

Vocational translation training into a foreign language

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Abstract & Keywords

English:

The training of professionally-oriented translation into a foreign language is an under-researched area of translation studies, perhaps hampered firstly by the traditional association between translation into a foreign language and pedagogical translation, and secondly by a persistent acceptance of time-honoured methodologies in the translation classroom. This article is in part an attempt to redress the balance, to consider vocational translation training into the foreign language in terms of classroom strategies, text typology, textbooks and language / information resources, and to reflect upon how these might differ from the criteria involved in training translation into a native language. Particular attention will be devoted to the issue of directionality in the classroom, i.e., should the trainer ideally be a native speaker of the source or the target language? The final part of the article discusses how classroom directionality is affected by the presence of foreign-language (e.g., Erasmus) students.

Keywords: translation into a foreign language, directionality, vocational translation, translator and interpreter training, formazione interpreti e traduttori, direzionalità, traduzione nella lingua straniera

1. The literature on translation training

Roiss and Weatherby (1998: 213) lament that:

On searching through the literature on both translation and translator training the impression might be derived that the requirement of translation courses into L2 is rather pointless, since few writers give more than a few words to the subject.

It is indisputable that works on translation training *tout court* devote very little attention to translation training into a foreign language. Important works on training published in recent years, for example Kiraly (2000a), Colina (2003), González-Davies (2004), Kelly (2005) and Tennent (2005), make scarce reference to it, as do the collections housed in Dollerup and Appel (1996), Dollerup and Lindegaard (1994) and Dollerup and Loddegaard (1992). On the other hand, works devoted specifically to translation into a foreign language, such as the collections edited by Grosman et al. (2000) and Kelly et al. (2003), do include a number of contributions specifically on how translation into a foreign language might be taught. These works and others will be considered later in the article within the context of issues of importance for translation training, e.g. classroom methodology, choice of texts, textbooks, language resources. It seems necessary, however, to begin with a three-way distinction which is crucial for present purposes: that between pedagogical translation, professionally-oriented translation and professional translation.

2. Pedagogical translation, professionally-oriented translation, professional translation

'Pedagogical translation', also known as 'academic translation', is defined by Delisle (1988: 26) as follows:

Academic, or pedagogical, translation is intended to help the student acquire the rudiments of a language, or at a more advanced level, to perfect his style. It is never an end in itself, but always a means.

In other words, this is translation primarily as a language-learning activity (see also Gile's "school translation" (1995: 22)) rather than as a translation-learning activity as such. This is what Ladmiral (1979: 41) terms "traduction comme exercice pédagogique" – an activity with, in the words of Pym (1992b: 73), "ancillary status as a didactic means in foreign language teaching". Many scholars have pointed out that this type of exercise goes back a long way, inspired by the manner in which Latin and Greek were taught within the framework of the 'grammar-translation method' (see Sewell 1996: 135, Cook 1998: 117-120, Beeby 1998: 64-65, Malmkjær 1998b). This method is concerned with the establishing of correspondences between two languages in order to facilitate learning by contrastive methods (Lederer 2003: 138). Whether effected by the translation of texts or of isolated sentences, pedagogical translation can be defended as a language-learning technique – not everybody enthuses about it (e.g., Klein-Braley 1996: 18-21; see also Malmkjær 1998b: 4-6 and Carreres 2006: 5 for a summary of traditional objections to the use of translation in language teaching), just as not everybody enthuses about dictation or about grammatical drills, but it is a widespread language-learning activity. Within this framework those factors which are so crucial in translation training proper, such as the target readership, the translation commissioner, the context and the 'real-world' purpose of the text, are given less priority, if any at all. The target readership of a pedagogical translation – though rarely expressed as such – is most commonly either an evaluator (teacher / examiner), the student her/himself (for example when checking versions against solutions in a self-study manual), or classmates (if a student's version is submitted to the rest of the study group).

'Professional translation', on the other hand, is described by Gile (1995: 22) as:

aimed at a Receiver (reader or listener) other than the Translator him- or herself, a rater, or a corrector of the Translation: in professional Translation, the Receiver is essentially interested in the Text, in whatever 'message' it carries, and/or in the Sender (author or speaker), not in the Translator or in the Translation process. Professional Translation is done on request and for a financial reward.

Ladmiral (1979: 41) classifies this as "traduction proprement dite" or "traduction traductionnelle":

Il s'agit de produire ce qu'on appelle justement 'une traduction', c'est-à-dire un texte-cible destiné à la publication et à la lecture (voire, dans le cas du théâtre, à être joué etc.), dont la fonction explicite et exclusive est de nous dispenser de la lecture du text-source original. Cette traduction doit satisfaire à un certain nombre d'exigences qui ne sont pas les critères pédagogiques.

Somewhere between pedagogical and professional translation lies what I shall refer to in this article as 'vocational translation' (a term sometimes adopted in the literature, e.g., Klein-Braley and Franklin 1998: 54), i.e., professionally-oriented translation in pedagogical settings, whereby trainees are prepared for the translation market – an activity for which Ladmiral (1979: 42) uses the appellation "pédagogie de la traduction" (see also Delisle 1988: 26). Some trainers take vocational translation as close to professional translation as possible. Cámara Aguilera (2003) describes a Spanish-English course in scientific and technical translation held at the University of Granada, where

the students carry out a real translation commission into English, contacting public and private organisations and institutions as well as specialists [...] making possible an experience close to a real working situation (p.208 [abstract]).

See also Kiraly (2000a) for examples of this.

