



Convention UCLV 2021
Central University "Marta Abreu" of Las Villas
**"INTEGRATING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE INTO THE
TRAINING OF TRANSLATORS AND INTERPRETERS"**

**FIRST INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM "HUMAN
DEVELOPMENT, EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE"**

**Title: INTEGRATING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE
COMPETENCE INTO THE TRAINING OF TRANSLATORS AND
INTERPRETERS**

***Título: INTEGRACIÓN DE LA COMPETENCIA COMUNICATIVA
INTERCULTURAL EN LA FORMACIÓN DE TRADUCTORES E
INTÉRPRETES***

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Abstract:

- **Problem to deal with:** The Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) is an essential tool in the English Language teaching and learning process, particularly in the training of translators and interpreters. In today's globalized world, the translator/interpreter needs to acquire a certain level of ICC in order to function as a bridge between different sociocultural groups, minimizing the effects of cultural misunderstandings.
- **Aims:** To propose a set of activities for the subject *Introducción a la Traducción* in the third academic year of the degree course English Language with A Second Foreign Language so that students become interculturally competent translators and interpreters.
- **Methodology:** A mixed-method approach was held in this study. The sample included ten fourth-year students of the academic year 2019-2020 and five professors from the English Language Department, School of Humanities at the Universidad Central "Marta Abreu" de Las Villas.



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- **Results and Discussion:** The needs analysis concerning the current situation of intercultural communicative competence in the degree course English Language with A Second Foreign Language indicated that most of the participants thought that integrating ICC into the teaching and learning process of translation would be very useful for the enrichment of students for their future professional lives.
- **Conclusions:** The activities proposed are intended to sensitize students with respect to the importance of intercultural communicative competence in their training as future professional translators and interpreters. They could be a very suitable pedagogical tool in the teaching and learning process of translation in order to foster the students' intercultural communicative competence.

Resumen:

- **Problemática:** La Competencia Comunicativa Intercultural (CCI) es una herramienta esencial en el proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje de la lengua inglesa, especialmente en la formación de traductores e intérpretes. En el mundo globalizado actual, el traductor/intérprete necesita adquirir un determinado nivel de competencia comunicativa intercultural para poder funcionar como puente entre diferentes grupos socioculturales y minimizar los efectos que puedan ocurrir debido a malentendidos entre culturas.
- **Objetivo(s):** Proponer un conjunto de actividades para la asignatura Introducción a la Traducción en el tercer año académico de la mencionada carrera que contribuya a que los estudiantes se formen como traductores e intérpretes interculturalmente competentes en su futura vida profesional.
- **Metodología:** Se empleó un enfoque mixto para el presente estudio. La muestra incluyó diez estudiantes del cuarto año del curso académico 2019-2020 y cinco profesores del Departamento de Lengua Inglesa, Facultad de Humanidades, Universidad Central “Marta Abreu” de Las Villas.
- **Resultados y discusión:** El análisis de necesidades acerca de la situación actual de la competencia comunicativa intercultural en la carrera Lengua inglesa con segunda lengua extranjera demostró que la mayoría de los participantes



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consideran que la integración de la CCI en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje de la traducción podría ser muy útil en su formación profesional.

- **Conclusiones:** Las actividades pueden ser una herramienta pedagógica muy apropiada en el proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje de la traducción con el fin de potenciar la competencia comunicativa intercultural de los estudiantes.

Keywords: Culture; Intercultural Communicative Competence; Interculturality; Translator and Interpreter Training

Palabras Clave: *Cultura; Competencia Comunicativa Intercultural; Interculturalidad; Formación de Traductores e Intérpretes*

1. Introduction

Today's globalized world requires a new type of translator/interpreter. Translators and interpreters, more than simple interlinguistic mediators, are increasingly becoming intercultural mediators. Therefore, training in intercultural communication becomes vital in their training.

This new translator/interpreter needs to acquire certain abilities which go beyond the borders of linguistics. He/she needs to understand culture, with its several dimensions comprising both the tangible and intangible aspects of human behavior and manners. Also, he/she needs to know how a culture can influence another in a process called interculturality. Therefore, improving the intercultural communicative competence of future generations of translators and interpreters is becoming a recognized priority.

