Green, R.
Universidad Europea de Madrid

Part I Culture and the Translation Student

The cultural component of translation is often overlooked and even ignored by the layman. Most people understand translation as expressing in one language a text written in another language; interpreting means doing the same but orally. If we turn to the dictionary for a clearer definition we will find basically the same idea "to translate = to turn into one's own or another language" and "interpreter = a person who translates orally for parties conversing in different languages." (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary) Neither of these definitions makes reference to the type of knowledge needed to successfully render in the target language the meaning and ideas expressed in the source language. They are limited to the purely semantic aspect of translation.

While it is obviously true that linguistic knowledge is the basis of the ability to translate, it is no less true that cultural knowledge is also needed to convey meanings and ideas between languages. If the object of translation is to offer equivalent forms in the target language which reflect the original meaning expressed in the source language, then in the majority of the cases, especially in the case of literary translation, but also in other fields of translation, cultural knowledge is essential. Translating the English expression "raining cats and dogs." is fairly easy and can be expressed in Spanish as "llover a cántaros." Both expressions mean that it is raining heavily and are readily found in dictionaries. Nevertheless, if a Spaniard makes reference to someone as having "más moral que la Alcoyana" the unprepared English translator is faced with a problem; in fact with two problems. The first is to understand the meaning of the expression and the second is to find an equivalent expression in English. Unless the translator has had either direct contact, through living in the country, or indirect contact, by reading extensively, he may not recognize the expression and be forced to spend part of his valuable time researching the term. Once he has understood the meaning of the phrase he must then find an equivalent phrase in English, a challenging task, since the concept of "moral" does not translate well between cultures.

Cultural references and cultural differences are not limited to words or expressions, however. A few years ago a translation of mine, from Spanish to English, was "corrected" by the editor of the publication it was going to appear in. The article contained a series of statistics expressed in percentages. Whereas Spanish expresses thirty-nine point five percent as 39,5% (using a comma) English makes use of the period, 39.5% The earnest editor "corrected" what he thought were the translator's errors. Fortunately, in the final proofreading the "corrections" were corrected by someone with a broader base of cultural knowledge.

Legal translation is another area where cultural knowledge, knowledge of how things are phrased, is essential. Recently one of my former students consulted me about a translation she was working on. The document was a contract for a series of screenwriters whose work would then be translated into various languages. In the original English version one of the clauses stated that when their names appeared in the credits it would be done on a "favored nation basis." My student, although she understood the words of the phrase, was stumped since she could not see the connection between a phrase used in international politics and screenwriting. I explained to her that a possible translation into Spanish would be "tratamiento preferencial según país de origen" since what the clause meant to establish was the fact that each writer would receive top billing, i.e. be listed first, in his native country.

The aforementioned examples offer anecdotal proof of the need for the future translator to have a broad cultural basis in order to do his job correctly. Needless to say pedagogues and experts in the field of training translators tend to concur with this opinion since the connection between culture and language is fundamental to their work. In order to translate one has to learn a second language and learning a second language involves learning a second culture; knowing the linguistic forms is not enough. As Seelye points out too often we assume that "…mastery of the linguistic patterns of a foreign culture leads in itself to 'thinking like a native.' (Seelye 21) but he goes on to clarify that "Unless the student is learning the language in the target culture, the cultural referents necessary to understanding a native speaker must be learned in addition." (Seelye 21) In other words, culture is something which must be taught beyond and above the linguistic aspects of language. Knowledge of these linguistic aspects - sounds, grammar, vocabulary – is the basis of "knowing" a second language but this knowledge in itself does not guarantee successful communication. For, as Morain states, "Word in themselves are too limited a dimension. The critical factor in understanding has to do with cultural aspects that exist beyond the lexical …." (Morain 64); however, identifying exactly what these cultural aspects are is a matter of debate since not everyone defines culture in the same way.

