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# Reflections on the use of English and Spanish in analytic philosophy

Susanna Siegel (coord.)



Topic: English and Spanish in the practice of analytic philosophy

Summary: Reflections by seven analytic philosophers on the use of English and Spanish in their professional work.

Keywords: analytic philosophy, Spanish, English, publications

## Overview

This report collects seven reflections of analytic philosophers on the use of English and Spanish in the performance of their professional duties. These reflections were presented at a meeting held at the Instituto Cervantes at Harvard University -"Observatory of the Spanish language and Hispanic cultures of the United States"- on April 18, 2014. The meeting, entitled "Conversations in the

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Observatorio: about philosophy," was coordinated by Susanna Siegel, Professor of Philosophy at Harvard University, and was attended by the following speakers: Josefa Toribio, a professor at the Autonomous University of Barcelona; Diana Pérez, a professor at the University of Buenos Aires; Jorge Gracia, professor at the State University of New York at Buffalo; Laura Pérez, a professor at the Autonomous University of Mexico; Carla Merino, professor at the universities of New York and Northern Arizona; and Diana Acosta and Patricia Marechal, both graduate students at Harvard.

The texts included in this report comply with the documents prepared by the authors for their oral presentation and have been prepared for publication. However, in order to offer some formal homogeneity, publishers have proceeded to unify some discursive aspects, although the personal tone chosen by each speaker is preserved. The references provided by the authors appear in a single bibliographic section and typographical and textual criteria have been unified. The oral submissions made by all participants can be seen through the website of the Observatory: http://goo.gl/GQeJ7U; http://goo.gl/4axG8j.*



Francisco Moreno-Fernández

General Editor de *Informes del Observatorio* / Observatorio *Reports*

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# Susanna Siegel – Introduction to Dialogue on Philosophy in Spanish

Philosophy in Spanish has a philosophical dimension, a practical dimension, and a political dimension. Two years ago, I started giving Spanish classes in Latin America. I was extremely lucky that Diana Acosta from Harvard, and PhD Laura Perez, researcher from UAM, were willing to help me to prepare my classes. I couldn't have made myself easily understood in Spanish without their help in the translation. During the process of translating my talks, I learned how Diana and Laura's advice improved my attempts, and then as a result improved my ability to formulate what I had to say philosophically in Spanish. This process of refinement brought into focus for me all three of the dimensions that, in my opinion, we can find in today's analytic philosophy.

On the philosophical dimension, I quickly learned that when you translate your work, you cannot hide the philosophical difficulties. The hardest parts to translate were always the most philosophically problematic parts as well. I also found new examples that proved a familiar fact: philosophical problems begin with the way they are formulated. Let's consider the discussions we have about the nature of the word *belief*. In English, one of the central debates in this area concerns the relation between beliefs in a binary notion (*on-off belief*), and the incremental degrees of belief, called *credences*. According to the incremental notion, credences involve different grades of belief. According to the binary one, there are only two ways of believing in a proposition: *believe* or *disbelieve*. Literature in this area tries to explain the relationship between binary credences and incremental credences. In Spanish, there is only one word for both terms. If you want to discuss this topic in Spanish, you need to select a word to distinguish between those two types of *beliefs.* We would have to define that word previously ('binary credences' or 'incremental credences'), so we could identify the philosophical properties of that distinction. Translations are a way of trying out philosophical problems, which form a great example of the value of translation



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philosophy from English to Spanish.

On the practical dimension: When I gave my talks in Spanish, I discovered that discussions were much better when the audience wasn't forced to translate the talk. Results are better when someone familiar with the topic does the translation.

On the political dimension: Should analytic philosophy be published in Spanish today? How could this even be a serious question? Gonzalo Rodriguez-Pereya recently published an article defending a serious answer to this question. This author offers a huge list of practical advantages in favor of publishing in English. In my opinion, there is another huge list of practical advantages to publishing in Spanish. Either way, his answer was that analytic philosophy shouldn't be published in Spanish. In my opinion, he ignores a separate mountain of different practical advantages to publishing in Spanish. Either way, the question has a different significance for Spanish than it would for French or German, since German and French have a place in the history of western philosophy. I'm told that people working in analytic philosophy in Germany today often consult English translations of Kant, because they're easier to understand. Holding conferences in English in Germany for German-speaking philosophers would not be condemned in the way that it would be to hold conferences in English for Spanish-speaking philosophers in Latin America. Holding analytic philosophy conferences in Spanish establishes and maintains Spanish as a language for analytic philosophy.



In the United States and in England, analytic philosophy has well-known demographic problems. In my opinion, those problems are arguably artifacts, to some extent, of insular intellectual subcultures in which there isn't enough of a check on the discursive practices and the social patterns that go with them. In part the insularity is due to the fact that philosophical questions are genuinely distinct from many questions in neighboring fields in both the social sciences and the humanities. Most of the subcultures we find today in analytic philosophy are



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also insular because dominant social forces unduly influence them. This kind of insularity is harmful and gratuitous. We can open and improve the profession by widening its linguistic horizons.

## Josefa Toribio – The Latin of Modern Times

I think of English as the Latin of modern times. It plays the role that Latin used to play for Europeans in the Middle Ages. Unsurprisingly, both Latin and English are languages of an Empire. But so is Spanish, the language of a (fortunately) lost Empire. I can well imagine philosophers from non-Spanish speaking countries, including some colleagues from the Basque Country or Catalonia, arguing against the idea that Spanish should play the role that English plays today in all areas of academia. Thus, we should not be lured into thinking that it is in any way imperialistic for Iberian and Latin American philosophers to publish exclusively in English. The issues here are complex. We must resist the temptation to let political ideology drive the discussion. In particular, we should resist the thought that the contributions to philosophy made in English by Spanish-speaking philosophers are a sign of subordination or dependency. Quite the opposite: this should be taken as an illustration of the equal status shared by those who make critical analysis and the sheer pursuit of philosophical knowledge their ultimate goal.



There is another pitfall to be avoided: to think that by choosing English as their academic tongue, Spanish-speaking philosophers have given up the historical goals of philosophy as a humanistic discipline. The complaint is that a good part of the philosophy published in English belongs to a tradition or style of doing philosophy —the analytic tradition—which, some contend, is completely detached from our most personal human concerns and aspirations. The criticism is that Iberian and Latin American philosophers who write in English do so because they endorse the kind of philosophical specialization that characterizes analytic

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philosophy, which, in turn, entails abandoning the historical goals of philosophical enquiry. Having decided to use English as their academic language implies, according to this view, that these philosophers have given up the idea that philosophy's main goal is "to offer a worldview and give a personal answer to existential questions" (Hurtado 2012: 166).

This is an unfounded claim in general, as shown by the work of many English speaking philosophers who engage in issues of deeply personal, social and political significance, like Bernard Williams, Elizabeth Brake or Jay Wallace, to name just a few. It is also unfounded when the claim purports to refer, in particular, to Iberian and Latin American philosophers. The examples here are many, but let me just mention one: José Medina's recently published *The Epistemology of Resistance: Gender and Racial Oppression, Epistemic Injustice, and Resistant Imaginations*.

