

DEVELOPING TRANSLATION KNOWLEDGE AND COMPETENCES IN LANGUAGE STUDENTS

RITVA LEPPihalme

UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Abstract:

This article presents a research-based second-year translation course from L2 (English) into L1 in a university foreign-language department. The course aims at giving future language professionals awareness of issues discussed in translation research and to develop critical thinking and problem-solving competence by increased experience in source-text analysis and target-text production. The focus is on translation knowledge and translation problems. Target-text clarity and readability are seen as essential goals. Students are encouraged to make the transition from an overly faithful approach to one that is functionally appropriate. It is argued that if teachers build their courses on their own holistic approach to translation studies, this may work better in the classroom than presenting a number of theories separately during the course.

Key words: translation, acquisition of knowledge, competences, employability

1. Introduction

In the past twenty years, translation teaching in universities has developed in many directions. While it used to be considered simply a way of promoting foreign language (L2) learning, both as regards reading comprehension and the production of L2 texts free of language errors, and of raising awareness about contrastive issues, it has developed into a discipline in its own right and is seen to foster the growth of competences needed by language professionals in working life, including but by no means limited to those working as translators and interpreters.

The rise of translation studies as a discipline has favoured the establishing of separate departments of translation studies in universities, leaving departments of language or philology somewhat uncertain about the role that translation should play in the education of their students. Birgitta Englund Dimitrova (2002: 75) nevertheless affirms that acquiring the linguistic and cultural competence to understand the source text (ST) and to produce a target text (TT), which involves such areas as “grammar, semantics and lexis, stylistics, text linguistics and pragmatics”, would seem to “fit in quite well with the teaching profile of most university language departments”. Yet Jean Vienne (1998: 112) argues that language students are not taught certain abilities crucial to translation, such as the ability to analyse translational situations and to base their choice of translation strategies on that analysis.

This article argues, firstly, that some familiarity with the tenets of modern translation studies is a necessary component in the education of all language professionals, making them more employable in today’s world where communication across languages and cultures is more frequent than ever. This view is not necessarily shared by all staff at language departments and by the decision-makers above them in academic hierarchies who worry about costs and are anxious to eliminate overlapping. It is not only in the institutional context described below that it is often necessary to justify the very existence of teaching translation at university level. It is therefore hoped that this article, which describes one way of coping with the situation outlined, will interest readers in other countries though in its details it is grounded in a particular department in a North European university.

Even in sub-optimal conditions students need to be taught. This article therefore discusses one attempt to give language students some awareness of how translation research has affected the way we see translation and communication in today’s world, and how practice in source-text analysis and target-text production and assessment may increase students’ critical thinking and give them various competences valued in working life. Competences specific to translation are discussed for example by Christina Schäffner (2000: 146), who sees translation involving at least the following translation-specific competences: linguistic, cultural, textual, domain/subject-specific, (re)search and transfer competences. Amparo Hurtado Albir (2007: 177-178) in turn distinguishes between six categories of competences specific to training translators: methodological and strategic competences, contrastive, extralinguistic, occupational, instrumental and textual competences. Further views on translation competence(s) are offered in a variety of papers in Schäffner and Adab (2000).

This article is also offered as a contribution to on-going discussions of the role of theories in translation teaching. On a concrete level, it deals with a course in translating from L2 (English) to L1 (the mother tongue) at a department of English, discusses problems addressed during the course and presents the aims of some of the exercises used. Some student feedback is also presented. The emphasis is on the practical classroom side, but research in translation underlies the planning and the emphases of the course. It is certainly not claimed that this is how translation is taught ideally (Calzada Pérez, 2004: 120); the intention is only to discuss how it can be taught under the less than ideal conditions familiar to many teachers in the world's universities. My argument is somewhat different from that of Maria Calzada Pérez, who recommends that teachers should provide students with "as many approaches and views as possible to make them flexible in decision-making processes in a real-life professional career". She proposes that the best way of doing so is to "introduce a large number of theories" (2004: 130-131). In contrast, Marianne Lederer (2007: 18) considers that one theory "and only one — irrespective of which — should be chosen as a basis for translation teaching in a given context". My own recommendation, especially for what in the institutional context in question is necessarily a short course, is for teachers to construct their own holistic approach to translation on the basis of the theories they find most useful for their students at the interface of the source and target language cultures. This will obviously involve reference to the important work done by many translation theorists who have helped us see more clearly what translation is all about but in the end, it is for each teacher to accept responsibility for his/her own, often eclectic method.

