

Where Translation Studies Lost the Plot: Relations with Language Teaching

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Abstract. Recent interest in the role of translation in language teaching calls for dialogue between the disciplines of Translation Studies and Language Education. In framing this dialogue, translation scholars would do well to avoid assuming superiority or special knowledge; they would instead do well to reflect on the history of their own discipline, particularly the opposition to language departments that can be found in some countries in the 1980s and 1990s. In politically turning away from language learning, translation scholars left the education field open for unopposed implantation of immersion and communicative teaching methods that ideologically shunned translation. Further, in framing their major internal debates in terms of binary categories, usually involving a good translation method opposed to a bad one, translation scholars themselves all but abandoned the non-binary pedagogical models that once included many types of translation solutions. Those non-binary models should now be investigated anew in order to rebrand translation for the language-education community. In so doing, however, translation scholars may need to break the unspoken pact that they have developed with the translation professions. They should instead adopt a view where everyone can translate, not just professionals, and everyone can be trained to translate better.

Translation Studies vs. language teaching

Foreign-language teaching (here shortened as “language teaching”) is an impressive world, especially when seen from the perspective of Translation Studies (here understood as also addressing interpreting). For instance, my compatriot David Nunan not only shows us how to teach English communicatively but has also, according to Wikipedia, sold more than 2.5 billion copies of his textbook series *Go For It!*. That is a lot of books! In Translation Studies, a best-selling textbook might move around 3,000 copies a year. Academic books, of the kind I occasionally write, are doing well if they sell anything above 350 or 400 copies per year. Ours is clearly not the world of foreign-language teaching.

My purpose is not to complain about Translation Studies being a small field. Reduced dimensions can be exciting, friendly, *gemütlich*. There was a time when we, as translation scholars, even felt rather superior, precisely thanks to our reduced size and inherent specialization. In order to study translation, you had to know at least two languages extremely well; you had to know the fields of discourse, the mapping operations that could lead from one language to another, a lot of linguistics, perhaps something about of literature, a bit of technology, and then a few social aspects such as

client relationships. Not surprisingly, some in the field felt we were so specialized that we were axiomatically superior to any of those run-of-the-mill English teachers milling around us. It felt genuinely exciting to be establishing a new discipline that was necessarily small and necessarily in opposition to established fields of inquiry. One could make plans for the future and justify mistakes: “Ah, this is just the beginning!” Can we still pretend, though, that this is any kind of excuse or justification?

One of the great planners, of course, was James S. Holmes, who was quite prepared to disregard any large-scale authoritative fields of research. Holmes was happy to pursue his own interests, no matter how institutionally marginal. Some remember him as the founder of Dutch gay studies, although most of us know of him better as one of the founders of Translation Studies. When we re-read his seminal article “The Name and Nature of Translation Studies” (1972/2000), we find places for most of the things we have been doing since then. However, my colleague Nune Ayvazyan (forthcoming) points out that Holmes also envisaged some things that we have *not* really been doing. His conceptual map had an area explicitly called “translation policy.” And under that rubric he formulated a call for “extensive and rigorous research to assess the efficacy of translating as a technique and testing method in language learning” (1972/2000: 182). Holmes envisaged Translation Studies as a field that, in one of its parts, could work alongside, with, and potentially in dialogue with language learning. Most translation scholars have not seriously pursued any part of that envisaged mission. Why not?

I suspect that one of the reasons is the visual form that the late Israeli translation scholar Gideon Toury later gave to Holmes’ seminal article. Toury’s map of Holmes’ prose (1991: 181) has nothing corresponding to what Holmes called “translation policy,” and nothing at all that corresponds to the question of how translation is used in language learning. That whole sub-section disappeared from graphic existence; it was airbrushed out. Why did that happen? Why did we lose that minor opening to one of the world’s major intellectual industries?

I think a substantial answer, possibly the reason for Toury’s omission, has to do with the political strategies adopted during the development of Translation Studies. Back in the 1980s and early 1990s, we would go around telling everyone that in order to translate you needed to know *more* than the two languages: translation competence was necessarily much *more* than language competence. We proclaimed out loud that it is not enough to be able to teach a language in order to train translators. As noted, our own sense of essential superiority thus moved us away from language learning. And so we founded separate institutions for the training of translators. In Spain and Germany these have the status of *faculties*: on the level of faculties of Law, Medicine, or Biology, we have faculties of Translation and Interpreting. Translation was apparently so different from anything concerning the learning of languages that it was put in separate buildings, with separate administrators, separate publication spaces, separate job titles, and remarkably little dialogue across those separations.