A different matter, and one to which we, Spanish-speaking philosophers, should be sensitive to, is the potential impoverishment of the language due to the introduction of Anglicisms in our Spanish philosophical vocabulary. Always writing about philosophy in English may have this consequence. I am painfully aware of this danger. For better or for worse, I think about philosophy in English, even though I did not have a bilingual upbringing and did not find myself in an English-speaking environment until I finished my PhD. But then, I spent twenty years of my life in English speaking countries. I only occasionally publish in Spanish. When I do, I often struggle with finding the correct Spanish word for a philosophical view or for a key philosophical concept. In conversation, given that most of my colleagues and students speak English, the linguistic betrayal is easy. This strikes me as highly undesirable.



I have been living and working in Barcelona for the last five years. I doubt my employer, a Catalan research institution, would be happy if I decided to start publishing philosophy in Spanish—but not because they think I should publish in

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Catalan. Professional philosophers are under a lot of pressure to publish and to publish in high impact journals. Most of these journals publish exclusively in English. I find it interesting that the issue about the quality of philosophy journals that publish exclusively in English, as opposed to those publishing exclusively in Spanish, has not been addressed in some of the exchanges about this topic published so far. I suppose that, in mentioning it, one opens another can of worms about journals rankings. But, I believe I am not at all biased when I claim that if professional Iberian and Latin American philosophers aim at publishing in the best philosophical journals, then they will need to write in English. Interestingly, the Spanish and Latin American philosophy journals that compete with some of their Anglo-Saxon cousins are precisely those open to submissions written in either language. It shouldn't come as a surprise because, in doing so, they guarantee that the work can be evaluated by a wider community of experts, and this, at least to some extent, contributes to raising their standards.

Not only do I not encourage my students to publish in Spanish, I positively encourage them to publish in English, partially for that reason. Like any other supervisor, I want my students to get a job soon after they finish. Academic jobs in philosophy are so limited that I want them to increase their chances by being in a position to apply anywhere there is an opening, including non-Spanish speaking countries. If their formative years help them to think and write about philosophy in English, they will be moving a step forward in that direction.



As part of a multi-linguistic Europe, Spanish Universities have to be sensitive to the needs and expectations of students regardless of their native language. The philosophy departments of different Catalan universities, with this concern in mind, have joined efforts to offer two excellent MA programs in philosophy: one in analytic philosophy, the other in cognitive science and language. We can compete with other European Universities only because these programs are taught in English. All the professors involved in the program teach in English, and the students have to write their papers in English. They write their final research



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paper in English. Most likely, their first published paper will be in English. And all this happens while the Catalan Universities that host these programs carry on teaching both in Spanish and Catalan. There is no massive breakdown of the institutions of the kind once suggested by Guillermo Hurtado. There is a peaceful and productive pluralism of languages and styles of thinking (as analytic philosophers continue to be a minority in Spain).

I would like to finish with an autobiographical note. I am the president of the Spanish Society of Analytic Philosophy. The Society organizes regular meetings, conferences and lectures, and also fosters research and teaching in the analytic tradition. We collaborate with other philosophical associations, especially in Latin America, and are now editing a series of volumes with contributions to each of the central branches of philosophy, like epistemology, metaphysics and aesthetics. These volumes are published in Spanish and they play in important role in making available to high-school students and their philosophy teachers central contemporary debates in these areas of philosophy. Most of the events the Society organizes, however, are done in English. Are we being snob or succumbing to the perils of language imperialism? I don't think so. In pursuing this route, we benefit from contributions from scholars all over the world and can present our own contributions to a wider community. This wider exchange of ideas raises the bar for rigor, originality and critical analysis.



My modest contribution to this round table has not been driven by general political or strictly academic ideas. My considerations have been, for the most part, pragmatic. Given how the academic world works, I agree that publishing analytic philosophy in English is probably the best thing to do. My recommendation has this limited, pragmatic, force, but it cannot be easily dismissed without compromising some important aspects of our professional commitments.



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When I was a Masters student at UNAM in Mexico, there were many discussions on whether or not it would be appropriate for the university to allow students to write their theses/dissertations in English. Amongst the reasons offered in favor of this were: first, that it would be easier for students to use the materials from their theses/dissertations as part of their applications to graduate programs in the US and UK; and second, that this would give them the chance to further develop their English proficiency. The conclusion of this discussion was that students should not be allowed to write their theses/dissertations in English, because it is valuable to foster philosophy in Spanish. Also, translating one's work into a different language can be advantageous.

However, philosophy students who attempt to insert themselves into a predominantly English speaking philosophical community and whose native language is Spanish might face some disadvantages. For instance, there might be implicit biases in place against people that speak English with a Spanish accent. However, some research would be needed to either support or disprove this idea. To those initial problems we can add others related to gender: it is well known, for instance, that philosophy is a discipline with few women. This suggests that disadvantages like these, even if small, might make an important difference on how well native Spanish speakers integrate into the philosophical community.



However, victimization would not be the solution to this problem. What, then, can be done to avoid victimization while responsibly acknowledging that these problems may exist? Tentatively, let me suggest the following:

Foster philosophy in Spanish speaking countries. The idea would be to reach out to more people and to foster high quality philosophy in Spanish. While this proposal might seem obvious, it is worth noting that the number of philosophy and critical thinking requirements in high school and undergraduate levels in Mexico has been decreasing.



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On the other hand, it is prudent to encourage students to publish their work in English, given that the most prestigious and widely read journals are published in this language. How, then, could we foster high quality philosophy in Spanish? Perhaps here we have a situation in which it might be best to divide and conquer. While it might be advantageous for a philosopher to publish in English early on in her career (i.e. this might make it easier for her to find a job or get tenure—though this, of course, depends on the individual's aims), once they have established themselves, they could aim at publishing in both languages. The same seems to be the case for promoting philosophy in Spanish, getting involved in attracting Spanish speakers into philosophy, and fostering bilingual encounters and exchanges, such as this one. The proposal then is for philosophers to focus on developing their work and securing stable positions during the early stages of their careers and, during later stages, become more involved in leading efforts like these. This might be a feasible way in which we can all contribute to producing more top quality philosophy in Spanish and bringing more linguistic diversity into our discipline.



## Jorge J. E. Gracia

## – Semantic Equivalence and the Language of Philosophical Analysis

I learned to philosophize by translating Francisco Suárez's *Metaphysical Disputation V* from Latin into English. Who reads Suárez these days? And what could I learn from a sixteenth century scholastic writer that would help me in the twentieth century? I would certainly be surprised if one were to find any references to some of Suárez's works in any of the works of twentieth-century major philosophers.

