

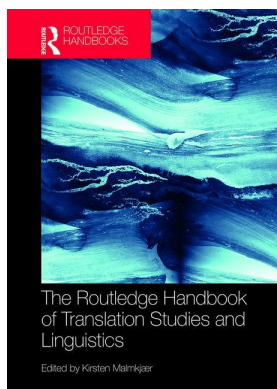
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Linguistics, translation and interpreting in foreign-language teaching contexts

Anthony Pym and Nune Ayvazyan

The relations between linguistics, translation (including interpreting) and foreign-language teaching can be seen as an interplay of three separate histories that, although once loosely entwined, have been following progressively different paths since the 1970s.

The modern history of foreign-language teaching

When adults sign up to learn a foreign language, they are making a considerable investment in an essentially unknown product: languages are vast, complex and daunting, and it is difficult for any learner to compare the virtues of different teaching methods. Approaches thus demarcate themselves by manipulating a limited set of signals. A course may offer rapid progress, limited effort, proven success, an authoritative source, naturalness and above all, in the age of modernity, newness. On any or all of these points, a new approach must score better than previous approaches. Further, since there are not many more actual values in play, that essential newness requires a clearly visible distinguishing mark with regard to exactly *what* is supposed to be new, habitually selected from the shortlist of things that can be included or not: grammar, pedagogical progress, orality, written correctness, structural repetition, contextualisation and, of course, translation. Not surprisingly, the appeals to “translation” in this discourse have remarkably little to do with what the term might mean for the various linguistic approaches to translation, or indeed with what translators actually do.

The history of language-teaching methods is well rehearsed in the literature (see Kelly 1969/1976; Byram and Hu 2000/2013; Howatt 2004). Kelly (1969/1976, 7) notes that the use of grammar was in vogue in the European Middle Ages and the 18th and 19th centuries, while “during the classical era, the Renaissance, and the early twentieth century it was intuitive command of the target languages that was required”. The modern era has seen a movement from the use of the “grammar-translation” method in the 19th century towards a clearer focus on the spoken use of language in situation. The nature of this development, with its implications for translation activities, can best be approached with reference to representative coursebooks, whose introductions and exercises tell a rather more varied story.

Teaching with translation

Since bilingual glossaries date back to 2500 BCE (Kelly 1969/1976, 24), one might assume that some kind of translation has long been associated with some kind of language learning. The clearer association of multilingual dictionaries with translation in the European Renaissance was part of a mode of text-based language learning where Greek and Latin were the essential elements of humanistic education. By the 16th century, classroom learning was closely associated with translating those key texts.

Ascham (1570/1870), Greek and Latin tutor to Elizabeth Tudor, famously recommended teaching a foreign language via a double translation method:

Let the master read vnto hym the Epistles of *Cicero* [. . .]. First, let him teach the childe, cherefullie and plainlie, the cause, and matter of the letter: then, let him construe it into Englishe [. . .]. After this, the childe must take a paper booke, and sitting in some place, where no man shall prompe him, by him self, let him translate into Englishe his former lesson. Then shewing it to his master, let the master take from him his latin booke, and pausing an houre, at the least, than let the childe translate his owne Englishe into latin againe, in an other paper booke.

(1570, 26)

As expressed, this method actually uses three moments of translation, to which we can add a fourth:

1. *Initial translation*: when the learner confronts the L2 text and construes it mentally into L1, either with or without textual prompts (bilingual glossaries and the like).
2. *Concretising translation*: a spoken or written translation into L1, here used to ground understanding in L1.
3. *Checking translation*: going back into L2 orally or in written form, which in Ascham is an overtly checking process that in effect tests how well the Latin text has been remembered. The union of this activity with translation into L1 can be called, as in Ascham, “double translation”.
4. *Communicative translation*: understood as a translation that goes beyond the checking function and is intended primarily as a mode of expression, where the translator can draw on a wide range of resources in order to communicate a message. This kind of translation can be used to illustrate grammatical *differences* between languages, although it is not clear if that was done in Ascham. Ascham’s pupil, as Elizabeth I of England, would nevertheless move beyond her language exercises and translate a sizeable body of works to be read by others.

