



Original article

## Didactic strategy to improve the teaching-learning process of translation

Estrategia didáctica para perfeccionar el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje de la traducción

Estratégia de ensino para melhorar o processo de ensino-aprendizagem da tradução

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### ABSTRACT

This article shows the main results of a doctoral research that focuses on the eradication of deficiencies that affect the teaching of translation in the Faculty of Spanish for Non-Spanish Speakers of the University of Havana. The objective is to present a didactic strategy, based on the task-based approach, for the improvement of the teaching-learning process of translation as a dynamic agent in the training of the future translator. The dialectical-materialist method was used as a general method, as well as methods of the theoretical level: the historical-logical, induction-deduction and analysis-synthesis. At the empirical level, the review of documents, the survey, the interview, the pedagogical test, the pre-experiment and expert consultation were used. The strategy is made up of theoretical foundations, principles and premises, characteristics, stages and a methodology in which the previous components are specified as a guide to the translation teaching-learning process towards its improvement. Methodological workshops were held to insert the work of the rest of the disciplines of the degree as support in the implementation of the strategy. The results obtained so far corroborated the effectiveness of the proposal, adding that it was possible to create a contract that allows students to carry out their preprofessional practices in the Translators and Interpreters Services Team of Cuba. The progress made exposed the real possibility of achieving higher levels of mastery of translation skills in students as future promoters of dialogue between cultures and nations.

**Keywords:** translation skills; task-based approach; teaching strategy; system; translation.

### RESUMEN

Este artículo muestra los principales resultados de una investigación doctoral que se enfoca en la erradicación de deficiencias que afectan la didáctica de la traducción en la Facultad de Español para

No Hispanohablantes de la Universidad de La Habana. El objetivo es presentar una estrategia didáctica, basada en el enfoque por tareas, para el perfeccionamiento del proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje de la traducción como agente dinamizador en la formación del futuro traductor. Se empleó como método general el dialéctico-materialista, así como métodos del nivel teórico: el histórico-lógico, la inducción-deducción y el análisis-síntesis. Del nivel empírico se utilizó el estudio documental, la encuesta, la entrevista, la prueba pedagógica, el pre-experimento y la consulta a expertos. La estrategia está integrada por fundamentos teóricos, principios y premisas, características, etapas y una metodología en la que se concretan los componentes anteriores como guía del proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje de la traducción hacia su perfeccionamiento. Se realizaron talleres metodológicos para insertar el trabajo del resto de las disciplinas de la carrera como apoyo en la implementación de la estrategia. Los resultados obtenidos hasta el momento corroboraron la efectividad de la propuesta, se añade que fue posible la creación de un contrato que permite a los estudiantes realizar sus prácticas preprofesionales en el Equipo de Servicios de Traductores e Intérpretes de Cuba. El avance logrado expuso la posibilidad real de alcanzar niveles superiores de dominio de las competencias de traducción en los estudiantes como futuros promotores del diálogo entre culturas y naciones.

**Palabras clave:** competencias de traducción; enfoque por tareas; estrategia didáctica; sistema; traducción.

## RESUMO

Este artigo apresenta os principais resultados de uma pesquisa de doutorado que tem como foco a erradicação das deficiências que afetam o ensino da tradução na Faculdade de Espanhol para Não Falantes de Espanhol da Universidade de Havana. O objetivo é apresentar uma estratégia didática, baseada na abordagem baseada em tarefas, para a melhoria do processo de ensino-aprendizagem da

tradução como agente dinâmico na formação do futuro tradutor. Utilizou-se como método geral o método dialéctico-materialista, bem como métodos de nível teórico: o histórico-lógico, a indução-dedução e a análise-síntese. No nível empírico utilizou-se o estudo documental, o levantamento, a entrevista, a prova pedagógica, o pré-experimento e a consulta a especialistas. A estratégia é composta por fundamentos teóricos, princípios e premissas, características, etapas e uma metodologia na qual os componentes anteriores são especificados como um guia para o processo de ensino-aprendizagem da tradução rumo ao seu aprimoramento. Foram realizadas oficinas metodológicas para inserir o trabalho das demais disciplinas do curso como apoio na implementação da estratégia. Os resultados obtidos até ao momento corroboraram a eficácia da proposta, acrescentando que foi possível criar um contrato que permite aos alunos realizarem as suas práticas pré-profissionais na Equipa de Serviços de Tradutores e Intérpretes de Cuba. Os progressos alcançados expuseram a possibilidade real de alcançar níveis mais elevados de domínio das competências de tradução nos estudantes como futuros promotores do diálogo entre culturas e nações.