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One of the reasons for my claim is the great difficulty I had in figuring out what Suárez's text means and how to render it understandable to English readers. Translating the text forced me to think in ways that were quite different from those I was used to thinking in Spanish, my native language, or English, my adopted language. In fact, the translation I produced after completing many drafts continued, and still continues to this day, to appear to me unsatisfactory, and that dissatisfaction was the key to understanding things I had understood very differently before.

The thesis I defend is that semantic equivalence between texts of philosophy in different languages is difficult, if not impossible in some cases, to achieve and, therefore, that it is a mistake to restrict doing analytic philosophy to English, as Gustavo Rodríguez-Pereyra argues we should do in a recent article published in 2013. Let me begin by noting an assumption that I unconsciously made at the beginning of my Suárez translation project and that informs every translation project to some extent. This assumption may be formulated by what I call the *Principle of the Semantic Equivalence of Texts in Different Languages* (PSE):



> PSE: Any text in any language has actual or potential semantically equivalent texts in every other language.

But what does it mean that two texts from two different languages are semantically equivalent? Consider an example of two scientific texts, one in English and one in Spanish:

(1) $H_2O$ boils at 100 degrees C

(2) *$H_2O$ hierve a 100 grados C*

What does it mean to say that (1) is semantically equivalent to (2)? Here are two ways of understanding it:

(A) (1) and (2) express the same proposition (metaphysical criterion)

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(B) (1) causes the same understanding in an English speaking audience that (2) causes in a Spanish speaking audience (epistemic criterion)

(A) and (B) are not equivalent, but for present purposes either one of them will do, for in both cases the translations of (1) by (2), or vice versa, appear to satisfy PSE. Indeed, PSE appears to apply well to cases of scientific texts, such as the one mentioned, as well as to cases of ordinary language, such as the English sentence 'The cat is black', which has as its equivalent the Spanish sentence *'El gato es negro.'* But PSE does not seem to apply as well to literary texts. Consider the following six translations of Emily Dickinson's famous verse *Hope is the thing with feathers*. The list below is headed by the original English text from Dickinson, followed by six translations into Spanish, each of which is in turn followed by its English translation:

"Hope is the thing with feathers."

1. *La esperanza es la cosa con plumas.*
   Hope is the thing with feathers.
2. *La esperanza es la cosa que tiene plumas.*
   Hope is the thing that has feathers.
3. *La esperanza es la cosa emplumada.*
   Hope is the feathered thing.
4. *La esperanza es una cosa de plumas.*
   Hope is a thing of feathers.
5. *La esperanza es algo de plumas.*
   Hope is something of feathers.
6. *La esperanza es esa cosa con plumas.*
   Hope is that thing with feathers.

None of the Spanish translations appears adequate. Indeed, even the literal translation in (1) fails to adequately reflect the English; Dickinson's verse is elegant, suggestive, and light, whereas the Spanish translation appears crude,



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limited, and heavy, which is particularly clear when the verse and its translations are read aloud (for my theory of why this is so in all cases of literary texts in general, see Gracia 2012, 155-84).

Now, why is this important and how is it related to Rodríguez-Pereyra's thesis that "research in analytical philosophy broadly conceived should be published exclusively in English" (2013, 83)? It is important and related to this thesis because, *prima facie*, one might be tempted to think that Rodríguez-Pereyra's thesis implies that he is committed to PSE and, consequently, that the thesis is false insofar as it does not hold with respect to literary texts, as Dickinson's example makes clear. However, although Rodríguez-Pereyra's thesis requires some form of PSE, it would be a mistake to think the formulation needed would have to be as strong as the one given above. Rodríguez-Pereyra's position requires only a weaker form of the PSE applicable exclusively to analytic philosophy, such as:

> PSE': Any text resulting from analytic philosophy in any language has actual or potential semantically equivalent texts resulting from analytic philosophy in every other language.



Without this principle, Rodríguez-Pereyra could not effectively argue that analytic philosophy should be done only in English, unless he were to hold that English has analytic philosophical advantages that other languages lack – a view he does not appear to hold. The reason is that the meaning of some pertinent English and Spanish texts, for example, might not be semantically equivalent, and therefore there might be things that could be said in texts of analytic philosophy in one of the languages that could not be said in the other. Rodríguez-Pereyra is concerned only with texts in analytic philosophy. For example, Wittgenstein's claim, in Ogden's English translation, 'The world is the totality of facts, not things,' which presumably is semantically equivalent to the original German version as well as the Spanish *'El mundo es la totalidad de los hechos, no de las cosas'* insofar as


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both presumably have the same meaning, namely, a proposition to the effect that the world is the totality of facts.

PSE', if true, makes possible Rodríguez-Pereyra's claim that analytic philosophers (e.g., Latin American) are free to use English, rather than, say, Spanish, in their philosophizing, since there would not be semantic idiosyncratic consequences of their use of English or Spanish. Obviously, then, if there are practical benefits of using English in analytic philosophy rather than Spanish as he argues, Spanish-speaking analytic philosophers should use English rather than Spanish when they philosophize (85).

Still, Rodríguez-Pereyra's thesis, even considered in terms of the PSE', is not free from difficulties (see Hurtado 2013, Pérez 2013, Ruffino 2013, and the other articles in this publication). One is that some practical conditions for the success of the project cannot be satisfied in our present world. The other is that the project requires a clear-cut dichotomy between analytic philosophical language on the one hand and ordinary and literary language on the other, and there is no such clear-cut dichotomy. In order to substantiate the first difficulty, let me refer to a period of philosophy in which a similar situation to that envisioned by Rodríguez-Pereyra's proposal with respect to analytic philosophy was a reality with respect to all philosophy: the Latin Middle Ages.



The medieval system worked well because those who practiced philosophy at the time, and scholastics in particular, formed a community that shared several common conditions among which are the following: (1) an established curriculum; (2) a set of methodological assumptions; (3) a language in which philosophers were educated and which they wrote and spoke with ease; (4) a set of writing genres; and (5) a philosophical tradition based on the models that Boethius had passed on to the Middle Ages and were later augmented by the translations of works from Aristotle and other ancient philosophers, as well as some Islamic and Jewish philosophers. This made possible for masters and students separated by

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centuries and originating in lands as distant as England and Italy, to communicate effectively. It also allowed philosophy to benefit from the input of peoples from around the globe, which are the two main practical benefits intended by Rodríguez-Pereyra's proposal (2013: 85).

If we assume that the medieval system worked because of the conditions mentioned above, then it becomes difficult to argue for its effective implementation, *mutatis mutandis*, to the case of analytic philosophy today. The reason is that analytic philosophy nowadays, even if it satisfies some of these conditions, does not satisfy most of them. Indeed, if we take seriously Max Black's characterization of analytic philosophy as a group of "philosophers who share a common intellectual heritage and are committed to the clarification of basic philosophical concepts" (1963: v), the point is quite clear. Generously, we might grant that some analytic philosophers share a belief that they are doing something similar: a set of methodological assumptions, the article genre, and perhaps a set of texts regarded as originating from their philosophical tradition. Even then, the other conditions operative in the Middle Ages are not satisfied. Analytic philosophers outside the Anglosaxon world have not been educated in English, and they do not share a rigorous training in a common set of disciplines, a technical vocabulary, or assumptions about religion and life. Both Rodríguez-Pereyra and at least one of his critics seem to accept the view that English competence is widespread among Spanish speaking analytic philosophers, but my own experience, which extends to most countries of Latin America and to Spain for a period of at least forty years, does not support this belief.