Despite the perhaps unsatisfactory terminological similarity of 'pédagogie de la traduction' (vocational translation) and 'traduction pédagogique' (pedagogical translation), the French nomenclature not only stresses the inevitable overlap between the two types, but also underlines that translation training proper does not suddenly

slough its didactic skin on account of its vocational orientation, remaining by definition rooted in the world of pedagogy. On this subject see in particular Carreres (2006: 12), who laments that “the divide between the teaching of translation as a language-learning tool and as a professional activity has been overemphasised to the point of preventing useful dialogue and exchange”. Kelly (2000b: 161) warns that no matter how vocational the training, it remains a learning experience, and that as teachers we should make sure, particularly in the early stages of training, that essential instrumental skills such as speed of submission and desktop management do not eclipse translation quality and thus result in sub-standard text (see also 3.2.4 below).

It goes without saying that students following translation courses, whether vocational or pedagogical, are conditioned by the pedagogical setting, perhaps above all by the fact that their work is to be evaluated and graded. This is what Marmaridou (1996: 58-59) has in mind when she discusses the performance of student translators and professional translators respectively:

The student translator may focus on ‘problematic’ areas of the foreign language text (whether this is the source text or the target one), on the grounds that the text product will be evaluated in terms of precisely these points by the teacher or trainer. The professional translator, by contrast, may be more concerned about the product itself as a finished piece of work that will be evaluated in terms of the language in which it is written alone, without resort to the source text.

The consequence of this is that trainee translators tend to produce more sign-oriented renderings, whereas professional translators produce more sense-oriented renderings and manifest a greater tolerance of ambiguity (see also Lörcher 1991, Kusmaul 1995). If this is so, one suspects that such sign-orientation is also a corollary of traditional translation pedagogy, from which students may derive “a general conception of translation as an exchange of signs” (Weatherby 2000: 194). Indeed, the fact that pedagogical translation actually bears the name translation at all is sometimes claimed to be a serious drawback in the vocational translation classroom. In the opinion of Snell-Hornby (1992: 18):

someone who has spent years using translation as a means of practising grammar structures and vocabulary as in Latin classes, automatically assumes that this is what translation is – a kind of linguistic transcoding.

Therefore, the author continues, it often happens that “the student has to relearn, be weaned away from thinking in terms of equivalent vocabulary items towards thinking holistically in terms of creating coherent texts”.

With specific reference to translation training into a foreign language, Pym (1992b) takes the view that little thought has been given to the development of a new rationale in the transition from the traditional prose class (i.e., the grammar-translation class – see also Section 2.1 below) to the vocational translation into a foreign language class. The transition, he points out, is far from easy. Communicative approaches practically eliminated translation from foreign language programmes, and since then the prose class has been “institutionally stranded” between foreign language classes and translator training (1992b: 74), “where its traditionally pedagogical orientation does little to recommend it to those concerned with supplying a professional labour market”. (see also Carreres 2006). Kiraly (1995) comments on a case study whereby German groups of trainee translators and professional translators were asked to translate a German tourist text into English. Kiraly concludes that “neither professionals nor non-professionals had the L2 communicative confidence and translator competence to translate adequately the text into English” (ibid: 109). However, the author continues, “given the present pedagogical gap in translator training and the nature of traditional translation practice classes, this lack of competence is hardly surprising”.

The issue of pedagogical translation vs. vocational translation will of course greatly depend upon the specific teaching environment and objectives. Pedagogical translation is much more widespread in language faculties than in translation faculties and translator training institutions, but it would be simplistic to argue that there is a hard and fast division in this sense (see Ulrych 2005: 3-4) – pedagogical translation is often adopted in more professionally-oriented environments for the consolidation of foreign language skills, while vocational translation is frequently present in language faculties. See Klein-Braley (1996) for further discussion.

2.1 Pedagogical translation and translation into a foreign language: a

tacit association?

Pedagogical translation can of course be either from native to foreign language or from foreign to native language – there is no reason why translation as an aid to language learning should not be bidirectional. Nevertheless, in practice pedagogical translation seems to be more readily associated with translation into a foreign language, i.e., with the encoding rather than the decoding of the foreign language (see Lorenzo 2003: 99). This is the type of translation referred to by Newmark (1981: 144) when he observes that “brief translations from native to foreign languages are useful for the consolidation and testing of spoken and written utterances”. Traditionally, pedagogical translation into a foreign language, i.e., translation as a foreign language learning exercise, has been known as ‘prose translation’ in the English-speaking world, and *thème* in the French-speaking world (see Ladmiral 1979: 40-55).

Beeby (1998: 64) rightly states that the term ‘prose translation’ has fallen into disuse in translation studies. It still turns up every now and then, though its conceptual boundaries are not always restricted to those of pedagogical translation, since it sometimes denotes translation into a foreign language across the board, whether pedagogical, vocational or professional. Pym (1992b) discusses the different interpretations, while Beeby (1996) adopts the term in the more general sense within the context of her proposal of a university syllabus for Spanish students translating into English.

Thème tends to be construed in the pedagogical sense alone, and like prose translation, is primarily conceived as an exercise in L2 grammar. It is traditionally contrasted with *version*, pedagogical translation into a native language, though as Ladmiral (1979: 44-45) underlines, the two are not precise counterparts. *Version* looks more towards the “aspect littéraire: il faut produire une paraphrase française d’un texte littéraire étranger”, while as for *thème*, “le plus important est la vérification et l’application de règles grammaticales” (see also Lederer 2003: 141-144). Harvey (1996: 58) corroborates Ladmiral’s view that the expression *fort en thème* traditionally means “hard-working and good at grammar, but lacking imagination or literary flair”.

Thus “le thème et la version ne sont qu’apparemment symétriques et correspondent à deux opérations essentiellement différentes” (Ladmiral 1979: 45). *Thème* (as well as prose translation) has strong links with grammatical testing, while in *version* the ability to formulate correct grammar in the native target language is assumed, the emphasis being more on lexical and stylistic expression, i.e., the ability to find the right word or turn of phrase. This would appear to reflect, as suggested above, an implicit association between pedagogical translation and translation into a foreign language.