**Palavras-chave:** habilidades de tradução; abordagem baseada em tarefas; estratégia de ensino; sistema; tradução.

## INTRODUCTION

In the current context of globalization, translation assumes a central position in the processes of international expansion. This situation places the world's universities before a need that cannot be postponed: the improvement of their scientific and methodological actions to adapt and develop the training of the future translator according to the new demands of the labor market.

In this sense, the studies linked to the didactics of translation, carried out by authors such as Hurtado (2019), Kelly and Horcas (2020), Trovato (2020) and Méndez, (2022), although they are relatively recent, insist on the need to a greater approach of the discipline to what will be the future professional life of the student.

These investigations also reveal a certain terminological instability and lack of consensus on the phenomenon of translation, which leads the present study to define it as a process and, in turn, as a product, in this way, it is understood as: interpretative and communicative process. of understanding a text in one language (source text) and then re-expressing it in another language (target text) which would be the result of this dynamic process of information communication between two different cultural systems, preserving the sense, the meaning, the style and function of the starting text. This concept includes positive aspects of the criteria of authors such as Andújar and Cañada (2011) and Hurtado (2019).

In this field, the task-based approach, which emerged in the teaching of foreign languages, is currently one of the didactic trends that mark the development of the translation teaching methodology at an international level to strengthen the link between education and society.

The didactics of translation from the task-based approach is based on the learning objectives and is structured around a series of enabling or enabling tasks (previous and propaedeutic steps to the translation activity itself), which lead, in stages and progressively, to the achievement of the final task, that is, the "translation" product (Hurtado, 2019). Frequently among the enabling tasks are the search for parallel texts, the identification of possible translation problems, the recognition of extralinguistic elements, as well as the selection of terminology that is difficult to translate.

Completing the translation task requires active and creative participation from the student, since it guides them in the construction of their knowledge by readjusting it to their cognitive system. According to Varona (2021) and Vega et AL. (2021), creativity allows the learner to face reality and find solutions. From this perspective, the task develops this skill in the student by working with important aspects such as fluidity of ideas, flexibility, problem solving and sensitivity during the translation process.

In this way, teaching planning in the translation task approach methodology is neither static nor rigid, since it is assumed to be a free and creative process resulting from continuous negotiation between teacher and student (Méndez, 2022), which It involves the active and conscious participation of the latter during the planning, execution and control of the teaching-learning process. The teacher guides and stimulates students in the development of their reflective autonomy and, by extension, in their personal and professional growth.

Along these lines, the preparation of the future translator of these times seeks to focus on the development of translation skills in students so that they can adequately work with cultural conventions and adapt their communicative strategies. The aim is for them to express in their language the full meaning of the source language in a clear and coherent style, which shows the use of terminology, format and uniform standards.

In this endeavor, the Spanish Language for Non-Spanish Speakers (LENH) degree offered at the Faculty of Spanish for Non-Spanish Speakers (FENHI) of the University of Havana, allows the young graduate, among other professional opportunities, to work as a translator, for For this reason, the discipline Translation is included in the study plan.

According to the current Curriculum E, which began to be implemented in the 2019-2020 academic year, this subject aims to master knowledge about the theory and practice of translation and the training of basic professional skills of the object of work of the profession: the Spanish language as a means of interlinguistic communication, which is manifested in the fields of action of translation. It is made up of three subjects, *Introduction to Translation Theory*, *Translation I* and *Translation II*, and has a total of 176 class hours.

However, despite the achievements obtained in this training, insufficiencies are still identified in the development of the translation teaching-learning process, among them are:

-Students are not able to achieve faithful and quality translations due to meaning, linguistic, terminological, intercultural and instrumental errors, and they also have difficulties in organizing work time.

-The documents that govern the discipline present a limited treatment of the most current theoretical and methodological conceptions related to translation didactics. Likewise, the use of tasks that allow the student to acquire and develop translation skills is scarce and poorly sequenced.