At the same time, translation scholars formed an unspoken alliance with the translation professions. We started to study the cognitive processes and workplace habits of people we called “professionals” or “experts;” we analyzed their products, ideally to train students to be like those model people and products. Professionals were sometimes quite happy to be flattered in that way, even though a mainstay of much professional discourse is still that academics know nothing about the realities of translation. Thanks to

that very particular alliance, even when operating as unrequited love (we like them; they don't really like us), many of us rarely glanced sideways at what was happening in foreign-language education.

This separation of fields reached the stage that the PACTE group at the Autonomous University of Barcelona admitted that students do have to learn languages in order to translate but nevertheless opined, without any firm empirical evidence, that the way translators learn languages should be different. We thus need *special* language classes geared to the training of translators (cf. Berenguer 1999): let us have nothing to do with our colleagues in that other building over there called language teaching!

These would all be possible reasons why Holmes' area for inquiry into language learning was spirited away and why, from the 1980s, translation scholars seem to have shown scant interest in the role of translation in language teaching. Yet it was not quite a question of mutual ignorance, and the story was not always so simple.

Rapprochements with language teaching

One of the strange things is that, if you go back and look at what Holmes actually said in 1972, at what he opined as a translation scholar looking at language learning, you find him being exceptionally pessimistic about any cooperation between the two fields. Holmes openly conceded that translating was likely to be “dysfunctional” in the learning of L2, and that “the chance that it is not efficacious would appear to be so great that in this case it would seem imperative for program research to be preceded by policy research” (1972/2000: 182). I take this to mean that we should not only look at the way translation is used, but we should also go back and look at policy decisions about where and how it should be used. In any case, we are not dealing here with something as simple as enlightened translation theorists versus ignorant second-language experts. Far from it.

Others occasionally sang similar tunes. In 1978, Eugene Nida recognized that translation had a bad press in language acquisition, that it was indeed dysfunctional, but he attributed the blame to the *kind* of translation being used:

Teachers too often require their students to make literal translations [...]. The result of this insistence on literal translating is that the students almost inevitably acquire a false concept of the foreign-language text. Because it comes out in such a crude manner in the mother tongue of the student, the second language is judged to be awkward, difficult, and hopelessly complicated. (Nida 1978/1997: 30)

That is indeed what is likely to happen if you use translation merely as a way to check on acquisition. If you want it to be as close as possible to the structures of the foreign language, it is bound to sound weird. The problem, says Nida, is that in the schoolrooms of 1978 (in the United States?), “correctness” had been taken to be practically synonymous with “literalness.” So any idiomatic departure from that norm was looked upon as dangerous. For Nida, it was this narrow literal concept of translation that was at fault.

Many others have made this kind of complaint since Nida, but for many years it was hard to find an English-language discourse that might count as some kind of dialogue between translation scholars and language educationalists. Those working on translator training, such as Kiraly (2000) and González Davies (2004), certainly paid heed to what

was happening in language education and variously proposed to drag student-centered constructivism across to the translation classroom, but there was no attempt to do research on what kind of translation might actually work in the language class. Indeed, when Kiraly addresses actual L2 learning, he fully subscribes to a “natural” approach where L1 is eschewed as far as possible (2000: 186), and translation is thrown out along with it. And González Davies merely mentions in passing that her proposed activities, formulated for the training of translators, might also be of interest to “foreign language teachers who wish to include translation activities in a communicative and interactive way in their classrooms” (2004: 6).

In English-language publications, I suggest, the most interesting advances have come more from the side of language education. An intriguing case is Duff’s *Translation* (1989), which is an excellent book full of ideas about how to use translation in the English-learning class. It was virtually ignored by translation scholars (what does this have to do with us?) and it struggled to find an audience among language-learning experts (why should we go back to that?). Some twenty years later, Cook’s *Translation in Language Teaching* (2010) has had rather greater impact on the language-teaching community, perhaps due to its use of intelligent theoretical discussion but also because it can be connected with a certain new interest among scholars in Translation Studies, as shown for example in Cook’s article in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (1998) and collective publications edited in the same years by Malmkjær (1998, 2004). The reasons why this incipient English-language dialogue at last became possible are rather difficult to fathom.

