

Should basic translation techniques be included into office administration study programs in Costa Rica?

¿Deberían los programas de estudios de administración de oficinas en Costa Rica incluir técnicas básicas de traducción?

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Resumen

El continuo florecimiento de empresas nacionales e internacionales en Costa Rica ha impactado la forma en que las personas administradoras de oficina realizan sus tareas diarias y además han experimentado transformaciones en su puesto de trabajo. Esto último también significa que quienes realizan estas actividades necesitan aprender nuevas técnicas, manejos de paquetes computacionales, idiomas y otras habilidades para desempeñar sus labores. En las últimas décadas, las tareas de esta rama han sido muchas; sin embargo, ahora que muchas empresas tienen oficinas o contacto con personas en países de habla inglesa, es momento de enfrentarse a ese cambio a la hora de hacer negocios, como país. Y por esto es por lo que la autora propone comenzar a incluir habilidades como las técnicas básicas de traducción en los programas de estudios de esta carrera en Costa Rica.

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Con esto se beneficiaría a las personas trabajadores, las empresas y al país en general. Es por esto, que este artículo se enfoca en la necesidad de incluir y mejorar áreas como la de técnicas básicas de traducción en los programas de estudio de la administración de oficinas en Costa Rica. Además de dar una recomendación al respecto de que, si no se pudieran agregar dichas técnicas a estos programas, otra opción sería impartir un curso de traducción administrativa.

Palabras clave: técnicas, traducción, inglés, español, administración de oficina, asistencia administrativa

Abstract

The continuous flourishing of national and international companies in Costa Rica has impacted the way office administrators carry out their daily tasks and have also experienced transformations in their workplace. The latter also means that those who carry out these activities need to learn new techniques, computer packages use, languages, and other skills to perform their jobs. In recent decades, the tasks of this branch have been many; however, now that many companies have offices or contact with people in English-speaking countries, it is time to face this change when doing business, as a country. And this is why the author proposes to begin including skills such as basic translation techniques in the study programs of this major in Costa Rica. This would benefit workers, companies, and the country in general. This is why this article focuses on the need to include and improve areas such as basic translation techniques in office administration study programs in Costa Rica. In addition to giving a recommendation, in case these techniques cannot be included to these programs, another option would be teaching a course in administrative translation.

Key words: techniques, translation, English, Spanish, office administration, administrative assistance

Introduction

This article's intention is to emphasize the need for and importance of including and improving areas as translation techniques in study programs for the office assistance major in Costa Rica. Office administration, as a major, is a very important part of the functioning of businesses, and so, it is the focus of this essay to find a tool that helps update, improve, and refresh to continue growing along with the country, society, and the world.

With a background in English and 12 years of professional experience in adult education, the author has a personal and professional interest in encouraging continuous improvement in the area of office administration in higher education institutions of the country.

To achieve this, four key areas will be covered in this essay: the first section discusses the importance of English for professionals in Costa Rica; the second addresses three basic translation concepts: 1) translation as a process, 2) translation as a product, and 3) the translation techniques considered for this essay. The third section refers to why including basic translation techniques in study programs for this major in Costa Rica is essential for current and future office administrators. The fourth and final section presents a potential option to translation techniques in an administrative translation course which emphasizes the types of texts used in the Office Assistant field and how to handle them linguistically.

In conclusion, adding a course on basic translation techniques to educational programs is a win-win scenario for everyone involved and this article aims at encouraging educational institutions companies, and future office administrators to consider this tool as a new opportunity for improvement in Costa Rica. Additionally, this idea seeks to support the current study of Commercial English for business-related majors.

Body

The first part of this article discusses the importance of English for professionals in Costa Rica. This may seem obvious, considering that English has long been a necessary tool for professionals in Latin America. In fact, according to Baker, (2021), “English is a dominant language of science in Latin America” and it mentions that many fields of study rely on this language to communicate both nationally and internationally, now more than ever.

In the digital age, translation has become an indispensable tool for breaking language barriers and connecting cultures. In this context, the rise of technological tools has raised questions about the future of translation. Will these technological tools replace the role of translation professionals?

While it is true that technological tools have advanced significantly in recent years and offer increasingly accurate translations, they still cannot replicate the complexity and subtlety of human language. As Hernández and Martínez (2001) point out, they mention that the computer age has substantially modified the work of translation professionals, since there are now technological tools that support their work, since they perform automatic translations.