The layman often makes a distinction between culture with a capital c, Culture, and culture with a small c, culture. The former is generally understood to refer to activities or intellectual pursuits undertaken by an elite minority; i.e. opera, theatre, the arts in general. To describe someone as being very "cultured" is to say that he or can speak, or at least read, several foreign languages, can identify pieces of classical music at will, recite poetry, identify and comment on the majority of the paintings hanging in the world's most famous museums, and compare and comment on the works of those authors most revered by the critics. While all of this is still true today, access to the arts, formerly restricted to limited numbers of people, has broadened considerably and has led to a second reading of culture with a capital 'c'. Today we can refer to pop culture which is taken to mean more "popular" activities such as sports, most cinema production, and most definitely television. This distinction, however, commonly designated as "highbrow" vs. "lowbrow", is not very useful when referring to the type of cultural information the future translators needs. (Ironically, this distinction in itself is an example of the type of cultural knowledge translators need.)

Culture with a small 'c' has generally been used to designate those social activities, habits, or customs representative of a particular group of people, i.e. food and mealtimes, dress, type of dwellings, recreational activities, family structure, etc. This concept of culture is the one found in most elementary language textbooks where there are always lessons built around such themes as "The Family", "Dinnertime", "At the Train Station", or "A Visit to the Seaside" or similar. Here the authors have a double purpose: present specific points of grammar or vocabulary and introduce the student to the culture of the people (or peoples) who use the language being studied. In the case of textbooks used to teach Spanish in the United States authors make sure to include units based on cultural aspects of the different nations that use the language. One unit is based on an aspect of Mexican culture, another is related to Argentina and a third to Andalucía. The authors clearly recognize that culture with a small 'c' varies from country to country even though the language is basically the same.

In terms of preparing translation students, however, a much broader definition is called for, one which includes all aspects related to the lives of a particular language group. Seeyle underscores this idea by quoting George Murdock, "For much of the profession culture has been defined almost exclusively in terms of the fine arts, geography, and history. This narrow definition of culture, unfortunately, does not fully prepare a student to understand the wide range of behavior exhibited by our species." (Seelye 14) Culture, then, must be understood to include a much broader spectrum of elements such as attitudes, creeds, religion, or politics; in short, all those things that contribute to a particular people's world view. In this sense culture is seen to include those ideas and values that are associated with these concepts, and goes beyond the superficial aspects of definitions that limit themselves to describing "patterns of living" or "lifestyles" and "national habits." Culture is thus seen as Katan indicates, as something "internal, collective, and … acquired rather than learned." (Katan 17). His distinction between acquiring culture and learning culture echoes Stephen Krashen's distinction between learning language and acquiring language: "Acquisition is the natural, unconscious learning of language and behaviour through informal watching and hearing. Learning, on the other hand, is formal and is consciously taught. (Katan 17).

Krashen maintains that acquisition is superior to learning in terms of internalizing knowledge and therefore produces better language learning results. The same is undoubtedly true of cultural learning too. Experiencing the culture *in situ* cannot be compared to studying about the culture in the classroom, no matter how inventive or dedicated the teacher is. Unfortunately, students' opportunities for experiencing the culture naturally, first-hand, are limited so teachers must turn to techniques such as recordings (cassettes, CD's, etc.) or filmed material (DVD's) or activities such as role-plays or oral presentations. While all of these techniques provide the learner with appropriate input it is doubtful that they are as motivating as coming in contact with the "real thing." Even brief contact with the superficial aspects of another culture can serve to heighten a student's awareness of culture differences and their importance. Spanish exchange students staying with American families are often surprised to find that, contrary to what many Spaniards believe, hamburgers and pizza do not represent the main course of every meal served in American homes; the truth being that a great variety of foods are served and that regional differences exist. Each region has its own distinctive cuisine much in the same way that Spanish families in Barcelona or Pamplona will eat differently from families in Cáceres or Córdoba. They are even more amazed to learn that American schoolchildren stand, place their hand over their heart, and pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States first thing everyday in their classrooms. This open display of patriotism is completely foreign to the vast majority of Spanish students.