Part of the reason, I suspect, lies in changes within approaches to language teaching. Increasingly from the 1980s and into the 1990s, language educationalists came to realize that a multitude of factors are involved in the success or failure of a teaching method, and that it is virtually impossible, given this complexity, to prove that any one method is always superior to any other. This particularly concerns the need for participants to *believe* in the teaching method – the whole question of motivation has become key. If participants are convinced the method is good and superior, they will make it work. If not, then not. One upshot of this is what has been called the “post-method condition,” where the research community openly admits that it cannot prove any one method is superior to any other and therefore accepts that most actual teaching is going to mix and match the available approaches (see Stern 1983, Prabhu 1990, Kumaravadivelu 1994). For some of us, this “post-method condition” is scandalous in that it justifies huge social resources being spent on the presumed efficacy of teaching methodologies for which no significantly contrastive evidence has been presented (as far as I can tell). Enthusiasm for CLIL might be a case in point. At the same time, this perplexing “condition” has actually been quite good for translation, since within the language-learning community people are now freer to look around at the things that can be done, or indeed at the things that teachers have been doing for many years but did not feel free to talk about, including translation.

That peculiar state of affairs first concerned what actually happens in classrooms; it has taken time to affect the kinds of topics that research is done on. As Guy Cook put it:

For just at the point when the trajectory of ideas should have led to investigation of the effects of TILT [Translation in Language Teaching], the scientific principle seems to have failed, and for

some reason the research has not been done. In SLA [Second Language Acquisition] in particular, the notion that translation is not helpful to acquisition seems to have become so firmly established that it has hardly been investigated at all. (Cook 2010: 87-88)

Here Cook means that the role of translation has not been investigated within language-education circles, but I would add it has still not been investigated in any major way within Translation Studies either. There have been various calls to action, but few substantial research projects, which is what Translation Studies is supposed to be about.

As Cook indicates, the chief bugbear within language education seems to be a general supposition that translation is still presumed to be negative, that there is nothing positive to be discovered. And if there is nothing positive, why would anyone do research on it?

As mainstream translation scholarship thus seemed to turn its collective back on the huge market of language learning, most language educationalists were more than happy to reciprocate by turning their collective back on us – if indeed they knew we existed –, moving further and further into ideologies of communicative approaches and immersion, none of which needed translation.

Yet that is still not the whole story.

Germany as a special case

In Germany, the late 1970s and 1980s actually saw quite a lively discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of translation in language learning, with the participation of a few serious translation scholars (as well as cross-over linguists such as Juliane House).

Perhaps the most remarkable case is House's *A model of translation quality assessment* (1977), where the entire last chapter presents ways in which her model can be used in the foreign-language class. House offers a potted history of the uses translation has had in language teaching (largely drawn from Kelly 1969/1976), then proposes actual translation activities that, instead of focusing on comparative grammar or checking on prior acquisition, highlight the construction of pragmatic meanings in specific situations: "All texts chosen for translation activities should be totally contextualized for the students, i.e., they must be relevant to the students' particular range of experience and interests, and they must be presented as part of a 'situation' which approaches authenticity to the greatest possible degree" (House 1977: 233). Whereas Nida, in the same years, was simply complaining about the way translation was being misused in the language class, House was offering concrete remedies, drawing on the key ideas that were elsewhere known as the communicative approach.

In that remarkable chapter, a version of which was later published in German (1980), House also summarizes the debates that had taken place in Germany to that date and that had involved both translation scholars and language educationists. She mentions the idea that translation is the "fifth skill" (alongside speaking, listening, writing, and reading) and attributes it to Friedrich (1967), which is the earliest reference I have seen for the concept. For Friedrich, the "fifth skill" model was a reason for *excluding* translation from lower-level language classes, since translation was separate and required a separate mode of instruction. Many years later, after "mediation" had been recognized as a "fifth skill" in the *Common European Framework of Reference* (Council of Europe

2001), remnants of Friedrich's argument remain. When we presented the "fifth skill" idea to language teachers across Europe and beyond (Pym et al. 2013), we were somewhat perplexed to find that teachers in Germany generally agreed that translation was indeed a fifth skill, but tended to *disagree* that it "brings the skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking together." We noted that our data from Germany indicated "a strong feeling that translation is a separate skill, with its own place and its own training structures" (ibid.: 68). Now we might know why: for us, the "fifth skill" idea looked like a reason for *including* translation in all language classes (since we think teachers train people to do things with language); in the German context, perhaps since 1963, the same idea has been used to support the opposite argument. Something different had been happening in Germany: they hadn't entirely lost the plot, at least not in those years, and they were thinking a little differently in consequence.

