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TEACHING AND STUDYING TRANSLATION: A DUAL APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

When translation is considered in the context of university studies, the key questions – how to teach and how to study translation – become two closely related perspectives, equally essential for teachers of translation. This close association between the perspectives of the teacher and the student is also linked to the requirement to be aware of the decision-making routines used by student translators. Teachers need to anticipate potential issues and equip students with problem-solving methods; in general terms, this means a specific way of thinking and acting for translators. Though highly individual, there are some common features and approaches. This paper is aimed at providing, based on brief references to theoretical literature, analytic insights into several aspects of teaching translation in tertiary education that make an essential contribution to enhanced competence of student translators. It does this by examining, first, the primary aspects of translation studies and translation to be discussed with students; second, a number of the most important approaches and techniques for ensuring productive studies; and third, illustrative translation units. The paper covers some key terminological, contextual, co-textual, and editorial considerations for developing student awareness regarding the prerequisites for efficient translation procedures and for quality translations. In practical terms, tertiary translation studies should be aimed at undertaking course activities that ensure advancement of students' competence, including general background knowledge and specific skills. Structured theoretical and analytical insights into translation and ready-made sets of priorities and approaches save time for students in understanding the essence of translation and the factors that determine the quality of the target language-for-special-purposes or literary text. In particular, discussions should emphasise interpretative aspects, the poeticity of text, function-based, process-oriented, and product-based approaches, the technique of key focus areas, ways of encouraging flexibility and avoiding literal translation, contextual and co-textual considerations, and text revision.

Keywords: *studying translation, teaching translation, translation pedagogy, translation quality, translation studies*

Introduction

In pedagogical and didactic considerations regarding translation studies where key questions include how to teach and how to study translation efficiently, teaching and studying are not opposing positions. Instead, these perspectives have similar roles and form an 'interface' type relationship. Moreover, in every new translation of an LSP (language for special purposes) or literary text, teachers of translation who are also practitioners become students approaching the task from a 'zero' position. The close association between the perspectives of teachers and students also follows from the need to understand the decision-making processes of student translators by applying the method of anticipation to proactively highlight potential issues and equip students with efficient problem-solving methods. The problem-solving techniques imply that translators have a specific way of thinking and acting – i.e., a competence-based model for processing source text through inference, use of linguistic resources and techniques, intuitive use of language, and production of a quality target text by applying creative and re-creative text-building actions. A translator's work includes selection and use of specific lexical units, syntactic constructions, references, and assistant materials in the context of uncertainty caused, for instance, by insufficient information, a typical feature of any text. Thus, special importance should also be assigned to getting a 'feel' for the language and developing a skill-based awareness of restrictions and limits in search of balanced text manipulations.

The paper is aimed at analysing, based on a brief review of theoretical literature, some of those aspects of teaching translation in tertiary education which, as proved by practical experience, have substantial importance in enhancing the competence of student translators when they process source and target texts.

Background of the author in the above context is threefold: as a university student of translation completing a doctoral thesis on poetry translation; as a translator of various texts ranging from printer manuals to essays written by Joseph Brodsky and a few poetry translations; and as a teacher of translation at university for ten years. At the university, the courses of the author have included literary translation and translation of LSP texts (commerce texts, legal texts, EU texts). Each of these roles has contributed to outlining a set of minimum skills and models of actions, which are either important to or determine the potential outcome in absolute terms.

Methodology

By empirically analysing, first, the primary aspects inherent in translation studies and in translation itself to be covered in course activities with translation students; second, the typical approaches and techniques that may ensure more productive studies; and, third, illustrative translation units, this paper presents a discussion of certain key terminological, contextual, co-textual, and editorial considerations that are essential in developing student awareness of the main prerequisites of efficient and quality translation. The analysis is also a result of observations of how students act, either during in-class translations or during discussion of translations, where their comments suggest the aspects they consider to be important and where the teacher's input is to emphasise additional factors and perspectives in addressing the source and target texts. Thus, the method includes empirical analysis of student translation procedures, choices and decision-making processes; some conclusions are also based on observations of student actions.

The translation units used in this paper as illustrations of such considerations are sourced from published literary translations, student translations of LSP or literary texts, and from literary texts that have not yet been translated but suit discussion needs. Similarly to in-class procedures where the training context sometimes makes the aspect of authorship irrelevant (except, in most cases, in literary translation), only some of the translation units and examples analysed in this paper include specific indication of the source and author. As the discussion includes an element of criticism, the name of the translator who has presented an arguable translation is not relevant – the emphases is on the discussion of the context, implications, and alternatives. Those readers who wish to identify authorship details may do so based on the information and clues provided in this paper.

The scope of the study sets certain limitations: it does not cover error typologies and metrics, psychological aspects, in-class routines, or types of interactive communication between the teacher and students. Furthermore, this study does not include considerations regarding the cooperation of translators with editors and publishers. Each of these subjects requires separate discussion.

Discussion and results

Theoretical insights as structured shortcuts to competence

Regarding the question of whether translation theory may be of any use in translation practice and in translator training courses, the discussion raises the issue which is similar to the question of whether it is possible to teach creative writing – whether it is possible to actually *become* a writer. The highlighted word is a key aspect of consideration. The author has completed the journey of becoming a translator both through academic studies and daily translation practice. It may be easily assumed that practice is what has driven the process, but the contribution of academic discussion of translation is much more complicated to grasp, analyse, and define. Nevertheless, reflection and analytical thoughts on the essence of translation, including different ways in which the process and procedures of translation are structured and classified, contribute to deeper insights and understanding and, thus, both directly and indirectly, toward more prepared translation specialists and later professionals, enhancing translation quality.