While the previous two examples may seem trivial they often serve as triggers, to raise the exchange student's cultural awareness since they point to deep underlying cultural values, and even though it is true that "cultural problems most often arise when there is a great distance between source and target cultures, such as between China and the western world" (Kussmaul 65), the closeness of two cultures, in this case Spain and the United States, both part of a greater cultural entity, the western world, can also be a source of problems. Students will tend to assume that the foreign culture will be more like their own than it may be in reality precisely because both cultures belong to a larger cultural grouping. Both Americans and Spaniards drink coffee but the type of coffee served or its social significance varies between the two cultures. For a Spaniard, Americans drink "dirty dishwasher" since their coffee is so much more watery than a "café solo", and for an American the amount of time Spaniards spend drinking coffee and chatting away, not ostensibly producing anything, can be construed as a waste of time. Students coming in contact with American culture suffer a further handicap, because American culture is so omnipresent through the influence of American movies or television programs. In addition, the presence of numerous American products and corporations is a fact of life in many countries. Both of these factors may lead students to believe that they already know all there is to know. This may be the source of their belief in the ubiquity of hamburgers and pizzas. The fact is that American families today are extremely concerned with nutrition, albeit in part due to the epidemic of obesity facing the nation; “eating healthy” has become a staple of the American way of life. And even though in many movies Spaniards have seen Americans sing the national anthem at baseball games it is difficult for them to see pledging allegiance to the flag as something more than a quaint ceremony. To Americans the flag is a unifying symbol to be revered representing all that brings them together as a nation. Patriotism is not a negative value as it is often perceived in Spain but rather an element that reinforces the sense of belonging to a single entity. It provides a way to express to others the fact that one believes in and wants to share in those ideals which constitute the basis of the American character. If translation students can be made aware of the deeps roots lying beneath such cultural manifestations this will help develop and nourish their sense of cultural awareness and make it easier for them to understand what lies behind such expressions as “a chicken in every pot”, “Life is just a bowl of cherries”, and “true blue” or what is meant by describing a political stance as so much “flag-waving.”

Cultural awareness is a key component of any competent translator and is usually developed parallel to the process of learning a foreign language. As has been stated previously culture and language are inseparable and must be learned hand-in-hand and this is particularly so in the case of translation students. If they are not sufficiently aware of the cultural component involved in translating they will inevitably run into trouble since the problems that arise in expressing the meaning of an original text often “do not depend on the source text itself, but on the significance of the translated text for its readers as members of a certain culture, or of a sub-culture within that culture, with the constellation of knowledge, judgement and perception they have developed from it.” (Snell-Hornby 42) In other words, the meaning of any given text is more than just the meaning of the words it contains; its overall meaning includes the cultural meaning attached to it as understood by its original intended audience. Recognizing this cultural meaning is essential to be able to convey the true meaning of a text when translating it to another language. As Puig Pardos indicates “Each translation is an act of communication set in a specific context … translation involves linguistic and cultural transference, and accordingly translators should pay special attention to context and situation” (Puig Pardos 52).

Needless to say it is a fact that cultures do not translate easily since texts often contain specific culture references which strike chords of recognition in the native reader but mean nothing at all to the unprepared translator. Translators must acquire solid background information about the cultures they work with including such areas as geography, history, social and political affairs and even popular culture in order to feel comfortable when doing their job. Even though a translation student may have an excellent command of the English language from a linguistic point of view, very few would understand what an author means when he refers to a town as “Podunk, Iowa” or describes a character as a “Clark Kent type of guy.” Likewise how many future translators of Spanish would know who “el Ratoncito Pérez” is, or be able to provide an English equivalent for the Spanish phrase “en el quinto pino”? While it true that in all of these cases information regarding these expressions can be readily found, we need to remember that for a freelance translator, “time is money” and time spent finding the meaning of unfamiliar terms is time taken away from the task at hand. Furthermore, in many cases, if the translator has adequate cultural background knowledge of the source language, he will recognize the field from which the expression is taken. For example, if a character in a book talks about his date with a young woman and explains that he "couldn't get past first base with her", even if the translator does not understand the complete expression he may recognize the term "first base" as part of the game of baseball, thus narrowing the area he needs to research to find the meaning and saving time.