In 1976, Hall developed the iceberg analogy of culture. He reasoned that there are some visible aspects above the water, but there is a larger portion hidden beneath the surface. Also, Hall subclassified culture into two types: the one with "C" (the tip of the iceberg) and the other with "c" (the part below the surface). Culture with "C" refers to the tangible or physical representations: art, music, dance, rituals, religion, cooking, shelter, clothing and technologies. The other with "c" refers to the immaterial aspects of culture: principles of social organization, mythology, philosophy and the social relations



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established between people. This last one determines the behavior of citizens from one culture or another (Hall, 1976).

Another key concept to consider is that of interculturality, defined by Garbey Savigne & Enríquez O’Farrill (2016) as a type of relationship that different cultures establish intentionally between them which fosters dialogue and interaction based on the mutual recognition of their respective values, beliefs and ways of life. They explain that the concept refers to both different and distant cultures and the relationships established between people belonging to different ethnic, social, professional, and gender groups within the borders of the same community.

The concept of intercultural communication has attracted the attention of linguists. Allwood (1985), for example, concludes that intercultural communication is “the sharing of information on different levels of awareness and control between people with different cultural backgrounds, where different cultural backgrounds include both national cultural differences and differences which are connected with participation in the different activities that exist within a national unit.”

As for intercultural communicative competence, Sercu (2005) points out that in order to deal with intercultural experiences a person needs a number of intercultural competences identified as willingness to engage with the foreign culture, self-awareness and the abilities to look upon oneself from the outside; to see the world through the others’ eyes, to cope with uncertainty, to act as a cultural mediator, to evaluate others’ points of view, to consciously use culture learning skills and to read the cultural context, and to understand that individuals cannot be reduced to their collective identities. Moran (2001) further argues that the goal of developing Intercultural Communicative Competence is to enable cultural learners to acquire a mix of culture-specific understanding and culture-general understanding by emphasizing intellectual insight and empathy regarding a specific culture.

The study herein presented was motivated by the fact that students of the degree course English Language with A Second Foreign Language at the Universidad Central “Marta Abreu” de Las Villas (UCLV) might not be fully acquainted with the important role intercultural communication will play in their future professional lives as translators and



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interpreters.. Therefore, the general aim of the study was to propose a set of activities for the subject *Introducción a la Traducción* in the third academic year of the aforementioned degree course to help students become interculturally competent translators and interpreters.

2. Methodology

In the study herein reported, the authors adopted a mixed-method approach since it focuses on collecting, analyzing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data, providing a more comprehensive understanding of research problems (Creswell and Plano, 2011).

In this research some methods were applied:

Theoretical methods: historical and logical, analysis and synthesis, inductive and deductive, structural and systemic, for constructing a theoretical framework to systematize the main concepts associated with the topic of research and their relationships.

Empirical methods: surveys and participant observation, for collecting and processing data.

Statistical and mathematical methods: percentage analysis in order to tabulate and analyze the data.

The sample consisted of ten fourth-year students of the academic year 2019-2020 and five professors from the English Language Department, School of Humanities at the Universidad Central "Marta Abreu" de Las Villas. To choose the sample, some aspects were taken into consideration: academic level of students, academic and scientific degree of professors, willingness to collaborate with the research.

The whole research process consisted of three main stages: 1) bibliographic review in order to construct a theoretical framework to systematize the main concepts associated with the topic of research and their relationships, 2) needs analysis concerning the current situation of intercultural communicative competence in the degree course English Language with A Second Foreign Language and 3) design of a set of activities



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to improve the intercultural communicative competence in the subject *Introducción a la Traducción* in the third academic year of the above-mentioned degree course.

3. Results and Discussion

A survey was applied to students for exploring their point of view concerning their acquisition of Intercultural Communicative Competence throughout their studies and the importance they attach to its study. Another survey, applied to professors, was aimed at gathering some relevant information regarding the current knowledge and development of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC). The participant observation helped to get a closer insight into students' practices regarding intercultural competence in the subject *Introducción a la Traducción*.