3. The translation classroom

3.1 The traditional translation classroom

Before moving on to the nature of vocational translation training into a foreign language, we need to consider the discussion so far against the background of traditional translation training in general, i.e., over and above questions of directionality. Kiraly (1995, 2000a) is particularly critical of the traditional translation classroom, where in his view the students’ role is that of passive absorption, and where the teacher is little more than a dispenser of correct answers, or better, “a repository of translation equivalents and strategies that are to be made available to the entire class when one student displays a gap in his or her knowledge by suggesting a faulty translation” (Kiraly 2000a: 24).

Colina (2003: 52) points out that the traditional translation classroom epitomises what has been referred to in language education as the ‘Atlas complex’, where the teacher “carries over his/her shoulders the full responsibility for all that goes on in the classroom”. The author lists the following characteristics:

- instruction is teacher-centred.
- the teacher is seen as a repository of knowledge/truth.
- student discussion is minimal, and when it occurs it is always via the instructor; that is, a student answers the question posed by the teacher who in turn comments on his/her contribution and then moves on to the next student: students do not normally

address each other; interaction is one-sided and usually limited to dialogues in which one of the participants is always the same – the teacher.

- students' roles are passive; they are supposed to learn by being exposed to the expert knowledge the teacher possesses.

Colina also stresses (2003: 52-53) that the teacher-centred classroom described (i) risks giving the impression that there is only one correct answer (the teacher's), and (ii) is detrimental to the students' autonomy and self-confidence. Kiraly (2000a: 193) laments that this type of "instructional performance" is out of date:

The rigid teacher-focused classroom structure as the default mainstay of teaching practice in our field is starting to be called into question. Voices within the translator education establishment calling for a major change in translator education pedagogy are being heard more and more frequently in publications and conferences. There seems to be an increasing perception that the conventional teacher- and exercise-centred classroom alone cannot equip translators-in-training with the wide range of professional and interpersonal skills, knowledge and competence they will need to meet the requirements of an increasingly demanding language mediation market.

It would be out of place here to reproduce in detail arguments against the traditional translation classroom, but it may well be that the error-based emphasis of the traditional classroom has more in common with modern training into a foreign language than into a native language, if only because errors in translations into a foreign language tend to be more conspicuous than those in translations into a native language, at least as regards the presentability of the final product (translation errors into the native tongue, on the other hand, may be 'invisible', in that mistranslations of the foreign-language source text often go unnoticed because linguistically unexceptionable in the target language – see Stewart 2000: 219 for an example). With this in mind, I shall now focus upon the principal characteristics of modern translation training into a foreign language.

3.2 Translation training into a foreign language: the modern classroom

According to Kiraly (1995: 18):

It is of vital importance to the field of translator training to ask whether professional translators can realistically be expected to translate adequately into a foreign language; whether the skills involved in both directions are the same; and whether the skills involved in this type of translation activity can be trained in the same way as skills involving into one's mother tongue.

In consideration of the fact that, across Europe at least, translation into a foreign language is a staple part of the translation training diet, and in consideration of the recent proliferation of academic publications in favour of translation into a foreign language (see Kearns 2007 for a summary of these), one would imagine that the first query raised by Kiraly has already found an answer. The conundrum these days is not so much *whether* one should translate into a foreign language but *in what circumstances* one should do so. The second query – whether translation training into the foreign language requires specific or additional skills by comparison with training into a native language – is a fundamental one, to be discussed in the sections which follow.

3.2.1 Methodology

Perhaps the most obvious feature of translation training into a foreign language is the greater emphasis on foreign language skills. Mikoyan (2000: 207) affirms that

if it is the translator's language competence / incompetence that primarily affects the quality of translated material in non-mother tongues, then it is the language competence that should be an essential prerequisite in the training of non-primary language translators.

Mikoyan believes that "translation skills proper should not be neglected [...] but should come after serious language competence training", and some scholars take the view that training into a foreign language should be undertaken only after a high level of proficiency in the foreign language has been achieved, e.g., Klein-Braley and Franklin

1998 (but see Carreres 2006: 14-15, who feels that it is time to re-open the debate). Dodds (1999: 57) adopts a more radical position when he writes that in the translation into a foreign language class theoretical questions are subordinate to the main objective, which corresponds to “simply a question of basics, of getting the language right”. Dodds goes so far as to claim that, in a country like Italy, translator training into the foreign language is first and foremost about language teaching.

Whether this is so or not, in training into a foreign language greater emphasis tends to be placed on the foreign language encoding phase, and there is correspondingly less emphasis on the decoding of the native source language. This is perhaps inevitable, since one of the first barriers to be overcome in translation training into a foreign language is, as noted by Weatherby (1998: 22-23), that students “feel threatened by the difficulties they face in achieving their product, a TT in L2”. With this in mind, studies on translation training into a foreign language tend to underline the methodological importance of providing trainees with realistic goals. Mackenzie (1998: 19) stresses that

we should not discourage them [trainees] by making unreasonable demands – a perfect command of the language in question in all its variety, combined with knowledge of innumerable text types and subjects; rather, we should teach them to use the language and information resources available and to act cooperatively towards the goal of producing a quality product – a text that functions as its sender intended it to function for a given audience in a given situation.

In the same vein, McAlester (1992: 297) underlines the need to educate students to an awareness of what they can and cannot do, and Beeby (1998: 67) asserts that

translation trainees should be made aware of their limitations in inverse translation and taught to recognise which text types and discourse fields they can reasonably expect to translate competently, and how to go about preparing themselves for the task.