When discussing the translator and culture it is important to keep in mind that the role played by the translator is much broader than most people would assume. A translator is not merely someone who substitutes words in one language for words in another but rather someone who mediates between cultures, someone who makes a text accessible to an audience different from the audience it was originally intended for, and this involves adapting any cultural references present in the text if necessary. The translator as a cultural mediator, while a relatively new concept, cannot be overlooked in any program designed to train future translators. As Katan makes clear by quoting R. Taft, it is the translator's job to interpret "the expressions, intentions, perceptions, and expectations of each cultural group to the other …" (Katan p. 12) and in order to do so the mediator must be, to a large degree, bicultural, since only someone who is bicultural will be able to communicate ideas to the target audience in terms that are meaningful to them. While it is true that no program designed to train translators can pretend to produce bicultural translators, it is also true that much can be done towards achieving that goal by acting realistically. The following reflection might serve as a valid starting point:

> "For the average person, a complete assimilation of a second culture may be even more impossible than speaking with flawless grammar and accurate pronunciation. What may be more realistic and valuable than striving for total assimilation of the target culture is the development of an awareness of culture and the intercultural skills that one develops on the way to cultural awareness."
> (Gaston 2)

By framing the purpose of the program in this way it becomes clear that developing cultural awareness, not biculturalism, should be the final goal in programs which prepare future translators. Translation students need to understand that our perception of the world is culturally-based. A very simple illustration of this fact occurs when Spanish students are asked "How many continents are there in the world?" The immediate response is "Five." They are shocked to learn that their answer would not be considered correct by American students who are taught that there are seven continents, the major difference being that Americans consider North America and South America as two clearly different continents. When asked which of the two ways to describe the world's land masses is correct the Spanish students naturally say their way is the correct one. The discussion becomes even more interesting when they are asked to explain why Spaniards consider North America and South America as one single land mass but do not do the same in the case of Europe and Asia. Since there are arguments to justify both ways of dividing our planet's land masses, students come to see that either system is merely a cultural convention invented by different peoples. For many students this simple realization is the first step in the process of developing the cultural awareness they will need in their future profession.

Helping students heighten their cultural awareness is an essential part of the job of language teachers or anyone involved in preparing future translators. Nevertheless, meeting this challenge is not always easy and those who attempt it must begin by recognizing that “Cultures do not translate easily. This is a fact critics and translators experience every day. And there is another fact that is brought out most sharply when one tries to replace her language with another, the fact that language is culture and culture is language.” (Valero Garcés 67). Only those who keep this in mind at all times will meet the challenge successfully.

Part II First Spanish-American Intercultural Exchange

As has been made clear in the introduction, cultural knowledge is essential for the translator and providing translation students with the cultural knowledge they need is part of any program designed to prepare them for their future profession. It has also been made evident that cultural knowledge in itself is not enough but that developing students’ cultural awareness must be a major goal for any language teacher working with translation students. Gaston has identified four stages in the process of developing cultural awareness terminating in an appreciation of the diversity of cultures: recognition, acceptance/rejection, integration/ethnocentrism, and transcendence. (Gaston 3). In the first stage the individual comes to realize that culture exists and that cultural differences are more than just concrete elements such as food or clothing but also include abstract elements like values and attitudes. During the second phase the individual who has come to understand that there is more than one way to behave must decide to accept or reject both his own culture and the new one. In the third phase, if the path taken is acceptance, the individual will begin to develop a bicultural point of view. If, however, rejection in the road taken, no further development will take place and the individual becomes anchored in ethnocentrism. In the fourth and final stage, the individual is able to appreciate not only his own culture but those of others recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of each of them.

Given the time constraints and the amount of information that needs to be transmitted to the students, the impossibility of leading students through these four phases during the academic year becomes apparent; furthermore it is not the final goal of the course. It is possible, however, to have students experience the first phase, and to hopefully spur them on to the following stages; the classroom activity under discussion here had that as its final goal.

The decision to design an activity involving personal contact between students of two different cultures was based on the belief that acquiring knowledge first hand through personal experience is much more motivating than doing so by listening to the teacher, watching a movie, or reading a textbook. We cannot forget that human beings are social animals and that people like to be with people. In addition, human contact allows for a much greater interplay of factors, both predictable and non-predictable, creating a much richer experience which allows for better learning. Answers to questions about things you want to know asked directly to another person are much more likely to be remembered than those obtained through written text because of the emotional value attached to the exchange. Emotions are part of any human interaction and form an essential part of the context and setting. One of the strongest human emotions, curiosity, served as the foundation for this activity. Curiosity leads to interest and interest to a desire to know, and this desire was an integral part of this particular learning activity.

