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Advantages and Challenges of Online Translation Teaching and Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Mexican Case Study²

Extended summary

This article analyzes the advantages and challenges that Mexican university professors and students experienced with online translation teaching and learning during the August-December 2020 semester. Examining this didactic situation is meaningful for two reasons. First, to yield more insight into Mexican translation professors and students' experiences in light of the lack of research about Translation Didactics in the country. The second reason is to identify how the participants faced the teaching and learning process during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their experiences could be compared to others from different contexts to analyze the present and future challenges.

This case study follows a qualitative approach. Data was collected online using 41 individual semi-structured interviews and 67 non-participant classroom observations (160 hours in total) involving 39 English language students and two translation professors from the School of Languages and Literatures of the Autonomous University of Querétaro. These research methods were selected to contrast the participants' discourse and actions.

In this qualitative case study, data analysis has been carried out applying theory from Translation Didactics focused on online teaching and learning, e-learning, and Mexican translation teaching and learning. The data were coded and classified into analytical categories re-

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lated to the participants' teaching and learning processes. The data were then analyzed with the ATLAS.ti software. The findings are discussed in three sections. First, the general educational changes adopted in the UAQ undergraduate degree are outlined. Secondly, the positive experiences of the professors and students with online translation teaching and learning during the August-December 2020 semester are presented. Finally, the challenges of the teaching-learning process of the informants are discussed.

The findings reveal that during the COVID-19 pandemic professors and students faced different educational changes. First, as in many other contexts worldwide, the teaching mode was modified, shifting from face-to-face to distance education. Professors started to apply collaborative learning (Poe & Stassen, 2002) and translation projects during the classes. According to learners, the new online translator education had several advantages related mainly to comfort and academic and personal organization. Academically, participants considered autonomy and self-learning promotion as the central favorable aspect of this way of learning.

The findings show that some students could successfully manage distance education due to their organizational and self-learning skills, commitment, motivation, and proper internet access. However, the majority of the participants had developed negative perceptions about online education as well as health problems that interfered with their teaching and learning process. For this reason, they clearly expressed their desire to return to regular face-to-face classes at the university as soon as possible.

These findings inspire us to think about changes beneficial to online education and lifelong education and conceive other implications of improving online teaching and learning to incorporate more e-learning in Mexican translator training. The experiences presented in this paper reflect the features of a situated reality. These points could be contrasted to other contexts with similar characteristics to examine how the COVID-19 pandemic has transformed the curriculum and the lives of students, professors, researchers, and parents.

Keywords: students, professors, translation, distance teaching, online learning

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