From the above, the improvement of the teaching-learning process of translation in this institution is conceived as a problem to be solved scientifically. To this end, the objective is established: to present a didactic strategy, based on the task-based approach, for the improvement of the teaching-learning process of translation, as a dynamic agent in the training of the future translator.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The comprehensive analysis of the contradictions that were observed in the problem to be investigated was carried out from a dialectical-materialist conception that allowed insufficiencies to be

confirmed; conceive the teaching-learning process of translation from the student's interaction with the people around him, inside and outside the academic context. It led to the implementation of procedural, gradual, contradictory, multifactorial, dialectical and logical learning during the completion of tasks, which took place in the midst of an active, systematic and socialized process of construction and reconstruction of content. Based on this method, theoretical, empirical and statistical methods were used to achieve concrete and verifiable results in practice.

At the theoretical level, historical-logical analysis was used to evaluate how the teaching-learning process of translation in higher education has developed; the stages that have marked it, its evolution and interrelationships. With the analysis and synthesis it was possible to systematize the ideas related to the object of study, the processing of information and the formulation of theoretical positions and conclusive ideas. Induction and deduction were used to arrive at general and specific conclusions related to translation didactics. With the systemic-structural method it was possible to make a correct conformation of the didactic proposal.

At the empirical level, the interview with directors of the Faculty of Spanish for Non-Spanish Speakers was used with the objective of knowing the value and significance given by them to the teaching-learning process of translation. The survey of teachers and students of the program to determine their needs and interests, enrich the information obtained and verify the problematic situation. Scientific observation to directly evaluate the data that describes the reality investigated. The documentary study, which included programs, P1, lesson plans of the Translation discipline, to determine irregularities in its didactics. The pedagogical test made it possible to diagnose the state of the training process under investigation. The pre-experiment and method of consulting experts to assess the effectiveness of the teaching strategy.

To fulfill the research objective, it was considered pertinent to intentionally select, from a population of 28 students, a sample made up of 10 Chinese students from the fourth year of the degree, as well as 13 professors and four directors of the Faculty of Spanish for Non-Spanish speakers from the University of Havana, who maintain a direct link with the degree.

## RESULTS

In the documentary study, pedagogical tests, surveys and interviews, the existence of the scientific problem was corroborated. The main irregularities were evidenced by the need for more intentional interdisciplinary work; the limited use of authentic materials and the potential of collaborative work; the lack of a greater number of translation tasks and objectivity in some evaluation indicators, as well as the insufficient development of translation skills in students.

To design the didactic strategy, we started from the analysis of the concept of strategy in the didactic context proposed by authors such as Ordaz (2011) and Valle (2010). From the theoretical systematization carried out, the didactic strategy was defined, based on the approach by translation tasks, for the development of the teaching-learning process of translation in the LENH career as *the system of actions and procedures selected, organized and founded from the points from a pedagogical, philosophical, sociological, psychological, linguistic, didactic and translational point of view, which plans, organizes and controls the development of the translation teaching-learning process, and which takes into account the development of communicative competence, linguistic skills and translation skills in the student, in order to reach an ideal or desired state of said training process in a specific time.*

The theoretical foundations that were determined for the didactic strategy,

although they essentially come from translation studies, were also framed in several sciences closely related to education: sociology, psychology, linguistics, pedagogy, didactics, among others. Each of the approaches assumed from these sciences found Marxist philosophy as a guiding framework, which provided the general dialectical materialist method with laws that allowed the knowledge process to materialize.

This proposal was based on a system of guiding principles that, taking into consideration the theoretical assumptions and the results of the diagnosis carried out, favored the improvement of the translation teaching-learning process:

1. Principle of the dialectical relationship between the logic of science and the logic of the profession taking into account the curricular and extracurricular dimension (Hurtado et al., 2022; Enrique José Varona University of Pedagogical Sciences, 2022)
2. Principle of the integral, systemic, dynamic and coherent nature of the translation task as a representative unit of professional practice (Weinberg and Maondaca, 2019)
3. Principle of harmonious combination between the stages of the translation didactic process (López, 2004; Trovato, 2020)

From the above, the following premises were derived:

- The dynamic nature between the logic of science and the logic of the profession during academic, work and extension activity
- The task of translation as a guiding axis in meeting the demands of professional practice
- The translation process goes through stages where three important functions of the translator merge: reader, interpreter and writer.