The course I teach, *Civilización y Cultura a través de los textos*, is an introductory course on American geography, history and culture offered to first-year students of translation and interpretation and taught exclusively in English. All UEM translation students are required to study English and our program recognizes the need for the student to acquire not only linguistic knowledge but also cultural knowledge by requiring, in addition to language courses, that they take two separate courses on the two major societies using the English language : the United States, first year, and United Kingdom, second year. (Students studying French or German also take courses designed to introduce them to the cultures of French and German-speaking countries.) In my case, as has been made clear earlier, I am not only concerned with transmitting facts and ideas but also with raising students' cultural awareness. I believe that by doing so I am helping my students more than if I limit myself to being concerned about whether they can name the date of the Declaration of Independence or explain the two major causes of the U.S. Civil War. From my point of view language and culture are inextricably linked and translating words involves translating cultures. This is made clear to the students from the beginning since the following is stated as one of the major objectives of the course in the course syllabus: *Provide the student with a basic awareness and knowledge of the major cultural differences between the United States and Spain and Europe.* (For complete syllabus see appendix)

Throughout the course I make sure to provide the students with appropriate cultural input above and beyond what is available in the assigned textbook. Articles, songs, or movie clips are used and students are often directed to web pages where they can find relevant information which, in some cases, they are requested to present to the class. However, as the semester progressed I got the feeling that this was not enough, something bigger and better was needed to increase my students' interest in the cultural aspects of the course. Fortunately I have close ties with the administration and many of the faculty members of an American university which has a small campus in Madrid. Suffolk University is a four-year college located in Boston, Massachusetts which offers a large variety of degrees but is particularly strong in business and medicine. It is also a school that is firmly committed to interculturality as it has two foreign campuses: one in Madrid, as mentioned, and another in Dakar, Senegal. Local students can study for two years at Suffolk and then transfer to the home campus in Boston to complete their degrees. At the same time both campuses receive a good number of American students, not only from Suffolk Boston but from schools all across the nation, who take classes in both English and Spanish.

In searching for a way to enhance my students' cultural experience I decided to see if I could make use of these American students by bringing them together with my own Spanish students. I approached a colleague at Suffolk who allowed me to speak with some of his students. I explained to them that I was looking for students willing to participate in a discussion on the United States with Spanish university students. I also explained that it would mean travelling 45 minutes outside of the city and that they only monetary compensation they would receive would be a free school cafeteria meal. Surprisingly there were a number of students willing to participate but in the end only four, three female students and one male, were able to participate on the day and time set. None of the four were Spanish majors; one studied business administration, another, nursing, another, media studies, and the fourth, sports. Three were white and one was black; two were from the West Coast, one from the Midwest and one from the East Coast, all together a fairly representative group (with the exception of the exclusion of a Hispanic.) Only one of the four had been in Spain for longer than three months and in general their ability to communicate in Spanish was limited, much less than my own students' ability to communicate in English. That, however, did not pose a problem, as I foresaw whatever activity I designed taking place primarily in English.

Once I had the human material I needed and the basic idea of the activity clear I could now concentrate on clarifying the structure of the activity. I wanted to create an organized coherent activity since I knew my Spanish students, all first year students, would need guidance and a clear framework in order to feel comfortable. The American students were older, 19 to 21 years old, and, due to the nature of the American educational system, more used to freer activities which require greater amounts of self-confidence and self-direction. I originally envisioned the activity as a sort of panel discussion with questions from the audience with the American students forming the panel and the Spanish students the audience. This was also due in part to the difference in numbers between the two groups, four American students vs. 22 Spanish students, and to the fact that one of the major purposes of the activity was to expose the Spanish students to a natural language environment. (As mentioned earlier, due to the limited proficiency in Spanish of the Americans it was clear that English would be the language of communication during the activity.) The Spanish students would receive valuable practice in speaking with and listening to 'real' Americans using natural language and not their teacher whose prolonged stay in Spain may have isolated him from the current trends in American English, and who, after years of teaching English to foreigners, may be suffering from what Spaniards call "deformación professional." (Usually manifested in a tendency to over-enunciate and use simple language.) Nevertheless I also realized that time should be provided for a less controlled activity which would give the students the opportunity to choose the discussion topic. Since the class time available would be two hours I decided to create a two part activity. The first part would be the panel discussion but the second part would be a small group activity with each of the American students serving as the focus of the individual groups.