It is not clear how Ascham’s use of double translation was to connect with this kind of communicative translation. Indeed, what takes a back seat in this method is close attention to pedagogical *progression*: if the aim is to read and understand Cicero, the beginner is being thrown into the deep end of the pool.

The 17th century saw an influential variant on initial translation for beginners. The Moravian bishop Comenius (Jan Amos Komenský) devised a method for learning Latin that emphasised the importance of direct sensorial knowledge. His *Orbis Pictus* of 1658 had images of everything a child might wish to know about, with a series of short parallel bilingual texts and noun phrases under each image. The prompt was thus initial translation, but the

pedagogy did not stop there: where possible, the child should be shown the real thing, then study the picture, speak the names, copy the image and colour it in, in a pedagogy that sought to unite the senses. The first edition of the *Orbis Pictus* was in German and Latin, and then in all major European languages. Tellingly, an edition of Hoole's English translation of the *Orbis Pictus*, published in 1777, adds the sub-title "and the English made to answer word for word to the Latin", with the editors advertising that they have made it easier to pair the English and Latin words by imposing Latin literalism on the English of previous editions (1658/1777, 5). At this initial stage of learning, the pairing of words was clearly more important than any differences in syntax. Such was learning by translation. But it was far from what was to be called "grammar translation".

In both Ascham and Comenius, translation was at work without any close alliance with grammar. This would change with Meidinger's *Praktische französische Grammatik* of 1783, which became the best-selling textbook of its age, spawning many imitations for the learning of European languages. Meidinger (1783/1799, 2) starts from the proposition that "learning from rules is the shortest and safest way to learn French" and then offers comparative grammar lessons, going from simple to complex, with each step checked by having the learner translate short texts, which also go from simple to complex. We thus find pedagogical progression, comparative grammar and translation being used to teach the grammar, not to teach classical texts or sensorial objects. Meidinger explains that the pedagogical work on each text should start from an *oral* question-and-answer routine between student and teacher, in the L2, to ensure the text has been understood. Once the text has been grasped orally, "I read them the story word-for-word in German [L1], and they translate it into French [L2]" (1783/1799, ix). There is thus double translation, as in Ascham. There follows a revision phase based on the checking translation: "Should the learner make a mistake [in the written translation], one does not correct them but underlines the error in red ink and reminds them of the rules, so that they can correct themselves" (1783/1799, viii). A version of Meidinger's method was applied to the learning of English in Fick's (1793/1800) *Praktische englische Sprachlehre*.

These grammar-translation methods were modified in several successful textbooks. Seidenstücker's *Elementarbuch zur Erlernung der französischen Sprache* (1811/1833) begins with the Romantic claim to be following nature: "imitating, as closely as possible, the natural way in which children come to gain knowledge and use their mother tongue" (1811/1833, iii). Although this is ideologically almost the inverse of Meidinger's insistence on grammatical rules as offering a quick and sure path, it does not involve a lesser use of translation, just a change in order. Seidenstücker presents the learner with a bilingual glossary, a text and translation exercises *prior* to working on formal grammar. This inductive approach to the teaching of rules effectively makes translation part of the discovery process. The change alters the nature of the texts to be translated: instead of longish continuous texts, Seidenstücker offers the learner disconnected sentences, designed to indicate the grammatical rule to be discovered. For example:

Vous, ihr, avez, habt, livre, Buch, acheté, gekauft

Vous avez un bon père et une bonne mère. Avez-vous un livre? Le livre est bon. Nous avons acheté un bon livre. Le livre que vous avez acheté, est bon. [. .]

(1811/1833, 2)

The first lines give the French words with their German equivalents, then the series of French sentences are to be read aloud and translated. The first sentence uses the grammar points previously required; the following sentences use the new words to illustrate new grammatical structures.

Carl Ploetz first published his *Elementarbuch der französischen Sprache* in 1848. His approach is initially inductive, like Seidenstücker's, although he introduces several innovations to help students in their translations. First, in the French sentences, the words pertinent to the grammar point are in italics. Second, syntactic differences between French and German are marked in parentheses in the German sentences. And third, different word orders are also marked by inserted numbers, indicating the order in French. This effectively embedded the grammar lessons within the translation tasks.

