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ABSTRACT

Translation is a real-life communication skill that should be incorporated into second language instruction. Communicative language teaching theory recognizes the importance of learning to handle foreign language internal transfer. Classroom activities to promote such language transfer skills include the following: (1) pairing students to summarize, for each other, articles in different languages about the same topic; (2) simulated interpreting situations; and (3) having students predict the difficulty of translating a variety of text types, then translate them and discuss their actual difficulty levels. The teaching of translation-as-communication in second language courses is helpful to all translators: highly-proficient second-language users will have a sound theoretical and practical basis for developing translation skills, and good second language users will have been taught to translate informally in a wide range of contexts and genres. A 25-item bibliography and sample texts are appended. (MSE)

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Wacko Jacko and the Night of the Returning Dead: Post-Communicative Translation Teaching

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MONOLINGUAL AND BILINGUAL LANGUAGE TEACHING

There are many ways to success (and failure) in foreign-language (FL) learning: research shows us (Ellis 1985, 1990) that the process is determined by complex interactions between the learner's individual characteristics and those of the learning environment and the FL itself. Thus there is unlikely to be a single best methodology for all learners and settings (Ellis 1990:10-11); despite this fact - or perhaps because of it - accepted methodologies seem to alternate over time (Kelly 1969) along two basic axes (Dodson 1986): **bilingual** (heavy use of the mother tongue) vs. **monolingual** (mother-tongue use discouraged); and **medium-orientated** (focus on language as system) vs. **message-orientated** (focus on language in use).

Thus traditional **grammar-translation** methods, which present items through mother-tongue explanations and translated word-lists and then practise them by means of the literal translation of decontextualized sentences, are strongly bilingual and exclusively medium-orientated: no attempt is made to convert knowledge about language into ability to use it. **Communicative methods**, by contrast, which came to the fore in the late 1970s (Littlewood 1981), claim that, as language is communication in action, FL proficiency can only be acquired through meaningful communication in the FL - in other words, they are strongly monolingual and message-orientated. Translating is seen at best as irrelevant to the task of learning how to communicate in the FL, and at worst as actually harmful.

Recently, **post-communicative** coursebooks (e.g. Swan & Walter 1984) have brought back medium-orientated work (grammar exercises, vocabulary study, etc: Dodson 1986) whilst still recognizing that message-orientated communication is vital for converting knowledge about language into ability

to use it. At the same time, the post-Chomskyan widening of the concerns of linguistics has become reflected in more complex syllabuses. Individual language-field syllabuses (covering e.g. grammar, lexis, discourse) and skills syllabuses (e.g. reading, writing) are woven together to form a complex "multi-stranded" syllabus (see Swan & Walter, 1984) determining all the items to be taught in a course. L1 use (e.g. for making vocabulary lists) is no longer absolutely banned - but neither is it encouraged.

Dodson (1967, 1986) feels that there is a strong justification for retaining both medium-focused work and translation in the FL classroom. Children learning their L1, he argues, do not only use language for communication: they also talk about words, and practise their sounds in nonsense "play sequences" (McTear 1985:149ff). Moreover, he claims that monolingual FL methods are based - erroneously - on how the monolingual child learns language: we should be looking instead at the bilingual child, (sic) whose metalinguistic talk (what that word mean?) and play sequences (dog chien dog chien) make heavy use of cross-language equivalence. In the same way, he argues, medium-focused activities are necessary for FL learning; and they should aim to create and exploit L1:FL links, not to avoid them.

Dodson's ideas, however, have not gained wide currency. FL teaching still seems characterized by a Great Divide - that between the Old Fogeys on the one hand, who, ignorant and therefore mistrustful of new-fangled methodology, stick to the way they were taught (grammar-translation, in other words), and the Young Turks on the other, who see in language-transfer activities only the returning dead of grammar-translation.

TEACHING TRANSLATION AS COMMUNICATION

Translation has three main roles in FL learning (Jones, forthcoming):

as a key to meaning (e.g. vocabulary lists), as a means of practice (e.g. grammar-translation exercises), or as a skill worth acquiring for its own sake. Here I concentrate on the final aspect (an area, interestingly enough, where reformist Young Fogeys from university modern-language departments - cf. Keith & Mason 1986, Altman 1987 - seem to be making more progress than the now-Old Turks of the EFL world).

Recent translation theory (Hönig, Kussmaul, et al: Lörscher 1989) sees translation as a communicative act. In other words, it is a real-life communicative skill (whether informal or professional), and thus one which deserves to be woven into the syllabus as a language-skill strand, just like speaking or writing, with its prominence dependent on the needs of the (?) learners in question. Moreover, as Gideon Toury's paper elsewhere in this volume reminds us, the post-communicative learning model implies that translating should be taught as a cognitively-aware act of textual communication in a social context (Hatim & Mason 1990; Tudor 1987), and not as a mechanical item-transfer exercise.

