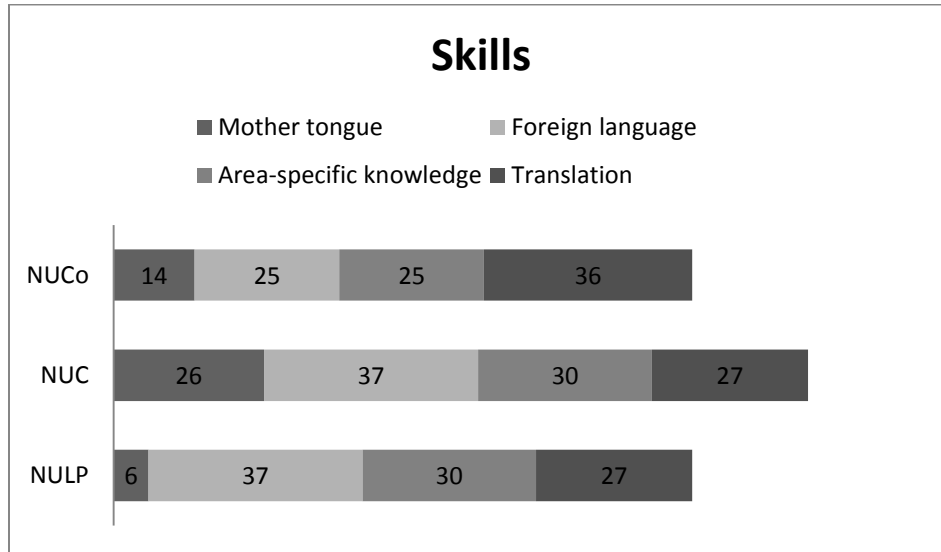
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Appendix 1



Appendix 2

