“Translation of Shakespeare’s sonnets as a means to achieve pragmatic awareness on the second language and enhance lexical acquisition”

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Gualeguaychú, 2015
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María Alejandra
ABSTRACT

This research work focuses on translation of poetry as a tool to boost awareness of the similarities and differences between English and Spanish languages in terms of vocabulary and pragmatics in students. It is a fact that there is no absolute criterion of what a good translation is, and theories abound, from the literal one in which an equivalent must be found for each word, to those in which meaning is more important than the features of the text. This essay aims to shed light on the crucial role of translation as a process that involves complex cognitive mechanisms in which the language is analyzed, compared, classified and transformed, resulting in an active use of both the mother tongue and the target language to achieve communicative purposes. This work is a response to the problematic observed that students are well acquainted with grammar rules and vocabulary, yet in practice, there is too much interference of their L1 in their L2 productions. By means of working with translation of poems, students will exercise this skill, as more idiomatic and complex semantic expressions take place, which require special analysis and attention. The approach of this work consists on a theoretical study of translation theories focused on poetry, and the analysis of an experience in which students of 4th year of the Saint Exupéry School of Concordia, Entre Ríos, participated. They produced a translated version in English and in Spanish of two Shakespeare sonnets. The results of the experience showed that students undergoing translation exercises in groups were able to produce versions of the sonnets in the target language, yet difficulties arose when dealing with rhyme and metric. However, they were satisfied with the results when these were compared with the original versions of the poems. It was observed that they enjoyed the activity and the fact that it involved cooperation and exchanges in order to come to agreements to achieve their objective. In conclusion, this approach could be of great use for teachers of English as a second language in Secondary school to propose a different set of activities in which students are able to use the skills acquired combined with creativity, imagination and cooperation to produce their own versions of poetry. Through this process, they would exercise vocabulary and rephrasing skills and, last but not least, become aware of what lies underneath all languages, their similarities, and what is remarkably different and makes the language unique.

Key words:
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INTRODUCTION

The Tower of Babel is among the most famous biblical tales, as it provides a certain explanation on the vast amount of languages by which people communicate. It tells the story of how the people, who had “one language and the same words”, got to the land of Shinar and settled there proposing themselves to build a tower that would reach the heavens or otherwise, they would “be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth”. Seeing this, the Lord decided to scatter the people and give them a language so that they would not understand each other’s speech and called the city Babel “because the Lord confused the language of all the earth”. Although the story lacks the scientific elements to prove the origin of the variation of languages around the world, it does illustrate the inconveniences caused by the linguistic mosaic distributed around the Earth. In fact, regardless of Chomsky’s theory of a Universal Grammar, which states that all languages share common properties, the ability of discerning between them and learning them all is almost an impossible task. Unless we endeavor to learn all the languages of the world in the most intensive courses and with endless amounts of input, a lifetime would not be enough to learn at least the basics of all 7,000 different languages. Translation seems to be the only answer. George Steiner claims that translation is schemed as a message in a source language that is transformed into a target language (Waismann 2005:109). Up to there the question seems to be simply solved. However, the problematic starts, as Steiner goes on to tell, with the fact that languages differ and in order for the message to be transformed, there must be an interpretation which is sometimes described in terms of “codification” and “decoding” (109). Jorge Luis Borges starts his essay “Las dos maneras de traducir”, written in 1926, claiming that translators are sentenced to be “traduttore traditore” (translator/traitor) because of the assumption that original texts are purely good and translated works are deceitful versions of these. One of the reasons for what he claims so is the existence of foreshadowed thoughts established by the language. I believe that the difficulties posed by the task result in a constant dissatisfaction regarding the final result: translating is a complex process and most of the times the

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1. Strawn on http://global.oup.com/obso/focus/focus_on_towerbabel/: last retrieved on November 3rd 2015
translated text lacks a complete resemblance to the source one. In the mentioned essay, Borges proposes that there are two ways for translation to be carried out: a literal one, and another one based on circumlocution or periphrasis. The former focuses on the word-by-word approach whereas the second focuses on the meaning and context, even if this means changing the original words. The debate between these two postures will be discussed in the theoretical framework of this essay, but it serves as a starting point for the following question: Can translation be a meaningful tool for students of a second language to learn vocabulary more meaningfully and become aware of the meaning that lies beyond the words of a language? This question arose as a result of my experience as a teacher in which students acquire a vast amount of vocabulary, grammatical structures and all the ingredients to speak the English language as fluently and as accurately as possible, yet one element seems to be missing, or at least, seems to be hiding: pragmatics, the meanings of items of language that cannot be studied in isolation, as the Collins dictionary defines. In written exercises and informal talks with students, even the most advanced ones seem to have their language skills in English interfered by those of Spanish, and when they are made aware of this, realization comes with a question: Why is it so different? In the cases where they seem to translate directly, as in “No se si lo voy a lograr” to “I don’t know if I’m going to do it” instead of “I don’t know if I’m going to make it”, the explanation given responds to a more semantic one, whereas in the cases of “Es chino básico para mí” translated as “It’s basic Chinese to me” instead of “It’s Greek to me”, the explanation lies on the fact that it is an idiomatic expression, and some anecdote about how Shakespeare invented the expression. In spite of counting with the answers (or sometimes not) to these differences in meaning, it is important to raise awareness and autonomy in students about the recognition of how an expression can vary from language to language with a result that can be literally identical or not, but sharing the same meaning. In this essay, this question will be explored, firstly with a theoretical framework regarding the theories of translation posed by Walter Benjamin and Jorge Luis Borges followed by the pedagogical implications of these principles in the classroom as a tool to enhance second language learning.
In the view of English teachers, translation as tool to aid students in their learning process is viewed with suspicious eyes, especially in the acquisition of vocabulary. When I say with suspicious eyes I refer to the fear of failing to create an English-speaking environment, especially when the class may be the only opportunity students have of making contact with the language. However, Jeremy Harmer (2007) explains that this process is inevitable for students and that in fact, “it is a natural process of learning a foreign language” (2007:38). This statement influenced me to work with translation in this research project.