The initial practical standpoints regarding the aims and tasks of tertiary translation studies are apparent: by undertaking certain activities, to enhance students' competence in translation in terms of their general background knowledge and a set of skills. This also implies that studies should empower further professional development in the post-graduate period.

The opposing positions that "translators are born, not made" or "made, not born" (Gile, 2009, 7) only possess value in their use as attractive 'eye-catchers' – while talents and gifts are important in every human endeavour, translation is not magic but hard work, where mastery requires intense practice (in most cases, years of intense practice), which means further opportunity and challenge as no translator can ever reach the 'destination' where all problems can be easily solved and quality issues have become irrelevant.

Related to this, an inclusive idea is shifting the emphasis from teaching students how to translate to helping them to become better translators, more specifically:

a. to provide a qualification in literary translation;
b. to provide students with the means to speculate on, to discuss, and to carry out research into literary translation;
c. to ensure a competence that assists in establishing contacts with other literary translators and with organisations, publishers, and academics in the field;
d. to help students to translate better (Boase-Beier, 1998, 33–34).

The value of theoretical insights for students lies in suggesting ready-made key ideas and sets of priorities and approaches that do not require students themselves to carry out time-consuming empirical research.

Time is indeed a key aspect. It is not possible to dwell on details during the discussion, especially with regard to theoretical considerations. A useful technique may be selection of primary concepts for discussion: language and speech; source/target text; source/target language; the concept of language contacts and their impact; text as a verbalised expression of culture (including its non-verbal representations) and its aspects of standardisation on the one hand and invention and rule-breaking on the other; text types; textuality; genres, registers, and respective features; style and poetics (or poeticity (García-Berrio 1992); meaning and sense (for instance, L'vovskaya, 2018); (non-)equivalence; target audience; context; co-text; foreignisation and domestication (Venuti, 1995); overt and covert translation (House, 2015); localisation; direct translation (including borrowing, calque, and literal translation) and oblique translation, including transposition (grammatical changes without changing the sense) and modulation (semantic changes without changing the sense) (Munday, 2001); cohesion and coherence; obligatory and optional shifts (van der Broeck, 2014,), and so on.

At this point, an example is included of how, in a concise manner, the meaning and sense of a text could be discussed in the context of translation, by only noting keystone theoretical ideas:

> *Premise: the semantics of a text derive from the interaction of meanings of various elements (words, grammatical forms, sentence structures, prosody) – i.e., meaning is not related only to words but to all units of linguistic context; every unit is related to others (L'vovskaya, 2018, 50). Meanwhile, the sense of a text is a contextual phenomenon; it is also formed by non-verbal circumstances or extra-linguistic factors.*

Main principles in translation: (1) the same sense may be conveyed via various meanings; and (2) the semantic meaning of the text may be manipulated without detriment to the sense (ibid., 52–53).

This implies that the semantic meaning of a text is not a clear indication of its sense and that formal equivalence, even when it potentially exists, does not guarantee attainment of communicative equivalence (ibid., 54).

A text's sense is an extra-linguistic and subjective category determined by an individual's motive and purpose of communication in a specific setting, and the relationship of linguistic meaning and sense is similar to that of the philosophical concepts of form and content (ibid, 50–51). The communicative situation motivates, determines, and actuates the sense of the text (ibid., 61).

Special attention should be paid to text interpretation and its subjectivity where the concepts of direct and implicit information, as well as of its balance, stand out as key to contextualised consideration of the source and target texts. For instance, translation studies should enhance students' capacity to provide a different level of interpretative 'inputs' in literary text processing when compared with LSP texts, as interpretive acts in literary and non-literary (instrumental) texts are distinct (Kharmandar, 2016).

As regards translation quality, a complex concept in translation research and a question to which students usually expect clear answers during practical translation courses, theoretical inputs could include comments on main theoretical ideas (Bittner, 2020; House, 2015; Reiss, 2000 to mention just a few). However, practical examples highlighted during translation discussion are usually more important as actual issues, while contextual examples help to understand cause–effect relationships and the respective techniques and solutions faster than any exhaustive lists of classification of theories on translation quality assessment or types of errors. In this regard, a time-saving activity is the so-called chapter readings, where students are assigned to read specific parts of publications on subjects discussed in class.

An important aspect of theoretical discussions is bringing them close to translation practice (most of the seminal and important publications in translation studies tend to also employ this practice-oriented approach). For instance, when considering argumentation-based translation quality assessment (Kharmandar, 2016), another, to some extent related, perspective on the discussion of literary texts and the quality of their translations could be what is called the argumentation of poetics. Within this perspective, text are embodiments of specific features (created and/or attained by the author through application of certain techniques and verbal and non-verbal 'tools') that ensure the text's multifaceted aesthetic quality. These qualities of the text may also be considered from the point of view of the text's 'persuasiveness', an aspect directly related to the concept of reader response. The importance of this aspect may best be observed in a situation when students lack respective awareness and translate, for instance, a subtle, emotional tone of a literary text in a highly technical manner by looking into what words are used and not what they actually convey.

