

Translation and Language Education

Pedagogic approaches explored

Sara Laviosa



Translation Theories Explored

TRANSLATION AND LANGUAGE EDUCATION

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TRANSLATION AND LANGUAGE EDUCATION

The revival of translation as a means of learning and teaching a foreign language and as a skill in its own right is occurring at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels in universities.

In this book, Sara Laviosa proposes a translation-based pedagogy that is grounded in theory and has been applied in real educational contexts. Drawing on the convergence between the view of language and translation embraced by ecologically oriented educationalists and the theoretical underpinnings of the holistic approach to translating culture, this volume puts forward a holistic pedagogy that harmonizes the teaching of language and translation in the same learning environment.

The author examines the changing nature of the role of pedagogic translation starting with the Grammar Translation Method and concluding with the more recent ecological approaches to Foreign Language Education.

Translation and Language Education analyses current research into the revival of translation in language teaching and is vital reading for translators, language teachers and postgraduate students working in the areas of Translation Studies and Applied Linguistics.

Sara Laviosa is Senior Lecturer in English Language and Translation at the University of Bari Aldo Moro, Italy. Her recent publications include *Linking Wor(l)ds: Contrastive Analysis and Translation* with Richard D. G. Braithwaite (2014).

Translation Theories Explored

Series Editor: Theo Hermans, UCL, UK

Translation Theories Explored is a series designed to engage with the range and diversity of contemporary translation studies. Translation itself is as vital and as charged as ever. If anything, it has become more plural, more varied and more complex in today's world. The study of translation has responded to these challenges with vigour. In recent decades the field has gained in depth, its scope continues to expand and it is increasingly interacting with other disciplines. The series sets out to reflect and foster these developments. It aims to keep track of theoretical developments, to explore new areas, approaches and issues, and generally to extend and enrich the intellectual horizon of translation studies. Special attention is paid to innovative ideas that may not as yet be widely known but deserve wider currency.

Individual volumes explain and assess particular approaches. Each volume combines an overview of the relevant approach with case studies and critical reflection, placing its subject in a broad intellectual and historical context, illustrating the key ideas with examples, summarizing the main debates, accounting for specific methodologies, achievements and blind spots, and opening up new avenues for the future. Authors are selected not only on their close familiarity and personal affinity with a particular approach but also on their capacity for lucid exposition, critical assessment and imaginative thought. The series is aimed at researchers and graduate students who wish to learn about new approaches to translation in a comprehensive but accessible way.

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Marilyn Gaddis Rose

Representing Others
Kate Sturge

In loving memory of my mother
Volumnia Eulalia Ester Di Leonardo
(11.02.1928–10.11.2012)

'Laviosa provides us with a comprehensive, rigorous and challenging book at the interface of translation and language pedagogy. She reviews the past to lead us into present and future ecological, holistic grounds. She discusses some of the most exciting research voices and puts their theories to work. Indeed, this book is a must to empower translation/language teachers and students.'

María Calzada Pérez, *Universitat Jaume I, Spain*

'This book is an exciting and welcome addition to the emerging pedagogical field of translation in language education. A far cry from the original grammar translation method in language teaching, Laviosa takes as her starting point that translation as an integral part of language teaching does not only benefit a new generation of translators, but is a crucial part of developing linguistic skills as well as being "a means of getting a look into another culture's head", as one of her students put it.

In this authoritative and readable account Laviosa develops an interdisciplinary theoretical framework drawing on the concepts of "holistic cultural translation" and "symbolic competence" embedded in recent thinking in the fields of translation and language pedagogy theory. Theory and practice merge seamlessly as she illustrates her framework with case studies of translated texts and pedagogical examples. This book is an indispensable contribution for the development of the language professionals of the future.'

Dr Gerdi Quist, *University College London, UK*

'Sara Laviosa has opened a dialogue between translation and foreign language education. Drawing on the insights from Kramsch's ecological approach to foreign language teaching and from Tymoczko's holistic approach to translation studies, Sara proposes a holistic pedagogy which aims to harmonize these theories in the same learning environment. This book is a praiseworthy attempt to bring together scholars who are working with both languages and cultures.'

Zhang Meifang, *University of Macau, China*

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Sara Laviosa
10 November 2013

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades there has been an increasing interest in (re)defining the place and role of translation in foreign language teaching, particularly as regards higher education.