The difficulty with Rodríguez-Pereyra's proposal is not only a matter of some missing conditions in the community of analytic philosophers today, but also of the fact that language is a cultural product resulting from unique historical circumstances and events that mold populations and reflect different values and world views. This is the second, and more important, difficulty I see with Rodríguez-Pereyra's proposal, for I believe his thesis does not take it into



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account. It is not just that Spanish and English sound different, that their grammars are different, and that their vocabularies and what the words mean do not coincide. The difficulty arises because languages are ways of living, and understanding a language requires an understanding of the way of life that produced it, that is, it requires living it (cf., Hurtado 2013, 109). Languages reflect conceptual frameworks that carve out experiences differently. Indeed, entire philosophical systems have been developed based on idiosyncrasies of certain languages. Is not the distinction between substance and property that permeates western philosophy a byproduct of the languages in which western philosophy first developed? Rodríguez-Pereyra is too quick to dismiss the close connection of languages to world views. Indeed, how else can we explain the difficulty in translating the Spanish distinction between the verbs *ser* and *estar* into English, or the obstacles posed by the attempt to translate Aristotle's *Metaphysics* from Greek, a language rich in ontological vocabulary, into Chinese, a language that lacks equivalent terms?

The key point that is that most texts in one language cannot be effectively translated into texts from other languages. Note that I am not saying that their translation is impossible. I do not subscribe to Benjamin Lee Whorf's notorious Principle of Linguistic Relativity. Philosophy claims to be universal. It tries, like science, to make claims that have universal validity, and this entails that, regardless of the peculiarities of particular languages and cultures, it should be possible to translate texts from one language into another. But this does not contradict the less controversial claim that each language favors particular ways of conceiving the world and, therefore, that it is difficult and sometimes even impossible to effectively translate every text in one language into a text of another. Nowhere is this clearer than in the translation of texts that are literary, but it is also quite evident in texts in ordinary language.



To this, Rodríguez-Pereyra could object that the language of philosophy that concerns him is neither literary nor ordinary; philosophy uses technical language,

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as shown by the jargon of scholars and analytic philosophers. Unfortunately, this is not right. Some philosophy is quite technical, but most philosophy is not, analytic philosophy included. After all, one of the great currents of analytic philosophy advocated the use of ordinary language, and to this day one of the virtues of analytic philosophy in the twentieth and twenty first centuries is the effective use of ordinary language as Rodríguez-Pereyra's own article illustrates. The great project of the logical positivists of developing an ideal language has never quite gotten off the ground. And even the strictest logical positivists used ordinary language when they philosophized. Indeed, analytic philosophers continue to use ordinary language today, as any page of any philosophy article confirms, and the reason is that philosophy is ultimately based on ordinary experience and common sense, and through the ordinary language in which they are both expressed. This is a fact of which the founders of analytic philosophy were well aware, or have we already forgotten the lessons that G. E. Moore, Bertrand Russell, and Ludwig Wittgenstein taught us? Rodríguez-Pereyra's position requires a very narrow understanding of philosophy and its task, a point that all three of his critics mentioned (Pérez 2013, 94; Hurtado 2013, 107-108; and Ruffino 2013, 100). In fact, Rodríguez-Pereyra seems to forget four rather important points: (1) analytic philosophy has given ordinary language a principal role from its beginning; (2) peculiarities of particular languages have given rise to important philosophical positions; (3) the close relationship between ordinary language and culture is significant; and (4) ordinary language is closely related to experience and experience is fundamental for philosophy.



If philosophy uses ordinary language and ordinary language reflects a way of life, then we should be able to advance our understanding by learning other languages, and the benefits of using only one language to do analytic philosophy imposes a counterproductive limitation. In short, it would be ultimately harmful to use only one language to do philosophy, be that philosophy analytic or not, for to do so would narrow the range of our experience and horizons. Indeed, if we consider the period in which Latin was the language of philosophy, we can see



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that, although philosophy at the time reached enormous heights in certain areas, it did not advance in others. And one of the reasons why it did not was that it was stuck in Latin and the Latin language game.

Now it should be clear why I started a reference to my project of translating Suárez. A translator, as Boethius so well put it, is always a traitor, for a translation always fails to some extent, even when the translator translates a rather technical philosophical text. Ruffino, one of Rodríguez-Pereyra's critics, is too generous when he states that "Knowledge of Greek and Latin is certainly not a *sine qua non* condition for reading ancient Greek or medieval philosophy, since there are usually good translations available" (Ruffino 2013,103). It is true that one may be able "to read" the translated texts, and even get a more or less adequate understanding of the meaning of the texts in the original languages, but as to a precise and accurate understanding of the original author's meaning, that is another matter altogether. My experience with translations is quite different to that of Ruffino, for there is not a single translation of a philosophical text from one language I know into another that I also know, that satisfies me (and that includes my own), or that is universally regarded by experts as a faithful rendition of the original. Indeed, it is precisely because of this that the process of translation opens windows to previously unknown vistas.



Rodríguez-Pereyra's thesis suggests that perhaps he does not sufficiently appreciate diversity, even when scientists tell us that diversity is the key to life, survival, and progress. Nature teaches quite clearly that a genetically diverse pool is the key to strength. Nature seeks diversity to facilitate survival. This suggests that variety in the language of philosophy should also be beneficial, as in fact the history of philosophy shows. There is no reason to think, then, that linguistic diversity is not beneficial to analytic philosophy. The Principle of Semantic Equivalence is not pertinent not because it is impossible to find such equivalence in languages, but because it is very difficult to do so in part because the language of philosophy, including analytic philosophy, is mixed with ordinary and literary


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language insofar as it is founded on ordinary experience. So, no, let us not restrict doing analytic philosophy to English less we fall into a "dogmatic slumber." Linguistic diversity should help us broaden our horizons and thus help in the search for a deeper philosophical understanding.

## Laura Pérez – Philosophical Research in Spanish. A Case of Simultaneous Translation

Gonzalo Rodriguez-Pereyra (2013) argues in favor of research in analytic philosophy to be published only in English. This article generated a big discussion lead by Diana Pérez (2013). Pérez highlights certain values of philosophical practice – such as freedom, tolerance, curiosity and lack of prejudice— in order to argue against using just one language to write about analytic philosophy. The purpose of this article is to address whether we should translate lectures on philosophy from English to Spanish. It is a problem with the debate generated by Rodriguez because one of the most productive ways to do research in philosophy is presenting it in the form of lectures and talks.