The strange thing about House's book is that I read it in the late 1970s, but I took no notice at all of that final chapter. House's distinction between overt and covert translation was a true novelty, I think, and her evaluation model was a solid exercise in synthesis, but that final chapter was simply of little interest to me, or indeed to anyone else in the English-speaking world, to judge by the lack of repercussions. As with Holmes' initial map, I have now had to go back to the text, to be amazed at what I had missed those many years ago.

There nevertheless seem to have been certain repercussions in Germany, where House is just one of a series of texts that discuss the role of translation in the foreign-language class. Wilss (1973, 1978), writing as a translation scholar, had stressed the use of translation for comparative linguistics and metalinguistic knowledge; House was obviously opposed to this, calling for more situational uses of translation, in both language learning and translator training. The volumes edited by Bausch and Weller (1981) and Tiftord and Hieke (1985) continue the discussion, generally seeing translation as a positive part of language teaching. Krings (1986: 36ff.), like House, criticizes the use of non-communicative and inauthentic translation activities in the foreign-language class, especially the use of activities where "the client and the end-user are no one but the teacher" (1986: 478, 503). Ettinger (1988) then usefully reviews the debates to that date, asking whether translation is finally returning to the language classroom. House (2001: 259) returns to the question of translation as a "fifth language skill," while Königs (2001) offers a fuller account of the arguments for and against translation. Kiraly (1995: 15) then brings together various criticisms of the way translation is traditionally used in language education, to the point where one would expect him to fight for the use of more translation, but then, as noted above, Kiraly strangely rejoins Holmes and fully subscribes to a "natural" approach where the L1 is eschewed as far as possible (2000: 186), and translation along with it. So to say that there were debates extending over those years in Germany does not mean that there was any final agreement.

To summarize a complicated history, the general discourse from within Translation Studies was initially negative and critical, to the point where Bohle starts pointing a finger in what I think might be the right direction: "Translation Studies, which criticized the way translation was used in foreign language classes, also contributed to the niche existence of translation activities for many long years" (2012: 46, my translation). For many language teachers, translation remained suspicious: they were being told that they did not understand it, that specialists in translation schools did understand it, so their

understandable reaction would have been to leave it alone. But then, continues Bohle (2012: 48), there gradually arose, especially in the last years of the twentieth century, a new awareness of how “good” translation could be used in the foreign-language class. By 2000, Königs could at least claim that, at least in German language education, the question was no longer *whether* translation should be used in language learning, but *how*.

These references indicate that the German context stands as something of a special case. This is even more so when we note that Nida’s 1978 comments were first published in Germany, House was writing in English from Hamburg, Titford was working for a computer company in Frankfurt, and Kiraly was also writing in English but teaching in Germersheim. Indeed, the debates and discussions that took place in the German context set up many of the positions that have later been presented as novelties by writers in English, Spanish, and Italian.

So why should Germany have been a special case? Several factors come to mind.

First, parallel to the various interventions by translation scholars, serious interest in translation was also stirred within the language-education community. We have noted Friedrich (1963) using the “fifth skill” idea against translation, and similar positions are reviewed in House (1977: 226ff.). Yet rather more *éclat* was associated with the sometimes belligerent stances of Wolfgang Butzkamm (cf. Butzkamm 1980, 2007, Butzkamm and Caldwell 2009), who drew on previous work by Dodson in calling for a re-introduction of L1 into the L2 class, in the name of a “bilingual reform.” Butzkamm was included in the collective volume edited by Titford and Hieke (1985), which was otherwise peopled with translation scholars. He was, however, and remains resolute in seeking to develop *communicative* competence: he makes carefully restricted use of the term “translation,” generally preferring to refer to “code-switching” and the like.

Second, the debates within German Translation Studies as a whole were themselves particularly lively in the 1980s and 1990s, especially with the impact of *Skopos* theory, which argued that translations are dominated by the purpose they are to serve. The *Skopos* tenets could only reinforce the basic tenets of communicative approaches, opening the way for an easy docking process with language education. That kind of translation theory nevertheless failed to develop a properly empirical component, so there was next to no testing of what translations were actually doing, neither in the classroom nor in the workplace. Perhaps as a consequence of this lacking research, the international impact of German Translation Studies would seem to have declined since 2000 (see Toury 2009: 67), albeit not without having a domestic impact on language teaching.