Steiner (1975:47) views all communication as translation, with the receiver putting her[2] own active interpretation on the sender's message: transfer, in other words, takes place within languages as well as between them. At its simplest, channel and text-type remain constant (A writes a letter which B reads); at its most complicated, style, text-type and mode may change (A writes an official warning notice which B explains to his 5-year-old child). Communicative language-teaching theory recognizes the importance of learning to handle FL-internal transfer variables: thus many coursebooks contain channel, text-type and style transfer activities to which language transfer elements can be added.

COMMUNICATIVE TRANSLATION ACTIVITIES

One such activity (cf. also Jones, forthcoming) is for students to work in pairs, with A and B each reading a different FL newspaper article, which they then summarize to each other orally. The language-transfer element could be to find the equivalent articles in the same day's L1 newspaper, and then to discuss the differences of style, approach and opinion between FL and L1 versions - e.g. the attitudes of The Sun (gutter-press) and Le Monde to a speech on European monetary union.

In another example, students (in groups of 3) give their watches to student A - the smuggler, who allegedly only understands her L1. B, the customs officer, who only speaks the FL, demands to search A; C, the smuggler's friend, has to interpret. As with many activities, videoing one group's interaction enables incisive discussion and evaluation of strategies and errors afterwards. In practice, C often summarizes when translating; moreover, he is rarely a neutral mouthpiece, for he often attempts to mediate between A and B. In this case, "errors" are hardly cut-and-dried - is a false translation that gets the smuggler off the hook preferable to one that gives the full force of an insult? When does a lexical transfer error impede communication? The teacher, I feel, should be the last, not the first, to give an answer; as Toury points out, allowing the students to judge themselves and each other sharpens their perceptions and lets them learn from their errors ("you can't learn without goofing": Dulay & Burt 1974). Moreover, simulated activities bring home the fact most clearly that, in Toury's words, "every translation strategy has its price".

In translating it could be said that learning how to goof gracefully - in other words, how to let target-text genre determine one's strategies

for coping with conflicting demands, e.g. of literal and metaphorical meaning - is actually a vital professional skill (Jones 1989). My final example is of a series of activities (see Jones 1991 for case-study) which aims to build up such textual strategies.

In the first activity, students (here, of English) are asked to grade 6 text-types - 17th-century English; advertisements; poems; popular, quality and financial journalism - in order of translating difficulty. They then translate a short example of each (see Appendix: texts 1-6) into their L1, and finally discuss whether their initial grading was correct.

The stress is on group work and cooperation in finding solutions (in a multilingual class, students will be grouped by L1: Jones 1991), interspersed with regular whole-class discussion of both specific points and more general issues. The reason for giving students highly problematic texts is to force them to consider other strategies than low-level transfer - gross domestic product numbers requires access to specialist dictionaries, for example; Wacko Jacko has to be brainstormed; and with the (sic) tonges of all men, the student has to decide whether to go for an ancient or a modern rendering. Thus it is essential that the teacher provides strategic advice and source-text information without overruling target-text solutions - especially as the students are native speakers of the target language. Indeed, if the students rather than the teacher are to be the judges of low-level accuracy, teacher TL knowledge need be no higher than the ability to read with a crib, which makes multinational classes somewhat less problematic (Jones 1991).

Class discussions will reveal that the poetic - in Jakobson's sense (1960) of stress on linguistic form (puns, structures of word-sound,

literal re-interpretations of metaphor) - causes perhaps the greatest problems in translating, and is by no means unique to the genre of poetry. Poems, however, are very useful for translation-as-skill work: they present a wide range of problems in a concise space (Jones 1989), and the fact that they are often viewed as "untranslatable" gives popular respectability to non-literal but internally-valid target texts.

John F. Deane's All Hallows (1985; see Appendix: text 7) makes a suitable follow-up activity: the lexis is carefully crafted for tone ("appeased/offerings/urn"); it has sound-structure without the straitjacket of rhyme ("children/mimicking/spirit"); and it has a cultural underlay not without parallels in other cultures (All Hallows, or Halloween, is the Catholic festival of the "returning dead": in Ireland, children dress up as ghosts and knock on neighbour's doors, demanding a small gift if they are not to cause mischief). In practice (Jones 1991), I have given this activity a strong readership focus by informing the students that the aim is to produce a taped version to send as a gift to the original poet.

