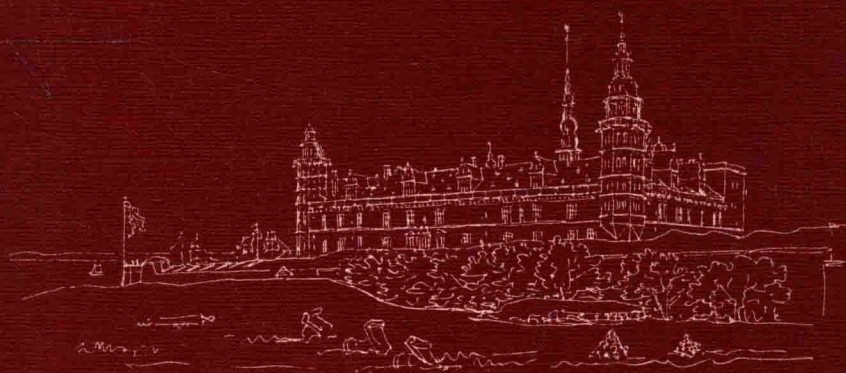


# Teaching Translation and Interpreting

## Training, Talent and Experience

Edited by

Cay Dollerup and Anne Loddegaard



JOHN BENJAMINS PUBLISHING COMPANY

# TEACHING TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETING TRAINING, TALENT AND EXPERIENCE

Papers from the First *Language International* Conference  
Elsinore, Denmark, 31 May - 2 June 1991  
(Copenhagen Studies in Translation)

Edited by

CAY DOLLERUP and ANNE LODDEGAARD

JOHN BENJAMINS PUBLISHING COMPANY  
AMSTERDAM/PHILADELPHIA

1992

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Language International Conference (1st : 1991 : Helsingør, Denmark)

Teaching translation and interpreting : training, talent, and experience / edited by Cay Dollerup and Anne Loddegaard.

p. cm.

"Papers from the First Language International Conference, Elsinore, Denmark, 31 May-2 June 1991 (Copenhagen studies in translation)."

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Translating and interpreting -- Study and teaching -- Congresses. I. Dollerup, Cay. II. Loddegaard, Anne. III. Title.

P306.5.L36 1991

418'.02'071 -- dc20

91-47536

ISBN 90 272 2094 8 (Eur.) / 1-55619-453-6 (US) (hb) (alk. paper)

CIP

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## EDITORS' FOREWORD

This book is, we hope, the enduring monument of fifty hours of intense and amicable international debate and shop-talk at Elsinore, full of descriptions of the present and visions of the future of the language professionals concerned with translation, interpreting, and interlingual transmission from the angle of teaching the art and craft to future practitioners.

The conference took place under the auspices of *Language International* (general editor) Geoffrey Kingscott (United Kingdom) and the publishing house of John Benjamins (the Netherlands). It was organised by the Center for Translation Studies and Lexicography of the University of Copenhagen, Denmark.

Individual as well as collective teaching is nurtured, improved and inspired by a heightened awareness of the problems and principles involved in the teaching of any subject area. There are many ways in which this may happen, but one important means to this end is the exchange of experience, good or bad, the establishment of similarities, the highlighting of differences, in open dialogue between colleagues, between various nationalities and cultures, between inquisitive novices and experienced hands. Such meetings, indeed clashes, of opinions, views, and experiences make for mutual inspiration.

The present volume should represent such a dialogue in several ways. There is a progression in the articles in order that both the scholar and the interested outsider can begin at the beginning and come out wiser about interpreting and translation in the end.

This is deliberate in so far as we think that the newcomer should be able to understand (but perhaps not always to speak on an equal footing with) the experienced scholar. Therefore most jargon and acronyms have been mercilessly rooted out, to make the frontiers in present-day thinking more clear.

In the book, there is also an ongoing dialogue between various foci in the world, and between various problems or concerns in the world of teaching the language professions in a broad sense. As editors, we have not

selected papers because they were in agreement with our own ideas, nor have we aimed at consensus. Papers have been chosen because they represent different voices - in the informed views and opinions, sometimes divided, sometimes nearly (but then also only nearly so) in agreement - as in real life, in teaching, in professional life, and in research. And in setting this down, the editors also wish to thank all contributors to the volume who have been willing to make concessions in the name of its overall thrust.