With the structure of the activity decided I then focused on the content. My first idea was to tie in whatever was to be discussed in the activity with themes I had worked on in class; however, after thinking about it more carefully I decided to include more general themes also to give both groups of students something easier to talk about. My compromise decision was to include two of each kind. From discussions that had taken place in class I chose the topic of stereotypes and that of the American educational system, in particular, American university life. For the freer topics, since the activity took place at the beginning of December, I chose 'The Holiday Season' as a topic. As the final topic I chose an old standard, Leisure Time and Entertainment. Many other topics could have been used but since there was a broad range of English language competency within the Spaniards I wanted simple topics that all the students could deal with easily. The major purpose of the activity was to encourage communication which would lead to acquiring cultural knowledge, not to require that students do in-depth research.

The next step in preparing the activity was to communicate its existence to the students. Since I wanted to make clear that this was a very special activity and to underscore its importance I chose to do so by sending them a letter by e-mail (see appendix) and by giving it a rather pompous title, *First Spanish American Intercultural Exchange* to reinforce its importance. In the letter I announced the activity, its basic purpose and format, and that they would be divided into groups with each group being assigned certain tasks in preparation for the activity. The sheet detailing the tasks and the organization of the activity was attached to the letter. (See appendix.) This attachment contained the agenda to be followed during the activity, the makeup of each of the groups, a series of initial questions to be asked, and a final writing assignment. The basic task for each of the groups was to prepare of series of questions related to the topic and to provide a final written summary of the conclusions reached. When the students received the letter with its attachment, as I had hoped, it generated a good deal of interest and in the next class session most students indicated they were looking forward to the activity although it meant a little bit of extra work on their part.

The venue chosen for the activity was the university's *Aula del Caso* located in building B. This small lecture hall type classroom with a generous amount of floor space and rows of seats sloping upwards was designed to be used by teachers making use of the Case Method of Teaching. Unlike most of the other rooms at the university the room has individual chairs which can be moved around easily allowing for the group work activities which are an integral part of the Case Method. In addition the sloping rows of seats provide ideal audience space when rival groups are presenting their conclusions to the group as a whole. Such an arrangement was also ideal for the panel discussion section of the activity we were going to hold.

On the actual day of the activity everything went fine. The American students were brought to campus and given a quick tour (They liked the feel of the campus and found it very attractive and comfortable.) and at the appointed time everyone filed into the *Aula del Caso* including a colleague of mine whom I had invited because I knew she was interested in activities of this type. In keeping with the agenda both groups of student introduced themselves, and then the question-and-answer session began. To my surprises the Spanish students "took the ball and ran with it." Almost all of them participated actively in the discussion, asking questions or adding comments to clarify responses when necessary. The Americans, when asked about their impressions of Spain and Spaniards, all said two things surprised them: the amount of noise present in the city and the fact that so many Spaniards smoke. The Spaniards laughed in agreement. When asked about some of the stereotypes Spaniards hold of Americans, the American said it was very hard to generalize and that each part of the country was different from the other. In other words, even though to Spanish eyes all four of them were just 'Americans' they themselves recognized cultural differences between them, something interesting for the Spanish students to learn. The discussion, ostensibly focused on stereotypes but in reality wider ranging than that, took up the entire first hour. The other three topics were not even mentioned which in reality was a minor disappointment since the major goal of the activity, cross-cultural communication, had been so successfully reached.

After the break the format changed. The four American students were split up with the Spanish students forming groups around them. I suggested that they might want to use some the questions they had prepared for the first hour but had not gotten a chance to ask but as I made the rounds visiting each group I realized that each group had taken on a life of its own. One group was talking about sports, another about places to visit in Spain, another about the movies, and one group was trying to explain the difference between a region and a "Comunidad Autónoma." Over the course of the following 50 minutes the topics under discussion changed considerably and very little teacher intervention was needed at all. Because the students were so engaged in communication the decision was made to forgo any formal conclusions and allow them the maximum time possible to carry on their discussions. At the end of the activity, once all participants had been thanked for their time and effort, several Spanish students approached the Americans to exchange e-mail addresses in order to be able to keep in touch with them. Whether this actually happened or not is unknown to me.

