

Educating Parents in the Spanish-Speaking Community: A Look at Translated Educational Materials

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Abstract

Federal legislation (White House Executive Order 13166, 2000) mandates that language services be provided to limited English proficient populations by health care providers receiving federal funding. In order to do this, some basic resources have been developed to administer medical services. Nevertheless, the translation aspects of these guidelines often lack many components that would be necessary to assure the functional adequacy of the translated text (e.g., cultural, pragmatic, and textual appropriateness). Furthermore, outside the medical field, guidelines and legislation are often nonexistent. In the absence of specific requirements for translation and/or translator qualifications, research suggests that translators, in particular novice, unexperienced translators, tend to adopt a literal, linguistic, micro-approach to the translation task, failing to consider global or pragmatic factors (Colina, 1997, 1999; Jääskeläinen, 1989, 1990, 1993; Königs, 1987; Krings, 1987; Kussmaul, 1995; Lörscher, 1991, 1992a, 1992b, 1997; Tirkkonen-Condit & Jääskeläinen, 1991). Given the scarcity of educational programs in translation and the frequent use of untrained bilinguals to produce translated materials in Arizona, we hypothesized that documents translated in educational settings would not be functionally adequate. Using a sample corpus of educational materials for the Spanish-speaking population, we show that this is indeed the case. We demonstrate that a structural, literal approach is inadequate for educational purposes and often negatively affects educational outcomes. The effectiveness of the translated materials with regard to global considerations and purpose is vital, especially in regard to parental involvement as a key factor in a student's success. More adequate guidelines need to be developed regarding requirements for translations and translator training. Additional implications for education and policy creation for language-minority populations are discussed.

Introduction

It is no secret that the intentions of federal mandates often do not match the actual results. This lack of implementation could be for a variety of reasons, including the impracticality of application, lack of funding, or resistance from a number of involved parties. However, it could also be that administrators believe the mandates are actually being carried out correctly when they are not. This is especially true when dealing with minority populations and limited English proficient (LEP)¹ members of the community because it is very difficult, without proper communication, for a program administrator to truly assess if the parties' needs are being met. This communication is often difficult due to the language barrier existing between monolingual English speakers and LEP populations, and, in turn, requires the help of someone who is involved with both English and the native language of the LEP party. Unfortunately, this help is often expensive, inaccessible, or simply unavailable because of the existing gap between researchers and professional practitioners (see Angelelli, 2000, for a historical account of what has led to this situation, which she calls the "closed circle" in translation and interpretation). While there are a number of federal laws (e.g., Civil Rights Act, Title IV, 1964; Equal Educational Opportunities Act, 1974) and court mandates (e.g., *Lau v. Nichols*, 1974; *Castañeda v. Pickard*, 1981) that require equal educational access for students of all origins, the reality is that language continues to be a barrier in implementing programs and providing educational information to students and parents who belong to LEP populations.

In the medical field, federal legislation (White House Executive Order 13166, 2000) mandates that language services be provided to LEP members of the community by health care providers that receive federal funding. In order to do this, some basic guidelines and resources have been developed to administer these services in the medical field.² Nevertheless, in most cases, these are either procedural guidelines only, or, at best, very basic translation-specific elements, lacking the necessary components to assure the functional adequacy of the translated text (i.e., cultural, pragmatic, and textual appropriateness: Does the text do what it is supposed to do?). Furthermore, outside the medical field, guidelines and legislation are even more limited or nonexistent. This absence of translation guidelines within the K–12 context can have very serious implications for students and parents, and very likely accounts for some of the difficulties in implementing a variety of programs for the LEP community. In the absence of specific requirements for translation and/or translator qualifications, research suggests that many translators often adopt a literal, linguistic, micro-approach to the translation task, failing to consider global or pragmatic factors such as purpose of the translation, textual functions, and so on (Colina, 1997, 1999; Jääskeläinen, 1989, 1990, 1993; Königs, 1987; Krings, 1987; Kussmaul, 1995; Lörcher, 1991, 1992a, 1992b, 1997;

Tirkkonen-Condit & Jääskeläinen, 1991). This literal, micro-approach is inadequate for educational purposes and can often negatively affect educational outcomes. Given the importance of adult education (in particular, of parental education that affects a student's success within the American educational system), the effectiveness or adequacy of the translated materials with regard to global considerations and purpose is vital. More adequate, research-based guidelines need to be developed regarding requirements for different types of translated texts, as well as for the testing and training of translators.