Third, the renewed interest in translation connected with the naming of “mediation” (*Sprachmittlung*) as a fifth language skill in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (Council of Europe 2001):

The learner does not simply acquire two distinct, unrelated ways of acting and communicating. The language learner becomes plurilingual and develops interculturality. The linguistic and cultural competences in respect of each language are modified by knowledge of the other and contribute to intercultural awareness, skills and know-how. They enable the individual to develop an enriched, more complex personality and an enhanced capacity for further language learning and greater openness to new cultural experiences. Learners are also enabled to mediate, *through interpretation and translation*, between speakers of the two languages concerned who cannot communicate directly. (Council of Europe 2001: 43; emphasis ours)

So mediation is a category that subsumes translation and interpreting, as well as gist versions and explanations. All of these are activities we can use to get our message across from one language to another. It is no surprise then, that when Pym et al. (2013) asked German teachers whether they used translation in the classroom, almost all of them said something like, “No, not at all. We don’t do translation activities. Not anymore. Now, we do *mediation* activities, *Sprachmittlung*.” So that conceptual space, which in English has been transformed into “translanguaging” and the like, congealed in Germany around the term “mediation,” under which guise it included various forms of translation in all but name.

Although it would obviously be wrong to claim that German translation scholars turned their back on language learning – quite the opposite: they participated in debates that should have taken place in other languages as well –, the outcome has not been entirely satisfactory. The dominance of non-empirical approaches in Translation Studies meant that there was no effective testing, at a time when empirical research was becoming interested self-justification in language education. And the price of having translation activities used in language classes was ultimately the loss of the name “translation,” to the extent that the language educationalists could insist that “mediation” lay in their field alone, restricting Translation Studies to the training of professional translators and interpreters.

Implications for policy

So where are we now? Where do we stand in relation to the kinds of policy implications that Holmes mentioned way back in 1972?

In 2012, Kirsten Malmkjær, Mar Gutiérrez, and I set out to discover what was happening in this peculiar relationship between translation and language teaching (Pym et al. 2013). We did a survey of 878 language teachers from ten case-study countries and found that, in general, language teachers do *not like* translation very much: the most popular reported teaching methodology was the “communicative approach,” and the least popular approach was generally “grammar translation.” The real surprise, though, was the extent to which teachers reported *using* translation in the classroom, in some way and in some places. That is, to simplify, translation is being used but it is not being talked about very openly. In fact, we found that very few of the teachers had thought seriously about the question: they were using translation in an almost secretive way, as something to be ashamed of. And it may be this sense of hidden guilt, perhaps more than anything else, that has blocked open discussion and research on the issue.

Pym et al. (2013) lined up the ten case-study countries from their research and found that teachers in countries like Finland, PR China, and the United Kingdom reported quite a lot of translation, whereas those in France, Spain, and Germany reported far less. What is interesting in this distribution is that some of the countries that do best at learning English, according to the 2012 EF Proficiency Index, *also* score high on the use of translation. Finland, for example, is at the top of both lists (but Finland always does everything better, doesn’t it?), while France and Spain were very near the bottom in both lists: their students have the worst English *and* their teachers report the least use of translation.

Did we then conclude that the use of translation helps you learn English better? Not at all. There are always numerous factors involved and there is no simple cause-and-effect relationship in evidence. We can, however, claim that the presence of translation in the classroom appears to have no major *negative* effects on the learning of English, and that is interesting in itself. Despite all the ingrained prejudice, we can at least claim to be doing no harm.

More important than that, though, is the kind of goal envisaged in the above account of mediation. The *Common Framework* has as its aim the education of a polyglot intercultural citizen, someone who is able to use more than one language and can move successfully between them, both individually and for others. This is a sophisticated, humanist understanding of what language learning is all about. It is not a question of using translation because it can be fun; this deeply concerns what it means to live in a multilingual democracy.