This would include discouraging students from taking unnecessary risks in the foreign language by employing words and expressions with which they have little familiarity (often with the purpose of ‘impressing’ the trainer, who may on the contrary be irritated by the misuse of such words) or which they have not had time to investigate sufficiently. All words and expressions are loaded for meaning, register, collocation, style, sound, frequency etc., and trainees who fail to take these on board are playing with fire. See Beeby (1996) and Goodwin and McLaren (2003), who provide methodological recommendations and suggest classroom activities for the training of translation into a foreign language.

3.2.2 Texts for translation

Kelly (2000b: 160) underlines that very little has been written on the criteria adopted by translation trainers in selecting texts for translation in class:

I believe that text selection is one of the most important aspects of our teaching activity and, as such, it is disheartening to see just how (albeit informedly) haphazard it often is.

This notwithstanding, some indications are provided in the literature on the training of translation into a foreign language. The consensus of opinion among translation scholars appears to be that professional translation into a foreign language should prioritise pragmatic / non-literary texts, and as one would expect, the same is considered to be true of translation into a foreign language in training. Tourist texts are considered by many to be ideal. Snell-Hornby (2000: 38) finds them suitable for advanced classes because, without being technical, “they involve cultural and pragmatic subtleties and are hence relatively complex”. Kelly (2000b) stresses the versatility and diversity of tourist texts, inasmuch as they are professionally relevant, gradable for practice, reasonably familiar to students, conceptually accessible, conducive to documentary and terminology skills, and they entail a range of text functions, as well as some specialised language. Further, the source text is sometimes poor in quality, something which introduces theoretical and ethical questions concerning how to react to qualitative shortcomings. All in all, Kelly states, tourist texts are good for students’ confidence, who will feel that they can produce acceptable target texts in the foreign language. In more general terms, informative and conventionalised texts (e.g., patents and contracts, see Mackenzie and Vienne 2000: 125) are

recommended. Nord's (1994: 66) suggestion for both translation into a native and a foreign language is that "in the initiating phases of teaching [...] it would be wise to start by translating strongly conventionalised texts with clear functions, such as instructions or tourist brochures".

Texts of a literary or journalistic nature, traditionally popular with translation trainers, are sometimes considered to be appropriate for practice but to be handled with care in the training of translation into a foreign language, since "while they are most popular as final examination tests for future language teachers and are a stimulating challenge in class", they are in reality "the least likely candidates for professional translation into a non-primary lingua franca" (Snell-Hornby 2000: 38). According to Kelly (2000a: 189-190), their use in translation training into a foreign language "may mislead some students into believing that once qualified they may undertake such work professionally". Nevertheless, Kelly (2000b: 161) believes that, in limited doses, more expressive texts can play a role in translator training, "if presented with the aim of developing specific translation awareness or competence". It should be strongly emphasised, however, that the observations made by Snell-Hornby and Kelly are more readily applicable to translation trainees whose native language is one of broad diffusion. Translators whose native language is one of limited diffusion are often called upon to translate works of literature into a foreign language (see Pokorn 2005).

3.2.3 *Translation textbooks*

Here 'translation textbook' is intended as a practical work on translation offering texts for practice, with notes and/or commentaries and/or accompanying translations. According to Kelly (2005: 84), "textbooks in the traditional sense of a course-book to be followed from beginning to end as the basis for a module are [...] a little-used resource in translator training", yet we need to bear in mind that although trainers may not follow textbooks from front to back cover, in my experience they do extract passages of interest for analysis and translation in class. Further, textbooks are often available in bookshops and libraries as self-study manuals. Therefore, even if trainers might be reluctant to use them in class, students are not necessarily reluctant to use them at home, especially if they have attendance problems. Indeed trainers often recommend textbooks for extra study as a backup to classroom activities (see also Kearns 2006b: 212-213).

Translation textbooks may perhaps be divided, albeit rather crudely, in accordance with the distinctions discussed in Section 2 above, i.e., into those concerned primarily with pedagogical translation and those concerned primarily with vocational translation. It would be inappropriate here to go into the pros and cons of translation textbooks (see Stewart (forthcoming) for a discussion of these), but the following issue in particular is relevant to the training of translation into a foreign language.

In my experience, which primarily regards textbooks with the language combination English / Italian, those textbooks dealing with pedagogical translation privilege literary and journalistic texts. As mentioned earlier, these may be not the most typical texts that professional translators into a foreign language are usually required to deal with, but since pedagogical translation is concerned with translation as a language-learning exercise, the presence of such texts would seem justifiable, though it is not clear why other text typologies are so consistently neglected in textbooks of this kind. More vocationally-oriented translation textbooks, on the other hand, often include an impressive range of text types and translation briefs (see, for example, Taylor 1998, Laviosa and Cleverton 2003), but do not address translation into a foreign language as a special skill, i.e., the two activities of working into and out of a foreign language appear to be regarded as interchangeable. Other vocational textbooks counsel and include only translation into the mother tongue (Hervey et al. 2000).

Ironically, the consequence of this situation is that it is pedagogical translation textbooks which cater more earnestly for translation into a foreign language as a separate skill, something which leaves us with the retrograde situation whereby translation into a foreign language as a specific vocational activity is all but ignored in textbooks, and what prevails as a result is the time-honoured association between pedagogical translation and translation into a foreign language.