The French used a similar method for learning German. Ollendorff's (1836/1838) *Nouvelle méthode pour apprendre à lire, à écrire et à parler une langue en six mois* seeks to present sentences that learners might actually want to ask about, and bases his method on interaction around those examples: "I was not guided by arbitrary laws, but by the manner in which the child begins to learn his mother tongue" (Ollendorff 1846, vii). But then, these exemplary dialogues begin with: "Have you the bread? – Yes, Sir, I have the bread. – Have you your bread? – Yes, I have my bread" (1846, 10), which would certainly be a strange way for any child to begin learning L1. The learner is also required to render the sentences into L2, which no doubt explains why the L1 English has been made to fit French syntax (avoiding "Do you have the bread?", for example). An American French textbook written by H. G. Sanders to prepare younger students for the Ollendorff method is rather clearer about what "naturalness" actually involves: "Young persons will more readily follow an example than a rule" (Sanders and Hubert 1848, 4) – translation is once again being used inductively, in order to lead to grammar. The originally German-language method had thus reached the United States, where it was initially known (and opposed) as the "Prussian method".

The French pedagogue Marcel (1853, 93) also opposed the "grammar and dictionary" method, which he held to be "in direct opposition to nature". Yet he devised an ingenious argument to make translation akin to what he assumed was the natural acquisition process. Marcel argued that foreign languages should only be taught at *advanced* stages of education, since the young mind first had to learn how to think in L1. Learning an L2 then works, for Marcel, from the written-language forms, the meaning of which is given not by situational context (as in L1 acquisition) but by translation:

The native expressions addressed to [the child learning L1] are always accompanied by tones, looks, and gestures, which explain them at once. The translation attached to the text [by the advanced learner of L2] interprets the foreign words at once, as the language of action interprets the native [language].

(1853, 93; cf. 1867/1869, 23)

Translation thus somehow parallels "natural" language acquisition. Indeed, Marcel argues that translation is *superior* to L1 learning, since the meaning is given immediately.

Interestingly, Marcel (1867/1869, 11, 14) assumes that L1 acquisition progresses inductively through understanding speech, speaking, understanding writing, then writing. In L2 acquisition, on the other hand, the assumed order is *reading*, hearing, speaking and writing (1867/1869, 22). In this way, Marcel limits the advantages of his initial translations explicitly to reading (the first phase), then includes checking "double translation" exercises in his section on writing.

Marcel was not above envisaging a commercial virtue in his matching pairs: "these reciprocal translations may thus serve both peoples to learn each other's language" (our translation) – the one text might serve two markets. Not surprisingly, the matching equivalents

are explicitly contrived, once again, by starting from structures shared by the two languages and bending natural syntax (1880/2013, 14). Marcel (1853, 93) nevertheless sees an advantage in having L2 expressions translated in different ways in different situations, since the differences will lead to greater understanding. Here literal translation has become context-sensitive. Yet translation *into* L2 is not required of the beginner (1867/1869, vi), and all translation is to be phased out at advanced stages. Translation thus operates as scaffolding, to be removed once competence has been constructed.

Line up Meidinger, Fick, Seidenstücker, Ploetz, Ollendorff and Marcel, and you find a series of rather flexible ideas: (1) translation is to be used alongside other methods, especially spoken interaction; (2) it can be adapted to the criteria of pedagogical progression; (3) the relation between translation and grammar can be inductive, deductive or a mixture of both; and (4) L2 acquisition involves a “second nature”, quite unlike L1 acquisition. All these writers were working in or for secondary schools; they were concerned with training learners above the age of 12 or so.

Teaching without translation

When Marcel argues that an L2 should not be taught to children younger than about 12, his idea harks back to Rousseau, whose *Émile* (1762) affirms that clear ideas are naturally formed in L1 only, so there is no sense in disturbing them with any L2: “you may give children as many synonyms as you please; you will change the words, not the language; they will never know any but one [language]” (1762/1979, 109).

