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Teaching Translation

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Abstract

This article gives particular attention to an aperture into teaching translation as a part of my experience in both CPE and UFC. What it includes is; the reasons for using translation in the classroom, what to take into consideration when selecting the materials needed for translation, how teaching translation should be organized as well as the principles of translation. And end it by looking at how correction should be handled as well as my view on reformulating "teaching translation" to "using translation".

Mots clés :

Matériel pédagogique, enseignement, traduction, langue étrangère, pratiques didactiques

Résumé

Cet article accorde une attention particulière à une ouverture dans l'enseignement de la traduction dans le cadre de mon expérience à la fois au CPE et à l'UFC. Ce qu'il comprend est ; les raisons d'utiliser la traduction en classe, ce qu'il faut prendre en considération lors du choix du matériel nécessaire à la traduction, comment l'enseignement de la traduction devrait être organisé ainsi que les principes de la traduction. Et finir par observer comment la correction doit être traitée ainsi qu'une analyse sur la reformulation de «l'enseignement de la traduction» à «l'utilisation de la traduction».

Dr. Jan Tudor says "Translation, as the process of conveying messages across linguistics and cultural barriers, is an eminently communicative activity, one whose use could well be considered in a wider range of teaching situations than may currently be the case."

1. **Teaching translation is part of my experience in both CPE (SONATRACH) and UFC**

It is a discipline as theory and practice of translation existing in the curriculum of both enterprises, as most students continue their education using different languages (ARABIC French, English, German and Spanish) at different Universities or are executive in departments where the use of many languages is a must.

Teaching translation can contribute to the development of professional competence of a future teacher. It gives a chance to see the opportunities of translation, test them through learning and then, use them through teaching.

The teacher's task is to show the ropes, involving the students into the world of translation. Though basic language teaching methods throughout history have cantered on translation and almost all language learning developed out of translation. Translation is 'Cinderella' in the family of language teaching techniques as Alan Marley said, translation has been put into methodological lumber room along with such activities as dictation, reading aloud, etc. It is considered to be something "boring", 'pointless', "difficult", "irrelevant' and at last, uncommunicative'. I think, it is so, because traditionally, many English teachers associate translation activities with grammar translation as a method. Teachers feel, with some justification, that :

- It is text-bound
- it is not a communicative activity (because it involves no oral interaction)
- it is time-consuming (not suitable for work in the classroom-because students must do the writing on their own)
- it requires the use of the mother tongue (but it is not desirable at the English lessons)
- it is boring — both to do, and to correct

This may be so, but many other approaches are possible. Translation can be introduced, purposefully, into the language learning programme. In his book Alan Duff highlights at least 5 reasons for using translation in the classroom:

- **Influence of the mother tongue.**

We all have mother tongue, or the 1st language, or the language of habitual use- in the interpretation by Peter Newmark. It shapes our way of thinking and our use of the foreign language to some extent. Translation helps us to understand better the influence of one language on the other. And, because translation involves contrast, it enables us to explore the potential of both languages- their strengths and weaknesses.

- **Naturalness of the activity.**

Translation is a natural and necessary activity. Outside the classroom- in airports, offices, banks, etc.- translation is going on all the time. Why not inside the classroom ?

- **The skill aspect.**

Language competence is a two-way system. We need to be able to communicate both ways: into and from the foreign language. Translation is a perfect means for practicing this vital skill.

- **The reality of language.**

The proper material for translation is authentic and wide-ranging: the learner is being brought into touch with the whole language, and not just parts isolated by the textbooks.

- **Usefulness.**

As a language learning activity, translation has a lot of merits:

- It invites speculation and discussion. In translation there is hardly any 'right' answer, but there are a lot of wrong ones. Doing all the work individually and in writing is not necessary. Students can work in pairs or groups for oral discussion. You may choose short texts for reading and discussion to save the time.
- Translation develops three essential qualities to all language learning: accuracy, clarity and flexibility. 'It trains the reader to search (flexibility) for the most appropriate words (accuracy) to convey what is meant (clarity)'.
- Depending on the students' needs, and on the syllabus, the teacher can select material to illustrate particular aspects of language and structures the students have difficulty with. By working through these difficulties in the mother tongue, the students can see the link between the language (grammar) and usage.
- Translators will always be needed. Without them, there would be no summit talks, no Olympic Games, no international festivals and so on. And who is to do this work? — Either the professionals, or the students of language.

Professional translation is a specialized skill that requires specialized training. And, actually, it is not the goal we would like to achieve. The goal of translation is more like to provide learning opportunities in the process of creating translations and examination of them as final products in order to develop language awareness. Translation activities should be used in. the English classroom, and they should be supported by communicative, natural learning methods.