It is important to discuss actions prior to the translation phase. For instance, in translation of LSP texts, the tough deadlines and the respective ‘deadline-was-yesterday’ routine suggests that it is not always possible to first read, as textbooks on translation suggest, the whole source text and undertake thorough pre-translation analysis. It is more important that translators of LSP texts quickly look through the source text to determine whether they are actually able to translate it and to produce a quality target text; to consider terminology, reference sources, their hierarchy and reliability, and so on. Instead, in literary translation, initial steps include getting acquainted with the text’s world, its features, and the specific techniques and devices used by the author, as these preparations are essential prerequisites of translation quality. It should be noted, however, that reference materials can also be useful in literary translation. For instance, sometimes students spend time considering transliteration in a complex case of proper name, though the author has already been translated into the target language and the standard variant is available (except when the transliteration is obviously incorrect).

The approach of ‘stepping back’ and looking at the text from a distance to grasp the context and tone may bring important benefits. Theoretical discussion is another form of step-back technique used to consider, in a condensed, structured manner, the nature of language, (literary) text, culture(s), and translation. In various practical implementations, this stepping back ensures the ability to see the big picture, an important aspect that is also discussed further in the paper. In other words, contextualisation is key to meaningfulness, both in theoretical and practical discussion of translation and in the translation process. When false friends of the translator – words of another language which misleadingly, through apparent associations, suggest a ‘transparent’ translation – are discussed, it is important to not just mention them and list typical examples but to outline the linguistic, extralinguistic, and interlingual context of this phenomenon. When the subject is synthetic and analytic languages, contextualisation suggests comments on the translation implications, for instance, translation from an analytic language (English) to a synthetic language (Latvian, Russian) may mean syntactic changes in view of the fundamentally different linguistic means and techniques by which grammatical relationships are formed. When asymmetry is first discussed in the context of language typologies, common and different grammatical and lexical features need to be addressed, followed by an indication of the respective translation techniques, including creative solutions either by using one’s own language resources or borrowing other; then, relevant concepts would include calques, domestication versus foreignisation, localisation, and so on.

The aspects of cultural, social, and textual mediation, bridging, and transfer may be addressed using the concept of nodal point (Bush, 1998), as it highlights both the aspect of relationships and connections and the aspect of the textual forces that are formed by these connections. The translator’s task is to maintain, to a practicable extent, the relationships, forces, and their balance. In a broader context, this networking aspect is also related to an awareness that literary texts embody the quintessence of a language and the literary representations of a culture (ibid, 4). These premises, and not specific linguistic manipulations, represent the essence both of what translation is and of what its main substance or work material is.

This standpoint is illustrated by the situation observed with every new group of translation students, of whom many are surprised and, in a way, frustrated when they notice that practical translation courses do not specifically and directly contribute to their foreign language skills. When insights into theoretical concepts, creative and aesthetic features of language and writing, and intuitive, imaginative use of language are discussed during classes, it is necessary to explain, first, that interrogating, exercising, and extending competence in translation, especially literary translation, implies specific activities and routines that are fundamentally different from the ways in which knowledge is acquired, for instance, in natural sciences, and, second, that translation studies are not the same as language studies. It should also be noted that students are similarly surprised when they learn that every translator 'starts' with their mother tongue as it is, in most cases, the target language, and target language skills need to be at the utmost level of excellence.

The above considerations suggest the importance of a structured study curriculum, which, in a perfect world, should start with an introductory course on translation theories followed by courses in literature and creative writing, in order to equip students with the background knowledge and skills that are essential in literary translation. Past studies suggest, from the perspective of students, 'shortcuts' for informed actions to acquire translation skills more rapidly and to fully realise their potential; however, specific intellectual criteria must also be met and translators should possess certain personality features. The alternative road, one without theoretical (and practical) instruction, may involve much groping in the dark and time-consuming learning by trial and error (Gile, 2009). This is the perspective where both the theory *for* translation and theory *about* translation (Round, 1998, 19) contribute to structured expectations; in other words, students are provided insights into the main potential problem areas that need special attention and scrutiny in every translation task.

Making the complicated simple

A valuable method that may help students to link themselves to the specific world of translation is highlighting the everyday character of translation inherent in all communicative acts, in all messages, written, oral or implied. Further, this may be extended to the idea of communication as text, thus illustrating that textual experience and competence is something students already possess even if they are not passionate readers or skilled literary translators. Simple everyday dialogues illustrate interaction based on the exchange of direct and, most importantly, implicit information that individuals are able to decode, interpret, and understand. The temptation of the incomplete, unsaid, and hidden is illustrated by aesthetic enjoyment of scenes of mist and fog, and of detective stories. All texts both highlight and hide information.

Another example of making the complicated simple is the importance of context, illustrated in discussing the potential quality of advice when a translator receives a cell phone message from a friend who asks how to translate a word without any reference to the context – the translator would, at best, be able to suggest translation variants.

Class activities should preferably also be aimed at developing students' ability to use language freely and creatively, similarly to written practice courses where students are assigned creative writing tasks that involve use of different registers or an element of rule breaking, where a 'mistake' is not a mistake or the usually unacceptable is appropriate. For instance, they might be asked to use, in a balanced manner, colloquial speech units, including slang. These activities provide links with the new and unexpected, otherness, texts where the norm is stepping across the established standards and 'correct' boundaries – aspects of high importance when literary texts are considered. This also helps to understand the specific nature of the concept of 'mistake' when using a language: in simple terms, this implies the use of such linguistic techniques or means which are contextually inappropriate for the specific purpose and needs.