Rousseau’s ideology of the natural subject fed into language education via other routes as well. One of them was in Switzerland, where his influence on the educationalist Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi led to a properly Romantic approach to language teaching. Pestalozzi (1801/1894, 71) insisted on teaching language as an integral part of all other skills, with special attention to “the gradual progress of lessons from sound to word, from word to speech, to attain to the formation of clear ideas”. Pestalozzi’s main application of psychological progression was in teaching young children to read. Later in his career, he applied his method to the teaching of classical languages to older children. It seems, however, that Pestalozzi’s Latin teacher, Stern, also gave grammatical overviews and used back-translations (Roth 1984, 182). Thus, even within a radically naturalistic spoken-language approach, we find methods being drawn from grammar translation and Prussian New Humanism, which similarly sought to engage the student in the inductive discovery of grammar.

Apparently independently of Pestalozzi, the French Latinist François Gouin began working on a method that radically excluded translation. In his *Essai sur une réforme des méthodes d’enseignement* (1880), Gouin gives an account of how he tried to learn German using the available methods, all of which failed miserably – apparently he sought no human teacher, trying instead to do everything from one book after another. Among much else, he found that a week of translating led nowhere: “Translation might be suitable for learning Latin and Greek, but not for living languages” (1880/1894, 16–17; our translation). Then came a communicative epiphany. Gouin by chance witnessed how his three-year-old nephew was learning French by repeating over and over actions he had done. Gouin immediately understood the importance of repeated speech. His method is then based on carefully concocted “series” of sentences, connecting a result with a logical set of actions. Students have to repeat and memorise the sentences. Gouin further claims he can teach “universal grammar”, common to the (European) languages involved. He nevertheless remained a strangely marginal figure. Commercial success was to come from elsewhere.

Gottlieb Heness migrated to the United States in 1841 and started teaching German. In explaining his method (1867), Heness interestingly starts from something *between* L1 and L2 acquisition: he explains that children in Germany are brought up speaking local dialects, then go to school and learn High German. They do this through what Heness terms “object-teaching”, adapted from Pestalozzi, which involves using a psychologically ordered sequence of activities. Heness (1867/1884, 4–5) argues that the same thing can be done when teaching German to speakers of English.

Heness opened a German-language school in New Haven in 1866. Two years later he employed the Frenchman Lambert Sauveur to teach using the same method, and in 1871 the two were working in their new school in Boston. The course starts from the teacher naming the fingers of their hand (Heness 1867/1884, 23). It then moves from objects or pictures to intensive question and answer routines, with much repetition (Heness 1867/1884, 16–17). Heness (1867/1884, 10) stipulates that his course is for *young* children, for whom the teacher is like a parent. This is because “it is very difficult for the adult to understand and speak without translating”, and translation, including mental translation, is precisely the thing to be avoided, along with a dependence on rules.

In contradistinction to the “Prussian” method, Heness and Sauveur designed their courses for students whose first aim was to *speak* the foreign language. This language learning was for four hours a day, five days a week. Heness and Sauveur, as immigrants (along with the critical Marcel, who had learned his English when in Ireland), were speaking from the experience of the displaced person. Their courses were not imitating nature, but immersion abroad.

The American Maximilian Berlitz, an immigrant of German Jewish origins, opened his first language school in Rhode Island in 1878 and expounded his method in a series of publications in the 1880s. As in Heness and Sauveur, use of L1 was excluded, and with it disappeared translation as well. Berlitz initially presented his method as “an imitation of the process followed by nature in teaching a child its mother tongue” (1888, 1). Berlitz (1888/1916, 4) nevertheless also makes an appeal to the “second nature” known by the immigrant: “Instruction by the Berlitz method, is to the student what the sojourn in a foreign land is to a traveller”.

The principles of Berlitz’s method are: (1) “Teaching of the Concrete by Object Lessons” (as in Pestalozzi, Heness, Sauveur, perhaps Gouin), (2) “Teaching of the Abstract by the Association of Ideas” (as in Gouin), and (3) “Teaching of Grammar by Examples and Ocular Demonstration” (as in almost everyone since Seidenstücker). In practice, Berlitz’s system is a clearly ordered sequence of object-based dialogues – as in Pestalozzi, Gouin, Heness and Sauveur – that starts from objects in the classroom, then colours, positions, numbers, and so on, with possible accompaniment by large wall pictures showing the objects mentioned – as in Comenius.