2. Institutional Context and Problems

In addition to courses in literary studies, linguistics and philology, among others, the syllabus of the Department of English of the University of Helsinki currently also includes obligatory one-term courses in translation both from and into English in studies for the Bachelor's degree (Basic and Intermediate levels), as well as optional translation courses for the Master's degree (Advanced level). Additionally, optional courses in intercultural translation problems (for a description, see Leppihalme, 2000) and in the textual and technical aspects of subtitling are offered at the Intermediate level. Hence, students who take a special interest in translation are able to specialize to some extent, usually complementing courses offered by the English department with those offered by the MonAKO Multilingual Communication Programme in the Department of General Linguistics (www.ling.helsinki.fi/en/department/index.shtml). In 2000-2007 15 per cent of the English department's students chose to write their Master's theses on a translation-related topic (for a list of thesis titles, see www.eng.helsinki.fi/studies/progradus.htm). The career paths of the department's graduates diverge in many directions; at least at some stage of their lives most are likely to be employed as teachers at different levels of the education system but they also find work as translators, localizers, subtitlers, etc.¹ There are also currently seven postgraduate students doing research on translation for their doctoral dissertations.

¹ A survey of the department's first-year students at the beginning of their studies in 2005 showed that 65% of the 97 students who replied expressed an interest in translation, and as many as 80% thought that they might consider translating as a career choice in the future. Other career plans that were mentioned by more than 50% of the students were teaching, journalism and research.

The department's obligatory translation courses have traditionally been thought of as "skills" courses and may be taught by teachers whose own specialisms are different; the financial cuts of recent years have made it almost impossible to hire professional translators to teach translation courses. The courses are taught by both tenured staff and doctoral students or researchers.

Englund Dimitrova (2002: 74) presents characteristics of typical backgrounds of translation teachers in neighbouring Sweden,² pointing out that neither university teachers nor professional translators have knowledge of translation theory, but unlike the former, the latter have experience of translation as a "communicative-professional activity". In fact, of course, some university lecturers also work as translators. The situation Englund Dimitrova describes is doubtless changing with the growing numbers of graduates, even Ph.D.s, in translation studies – as long as universities have jobs for them. At the turn of the millennium the University of Stockholm attempted to redress the problem of a lack of a theoretical background in translation studies by offering courses for teachers and translators. One problem that remained unsolved was that many teachers were too busy teaching, "mostly teaching translation at that" (Englund Dimitrova, 2002: 81), to take the time to attend the course, much as they would have liked to. There are of course also teachers who take a special interest in teaching translation even if their own research and other activities are in other fields. But in many foreign-language departments in many countries, the situation remains as described Englund Dimitrova (2002: 75), teachers are not "knowledgeable about the recent theoretical, developmental and educational work in translation theory, translation didactics, and empirical research". She believes that the training and educating of the trainers of future translators is a key issue in translator training. This naturally also applies to translation teaching in language departments.

The lack of teaching resources places an obvious constraint on the translation courses offered. Teachers who see translation competences as an integral part of a language professional's profile regret that the teaching can do no more than touch on so many elements important to acquiring those competences, while those who think of translation as an un-academic mechanical skill believe that even the current translation teaching hours are being wasted on inessentials. This attitude may well seep into their translation teaching if they are required to give any.

In the institutional context described in this article, teachers are native speakers of the target language of the course(s) they teach so that courses into English are taught by native speakers of English and courses into the students' mother tongues (Finnish or Swedish) are taught by staff whose first languages these are. International students who do not know either of the official languages of the country are exempted from the translation courses, taking a "Foreigner's option" instead.