In a very different way, Edith Grossman (2011), a distinguished translator, supports the idea of translation claiming how crucial it is because it is inherently linked to literature to feed our senses in artistic and practical ways. Her ideas will be explored in the theoretical framework as well.

The purpose of this essay will be to dive into the advantages of translation to learn vocabulary and the possibility to create awareness of the differences in meaning between Spanish and English. This will be done by means of analyzing how different translations based on the same text can vary, as with the Sonnet XVIII of William Shakespeare, and the production of a translation of another sonnet, Sonnet XXIX by the students of 4th year of the Saint Éxupery school in Concordia, Entre Ríos. The experience, rich and fruitful, aims to collect their views on the differences perceived between a literal and a focused on meaning translations of the same sonnets and how these could help students in the production of their own translation of a poem in the English language. These will be carried out to assess in which way the role of translation as a useful tool for understanding and learning of new vocabulary is acknowledged by them, and also to observe how they perceive the differences in languages as a source of inspiration for creative writing and use of the new vocabulary acquired, to bridge the gap between their mother tongue and English as a second language which was creatively illustrated by the tale of Babel. Hopefully, although languages have been scattered around the world there is the hope of breaking the barrier of differences to ensure true understanding and meaningful communication.
1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
1.1 Why translation? Why translators?

This question is essential as a starting point to signal the objective of our journey. As said before, translation is usually seen as the opposite of what an English as a Second Language teacher would recur to in order to ensure the acquisition of fluency and accuracy in the students. However, translation is more complex than it seems to be. Edith Grossman (2011) dives into the matter in her book “Por qué la traducción importa”. She makes the claim that the job of the translator is to write-or rewrite- in a language B a work of literature originally composed in a language A (p.18), so that readers of the second language are able to perceive the text in the same emotional and artistic way the first readers (the readers of the original language) did. The author goes on to point out the sharp sense of style (p. 18) that translators must develop in both languages and that they must go through a series of creative decisions and imaginative acts of criticism (p.20) when performing their job. Her point of view reflects her work as a translator of masterpieces such as The Quixote and her book is a wonderful account of the setbacks and virtues of the profession of translation, highlighting the key factor that makes it unique: that translators are not mere readers of the text. They hear the voice of the author in their minds along with the second text (the translated work) that repeats what they heard although in another language (p.21). This language perceived is not only the version of what has been read with the morphology syntax and phonology of the target language. This language, she claims, is heard when reading the original text. Moreover, it is the collection of literary traditions and cultural features, along with their own lexis, syntax and its own historical background. If we take into consideration all the factors that converge it can be said, as Grossman concludes, that the purpose of translation is to recreate all these features with the stylistic peculiarities of the work of literature being translated which are comparable to the ones in the first text but never identical (p.22).

Now that the role of the translator has been stated, it is the moment to answer the first question: why translation? It is undeniable that translation allows us to amplify our capacity of exploration by gaining access to the ideas
and feelings of people from other societies or of other times through literature. Why? Because all this amount of information was produced in different places and times without sharing the same language. Taking into account the large number of languages in existence, translation serves as a bridge to unify all these voices into a single one, adaptable to each reader. For writers on the other hand, Grossman adds, the translation of their works is of crucial importance (p.26), as it promises a wider number of readers that can get access to them.

These facts allow us to reach the conclusion that every civilized and illustrated civilization should give translation a central position. Grossman identifies it as the determining factor of Europe’s Renaissance as this movement started with the translation to Latin and then the vernacular languages of philosophy and Greek classical sciences that had got lost during the Christian Europe (p.25). Such a long history of allowing people from all over the world get access to knowledge resulted in translations for studying and reading as essential. Grossman suggests that translation allows the possibility of a coherent and unified experience of literature in the multiplicity of languages around the world (p.30) This means that the expansion of the horizons that comes with translation affects the nature of the language itself as its vitality is fed by the artistic discoveries allowed by translation. By “artistic discoveries”, we mean the filtrations and transfusions of new elements and foreign adaptations of phrase, elements that make the language become bigger, more expressive and flexible. Grossman concludes that where there is literature, there is translation, as Siamese sisters who are completely inseparable and in the long term, what happens to one of them happens to the other as well (p.48). This comparison gives us a clearer view of the complexity involved in the process of translation of texts and the importance this may have in the learning of a target language. The comparison of the source text and the translated one can result in the understanding of what lies beyond languages, what they may have in common and the differences that exist as well.
What comes as a challenge when dealing with translation is the process itself. In fact, the main debate about the subject revolves around what the focus of the translation should be. James Wood (in Grossman 2011:62) says:

Los traductores literarios tienden a dividirse entre lo que podría llamarse originalistas y activistas. Los primeros honran las sutilezas del texto original, y se esfuerzan por reproducirlas lo más precisamente posible en el idioma traducido; los segundos se preocupan menos por la precisión literal que por el atractivo musical que se ha trasladado a la nueva obra. Cualquier traductor decente tiene que ser un poco de ambos. […]

In this statement, Woods summarizes the views of many writers, linguists and translators into two opposite groups: Those who focus on the translation of each word to keep the distances between languages as close as possible and those who focus on reproducing the meaning rather than the technical parts of the original text and the lexis and syntax used. George Steiner (Waisman 2005:47) adds that all theories of translation, even those that focus on the formal aspects or on the pragmatic or on the chronological aspects, are variations which lead us to a sole question: How can accuracy be obtained in its highest expression?

As a translator, Segio Waisman coexists with this question and emphasizes that if considering a literary text without taking into consideration its historical and cultural context is impossible, then its translation would be a doubly complex issue (pp.8-9). He makes this comparison in order to create awareness of the complexity of factors that have to be taken into consideration in order to undergo the process of translation. He shares Edith Grossman’s opinion that translation is one of the driving forces in the development of any literature with a tremendous effect in its way of defining itself locally and globally (p.9).

With respect to these two “theories” of translation, in the present work, the representatives of each theory will be the Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges, and the German philosopher and literary critic Walter Benjamin.
1.2 J.L. Borges, Derrida, Benjamin and Translation

As Waisman states, there is no other author in the 20th Century for whom translation has been such an inherent part of his work as a writer. In fact, in Borges’s texts translating and writing became almost inseparable practices in creation (p.7). Therefore, although Borges never makes an explicit theory about translation, in his interviews and essays we can understand that he questions the notion that translations are necessarily inferior to the original versions. Moreover, he favors the irreverent practice of “mistranslation” (p.8) an idea that gives translators a new freedom. Why? Because it changes the role of translation as not only the activity of changing a text from one linguistic system to another, but the writing (or rewriting) of this text in another literary system, in the context of the target language. In fact, Borges suggests there are no “definite texts” but just drafts and versions (p.47). By suggesting this theory of “mistranslation”, Borges encourages translation as a kind of theft and infidelity (p.48) with aesthetic value, which come to compensate the gaps that the Babel story left, in which multiplicity, and differences are not disasters but fields with potential (p.49). This is why he does not believe that translations are not necessarily inferior to the “original” versions. This theory can be appreciated in the literary heritage of the world: Borges suggests that literature is a series of versions that are multiply reflected, in which it is difficult to identify the original source (p.58) as translation is always a transforming process. In this way, the “original text” loses its privileged position as the main source and there are only translations of translations without any identifiable source (p.59). This derivation of texts that take place throughout history is only possible, as said before, with translation, as the vast number of languages in which these are written are not accessible to the majority of the readers. This is what Borges observes: if something allows the reader to enjoy the massive quantity of versions is precisely the lack of knowledge of the source language. It is this freedom to be inaccurate and infidel to the forms or focusing on the expression of the original message what gave way to numerous possible versions. It could be said that the inspiration of ones served as inspiration to others and translation was the bridge to those versions.
In his essay “Las dos maneras de traducir”, written in 1926, Borges focuses on the translation of poetry (to be developed in 1.3) by means of discussing the translation of Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Raven” by the Venezuelan Pérez Bonalde. In the essay, the author points out a fundamental aspect in all texts, originals or translations: that all of them have a different value for different readers, even if they speak the same language (Waisman 2005:51). To make this point, he compares the reading of Evaristo Carriego of himself as a person from Paraná with how a person from Chile would read it, although both speakers share Spanish as their first language and we would conclude that for both readers, the meaning would be different (p.51). This example illustrates Borger’s idea of the strong relationship between what has been written, the contexts and the readers.

At the beginning of this chapter, it had been stated that there are two theories related to fidelity in translation: Whether the translation should be loyal to the words or to the spirit of the original, presupposing that it is impossible to be loyal to both of them. James Wood, as cited before, concludes that any decent translator should carry out a bit of both theories in their work. On the one hand there is Borges’s point of view regarding translations as a part of the writing process and the development of universal literature through endless versions of versions, each one to cater for each reader’s taste was stated. The other side of the coin is Walter Benjamin’s theory. In 1923, he wrote an essay called “the translator’s task”, in which he demonstrates that every translation theory is a theory of language, breaking with traditional theories. The author makes a theory about the relationship between languages and how the meaning is built in each one. He imagines that translating is a way to make up for the disaster of Babel. (p.48) Benjamin, contrary to Borges, suggests that translation has an impossible and unrealistic goal. He puts emphasis on the fact that that it is useful to reveal the differences between meaning and language in a way that the reader could have never imagined before (Bullock and Jennings 2002:254) The purpose of this process is to enable them to see the difference between the original language and the translation. In this way, it becomes clear how translation can compensate for what is missing from the original source.
Waisman points out that, although Benjamin’s position is radically different from Borges, there is a common point between them: that word per word fidelity in translation hardly ever reflects completely the sense of the original (Waisman 2005: 69). However, Benjamin thinks that the language has to be as close as the original to continue with his idea of translation as a complementation and a pure language (Bullock and Jennings 2002:257). Borges is far from this idea, because he values linguistic differences because of the aesthetic effect it may provoke and literal translations are the least loyal.