In this series of activities, the direction of translation (FL->L1) is chosen in order to give students access to the maximum range of target-text options, thus supporting strategic exploration above low-level transfer; moreover, action research (Krings 1986) indicates that most translating time is taken up in target-text work, and it is a truism that good translation depends ultimately on excellent target-text skills (Jones 1989; there are interesting opportunities here for cooperation between FL and first-language departments!). In addition, a useful spin-off of FL->L1 translation is that the close source-text reading which translation requires can give deeper insights into FL genres than those achieved by

monolingual activities using the same materials (Jones 1991; cf. Duff 1989). On the other hand, L1->FL (and 2-way) translation is a useful informal and even professional skill, and thus one which should not be ignored, as Gerard McAlester points out elsewhere in this volume.

TRANSLATING: LANGUAGE SKILL OR PROFESSIONAL SKILL?

In conclusion, it is often said that grammar-translation methods teach "bad grammar and bad translation" (Catford 1965:viii); thus Mary Snell-Hornby points out elsewhere in this volume that they give a poor basis for translator training courses (though one would imagine that monolingual FL teaching gives a worse one!). Translating is not only carried out by trained translators, however: many proficient FL users develop professional translation skills through experience rather than specialized training; furthermore, non-professionals are often asked to translate informally (You read French - what does this letter say?).

Far from ushering in a night of the returning dead, however, the teaching of translation-as-communication on FL courses will aid all three translator types. Highly-proficient FL users will have a sound theoretical and practical basis for developing professional translation skills, whether through training or through experience; and good FL users will have been taught to translate informally in a wide range of contexts and genres.

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NOTES

1. I use translation in its German sense throughout, i.e. of language transfer in either the written or the spoken channel.
2. With referents of indeterminate gender, I alternate personal-pronoun

forms.

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APPENDIX

(1)

Shot jet saved by British pilot

Paul Keel

A BRITISH pilot landed an executive jet carrying Botswana's president after it had been hit by fighter planes over Angola last Sunday.

Captain Arthur Ricketts, from Hatfield, Hertfordshire, took over the controls of the BAE 125-800 and made an emergency landing on one engine when its other motor was knocked out by a heat-seeking air-to-air missile at 35,000 feet.

(2)

Star goes bananas!

(18) WEMBLEY staff are quaking over Wacko Jacko's next London concert after amazing revelations about his latest stay in the capital.

Behind the scenes workers told last night how the oddball star ordered SIX giant hot air driers to be brought in after it rained on the fake garden outside his dressing room, ordered staff to change the pink toilet paper in his bathroom to blue; had such a messy fruit fight with ten-year-old pal Jimmy Safechuck that his swish Wembley dressing room had to be re-carpeted.

With more concerts on August 26 and 27, staff are bracing themselves for another spate of loony antics.

FRUIT... Jacko

(3)

THE SPECTRE of renewed inflation haunted the US financial markets yesterday after the US Government reported that wholesale prices climbed a disturbing 0.5 per cent last month.

The jump in wholesale prices, coming so soon after gross domestic product numbers also showing stronger inflation, partly explains the Federal Reserve's decision to raise the US discount rate to 6.5 per cent this week. Commercial banks quickly followed raising the prime rate -- which controls the cost of most mortgages — a half point to 10 per cent.

(4)

I would desire that all women should reade the Gospell and Paule's epistles, and I wold to god they were translated in to the tonges of all men. So that they might not only be read and knowme of the scotes and yryshmen, But also of the Turkes and saracenes. Truly it is one degre to good livinge, yee the first (I had almost sayde the cheffe) to have a little sight in the scripture, though it be but a grosse knowledge. . . . I wold to god the plowman wold singe a texte of the scripture at his plowbeme, and that the wever at his lowme with this wold drive away the tediousness of tyme.

(5)

at dawn
names of the dead
appear on the pane

beautiful

in decipherable frost

breath
hurts them
and they fade

(6)

THE REAL BEAUTY OF IT IS THE NEW 2·7 LITRE ENGINE.

The gracious lines and sleek good looks of the Rover 800 have already raised many an admiring eyebrow.

Look, for example, at how America greeted the arrival of the Sterling. "With the possible exception of Concorde, no machine so nicely put together has ever before come out of England." *US Car and Driver magazine.*

Well now, to turn heads still further, the Sterling comes with another powerful asset. An all-new 24 valve, 2·7 litre V6 power unit.

It's not only very powerful, it also thinks rather fast. The brain behind the 177 PS engine being a computer-controlled, electronic engine management system.

(7)

ALL HALLOWS

Children, mimicking spirit shapes, have called
and I appeased them, with apple-offerings

this is the night of the returning dead

I hold a small clay urn that you were fashioning
before you died, your finger-prints
are biscuit-fired inside

I think of graveyards on the shard-rough
western coasts, their plates
with phoenix-patterns or blue
eastern villages, broken across to let the ghosts
out

your name is nail-scratched on this urn
I guard it carefully

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