In order to examine this issue in greater detail, this work discusses the existing legislation and translation guidelines within the educational field, in order to add insight regarding the translation services that should be available to LEP students and parents. Then, using a sample corpus of educational and informational materials for Spanish-speaking parents, we evaluate the adequacy of adult educational materials available to LEP parents, basing our analysis on current translation research. We test the hypothesis that, given the scarcity of educational programs for translators and the frequent use of untrained bilinguals to produce translated materials in Arizona, translated documents in the educational context would not be functionally adequate. Finally, we propose additional guidelines for translation and evaluation of translators, and discuss the need for improved educational handouts for language-minority parents, education of translators and interpreters, and policy creation.

Current Legislation and Guidelines in the Educational Arena

Federal legislation requires that all students receive equal educational opportunities, regardless of their "race, color, sex or national origin" (Equal Educational Opportunities Act, 1974). Thus, even those students with limited English proficiency must be granted access to the same education that is available to their native English-speaking counterparts. In addition to the legislation requiring equal access, a number of guidelines have been set forth regarding the implementation of programs and provisions for ensuring equal access. These guidelines are fairly extensive and include the identification of LEP students, assessment of LEP students' needs, provision of services, integration into instructional and social systems of their peers, reassessment, and documentation. Irujo (1995) summarizes the majority of this legislation in her New Hampshire Department of Education Compliance Guide (see Table 1). These guidelines are very important for the educational system and outline many specific provisions that must be made to include the LEP population. However, despite this detailed legislation, the practical implementation is hindered due to inadequate communication with the involved LEP parties.

Table 1

*Summary of New Hampshire Department of Education
Compliance Guide*

Requirements	Legal references	Programs
Identification	Office of Civil Rights memo (1970) <i>Lau v. Nichols</i> (1974)	Home language survey Train intake staff Classroom survey
Assessment	Office of Civil Rights memo (1970) <i>Gómez v. Illinois State Board of Education</i> (1987)	Appropriate proficiency test Multiple criteria for placement Identify home language proficiency Diagnose mathematics skills
Provision of services	<i>Castañeda v. Pickard</i> (1981) Equal Education Opportunities Act (1974) Titles IV & VII of Civil Rights Act (1964) <i>Ríos v. Read</i> (1978) <i>Cintrón v. Brentwood UFSD</i> (1977, 1978) The Provision of an Equal Education Opportunity to Limited English Proficient Students (U.S. Department of Education, 1992)	Develop instructional skills Schedules for service Who provides service Assessment plan Current ESL teaching Identify appropriate materials Identify what is taught Train and support staff
Ensure integration	Titles IV & VII of Civil Rights Act (1964) Equal Education Opportunities Act (1974) <i>Lau v. Nichols</i> (1974)	Describe access to programs and services Develop policies for grading Identify how integrated with same-age peers
Reassessment	Office of Civil Rights memo (1970) <i>Ríos v. Read</i> (1978) <i>Cintrón v. Brentwood UFSD</i> (1977, 1978)	Specific multi-criteria reclassification procedures
Documentation	<i>Castañeda v. Pickard</i> (1981) The Provision of an Equal Education Opportunity to Limited English Proficient Students (U.S. Department of Education, 1992)	Develop program guide Develop record-keeping plan Appoint team to implement evaluation plan

Note. Adapted from Irujo (1995).

Every step of the process requires a great deal of communication, not only with LEP students, but with their parents as well. Thus, many programs include the need to provide materials in the native language of the LEP students or parents through translation of written materials.