This didactic strategy based on the translation task approach was distinguished by being systemic, planned, flexible, contextualized, dynamic, developmental, interdisciplinary, creative and experiential. It was structured in four stages: *diagnosis*, *modeling*, *execution* and *evaluation*, which in their consecutiveness contributed to the fulfillment of the research objective, through logical actions. Among the results of these actions are:

-Preparation of a new translation correction scale, and its corresponding error penalty scale, which mitigated the subjectivity of some evaluation indicators.

-Modification of the programs, P-1, lesson plans, work texts, methodological guidelines of the three subjects that make up the Translation discipline.

-Design and implementation of methodological workshops, which were offered as tools to teachers for the development of more compensatory and effective strategies based on the eradication of deficiencies.

-Student participation in extracurricular activities to further develop their translation skills.

-Creation of virtual classrooms on the Enea platform for each of the subjects in the Translation discipline. In these spaces, lists of logs for translators in training were also offered, as well as a list of general and specialized dictionaries and glossaries that provide reliable terminology.

-Development of a translation task system

This task system was designed based on modifications made to the structure proposed by Weinberg and Maondaca (2019) and responded to a teaching unit of the Translation II subject. The work was proposed with an authentic translation assignment in Spanish titled "International purchase and sale contract for radial drill" to guarantee the student better

preparation for their future employment since, once graduated, they will begin to work in multinational companies, departments foreign trade and translation agencies (González,2023).

**Table 1-** Task system for fulfilling the translation assignment. Title of the translation assignment: International sales contract for an industrial drill

<b>Preparatory stage</b>	Task 1. Contact with the client
	Task 2. Previous knowledge
	Task 3. Translation assignment
	Task 4. Phases of work
	Task 5. Distribution of tasks
	Task 6. Documentation
	Task 7. Work order
<b>Semantic understanding stage</b>	Task 8. Text analysis
	Task 9. Translation problems
	Task 10. Textual genre
	Task 11. Textual markers and comprehension
	Task 12. Documentation and terminology
<b>Production stage and review of the arrival text</b>	Task 13. Writing in target language
	Task 14. Translation
	Task 15. Adaptation to the assignment
	Task 16. Technical translation procedures
	Task 17. Successes and errors
	Task 18. Spanish language problems

This system of tasks had as its final communicative objective the production of a text in the target language as stipulated in the assignment. Therefore, all the work carried out in each task responded to the needs imposed by this objective, that is, what did the student need to know to produce a final text that meets the requirements of the translation assignment?

The structure assumed for the sequencing of tasks was based on the same presentation scheme that covered the following aspects: a) number of the translation task according to the position it occupies within the didactic unit; b) title of the translation task; c) brief introduction, to contextualize the student with the learning situation that arises; d) objectives

of the task; e) teaching materials necessary to carry out the task; f) necessary support resources; g) dynamic (individual work, in pairs or in teams, face-to-face or non-face-to-face activity.); h) type of classroom; i) development of the task; j) translation skills that are fundamentally developed; and k) comments.

The tasks were grouped into three subsystems:

Subsystem 1. *Pre-translation tasks* aimed at activating thematic knowledge, working with parallel texts, documentary search and planning the translation process.

Subsystem 2. *Semantic understanding tasks* aimed at searching for the logic of the development of the text, locating its semantic logical relationships (cause effect, condition, concession, purpose or others) and recognizing linguistic and extralinguistic elements.

Subsystem 3. *Translation and review tasks of the incoming text*.

For the grading of the tasks, factors such as:

- the characteristics of the text (the complexity and linguistic, thematic and cultural specificity)
- the quantity and quality of the available documentation sources (technical difficulties)
- the requirements of the translation assignment that imply the intended functions, the recipients, the medium, the time available, format of the text received (professional difficulties)
- the level of competence (linguistic, cultural, translation), cognitive styles and the general and thematic background of the students (competence difficulties).