Because of the situation outlined in this section, some of the students who come to take the course discussed below have had very little exposure to modern translation theories while others have had more, depending on the orientation of their teachers at the Basic level or when studying in other language departments. The Intermediate course in focus

² As Englund Dimitrova describes it (2002: 73-74), at Stockholm University translator training programmes are organized as specialized undergraduate programmes run in co-operation with language departments.

in this article is of importance because it may well be the last course in translation that the students take if they leave after completing their Bachelor's degree or if they choose other options at the Advanced level. Therefore, what they are taught about translation at this course may well colour their attitudes to translation in their professional lives.

A course in translating into L1 necessarily has to take into account the question of how to communicate successfully in the mother tongue. This point is not necessarily obvious in a foreign language department where staff may take it for granted that students either already possess sufficient competence in writing L1 text or that acquiring such competence should be the responsibility of the department of mother-tongue studies. Clearly, the short courses now offered in translating do not in themselves suffice to turn students into professional translators but their emphasis ought to be to give future language professionals an awareness of issues discussed in modern translation studies and their implications for working with texts. The students need to learn how to deal with English texts in their future workplaces – indeed, in their lives – and how to communicate successfully in their own language without getting bogged down by source-language interference or outdated attitudes of fidelity to source-language wordings.

3. In the Classroom

The course discussed in this article is an Intermediate-level course in translation from English into Finnish, taken in the student's second (or third) year of studies, and taught in groups of twelve students for ten weeks, meeting once a week for 90 minutes. Each group may contain students majoring in English as well as others for whom English is their minor subject. An exercise is done at home in advance of each session and is usually sent to the teacher for marking via e-mail a couple of days before the next session. The session starts with a review of the difficulties students had with the text and continues with an analysis of the source text, which is intended to foster in-depth reading and show students how a detailed analysis helps solve translation problems. Two student translations are duplicated for each session and their strengths and weaknesses are discussed by the group. If there is a published translation of the text available, comparison can be made between the published version and the student versions.

A student may find it stressful to know that his/her own translation may undergo the scrutiny of the whole group; to lower stress levels, each course begins with a round of introductions. Then it is discussed what the students have learned so far in earlier translation courses in or out of the department. Among other points, students may bring up the need to consider the target readership, the need to revise their translations and the likelihood there are still some weaknesses in their work that they have missed.

As for selection of materials, in my view source texts written for specialists in fields like law or technology should be avoided as students should be able to understand the texts they translate. I also like to choose texts that students can relate to emotionally, either agreeing or disagreeing with the writer, in preference to texts that are merely informative. The course materials therefore include argumentative texts, where it is important to see which of the expressed opinions the writer upholds and which are

rejected by him/her. Some of the texts are literary; the focus of one may be on dialogue, of another, description and mood. In practice, the texts translated in a given term will include both older and newer texts, the older ones having proved their enduring usefulness and the new ones bringing a sense of topicality which may increase student motivation.

What needs to be ruled out early is the idea that there is one final “perfect” or “correct” translation. Assuming that all versions that do not coincide with the teacher’s translation are somehow wrong disregards the fact that when texts are translated into the mother tongue, there is no shortage of alternatives. Furthermore, when the source and target languages belong to different language families, as is the case with English and Finnish (a non-Indo-European language), the syntactic structures in which the lexical alternatives can be placed also offer a variety of choices and thus widen the range of possible target versions. Rather than aiming at one “correct” translation, the various target texts can (in my opinion, should) be assessed with a view to how successful they are as target-language texts with regard to their function and adherence to target-cultural norms. It also needs to be emphasized that considering translations sentence by sentence does not encourage students to see the text as a whole but reinforces working habits typical of the novice rather than the professional. Think-aloud protocols and other translation process studies show that novices tend to focus on smaller translation units than professionals. In Riitta Jääskeläinen’s experiments, “the professional translators seemed to rely more on textual and world knowledge, whereas the non-professionals were more inclined to remain at the linguistic surface level” (1999: 242).

To enable students to assess their own and their fellow students’ translations and in this way develop their own translation competences, certain theoretical notions are needed. Because for many of the students, earlier translation class experiences have been theoretically vague, it is useful for teachers to point out that there are different theoretical approaches in translation studies and to indicate where they themselves stand (in practice, of course, theirs is often an eclectic combination of approaches). From the training point of view, the contributions of for example Christiane Nord (2002: 14-20), Maria Calzada Pérez (2004 and 2005) and Dorothy Kelly (2005, chapter 1), who all offer somewhat different selections of models, provide useful overviews. The course discussed in this article emphasizes careful analysis of the source text, establishing a purpose for the target text, and awareness of and adherence to target-cultural norms.