Despite this essential translation of materials, the guidelines addressing how this translation should be done are very vague, and very few mandates exist at the state or national level. The most specific guidelines for translation occur internally in a departmental directive within the U.S. Department of Education (Limited English Proficiency Plan, 2003). This document does specify the use of a certified translator and requires the use of the Office of Public Affairs to ensure the quality of nationally syndicated documents. However, in the United States, there exists no federal or state certification process for translators. Very few guidelines actually exist on how translations of the same quality can be produced at the state and district level. Even the U.S. Department of Education's Preliminary Guidance on the Title II State Grant Program for the Official English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement for Limited English Proficiency Students, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act (2002), states that "required notices" must be "provided in an understandable and uniform format and, to the extent possible, in a language that the parent can understand." The department does not specify any translation standards or evaluation procedure for translated materials at the local level. Thus, the production of inadequate materials very often creates an important, usually unrecognized obstacle to equal access for LEP students and parents.

It should be noted that this problem is slowly coming to the attention of legislators. In 2002, the Tucson Unified School District was required to address a complaint (Office of Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education, Case 0801157) concerning the inadequacy of information to parents regarding school activities and programs. In order to address this complaint, the district has adopted procedures for interpretation and translation of critical information and has established an office that specifically addresses interpretation and translation needs of LEP students and parents. This is unarguably a first step in the right direction, but after an examination of the corpus used in this study, we believe it is evident that much more remains to be done at the local and national level in order to ensure meaningful access to materials through translation. Along with the creation of standards, assessment guidelines, and testing instruments comes the need for providing educational opportunities to ensure that a sufficient number of language professionals can meet the specified standards. At present, the few U.S. programs in translator and/or interpreter education cannot even attempt to meet market needs for professional translators and interpreters.

Current Translation Research

Before discussing the current materials in detail, it is essential to examine some of the existing translation research to determine what constitutes adequate translation. As mentioned previously, research suggests that novice and/or untrained translators often adopt a literal, linguistic, micro-approach to the translation task. Using this micro-approach, a number of factors are not taken into account in the creation of the translated text, or target text (TT). These missing factors include a reflection of the purpose of the translation, textual functions, pragmatic aspects, and a more global picture of the translation (Colina, 1997, 1999; Jääskeläinen, 1989, 1990, 1993; Königs, 1987; Krings, 1987; Kussmaul, 1995; Lörscher, 1991, 1992a, 1992b, 1997; Tirkkonen-Condit & Jääskeläinen, 1991). Thus, even though the result of the translation might be comprehensible on a linguistic level, in terms of a functional approach to translation, the ending result is a TT that does not successfully carry out the required function for that particular TT and, thus, does not provide equal access to the target reader (e.g., an instructional text that is unclear and therefore does not instruct, an advertisement that does not convince the target audience, a letter that informs parents of a parent–teacher meeting but is not forceful enough in the Spanish translation and is therefore understood as a suggestion, etc.)

It is important to note that, historically, there have been a number of approaches to translation. As Nord (1997) notes, early translations and structuralist linguistics approaches opted for more “scientific” approaches to translation, which often resulted in word-for-word translation of the source text (ST). On the other hand, functionalist approaches to the translation process advocate a more holistic approach, which views translation as an instance of communicative language use and is therefore more appropriate for professional translation. This point of view implies the need for changes in translation pedagogy. Most recently, Colina (2003) and others (e.g., Holz-Mänttari, 1984; Reiss & Vermeer, 1984; Nord, 1992, 1997) have argued that functionalist theories of translation, specifically Skopos Theory, constitute the most descriptively and explanatorily adequate approach to “communicative professional translation” to date (Colina, 2003, p. 11) for a variety of reasons (e.g., purposes of translation, success in the area of training, similarity to language learning and production, consistency). Skopos Theory will serve as a basis for this analysis because the translations utilized in the educational arena are used for a specific communicative purpose: informing LEP students and parents.

Before moving on to the analysis itself, it is important to further examine the functionalist approach to translation and the basic tenets of Skopos Theory³ in order to understand how this approach applies to the current analysis. Beginning in the 1970s, a number of scholars (Reiss, 1971; Hönlig & Kussmaul, 1982; Holz-Mänttari, 1984; Reiss & Vermeer, 1984) began to explore and define the main principles of Skopos Theory and its use in translation.

