The Place of Translation in Higher Education

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Introduction
“2011 has been an extraordinary year for the art of translation” (Robert McCrum, The Observer, 26th November 2011)
Other groupings in the novel can also seem cult-like in structure. One of the two main characters is a maths teacher and writer, Tengo, who gets drawn by his editor into a literary conspiracy: he ghost-rewrites a novel by a teenage girl, which then wins a prize and becomes a bestseller. (Murakami's translators Rubin and Gabriel, assigned a volume each to meet a rush publishing schedule, have also conspired successfully in producing an English version of limpid consistency.) Elsewhere in Tokyo, an elderly woman known only as the Dowager runs a shelter for female victims of domestic violence. To inflict clandestine punishment on the brutish men, the Dowager retains the services of the novel's other main character: a woman named Aomame, a martial-arts instructor and physical therapist. (The Guardian, 18th October 2011)
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Venuti (2008: ch. 1)

USA 1995

USA 2004

UK 2001

- 2.85%
- 2.07%
- 1.4%
Contemporary Europe:
• France 8-12%
• Italy 22-25%
• Germany 7-14%

Early-modern France
• “the main protagonists of the Renaissance” (Dotoli 2010: 64, my tr.)
• ‘un modèle de style’
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Outline

1  Translation Today
2  Translation in Theory
3  Translation in Practice
4  Translation Tomorrow
1 Translation Today

- X Literature in Translation (10)
- Translation practice (6)
- Translation as metaphor (1)
- Translation as object of study (3)
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1. No translation
2. As linguistic exercise
3. As vocational skill
4. The Routledge effect:
   - Translation studies
   - Range of genres
   - Problem-solving
   - Conscious decision making
Some notable programs and courses include Columbia University's Writing Division's Center for Literary Translation, University of Texas-Dallas's translation workshop, and Stanford University's English department's recently introduced undergraduate seminar in literary translation (which also uses Venuti's The Translation Studies Reader). Princeton University recently introduced a certificate program in translation open to all majors, including English majors who also work in a second language. (Wittman and Windon 2010 n.1)
we often ask our students to use translations
we sometimes ask them to translate
we hardly ever ask them to think about translation
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My position:
- Translation is a primary linguistic practice
- Translation is not just written, literary, faithful
- Translation is useful in research
- Translation is useful in the classroom

Translation matters!
2 Translation in Theory
1. What translation can tell us about languages
2. What translation can tell us about culture
3. What translation can tell us about people
4. What translation can tell us about texts
What translation can tell us about language

- How languages influence each other (McLaughlin 2011a, b)

  faithful translation > syntactic borrowing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construction</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Relative Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prototypical</td>
<td>1542</td>
<td>96.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impersonal</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronominal</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Se faire</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1592</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What translation can tell us about people

• How people conceptualize meaning
• How people conceptualize language
• How people conceptualize authorship

Oresme (1370-72) : “je ne ose pas esloingnier mon parler du texte de Aristote”

Du Bellay (1549: ch. VIII) : “Je vous demande donc, vous autres, qui ne vous employez qu’aux translations, si ces tant fameux auteurs se fussent amusés à traduire, eussent-ils élevé leur langue à l’excellence et hauteur où nous la voyons maintenant?”
Translation it is that openeth the window, to let in the light; that breaketh the shell, that we may eat the kernel; that putteth aside the curtain, that we may look into the most holy place; that removeth the cover of the well, that we may come by the water. (King James Bible 1611)
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What translation can tell us about culture

• “I think it reasonable to suggest that we can use the wide availability of and free access to translations in any society as a clear, determinative sign of vigorous, uncensored freedom of communication, an issue that deserves to be at the forefront of our political thinking. It is a compelling and original benchmark to consider in our continual, crucially important efforts to protect liberty.” (Grossman 2010: 52)

• “I would even say that the translation of the Bible contributed massively to the making of Europe, to the differences between the works which themselves founded national languages.” (Meschonnic 2008: 37)
Pym (2010): “the way we translate, and the way we think about translation, depends on the problems we are trying to solve”