To tackle the problem of whether we should translate lectures in philosophy from English into Spanish, I will first present the context of a case study, a Mexican research project. An important part of the objectives of the project is to organize lectures and talks. For that purpose, we invite non-Spanish speaking philosophers to present their most recent research. Second, I will set forth my case study, that of a simultaneous translation of a lecture from English into Spanish. Third, (Section 3) I will pose some questions regarding conditions of the project, the members and the university where the project events take place. I will conclude that English language competence does not immediately or directly meet the objectives of our research project.

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*The project*

I am a member of a three-year research project in philosophy of perception at Autonomous University of México -- Cuajimalpa (UAM-C), a public university located in Mexico City. The project is funded by the National Council of Science and Technology (CONACyT), a Mexican public organization directed by Professor Alvaro Peláez, a faculty member of the Department of Humanities at UAM-Cuajimalpa. We are currently in our second year of research and are interested primarily in topics related to the nature of perceptual experiences and their contents. Additionally, we are eager to learn about various problems in the philosophy of mind. As a complement to the research project, a center for the studies of perception has been created at UAM-C.

*About our research group*

Our group is made up of undergraduate and graduate students and researchers interested in the philosophy of mind. None of the members of the project received their education at UAM-C. Anyone interested in the philosophy of mind and perception, besides epistemology, metaphysics and cognitive sciences, has access to our project activities, and we encourage students from UAM-C to participate in them. We do not have an undergraduate program in philosophy at UAM-C, but we do have one in the humanities which is divided into three areas: philosophy, arts and literature, and history. Until now, philosophy of mind was not part of the undergraduate program in humanities.



*About our research objectives*

We aim to produce high-quality philosophy in the form of publications and presentations.

*About our events*

We organize three types of activities: (a) a research and a translation seminar (we're currently translating from English into Spanish S. Siegel's *The Contents of Visual Experience* and G. Evans's *The Varieties of Reference*); (b) talks, which

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include lectures and talk series; and (c) advice sessions. To achieve b), we invite national and international students and faculty to speak about their most recent research. Since 2013, seven graduate students and six professors have presented their research as part of the project events.

*Case studies*

Professor Christopher Peacocke of Columbia University visited UAM-C in February 2014 to give the opening lecture of the Center for the Studies in Perception. Peacocke's lecture dealt with the philosophy of magnitudes and temporal properties and the philosophy of music. Members and non-members of the project attended the lecture. Among the non-members, undergraduate students and faculty of the Department of Humanities at UAM-C as well as undergraduate and graduate students of UNAM attended the lecture.

PhD. Álvaro Peláez –the project director– hired a simultaneous translation service for Peacocke's lecture in order to include a wider audience. The primary benefit of simultaneous translation is that it creates a more inclusive environment, e.g. instead of having exclusively an English speaking audience, we also had Spanish speaking attendees. Anyone interested in the topics had access to the lecture.



The lecture and the following discussion were translated from English into Spanish. This is the first aspect of the research project I want to highlight. If the guest is a non-Spanish speaker, the service of professional translators is necessary for lectures and discussions to take place. The primary limit of resorting to simultaneous translation is that the lecture is just a small part of the activities involved in hosting a non-Spanish speaking philosopher. For instance, besides the lecture, we encourage students and faculty to have meetings with the guest.

Almost none of the members of our research project judge themselves as having a good level of spoken English. This is the second aspect of the project I want to


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highlight. By *good level* I mean that we do not give lectures in English, write papers in English, or engage in philosophical discussions in English. This is not the first event in which simultaneous translation was involved. Last year, Professor Iakovos Vasiliou from Tthe Graduate Center at the City University of New York (CUNY) visited UAM-C. His lecture was translated from English into Spanish. Some of our non-Spanish visitors gave their lectures in Spanish. For instance, Professor Susanna Siegel of Harvard University, whose first language is English, gave three lectures in Spanish at UAM-C. Also, Thomas Meier, a PhD student at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (LMU München), and whose mother tongue is German, gave his lecture in Spanish. Audiences at UAM-C have different responses when attending a lecture in Spanish and a lecture in English. If the lecture is in Spanish, the audience feels more confident to ask questions. If the lecture is in English, we sometimes feel we will not understand the responses to the questions, so we do not ask any.

Philosophy taught at UAM-C is in Spanish. Contrary to what Rodriguez-Pereyra holds, students of UAM-C –or at least the grand majority– do not read philosophy in English. How it is so? Students are not asked to read philosophy in English. It should be noted that philosophy courses cover only 30% of the undergraduate program in humanities. Also, the level of philosophy courses is introductory, so we can use classic references already translated into Spanish. But most importantly, in principle we could not ask students of UAM-C to have a high competence in English because in many cases their previous study of the language was limited, inadequate, or even non-existent.



After the lecture, Professor Peacocke held a two-hour meeting to share research advice with four students. None of them were students of UAM-C. Although two students needed a translator and professional translators were not present for the meetings, we nonetheless made the meetings happen. I helped with the translation, although I made some mistakes. For instance, instead of saying 'X grounds Y', I said 'Y grounds X.' Peacocke reads and understands some Spanish,



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so he noticed my mistake and corrected it. Additionally, I left out details of his feedback to the students because my vocabulary is not that rich in English. The students who asked for the research advice session work in topics in the philosophy of perception –e.g. the nature of hallucinations, and the non-conceptual content of the experience. They read philosophy in English all the time. However, two of them cannot speak or understand spoken English.

*Some questions*

Several questions have been asked regarding the conditions of the project, the members, and the university where the events take place.

Do we meet the material conditions to host a non-Spanish speaking philosopher? Partially. If we limit ourselves to lectures, simultaneous translation seems enough. However, there is more involved than just the lecture. For instance, a member of the project posed a question to Peacocke. He removed his headphones, which he used to listen to the whole lecture in Spanish, to raise the question, but forgot to put them back to hear the response. He is acquainted with Christopher's work and he reads philosophy in English all the time, but he missed a lot of the details of Peacocke's response. Fortunately, the member of the project attended the research advice session with the speaker later.



Should we only host Spanish speakers to give philosophy lectures at UAM-C? Improving the conditions of the project does not require that we all speak English, but that we create a better environment to communicate in both English and Spanish. Communicating in two languages has many advantages, e.g. one can enrich the formulation of one's ideas. If you have a thought in English, by making the translation of my thought from English to Spanish, it is possible to improve, enrich, and change the original thought in English. Competence in two languages is a strategy to think.



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Should we stop using simultaneous translation? Rodriguez-Pereyra holds: "[...] it is not necessary that one writes in English as well as in one's mother tongue. And even if not everyone can write reasonably well in English, this is a skill that any competent philosopher can acquire. Since publishing in English is valuable, one should try to acquire this skill if one doesn't already have it." (Rodriguez-Pereyra 2013: 86) It is advisable that some of the members of the project are competent in English if one of the central activities of the project is to invite and hold a dialogue with non-Spanish speaking philosophers. It is undesirable to impose English competency as a requirement to attend lectures and do research in philosophy.