More generally, the combined formats of function-based, process-oriented, and product-based approaches in translation training, including the theory discussion phase, provide distinct and attainable benefits, such as translation strategies (overall action plans) and tactics (decision-making in case of difficulties). In this context, teachers are suggested to focus on the process and discuss linguistic acceptability and standards of fidelity in more general terms rather than focusing only on the product (student translation), and on the reasons for errors or good choices rather than on the specific choices made by the students (Gile, 2009; González Davies, 2005).

Individual versus pair work versus group work

Studies show that translation courses feature both in-class translations and translations that are done at home and later discussed in class; the proportions of individual/pair/group work in in-class formats also varies (Ulrych, 2005, 15).

Each format has specific inputs and benefits. Initially, the focus could be on pair or group work to generate shared insights, discussion of translation variants with peers, and joint decision-making, all of which ensure an opportunity to experience and compare different viewpoints regarding the same text unit, technique, or linguistic means. Ideally, students would be divided so that pairs and groups include students of diverse backgrounds and capacities; this contributes to dissemination of knowledge. It is important to supervise the procedures applied by students so that there are no passive members. Another risk is dominance of one opinion, which precludes discussion, sharing, and learning how to develop decision-making criteria when several translation variants are suggested. As variants represent an essential aspect of and in translation (and embody the concept of translation problems), the ability to see several variants for every unit and the skill of paraphrasing are as important as mastery of the mother tongue or of the target language. Thus, pair/group work is another shortcut to enhanced competence. These two formats also encourage a relaxed atmosphere. Subjectively, the author prefers pair tasks over group work as the latter poses the risk of losing focus. The second phase is individual work in class or at home; however, this phase could also include mixed formats.

While different practices are used in translation discussion (for instance, 'translation defence', where every student defends their translation by explaining the references used and decisions made), the author prefers joint discussion of anonymous translation variants presented on a screen. Again, a risk is that only some students actively engage and others remain silent, though this could be solved by directly addressing every student in the class.

As to the level of involvement of the teacher, there are two considerations: the ideal world, and actual practice based on what is possible within challenging time limitations. In general terms, the author agrees with the position that teacher's function during translation discussion should be limited to indication of the type of mistakes made, while correction should be the task of students; the teacher reviews translation variants and this cycle is repeated until an adequate translation is obtained (L'vovskaya, 2018). This procedure is efficient in counteracting the readiness of students to accept a variant too quickly without duly considering other acceptable options. However, an important shortcoming of this method is that it is excessively time-consuming. In a course of sixteen classes (1.5 hours each), this would mean discussion of a very small number of translations; thus, the discussion procedures will require compromise and adjustment depending on the specific features and backgrounds of the group and general circumstances.

The next part of the paper includes brief comments on practical aspects essential in developing students' ability to think about the source and target texts, tasks, and activities in the context of translation, or the 'translator-type thinking' that is always relevant. For instance, a useful approach is the technique of 'red indicator lights' – every translator should develop a list of primary aspects that need their special attention in every translation task, including:

a. Word order (e.g., *un turpat 70 gadus vēlāk nomira* – in Latvian, *turpat* means 'in the same place' and, in colloquial use, 'almost', thus the word order may cause confusion, one possible solution is: *septiņdesmit gadus vēlāk turpat nomira* (in English, literally: seventy years later [he] he died there).
b. Alignment of word endings (in case the target language is a synthetic one) or problems in syntactic relationships (e.g., *strīdu gadījumā, kas saistīti* (in English, literally: in dispute case which are related [to]) – the issue of syntactically aligning the singular noun *gadījums* and the plural verb *saistīti* though in fact the verb is related to the plural Latvian word *strīdi* (disputes)); *aptuveni divu no 56 kodolreaktoru jauda* (the issue of syntactic relationship which is here excessively complicated; a more preferable variant: *jauda divos no 56 kodolreaktoriem* (in English, literally: power I two of 56 nuclear reactors); *braucam pa rajonu, kurš atzarojies no miestiņa, kopš neesmu te bijusi* (in English, literally: [we] cross an area that's spread out from the village since I haven't been here) – here time clause *kopš…* (since…) is related to the respective verb *atzarojies* (is spread out), not noun *village* which is not a preferable syntactic option; a suggested variant would be: *braucam pa rajonu, kurš no miestiņa atzarojies, kopš neesmu te bijusi*.

c. Ensuring that, in Latvian, syntactically related units are placed as close together as possible (which is not always necessary or possible, for instance, in English). However, when this requirement cannot be fulfilled in the sentence, respective restructuring is needed to ensure easier perception by readers (e.g., *arī pie pilsētiņas, kurai braucam cauri, luksoforiem diedelē žēlastības dāvanas* – here syntactically directly (through a genitive) related units *pie pilsētiņas* and *luksoforiem* are separated by a clause; a solution is making the relationship less direct, for instance: *arī pilsētiņā, kurai braucam cauri, pie luksoforiem diedelē žēlastības dāvanas*).
d. Where a part of a complex sentence is disintegrated and stands apart from other parts or items in the sentence.
e. Wordiness (e.g., *pēc brīža mēs kāpsim ~~augšā~~ Prāgas kalnā* – this part of the sentence may be easily understood without the deleted word).
f. Typing errors, most importantly with regard to surnames and numbers.