Waisman explains that Benjamin’s theory of translation as part of a theory of language comes together because translations makes it possible to visualize both differences and similarities between the languages (Waisman 2005: 67). He goes on to point out that, the problem with Benjamin’s position of translation as a substitute of the original is that the in practice, in order to keep the “pure language” Benjamin desires, the outcome is a loss of the original sense of the original text. As a result, it will never be as good as the original (p. 72). Borges states that the linguistic difference that exists in both the original and the translated version is full of possibilities for the creation of different versions, all sincere, genuine and divergent (p. 70). For him, the translator does not know and will never know the original text fully as their attempt is to put this text in a new context. Therefore, the role of the translator is a new one.

To conclude this section, it is worth mentioning the connection Waisman made between the mentioned authors and Jacques Derrida. The coincidences he found between Derrida and Borges lie especially in the conception of differences in translations as complements. He claims Derrida focuses on the “sacred text”, a text that for Benjamin is impossible to translate due to the impossibility of make a difference between sense and words. For Derrida, this sacredness lies on what he calls the paradoxical nature of translation (p. 73), necessary and impossible at the same time. This means that, when the translator feels that there is no way to translate a text, or that a text cannot be translated fully, as in poetry, the text becomes “sacred”. However, at the same time, he postulates that the limit Benjamin sees in translation, that impossibility to translate that makes a text sacred is also what can “purely” be translated (p.74) This is what has been stated before in this essay: that behind every
language there is a “pure” language that translation can shed light on. Derrida adds that although translation may be complementary, the original version is the privileged one. As we have seen before, Borges’s position is completely different from this determined view of the consecration of literature and of the original versions, as for him all the texts are “drafts”, free versions that are free from the idea of the impossibility of translation. From his point of view, translation is a creative effort in itself.

1.3. Translation of poetry

Without a doubt, poetry is of all types of literary texts, the most complex, as not only does subjectivity stand out, but also the message is combined in a mosaic of syntactic and lexical play in order to achieve the beauty of its content. Edith Grossman states the undeniable fact that poetry is the most intense, most artistic and complex form of language, associated with the origins of dance and music (Grossman 2011:110). She does admit that artistic prose and poetry are comparable in various senses. Both presuppose an exquisite and attentive use of language to create the numerous effects of which literary capacities are capable of, such as emotional resonance, conceptual compromise, rhythm, aesthetic tension and pure beauty of expression (p.109). In this way, we can conclude that both present a challenge to the literary sensitivities of the translator and the capacity to understand the text as deeply as possible.

This complexity in form makes it certain to state that poetry supposes a problem regarding the viability of translation. Walter Benjamin treats poetry as a sacred language that cannot be altered and therefore, which cannot be translated. (Waisman 2005: 69) George Steiner claims that the “scheme” model of translation is of a message in a source language that is transformed into a target language. The problematic in the source is that languages differ and in order for the message to be able to be transformed, there must be an interpretation which is sometimes described in terms of “codification” and “decoding”. (p.109) Steiner’s words support the idea that translation must rely on the subjectivity of the translator to undergo the transformation process. This could give some viability to the translation of poetry. On the other hand, Roman Jakobson concealed the idea that translation from a didactic or speculative approach is possible, yet by definition, poetry cannot be translated (p.55), as
it is governed by phonemic and semantic units (such as puns) which, when translated, are broken and therefore, content and connection are lost.

To these two different positions, it is worth mentioning an issue discussed in 1.1: in translation, all the previous traditions and inheritances from the past come to play through rereading and rewriting. As the texts travel through time and space, their value is altered and the geographic and political distance comes to be a crucial factor as the linguistic difference in the interpretations that can be made, as stated by Borges. Tradition of their mother tongue is what allows translators and writers to make recreations with new and original meanings compared to the source text. Therefore, to the complications of syntax, lexis and rhythm, we add the context problem. The question remains: Should translation be loyal to the words of the text or to its spirit?

Borges answers this question with the idea that both ways are valid after evaluating them in terms of the pleasure the reader obtains from each of them. (p.62) If fidelity is carried out not only to the intentions of the poet but also to how the poet wanted to express them, it is not possible to be accurate. (p.63) However, he concludes that except for literal translations, all the translated versions can be considered loyal to the intentions of the poet (p.64).

