

**Beyond Grammar:  
Revisiting Translation in the Foreign Language Classroom**

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I. BIBLIOGRAPHY ON TRANSLATION AND LANGUAGE LEARNING

\* = works I found particularly relevant in developing my activities

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## II. FIVE-DAY SEQUENCE OF TRANSLATION LESSON PLANS

\* For handouts (in French) please contact me at [linda.louie@berkeley.edu](mailto:linda.louie@berkeley.edu).

### **Lesson 1: What is translation?**

#### **Background Information**

Level: Advanced Intermediate French

Duration: 30 minutes

Goals: Raise students' awareness of translation as a communicative activity that takes place within language (as well as across languages); raise students' awareness of register, style, geographical variety, medium, and target audience; introduce key concepts of translation theory

#### **In-Class Activities:**

*Warmup (5 min)*: Have students write definitions of translation in pre-activity questionnaire. Write some key words on the board arising from students' definitions.

*Individual activity (5 minutes)*: Show students posters for two American movies ("Silver Linings Playbook" and "No Strings Attached") and have them translate into French (using dictionaries / online resources as desired).

*Whole class discussion (10 min)*: Write various examples provided by students on the board. Also add Google Translated translations for each one. Questions for discussion:

- Which translation is your favorite, and why?
- What do you think of the Google Translate translation?

- What strategies did you use to translate?
- Are you satisfied with your own translation? Why/why not?

*Small group discussion (10 min):* Give students a handout that includes the official translations used in French distribution of these movies (“Happiness Therapy” and “Sex Friends,” respectively), as well as from a number of other Hollywood movies (and show them the BuzzFeed article from which they are taken, “19 Hilarious French Translations of American Movie Titles”) (**Handout 1**). Read through the examples all together, then assign students to small groups to go over the accompanying questions and report back.

- What trends do you see in the translations of these titles?
- Are these translations in accordance with the definition of translation we discussed earlier?
- Why does the BuzzFeed article call these translations “hilarious”? Do you agree?
- Compare these translations to some American translations of French movie titles (on **Handout 1**). How are the translation strategies similar/different? How would the audiences for these movies be similar/different?

*Homework:* Assign **Handout 2 (translation of film titles from French to English and any language into French)**, approx. 30 minutes.

## **Lesson 2: “Mistranslations”**

### **Background Information**

Duration: 30 minutes

Goals: Consider how cultural context affects translation; raise awareness of pragmatic and generic factors (medium, function, audience, etc.) in translation; begin discussion of translation challenges and problem-solving strategies; focus on register and stylistic adequacy

### **Pre-Lesson Activities:**

Film titles homework (**Handout 2**, approx. 30 minutes).

### **In-Class Activities:**

*Warmup (5-10 minutes):* Discuss homework. Have students give several examples of their translations and discuss whether or not they feel they were successful. Discuss why they chose (or did not choose) a literal translation strategy.

*Whole class discussion (5 minutes):* Have students give definitions of what a translation “error” is, and write on board. Examples may include: false friends; choosing a word with unsuitable connotations; a choice that demonstrates lack of understanding of the original; etc.

*Pair activity (10 minutes):* Distribute **Handout 3**, which includes a résumé originally written in French and a preliminary translation of that résumé into English (as well as an example of a ‘standard’ American résumé for reference). On the translation, several different mistranslations have been identified. In pairs, students identify the reason the given solution is a “mistranslation” and come up with alternatives.

*Discussion (10 minutes):* In a whole-group discussion, go over several examples and ask them to classify the type of translation “error” using the above-discussed list (or add new kinds of errors). Make sure to discuss that some kinds of translation will always be read as “errors,” while others can be an error in a certain context but correct in another context.

*Homework:* Assign **Handout 4** (30-45 min). Overnight, students read Baudelaire’s “L’Albatros” (original in French) and listen to a recording of it, then comment on the poem’s word choice and sound.

### **Lesson 3: Translation Analysis**

#### **Background Information**

Duration: 30 minutes

Goals: Consider style, diction, and poetics in the context of translation; discuss objective/audience as a criterion for evaluation of individual translations; introduce students to the plurality of solutions to translation problems

#### **Pre-Lesson Activities:**

“L’Albatros” analysis (**Handout 4**, approx. 30-45 minutes).