Since then it has become a widely used approach in translation studies research (see Nord, 1997, for a more detailed summary of these works. In an educational context, see Colina, 2003, for a functionalist approach to translation teaching).

On a basic level, functionalism involves context in the translation process itself, allowing the translator to make decisions based on the contextual factors surrounding the TT (audience, purpose, medium, motive, time, etc.). Colina (2003) summarizes that “functionalism is a contextually based theory of translation that allows for consideration of contextual factors intervening in the translation process, even if [these factors are] contradictory in nature” (p. 13). Thus, a conflict between the requirements of the ST and those of the TT can be resolved by looking at the function of the TT and using that as the guiding principle. In order to do this, the translator must take into consideration the function of the ST, the intended functions of the TT, and the features necessary to appropriately express that function in the TT. It would be impossible here to explore all of the paradigms and definitions of language function. Scholars in a variety of areas of linguistics (e.g., discourse analysis, pragmatics, sociolinguistics) have created schemata for identification of function at a variety of levels (phrase, sequence, text, etc.). In terms of translation, Reiss (1976) and Nord (1997) classify a number of functions to analyze when looking at STs and TTs. These can be summarized according to three specific functions: referential or informative, expressive, and operative functions (see Colina, 2003). Table 2 gives definitions and examples of these three functions.

When examining the purpose of the texts being translated in the K–12 context, it is especially important to address the operative functions and subfunctions, due to the fact that most often the TTs are produced to cause readers (LEP students and parents) to act in some way. By using Speech Act Theory as a means to cross-culturally compare the carrying out of these operative functions and subfunctions,⁴ it is possible to address the difficulties that arise when aiming to maintain the illocutionary force (what the speaker or writer accomplishes through speech acts; see below) across cultures.

Speech Act Theory originates from Austin (1962) and Searle (1976, 1979), who define and classify speech acts. A speech act can be summarized as a communicative act that demonstrates how meaning and action are related to language. These speech acts can be put together in a systematic classification of communicative intentions, organized according to the ways in which they work linguistically encoded in context (Schiffrin, 1994; Blum-Kulka, 1997). At this point, it is important to note that, as its title indicates, Speech Act Theory is traditionally associated with oral speech. Nevertheless, its principles can also be applied to written discourse, and, thus, these principles are applicable to the current work. Searle (1979) proposes five main classes of speech acts: (a) Representatives, (b) Directives, (c) Commissives, (d) Expressives, and (e) Declarations. Since the aim of the majority of the TTs being analyzed is to

Table 2

Functions of Language

Function	Definition	Example
Referential/ Informative	Concerns reference to objects and facts of the world; subfunctions are informative and didactic.	A parent must understand the basic notion of how the school system works in order to understand references to various processes.
Expressive	Language used to express feelings, emotions, evaluation, irony, humor, etc. Often culturally specific, requiring changes by the translator.	A brochure educating parents about teaching their children to be independent would need to appeal to very different emotions when addressing English-speaking parents versus Spanish-speaking parents because the view of independence is different in each culture.
Operative	Language used to make the receiver act in a particular way. Includes a number of subfunctions (e.g., selling a product, making an argument, etc.). This is a receiver-oriented strategy and must be adapted to the receiver's schema.	Selling a van. In the United States it would be important to appeal to people's sense of value ("more for your money"). However, in the Spanish-speaking world it would be more effective to appeal to the ability for the whole family to be together, etc.

Note. Adapted from Colina (2003).

get LEP parents and students to do something (come to a meeting, enroll their students, get vaccinations, etc.), for the purposes of this analysis, the researchers will focus on Directives, defined by Blum-Kulka (1997) as speech acts “used to get the hearer [or reader] to do something, by acts like ordering, commanding, begging, requesting, and asking” (p. 43). Directives, especially requests, are different for native speakers of English and native speakers of

Spanish (see the Analysis & Results section for specific details); this often leads to confusion and frustration when Directives are transferred between native speakers of each.