3.2.4 *Language resources, information resources*

With the onset of groundbreaking technological advances it is natural that many translation scholars stress the need for training in the use of state-of-the-art language

and information resources. For Kiraly (2000b: 118-119), the modern translator is a “multilingual and multicultural communication expert”, and trainee translators should be instructed in how to use and create a computer-based workstation, “complete with word processors, spreadsheets, terminology databases, translation memory, desktop publishing software, access to the Internet and a variety of on- and off-line electronic resources” (2000b: 123). Mackenzie and Vienne (2000: 126-127), with a particular eye to training into a foreign language, agree that resource research and management are vital: “the ability to acquire, manage and utilise resources is part of the translator’s competence and should be taught and practised systematically during training” (2000: 127). For the authors it is particularly important for the trainee into a foreign language to build up a “text library” – a library of parallel texts for specific assignments, since in this way (2000: 130) “students learn to conceive of translation as a search for texts rather than a search for words”. Rodríguez and Schnell (2003: 178 [abstract]) work on similar principles:

If we consider translation activity as situated on the textual level, documentary research and management, involving ordering, analyzing and storing documents, becomes a key factor in the development of textual competence, aiding the student in the task of producing texts in the target language.

See also Kelly (2003), Adab (2005) and Thelen (2005) for further comments on the need for computer literacy on the part of trainee translators into a foreign language. On the use of electronic corpora and online resources in the translation classroom, see, for example, Laviosa (2002) and Zanettin et al. (2003), Beeby et al. (forthcoming), Zanettin (forthcoming).

Bernardini (2004), on the other hand, believes we should not exaggerate the role of technology in the translation classroom. In recent years university courses have been accused of being detached from the translation market and the real world, and the emphasis on resource management is in part an attempt to deflect such accusations. In Bernardini’s view, the idea of replicating real world situations in the classroom is dubious: whatever we as teachers introduce into the classroom, it remains a pedagogical environment within which students are or will be assessed in the form of marks and examinations. The author has no objections to training with technology in a specialist, postgraduate environment, but feels that this should not eclipse the need for translator education at undergraduate level. Neunzig (2003: 199) warns of the perils attendant upon new technologies in the classroom, since students rashly tend to regard them as a panacea which can rapidly resolve most translation problems, and Goodwin and McLaren (2003: 243) point out that the wealth of texts in English on the Internet can be “un arma de doble filo” [a double-edged sword], above all for the trainee translator into English as a foreign language, since many students do not possess sufficient language skills to distinguish well-written from poorly-written texts. Kelly (2000b: 161) stresses the danger that students can become obsessed with certain aspects of the professional world (speed, instrumental skills, desktop publishing) to the detriment of questions such as bridging cultural differences or target text function. On the drawbacks and dangers of the type of authentic commissions for trainee translators advocated by Kiraly (e.g., 2000a: 43), see Schopp (2006).

3.3 Translation training institutions

Many scholars agree that courses into a foreign language are an integral part of modern translation programmes (see, for example, McAlester 1992: 291, Kiraly 1995: 18, Beeby 1996, Stewart 1999: 54-55, Kelly 2000a: 190; Ulrych 2005: 11), even though the view is sometimes expressed that translation into a native language is the ‘normal’ direction (Hatim 2001: 164) or the more suitable direction (Klein-Braley and Franklin 1998: 54). Training programmes may be influenced by the fact that translation into a foreign language sometimes bears the stigma of unprofessionalism (discussed by Weatherby 1998: 21). Ladmiral (1979), though apparently well-disposed to the activities of schools of translation and interpreting, states (1979: 42) that training into a foreign language in such schools is rare, and when taught is little more than a preliminary to the evidently more serious business of translation into a native language: “les écoles d’interprétariat et de traduction pratiquent peu le thème et essentiellement à titre d’exercice préparant à la traduction dans le sens de la version”.

The point is, however, ambiguous: does Ladmiral mean that translation and interpreting schools tend to eschew *thème* as he describes it, i.e., *qua* an exclusively grammatical exercise, or does he mean that the tendency is to avoid translation into a

foreign language fullstop? The waters are muddied further a few pages later when Ladmiral allows that *thème* may in rare cases be considered translation proper (1979: 53): “Ce n’est qu’à un niveau élevé que le thème tend à être véritablement une traduction. Mais alors il change de nature et mérite bien plutôt d’être appelé une *version à l’envers*”.

In any case it is perhaps not worth worrying about – these observations were penned nearly thirty years ago and the current situation in translation schools is very different. See Ulrych (2005) for statistical details.

3.3.1 *The translation trainer*

In translation theory a great deal has been written about translation but comparatively little about the translator. A parallel situation emerges in the literature on translator training: there have been many monographs and articles on training – mostly on training into a native language – but hardly anything about trainers themselves and in particular about the native language of the trainer (and of the trainees), something which is crucial to directionality. An exception is Kelly (2000a: 190), who, referring in particular to translation into a foreign language, believes that

It is the native speaker or habitual user of a [target] language who is best able to train a student to develop the skills required to work professionally in TNMT [translation into a non-mother tongue].

Whether this actually happens or not will vary not only from country to country but also from faculty to faculty. In translation and interpreting faculties in Italy it is normally the case that the target language of the classroom corresponds to the trainer’s native language, though in language faculties things may function differently.

In this respect it is worth pausing to reflect on an observation by Newmark (1981: 180):

Foreign teachers and students are unsuitable on a translation course.

I have already had occasion to comment upon the succinctness of this statement (Stewart 1999: 54ff), which squeezes a potentially controversial issue into just a handful of words. A hasty reading might give the impression that Newmark is simply expressing reservations – as he has done elsewhere – about the feasibility of translation into a foreign language, but a closer reading reveals the message to be that in any given translation course, teachers and students should be of the same nationality and therefore work into and out of the same languages. And presumably this would apply irrespective of whether the class direction is foreign→native or native→foreign. However, before considering this further it will be as well to refine Newmark’s directive. Presumably he means that teachers and students should share not so much the same nationality as the same native language – otherwise, for example, Australian trainers would be barred from teaching translation in New Zealand, Peruvians would be barred from teaching translation in Chile, Canadians from the U.S. etc. Yet even with this rider, the author’s standpoint is striking, since in many translation faculties throughout Europe, perhaps particularly in southern Europe, trainers are asked to teach solely towards their mother tongue (see Kelly 2000a: 190 for the situation in Spain). Since most translation faculties offer courses into a foreign language, this means that up to half of the translation trainers in a given faculty may have a native language which is different from that of their students.