#### **In-Class Activities:**

*Warmup/Discussion (10 min):* Listen to recording of a reading of “L’Albatros” to prime students for homework discussion. Go over their observations in the homework about stylistic features of the poem (for example: rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, repeated words, unusual words)...

Ask what would make a translation of this poem successful: how are the challenges of translating “L’Albatros” different from translation of the résumé we looked at yesterday? Can a single translation convey all the stylistic features mentioned above? Should it? Why/why not?

*Small group work (15 min):* Distribute **Handout 5**, which has four different English translations of “L’Albatros” (one in rhymed verse, one in unrhymed verse, one in prose, one “false translation”). Assign each group one translation; they will have time to discuss

it, and then they will make an argument to the class that their translation is the best of the four.

Discussion questions:

- Which aspects of the original poem has the translator maintained/prioritized? (The rhyme, the number of syllables/lines/stanzas, the word choice, the sentence structure?) [Find 2 examples]
- Which aspects of the original are not maintained in this version? Why do you think the translator chose not to include these? [Find 2 examples]
- What kind of person would like/not like this translation? Who is its imagined audience?

*Wrapup Discussion (5 min):* After students make arguments for their assigned translations, ask: Was it hard to argue in favor of your translation? Why? Which translation do you really think is best?

*Homework:* Assign **Handout 6** (30-45 min). Overnight, students read “Le Rossignol de Kabylie” and carry out stylistic analysis similar to what they did for “L’Albatros.”

## Lesson 4: Preparation for Translation

### Background Information

Duration: 30 minutes

Goals: Consider stylistic and cultural aspects of the source text and how to convey them in translation. Discuss the relationship between authorial and translational purpose. Have students begin to describe their own translational objectives and approaches.

### Pre-Lesson Activities:

“Le Rossignol de Kabylie” analysis (**Handout 5**, approx. 30-45 minutes).

### In-Class Activities:

*Speed Dating (10 min):* Students answer discussion questions in pairs. Tell them to refer to their answers to the homework questions.

- Describe Roblès’ style in “Le Rossignol de Kabylie.” Compare the dialogue to the narrated passages.
- Who is Roblès’ imagined reader? Is this reader Kabyle, French, etc.? How do you know? Is Kabyle culture foreign or familiar in the story?
- Do you think the Kabyle culture is more or less (or equally) familiar in the English linguistic context? Why?
- What reaction does Roblès want to inspire in his reader? What emotions does he want the reader to feel? How does he create these emotions?

- What reaction do you want to inspire in your reader? Do you want the effect of your translation to be the same as Roblès'? Will you be able to use the same strategies as he does to create these effects?

*Whole group discussion (10 min):* Have students report back on a few conversations. Discuss the translation of the word *képi* (a military hat mentioned in the beginning of the story). What are some different ways to translate this word into English? What are the advantages/disadvantages of each choice?

*Individual work (10 min):* Have students free write two sentences about their objective in their translation and their imagined audience. Distribute copies of the excerpt students will be translating and ask them to read the beginning and underline words or phrases that they anticipate will be difficult to translate.

*Homework:* Distribute the details of the translation assignment and evaluation criteria (**Handout 6**). Students will prepare a preliminary version for the following day to workshop in class.

## **Lesson 5: Translation Workshop**

### **Background Information**

Duration: 35 minutes

Goals: Discuss how to solve translation problems. Introduce students to resources for vocabulary questions. Students continue to develop their own translation philosophies by discussing their choices with peers.

### **Pre-Lesson Activities:**

“Le Rossignol de Kabylie” translation rough draft.

### **In-Class Activities:**

*Warmup/intro (5 min):* Emphasize that discussion should be in French as much as possible.

*Workshop (15-20 min):* Students use the peer review guidelines on **Handout 7**. They begin by interviewing each other about their approach, and their opinions of the strengths/weaknesses of their own translations. Students identify 2 words/phrases they would like help with, and the peer editor brainstorms at least two suggested translations for each problem, identifying strengths/weaknesses for each one.

*Whole class discussion (10 min):* Discussion of translation problem-solving strategies. Instructor chooses a word from one of the excerpts and looks it up on a variety of dictionary tools (Google Translate, Wordreference, a French-French dictionary, a French thesaurus) and discusses the advantages/disadvantages of each tool.