Facilitating the process of teaching/learning writing in the second language: training translation students to face a global imperative

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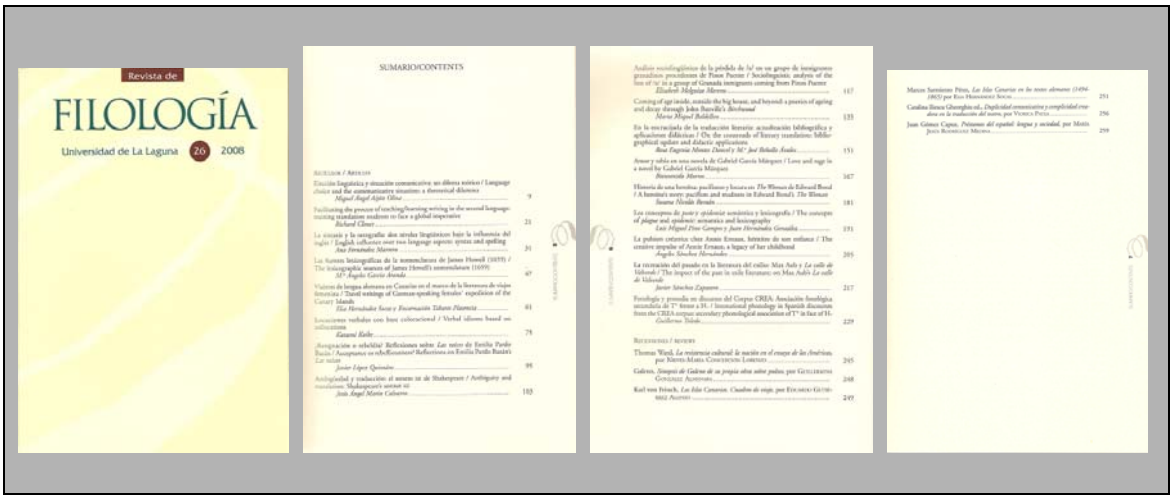
Abstract

English is now the dominant language of publication and translation in almost every academic and non-academic field, and pressure is increasing on many scholars and translators around the world to publish and translate in the medium of English, whether English is their mother tongue or not. As a teacher of English as a foreign language in a Faculty of Translation and Interpreting, I have frequently observed that students have very little confidence when writing in English. Since teaching methods started giving more importance to oral skills, writing seems to have been pushed into the background, teaching writing very often consisting in giving a topic question to be developed at home. Nevertheless, writing in the L2 should be central to a translator training programme since it serves as the foundation of another core subject: Translation into the foreign language. Whether we question the acceptability, or even desirability, of translating into the foreign language or not, the pragmatic, market-oriented stance of employers generally takes for granted that employees with language-related qualifications will be able to function competently in two or three languages and will have no difficulty in translating into and out of any combination of them.
This paper will address the teaching of writing in the second language within a translator training programme. The major focus is on an interactive process approach designed to gradually guide the learners towards autonomy by encouraging them to consider three essential components when writing: the writer, the reader, and the text, as writing always involves writers making choices in determined social contexts.