Is it stimulating to visit UAM-C if almost none of the project members have a good level of spoken English? In order to not lose the opportunity to philosophically and personally interact with non-Spanish speaking philosophers, some of the members of the project could play the role of translators. However, English language competence does not directly make us a stimulating research community.



Is simultaneous translation an effective strategy to host a non-Spanish speaking philosopher? In a sense, it is. However, we still have to face various challenges. Some of them include language competence and philosophical research and discussion attitudes.

Is UAM-C a low-impact philosophical community? If a low-impact community is one that does not aim to create opportunities of entertaining and discussing ideas, then we are not. We invited Christopher Peacocke to visit UAM-C to discuss his work with him and amongst our community.

*Conclusion*

Resorting to simultaneous translation and not being competent in spoken English does not prevent us from meeting the objectives of our research project such as



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to communicate ideas, pose questions, and ask for clarification in an altruistic philosophical environment. English language competence does not allow us to immediately or directly become a community that meets our research objectives.

## Diana Acosta y Patricia Marechal – Dialogue

It is undeniable that the philosophical work produced in the Spanish-speaking world does not reach many people in Anglo-American universities and academic institutions. If we were to ask English-speaking philosophers to name some of their Hispanic colleagues we would get very few, if any, responses. Moreover, the work of scholars affiliated with philosophy departments in Spain and Latin America is rarely accepted for publication in the most prestigious U.S. journals. This is especially worrisome since analytic philosophers of these regions dedicate their work almost exclusively to the debates carried out within the English-speaking world. It would seem, then, that communication goes in only one direction: Hispanic philosophers read and write about the debates that take place in the English-speaking world, but their contributions and opinions have little reception, impact or response from English-speaking philosophers. Thus, the work of Hispanic analytic philosophers has become secondary or marginal work that is rarely read by the Anglo-American authors.



Recently, some Latin American philosophers suggested that a solution to this problem is to abandon the production of analytic philosophy in Spanish. If Spanish-speaking philosophers wrote in English, a real dialogue between these two academic worlds would be established. Behind this proposal is the hope that the simple elimination of language barriers will enable a philosophical dialogue, with disagreements regarding the content but without any discord about the form. Clearly, linguistic and cultural differences substantially enrich these philosophical debates. A diversity of voices tests the extent and validity of our theories, and raises new questions and original proposals. These are valid reasons to preserve

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the production of analytic philosophy in Spanish. But besides these considerations, there are additional factors that make it unfeasible to adopt English as the only language for philosophical policy.

First of all, there are reasons to suspect that this proposal would not solve the problem stated above. It is not that philosophers of Latin American universities do not write in English, do not speak the language, or do not send articles to the Anglo-American journals with the expectation of being published on the acclaimed pages of *Nous* or *The Journal of Philosophy*. They do all of those things. Nonetheless, the acceptance rate for their papers remains extremely low. It is also noticeable that other regions of the world are not facing this problem, or at least not to the same extent. For example, the production of German and French philosophy is well noticed, received, and reviewed by Anglo-American philosophers, in a better fashion than the work produced by their Hispanic counterparts. This suggests that there are factors at play contributing to the marginalization of philosophy works produced in the Hispanic world which cannot be reduced to a simple linguistic difference. We suspect that the problems faced by analytic philosophy of Hispanic origin would not vanish if we adopted English as the exclusive language for philosophical production.



Why then is the Spanish analytic tradition ignored? To answer this question I will borrow a distinction made by Rousseau between two different ways of assessing individuals. We are talking about the distinction between 'recognition' and 'esteem'. It is not my intention to discuss the distinction itself here, but just to consider that this distinction provides a useful framework for analysis in the present context. While 'recognition' implies assessing someone intrinsically, that is, by his or her own merits, 'esteem' considers that an individual deserves admiration or praise because of his or her qualities, the result of his or her work, or because of his or her achievements. In other words, 'recognition' is given to a person simply through their virtue of being. On the other hand, 'esteem' is something that one would deserve because of the qualities of the work that one


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develops. The distinction becomes clear when we take into account that it is possible to recognize and respect someone with whom one disagrees and whose work or qualities one does not consider correct or relevant. Our idea is that Hispanic philosophy is not *recognized* as a potential source for contributions that must be taken into account in philosophical debates.

Behind the idea that the production of analytic philosophy should be conducted entirely in English, is the hope that if Hispanic philosophical production was available to English-speaking philosophers, it would be appreciated, acknowledged or refuted within the arena of philosophical debate. But the mere availability of Latin American philosophical production does not guarantee the basic recognition needed to be considered as a source of ideas and contributions within the academic world. The reasons, we suspect, are socio-political in nature and go beyond the linguistic differences: the lack of reception to these works results from inequalities in power and control within the intellectual field.

We are suggesting that one of the reasons why Hispanic institutions, academics, and their work are not acknowledged or respected has to do with where they come from. Second, it is worth considering what consequences would be created if we adopted the proposal to write and publish analytic philosophy exclusively in English. It seems that in addition to not being able to solve the fundamental problem faced by Spanish-speaking philosophers, accepting his measure would create additional problems for the Latin American philosophical community. To begin with, we must recognize that the level of proficiency in English within Spanish speaking countries is dramatically low. According to the third report published by *Education First* in 2013, only one country in Latin America displays an average level of English proficiency, while others are classified in the low and very low range.



While philosophy departments may well do better than average in this regard, it is not reasonable to assume that they constitute an exception to the rule. Even if



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both students and faculty in these departments can read in English, it is certain that publishing and debating in English requires a linguistic knowledge that is not possible to acquire in foreign language teaching institutions. It is not enough to achieve a competent level of English to produce publishable work in Anglo-American journals, since knowledge of presentation style, rhetoric, and interests cannot be learned in isolation; they are acquired within the academic and cultural context of universities and institutions of the USA and the UK.

Considering this background, how likely is it that Spanish-speaking philosophers could improve their English to the required level to publish in that language? Since, at least for the moment, such a scenario is not a very plausible one, it is worth asking what would happen if only those scholars who have a sufficient command of the language produced analytic philosophy. In other words, what would be the consequences of making English proficiency a requirement to participate in philosophical debates? And this is where our main concern lies: the level of English proficiency in Latin American countries is directly correlated with the socioeconomic status of their populations. Only those belonging to a higher socioeconomic class will be able to have access to a good bilingual education which can assure the required mastery of the language for writing high quality philosophical articles. Since access to bilingual education is limited to the upper classes, it would seem that these classes would become the dominant voices, if not the only voices, for the field of philosophy in the Spanish-speaking world. In this vein, people who do not have the financial means to access a bilingual education would be excluded from the philosophical debate.