At an early stage, Mona Baker (United Kingdom) called our attention to the Eurocentricity of translation studies in general. This has been heeded in so far as we have asked for examples and used back-translations and the like, into the language chosen for the conference, English.

Some readers will, perhaps, object that a volume concerned globally with interlingual transmission should represent the languages of the world: but, who, may we wonder, would then listen to the babel of voices? By choosing one major world language, we make possible the contact which we all need, and in that context, English is the language of exchange of ideas, not of power and oppression.

The book opens with three national settings: the prestigious Vienna School's future programme is presented by Mary Snell-Hornby (Austria). Then we are introduced to bilingual Brunei where the language professions are held in low esteem, and to multilingual South Africa where interpreters and translators will play crucial roles in the process of democratization.

The focus moves to teaching translation, first of textual analysis (Germany) and of aspects of translation theory (Finland). The next articles deal with ways, means and perspectives in teaching and class-room work. There is a case study of the gradual introduction of key terms from translation theory in Chile, practical suggestions for assessing the difficulties of texts (Italy), and the description of procedures for enhancing students' consciousness of what goes on in translation (Uruguay). The practicalities of translations in their social contexts, where students actually contribute to introducing new writers in their own country is presented from Finland. And as a fitting end, there is a description of a revision course from Canada.

Translation is considered an interdiscipline by many scholars and practitioners, and two papers take up the question of its affiliation. There is an Israeli description of the effects of moving translation from the humanities to the social sciences, which is followed by a presentation of an unorthodox course in Germany which combines engineering with translation.



Terminology is an established tool for translators, so the presentation of this field opens the section on terms and words in translation work (United Kingdom), in the progress - or non-progress - in students' lexicalization (Israel), of the possibilities of teaching of technical compounds (Denmark), and of a grand vision of quarrying the national language users' creativity for word formation (Iran).

New media also make their way into teaching as tools or areas to be taught, for instance, opening the possibility of teaching translation at a distance (Spain), of using computers (Germany), and of teaching television subtitling (Denmark).

The next contributions address interpreting and translation. The dominant systems of translator and interpreter training are presented (Switzerland), and a case is made for establishing the theoretical components in training interpreters (France). The similarities between interpreting and translation are discussed (Spain), and it is stressed that discourse analysis provides a common ground between the two types of interlingual transmission (United Kingdom).

Then interpreting is highlighted. It is argued that a general theory of translation and interpreting exists and that it can be integrated in the curriculum (Austria). There is a discussion of textual combinations which create problems for interpreters (Bulgaria). This is followed by a description of the teaching of consecutive interpreting in Iranian. And then, again, there are contributions addressing various components in teaching interpreting, for instance teaching analytic and mnemonic strategies (Spain), a critique of the use of 'shadowing' (Austria), and a report on introspection studies of the strategies employed in simultaneous interpreting (Germany). This is finished with a description of the teaching of interpreting in Canada.

Assessment is given little space here, but the case of how to assess student translations fairly is described from an Iranian angle, and from Spain we have a discussion of the common ground in translation and foreign language teaching and the way this overlapping affects the identity of 'errors'.

There is a world for the student translator beyond school: in minor languages translators will often have to work into languages which are not their mother tongue, an issue discussed from a Finnish angle. And finally, the realities of the literary translator (United Kingdom) and the interpreter (United Nations) are presented with perspectives on teaching, on the life-long studies the language professionals will have to continue in order best

to serve their chosen trade.

Despite the variety of nations, many of the issues are the same. A cynic would perhaps remark that sometimes even translators and interpreters are rediscovering the wheel. This, however, would be to overlook the different national embeddings, the different social and situational contexts in terms of cultures and languages in which the language professionals must work: some things are clearly specific to special moments in time and space in interlingual transmissions. Others are more general, perhaps even universal: if, as editors, we may point out one problem since we represent a minor language, it is the ubiquitous fact that many translators and interpreters actually have to work into foreign tongues.

It is in exchanges like the one in the present book that these points can be established. And the interchanges may make for mutual inspiration - and, maybe, avoidance of pitfalls.

Ingrid Kurz wrote us early on that "the 'sink-or-swim' method has been replaced by systematic training". The present volume bears witness to such a process world-wide. And also, to the different national tenors in the systematization which is institutionalised in interpreter and translator schools. Even so, there is not one universal way of progression. And new media, calling for new strategies or blends of old and new, also serve to blur the ever-elusive 'universal ideal'.