In addition to examining the functions of both the ST and TT, a translator must also take into account text type (particular structural and linguistic features associated with specific communicative purposes), genre (conventionalized forms of text that reflect certain features), and textual features (internal linguistic features used to identify the writer's intentions) in order to convey the proper communicative function (Colina, 1997, 2003). The use of text type and genre considerations in translation usually requires awareness and training on the part of the translator. It involves the ability to use source text analysis, parallel text analysis (texts belonging to the same type and genre that were originally written in the target language—not translated), and pragmatic features of the language within the context of a translation task; these skills are not necessarily gained by only knowledge of the two languages themselves. For the purposes of this study, a detailed exploration of how this type of analysis should be done will not occur; however, in the Analysis & Results section, the practical application of the theory itself will demonstrate the use of relevant techniques. (For a more thorough methodological discussion, see Hönig, 1986; Kiraly, 1990; Kussmaul, 1995; Nord, 1997; Colina, 2002, 2003.) As the current analysis will show, functional approaches are not being used in the translations produced in Arizona, and in turn, the TTs produced are not successful in attaining their goals. Thus, LEP students and parents are not receiving equal access to all materials and programs, the original intention of much of the previously mentioned legislation.

Analysis & Results

The Corpus

The corpus analyzed in this project consists of a variety of text types (i.e., informational brochures and pamphlets, application forms, letters, and permission slips), all for use at the state or local level, designed to inform LEP parents and students about programs and services available at the schools. They were collected from individual schools in Arizona. The variety of texts examined gives the researchers a broad perspective of the type and quality of the translated materials given to LEP parents. However, it should be noted that this is a random sampling, and that higher and lower quality translations are very likely being produced.

Methods of Analysis

In order to test the hypothesis and to gain greater insight into the materials being provided to LEP Spanish-speaking parents, the researchers compared the requests appearing in the STs with the TTs from a functionalist perspective as related to politeness (see the Analysis section, below) and Speech Act Theory. This made it possible to determine if the materials were performing the intended communicative purpose: getting the reader to do something. In doing so, the referential or informative, expressive, and operational functions of the STs and TTs were all taken into consideration, as were the text type, genre, and textual features. Most specifically, instances of requests were compared in terms of their pragmatic appropriateness, illocutionary force, and operative function in order to determine if they were adequate for the communicative purpose (getting the parents to do something). General observations, as well as examples from specific documents, are discussed.

Analysis

Overall, the requests produced in the TTs in the corpus do not reflect the same urgency as they have in the STs (in English). Thus, the true importance of the act, information, and so forth is not being conveyed to the LEP Spanish-speaking parent. In addition, cultural references to individualism, family, society, and so on are not being adequately handled.

Based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of pragmatic politeness, a number of researchers (e.g., García, 1989, 1992, 1999; Hernández-Flores, 1999; Márquez-Reiter, 2000) have noted that when it comes to forms of politeness, native English speakers tend to prefer to preserve negative face (autonomy, freedom to do what one chooses without being imposed upon), whereas, native Spanish speakers tend to prefer maintenance of positive face (concern for being well thought of by others, desiring similar things). Thus, different types of politeness strategies are used by each language group. For example, a positive politeness strategy in making a request would be to find common ground between the interlocutors (e.g., "It is an honor to be working with you, and I need an expert opinion on..."). In the same situation, a negative politeness strategy one might use is to minimize imposition (e.g., "I am really sorry to bother you. I know you are really busy, but I was wondering if maybe...").

In the corpus materials analyzed, both the STs and the TTs tend to opt for negative politeness strategies. Thus, although the words themselves are changed, the requests remain orientated toward the English-based system in terms of politeness. Therefore, the operative function of each of the requests is not being carried out adequately, and the speech act does not meet its intended illocutionary force. We will use some examples taken from the corpus to illustrate this point. Two samples come from informational brochures discussing Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) testing in

Arizona and high school graduation requirements. On the front page of each brochure, the title is designed to grab readers' attention and request that they look inside for additional important details.

The AIMS brochure reads as follows:

(ST): What do you know about the new AIMS test?

(TT): *¿Qué quiere saber Usted acerca de la prueba AIMS?*

The brochure on high school graduation requirements reads:

(ST): Do You Know What Your Student MUST Do To Graduate from High School Starting in the Year 2001?