Among the problems that would result from this type of exclusionary policy would be depriving the field from minorities, making philosophy an even more homogeneous discipline than it is now. But beyond this, the content of our philosophical debates would be affected. For example, in philosophical areas such as ethics or political philosophy, a diversity of voices ensures that the imperatives, moral standards, and the perspectives on justice are not simply the



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expression of the interests of the groups in power. The exclusion of non-dominant classes from the philosophical debate would result in a significant loss to the quantity and diversity of opinions, reducing Latin American philosophy to a shortsighted condition.

## Diana Pérez – The Dialogue

Philosophy is, from my point of view, a dialogical activity, and everything I will discuss here depends on accepting this idea: that philosophy is a form dialogue. The image that people have about philosophers is usually that of an old person thinking in solitude, far away from the world and the society where he lives. But this image is wrong: philosophy is practiced by the young, middle aged and old, by both men and women. It frequently involves social activities such as exchanging ideas orally in conferences or in classes, writing (and keeping in mind the potential readers of our texts), and so on. This is not in vain; some of the first philosophical works we still read (such as Plato) have a dialogical structure.

Dialogue is also the way human beings can understand each other and try to reach agreements in order to build a fair and democratic society; where all people can freely express their ideas and feelings, but also where everyone has the right to be heard by others. A dialogue is a human practice based on a symmetric relationship between participants. Equals can have a discussion, but two people in different levels of a hierarchy and with different amounts of power do not usually have this kind of conversation; since one of them has the power to order the other what to do, and if that happens, the dialogue would be broken.



A dialogue, as all of us know, is a human activity that is conducted through a shared language. If two people want to engage in conversation, they have to share a common language, or at least they have to be able to understand the other person's language. I want to stress here the latter, because it is a common experience for those like me, whose native language is a romance language. This



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allows us to engage in a dialogue (philosophical or not) with people who speak a different romance language. For example, this is a frequent experience for me, an Argentinian who speak Spanish, when I travel to Brazil where Portuguese is spoken. Obviously it is not the same to speak with someone who speaks the same language and with someone who speaks another language that we understand only partially. But when there are truly communicative intentions by the two people involved, and there is a common subject that both people know, for example a specific topic in philosophy, the communication is easy and fruitful even if neither speaks in the other's language. In fact, as Noe stated (2009: 103):

> In most of the world people live in densely multilinguistic environments. Indeed, the very idea of one people/one language is a cultural invention of the nineteenth century [...] [In cases of multilingual societies,] the question of translating between these languages does not arise [...] Languages are aspects of engaged human living.

The idea of a universal language like Esperanto was a failure; it is simply not true that people would choose a shared language in order to communicate with each other. This is possibly because one's native tongue always sounds better to the speaker, and any second language will always be difficult to decode for the listener (although in our case, as Spanish speakers, any other romance language will likely be easier to understand than a non-romance language like English).



If you agree with the idea that philosophy is a dialogical practice, we should acknowledge the fact that, as with any other practice, philosophy is ruled by certain norms, some of them explicit, and many others implicit. And these norms or rules which guide the practice of philosophy depend on our own values. In order to consider the question, 'what is the language for philosophy,' we must ask ourselves what we think philosophy is, and what values we consider the most important in our philosophical practices. In my opinion, some values we should adopt for guiding our activity as philosophers are: *freedom* to present our ideas



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the way we want; *tolerance* to accept that which is different from us; and finally, *curiosity* and *lack of prejudice* in order to search – across the borders of languages – for the interesting and original ideas presented by our fellows. And none of these values guide anyone to recommend someone to write or talk in any particular language.

We should also consider the arguments for using a language other than our native tongue for discussing philosophy. One fact we should consider when choosing in which language to write or speak is the intended audience we want to reach. The fact that English has become the shared common language for the scientific community has led some people to defend the idea that we should only write and talk in professional contexts in English. For example, Gonzalo Rodriguez Pereyra, an Argentinian philosopher who has been working for the last twenty years in the UK, recently wrote: 'original research in Analytic Philosophy in general should be published exclusively in English. Publishing such work in English is very valuable, but publishing it in languages other than English is of little or no value.'



The main reason Rodriguez Pereyra gave in support of his claim was the number of potential English readers and the number of journals that publish papers only in English. But his conclusion includes the word 'should.' Leaving aside the obvious philosophical difficulties that lie behind the naturalistic fallacy, it is worth remarking that from the very same fact we can draw different norms. For example, consider the use of quotas by universities to ensure a certain number of African American students, women, or other minorities. We might well conclude that the best norm we can draw from the fact that the great majority of papers are published in English is that the journals should establish a quota of foreign (other than English) language articles to be included in each volume, instead of concluding that it is less valuable to publish in a minority language. Which inference we draw depends upon what values we decide to adopt. And if we choose the values I mentioned above, the inference we should make is quite different from Rodriguez Pereyra´s.



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A second reason for using English instead of Spanish would be that perhaps there are different languages appropriate for different activities. When I was young, I was told that Carlos V, the Holy Roman Emperor and King of the Romans in Italy and Spain, and the Archduke of Austria and Duke of Burgundy (1500-1558), held that there are different languages for different human activities: German for guiding horses, English for ordering dogs, French for diplomacy, and Spanish for love. Leaving aside the historical accuracy of this quotation, the idea behind it is the same: there are appropriate languages for each kind of human activity. Native English speakers probably feel as uneasy with my quotation from Carlos V as some native Spanish speaking philosophers do regarding the imposition of English as a means to express their ideas.

In my personal case, in fact, when I was a student of philosophy my professors used to hold that the only language in which philosophy makes sense is German (at least Kantian, Hegelian and Heideggerian philosophers in Argentina used to think that); or alternatively that French is the proper language for philosophy (Existentialists and Postmodernists thought that). I am lucky that Classical Greek is a dead language now because someone probably would have told me that I should write in Ancient Greek! In any case, at least in my country, and as far as I know in other Spanish speaking countries, Spanish is not viewed as an adequate language for philosophy. I am not sure why, although I have some thoughts about why this is so, which perhaps we can discuss later, but the fact is that Spanish is rarely thought of as a good language for expressing our philosophical ideas. The conclusion after briefly examining these two arguments is that there are no reasons to abandon Spanish in order to express philosophical thinking.



In what follows, I will try to give some reasons why I think we should take Spanish seriously as a language for philosophy:

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The first point I want to stress is that language and thought are not as separate as some might think. Language is not just a transparent media in which we incarnate our languageless, abstract, universal, unpolluted thoughts. I do agree with those like Davidson, who hold that every human thought can be expressed in every human natural language. But the way in which we express the same thought in different languages has some specific features which are not present in every 'incarnation' of the thought. Because some words have different extensions in different languages (for example color terms); two words with similar meaning in a given language may not share the same etymology (such as clap vs. applause); or some words are compound words in one language, but are simple in another (for example boyfriend and *novio*); and also because some words sound heavy in a language and soft in another (*catarata* /fall and *grito*/ screech). So the web of psychological associations that a word in a given language activates in our minds is not exactly the same in all languages, even if the informational content we express is more or less the same. We sometimes even have to transliterate some words (robot) or add some new words to our language in order to express the ideas of another culture (*saudade*).