However, translation is not just about decoding words and phrases from one language to another. It involves understanding the cultural context, intentions and emotions presented in the text to translate by its original author. Human translators, with their cultural background and linguistic sensitivity, are capable of identifying these elements and translating them into the target language in a natural manner. In addition to adding the precise expressions that correspond according to the context

Without a doubt, there are different points of view, some think that translations generated by technologies are already sufficiently accurate, others think that they are a support to speed up the task but require human evaluation to guarantee the quality of the translations, especially in those cases where the text requires a high degree of cultural understanding. This author’s position is that the future of translation does not lie in the dilemma between humans and technology, but in the synergistic collaboration between the two. Furthermore, she considers that technological tools are valuable allies for translators and not enemies.

A recommendation that is provided for those who use technology to carry out translations is that they have a medium to high level command of the target language to be able to carry out evaluations of the results generated by the technological tool. This shows, once again, that knowing the English language is essential. In areas like office administration,

for example, the demand for effective English knowledge and its use, keeps growing every day not only in this country but, also worldwide.

According to Chavez et al. (2017), recent estimates suggest that around 402 million people speak English as their first language, just as it is currently used by more than one billion non-native speakers. This indisputable fact highlights the importance of English and the necessity for people to know and use it to succeed in working environments, especially in international contexts within the American continent or when interacting with the rest of the world.

According to Páramo (2011) (cited by Martinetti & Chóez, 2015) nowadays, world commerce and societies, in general, are increasingly interconnected. Therefore, it is crucial for companies to have workers with communicative abilities, as fluency in foreign languages, understanding of several cultures, and knowledge about economy and politics of the countries with which they want to establish commercial relations. This highlights the real need for translation services, and the fact that communication is essential for business. Policastro (2015), considers that translation and interpretation services for international companies are key to forming necessary alliances in our contemporary society. These services facilitate communication among people from different parts of the place to reach agreements that can affect many individuals.

In recent years, professionals have faced increasing demands. If a company has operations or interacts with businesses in English-speaking countries, additional skills beyond the basics may be required. Consequently, it becomes necessary to consider including or enhancing other skills, such as basic translation techniques, in these study programs in Costa Rica.

The second part of this essay explores three basic concepts of translation: 1. translation as a process; 2. translation as a product, and 3. specific translation techniques discussed in this essay. Let us take a look at Winston, (2016) who affirms the following of translation as a process:

Translation is a process that converts thoughts, feelings, messages, orders, or other verbal sentences expressed in a language into another language of same value and meaning. Different languages use specific names for this process, but the names indicate that the process consists of transmission and conversion of messages for the people who rarely use source language and are not able to understand the message without transmission and conversion processes into the system. It is very important to know the fact that translated to be content is not simply the elements, that are being replaced with elements of other target language system, but is should be translated in a way to express a message (para. 2).

Alternatively, according to the second definition of translation as a product, it is defined as ‘the result of such a process,’ as stated in the Merriam Webster Dictionary’s definition of ‘translation’ as a noun. This definition emphasizes the final outcome rather than the process of translating itself.

When referring to basic translating techniques, particularly within the context of English and Spanish, the article addresses eight techniques commonly taught by the author: calque, transposition, addition, amplification, economy, modulation, literal translation, and borrowing.

Molina & Hurtado (2002), assert that Vinay and Darbelnet's pioneer work "Stylistique comparée du français et de l'anglais (SCFA) (1958) was the first systematic classification of translation techniques that had a clear methodological purpose." It is because of many other authors, as well as Vinay and Darbelnet, that we have come to apply those techniques and others to the different types of translations we currently use. To clarify the meaning and application of these techniques in this article, the following is how Saridaki (2021) defines them in their work according to Vinay and Darbelnet's original's definition in 1958:

- Borrowing. In this technique, a word is taken directly from another language.
- Calque. A foreign word is translated and incorporated into another language.
- Literal translation as word for word translation.
- Transposition. A shift of word class, i.e., verb for noun, noun for preposition, is when two signifiers are shifted.
- Modulation. A shift in point of view or in cognitive categories.
- Amplification. When the TL uses more signifiers to cover syntactic or lexical gaps.
- Economy is the opposite of amplification.