Berlitz’s (1888/1916, 3) position with respect to translation was clear: “translation as a means of acquiring a foreign language is entirely abandoned”. He gives three reasons for disliking translation:

1. In all translation methods, most of the time is taken up by explanations in the student’s mother tongue [...].
2. He who studies a foreign language by means of translation, neither gets hold of its spirit nor becomes accustomed to think in it [...].
3. A knowledge of a foreign tongue, acquired by means of translation, is necessarily defective and incomplete; for there is by no means for every word of one language, the exact equivalent in the other.

(1888/1916, 3–4)

The translation concept here is clearly one of exact word-for-word matching, of the kind offered in initial prompts in previous methods.

These 19th-century arguments for and against translation did not fundamentally alter in the 20th century. The “against” team did however gain academic respectability.

Enter some linguists

What the Americans called the “Prussian” method came to be known as “grammar translation”, although the term seems never to have been used by the writers themselves. It was probably coined in Wilhelm Viëtor’s 1882 treatise *Der Sprachunterricht muß umkehren!* (Language teaching must be turned around!). In the early 20th century, the term “grammar translation” was then used loosely to refer to any method that taught grammar and translation, often with the clearly erroneous assumption that this is all that those methods set out to do (Siefert 2013, 1–30).

Viëtor’s arguments were picked up by the English phonetician Henry Sweet and then became part of a concerted intervention by university phoneticians: Sweet in England, Otto Jespersen in Denmark and Paul Passy in France. Together with Viëtor, these heavyweights became the Reform Movement (Howatt and Smith 2002).

Even though their insistence on speech chimed in with the L2-only methods of the American-language schools, the phoneticians found translation suitable in the right place and time. Passy (1899/1903, 42–43) actually argued *against* Berlitz’s banishment of L1, allowing that translations into L1 and L2 could be useful exercises for advanced students to explore the differences between languages, and that, at beginner levels, checking translations could save time. Passy thus implicitly recognises several kinds of translation: initial word-for-word (which he rejects), explanatory spoken checking into both L1 and L2 (which he accepts) and full (transformational) translation for advanced students.

Sweet (1899), in his *Practical Study*, was even more open to translation. He saw it as enabling a “full understanding” of the L2, to be divided into several stages: the first is “initial translation”; the second is part of contextual “explanation” in L1 and L2, similar to what we have termed “concretising” translation; the third is then the use of translation to highlight *differences* between the languages, and here the reference to “free idiomatic translation” is key: we are approaching a fuller concept of what translation can do, although its function here is ultimately to check on acquisition, with exercises going into both L1 and L2 (1899, 207). In the fourth stage, translation is an *application* of the skills acquired.

Jespersen’s (1901/1904) *How to Teach a Foreign Language*, on the other hand, accords a far greater role to inductive work on grammar, and thereby severely limits the role of translation. Jespersen (1901/1904, 70–71) nevertheless admits that “there are many words where an English translation gives the information required more quickly and more clearly than it could be given in a long explanation in the foreign language”.

If at this point we look back at the 19th-century discourses, it seems clear that there was never a period where translation was held up as the *only* teaching method: translation was generally to be used alongside spoken activities, visual or situational supports, carefully graded exercises and, from Prussian New Humanism, inductive grammar. Some of the textbooks were remarkably eclectic, suggesting a “pre-method” era, even as their covers promulgated one new method after another. The radical *exclusion* of translation seems to date from the immigrant experience in the United States.

A measure of how complete this break was is found in an anecdote recounted by Heness. A student who speaks only German at school comes home to his mother, who asks what the boy

has done at school. The boy “began to stammer, unable to speak intelligibly”, then confesses: “‘Mother, if you will let me talk in German, I will tell you all;’ and he gave a full account of the day’s adventures in German” (Heness 1867/1884, 6). This is presented as a hallmark of the method’s success: the student is rendered unintelligible in L1.

Developments in the 20th century

The Swiss linguist Charles Bally developed a diachronic stylistics that, privileging spoken interaction, found little place for translation. Bally (1909/1951, 1.2) dismisses the kind of “mechanical translation” performed at the beginning of language acquisition, which he sees as moving from “form to form” rather than passing through the “idea”. However, elsewhere he sees his stylistic analyses as preparing the student for quite a different mode of translation, to be used in the final stages of the acquisition process (Bally 1905, 163). He even describes his own linguistics as providing “a veritable method of translation” (1909/1951, 1.138). Bally’s *Traité de stylistique française* comprises numerous exercises for learning French stylistics, many of which do indeed involve translation of the more communicative kind. His terms and approach were later picked up by Vinay and Darbelnet (1958/1972), who turned comparative stylistics into one of the foundational pillars of Translation Studies.