The results obtained from the implementation, through the pre-experiment, of the designed translation task system revealed a significant progress in the students, when compared with those of previous evaluations, it was observed that there were no failures and the incidence of errors was lower. serious meaning or translation. 50% of the students achieved the maximum score, (a) equivalent to 5 points, 30% were evaluated as (b) with 4 points, by presenting completely acceptable translations and the remaining 20% received the grade of (c) 3 points. The main errors found were caused by lack of terminological knowledge, linguistic errors (absence of quotation marks, inadequacy to the textual typology), serious and minor errors of meaning (suppression of necessary information).

From the students' opinions about their experiences during the implementation of the translation task system, the following strengths and weaknesses are extracted:

### Strengths

- They were more aware that translation is not a simple task, it is necessary to have a lot of linguistic, thematic and cultural knowledge to deal with it.
- A very interesting and necessary topic for professional training was worked on.
- They became better trained in the use of diverse sources of information and different types of dictionary and glossary.
- They used the same translation correction scale as the teacher.
- They designed their own glossary with specialized terminology.
- They increased their linguistic, thematic and cultural knowledge.
- They learned to work as a team in an ethical and responsible way. Each one was more demanding and responsible with themselves, since their own work had an impact on that of the group.
- They had contact with experts for the first time.

- They became familiar with the professional world of translation: they learned to find and solve problems. They learned about translation rates and the different functions that a translator can assume.
- They were more aware of their mistakes and successes. They detected errors that would go unnoticed if they were not reviewed by other people.
- They learned to respect, to take into account the opinion and vision of third parties.
- They improved in the organization of work time.
- They learned to negotiate, debate and justify translation options.
- They used different solutions for the same problem.
- They applied the theory learned in the practice of translation.

#### **Weaknesses:**

- It was complex to coordinate the different rhythms and ways of working, to avoid delaying the work of others.
- It was difficult to bring together diverse points of view, since some used to think that their translation option was the best.
- They felt "forced" to work, since they had to account for the work done on each task.

The evaluation process of the teaching strategy also occupied three other moments. The first, through a pedagogical test whose results showed a greater development of translation skills in the students, which demonstrated that with the insertion of the task system, the deficiencies identified in the translation teaching-learning process decreased. It is worth noting that better time and information management was observed in the students.

The second moment, through the Preprofessional Practice IV subject, which in coordination with the Translation discipline, worked at the *República Federativa de Brasil primary school* located

in the Cerro municipality, during these exchanges the students wrote reports in Chinese and Spanish, about their actions and impressions in the activities carried out. The quality observed during the review of these productions also confirmed the progress achieved.

The second moment, in the final exam of the subject Translation II, where results superior to those achieved in the previous evaluations were obtained, this revealed progress in the students since none obtained evaluations of (d) 2 and (c) 3 points. In general sense, no serious errors were detected, however, it is necessary to continue the work in order to eradicate linguistic and instrumental errors that still affect written expression.

The progress achieved in this research was also the result of the interdisciplinary work that, in parallel, was carried out to increase the mastery of the Spanish language in the students of the program. From the reflective analysis in the methodological workshops given, each teacher extracted criteria that allowed him to reevaluate his actions and create new work alternatives in order to raise the students' linguistic and cultural knowledge. At the same time, spaces for debate and reflection were provided in the meetings of the year's group, which resulted in the enrichment of the collective experience, the improvement of actions, the search for new ways and forms that make them more effective in their application.

With this interdisciplinary support, students during the translation process were able to establish constant connections between knowledge that allowed them to reinforce concepts, more easily recognize extralinguistic elements, locate information in new sources of documentation and use the Spanish language more appropriately.

Through the use of the expert consultation method, it was observed that there was a consensus on the importance and need for the implementation of the didactic strategy in the context of the LENH career and it was



recognized that this has an impact on the professional and comprehensive training of the student of foreign languages. This analysis allowed us to assess to what extent the strategy contributes to the development of the teaching-learning process of translation and the effectiveness of its implementation in the degree. Likewise, it revealed that the experts considered that the proposed strategy, in its entirety, managed to coherently combine the theoretical essence with the practical-methodological aspect in its dialectical unity, thus responding to the need for scientific research for the improvement of the translation teaching-learning process.