(TT): *¿Conoce usted lo que su hijo/a debería hacer para graduarse de la secundaria en el año 2001?*

In the STs in the above examples, the writer is appealing to readers' negative face by asking them to improve their own knowledge. Both are indirect requests that ask readers to continue for their own betterment without imposing too much on their time and space. This is a very effective tool for native English speakers and will very likely produce the proper operative function: getting readers to continue for more critical information that will help them and their children. However, in the TT, the same type of appeal is made to readers' negative face, even though Spanish normally centers on the positive face; therefore, the proper operative function is not maintained. Furthermore, consideration of the informational structure of the first TT reveals that "*quiere saber acerca de la prueba AIMS*" (literally, "want to know about the AIMS test") is linguistically marked, through word order and syntactic structure, as shared information (old information, theme). The word *qué* identifies the new information or theme. In other words, the writer takes as his or her point of departure that the reader wants to find out more about this test (shared, old information), but does not know what in particular (new information). However, these assumptions about what is shared or known and what is new information do not match those of the typical native Spanish-language reader, who never expressed an interest in obtaining more information about AIMS and whose typical response to "*¿Qué quiere saber Usted acerca de la prueba AIMS?*" would be "*nada* [nothing]" (i.e., "Who told you that I wanted to find out more about the AIMS test? I never said that."). Thus, the request is not being carried out properly, and it does not prompt the reader to open the brochure and keep reading. It does not express the same importance to the LEP Spanish-speaking parent that it conveys to native English-speaking parents. Instead it would be more effective to both appeal to the readers' sense of positive politeness and use a more direct request to express urgency. For example, "*¡Ayude su hijo/a! Lea esta información importante sobre la prueba AIMS* [Help your child! Read this important information about the AIMS test]" or

even “¿*Qué sabe de la prueba AIMS?* [What do you know about the AIMS test?].” This both appeals to readers’ sense of positive politeness (helping their child) and expresses the request to read the important information inside.⁵

The Spanish version of the high school graduation brochure does not reflect the critical nature of the request that is expressed in the English version. The use of capital letters in the ST to emphasize “MUST” indicate that the information is very important and the request to read on is not unwarranted. In contrast, the TT uses the conditional form of the verb “*debería hacer,*” indicating “should do” instead of “MUST,” making the request much less important and, in turn, not carrying out the proper operative function. As Haverkate (1994) notes, the conditional form is often used to express politeness in Spanish. Nevertheless, it does not express the required urgency of the request, making the information seem less important to the reader.

Another example of the discrepancy concerning the urgency of the request between the ST and the TT comes from a medical brochure designed to inform parents of the available health insurance for uninsured children in the school system. The segment in the example below requests that parents investigate the details regarding eligibility requirements for their children.

(ST): See inside details for children eligible for services.

(TT): *Ver detalles adentro de este panfleto para los niños que reúnen los requisitos necesarios para estos servicios.*

In this case, the directness of the request is not reflected in the TT. In the ST, the command form of the verb “to see” is used to ensure that parents read the eligibility requirements. This command form is very strong in English because it imposes on readers and confronts their negative face. This strongly encourages the reader to continue, because the command form expresses urgency. If looking at the requirements were optional or less important, it might read something like, “The eligibility requirements may be found inside.” Yet, the command form is used to express the urgency. This expression of urgency is even more critical in the TT, because the nature of requests in Spanish requires some degree of directness. On a scale of less polite to more polite, Koike (1989) ranks suggestion as less polite than a direct request; thus, in Spanish, it is more polite to just ask than to indirectly suggest something. In addition, Hernández-Flores (1999) argues that formal commands are more common and more polite than direct requests, especially in Peninsular Spanish. However, despite these norms, the TT does not use a command form or a direct request to indicate the necessity of seeing the eligibility requirements. Instead, the TT uses the infinitive (*ver*) without any phrasal support (e.g., *Refiarse a, consulte*) to make the request. Therefore, instead of expressing the communicative function of the request—to get the parent to really look at the eligibility requirements—the text indicates that readers can see the eligibility requirements inside if they want to, rather than that reading these requirements is essential.