• Equivalence & European unification
• Cultural turn & postcolonial societies
What translation can tell us about people
Ahrens et al. (2010)

• Most active: left superior temporal sulcus
  – Processing of lexical-semantic information
  – Extracting speech sounds from the environment
  – Inhibits the perception of the interpreter’s voice

• Also indicates:
  – Visual perception
  – Motor actions related to hand movements
What translation can tell us about texts
Translation universals (Chesterman 2010)

• Simplification
• Conventionalization
• Untypical lexical patterning
• Under-representation of TL specific items
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Laviosa (1998):
• 14 translations
• 18 originals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Translational</th>
<th>Non-translational</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>LEXICAL DENSITY</strong></td>
<td>52.87439153</td>
<td>54.9536606</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
<td>2.552626875</td>
<td>1.8632584</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PROPORTION OF HIGH</strong></td>
<td>59.736429</td>
<td>58.51277778</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FREQUENCY WORDS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
<td>6.8007801</td>
<td>5.0424312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MEAN SENTENCE LENGTH</strong></td>
<td>24.08714286</td>
<td>15.62555556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
<td>137.6326347</td>
<td>3.551449191</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5
The comparable corpus of narrative prose: lexical density, proportion of high frequency words, mean sentence length, and variance
McLaughlin (2008: 58):
French: Jean je l’aime
English: John I love him

Table 3. Frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Translation</th>
<th>Number of dislocations</th>
<th>Frequency of dislocation/10,000 words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>130</td>
<td>28.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td></td>
<td>12.89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
understanding translation helps us understand everything else

“If writing literature is a transfer or transcription of internal experience and imaginative states into the external world, then even when authors and readers speak the same language, writers are obliged to translate, to engage in the immense, utopian effort to transform the images and ideas flowing through their most intimate spaces into material, legible terms to which readers have access” (Grossman 2010: 76)
Dizdar (2009)

• Law as translation (Crapanzano 2003)
• Human communication as translation (Abel 2000)

“A focus on translationality could, as Sandra Berman states, increase attention to some of the most challenging issues we are confronted with as world citizens, and a sensibility towards translation may lead us to ‘read literary texts as well as the daily news in a more informed and critical light’” (Berman 2005) (p.96)
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3 Translation in Practice
1. Translation in the language classroom
2. Translation in the language program
3. Translation in the university
1. Translation in the language classroom
To increase understanding:
- complex grammatical concepts

**Italian**
la mela si mangia (the apple refl. eats)
= la pomme se mange
si mangia la mela (refl. eats the apple)
= la pomme se mange
= on mange la pomme
French

je mangeais une pomme (I *eat* an apple)
je mangeais une pomme quand il est arrivé
je mangeais une pomme tous les matins

je mangeais une pomme (I *eat* an apple)
  = I *was eating* an apple
  = I *used to eat* an apple
German
Sie ging in den Wald
= she went into the forest
= she used to go into the forest
= she did go into the forest
= she was going into the forest
To ensure understanding
• reading to translate ≠ reading to understand
• benefits the student and the teacher

Translate into English:
Ire Maxime (Molière, *L’école des femmes*)
Celle qu’un lien honnête
Fait entrer au lit d’autrui,
Doit se mettre dans la tête,
Malgré le train d’aujourd’hui,
Que l’homme qui la prend, ne la prend que pour lui
To move beyond grammaticality and achieve naturalness

• Contrastive analysis through translation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transposition:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Elle est d’une beauté extraordinaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>she is of an extraordinary beauty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>she is extraordinarily beautiful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Il est entré dans la chambre en courant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he came into the room running</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he ran into the room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Malgré mon absence de Paris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>despite my absence from Paris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>despite being away from / not being in Paris</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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To discover what you can do with another language