As a result of the work with the professionals of the Translator and Interpreter Services Team (ESTI), during the consultation with experts, it was possible to create a contract that allows the groups of the fourth year of the LENH degree to carry out their pre-professional internships in this institution. This exchange, which has begun with the 2024 academic year, guarantees students have real experiences about the work of the translator, at the same time it makes it easier for ESTI professionals to collaborate with native speakers to fulfill reverse translation assignments.

## DISCUSSION

The results of the teaching strategy presented showed that it was possible to encourage and engage students more in the translation teaching-learning process, which translated into greater interest and confidence in the subject. In turn, they made it possible to design translation tasks that were more in line with the needs and abilities of the student in order to achieve their active, conscious, creative, transformative and independent participation, inside and outside the academic context.

Among the main advantages of the teaching strategy, which mark a difference with previous forms of work in the LENH degree, it stands out that it allows the student to focus and perfect the teaching-learning process of translation from work with each of its students. components, hence:

The objectives are aimed at the development of translation skills, which in Galán's (2007) terms, implies that the student has to learn to do, learn to translate. To achieve this, procedural content is prioritized, which not only consists of knowing how to do things but also knowing how it has been done and how to do it in different situations. All of which is in line with the guiding ideas of current translation didactics.

The use of productive methods that stimulate the development of self-learning strategies by students is encouraged so that they are able to discover new knowledge on their own and solve problems for which they do not have all the solution tools. Dynamic forms of organization are used that develop socialization and teacher-student/student-student interaction, including student/expert.

The teaching aids combine the traditional with new information technologies and stand out for the use of authentic and varied materials. Furthermore, it agrees with the criteria of authors such as Cerezo (2020) and Méndez (2022) who opt for an optimistic position of the evaluation, which measures both the process and the product, with a penalty for flexible errors (slight, less slight, serious and very serious) because it better fits the nature of the error in translation. These changes help the student verify if they have acquired skills, to what degree and, in turn, allow the teacher, through differentiated tasks, to provide levels of help for their advancement from a level of real development to a level of potential development. .

The authors of the present study declare that working with these components of the translation teaching-learning process can lead to executing actions with teachers caused by the need to include the participation of the rest of the disciplines as support for the development of the strategy (hence its interdisciplinary nature), but that does not mean that the essence of the strategy stops being didactic.

It is worth highlighting that this proposal, for the first time, offers the translator in training in the LENH career the opportunity to work with professionals, some of them graduates of the FENHI, who also provided a large part of the authentic materials included in the Translation discipline.

Among the advantages of the designed task system, highlighted by students and experts, are that it promotes the integration, systematization and transfer of interdisciplinary knowledge. Its teaching is based on real-life professional processes and situations and leads in a progressive and coherent manner to the acquisition and development of translation skills in the student. At the same time, it encourages group work, which strengthens the development of values (honesty, responsibility, respect, self-improvement, camaraderie, solidarity). It requires the protagonism and creative and investigative activity of the students.

It is considered that generalizing the proposed teaching strategy would imply work that covers all the disciplines of the degree. Although translation is introduced from the third year onwards, it would be positive to begin working on pedagogical translation from the first years, which allows the development of linguistic skills and communicative competence in the student, through a system of tasks that works text manipulation, contrastive analysis and reflection. For this, it is a requirement that the teacher master the student's native language.

It is important to highlight that in this study it was decided to include work with reverse translation (from the mother tongue to the foreign language) due to the interest of the students themselves in experimenting with this modality. Although the classes of the discipline are not dedicated to this training, this exercise was considered valid to recognize and correct problems in the command of the Spanish language, which allowed increasing the student's contrastive metalinguistic awareness.

The impact derived from the implementation of the teaching strategy in educational practice corroborated its effectiveness. The real possibility was appreciated that in an orderly and directed manner, higher levels of mastery of translation skills in students can be achieved, together with the actions of the rest of the disciplines of the degree in favor of the comprehensive training of the student.

In this way, this new proposal promotes the improvement of the scientific and methodological actions of higher education, contributes to the comprehensive training of the future foreign language professional, helps them to insert themselves more efficiently into the labor market, and thereby generate greater understanding between cultures and nations.

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The authors declare not to have any interest conflicts.

**Authors' contribution:**

The authors participated in the design, analysis of the documents and writing of the work.

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