A similar double game can be found in Eastern Europe, where the memorisation of spoken L2 dialogues became one of the mainstays of foreign-language learning, in principle excluding the use of L1. Extensive use of translation nevertheless remained. In the classical “Bonk” textbooks (such as Bonk, Kotiy and Lukyanova 1961) translation activities into both L1 and L2 are a part of all lessons, alongside oral practice. In that part of the world, translation never went away.

Audiovisual teaching methods were developed in France from the 1950s. As in the Russian tradition, there were dialogues to be repeated and remembered, but in this case using tape recordings and slides or filmstrips, fleshing out the context in which the L2 utterance was to be understood. The exclusion of L1 was more radical, however. Harvey (1996, 46) reports that ministerial guidelines banned translation from language-teaching methods in the 1950s, although the Association des Professeurs de Langues Vivantes condemned the ban in 1987. Harvey (1996, 46) sees this as a conflict “between teachers faced with the day-to-day reality of the classroom, and official policy makers”.

The French ban remains an exception. Elsewhere in the world, the grammar-translation method has remained in force. Adamson and Morris (1997) explain that audiolingual methods and grammar translation were both used from the founding of the People’s Republic of China (as indeed they were in the Soviet Union), although grammar translation became dominant after the Cultural Revolution, among other reasons because the audiolingual method was apparently seen as being American.

With the rise of English as a global lingua franca, the teaching methods used around the world have increasingly tended to coincide with those being used to teach English. And in that particular area, the traditional arguments against translation steadily accrued force, albeit through simple repetition rather than conceptual sophistication (see Malmkjær 1995–1996, 58–60; Pym, Malmkjær and Gutiérrez 2013, 12–14). Gatenby (1948/1967, 66) assumed that children learn L1 without translation, so translation is a “departure from the conditions of the natural process of acquiring speech”. The argument is backed up by a small cost-benefit analysis: translation is described as “a deceptive process in that, being laborious, it persuades teacher and pupil that a great deal has been accomplished” (1948/1967, 69).

Mackey (1953–1955/1967, 34) added that translation can only produce “mental confusion” due to L1 interference. And Lado (1964, 54) insisted that initial translation was misleading because it relied on word-to-word equivalents. Indeed, the general abstract arguments against translation were so overwhelming that Morris (1957/1967, 61) expressed legitimate surprise that the level of foreign-language skills could be so high in Scandinavia and the Netherlands despite their “excessive resort to translation”.

One voice in favour of translation in this period was Dodson’s (1967/1972) *Language Teaching and the Bilingual Method*, which combined spoken practice with printed text, picture strips and initial translations as complementary inputs that enabled the learner to act out a given situation in L2. Translation was one input among many, while the goal remained communicative performance. This approach was picked up in Germany by Butzkamm (1980), who argued more explicitly for a “sandwich technique” where the learner is given the L2 expression, the L1 translation and then the L2 expression again:

TEACHER: *Was geht hier eigentlich vor? What’s going on here? Was geht hier eigentlich vor?*

STUDENT: *Was geht hier eigentlich vor?*

(from Butzkamm 1980)

The aim is for the student to grasp as quickly as possible what the foreign sentence means, without relying on form-for-form translation (the German word “*eigentlich*”, meaning “actually”, finds no equivalent here) and assuming that the adult learner would be engaged in mental translation in such cases anyway.

Communicative approaches

The so-called Communicative Approach emerged during the 1970s as a method that advocated real and meaningful communication based on learners’ immediate needs (Brumfit and Johnson 1979; Krashen 1982). Once again, that simple idea can be found in various forms throughout 19th-century discourses, albeit mostly with some presumption to restrict or fabricate the learner’s “needs” by assuming some natural relation to pictures, immediate objects, simple actions in the world and indeed to the spoken word. Anything could be considered a “need” in the eyes of the pedagogue, except translation, apparently.