Waisman takes what Barbara Johnson says in “Taking Fidelity Philosophically”. She expresses that the traditional view of fidelity is far from the figure of the translator, as he/she in a time is subjected to love, honor and obey contracts that will eventually betray and presents him/her as a loyal bigamist who divides his/her loyalty between a native and a foreign language (p. 82). It can be said that Borges agrees with this and takes into consideration, as mentioned before, that the countless options available to the translator come from the difficulty in determining what belongs to the poet and what belongs to the language. If the tension already present in the original is combined with a necessary freedom to omit, change, add, rewrite and falsify, the act of translation is limitless. (p.82)
In fact, as Edith Grossman says, the language of poetry, its musicality, its own tradition of shapes and metric and imaginary along with its linguistic characteristics make it possible to express certain concepts and emotions in a specific way, but not in another (Grossman 2011:110). Why? Because all of these aspects are inherent in such a deep way in a poem that its translation to another language seems an insensible act. However, translations are abundant and this has allowed readers of all the world be in contact with the masterpieces of Shakespeare, Góngora, Borges, Pessoa, Poe, Baudelaire or Virgil.

In spite of the weight and the importance of translated poetry in our literature, the confluence of sound, sense and shape in a poem represents a special problem for the translator, related to syntactic analysis. Grossman explains that the translator is obliged to divide the constituent parts (the poem’s language, its syntax, its lexis and structures) originally inseparable in the poem and at the same time, move towards different aesthetic directions (p.112). This is where the problem resides: These features should be modified drastically even when the manifestation and intention of the work, its content and emotions must remain the same. In a similar way to Borges, she expresses that a translation remains faithful to the aesthetic and the emotional reality of its source and it is a true and precise reflection of the first poem. This means that the readers will experience an aesthetic experience comparable to the one expressed in the original poem.

To conclude this section, Borges’s view seems to summarize the issues discussed. According to him, it is difficult to determine what belongs to the language and what belongs to the poet, which could be an analogy between distinguishing between context and text, between meaning and the meaning of language throughout time.

1.4 Pedagogical approaches

The translation of poetry could serve as a bridge to assess the level of understanding of students in more than one way: the lexical level, the syntactic one and the pragmatic one. Translating a poem from Spanish to English or vice versa, means an intense process of decoding and rewriting, with the aim of
achieving a piece as similar to the original one, trying to preserve the original features.

Jeremy Harmer states that students are going to translate what is happening into their L1 whether teachers want them to or not (Harmer 2008:38). This does not mean that an attempt has to be made to keep and English environment in the room (pp.38-39). In fact, this will boost student’s exposure to the language and their acquisition. In Harmer’s words, it would be foolish to deny the value of the L1 in the class and its potential value (p.39). Including translation of poetry in some parts of the syllabus would be a fruitful and practical way not only to encourage students to apply their knowledge on vocabulary and grammar, but also to exercise cognitive process such as creativity, comparison, attention and dealing with solving problems, just to name some. This will allow them to think carefully about meaning and construction (p.39).

As poetry is in itself an extremely complex type of text to translate, it would be a rather abrupt encounter with translation if students had not come across such a task before. Harmer suggests an interesting way to start with translation techniques and getting students used to the exercise of translation which consists on working with films with subtitles so that students are able to judge the differences between script and the text offered and if these are suitable to the meaning. This process will allow students to see connections and differences between the L1 and L2 (p.39). Once they become familiar with some of the difficulties that translation involves, simple poems could be introduced, increasing in complexity with time. Poetry, as Paul Ricoeur said, would offer the great challenge of the inseparable union between sense and rhythm, meaning and significance (Ricoeur 2004:21). As he states, the rejection to what comes from a foreign place has turned into a linguistic ethnocentrism (p.19) of which students must be aware. The status of English as a lingua franca creates the image of it as a “supreme language”. The task of the English as a foreign language teacher, then, is to create awareness of the importance of all languages and the rich cultural background they all have. Translation would be the practical task that should make them come to this realization. What is more, they would be encouraged, as Ricoeur suggested, to give up the ideal of a perfect translation (p.25) as well as to accept the difference between
the own language and their foreign one in what he calls “linguistic hospitality”, in which the language of the other is welcomed into one’s own (Davidson 2012: 6)

In the experience carried out with the students of the Saint Exupéry school, the views of translation expressed by Borges, Derrida and Benjamin were to be analyzed in a practical exercise. These ideas, summarized in Ricoeur’s words, questioned whether translation should be taken in its strict sense, the transference of a verbal message from a language to another, or in a wider sense, as a synonym of interpretation within a linguistic community (Ricoeur 2004:31). Furthermore, the idea of fidelity and accuracy was analyzed, and the belief that the original text was the “best” came up unanimously. However, before diving into the experience of translation carried out with students proposed in the introduction of this work, a brief exploration of Shakespeare’s sonnets will be introduced, to condense the features they possess and the particular difficulties these pose as regards translation and the potential benefits of them undergoing this process.