The last examples to be discussed in detail come from a children's voting program. One example is an informational letter sent home to the parents, telling them about the program and requesting that they encourage their children to participate in the program and that the parents themselves register to vote. The other example is a reminder letter, which reiterates the parent's chosen time to register and vote. The requests made in these two letters are extremely important because they not only affect the information available, but also the student's ability to participate in an educational experience. The informational letter informs parents about the programs and requests that they register to vote and encourage their children to participate.

A segment from the informational letter reads as follows:

(ST): Your participation will allow your child the full benefit of this program. To qualify in the program, at least one parent [parent] must be a registered voter and students must have [have] the permission of their parent [parent] to participate.

(TT): *Su participación tendrá mucha importancia y permitirá [permitirá] a su hijo o hija de disfrutar de todos los beneficios del programa. Para calificar para el programa, uno de los padres tiene que ser votante registrado y el hijo o hija necesita el permiso de los padres para participar.*

Again, the indirect request is reflected in the ST by appealing to the English speakers' negative face through emphasizing their individuality (a dimension of autonomy). However, again, the importance of parents registering to vote in order to allow their children to participate in the program is not reflected in the TT, and therefore the illocutionary force or operative function of the request is not being carried out. Whereas a native English speaker will very likely be called to act by this type of polite, indirect request, a native Spanish speaker will very likely not see the implication of the indirectness, and thereby the critical nature of his or her own actions. Instead, it would be more appropriate to say, "*Su participación es esencial para que su hijo/a pueda beneficiarse del programa*" (literally, "Your participation is essential for your child to benefit from the program") in order to appeal to the positive face of the reader. One could also include an explanation of the cultural importance of the voting process in order to properly express the urgency of the request. The same holds true in the reminder letter, which reads:

(ST): Please take advantage of this opportunity to register you and your child to vote in the upcoming election in November.

(TT): *Por favor, tomé [tome] ventaja de la oportunidad de registrase y asegura que su hijo o hija también será registrado en el Programa de Votación para Niños.*

As mentioned previously, this request should also be very specific in terms of its importance and politeness face (e.g., “*Por favor no deje pasar esa oportunidad de registrar a su hijo y a usted mismo* [Please do not pass up this opportunity to register your child and yourself]”).

In general, all of the mentioned requests lack two specific features that inhibit their operational functionality and the effectiveness of the illocutionary force of the speech act: (a) politeness orientation (positive or negative) and (b) directness of the request. These features have far-reaching effects on the adequacy of the texts being translated and, without a doubt, have an impact on the LEP students’ and parents’ access to programs and materials. For example, a request for a parent to attend a parent–teacher conference must imply the urgency of the request to attend the school, and not merely a suggestion that the parent might want to come.

Another important element found in the corpus documents was the underlying cultural issues surrounding many of the pamphlets, letters, and so forth. For example, one brochure sent home addresses the abuse of alcohol, how to prevent it, and so on. Yet, the perspective on alcohol in the United States is very different than in Europe or Latin America. Therefore, the approach the translation should take is very different. In fact, it will very likely require a different tone and format altogether. Due to the scope of this paper, these issues will not be discussed in detail, but they need to be considered by future research.

With proper training and awareness, language professionals can produce materials that ensure that meaningful access to LEP members of the community is a reality. This study constitutes a first step in raising awareness. Qualitative in nature, the primary goal of the current research is to offer a preliminary glimpse at what is happening in the field in order to provide an important starting block for future research and legislation. More empirical research, particularly quantitative studies, is necessary to confirm the current findings, to assess the areas that most need attention, and to systematize native-speaker norms regarding the linguistic expression of pragmatic or illocutionary force. Studies must include different types of texts, schools, areas, and so forth and should also involve LEP students and parents in the process. Translated texts need to be tested on readers to observe reader response. Despite the limitations of this study, the preliminary results have far-reaching implications. These will be discussed in the following section.