After analyzing the results of surveys and participant observation, the following regularities can be pointed out:

- Both students and professors believed that the students' knowledge about intercultural communicative competence has to be improved it
- In general, students and professors considered that the development of ICC is acceptable in the course
- Professors and students agreed that the teaching of ICC could be integrated in almost every discipline of this course
- Most of the surveyed participants thought that the inclusion of ICC would be very useful for the enrichment of students for their future professional lives

As stated in the Introduction, the main purpose of the study herein presented was to propose a set of activities to improve the intercultural communicative competence in the subject *Introducción a la Traducción* in the third academic year of the degree course English Language with A Second Foreign Language. They are intended to sensitize third-year students with respect to the importance of intercultural communicative competence in their training as future professional translators and interpreters. All of the activities fulfill the following requirements:

- They were designed according to educative and intercultural communication criteria.



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- They are centered on students' Intercultural Communication needs, interests, and competences.
- They may encourage students to be aware of and to develop an interest for their own culture and for foreign cultures.
- They draw students' attention to the ways people from different cultural backgrounds communicate.
- They can equip the future translators/interpreters with some of the basic competences they need to acquire in order to develop ICC
- They can foster students' skills of observation, interpretation and critical cultural awareness.
- They can help students to manage and mediate the cross-cultural clashes and misunderstandings which might arise when translating to and from different languages with their corresponding cultures.
- They can be applied by teachers in between the planned lessons of the subject *Introducción a la Traducción* of the course English Language with Second Foreign Language to expand students' knowledge regarding intercultural communication.

A sample of the activities proposed is provided below. All of them contain seven sections: Topic, Objective, Technique, Teaching Aids, Time, Procedure, and Evaluation.

Activity 1

- Topic: Compiling a Bilingual Glossary
- Objective: To compile a bilingual glossary about specific cultural topics that will help to expand the cultural competence of students.
- Technique: Group work
- Teaching Aids: blackboard, chalk, dictionaries
- Time: 10-15 minutes
- Procedure:
 - The teacher will get the students to make in groups a bilingual glossary of terms used in a) recreational activities, b) hotel reception and accommodation, c) typical food



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from both languages culture (one choice per group). The students will have a two-week deadline to hand in the glossary.

- The glossary will contain up to 50 items/terms extracted from parallel texts in the source and target languages (e.g. a digital magazine/newspaper/brochure that has both English and Spanish version).
- The teacher will provide links to websites related to recreational activities, hotel reception and accommodation, and typical food that will support students' research. However, the students can use any other source.
- The students should accompany the glossary with a comment on equivalence and non-equivalence deriving from cultural differences, as well as on possible emotional connotations inherent in the items (e.g. a word may have two equivalents but one has a negative connotation).
- The glossary should include definitions in both languages.
- When students hand in the glossary to the teacher, they will also share it with the group and copy their partners' glossary in order to read them and expand their intercultural knowledge.
- Evaluation:
 - The teacher asks students if they think this exercise will help them expand their intercultural insight into both cultures and why. Also, the teacher asks them if this brief research will be helpful when facing a translation about these three topics (recreational activities, hotel reception and accommodation, and typical food) and why. These questions will test their awareness concerning the importance of acquiring intercultural knowledge.

Activity 2

- Topic: History as a reflection of our identity
- Objective: 1. To develop interest for our own as well as another culture. 2. To learn that before engaging in the translation process, the professional translator must do some background research about the topic.
- Technique: Individual and group work.



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- Teaching Aids: printed material (a passage of history from the book *Historia de Cuba -Nivel medio superior*), blackboard, chalk, dictionaries
- Time: 45-50 minutes
- Procedure:
 - The teacher will introduce the activity by explaining that culture is to a certain extent a result of history. In history we can find the answers to why we behave in a certain way, why we speak in a certain way or with a certain accent, why we like a certain kind of music, food, or why we defend the values we do at present.
 - Then, the teacher will ask the students about their history. (Some passages of Cuban History will be very difficult to talk about, or they would feel insecure because they cannot or might not find an equivalent in the target culture, which is English, to the extent that some things they might feel the need to explain them in their mother tongue. This will prove them that interculturality may be tricky when we encounter people from different cultures.)
 - Next, the teacher will give the students a passage of Cuban History with some expressions in bold that will pose some difficulty when we plan to translate them due to culture-bound issues (*bloqueo, campo socialista, período especial en tiempos de paz*). The teacher asks them to do a reverse translation (15 minutes) paying special attention to those words.