Within the Italian context the situation is fairly rigid. With very few exceptions, trainers (whether Italian or non-Italian) in translation faculties teach translation towards their own native language. But why is this the conventional wisdom? Here one detects the kind of target language prioritisation which characterises so much of recent translation theory and practice, i.e., if the target language must equate with the trainer’s native language, then this would point to a greater concern for successful encoding of the target language rather than successful decoding of the source language. Within the framework of such prioritisation, trainers do not teach towards their foreign language(s) presumably because they are considered to lack sufficient foreign language expertise or intuitions to be able to assess with absolute confidence the inevitably wide range of target language solutions that students come up with, whether in class or during exams.

From a more practical, perhaps more cynical standpoint it could be argued that the policy of avoiding trainers working into their foreign language is little more than a face-

saving exercise. It is not unusual for translation training institutions to have a number of almost fully bilingual students, with the result that trainers working into a foreign language may experience embarrassment at having trainees instinctively better able to judge the 'feel' of suggested translation solutions than they themselves are.

However, the trainer-into-native language policy has its drawbacks. While it may be assumed that the trainer will have excellent competence in her/his foreign (source) language and culture, (s)he may nevertheless not fully grasp all the subtle distinctions and nuances that a source text has to offer, and this also could provoke uneasiness or tension in the classroom. Nevertheless, translation faculties presumably regard this as the lesser of two evils; it would seem that the most important criterion is that the trainer has undisputed expertise of the language in which the translations themselves, and therefore the accompanying tests and exams, are actually written.

Some would argue, of course, that worrying about potential tension or embarrassment in the translation classroom is misplaced and outdated. On the contrary, the argument might go, a situation with critical interaction on both sides is devoutly to be wished, since it encourages constructive dialogue between teachers and students (see Kiraly 1995, 2000a). One imagines, however, that the problem is not simply that teachers may feel uncomfortable about being 'taught' by their pupils, but also that students themselves may feel uncomfortable about 'teaching' their teachers. I have even heard of students from translation into a foreign language classes actually being irritated by interaction of this nature, firstly because they feel it is not their job to explain source language subtleties to the teacher, and secondly because they feel it reduces the time which could be devoted to the more pressing matter of the foreign (target) language encoding. Such situations arise from conflicting directionality, which will now be dealt with in more detail.

3.3.2 *The translation trainer and conflicting directionality*

As recorded in section 2.1, Ladmiral (1979: 45) underlines the asymmetry between *thème* and *version* (pedagogical translation into a foreign and native language respectively), emphasising that the two are not simply mirror images pointing in different directions, but are activities which, despite sharing many aspects, involve distinguishable sets of skills. This is true of both pedagogical and vocational translation, and would explain why the distinction between translation into a native language and translation into a foreign language is a major factor in the overall didactic organisation of both translation and language faculties (Kiraly 1995: 18). As Pym (1992b: 75) notes, the division of translation modules into (i) native language and (ii) foreign language is "based on the assumption that the students' competence is itself asymmetric, in principle greater in the A than the B domain". However, as hinted at above, there can be a further type of asymmetry in the translation class: the fact that teachers and students often work in opposite directions. The following is an example.

In translation faculties in Italy, students working with the language combination, for example, Italian and Spanish, are provided with mother-tongue Italian trainers for the Spanish → Italian translation modules, and with mother-tongue Spanish trainers for the Italian → Spanish translation modules. The arithmetical consequence of this, in terms of directionality, is that 50% of the trainers – the Italian native speakers – move in the same translation direction as their students (foreign → native), while the other 50% – the Spanish native speakers – move in the opposite direction from their students (trainer foreign → native, students native → foreign).

In order to illustrate the latter situation let us take the case of a hypothetical Spanish native-speaker translation trainer in Italy whose Italian is excellent after 20 years of translating and teaching translation in the country. Let us also imagine that she is a highly competent teacher. There would appear to be all the prerequisites for a successful translation class. However, the fact remains that she works in the opposite translation direction from her students, with consequent potential pitfalls:

(i) she may not fully appreciate the extent of the difficulties encountered by Italian students in their efforts to de-select usage which is inappropriate and to select usage which is appropriate in Spanish as a foreign language. This applies in particular to the use of language resources. For example, in a bilingual dictionary, students may find a host of equivalents for an Italian source-text word, collocation, expression etc., and it may be no easy task – when they adopt further resources such as monolingual dictionaries, corpora etc. – to prune those (perhaps all) which are not suitable in the

context. Our Spanish teacher, on the other hand, being a Spanish native speaker and thus able to tap her much greater knowledge of Spanish usage, may well be able to discard irrelevant bilingual dictionary solutions almost at once, without the need to employ further resources (unless of course the text in question involves technical language). What is self-evident to the native speaker can be anything but self-evident to the non-native speaker. Now a traditional pedagogical approach might condemn this reservation out of hand – surely the most important criterion is that the teacher be able to assess whether the translation solutions suggested are suitable or not. The drawback is that within this traditional framework the teacher's role risks being reduced to that of an arbiter. It would seem more enlightened, and certainly more modern, to take the view that teachers cannot adequately evaluate the final product if they are not reasonably sensitive to the process which produced it.