- **Material for translating**

Selecting the material for the work, I try to take into consideration the following criteria:

- it should reflect my students' needs and be appropriate to their level.
- it should be authentic (press, books, Internet) it should represent full range of styles and registers. it should illustrate the problems, challenges and strategies of translation in general.

- it should be interesting and translatable.

The length of the texts is also important: short texts for oral work in class, and longer ones for translation at home (mostly in writing).

'Translation, unfortunately, is something you learn only by doing'
***William Weaver, translator of The* Name of the Rose.**

Practice in translation doesn't mean setting as many written assignments as possible (practice makes perfect?) to be returned to the students with the errors marked in red. It means giving the students regular opportunities to compare and discuss their work with the others, and to respond to suggestions.

- *How might it be organised?*
- *In different ways, with different objectives. But I may figure out some basic stages:*

- **WARM-UP :**

Translation takes time, care and thought. To prepare the students to the translation activity, to avoid questions like 'Why am I doing this? Couldn't I spend the time better?' the teacher should give an introduction to the material they are going to work with (warming —up activities are of great importance; they are generally oral tasks), challenging and setting the students thinking about specific language items.

- **PAIR/GROUP WORK :**

Translation is usually regarded as an activity to be done individually. Why not translate with other people? The problems the translator usually solves alone are worth discussing with others.

"The ability to discuss translation in an objective way is central to a translator's competence". (Kussmaul).

The 1St stage — discussion in a group or in a pair: it gives all the students a chance to be heard, to test their ideas against the others', to listen and compare. The teacher's task is to help (not by translating for the students, but by listening to their translations and pointing out any features of the English that haven't come through).

In **the 2nd stage** of discussion — one group meets another- the teacher's task is to bring together groups which have found different solutions.

Translation is a constant process of making choices. The function of the discussion is to give the students time for further reflection, a chance to change their minds and the possibility to select 'the best' variant.

The students are supposed to work orally or to take notes, translating the focused fragments, instead of writing down the whole passages.

Time-limits should be set to prevent the students from getting 'stuck' but, at the same time, sufficient time should be left for the discussion.

- **CLASS DISCUSSION :**

In the final stage the teacher's contribution is crucial: after listening to the suggested translations, the teacher and the students **indicate their own preferences, giving reasons;** the teacher may offer your own alternative translations (if you wish),

recalling Henry Gifford's words: ***'the first law of translation is clear- nothing can be taken as final'.***

Principles of translation:

Here are some guidelines on how to help the student evaluate their own work. The principles are adapted from Frederick fuller: *The Translator's Handbook.*

Meaning	**The translation should reflect accurately the meaning of the original text. Ask yourself :** - **is the meaning of the original text clear? *if not,* where does the uncertainty lie?** - **are any words 'loaded', that is, are there any underlying implications?** - **is the dictionary meaning of a particular word the most suitable one?**
Form	The ordering of words and ideas in the translation should match the original as closely as possible. (This is particularly important in translating legal documents, guarantees, contracts. etc.) But differences in language structure often require changes in the form and order of words.
Register	Languages often differ greatly in their levels of formality in a given context. Consider : - would any expression in the original sound too formal / informal, cold/warm, personal/impersonal . . . if translated literally? - what is the intention of the speaker or writer? (to persuade/ dissuade, apologize/criticize?) Does this come through in the translation?
Source language influence	One of the most frequent criticisms of translation is that 'it doesn't sound natural', A good way of shaking off the source language (SL) influence is to set the text aside and translate a few sentences aloud, from memory. This will suggest natural patterns of thought in the target language (TL), which may not come to mind when the eve is fixed on the SL text.
Style and clarity	The translator should not change the style of the original. But if the text is sloppily written, or full of tedious repetitions, the translator may, for the reader's sake, correct the defects.
Idiom	Idiomatic expressions are notoriously untranslatable. If the expressions cannot be directly translated, try any of the specific methods of transferring the meaning of the idioms. The golden rule is: if the idiom does not work in the TL, do not force it into the translation.

- **Correction:**

Much of the correction is done by the students themselves during oral discussions at the lesson:

- they listen to each other; they are more receptive to any corrections (students learn from each other's mistakes)
- The teacher doesn't have to correct the same errors several times (it always happens with written translations). One comment is quite enough for the whole group.

But it doesn't mean that the correction of written works should be rejected. Translation in writing must be done and it needs correcting. Correction might be the opportunity to encourage: marking not only errors, but also underlining felicitous solutions.

Taking into consideration all what was mentioned above:

- short and varied texts for work in the class
- Equal involvement in the task
- as much oral translation as possible
- writing only in the form of notes, to be used in later discussions
- Time limits where necessary
- Pair and group interaction.

Is translation, actually, time-consuming? I think, not.
Is it non-communicative? I think, not.
Does it give the opportunities to develop language awareness? I think, yes.

And I'd like to reformulate ***teaching translation*** into ***using translation.***

Based on *Translation* by Alan Duff

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