A passage of Cuban History

*En medio del mundo unipolar predominante en los inicios de la década de 1990, la Isla enfrentó una situación de doble **bloqueo**; pues, junto a la intensificación del bloqueo económico norteamericano, se unía ahora la imposibilidad de acceder a los productos y mercados del desaparecido **campo socialista**. La situación para la economía cubana fue tan crítica que obligó a declarar al país en **período especial en tiempos de paz**. Muchos pensaban que era el colapso de la Revolución; pero el pueblo cubano, con muchas iniciativas, sacrificios y unidad en torno a la dirección de la Revolución, logró preservar las principales conquistas obtenidas con el socialismo. (Callejas Opisso, Loyola Vega, Díaz Pendás, López Civeira, & Rodríguez Ben, 2014)*



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- Afterwards, the teacher proceeds to check the translation. A student will be asked to write his/her translation on the board. All the class should analyze it and provide other solutions and the teacher should clarify any doubts concerning the expressions in bold. He/she should explain how to translate it and the best equivalent. The teacher will highlight the equivalents of troublesome expressions such as *bloqueo*, *campo socialista*, *período especial en tiempos de paz*, taking into account the context where it is produced.

Equivalent of the phrases

In texts issued in Cuba for foreigners, the most widely accepted equivalent should be:

-*Bloqueo*: *blockade*.

-*Campo socialista*: *East European socialist bloc/ Socialist bloc*

-*Período especial en tiempos de paz o simplemente período especial*: *The Cuban Economic Crisis that started in 1991/ Special Period in Time of Peace (Special Period)*. When using the second equivalent it is recommended to write the whole phrase the first time and then write just what is in parenthesis

- After checking the translation, the teacher asks the students the conclusions they have come to during the activity. (e.g. before translating, we should first be aware and do research about the subject, in both languages and/or cultures to deliver an accurate translation).
- As an assignment, the students should analyze culture-bound words (*milicias criollas*, *mulato*, *patria chica*, *cabildo*, *milicianos*) from another brief passage of Cuban history and translate it.

Passage of Cuban History

*Cuando las **milicias criollas**, integradas por blancos, negros y **mulatos** libres, se enfrentaron al invasor inglés, defendían todo lo suyo. La tierra donde habían nacido, sus familias y propiedades, su “**patria chica**” representada en su localidad o región, su religión, lengua, costumbres y tradiciones. Este sentido de pertenencia se manifestó en la valentía demostrada por José Antonio Gómez de Bullones (Pepe Antonio), regidor del **cabildo** de Guanabacoa, que al frente de una partida de **milicianos** hostilizó con sorpresivos y rápidos ataques a las tropas inglesas.*



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(Callejas Opisso, Loyola Vega, Díaz Pendás, López Civeira, & Rodríguez Ben, 2014)

- The students should also do some research about a specific passage of either U.S. or U.K. History for the next lesson and bring a paragraph or two of that passage in which it can be observed culture-bound issues.
- Evaluation:
 - The evaluation is done individually, through the students' conclusions of the activity and their behavior and participation in class.

Activity 3

- Topic: Analyzing a British Recipe
- Objective: 1. To learn about different ways of cooking, eating habits and cooking terminology in both the source culture (SC) and the target culture (TC). 2. To become acquainted with the differences in style, structure and level of precision between SC and TC when translating.
- Technique: Pair work and group work
- Teaching Aids: book of recipes (digital format), printed materials (recipe)
- Time: 20-25 minutes
- Procedure:
 - The teacher introduces briefly the topic, the book the students will be dealing with (Renal Recipe Book compiled by Renal dietitians), and the printed recipe they are going to analyze.

Recipe

Pumpkin Risotto

This is a filling dish and although it contains butternut squash (a vegetable with moderate amounts of potassium), it is made with rice (rather than potatoes) which lowers the potassium content of the overall dish. The cheese used for this recipe is minimal, however you can enjoy this meal without cheese making it lower in phosphate and fat.

Serves 3-4

- 570ml (1 pint) vegetable such as low salt Bouillon or chicken stock
- 1 small onion, chopped



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- *12 fresh sage leaves, chopped finely*
- *2 tbsp olive oil*
- *170g (6oz) Arborio (risotto) rice*
- *250g (9oz) pumpkin or butternut squash, diced small*
- *50g (2oz) butter*
- *Freshly ground black pepper*
- *Piece of fresh parmesan, or vegetarian parmesan-style grating cheese (optional)*

Preparation method

1. Heat the stock until almost boiling and then simmer over a very low heat. In a separate heavy-based saucepan sweat the onion in the oil until soft but not browned. Add the chopped sage and cook for a couple more minutes.