Problem first, solution next

In most cases, when asked to comment upon the problem with regard to an item or sentence in the translation context, student translators tend to jump to the solutions and explain what could be done. It requires some effort to convince them that the logical order is not a formal procedure but could bring efficiency benefits. Clear indication of the problem is sometimes half of the solution – without first identifying what must be fixed, it may turn out that we either spend time addressing irrelevant issues, provide inadequate solutions, or miss something out. The 'problem first' perspective also helps to develop structured problem-solving techniques and procedures that depend on recognisable precedent-based patterns and scenarios.

Understand the source sentence, forget the source sentence

When the translator starts the actual translation of a text, a unit of attention is the source-text sentence. It is unlikely that a quality translation of a sentence could be produced when the translator does not understand it. While several techniques may be applied (for example, splitting the sentence up into meaningful translation units, or using explanatory dictionaries), productive solutions also include (1) a close reading of the sentence, several times, paying attention to every detail and potential clue to relationships of sentence/meaning units; (2) making certain that the semantic functions of grammatical means and techniques are clear – in student translations, many issues arise related to not understanding sentence grammar (sometimes even minor items can suggest important information (e.g., *on the shores of the Hudson* – while there is a river and several lakes in various U.S. states named Hudson, the definite article suggests that here it is the river); (3) again, the step-back approach to look at the sentence, its cause–effect relationships and other aspects from a distance, by also applying the technique of 'imagining' the situation in the sentence, which can be particularly useful in uncovering the context and implications.

Sometimes, 'imagining' is an unreliable resource – for instance, when a translator deals with a specialised lexis or when specific technical details are discussed: *a perimeter of chain-link fencing backed with lengths of green screen*. While specialised dictionaries are certainly helpful, here 'imagining' also implies visualising. For this purpose, resources such as Google Pictures can be helpful.

As soon as this phase is completed and the translator understands the sentence, they should, in a way, 'forget' about it. At this point, the focus shifts toward the target side – language, culture, context, text, sentence, its words and syntactic constructions. It is important not be the 'slave' of the source text and source sentence; this is, however, frequently observed to be the case in student translations where problems arise around the difficulty transferring words and their collocations in exactly the way they are presented in the source sentence.

'Caged, no ambition' versus 'sailing in terra nullius' or the level of freedom in translation

Susan Bernofsky (2013, 232) noted how much freedom translators are required to exercise in order to translate in a "faithful" way. Translations by students typically represent two opposite trends – either they serve the source sentence too directly and literally, or they are excessively 'free' in manipulating the source material and 'the free birds get lost'. While the latter is especially unacceptable, for instance, in translation of legal texts, a balanced approach is needed in every translation, including literary translation. Even most experienced translators would hardly be able to explain, in a reasonable way, the 'right' limits of freedom and, even more so, ways of attaining this balance. It is a matter of practice, experience, and talent. However, some clues can be identified based on examples from student translations.

In a narrow sense, literal (or close) translation or mistranslation at the level of lexis, including terms, may be a reasonable first level of attention (here again, as a cross-reference, the concept of false friends of translator could be mentioned). For instance, an illustrative example is the translation in a Latvian tourism brochure written in English, which featured *free-air stage* for the Latvian lexical unit *brīvdabas skatuve* ('open-air stage'). Another example is the Latvian informal term *brīvie ūdeņi* for which, on several occasions, the translation *free waters* has been observed instead of the more acceptable 'international waters', 'high seas', 'no man's land', etc.

At the lexical level, students often fall into the trap of the so-called 'standard' or the most typical translation – in other words, the translation variant that is usually the first meaning indicated in lexicographic sources. Consequently, in the sentence *Emerging from colonial rules, many developing countries faced low and unstable prices* students typically translate *colonial rules* as *koloniālie noteikumi* ('colonial regulations'), as the standard Latvian translation for *rule* is *noteikums*. However, even before examination of lexicographic sources, students could be urged to consider other contextual translations; for instance, the translation of *Soviet rule* (typically, *padomju vara*, *padomju režīms*). Similarly, the English word *session,* which is a seemingly simple case for translation, could be a useful prompt for asking students to suggest, without using lexicographic references, Latvian translation variants, which include *sanāksme*, *sēde*, *sesija*, *apspriede* (similarly, English synonyms for *session* include *meeting*, *sitting*, *discussion*, etc.); for the verb *imply* – *ietver, paredz, nozīmē, izriet* (in English these include *mean*, *suggest*, *envisage* etc.), etc. Utilising the richness of the translator's own vocabulary is, first, time-saving, as it is not always necessary to look up dictionaries, and, second, may actually determine the ability to produce the best translation, as dictionary variants (especially with regard to synonyms) are limited and do not provide the diversity needed, for instance, in literary translation.

Another typical lexical issue is student confusion about semantic differences in plural form uses of nouns, which are typically singular in English (e.g., *business* and *businesses*, *development* and *developments*, *control* and *controls*).