The adjective “communicative” owes much to Hymes’ (1966) concept of “communicative competence”, which stressed that knowing a language system was different from using a language. We thus find Wilkins (1973) shifting attention away from the categories of grammar-based teaching and towards “categories of communicative function”.

However, the Communicative Approach was not completely against the use of translation in classrooms. Widdowson, for example, defended the communicative use of translation:

What we are aiming to do is to make the learner conceive of the foreign language in the same way as a communicative activity. This being so, it would seem reasonable to draw upon the learner’s knowledge of how his own language is used to communicate. This is to say, it would seem reasonable to make use of translation.

(Widdowson 1978, 159)

Similarly, Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983, 92) note that in the Communicative Approach “judicious use of native language is accepted where feasible”.

From the late 1980s we find a questioning of communicative approaches. Swan (1985a, 1), for example, points out that the Communicative Approach “fails to take account of the knowledge and skills which language students bring with them from their mother tongue and their experience of the world”. He advocates the moderate use of translation activities, even when they “seem to have no immediate ‘communicative’ value” (Swan 1985b, 83). Alan Maley questioned that supposed lack of communicative value more radically:

Only recently, as the communicative movement has begun to run short of ideas, has there been a resurgence of interest in traditional practices such as translation. Could it be that it serves some useful purpose after all? Could it be renovated, reinterpreted, humanized, made communicative?

(Maley quoted in Duff 1989, 3)

This question astutely avoids preconceptions of what translation is. The issue is instead how the traditional translation concept can be revamped and put to work, not in opposition to communicative approaches but as part of them.

One of the most significant attempts to reintroduce translation in this way was made in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)* (Council of Europe 2001), where “mediation”, presented as one of the five basic language skills, includes translation and interpreting, alongside activities such as providing “a paraphrase, summary or record” (*CEFR* 2.1.3). Communicative translation is thus one of the skill sets that the learner is supposed to acquire, in accordance with a vision where the aim of language education is to produce a polyglot who not only knows languages but can move between them. The schoolboy that Heness held up as a model of success because he could not explain himself in L1 would, in terms of the *Common European Framework*, epitomise failure.

In their survey of the use of translation in language learning in 10 countries, Pym, Malmkjær and Gutiérrez (2013) find that the Communicative Approach is the most popular method in virtually all countries, while grammar translation is among the least popular approaches in all countries. That said, translation activities are reported as being used in classrooms in particular ways: the older the students, the more translation is used, and the higher the education system’s general foreign-language skills, the more frequent the use of translation. The notable exception to this latter tendency is Germany, where language skills are high yet instructors report not using translation in class: instead they use “mediation”, in accordance with the terms established in the *Common European Framework*. That is, translation continues to be used in classrooms, but under a different name and along with a wide range of cross-language communicative activities.

Connections with Translation Studies

The various debates for and against the use of translation have taken place within foreign-language teaching circles; they have not become an issue within Translation Studies or indeed in linguistics as a wider discipline. This is not for want of early contacts between these fields. For example, Bally’s stylistics drew on the practical experience of translating with students and provided the basic terms for Vinay and Darbelnet’s “method of translation” (1958). Bally, however, did all he could to exclude “mechanical translation” from the classroom, and Vinay and Darbelnet filled their method with examples that are mostly parallel texts, not actual translations. The mistrust of mechanical translation remained.

A more intriguing disconnect can be dated from Holmes' (1972) article "The Name and Nature of Translation Studies", sometimes regarded as the founding document of Western Translation Studies. Holmes' research programme recognised that "priority should be given to extensive and rigorous research to assess the efficacy of translating as a technique and testing method in language learning" (Holmes 1972, 190). Yet the question is mysteriously absent from the graphic representation of Holmes in Toury (1995/2012, 12): the priority was recognised, then quickly forgotten. This was a period when Translation Studies was struggling to establish itself as an independent discipline, in part by insisting that professional translation required skills over and above the learning of a foreign language. Experts in communicative language teaching were free to assume that translation was not communicative, at the same time as translation scholars were quick to presuppose that language learning had nothing to do with translation. Had there been dialogue, of course, exchanges might have dealt with the facile arguments being tossed about both for and against the use of translation, and attention might have been paid to the different *kinds* of translation that can be used in classrooms. As it was, once the translation scholars withdrew from the scene, English-language communicative ideologies were able to rule the roost virtually unchallenged.