(ii) paradoxically, outside the classroom our trainer of translation into a foreign language may have little experience of translation into a foreign language as a practitioner. It is perfectly possible that in her professional life she has never translated from her Spanish native language to her Italian foreign language, and thus has little familiarity with the strategies and techniques required to produce an acceptable translation in a foreign language. My own experience certainly reflects this. A native speaker of English, I worked as a freelance translator in Italy for well over ten years, but despite being a teacher of translation at university level, and despite having postgraduate qualifications in Italian Linguistics, I was never asked to translate into Italian. It might therefore be claimed – and this may be what Newmark really intends when he asserts (see above) that foreign teachers and students are unsuitable on a translation course – that our Spanish trainer, and many other trainers in the same situation as myself, are engaged in teaching an activity which we have scarcely ever performed, i.e., translation into a foreign language. Snelling (1988: 43) raises this issue in the context of interpreting, pointing out

a kind of dichotomy between professional activity and teaching activity because, as a professional interpreter, like most professional conference interpreters in Europe, I do work into my own language but, as a teacher of interpretation at the University of Trieste, I am teaching people to work into a language which is not their own.

This may explain why, as a native-English speaking translation trainer working with Italian students, I break out in a cold sweat every time I read Newmark's edict above. Fear of redundancy runs deep.

So can Newmark's position be defended? Certainly the viewpoint espoused by Kelly (2000a: 190) and quoted above – that translation into a foreign language (and presumably translation into a native language too) should be taught by native speakers of the target language – has its drawbacks. Kelly concurs with the contents of an "unpublished internal document" regarding teaching staff in Spain, which recommends that trainers teach translation exclusively into their own native language. She then points out (2000a: 190):

This policy does not of course imply opposition to translations being carried out into the student's or professional's foreign language. Rather it expresses concern for the methodology of training. It is assumed that it is important for the student to establish a clear difference between the two skills s/he is learning. It is important for the student to establish an ethical approach to her/his ability to work professionally in TNMT. It is the native speaker or habitual user of a [target] language who is best able to train a student to develop the skills required to work professionally in TNMT.

This seems to me problematic for two reasons. Firstly, the objective of students clearly distinguishing the skills involved in translation into a native language and into a foreign language is a commendable one, but it is not clear why such an objective should be contingent upon trainers always teaching into their own native language. It would seem sufficient simply to offer, as often happens anyway, two separate modules for the two activities, and if one really wished to drive the point home then two different trainers could teach them, though this would not appear to be indispensable. In any case the opposite could be argued, i.e., if *trainees* can work in both directions, but *trainers* are restricted to just one of the two directionality skills in question, then those skills are not as clearly distinguished as they might be.

Secondly, the notion that it is the native speaker or habitual user of the target language who is best qualified to teach the skills required to work professionally into a foreign language seems suspect, particularly if, as discussed above, the teacher in question has

little or no *professional* experience of translation into a foreign language. It might be conceded that our hypothetical native-speaker Spanish teacher is better placed to *evaluate translation solutions* in Spanish, but it could then be argued that the ideal person to *teach the skills required* to work professionally into Spanish as a foreign language (including managing language and information resources in order to reach appropriate solutions in the foreign language) must be a teacher with substantial professional experience of translating into Spanish as a foreign language. It goes without saying that our Spanish trainer will have plenty of experience of carrying out translation from Italian to Spanish, but is she the best person to help students resolve in any autonomous way the kind of lexicogrammatical and collocational difficulties they face when encoding their foreign target language? As hypothesised above, our trainer's native knowledge of Spanish language and culture will be so vast that – at least as regards non-technical texts – she may barely need to consult language or information resources at all.

3.3.3 *A utopian solution?*

The directionality conflict discussed would thus appear to justify Newmark's edict. Is in fact the only sensible option for the vocational translation class into a foreign language to give precedence to trainers who have the same nationality or at least the same native language as the students, and who have substantial experience of translating into a foreign language behind them? After all, this would involve the not inconsiderable advantage of allowing teachers and students to move unhindered in a single direction along the native / foreign language axis. All those participating in the classroom situation would share a common native language and a common foreign language, there would be greater empathy all round, and cross-language and cross-cultural conflict would be minimal. It sounds like a utopian solution. Further, it would be in more in harmony with the situation in a whole host of countries with languages of limited diffusion, where there is very often an insufficient supply of native speakers of the foreign language with suitable credentials and adequate knowledge of the local source language, and consequently where local trainers have to be employed in any case (see Kearns 2007)

Like most utopian scenarios, however, this too is far from perfect. Here are some possible objections:

(i) a course in translation, among many other things, is also a course in writing, or better rewriting. Above all in translation into a foreign language, much emphasis has to be placed on appropriate encoding, especially as students' powers of expression in the foreign language can be fairly brittle. It might be argued that it is a native speaker of the language to be written (the target language) rather than the language to be understood (the source language) who has the better credentials to improve the students' writing skills. At the same time, of course, it could equally well be argued that writing skills are first and foremost the domain of language training, not translation training.

(ii) as alluded to earlier, a trainer who is a non-native speaker of the target language may find it disconcerting and ultimately too taxing to field the ample array of translation solutions that students are likely to suggest. Here again, however, it could be objected that one could solve this by removing as far as possible the figure of the trainer as judge and jury, and asking the students themselves to discuss and assess the appropriateness of the solutions in question with the assistance of language and information resources.

(iii) the notion of a native language common to both trainers and trainees is effectively scuppered by the ever more frequent exchange programmes for both students and teachers (see below for discussion).

(iv) foreign exchange students are generally considered to be important for cross-cultural communication, and there is no reason why the same should not apply to foreign teachers. The foreign teacher, as a person on the cusp between two languages and cultures, as a vehicle for fresh ideas and new perspectives, constitutes a vital and dynamic presence in the translation classroom (see Pym 1992b: 80).