At lunch afterwards, the Americans said they enjoyed the activity very much and that they had learned some new things about Spain. Their only regret was the fact that it had happened so late in their stay in Spain (Most of them were due to leave the following week.) and that this sort of activity should be done at the beginning of every American student's stay in Spain. With respect to this last comment, which points to a lack of contact with Spanish society, it should be kept in mind that the environment that these students experienced in Spain was basically an English-speaking one. Most of their classes were taught in English and several of them live in apartments with other American students. As is too often true with students studying abroad, coming in contact with the 'natives' is more difficult than expected and so many prefer to band together with 'their own kind.'

In the follow-up class discussion held with the Spanish students all of them indicated they enjoyed the activity and found it useful. Although several of them had spent time in the United States either as exchange students or just visiting, for others this was their first face-to-face contact with Americans. When asked if this activity, or a similar one, should be repeated in the following semester all of them answered affirmatively. It was clear that the overall reaction was overwhelmingly positive.
When asked why it should be repeated they responded that it was something different from the routine of the classroom, that it gave them the opportunity to practice English in a real setting, and that it gave them new ideas about America and Americans. On the basis of this last idea alone, it is clear to me that this type of activity must be included in all future classes I teach on American history and culture.

In conclusion, it is apparent that the activity was a successful one and that it achieved its main goal of fomenting intercultural communication. It is also clear that it served as a starting point in the case of many of the participants for further development of their cultural awareness. I am also convinced that it contributed to my students' recognition of the indissoluble link between language and culture.

Bibliography

Al-Alaya'a, Zaid. "Translation: A Cry for Help." Culture & Society. Yemen Observer. 9 July, 2005. 21 July, 2005. http://yobserver.com/cgi-bin/yobserver/exec/view.cgi/1/7410/.

Gaston, Jan. Cultural Awareness Teaching Techniques. Brattleboro, VT.: Pro Lingua Associates, 1984.

Katan, David. Translating Cultures. Manchester, U.K. : St. Jerome Publishing, 1991.

Kussmaul, Paul. Training the Translator. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1995.

Lado, Robert. Linguistics Across Cultures. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1976.

Morain, Genelle G. "Kinesics and cross-cultural understanding." Culture Bound. Ed. Joyce Merrill Valdes. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986. 64-76.

Puig Pardos, María José. "Translation and Pragmatics: The Use of Mujer and Niña as Politeness Devices in Lorca's The House of Bernarda Alba and their Translations into English." Transcultural Communication: Pragmalinguistic Aspects. Ed. Mª Pilar Navarro Erraste et.al. Zaragoza: Textos de Filología 9, 2000. 51-57.

Robinson, Douglas. Becoming a Translator. London: Routledge, 1997.

Samovar, Larry A. and Richard E. Porter. Intercultural Communcation: A Reader. Belmont, CA.: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1985.

Seelye, H. Ned. Teaching Culture: Strategies for Intercultural Communication. Lincolnwood, Ill.: National Textbook, 1985.

Snell-Hornby, Mary. Translation Studies: An Integrated Approach. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1988.

"Translation and Culture." <http.//completetranslation.com/culture.htm> 20 July, 2005.

Valero Garcés, Carmen. "Between Language and Cultures: Changes in Attitude rather than Simple Linguistic Misuse in the Discourse on Aids." Transcultural Communication: Pragmalinguistic Aspects. Ed. Mª Pilar Navarro Erraste et.al. Zaragoza: Textos de Filología 9, 2000.67-74.

Annex I

Dear Students,

On Tuesday, December 14 we will have a special class. We will have our ***FIRST SPANISH-AMERICAN INTERCULTURAL EXCHANGE***. The purpose of the activity is to allow you to gain first-hand information about life in the United States today from people of your own age (and not from your over-the-hill teacher). Naturally, since this is an exchange, you will be expected to offer information about life in Spain today. The format used will be a question and answer session conducted in English. (If questions or answers are offered in Spanish, since you are translation students, it is assumed you will be able to provide simultaneous interpretation.)

Your questions will be directed to four American study abroad students who have been studying in Madrid this semester. All of them are in juniors or seniors at university, each of them majoring in a different area. Though all of them can communicate very well in Spanish, none are Spanish majors nor are they of Hispanic background.

The agenda for the session is attached. Be sure you download it because all of you have been assigned certain tasks.

If you have any doubts or questions, please feel free to contact me.

I thank you for your cooperation.