In most cases, this part of a sentence – *the company hardly benefited from these schemes* – is translated, with minor variations, quite literally, as: *uzņēmums neguva īpašu labumu no šīm shēmām*. Though the translation is generally acceptable, it is important to encourage students to consider other modulations, for instance, *uzņēmuma ieguvums no shēmām bija nebūtisks/nebija liels/bija niecīgs* (in English, literally: company's benefit from the schemes was insignificant/quite small), depending on the context.

Useful in-class activities to increase flexibility and avoid literal translations could include paraphrasing tasks, which require more considerable manipulation without changing the sense of the sentence and without decreasing translation quality.

In this context, translator competence means insistent application of, first, the check-the-dictionary-twice approach (sometimes similes can be useful: while historians look up historiographic sources, translators/terminologists analyse data available in lexicographic sources) and, second, clarifying, to the extent possible, the indications of the freedom potential and its limits, starting from the general text-type/genre/style/register aspect up to the specific indicators within the sentence, paragraph, and text.

However, it is also important to explain another perspective regarding literal and 'free' translation, particularly in prose translation: a translation that is verbally close to the source text does not mean that the translation process and the respective selection and decision-making procedures are based on a simplified, literal approach. The acceptability of a literal translation may be a result of a detailed contrastive analysis.

'The trap of the face value' or the approach of 'positive or beneficial doubts'

The need for the translator to challenge their first idea of the meaning of the source text unit or what the translation is can be illustrated by two examples.

A common issue is the ability to identify potential false friends of translator in their various forms. An efficient technique for this is consulting dictionaries. More generally, potential problem areas could be identified as those that require special attention *per se*, for instance, a culture-specific lexis and nominations whose form seemingly 'suggests' the translation.

Misleading implications may also be presented by place names. The toponym *Aleksandrovskiy sad* (*Alexander Garden*) is translated in the following ways in one of the English translations of the poem *Christmas Ballad* by Joseph Brodsky: *Moscow's Aleksandrov Park*. The context suggests, however, that (1) this toponym actually refers both to Moscow and, implicitly, Saint-Petersburg; (2) the Alexander Garden should not be confused with another location in this city, the Alexander Park. By translating the source-text toponym as Alexander Garden, the implicit ambiguity would be preserved in view of the fact that Moscow has a similarly named location (typically translated as "Alexander Garden", not "Alexander Park"). By adding more specific information (*Moscow's Aleksandrov Park*), the balance of explicit and implicit information in the text is upset. Neither of the cities is explicitly named in the poem – an intentional choice by the author (see further in Veckrācis, 2020, 224).

In the sentence *My sister threw upon the door so that it banged against the little console table she kept by the entrance* the specific item *console table* was translated in a literal manner: *konsoles galdiņš*, yet contextualisation could suggest, through the domestication perspective, the translation *žurnālgaldiņš*. Similarly, the Latvian translation *Es izvilku telefonu un piezvanīju ātrajiem* (literally: 'I took out my phone and called the ambulance') of the English source-text sentence *I took out my phone and called 911*, is domestication, due to the fact that the emergency phone number in Latvia is different and *ātrie* is a typical usage in similar situations.

Another potential pitfall can be a misleading analogy. First, it should be noted that an essential element of the discussion of LSP text translation is the aspect of terminology, terms, specialised lexis, and identification of their use in the source text, as these units require special attention and processing techniques that are fundamentally different from those applied to general lexis.

In a class, most of the students translated the legal term *just enrichment* in a literal manner: *taisnīga iedzīvošanās*. The problem arises from the differences in polysemic meanings. In English, the word *enrichment* may refer to both positive and negative processes, as illustrated by its uses (*data enrichment*, *personal enrichment*, *uranium enrichment*, etc.), including legal terms *just/unjust enrichment*. However, in Latvian, the legal term *iedzīvošanās* is only used in the context of misconduct; for instance, *atprasījums iedzīvošanās dēļ* ('reclaim due to enrichment'), *nepamatota iedzīvošanās* ('unjustified enrichment'), *nelikumīga iedzīvošanās* ('illicit enrichment'), *netaisna iedzīvošanās* ('unjust enrichment'), *iedzīvošanās uz dienesta stāvokļa rēķina* ('graft'). Thus, *taisnīga iedzīvošanās* is a translation caused by a false analogy. In this case, students should be asked to devise other translation variants, such as *taisnīgs labklājības pieaugums* (literally, 'just increase in wellbeing').

From another perspective, semantic hypertrophy has been observed as an increasingly common linguistic phenomenon in Latvian due to the inference related to the new dominant contact language, English. Despite various meanings of the English verb *develop,* depending on the area and context of its use, Latvians tend to use a single translation for all of these: *attīstīt* (*develop a country* → *attīstīt valsti*; *develop a product* → *attīstīt* *produktu* instead of *izstrādāt produktu*) (Baldunčiks, 2015, 280–281). The same observation applies to *product* and *produkts,* where students could be urged to use other variants in Latvian (*prece*, *izstrādājums*, *ražojums*, *darinājums*, etc. (similarly, in English, these include *goods*, *manufacture*, *commodity*, etc.).

Again, the first step is not being satisfied with one's initial idea about the potential correct translation. An element of doubt and an everyday approach of double-checking help to identify potentially serious mistakes in simple translation situations. This is a key task in translation studies – helping students become accustomed to the application of these routines in every translation and even in every writing activity. For instance, many issues are related to the unwillingness of students to consult explanatory dictionaries and thesauruses, based on an attitude that either 'I know my native language' or 'I write what seems to be approximately correct', which is not a reliable technique.