3.3.4 *Exchange students*

In Kelly et al. (2003), a number of contributors discuss the implications for translation

pedagogy of the burgeoning numbers of foreign exchange students in the classroom. Tsokaksidu (2003), for example, informs us that at the Faculty of Translation and Interpreting in Granada, 20% of students, whether 'permanent' or exchange students, are non-native speakers of Spanish. The contributors to the volume in question follow in the footsteps of Pym, who ten years earlier had expressed his conviction that the future of translation classes was to "invest more resources in exchange programmes. We have to do far more to integrate foreign students into our studies. And we have to adjust the way we teach to make the most of their presence" (1992a: 112). Indeed Pym envisaged a scenario whereby the translation class comprises 50% local students and 50% exchange students, in which case the directionality issue would undergo a radical shift of perspective: "The two classes could just as easily become one, going in both directions alternately" (1992a: 113). Seen in this light, the presence of foreign students in the classroom, far from representing an irksome interruption to the general flow of things, would be considered an integral part of a stimulating cross-cultural experience, and would go a long way towards ironing out the asymmetrical nature of much translation training. According to Pym (1992a: 113), it "would ideally create a symmetry so beautiful that it should put an end to the specificity of the traditional prose class".

Guatelli-Tedeschi and Le Poder (2003), again with reference to the University of Granada, discuss the issue in terms of what they coin "direccionalidad distorsionada", a 'distorted' directionality created by the presence of substantial numbers of students in the classroom whose native language is not Spanish. They point out (2003: 278) that in the translation into a foreign language classroom there is the danger of local students simply yielding to the exchange students' native knowledge of the target language without devoting enough thought as to how they might reach target-language solutions themselves. The authors underline

la necesidad de no aislar una de las dos partes reduciéndola en mero receptor de las decisiones de otros. Se corre el peligro de que los alumnos permanentes se conviertan en rehenes lingüísticos de los alumnos de intercambio.

[the need to avoid isolating one of the two sets of students, reducing their role to that of assimilators of the decisions of others. The risk is that of turning local students into linguistic hostages of exchange students].

Of course this potentially works both ways: in the translation into a native language classroom, exchange students, though often 'exploited' as source-language consultants, are much more reticent about suggesting solutions in the target language.

Once again the question hinges upon whether – aside from questions of directionality – we are concerned with pedagogical or vocational translation. In the pedagogical translation classroom, where the emphasis is on learning language through translation, one imagines that most teachers would welcome the cross-linguistic and cross-cultural flow of information that may result from the participation of exchange students. But in the vocational translation classroom, where the local students need to develop the ability to take responsible and autonomous decisions, the presence of exchange students might prove to be distracting or at worst counterproductive, inasmuch as the two sets of students may 'feed' each other information without worrying too much about the strategies required to find it.

For discussion of these questions and some possible solutions, see the contributions in Kelly et al. (2003: 257-324), as well as Conacher (1996) and Mayoral and Kelly (1997).

4. Summary of points raised

The issue of translation training into a foreign language raises and revisits all sorts of questions. In the first place, the dearth of contributions on the training of translation into a foreign language may reflect a traditional reluctance to discuss translation into a foreign language in translation studies, but may also be due to its traditional association with pedagogical translation and therefore with language teaching rather than translation. That there is considerable overlap between pedagogical translation and vocational translation is undeniable, but the persistent, axiomatic link between pedagogical translation and translation into a foreign language, a nagging hangover from the grammar-translation days of yore, seems undesirable and in any case not conducive to the attainment of clear objectives in the classroom. The hangover cure is not assisted by antiquated, error-based methodologies in translation training, where the

trainer may not be so much a teacher as an arbiter of the final product.

The recurrent presence of translation into a foreign language courses in translation faculties cries out for work on how such courses be approached and conducted, and indeed some recent publications have proved very useful in this respect. It would seem important to pinpoint the main differences between training into a native language and into a foreign language in terms of factors such as methodology, text typology and resources, and it would also be a major step forward if there were more consistent numbers of translation textbooks devoted specifically to vocational translation into a foreign language.

The widespread insistence in translation faculties on trainers whose native language corresponds to that of the students' target language no doubt reflects the target language orientation of recent translation studies, but just as with translation into a foreign language in the professional market, local situations will vary. In countries with languages of limited diffusion such as Norway or Slovenia, it is unlikely that there are enough suitably qualified native speakers of English, French, Spanish etc. to teach translation from Norwegian or Slovene into English, French or Spanish. Whether in any case it is good policy to insist that trainers should teach only towards their own native language is a matter of debate, since, in translation into a foreign language training, it results in what I have termed conflicting directionality, something which may compromise trainees' progress. Trainers who are native speakers of the source language may be better placed to teach translation strategies, while trainers who are natives of the target language may be better able to assess the validity of the translation product. In more general terms, however, it could be contested that if students are required to work in both directions, then why shouldn't their trainers be required to do the same? Indeed the very fact of trainers not working into the foreign language might lead their trainees to infer that translation into a foreign language is best avoided.

The situation is further affected by the increasing presence of exchange students in the translation classroom, where directionality is more complex.

A possible alternative is to have two teachers in the classroom, each a native speaker of one of the languages involved. For example, modules on Italian into Spanish as a foreign language might be taught both by an Italian native speaker with professional experience of translating from Italian to Spanish as a foreign language, and by a Spanish native speaker with professional experience of translating from Italian to Spanish as a native language. The former would focus primarily on the translation process, while the latter could focus primarily on the final product, and the presence of two teachers might encourage a more dynamic and more collaborative working environment. In Italy this is already a reality in some university faculties within courses of linguistic and cultural mediation.

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"Vocational translation training into a foreign language", *inTRAlinea* Vol. 10.
Permalink to this article: <http://www.intraline.org/archive/article/1646>

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