This general trend is reflected in the recommendations made in the report of the MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages (MLA 2007), a programmatic document which advocates translation as a tool in language learning:

In the course of acquiring functional language abilities, students are taught critical language awareness, interpretation and translation, historical political consciousness, social sensibility, and aesthetic perception.

(MLA 2007: 4)

The report also supports the teaching of translation as a skill in its own right, in the section on 'Continuing Priorities':

Develop programs in translation and interpretation. There is a great unmet demand for translators and interpreters, and translation is an ideal context for developing translingual and transcultural abilities as an organizing principle of the language curriculum.

(MLA 2007: 9)

Moreover, '[t]he idea of translingual and transcultural competence, in contrast [to seeking to replicate the competence of an educated native speaker], places value on the ability to operate between languages' and entails the capacity to reflect on the world and on ourselves through the lens of another language and culture (MLA 2007: 3–4).

The recent concern for translation as a learning and testing tool as well as a professional skill has given rise to a substantial body of research into pedagogic

translation, particularly in undergraduate degree programmes. We can identify three main domains within this new niche: (a) theoretical considerations in favour of using various forms of translation for language teaching purposes; (b) Second Language Acquisition studies on the effectiveness of translation as part of form-focused instruction; (c) the elaboration of translation-based language teaching methodologies.

Against this backdrop, the aim of the present volume is to open a dialogue between language and translation educators about the role of translation in the development of communicative, metalinguistic and transcultural competences, which are deemed crucially important in the formation of the language professionals of the future. Engaging in this dialogue is, we believe, a prerequisite for elaborating pedagogic approaches that are firmly grounded in theory, are supported by empirical evidence and are realized within a multilingual learning environment where translation fosters and is fostered by linguistic proficiency.

As a contribution to the realization of this *desideratum*, the book puts forward an approach to language and translation teaching that is framed within the ecological perspective on language education and is informed by convergent and interrelated principles elaborated in second language education and translation studies respectively, i.e. 'symbolic competence' (Kramsch 2006, 2009, 2010) and 'holistic cultural translation' (Tymoczko 2007). Developed by Claire Kramsch (2002b), Leo van Lier (2004, 2010) and Glenn S. Levine (2011), the ecological approach to language education draws principally on sociocultural theory, ecology and semiotics and is in unison with Tymoczko's holistic approach to translating culture. The proposed pedagogy is intended particularly for the graduate and undergraduate language classroom and, since we place equal emphasis on theory and practice, it is illustrated by sample activities undertaken in real-life educational contexts. Translation proved to be beneficial in the monolingual as in the multilingual class and at pre-intermediate, intermediate and advanced levels of linguistic competence.

The book is organized into nine chapters and is targeted at prospective and practising language and translation educators in modern languages degree programmes as well as teacher trainers and researchers in second language teaching and translation pedagogy.

Chapter 1 provides a historical overview of the place and role of translation in second language education starting from the Grammar-Translation Method till the advent of Communicative Language Teaching (Howatt 2004; Cook 2010). It deals with the ebb and flow of various forms of translation as a language learning and teaching activity in various approaches devised for different educational contexts: from secondary school (e.g. the Grammar-Translation Method) to higher education.

Chapter 2 focuses mainly on higher education. It first surveys the theoretical considerations underpinning the reappraisal of pedagogic translation during the last two decades. Then it examines experimental Second Language Acquisition studies on the effectiveness of translation as a means of enhancing L2 proficiency.

Finally, it analyses novel pedagogic practices adopted or recommended at various levels of linguistic competence, using the three-level model elaborated by Jack C. Richards and Theodore S. Rodgers (2001) for the analysis of approaches and methods in language teaching.

Chapter 3 gives an overview of the ecological perspective on language and language pedagogy, which has become a major focus of interest in second language learning and teaching (Kramsch 2002b; van Lier 2004, 2010; Levine 2011) as well as in education in general (Robinson 2011).

Chapter 4 analyses the multilingual and ecologically oriented language pedagogy put forward by Claire Kramsch (2006, 2009, 2010). This legitimates interlinguistic, intralinguistic and intersemiotic translation as a practice that brings out the cultural differences in the relationship between language and thought, and contributes to the development of what she calls 'symbolic competence', a crucial dimension in the formation of multilingual subjects.

Chapter 5 examines the holistic approach to translating culture elaborated by Maria Tymoczko (2007) and illustrates how the author applies it to the teaching of literary translation at graduate level. The chapter ends with an analysis of the convergence between 'holistic cultural translation' and 'symbolic competence' as principles of good pedagogic practice that aim to empower translators on the one hand and multilingual language users on the other.