Contextual and co-textual considerations

When it comes to the actual translation activity, mastery in translation means, to a large extent, mastery of choice – a skill that is closely related to situational and communicative context (the non-verbal 'environment' of an utterance) and to the linguistic co-text (the linguistic circumstances around or in the close vicinity of an item). In many cases, restructuring (standard procedures include transposition and/or modulation) is needed to make an utterance or sentence 'sound good', i.e., there is a degree of interlingual asymmetry. In this way, using the transposition technique, the English sentence *remembering itself was injury anew* (in Latvian, literally: 'pati atcerēšanās bija jauns ievainojums') becomes *pati atcerēšanās [viņu] ievainoja no jauna* (in English, literally: 'remembering itself again injured [him]').

A typical example of co-textual considerations is avoiding same-stem words placed next to each other or close to each other within a sentence or utterance (*iezīme nozīmēja* – two adjacent words of the same stem *–zīm-*), as this is considered inappropriate style in Latvian, except where there are specific needs or a lack of options. Another example of co-textual considerations is: *Bija laiks, kad mēs ar puišiem gājām turp paēst, kad visu nakti bijām ballējušies.* Except when two adjacent same-type clauses (here: *kad… kad*) are intended to be parallel structures (coordinate homogeneous parts of sentence), they add clumsiness to the sentence and restructuring is needed; for instance: *Savulaik mēs ar puišiem gājām turp paēst, kad visu nakti bijām ballējušies.*

Due to co-textual considerations, this part of a translated sentence – *vismaz viņa rokas ir viedas, tās kustas pār mani kā aklā rokas* – needs restructuring, as it features excessive use of Latvian words in *–a(ā)s* form and the word *rokas* is used twice within the same sentence, which is typically accepted only either for stylistic purposes or when the repetition cannot be avoided.

The necessity for modulation can be illustrated by a potential literal Latvian translation of a unit from an essay written by Joseph Brodsky: *all the naval might that Russia has amassed today – visa jūras varenība, ko Krievija tagad ir uzaudzējusi*. The main 'problem area' is *jūras varenība* (in English, literally: power of the sea, mightiness of the sea), which does not make sense in Latvian and can be misleading. A variant after modulation is: *Krievija, kas kļuvusi par varenu jūras valsti* (in English, literally: Russia which has become a mighty naval country)

Contextual considerations are necessary in the translation of this part of a sentence: *in slips death with scythe, hammer, and sickle* (in Latvian: 'āmurs un sirpis') – in Latvian, these two Soviet symbols depicted on the Soviet flag are typically referred to as 'sirpis un āmurs' (sickle and hammer), and much more rarely in the opposite order. This means that the order of words should also be changed in the Latvian translation.

This seemingly simple sentence in an essay written by Joseph Brodsky brings up some complex considerations: *she looked positively stunning*. Lexicographic sources explain that the English adverb *positively* is 'used to emphasise the truth of a statement, especially when this is surprising or when it contrasts with a previous statement' (see www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/positively). Apparently, a literal translation (*pozitīvi satriecoša*) is not appropriate – in Latvian the word *pozitīvs* does not possess the necessary meaning. A translation variant could be: *viņa izskatījās – un par to nebija nekādu šaubu – satriecoši* (in English, literally: 'she looked – and there was no doubt about this – stunning'). However, knowing the specific context or implications of Brodsky's style and his use of the 'economy of language' approach, where lexical elaboration is allowed only when it carries poetic weight, a more likely translation is, for instance: *viņa izskatījās absolūti satriecoši* (in English, literally: 'she looked absolutely stunning').

'Zoom in, zoom out and step forward, step back', or translation as an iterative activity

The previous discussion of choice in translation and the co-textual and contextual implications are, in more general terms, related to the big/small picture of the text, which is further linked with the importance of 'picture updates'. Translation is, in many regards, an iterative activity. In simple terms, this means the sequence word-sentence-paragraph-text is considered in both directions. A sentence is translated by keeping an eye to the previous unit, paragraph, and part of the text while also looking forward to the further parts of the text. The next step again requires the same procedure with continuous 'updates' – alignment, substitution of words in larger translation units, and new paraphrased variants in view of the features of their relationships. Text is a verbal illustration of the concept of networking, and no element may be regarded or processed in isolation from the others. It is at this point that theoretical concepts like cogency, coherence, and cohesion (González Davies, 2004) become 'practical' and require contextualised explanation and application. Students are usually predisposed to handling separate micro-text units and items but developing their ability to keep the big textual picture in sight needs additional instruction and training, with the provision of meaningful examples that demonstrate the importance of these procedures.

Consideration of the big/small picture is also a prerequisite for a balanced approach. The requirement of balance and compensation derives from the basic translation techniques. A typical translation technique suggests that a stylistically marked source-text unit needs a stylistically marked unit in the target text. The implications of balance and compensation further require that, first, the stylistic features and intensity of these features should be preserved at the level observed in the source text and, second, whenever a stylistically marked unit is not available or is inappropriate in the target context, the stylistic element is provided in another text unit in compensation. Another option is to choose a stylistic resource of another type. Similarly, the balance of implicit and explicit information should be preserved or addressed through specific compensation techniques when some interlingual asymmetry is observed.