1.5. Shakespeare’s poetry and its translation

Pablo Inberg (2007) accounts for the wide variety of translations available of Shakespeare’s sonnets, from prose to free verse. He goes on to explain the difference between the English iambic pentameter and the Spanish hendecasyllable, highlighting that the difference does not lay between the number of syllables but in stress, as the English language can rely on a flexible iambic pentameter whereas in Spanish, there is no such strong accent, but a soothing of some features. (2005:36) However, they are similar in the categorical rhythm and semantics (36). Finally, Inberg goes on to mention that the hendecasyllable is the type of verse used by Shakespeare’s contemporaries, such as Luis de Góngora, to write their sonnets in Spanish. This means that a translation of these sonnets would resemble the original versions in terms of rhyme and meaning. Nevertheless, there is still an inconvenience as regards translation: from English to Spanish the number of syllables increases, and if we aim to keep the number of syllables between the original text and its translation, we should summarize or synthesize the contents. These issues in the translation of the sonnets are a clear example of the questions posed by Benjamin and Borges discussed in the previous section: keeping the sacred text,
the original words and therefore, the original meaning or the other option which consists of retorting to creativity to give birth to a new version prioritizing the meaning. Inberg provides an example of a translation by Manuel Mujica Lainez of the Second sonnet and compares it with a literary translation in free verse illustrated in the following chart:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original version</th>
<th>Mujica Lainez’s translation</th>
<th>Literal translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When forty winters shall besiege thy brow And dig deep trenches in thy beauty’s field, Thy youth’s proud livery, so gazed on now, Will be a tattered weed, of small worth held: (p.48)</td>
<td>Cuando asedien tu faz cuarenta inviernos Y ahonden surcos en tu prado hermoso, Tu juventud, altiva vestidura, Será un andrajo que no mira nadie. (p.37)</td>
<td>Y caven hondas trincheras en el campo de tu belleza, la altiva librea de tu juventud, tan mirada ahora, Será un vestido andrajoso tenido en poco valor. (p.38)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Table 1. “Sonnet II: Original text and translations” |

This comparison allows the reader to appreciate the aesthetic value in Mujica Lainez’s translation, which results in a great similarity in rhythm. The literal translation, however, lacks the semantic depth of the original, as it is more focused on keeping the original words. Ingberg points out that in the second verse there is a metaphor, which is not lost, but is transformed from warlike to one related to the countryside (p.36). What he wants to highlight is that in poetry there is a lot of discussion about what can be gained and lost especially regarding rhyme, which is what actually makes a sonnet. However, in order to achieve this equality in rhyme, changes must be made as regards meaning and content. Ingberg himself confesses that he would rather leave rhyme aside so as to keep not only the details of the meaning, but also the poetic resources, such as puns, rhetoric figures and polysemy, just to name some, as it is impossible at times to keep both. He concludes that the virtues and faults of the different metric forms are nothing but moulds where mud or gold can be poured in (p.39) and that the greatest challenge is posed on the skills, knowledge and dedication of the translator.
2. PRACTICAL APPLICATION
   2.1 Description of students.

   Having explored the characteristics of translation of Shakespeare’s poetry, a question must be posed so as to continue with this research project: How can Shakespeare’s sonnets help students at Secondary school improve their vocabulary skills as well as create awareness on the semantic differences that exist between English and Spanish? The question indeed raises a significant challenge. In the first place, the sonnets were chosen to work with because of their modest length, which allows the analysis of two translations almost simultaneously focusing on the meaning and differences that exist without worrying about the time constraints of working with long pieces of text, such as narratives. Secondly, poetry implies special focus on semantic differences as well as the features that characterize it, such as polysemy, puns, metaphors and other rhetoric figures. This means that students will be in contact with a piece of text whose translation implies a creative process in which they have to apply their knowledge of the English language grammar and vocabulary, as well as their knowledge on features mentioned above which they have explored in the Language classes at school.

   This group of students who participated in this experience belong to the Private institute “Saint Exupéry” High school in Concordia, Entre Ríos. They are currently undergoing the 4th year of their secondary education, and their ages range from 15 to 16 years old. The number of students is modest: 8 boys and 7 girls. This group is divided into an upper-intermediate and a pre-intermediate level. This means that, in spite of the fact that not all students possess the same level of fluency and accuracy in their L2, they all possess the tools in both languages to explore the translations of the sonnet. The expected result is that they become aware of what it takes to express the thoughts and beliefs from a source text to a translated one along with how much practical and theoretical tools they will need along with creativity and interpretation. This group of students is characterized by their energy and enthusiasm, as well as their good performance in the English classes, in spite of showing difficulties with interference of their L1 in the L2. The latter was the main reason why they were chosen to undergo this translation experience.
2.2. Development of activities

After exploring the cultural and historical background of Shakespeare’s time, the students were introduced to the sonnet xviii in the form of three translations in Spanish by Manuel Mujica Lainez, Andrés Ehrenhaus and Miguel Angel Montezanti (see Table 3). The students read the three versions aloud and discussed with the teacher the similarities and differences between them. Questions arose regarding the reason for such differences, and their motives were of particular interest: “If the three of them knew English and spoke Spanish, how come they made three different translations?” The question discussed in the theoretical framework of this work arose naturally. A brief explanation of the theories of translation was given. Following this, the students were allowed time to work in groups, set by their own preference, and the aim was to produce a version in English, which would be later compared to the original one, in its original English version next to a paraphrased one in modern English, so that they would be able to understand the words fully. (See Table 2).