True, the present volume is indeed a bit on the Eurocentric side. This reflects on wealth, on access to information, on the status and relative age of the teaching of translation and interpreting in Europe. This again is due to historical facts in European geopolitics and history:

In the modern sense, where they tie up with linguistic mediation for communities at large, the language professions are the eventual outcome of conflict: the French Revolution (1789), and the subsequent Napoleonic Wars. The French Revolution led to the gradual rise of the middle classes and, over many years, the right to learn to read for everybody, thus creating the new mass readership which eagerly consumed national literature, as well as the produce harvested by translators from foreign literatures as well as from foreign writings for educational, scientific, and technological purposes. And the Napoleonic Wars were a prime force in the creation of European contacts, first, with French-speaking rulers in contact with natives, needing middlemen who could ensure the smooth government - our budding interpreting profession. Secondly, the British blockade forced Continental

European trade to cooperation, once again calling for qualified linguists. And, thirdly, when Napoleon was eventually ousted, the royal and princely old houses - nearly 200 of them - had their summit, speaking in some cases only their own language, at the splendid Congress of Vienna (1814-1815). By the sheer number of nationalities represented, they ensured that language barriers were broken: there was, so to speak, a novel mode of international interchange, respecting national and local languages.

This all started in Central Europe. It is therefore fitting that it should be the school of Vienna which opened the *First Language International Conference* at Elsinore.

Elsinore in Denmark was an international port of call for more than four hundred years, when, wherever they hailed, traders plying Baltic waters would have to stay at Elsinore to pay to the King of Denmark the 'Sound Dues' introduced at a time when Denmark was an international power. The choice of Denmark for a meeting for professional translators, however, is apt in the present context: Despite its small size, the country ranks as one of the foremost nations in terms of sheer number of translations done, witness the annual listings of translations in the *Index Translationum* - translation, subtitling, and other interlingual transmissions are integral parts of the Danish way of life.

We all speak our national languages, and we call others who do the same our countrymen. The language professions are crucial for the preservation of national identities as well as individual and collective dignity and pride. But they are also crucial for communication between different nationalities, different cultures and religions. They are important for keeping together our multilingual and multicultural global village. They are important for their knowledge and experience of how to bridge interlingual gaps. They are tools for mutual understanding, for cooperation and peace. The better training teachers give the future generations, the better the prospects for the world.

We hope you will find the book illuminating and interesting - and we give our thanks to everybody who has helped make this book what it is.

Cay Dollerup Anne Loddegaard  
Cay Dollerup and Anne Loddegaard

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The organizers of the conference wish to thank The Danish Research Council for the Humanities for the support given to participants from Bulgaria, Chile and Uruguay.

The pictures from Denmark which grace this volume are reproduced with the kind permission of *Mr Poul Andersen* and of *Politikens Forlag*.

Among the numerous people that have helped us, we wish to thank Ms Kirsten Andersen and Mr Henrik Gottlieb for conscientious and constructive assistance in proof-reading. And to Mr Ole Jensen for incredible patience with our clumsy attempts to master word-processing.

## **NATIONAL PERSPECTIVES AND THE FUTURE**



## THE PROFESSIONAL TRANSLATOR OF TOMORROW: LANGUAGE SPECIALIST OR ALL-ROUND EXPERT?

*Mary Snell-Hornby, Translation and Interpreting Institute, Vienna, Austria*

Two hundred years ago, in 1791, Alexander Fraser Tytler published his celebrated *Essay on the Principles of Translation*, originally presented the previous year as a series of lectures to the Royal Society of Edinburgh. This otherwise barely noticed bicentenary was shown due appreciation in Geoffrey Kingscott's article in *Language International* (1991 (3) #1), where it is emphasized how relevant the *Essay* still is for the translator of today. Indeed, the basic principles expounded there seem to have the status of eternal truths, and Tytler was not even the first scholar to express them. His three basic "laws of translation" echo uncannily those presented in 1540 by the French scholar and translator Etienne Dolet and also those published by Dryden in the *Preface to Ovid's Epistles* in 1680. All three theorists arrived at virtually the same conclusions, according to which the basic prerequisites of a good translation might be identified as follows: mastery of both source and target language, knowledge of the material concerned, ease of style and an understanding of the author's message. As with all writings in traditional translation theory however, these words of wisdom were intended to apply only to the translation of great literature. The translation of what we now call 'pragmatic texts', although it has a history going back to the polyglot culture of Ancient Babylonia, was until comparatively recent times totally ignored in serious scholarly discourse.