• Multilingualism

• Kramsch and Huffmaster (forthcoming)
2. Translation in the language program

French 131: Translation and Debate

• Conception of translation: project-based
• Pedagogical approach: conscious translation
• Expanded genres
• Final translation project
  – Victor Hugo’s poems
  – Sarkozy’s presidential acceptance speech
  – Urban planning article about parking fines in LA
1. Make a list of all the English verbs you can think of that have to do with speech (say, suggest, complain, mumble, whisper etc.). Group them into sets, starting with the most general ones. Now think of all the verbs of speech you can think of in the target language. Comment on the presence/absence of any semantic gaps in the target language. (Baker 1992: 43)

2. Choose a notional category such as time reference, gender, countability, visibility or animacy and compare the way it is expressed in your TL with the way it is expressed in English. Comment on the sort of problems that could arise in translation from differences in the way the notion is expressed in the two languages. (Baker 1992: 114)
3. Translate the following sentences using the translation strategy requested.

a. J’ai longtemps hésité à écrire un livre sur la femme
   Direct translation:
   Faithful translation:
   Balanced translation:

b. Le chat et le Renard, comme beaux petits saints,
   S’en allaient en pèlerinage.
   Gist translation:
   Exegetic translation:

c. Les curieux événements qui font le sujet de cette chronique
   se sont produits en 194., à Oran.
   Foreignising translation:
   Normalising translation:
Leur taille était gracieuse comme le Mai, leur visage blanc comme la neige.

With figures graceful like orchid flowers.

6 Dans le texte source, les sœurs sont comparables à la fleur « mai », mais il y a un petit problème. La fleur « mai » n’existe pas dans la culture anglophone. J’ai eu le choix d’utiliser le nom scientifique Ochna integerrima, mais l’adaptation serait plus simple et marchait bien avec mon stratégie de normalisation. Donc, j’ai choisi une autre fleur d’origine tropique mais plus connu : l’orchidée. « They were graceful like orchid flowers... ». Malgré la perte lexicale, on gagne une nouvelle allusion au motif floral.
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⇒ A refreshing change from literary topics:

It revitalized my interest in the French language.

It made me enjoy being a French major

⇒ New insight into French:

It allowed me to explore the French language in a completely new way

I looked forward to the work because it gave me an opportunity to look deeper into why certain words are used at particular times. I feel I understood more of the nuances of the French language
New ways of thinking:

I have learned **so** much from this class. It has got me thinking about language in ways I never have.

This course has given me an entirely new way of looking at the process and discipline of translation.

Never had I dreamed that there would be so much methodology and techniques involved in [translation]. This course opened my eyes to a new field.
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French 205: Translation Theory and Practice

• Interdisciplinary
• Literary focus
• From 842AD – present day
  – Medieval
  – Renaissance and Early-Modern
  – Modern and Contemporary
3. Translation in the university
Present but invisible:

“This marginality of translation reaches even to educational institutions, where it is manifested in a troubling contradiction: on the one hand, an utter dependence on translated texts in curricula and research; on the other hand, a general tendency, in both teaching and publications to elide the status of translated texts as translated, to treat them as texts originally written in the target language.” (Venuti 1996: 328)
• Comparative literature
• Philosophy
• History
• Political science
• Anthropology
• Sociology
• Etc.

**Why** there is this “repression of translation in the classroom”: “Studying the meanings that Sayers’s English version inscribes in Dante’s Italian text would weaken the interpretative authority of the instructor who teaches that his reading is true or adequate to the Italian, despite his assimilation of modern scholarship and the students’ use of the translation.” (Venuti 1996: 330-31)
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Consequences:
- Misunderstandings
- Missed opportunities
- Misconceptions

Media studies: McLaughlin (2011a)
Cotter (2010)
4 Translation Tomorrow

• Globalization

• Technological change

• Translation metaphor
  – Dizdar (2009)
Conclusion

we often ask our students to use translations

we sometimes ask them to translate

we often ask them to translate

we hardly ever ask them to think about translation

we always ask them to think about translation
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?
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- Total immersion
- Multilingualism
- Repression of translation
- Translation studies
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References