In the author's opinion, these are the most useful techniques for translating administrative texts because of their content, context, language use, level of formality. In addition, office administrators need to understand different areas such as economics, laws, national and international business practices, and procedures, among others. That is why, when students are introduced to the process of learning translation, it is always a good idea to start with these basic techniques. Of course, there are many other techniques of translation but, for the purpose of this essay, only these eight mentioned above will be developed.

The third aspect to be addressed is the reason for including basic translation techniques in the curriculum of this major in Costa Rica as essential tools for current and office administrators. In this regard, people who decide to start studying to become office administrators in Costa Rica should be proficient in both English and Spanish, as well as understand and use both languages comfortably. Since it is known that most companies use both English and Spanish in their everyday communication in Costa Rica, knowledge of translation techniques can greatly benefit office administrators. This last fact supports the idea that including translation techniques to educational programs in Costa Rica will benefit future professionals, the companies they work for, and the country as a whole.

By doing so, not only will these future workers benefit from it but also, the companies that hire them. The fact is that many universities, programs, and technical degrees have included the English language as a crucial part of their curriculum. However, very few, if any institutions, offer courses specifically on translation techniques. In Costa Rica, the Office Administration diploma or Bachelor's in Administrative Assistant is currently offered by more than 20 different educational institutions including universities (both public and private) and technical colleges.

Some current study programs, offered in the country, also highlight the advantages of this working career, particularly when participating in bilingual environments that are attractive and have become crucial in modern developing societies like Costa Rica's. Being proficient in English, enables people to integrate more quickly into the country's labor force, which in turn activates the economy and gives those workers the chance to have better lives, keep studying, and even getting better jobs in the same area or others they might choose.

Therefore, providing office administrators with translation techniques to include in their everyday job turns into an excellent tool to help students, the major, learning centers, and companies to improve and progress. Nevertheless, adding another course may require changes in the current program, additional investment and also, finding suitable professors for the courses. Yet, this would not be a waste of time, money, or resources. On the contrary, it would provide long-term benefits for all of those involved in this process. So, incorporating this type of knowledge to the program will help future assistants to understand, create, or even correct the texts they usually work with in their bilingual tasks.

The last but by no means, less important part of this essay, proposes an option for a course called "administrative translation" to teach students how to translate the types of texts used in the Office Assistants' area and how to handle those texts, linguistically. Focusing on the text, more than the language itself, becomes beneficial since knowing how to use and create various of the administrative English language texts will always be a significant advantage to future administrative workers, companies, and the country in general.

In terms of the types of texts used in this major, a course in administrative translation is precisely what the workers of this field need, as it targets what Gasimova and Huseynova (2018) refer to as administrative texts: congratulation letters, information letters, letters from employers to potential employees, query letters, general business correspondence, networking, business letters, invitations to events, letters of confirmation and acknowledgment, internal communication, FYI, internal memos, management issues, meetings, reports in memo format, sales letters, letters requesting information, E-Mail and Fax correspondence, Internet, direct – mail, and marketing messages are among the most important. If a future administrative assistant is able to handle and work with these types of texts before entering their job, that employee will have a greater chance of performing well and succeed, providing the same opportunity to the company.

It is the author's opinion that a course in administrative translation could be the next best benefit if one on translation techniques is not available nor is possible to include in educational institution programs in Costa Rica.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there can be many advantages of including courses like translation techniques in educational institutions for all the parties involved in the process. In the case of international companies operating in Costa Rica, their workers will understand better texts presented in both English and Spanish; they will be able to hire people with this skill,

who can be more willing to communicate in both languages, not only orally, but also in a written form. For national companies, the chances of hiring workers who are better prepared in English and translation will become a reality and those same employees will have the ability to perform and interact with others in English at any level.

On the other hand, for the office administrators, there can be advantages like including this skill in their resumé, opting for better jobs, getting better salaries, and even applying for jobs outside Costa Rica. As a general rule, most people who work in this field are young, have no previous experience, and want to grow in the company where they work. All of which can ensure that the office administrator might feel more encouraged to pursue any learning process inside or outside the classroom.

Finally, Costa Rica as a country will take advantage from this scenario since the improvement and success of workers will directly benefit the economy, and ultimately, society overall. In the end, adding a course like basic translation techniques in educational center programs is a win-win opportunity for all of those involved and the purpose of this article is to encourage more companies, educational institutions and future office administrators to consider this area as a new opportunity of improvement for society in general.

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