Perhaps this may be one of the reasons why the professional status of the translator is uncertain even today. The translator seems to occupy a position similar to that of the local barber in bygone centuries, who not only trimmed hair and shaped beards but also performed functions now entrusted only to professional dentists and surgeons. The translator in Europe today frequently works free-lance and part-time, usually under extreme time pressure, for meagre pay and without a legally protected professional status, and indeed often accepts such conditions as an inevitable fact of life. Other translators are employed with varying security and esteem in industry or in

public organizations. Much translation is carried out as mere secretarial work, and it is unfortunately not unusual for important translation assignments to be handed over unthinkingly to the odd foreign language student or the chance native speaker who happens to be available. In the world of today however, where international dialogue and interlingual communication have become so complex and so vitally important, it is essential that the amateurish image of the present-day Figaro should disappear at last into the wings of history. This article is a plea for the revaluation of the work of the translator, who should have the knowledge, the competence, and also the recognized status of an expert.

### **Present-day training programmes**

What kind of knowledge however, and what kind of competence? In past centuries the major translators who are known to us today tended to be theologians, historians, writers or poets with a scholarly expertise in the Classics. The study of their work, along with the traditional 'prescientific' translation theory, is still considered to be part of Comparative Literature. After the Second World War, along with the euphoria that hailed machine translation in the early 1950s, there was a call for scientific rigour within the field of translation, which now of course included non-literary texts, and this field of study was clearly defined as a branch of Applied Linguistics. It is not exaggerated to say that both translator training and modern translation theory have been the victims of these rigid academic categories. Translation schools with academic status, even where they were independent foundations such as those at Saarbrücken, Heidelberg or my own Institute in Vienna, tended to be modelled on the lines of traditional language departments, elsewhere translation schools developed within the framework of linguistics departments, polytechnics or commercial colleges, usually as part of another field of study or else as a kind of language school. Here too the profile of the translator is very blurred.

There might seem to be general agreement that translation is a kind of linguistic activity. So should the professional translator be a kind of linguist? That very much depends on whether the word *linguist* is taken to mean "someone with a command of foreign languages" or "someone who specializes in linguistics". Language competence, as Tytler pointed out and as we now all know, is the essential prerequisite for any translator's work, but knowledge of the modern discipline of linguistics is only in part relevant for translation. Conversely, translation is not only a linguistic activity: we



don't translate languages but texts, and these are an integral part of the world around us, invariably embedded in an extralinguistic situation and dependent on their specific social and cultural background. Thus translation is primarily a sociocultural activity which presupposes not only language competence but also extensive factual and encyclopaedic knowledge as well as familiarity with the everyday norms and conventions of both source and target culture. "Knowledge of the material concerned": Tytler said it too, and it is the purpose of my paper, not only to address the question of specialization versus all-round competence in general, but to clarify the question of whether the translator is 'only' a language specialist or needs to be an expert in other fields too. If we see language as part of the world around us and agree that knowledge of that world is a prerequisite for translation, the profile of our envisaged professional translator becomes bolder: he or she is not only a bilingual but also a bicultural (if not multicultural) specialist working with and within an infinite variety of areas of technical expertise.

This means that formidable demands are going to be made on the institutions charged with training such multicultural experts. I should like to discuss these demands by means of a factual description of plans now under way at our Vienna Institute for a radical reform of our course of studies. Current problems will first be briefly outlined, the structure of our envisaged degree course will then be explained and situated within a general framework of related subjects. I hope that this concrete account will provide a clearer picture of what I consider to be the essentials of an academic course programme for the professional translator than would be possible in theoretical generalizations.

### **Vienna: the current situation**

First a few basic remarks on our current situation. At present the Institute of Translation and Interpreting in Vienna has over 4,000 students - on paper. Of these we estimate that about 2,500 actually attend classes. As you see, we have all the problems of the 'mass university', including anonymity and the headache of being chronically understaffed. In Austria anyone with the final school-leaving certificate is eligible to go to University, and we have no legal right to select students. Of our many students a very large percentage mistake our highly demanding programme for a kind of relatively easy language course - and the drop-out rate is lamentably high. The degree course is taken in two languages, a B language (for active use)