Implications and Conclusion

In light of the findings of this analysis, as well as the previously mentioned translation research, a number of implications need to be addressed. These include the following: (a) the need for a federal or state translator certification process, (b) the implementation of a larger number of translator training

programs and/or educational plans to ensure a sufficient number of educated language professionals, (c) the inclusion of functionalist principles in translator training programs, (d) the creation of resources to fund and support the translation of educational texts on a national, state, and local level, and (e) periodic, longitudinal assessment measures to determine the overall adequacy of the materials being produced.

The creation of a federal or state translator certification process is essential to the implementation of successful translation legislation and policies because it provides a standard to ensure higher quality. It is a common practice to certify a number of professionals (e.g., doctors, lawyers, teachers, etc.), and this should also be true of language professionals in all areas of interpretation and translation. The quality of the translations being produced has far-reaching effects on the LEP populations of the community, not only in the educational arena but other service industries as well (e.g., medicine). Under the current system, anyone can call himself or herself “certified” and be hired to do a job for which he or she might not have the skills. Employers have difficulty assessing the qualifications of job applicants as well as the quality of the text being produced. Thus, they may think they are receiving quality translation, when in reality this is not the case. A certification system would help to maintain consistency as well as more adequate translations across a number of professional areas—an especially important addition to the medical field, where lives may depend on the information being given to LEP patients.

The addition of this certification program must also come with additional training programs for language professionals so that market needs for translation can be met. Currently, there are nowhere near the sufficient number of programs to meet the growing needs of the field. The few that do exist cannot possibly meet the demand for quality translations. A larger pool of qualified translators would make these skilled professionals more accessible to the public at large. In terms of the programs themselves, the necessary skills must be taught for translation from a functionalist perspective. There must be a greater connection between the current research and professional practice. (See Nord, 1997; Angelelli, 2000; and Colina, 2003, for a detailed explanation of these issues.) Furthermore, courses must address not only the technical elements of translation (grammar, sentence structure, etc.) but also the global issues involved in translation. For example, a course on educational translation from English to Spanish should include many of the issues discussed in this analysis (politeness, requests, cultural perceptions, functions, etc.). It would not be justified to expect the inclusion of these elements in translation practice without their inclusion in the instructional program.

Most importantly, financial, educational, instructional, and practical resources must be made available for local agencies to receive the benefits of

skilled interpreters and translators. Without these resources, the goals of many of the changes would not be achieved, and the LEP community would not even receive the benefits of their implementation.

Finally, assessment measures must be longitudinally implemented to ensure that adequate materials are indeed being provided to the targeted LEP population. Without this assessment, there is no way to measure the success of improvements that can be made. The assessments should measure the adequacy of the translations themselves and the impact the newly accessible information is having on the LEP population.

A great deal of time, energy, and money is invested in developing translated materials for the LEP Spanish-speaking population of Arizona.⁶ Therefore, it is only logical that we use these resources effectively by ensuring that the intended goals are being accomplished. The insights gained from doing so can be applied to target audiences who speak other languages, as well.

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Endnotes

¹ Although it is normally *BRJ* policy to use the term *English language learner* (ELL) rather than LEP, we will use LEP in cases where the author is discussing these students in the context of official designations by governmental and/or school authorities.

² See documents prepared under the sponsorship of the National Council on Interpreting in Health Care (<http://www.ncihc.org/workingpapers.htm>) and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (<http://www.hablamosjuntos.org>).

³ It is important to note that this is by no means a comprehensive exploration of functionalist translation theory or the alternative theoretical perspectives. However, a brief look at the basic components is sufficient for understanding the current analysis. A more detailed examination would not fit within the scope of this investigation.

⁴ Speech Act Theory is not the only means of this type of analysis. However, it was chosen for this study since the majority of Spanish primary-language research is also based on Speech Act Theory.

⁵ Note that while a similar informational structure could be identified in the English ST, pragmatically, because of the appeal to the reader's negative face, English speakers recognize this as a strategy to indirectly ask or convince readers to improve their knowledge about the test.

⁶ For instance, in Maricopa County, Arizona, most city governments (e.g., City of Phoenix, City of Mesa, City of Chandler), hospitals, courts, and school districts have budgets allocated for language services for LEP populations.