The separation of disciplines obscured some positive developments. For example, Alan Duff's excellent 1989 compendium of translation activities for the teaching of English was virtually ignored by translation scholars, while it struggled to find an audience among foreign-language teachers. A decade or so later, though, the translation scholar Malmkjær (1998, 2004) edited two collective volumes on the role of translation in language teaching, the applied linguist Cook (1998) had his arguments in favour of using translation published in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, and since then Cook's (2010) *Translation in Language Teaching* has had an impact on both disciplines.

Empirical research

Dodson's (1967/1972) bilingual method was ostensibly backed up by empirical testing: numbers showed that the multiple inputs led to learning faster than just one. This finding is reported as being supported by a series of control-group studies (for example Walatara 1973, with others reviewed in Caldwell 1990). However, none of these studies isolates translation as a variable, since the focus is on the method as a whole.

Other empirical studies have been able to demonstrate the negative effects of translation. Ulanoff and Pucci (1993) tested a situation where the primary-school teacher translates everything as it is said, with the predictable result that the students stopped paying attention to what was said in their weaker language. Much depends, obviously, on the particular *kind* of translation that is used in class, and exactly *when* it is used.

There have been several studies on what students and teachers think of translation as a classroom activity (Altan 2006; Carreres 2006; Liao 2006; Boakye 2007; Fotovatnia 2010; Kelly and Bruen 2014), most of them finding that students generally regard translation as a useful tool. The semi-standardised questionnaires nevertheless include the statement "Learning English is mostly a matter of translating from my mother tongue" (with variants), with which students are requested to agree or disagree. The extreme nature of the statement, which fails to specify what kind of translation is involved or what other kinds of activities might be considered, gives results that seem of little benefit to any seriously balanced discussion of when and where translation can be of real benefit.

Other surveys have focused on instructors' opinions of translation. Pym, Malmkjær and Gutiérrez (2013) found that, except for the special case of Germany, the most negative

opinions of translation were in countries where the Communicative Approach and immersion scored highest, which also happened to be the countries where the foreign-language skills scored the lowest (notably France and Spain). This, of course, does not mean that translation itself enhances language skills, since there are numerous other factors involved. But it does suggest that the presence of translation activities in language classrooms in countries like Finland and Croatia, or of mediation activities in Germany, is doing no harm.

Most of the arguments for and against translation have nevertheless tended to remain on the ideological level, without seeking justification in experiments. Indeed, the teaching community has tended to shun empirical testing across the board, since there are always numerous complex factors involved and much depends not just on what is done in the classroom, but what instructors and learners *think* should be done. Rather than comparing methods and seeing what the numbers say, there has been adhesion to a “post-method” condition, where it is accepted that no one method can be demonstrated to be superior to any other, and there should be no need to restrict oneself to the use of just one method (see Stern 1983; Prabhu 1990; Kumaravadivelu 1994). The rejection of rigorous empirical testing has thus led to situations where significant social resources are invested in teaching methodologies whose effectiveness is often no more than a question of beliefs. At the same time, however, acceptance of “post-method” ideology has coincided with a movement away from single teaching methodologies, which has renewed interest in translation.

Further reading

- Cook, G. 2010. *Translation in Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
A timely, balanced and influential restatement of the virtues of translation in language teaching.
- Howatt, A. P. R. 2004. *A History of English Language Teaching*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
An invaluable reference work, although readers should be aware that it is restricted to the teaching of English.
- Malmkjær, K., ed. 1998. *Translation and Language Teaching: Language Teaching and Translation*. Manchester: St Jerome.
One of the seminal texts for the renewed interest in translation.
- Pym, A., Malmkjær, K. and Gutiérrez, M. 2013. *Translation and Language Learning*. Luxembourg: European Commission.
A survey of the institutional and pedagogical relations between translation and language teaching in 10 countries.
- Siefert, T. R. 2013. *Translation in Foreign Language Pedagogy: The Rise and Fall of the Grammar Translation Method*. Doctoral dissertation. Harvard University.
Brilliantly documents how the myth of grammar translation was fabricated by its opponents.

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