2. Add the rice and mix well for a few seconds to coat the grains with oil, then pour in one-third of the stock and bring to a gentle simmer. Cook until almost all the stock is absorbed. Add the pumpkin or squash and a little more stock, and continue to simmer gently until the stock is absorbed.

3. Add the remaining stock a little at a time, until the pumpkin is soft and the rice nicely al dente. You may not need all the stock, but the texture should be loose and creamy.

4. Stir the butter into the risotto, and season well with salt and pepper. Divide into four servings and add grated cheese.

- The teacher asks the students to read the introductory part of the recipe and to translate it taking into account the needs of the target culture (Spanish-speaking people, specifically Cubans in this case).
- After translating the first part, some students will share their translations out loud and the other students should pay attention with the objective to correct any mistakes or help to improve the text. The teacher will mediate this activity when required.
- Next, the teacher will provide printed papers with some recipes in the target language (Spanish) and asks the students to analyze and compare according to overall style, structure, and level of precision between the English and Spanish recipes.



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- On the basis of the students’ analysis, the teacher asks if there is a need for modification due to cultural reasons with regard to these three aspects, and asks to justify the answers with examples.
- The teacher sets as an assignment to identify at least five cooking terms or phrases in the recipe and translate them into students’ language (Spanish), making special emphasis on the ingredients and cooking instructions. The teacher remarks that cooking terminology is a culture-specific issue.
- Evaluation:
 - The teacher evaluates the students’ performance in class when they are asked to read out loud the translation of the introductory part of the recipe.
 - The teacher asks the students to summarize, according to what they have learnt in the lesson, the differences and similarities in style, structure and level of precision between SC and TC when translating.

Activity 4

- Topic: Two Versions of a Story
- Objective: To compare the Spanish translation of a short English story (about a culture-bound topic) and analyze the translation according to the lexis, syntactic formulations and style used.
- Technique: Pair work, group work
- Teaching Aids: printed copy of a short English story and its translation, dictionaries
- Time: 35-40 minutes
- Procedure:
 - Teacher asks students to read in groups of two a short story in English and its translation in Spanish.
 - Afterwards, the students should re-read them, and compare them with respect to the differences and similarities in lexis, syntactic formulations and style.
 - The students should write down these differences and similarities and think about the causes of these differences.
 - Teacher asks them if these differences are caused by syntactical differences between languages, by cultural differences that are reflected in the language use or by both.



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The students should discuss them with the whole class and take down notes about it with the examples (The teacher will mediate when there are some cultural aspects the students do not know of, providing the necessary information).

- Then, the teacher asks them to take a quick look at the similarities, note them down and share them with the class.
- The teacher asks the students if they agree with the translation and if they think the translated story is functional in the target language. Also, the teacher asks if they would have given a similar translation or if there is something they would have improved.
- The teacher will provide another short story as an assignment. The students should translate it paying special attention to the lexis, syntactic formulations and style used in the source language and the ones they will use in the target language. The translation should be handed in as an evaluation. The students will have a week deadline.
- Evaluation:
 - Students are evaluated while they answer what the teacher assigns them to do in class.

4. Conclusions

This paper reports a study conducted at the Universidad Central “Marta Abreu” of Las Villas (UCLV) with the degree course English Language with A Second Foreign Language. The study was aimed at proposing a set of activities for the subject *Introducción a la Traducción* in the third academic year of the degree course previously mentioned in order to help students become interculturally competent translators and interpreters. A mixed-method approach was held and the sample comprised ten fourth-year students of the academic year 2019-2020 and five professors from the English Language Department, School of Humanities at the Universidad Central “Marta Abreu” de Las Villas.

The activities proposed were designed on the basis of the theoretical foundations of the research and the regularities obtained from the needs analysis. Their main objective is to make third-year students aware of the importance of intercultural communicative



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competence in their training as future professional translators/interpreters. In addition, these activities could be a very suitable pedagogical tool in the teaching and learning process of translation in order to foster the students' intercultural communicative competence.

It will be advisable, for further work, to validate the effectiveness of the set of activities proposed after one academic year benchmarking. Also, conducting similar studies with other subjects of the discipline Translation and Interpreting will be of great help towards the training of translators and interpreters from an intercultural approach.

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