Chapter 6 starts from the premise that symbolic competence enhances and is enhanced by holistic cultural translation. Next, it examines a lived experience of language learning, literary translation and creative writing that supports this hypothesis. On the basis of the empirical evidence provided by this case study, we propose a holistic pedagogy that harmonizes the ecological perspective adopted by Kramsch and the holistic approach to cultural translation developed by Tymoczko.

Chapters 7 and 8 describe three examples of language and translation teaching that was informed by the pedagogy envisioned in Chapter 6. The activities described here were undertaken in Italian and English undergraduate and graduate language classes in the US and Italy respectively. The book ends with a summary of the main achievements of current research into educational translation and considers possible avenues for further development in this burgeoning area of scholarly enquiry and practice.

1

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

This chapter provides a brief history of the place and role of translation in second language education starting with the Grammar-Translation Method and concluding with the advent of Communicative Language Teaching. The ebb and flow of various forms of translation is examined in relation to the ways in which the purpose and process of learning are conceptualized in pedagogical approaches. As defined by Henry Widdowson, purpose refers to ‘what kind of language knowledge or ability constitutes the goals that learners are to achieve at the end of the course’ (Howatt 2004: 353).¹ Process, defined here from the point of view of the course provider, refers to ‘what kind of student activity is most effective as the means to that end’ (Howatt 2004: 353). Purpose determines the aspects of language that the method focuses on and is generally informed by linguistic theories. Process designs the most appropriate teaching techniques and is normally underpinned by Second Language Acquisition theories. The admission or exclusion of translation as a language learning exercise depends on how process is conceived; this in turn is influenced by how purpose is defined in a given methodology.

1.1 The Grammar-Translation Method

The Grammar-Translation Method began in Prussia at the end of the eighteenth century with the publication of a French coursebook and an English coursebook for secondary school pupils, authored by Johann Valentin Meidinger in 1783 and Johann Christian Fick in 1793 respectively (both cited in Howatt 2004: 152). The method was developed during the nineteenth century and became the dominant method of teaching foreign languages in European schools from the 1840s to the 1940s. The aim of Grammar Translation was to enable learners to read literary classics and ‘to benefit from the mental discipline and intellectual development that result from foreign language study’ (Richards and Rodgers 2001: 5). Grammar

rules were presented in the learner's first language one by one and in an intuitively graded sequence. Each grammar point was exemplified with a set of sentences created ad hoc in the L2 alongside their literal translation in the L1. Vocabulary was learnt by memorizing bilingual lists of lexical items and phrases.

For example, Franz Ahn's *New Practical and Easy Method of Learning the German Language* (1869) started with the declensions of German nouns, specimens of handwriting and the pronunciation of simple and double vowels, diphthongs, consonants and syllables. Then, in Part I, it introduced singular and plural subject personal pronouns with the present simple tense of the verb *sein* (to be) in the affirmative and interrogative forms (Ahn 1869: 1–12).

PART I.

1.

<i>Singular.</i>	ich bin, I am; du bist, thou art; er ist, he is; sie ist, she is;
<i>Plural.</i>	wir sind, we are; ihr seid, you are; sie sind, they are.

Gut, good; groß, great, large, big; klein, little, small; reich, rich;
arm, poor; jung, young; alt, old; müde, tired; krank, ill, sick.

Ich bin groß. Du bist klein. Er ist alt. Sie ist gut. Wir sind jung. Ihr seid reich. Sie sind arm. Bin ich groß? Bist du müde? Ist er krank? Ist sie jung? Sind wir reich? Seid ihr arm? Sind sie alt?

2.

I am little. Thou art young. We are tired. They are rich. Art thou sick?
You are poor. Is she old? Are you sick? Are they good? He is tall (groß).
Am I poor?

Knowledge of lexis and grammar was applied in exercises involving mainly the accurate translation of invented sentences and texts into and out of the mother tongue 'either *viva-voce* or in writing or in both – and this from the very beginning' (Sweet 1900: 203). Reading and writing were the major focus of language teaching. Speaking involved rehearsing a series of questions and answers to be translated from the L1 and then used in conversations between teacher and student, as in the so-called Ollendorff Method (Howatt 2004: 161–5). The medium of instruction was the student's native language, which was used to explain new items and make comparisons between the L1 and the L2.