When the task of making a single version in English was set, the immediate reaction in most of the students was the choice of Mujica Lainez’s version, and started translating with a literal approach, of word per word. However, as the activity progressed, it could be observed that they read it aloud several times to work out whether the rhythm coincided, and changes started to be made. It was interesting to observe the discussions (and some arguments) that started occurring in the groups to come to an agreement when changing the words to fit the rhyme but at the same time keeping the meaning. There were even discussions because the translation “did not sound nice”, which is related to their knowledge on the musicality and rhythm of poetry.
The final versions of the sonnet (See Appendix A) varied in lexis and syntactic structures. Clearly the format of the sonnet could not be maintained, but the effort to save the meaning was clear, as they believed that by respecting the words individually, the meaning would be preserved. Some others recurred to paraphrasing when the translation of a verse proved difficult, and yet the meaning turned out to be connected to the original text. In fact, having three translations to count on allowed them to search for alternatives when a word or phrase resulted difficult for them. The teacher monitored students and helped with the explanation of the meaning of some of the expressions, especially the ones of the metaphors, so that students could focus on the translation process itself.

The students showed interest and most of them enjoyed the activity. A surprising fact about those who claimed they did not find the activity attractive is that they expressed that the task itself seemed impossible. However, they enjoyed reciting the poems and even videos were made with images to illustrate their new poems. When the contrast was made with the original version, students were surprised to see that their versions were not so different, but acknowledged the fact that they lacked the knowledge or techniques to make their own productions sound as natural as the original one.

Following this activity, the introduction of the sonnet XXIX took place, in English with its modern version. Because of the limited time available, the activity was planned in the following way: In a PowerPoint presentation displayed with a projector, students read the full sonnet aloud. After this, each slide contained one or two stanzas (see Table 4). Students tried to make a version in Spanish orally. This activity was very fruitful because, as they were working all together, different opinions arose on how the new version in Spanish should be. Some corrected their fellow classmate’s grammar or suggested different words. The final version resulted in a quite literal translation of words, although the rhythm was not as accurate as the original one. In spite of their lack of success in this aspect, the effort of students to make the final version sound with a similar musicality was to be awarded. For the final version in Spanish, see Appendix B.
Regarding the materials available for the activities, students counted with mobile phones with dictionaries and the Internet and the class books and notes containing grammar rules. However, after finishing their first draft of their version of the sonnet, they realized that relying on these elements did not guarantee a satisfactory work, so teamwork and cooperation developed, exchanging opinions and discussing the possible changes to be made to make their final version.

SONNET XVIII

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original version</th>
<th>Paraphrased version (Modern English)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?</td>
<td>You are more lovely and more constant:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thou art more lovely and more temperate:</td>
<td>Rough winds shake the beloved buds of May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,</td>
<td>And summer is far too short:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And summer’s lease hath all too short a date:</td>
<td>At times the sun is too hot,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,</td>
<td>Or often goes behind the clouds;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And often is his gold complexion dimm’d</td>
<td>And everything beautiful sometime will lose its beauty,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And every fair from fair sometime declines,</td>
<td>By misfortune or by nature’s planned out course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By chance, or nature’s changing course, untrimm’d;</td>
<td>But your youth shall not fade,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But thy eternal summer shall not fade</td>
<td>Nor will you lose the beauty that you possess;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow’st;</td>
<td>Nor will death claim you for his own,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nor shall Death brag thou wander’st in his shade,</td>
<td>Because in my eternal verse you will live forever.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When in eternal lines to time thou grow’st;</td>
<td>So long as there are people on this earth,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,</td>
<td>So long will this poem live on, making you immortal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: “Original and modern versions of sonnet xviii”
¿A un día de verano compararte?
Más hermosura y suavidad posees.
Tiembra el brote de Mayo bajo el viento
y el estío no dura casi nada.

A veces demasiado brilla el ojo solar, y otras su tez de oro se apaga;
toda belleza alguna vez declina,
ajada por la suerte o por el tiempo.

Pero eterno será el verano tuyo.
No perderás la gracia, ni la Muerte
se jactará de ensombrecer tus pasos
cuando crezcas en versos inmortales.

Vivirás mientras alguien vea y sienta
y esto pueda vivir y te dé vida.

¿Por qué igualarte a un día de verano si eres más hermoso y apacible?
El viento azota los capullos mayos
y el término estival no tarda en irse;
si a veces arde el óculo solar,
más veces su dorada faz se nubla
y es norma que, por obra natural
o del azar, lo bello al fin sucumba.
Mas no se nublará tu estío eterno
ni perderá la gracia que posee,
i te tendrá la muerte por trofeo
si eternas son las líneas donde creces:
Habiendo quien respire
y pueda ver,
todo esto sigue vivo y tú también.

¿Te comparo a un día de verano?
Vos sos más temperado y placentero.
El viento bate el capullito enano
y el verano se pasa muy ligero.
A veces quema el sol con su destello,
otras, sus rayos tórridos se opacan
lo bello cede a veces de lo bello
suerte o naturaleza los atacan.
Pero el verano tuyo no se amengua
ni perderás tampoco lo que es tuyo
ni la Muerte usará su engreída lengua
si con versos eternos te construyo.