Cordially,

II ***FIRST SPANISH-AMERICAN INTERCULTURAL EXCHANGE*** ***RHG 14/12/04***

AGENDA

I Opening remarks (made by your host – me) and brief introduction of our guests.

II Self-introductions of the UEM students :

You will introduce yourself by giving your name, explaining where you come from (and a little bit about your town or region – i.e. geographic location, industry, places to visit etc.) and commenting on any trips abroad you have made.

III Self-introduction of the U.S. students:

Each of the four will introduce themselves by offering information similar to that offered by the UEM students.

IV Question and answer session

A. topic : **Stereotypes**

1. Pablo and Lucía A. as class representatives will open the session by asking the American students to explain what ideas Americans have about Spain and Spaniards in general i.e. What stereotypes do Americans hold with regard to Spain and Spanish culture?

   The UEM students will offer their opinions as to whether these stereotypes are accurate or fair.

2. The Americans will then ask the UEM students to explain what ideas most Spaniards have about the U.S and the American way of life. They will offer their opinions as to how valid those ideas are.

3. We will close this part of the session by asking a designated group of UEM students to comment on why we use stereotypes, whether their use is positive or negative, and how to correct stereotypes that are harmful.

4. All UEM students will be responsible for writing a summary and provide conclusions

on this part of the session.

B. topic : **American University Life**

1. A designated group of UEM students will ask questions about American university life and provide information about Spanish university life. They will be responsible for establishing contrasts between the two systems.

2. This group will be responsible for writing a summary and providing conclusions on this part of the session.

COFFEE BREAK (10 minutes)

C. topic : **The Holiday Season**

1. A designated group of UEM students will prepare questions regarding how Americans celebrate the holiday season (Christmas, Hanukah, Kwanza, New Year's). They will also provide information regarding Spanish celebrations.

2. This group will be responsible for writing a summary and for providing conclusions on this part of the session.

D. topic : **Leisure Time and Entertainment**

1. A designated group of UEM students will prepare questions regarding how young Americans spend their free time (sports, hobbies, movies, clubbing, volunteer work, etc.) They will also provide information on what most young Spaniards do in their free time.

2. This group will be responsible for writing a summary and providing conclusions on this part of the session.

IV Closure :

A. The host will thank all participants and ask both the American students and the Spanish students to comment on the experience.

B. The host will officially declare the session closed.

LUNCH ????

<u>UEM STUDENTS : DESIGNATED ROLES AND GROUPS</u>

Topic : **Stereotypes**

<u>Group</u> : Pablo, Lucía A., Raphaela, Natalia P. , Esther, Elena and Anu

Topic : **American University Life**

Group : Nacho, Lucía R., Eva, Jaire, , Sara, and Karsten

Topic : **The Holiday Season**

Group : Pedro, Natalia G., Estibaliz, Alfonso, Raquel, and Ina

Topic : **Leisure Time and Entertainment**

Group : Cuca, David, Lourdes, Nuria, Miriam, and José Antonio

UNIVERSIDAD EUROPEA de MADRID
FACULTAD DE COMUNICACIÓN y HUMANIDADES

Prof. Ronald H. Green **SYLLABUS**

Civilización y Cultura a Través de los Textos (Lengua B)

Asignatura Optativa Licenciatura de Traducción e Interpretación
Código asignatura : 3043002801

General Objectives

Offer the student a basic introduction to the history and culture of the United States of America while at the same time establishing clear contrasts with Spanish society and European society in general.

1. Increase the student's knowledge of the origins of the United States and its early development.

2. Increase the student's knowledge of the composition of the American people and the changes it has undergone through time.

3. Provide the student with a basic awareness of the geography of the United States.

4. Provide the student with a basic understanding of the forces that have shaped the American character.

5. Provide the student with a basic awareness and knowledge of the major cultural differences between the United States and Spain and Europe.

Green, R.
Universidad Europea de Madrid

6. Provide the student with a basic understanding of the American political system.

Specific Language Objectives

1. Provide the student with the vocabulary necessary to deal with the specific themes introduced in the course.
2. Review and consolidate grammatical knowledge appropriate to the themes addressed in the course.
3. Provide the student with opportunities to write short essays in English.
4. Provide the students with opportunities to hear varieties of American accents.
5. Provide the students with ample opportunities to communicate in English.