You lose that noble humanist vision as soon as you accept that translation and language learning are two very different worlds. Consider, if you will, the separation of translation from language learning that was very clear to Eric Pickles, who was the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government in the United Kingdom until May 2015. As a point of policy, Pickles argued that the English authorities should not translate for immigrants. Why? Because if you translate for immigrants, they will not learn English:

Stopping the automatic use of translation and interpretation services into foreign languages will provide further incentive for all migrant communities to learn English. (Pickles 2013)

The logic here seems impeccable. If you give people translations all the time, they will not want to learn the foreign language. They will just sit back and wait for more translations. And that makes sense for as long as you believe that translations have nothing to do with language learning. In fact, what you often find is that people use translation as part of their language-learning process. The presence of translations can give them access to the foreign language and they then can build on the pieces of knowledge acquired in that way. If you accept that translations – certain kinds of translation, at least – play a role in language learning, it becomes crucial to provide translations for immigrant communities, and to do so in ways that enhance rather than restrict their learning of the “host” language.

In the case of language policy in the United Kingdom, that has indeed meant the teaching of English to social groups that tend not to learn English otherwise, particularly low-income Muslim women (Cameron 2016). Yet that does not mean anyone need exclude translation from the process. On the contrary, those adult learners will require that translation be worked into the acquisition process in carefully creative ways.

Remarkably, we know very little about the ways translation can assist in language learning. And it is not just an academic question.

Possible answers from old textbooks?

A logical response here would be to look at the actual uses that have been made of translation in language learning. Perhaps perversely, one might start from the much-maligned nineteenth century, when translation was supposed to be part of the “grammar

translation” method¹, which was in turn presumed to at the root of how *not* to learn languages. Were the uses of translation really all that bad?

When I go back and look at the old textbooks (see Pym 2016a), I find a wide range of ways in which translation was being used, often alongside spoken work and communicative activities. A simple typology could be as follows:

1) *Initial translations*. There are textbooks where the learner is confronted with L2 words and is given the L1 words, that is, the mother-tongue words or phrases, so that the learners know what is being talked about. An example is in Seidenstücker (1811/1833: 2): “*Vous, ihr, avez, habt, livre, Buch, acheté, gekauft*” – a word-for-word translation aligning French with German. And then the student is given French words and phrases that they have to learn and use in sentences, incorporating the words that have previously been translated. This initial use of translation is obviously literal and word-based; it may be both oral and written (since it is given in the textbook). Nida would not have been happy with it, although it could mimic a stage of mental translation that most adult learners use at one time or another.

2) *Contrastive translations*: The textbooks then use something I call “contrastive translation,” for want of a better word (I reserve the more general term “back-translation” for the immediate checking process that linguists and translators sometimes use without pedagogical purpose). Once the student has supposedly acquired the foreign-language utterance, they translate it back into L1 so they can check they have understood the whole thing, observing the differences on the plane of expression. Here the translations could potentially be rather more idiomatic, although their use is still part of the initial acquisition process.

3) *Checking translations*: At the end of each teaching unit, the instructor may use translation to check whether the students have actually understood and mastered the material. This kind of translation often goes into both L1 and L2 – a double translation process checking on the acquisition but not replacing the spoken use of language in the actual learning.

4) *Communicative translations*: At more advanced stages of acquisition one finds not infrequent allowances for a further kind of translation, which is not embedded in the learning process but is presented as an *application* of previous lessons. This is what I want to call “communicative translation,” which would include the kind of adaptive solutions that Eugene Nida wanted us to use and for which House proposes classroom activities. My proposed term is a misnomer, of course, since all the uses of translation are communicating something (for example, telling the instructor whether the lesson has been learned). But the collocation “communicative translation,” which should cover all uses of translation for an ostensible receiver who supposedly does not have access to the start text, could yet provide productive irritation of all the “communicative” methodologies that nevertheless exclude translation.

There are many other possible uses of translation, of course. An important one is the “sandwich” method proposed by Dodson (1967/1972) and picked up in Germany by Wolfgang Butzkamm (1980): spoken initial translations of utterances are repeated in an L2/L1/L2 “sandwich”, and then replaced by use of L2. My point here is only to insist that the translations used in language teaching are not, and have never been, just one thing.

¹ Toward the end of the nineteenth century the method was dubbed (by its opponents) the “grammar translation” method. In reality, it had no such name in its day (see Siefert 2013): in the United States it was called the “Prussian method” because most of its textbooks during the first half of the nineteenth century were written in German.

Translation has long had *many* functions, and creative text production has been one of them.

Notwithstanding these different uses of translation, some in the language-teaching community still insist that translation is indeed just one thing, and that it is bad. For Zarate et al. (2004: 230), translation is “a reformulating activity that obscures all the challenges to intercultural communication which conceal the dysfunctions of a type of communication between partners based on different value systems.” For Faye (2009), “[t]ranslation teaches learners about language but not how to use it. Translation does not help learners develop their communication skills.”