Mientras los hombres respiren y ojos lean
vas a vivir en esos que me lean.

Table 3: “Three translations for sonnet xviii”

Table 4: “Sonnet xxix” presented to students to be translated into Spanish
CONCLUSION

George Steiner said in his book “After Babel” that the study of translation is a study of the language. (Steiner 1975: 49) Indeed, it poses an intellectual, theoretical and practical problem. Paul Ricoeur claims that there is no absolute criteria for what makes a good translation and therefore, he adds the ethical problem, whether there is fidelity or betrayal (Ricoeur 2004:67), better known in the sentence traduttore tradittore. As a matter of fact, the experience of working with translation with students proved invaluable because throughout the analysis of the translated versions and during the production of their own translated versions of the sonnets, these questions explored by Borges, Derrida, Benjamin, Waisman and Ricoeur arose naturally. It was inevitable to try to understand why there were such different versions for the same source if we all share a language.

This process resulted in accepting Ricoeur’s suggestion of being reluctant to the ideal of a “perfect” translation (p.68) and resorting to aiming for the best version that could be obtained. The result was the acknowledgement of the categorical differences that exist between the mother tongue and the foreign language.

This research work’s purpose intends to shed light on how translation can reinforce the second language acquisition process with the aid of the first language in order to create awareness of two features: first, the common elements which lie underneath all languages. Secondly, the elements that make languages different, which range from the lexis to the grammar to expressions and meaning which go beyond words, such as puns and metaphors. Future work could include an exploration on how to boost students’ capacity to reproduce the rhyme, rhythm and metric when translating, to make a complete version. However, the results obtained in the present work are satisfactory, as not only were students interested in the enterprise proposed to them, but also they displayed an understanding and analysis of the issue which was not expected.
To conclude with this research work, Franz Rosenzweig’s paradox cited by Ricoeur shows the bridge translation can give teachers when trying to create awareness of the linguistic elements which go beyond words. The paradox states that translating is to serve two lords: a foreign one in his/her work and the reader in his/her wish to take over the text. It is a foreign author and a reader who inhabits the same language as the translator. It is a complex process which allows the possibility to exploit the potentials of students, to enable them to know more than just grammar structures and vocabulary. In sum, to translate is to understand.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

APPENDIX

A. Translations of sonnet XVIII (Spanish to English)

Group 1

If I compare you with a summer day,
you are more beautiful and peaceful.
The wind crushes the flower of may,
And the summer goes so calm.

Sometimes the sun burns too much,
their rays turn overshadow.
All beauty at time declines
worn by luck or by time.

But your summer is never over.
You won’t lose grace, not death would use her tongue
if endless are the lines where you grew up.
As long as there is someone who breathes and you can see
All this is still alive and you too.

Group 2

Why I compare you to a summer day?
If you are more beautiful and more peaceful.
Trembles the may blossom down the wind
And the summer passes so quickly.
Sometimes the sun burns with their lights.
At other times, their lights are darker.

Sometimes the beauty things come from loveliness

Luck or nature attack them.

But your summer will be eternal.

You won’t lose the grace, not even death

If with eternal verses I build you,

while the man breathes and eyes read,

you’ll live in those who read me.

Group 3

Can I compare you to a summer day?

Such loveliness and softness you possess.

The wind is whipping the may’s outbreaks

And the summer passes buy so fast.

Sometimes the sole’s eye shines too much

And at other times its golden complexion tears off.

Every beauty ends at some time,

affected by luck or time.

But your summer will last forever.

You will not lose the grace.

Not even death will overshadow your steps

when you grow in these immortal verses.

You will live meanwhile someone sees and feels

and this is able to live and give you life.
Group 4

Like a summer day?
You’re more beautiful and tranquil.
The strong wind blows the flowers
and the summer is ending.
Sometimes the sun is very shiny,
and for a time the shine gets dark.
Every beauty ends one time
but you’ll still be beautiful.
And your summer never ends.
You’re not going to lose your grace.
You’ll grow with these phrases
Meanwhile someone feels and sees
And they live and give you life.

Group 5

Can we compare you to a summer day?
You are more beautiful.
The wind blows the blooms,
and the summer will be over soon.

Sometimes the solar eye shines,
and others their gold turns off.
All the beauty falls down
Because of luck or because of time.
But eternal will be your summer.
You will not lose the grace, and the death,
she will shadow your steps
when you grow older in immortal verses.
You will live while someone sees and feels
And this can live and give you life.
B. Translation of sonnet XXIX (English to Spanish)

Cuando en desgracia en la fortuna y ante los hombres
quede solo y en desgracia
Y los problemas dejen al cielo sordo con mi llanto
Y me mire a mí mismo y me maldiga
Deseando ser más rico en esperanzas
Como él, como él que tiene amigos,
Deseando el arte y el poder de ese hombre.
Con lo que más disfruto estoy menos contento;
Sin embargo en esos pensamientos en los que me desprecio,
Pienso en ti con alegría y luego mi estado,
Como la alondra que se levanta cuando comienza el día
De la tierra, canta himnos a las puertas del cielo.
Tu dulce amor me recuerda a las riquezas
Que con los reyes no cambiaría.