Revision – the task of to-be-or-not-to-be importance

If there were gods who decide the fates of translators, a god sitting next to Zeus the Translator would certainly be the God of Revision. This can be explained based on personal experience. It has never occurred to the author that he would not make corrections when proofreading and revising the translation – there are no prospects for a quality translation when there is no text revision. This also means that when young translators assess, especially during the early phase of their careers, their capability to translate a text within a time limit, they should also include the time needed for thorough revision work.

Revision techniques vary according to personal preferences and routines. There are few people who are able, without special training, to maintain the required level of attention throughout a large amount of text. Aside from other important aspects of revision, this also needs some consideration. Students usually mention that change of activity, even for a short time, is an efficient technique to regain focus when they return to revision. Some read the page from bottom to top – by using this technique, the illogical flow of the text helps them to remain focused. Most importantly, every translator should have a clear idea of how to ensure quality in proofreading and revision.

Another source of complications is the fact that it is considerably more difficult to notice one's own mistakes than those in a text written or translated by somebody else. Thus, another procedure in an ideal translator's routine would be giving the text to a competent peer for them to check the translation. Those peers would, however, also need to solve the problem of maintained focus. A technique the author uses and suggests to students is reading, as thoroughly as possible, every sentence immediately after it is translated. This way, the translator still has a clear idea of the context in the source text and needs to focus on that one sentence. Though this by no means implies that the final revision of the whole translation could be omitted, it does mean that some mistakes and misspelling issues will already have been resolved.

Ambiguity in assessment – a brief note

Students are naturally quite sensitive to translation quality assessment. It is common for lecturers to be reproached for unclear criteria, even when they are listed either at the beginning of the course or for every specific text. Clear-cut criteria are essential but it would be pseudo-clarity to propose that assessment of the quality of language use in general, or in its translation contexts, implies black-and-white mistake classification with respective grades. How do you quantify the weight of a student's attitude felt in the translated text in various direct and indirect ways? Attitude is, particularly in the training phase, a key indicator of a student's potential to become a good translator who produces quality translations, even if the specific text includes some mistakes and errors. Attitude is an important 'implicit' component of the quality of a student's work, which needs at least some credit. Indeed, the same mistake in student translations of the same source text may have different implications regarding the quality of their work and commitment. This needs to the extent possible, clear explanation. My experience shows that after being introduced to this consideration, students understand it, but they are not always themselves aware of this aspect.

Conclusions

In an inclusive idea about how to teach and how to study translation, the two perspectives of teaching and studying are not opposing positions but instead form a close 'interface' type relationship.

Structured theoretical reflection and analytical insights into translation contribute, in a condensed, time-saving way, to a more in-depth understanding of the nature of translation, an essential condition for producing quality target texts. Theoretical ideas suggest ready-made sets of priorities and approaches. A useful technique may be the selection of primary concepts for discussion by further elaborating on and explaining their practical, contextual relevance.

A special emphasis in in-class discussion should be placed on interpretative aspects, including a text's direct and implicit information, as well as on its balance; these interprtations are key to a contextualised analysis of the source text and translation.

Argumentation of poetics is another perspective that explains the verbal and non-verbal 'fabric' of a text. Texts comprise specific features that inform the text's aesthetic quality; these qualities ensure the text's aesthetic strength which determines, to some extent, the reader's response. The importance of this perspective is illustrated by situations when students translate a text with disregard for its aesthetic features, thus making inappropriate lexical choices (for instance, excessively neutral or formal, 'correct' lexis) and applying other techniques that are detrimental to translation quality.

The approach of looking at the text as if from a distance may ensure additional insights into the text's world. Meanwhile, theoretical discussion is a way to grasp the big picture and to consider language, (literary) text, culture(s), and translation in an inclusive manner. Another perspective from which to obtain the big picture is a well-structured study curriculum, which should equip, through a specific course sequence and follow-up phases, students with background competence.

In-class discussions usually employ combined formats of function-based, process-oriented, and product-based approaches that also explain practical translation strategies and specific tactics for each text. Individual and pair work bring distinct benefits suggesting preference for varied in-class formats.

A useful approach is the technique of 'red indicator lights'; these are aspects and tasks that every translator lists among the key focus areas in every translation. Beneficial activities to encourage flexibility and avoid literal translation techniques include paraphrasing tasks, which require sentence-level manipulation without changing the sense of the text and without decreasing translation quality. In this context, translator competence means application of the double-checking technique to avoid a misleading perception of the text and inappropriate 'freedom' (unnecessary or unacceptable manipulations), and second, identifying, to the extent possible, the indications of the potential and limits of freedom.

The choices and selections made by translators are related to situational and communicative context and to the linguistic co-text, particularly when any interlingual asymmetry is identified. Co-textual and contextual considerations are typically based on the big/small picture of the text and, more narrowly, sentence and further updates of the actual 'situation' in the text.

A task of translation studies is encouraging the application of those techniques which productively ensure quality in the form of everyday routines, another perspective of the iterative nature both of translation studies and translation itself.

Clearly defined quality assessment criteria are an essential consideration when student translations are discussed. However, assessment of the quality of language use in general or in a translation also involves certain factors that can hardly be examined within typical typologies of translation mistakes and errors. For instance, attitude, which can be felt in student translations, reveals, in a specific and indispensable way, a student's potential. Though less apparent in the translation, it is still an important indicator of commitment and the value of translation in the training context.

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