It is not hard to argue against these positions. How can you discover cultural differences except by translating between cultures? And what is translation if not a use of language? These are examples of just how low the debate became, to the point where the exchanges were no better than football supporters spouting the benefits of their preferred teams.

A more serious dialogue, however, may involve some truly important principles. One of the classic justifications for not using translation is that children do not translate when they learn their L1. In a monolingual context, infants learn their first language by imitating and reproducing utterances in situation. They do not translate, at least not in any interlingual sense. I think most people would agree with that (and the others would probably have to redefine the term “translation”). The problem is that a good deal of the language learners in the world are *adults*: they are no longer engaged in the same cognitive dynamics as young children. Further, it seems that from the rough evidence we have with regard to strongly asymmetric bilingualism that the second language is learned as an extension of the first (see a summary in Pym et al. 2013: 24-25). You can actually find this idea in Rousseau’s *Émile* (1762/1979), in his ideal of the person learning their one true national language “naturally,” which is the great Romantic ideology operating behind communicative immersion, then as now. But Rousseau goes on to say that you only *ever* learn *one* language: the other languages are merely extensions of it: “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). And that Romantic position was used to justify translation as the “natural” way of extending L1 (for example, in Seidenstücker 1811/1833, Ollendorff 1836/1838, Marcel 1853; see Pym 2016a). That is, the one position can be used both for and against translation. There is thus room for a dialogue that, to my knowledge, has never really happened.

Another important principle involved in interdisciplinary dialogue is the existence and role of “mental translation.” This usually supposes that adult learners acquire L2 or L3 partly by trying to figure out what is going on, or what the teacher talking about. They do this by developing transitory interlingual hypotheses: “Oh it could mean something like X in my L1.” When this happens, they use the support of their L1 in order to understand L2. Even when this is not supposed to happen, it happens. The learners are using translation in their heads precisely *because* it is being excluded from the communicative exchanges in the classroom. These days much the same under-the-table acquisition process incorporates the use of online machine translation. People want to know what is going on and they can generate hypotheses very quickly on a range of hand-held devices. Students are better than their teachers at technology: they are going to

use these new forms of translation, even within teaching methodologies that do not want to admit or condone it. Then again, as they say, more research is needed.

These days, it does not make a lot of sense to stick with the mantra that translation is somehow the opposite of language learning, or of no interest to it. And this applies on both sides of the unfortunate divide, in the work of both translation scholars and the language-teaching community.

Lost in binarisms?

So where did Translation Studies really lose the plot? A first instance was perhaps in the passage from Holmes' prose to Toury's visual map. A second curtailing could be the failure to extend the Germanic debates beyond Germany in the 1980s and 1990s. And a third case of willful blindness might be the blanket dismissal of old language-learning practices as if they were all the one nefarious mistake. Those examples may prove to be ultimately anecdotic, fragments of an unfortunate history, but as a community we – myself included – did indeed forget about language learning. We somehow pretended language learning was not happening, or was not interesting; we looked the other way. And we thereby allowed communicative ideologies to fill that space. That was our first political mistake.

The second political shortcoming that I would attribute to mainstream translation scholarship concerns a certain refusal to conceptualize the many creative ways in which translation itself can be used, both in language learning and beyond. In so doing, we historically bound ourselves to repeated dichotomies.

We have traditionally inherited the notion that there are basically only two ways to translate. Cicero (46 CE) said one translates either *ut interpretes* (like an interpreter in a business agreement) or *ut orator* (like an orator, with all attendant rhetorical devices). One *or* the other. Horace had much the same thing, as did Jerome: you could translate sense-for-sense *or* word-for-word. This runs right through to Schleiermacher in 1813: *verfremdend* (foreignizing) vs. *verdeutschend* (domesticating). And to Eugene Nida, as we have seen, with his formal correspondence vs. dynamic equivalence. There are many more: the basic binarism can be found in Newmark, Ladmiral, Toury, House, Nord, and Venuti, for example. A lot of our thought about translation has been dominated by this “either/or” mentality, even when the two terms are supposed to be extreme points on a cline. I wonder if that has served us well; I wonder if it has given us more theories than solutions to teach; I wonder whether that might be one reason why experts in language learning have not taken much interest in our internal debates. Perhaps we are the ones who have been involved in a simple, impoverished, abstract discourse on translation.