Second, there are some problems when we face the phenomena of translation. I don not mean only when translating literature (especially poetry), but also philosophy. I teach philosophy in Spanish and I always have the problem that I do not have any translation into Spanish of most of the papers I want to discuss with my students. So I create (with my collaborators) many translations from English into Spanish, and the fact is that it is not very easy to translate philosophical works. Some examples I have in mind are the difficulties we have when translating into Spanish the German word *dasein*, the Greek word ουσία or the English expression 'knowledge by acquaintance.' Let us think for a moment about the last example, which belongs to the core of the analytic tradition. 'To know' can be translated into two different Spanish words: *saber* and *conocer*. (In Spanish we know "*saber*" facts but we know "*conocer*" people and places). This is a fundamental problem, because for us it is not obvious that both words are

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expressing the same concept. It is something we should prove. And things get worse when we realize that in philosophy, at least since Russell and Ryle, we are used to distinguishing three different kinds of knowledge: *saber algo*/to know something (propositional knowledge); *saber cómo*/to know how to do something; and *conocimiento por familiaridad*/knowledge by acquaintance. But in Spanish we have a different word for knowledge of people and places, and we have two different grammatical constructions in the case of abilities: one of them is the same as in English: *saber cómo (jugar al ajedrez/*play chess*)* and the other has no parallel in English: *saber* plus a verb in the infinitive form: *Saber jugar al ajedrez*. And even worse, we do not have any word for "acquaintance", because we do not have the ordinary notion of someone being acquainted with someone else (we would likely say that someone is *conocido* of someone else, but it is not always the same as "acquainted").

These examples show why all philosophers agree that reading a philosophical text in its original language is a *sine qua non* condition for a proper understanding of the ideas the philosopher held. This is something that became obvious to us when we begin translating philosophical work. However, we should also accept the opposing argument: that we will never be able to express as acutely, precisely, or properly the thoughts we have as native Spanish speakers in other languages. Unless we are bilingual, we will not be able to express our thoughts with the same accuracy in a language other than our own. In this case, why should I be asked to change my mother tongue in order to express my philosophical ideas? If someone wants to truly understand my philosophical thesis he should make an effort to try to understand my native language in which I will probably express my thoughts in the best way I can. In the case of dead German, or Greek, or French philosophers, we should understand their language in order to understand their writings.



The medium we choose in order to express our ideas is important; it allows us to express our ideas and feelings in the best way that we can. We can look to

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literature for an example of this. It is a fact that a great writers, Jorge Luis Borges, despite being almost bilingual, did not write any of his major work in any language other than Spanish. The same is true for Julio Cortázar and Juan José Saer, who both spoke French fluently and who lived most of their lives in France. So the reasons to prefer one language over another is not merely the number of potential readers we can have; our mother tongue allows us to better express what we think.

There is obvious tension between two different communicational goals we have to take into consideration when we decide how to express our thoughts. On the one hand, as writers or speakers, we want to have the broadest audience as possible. On the other hand, we want to express our thoughts as accurately as we can. The second goal always makes us prefer our own language. But the fist one sometimes is in conflict with the second one, because we can reach a wider audience using a language other than our own. Sometimes we can decide to put the first one above the second, and this is the reason why I chose English for this talk. But the tension should not always be solved by putting the first goal above the second one. It seems to me that each time someone like myself, who can choose between two different languages, starts to write something, we should ask ourselves about the issues I raised here (and probably many others I did not address). Always giving priority to the second goal will prevent us from communicating with a lot of people, and in the end may result in isolation. However, giving priority to the first one will force us to forget who we are and abandon our own language as a genuine way of expressing our thoughts. As a consequence, the dialogue will become poorer because the subtleties we can make in our own language (but not in others) are buried. The decision will be highly contextual; there is not a single rule that can be applied to every situation.



It is important to note that even if I am discussing this issue in an individualistic setting, everything I said about the individual decisions that we should make as writers and speakers are considerations that should also be taken into account



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when we make political decisions within the institutions in which we, as individuals, work and develop. So the same considerations we, as individual writers or speakers, should apply in order to choose the language in which to express our thoughts are the considerations that many people should also make: for example the editor of a given journal, who refuses articles in languages other than English; or the organizer of a conference where only one language is accepted, or a university where a single language is used for teaching, etc.

These are some of the implicit rules that are behind the current philosophical practice. Unifying the language of philosophy by trying to impose a universal shared language on all the participants of philosophical dialogues leads us to have poorer discussions and poorer ideas, because inevitably we lose the hues and subtleties different languages provide. A careful pluralism that avoids the isolation of the minorities is the best strategy.

About the institutional question, I was one of two people (with Eleonora Orlando) who organized the first entirely English workshop in Argentina in 2003 (Susanna Siegel was one of our invited speakers). We had a lot of resistance because we heard arguments like this: why should Spanish-speaking people (Argentinians, Spanish, Mexican, etc.) speak English in Argentina? And the answer was clear to me: because the decision at that point was to make the goal of communication the first priority. But it was not easy at the time and many people disagreed with us.



Since 2008 I have been the president of the Argentinian Society for Analytic Philosophy, and every time we decide to do an activity in English in our Society we face the shadow of the opposition: why should someone be forced to speak in a language other than Spanish within the context of a Spanish speaking society? I think that 10 years after that first workshop, we have now reached a good balance: no one is forced to speak in a language other than Spanish, and all visitors coming to our Society know that we speak in Spanish. Since we usually



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invite non-Spanish speakers, we guarantee that they will be able to have an enriching philosophical exchange with us: either because those who want to do that will be allowed to speak in English (the majority of people do that) or because we will have some English version of the paper written in Spanish so that English speakers can follow a Spanish talk. I think that something like this should be done in every conference. When some English speaking philosopher goes abroad to a non-English speaking country, he should be concerned with finding some way to make himself understandable to everyone, and not simply assume that everyone should understand his English.

Let me now discuss another aspect of this institutional question: the problem with publications. As a member of the Editorial Board of the Journal *Análisis Filosófico*, I was one of the three (young at that time) people (with Eduardo Rivera López and Marcelo Alegre) working with the journal in 2000 who fought against the more senior members in order to allow the publication of papers in English in the journal. At some point, some colleagues argued that only native English speakers should be allowed to publish in English in our journal, and I argued that Spanish speakers should also be allowed to publish in English if they wanted to do so, for communicational purposes, for example. And my argument then was exactly the same as the one I am using now to defend the idea that those who want to give a talk or publish their philosophical ideas in Spanish should be allowed to do so. Everyone has the right to express their ideas in the best way they can and to try to reach the audience they want with their texts.



To summarize, my proposal is to explore the most diverse strategies in order to promote the dialogue between English-speakers and Spanish-speakers (in this case), respecting diversity and allowing everyone to choose how best to express their thoughts, and trying to prevent isolation of those who choose the minority language for their work.



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