Of course, there have been more than binarisms in Translation Studies – the whole town should not be painted with the one brush. In my own work on this history (Pym 2016b), I have gone back and looked at an alternative tradition: I have been interested in scholars who attempted to write a short catalogue or typology of the various solutions that translators come up with. The best-known example is probably Vinay and Darbelnet (1958/1972), who describe seven basic types. But as I looked around, I found that in history, that typology owed a lot to work by Charles Bally, a Swiss linguist who wrote about stylistics and language acquisition. And from Bally, Vinay and Darbelnet, and Malblanc, it is possible to trace a common concern that existed in Russian from the

1920s, in Chinese from 1958, in Czech and Slovak in the 1960s in the work of Jiří Levý and Anton Popovič, in Germany with Kade in 1968, right through to Andrew Chesterman, who proposed his typology in the 1990s, passing through the work of Newmark and, to a lesser extent, Nida, both of whom developed typologies within their larger binary categories. Most of these models have between seven and twelve different kinds of things that translators do; they are not limited to simple binarisms.

I think we need to return to those kinds of typologies, to experiment with them, and to do cognitive research to test and improve their categories. Yet the prime use of the categories is surely in language teaching, across the board: when you start to think beyond the binarisms, beyond the initial and checking functions of translation, it becomes easier to include the range of activities covered by the concept of mediation. The image I want to propose here is of translation involving a wide range of options, from simply copying and reproducing the foreign language right through to tailoring content to suit a new purpose. Instead of just playing on a two-note instrument – domesticating or foreignizing, one or the other – translation should be able to involve a whole orchestra. That full sense of translation is something that the binary tradition has covered over. I suggest that we have to recuperate, if ever we are going to get people in language education to listen to us, and perhaps for them to take seriously the notion that translation is a communicative language activity in its own right.

Rebranding translation

What I am proposing here is that we turn to the language-education community, to this major world industry, and we attempt to rebrand translation in a way that they will find clear and appealing. This is essentially what House tried to do in 1977; it is what we should try again now – good ideas don't go out of style. We have to make it clear that translation is not just one thing, and not just two things either. It is very probably not what many language teachers think it is. We have to pick up the notion of translation as communication and say that everything – all the values attached to communicative approaches – can be involved in translation activities because translation is communication. That is easy to posit and has often enough been said, but the message is still not being heard and it requires multiple repetitions. Yes, we want learners to engage in L2, to become fluent, and to say the things that they really want to say. But we can also get those same learners to engage in translation, to become fluent in translating, and to translate the things that really need to be said. You just have to put translation into the right kind of learning situations and encourage the full range of things that can be done in translation. A pedagogy that is able to incorporate translation in this way need not sacrifice any of the things that are done in communicative approaches. For example, we should maintain the primacy of spoken communication, and that means using a lot of *spoken* translation, or interpreting if you will. We have to get students to do that spontaneously, in real-life situations or role-playing. We have to encourage students to give *different* translations then discuss those differences, so we can break with the idea that there is only one translation for every foreign-language utterance. We have to allow students to add and delete content when translating, going beyond many of the restrictive notions of what translation is. And in so doing we explore the many differences between languages and cultures.

This means seeing translation as something that people are engaged in all the time, everywhere (cf. Duff 1989: 6). In an age of mobility, we are all constantly in contact with other languages; we are engaged in forms of mental translation, at least, and often in many modes of mediation. Seen in this light, translation is a skill that is not just for professionals. In consequence, we translation scholars have to question our implicit and longstanding pact with the translation professions. We are no longer here just to produce people who get paid to do translations. We are here to develop skills that people use in their everyday life, both professionally and non-professionally. *Everyone* can learn how to translate better; everyone can learn how to explore the variations made visible in translation. That means our pedagogies also have to be able to incorporate the many resources available. Online machine translation should be taught and used in class, as a valuable learning resource. If you do not do that, students will use it, but badly: they will continue to believe that it produces valid translations all the time, in a sad parody of the perennial pedagogical illusion that translation is really just one thing.

In sum, we have to make up for some thirty years of turning our non-Germanic backs on the world's major language industry and one of the most vital language activities that humans are involved in. To do that, we have to pick up the conceptual resources that we have gathered in Translation Studies. We have to get rid of those that are negative, simplistic, or that promote shortsighted misunderstandings of what translation is. And then we have to train our learners – would-be translators and non-translators alike – to play with the full orchestra of translation solutions.

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