Chesterman (1997:2) reminds us that the original sense of *theory* is ‘a looking at’ and by extension, ‘contemplation, speculation’. It can be argued that learning to look at translation through a more theoretical approach gives the students more self-confidence and encourages them to see themselves as providing expert services one day, not merely working as a “human dictionary” as one student put it. And even if there is no chance to look deeply into theory during the ten weeks of the course, for the students to learn that there are scholars contemplating and working on many of the issues that the students themselves recognize as being problematic, will invite some of them to plan to look further in their own research and reassure others that the problematic issues are indeed considered problems worth investigation (instead of their solutions being obvious to all but the novice translator him/herself).

4. Analysis

A source-text analysis of each exercise done in class complements the students' individual analyses done before the session, and aims at maximizing the students' comprehension of the text at hand. For example, let us consider the analysis of an extract from Anthony Burgess' book *1985* (1978). This has been a useful source text for the course for years (see Appendix 1; for copyright reasons only the first part of the text is given; the extract used in class consists of three successive paragraphs). Students receive the text a week before it is discussed in class. The bibliographical details are given and students are advised to look for further information on the Internet. It is pointed out that Burgess is also the author of *A Clockwork Orange* (1962), a work known to most of the students if not as a book then as a film version.

The analysis first focuses on the situation where the source text was written. Burgess was not only a novelist but also a teacher, critic and composer. The title of the book alludes to George Orwell's *1984* (published in 1949). In the late 1970s, when Burgess' book came out, the real date 1984 was approaching, and there was a resurgence of interest in Orwell's dystopia. Burgess' book consists of two parts: a long essay and a fictional story; he describes his intentions for *1985* as follows (1978: 19):

We have the following tasks. To understand the waking origins of Orwell's bad dream – in himself and in the phase of history that helped to make him. To see where he went wrong and where he seems likely to have been right. To contrive an alternative picture – using his own fictional technique – of the condition to which the seventies seem to be moving and which may well subsist in a real 1984 – or, to avoid plagiarism, 1985.

The seventies, the time when Burgess was writing *1985*, were a time of rebellious youth movements at universities. The source text is part of a chapter called “Bakunin's children”; Bakunin needs to be identified as a Russian anarchist philosopher of the 19th century, and his “children” are the rebellious students of the seventies. An important concern for Burgess is an individual's free will, and here the conclusion of *A Clockwork Orange* (the book rather than the film) is relevant.

Students often complain that in this text they cannot follow the writer's arguments for lack of explicit cohesion markers (e.g. *but, therefore, nevertheless*). But when we look for lexical cohesion, certain thematic words arise. There is *freedom, liberty* and even *licence; young* and *old* and their various derivatives; there is *knowledge, books* and *education*, linked to the *old* and the *past*. There are *neo-anarchists* and *primitivists*, who turn their backs on education, wish to be free to choose but have no “knowledge of what the choice entails” (Burgess, 1978: 74). The text also serves as a good example of textual manipulation, with the author's argument seemingly watertight, which easily leads to a discussion of translation ethics in class.

The book has not been translated into Finnish; the function of the translation could therefore be to introduce Finnish readers to more work by an author whom they know by at least one of his earlier novels. Orwell's *1984* has been translated into Finnish twice (1950 and 1999).

The analysis also shows how certain lexical translation choices are better in line with the writer's argument than others: an emphasis on books makes *koulutus* 'schooling' a more obvious choice than *kasvatus* 'raising' for *education*, and the straightforward style makes any polite euphemism for *the old* unnecessary. The result of the analysis is rewarding in that students end up understanding a text that initially seemed to defeat them.

5. Problems

Teaching and testing at the department have shown that there are certain specific problems requiring particular attention during the course. Translation problems are here understood in the sense of Nord (1997: 64): they are intersubjective and identifiable in advance, but translators can develop ways of dealing with them and such ways can be taught. Failure to identify problems is likely to lead to errors. The reasons for translation errors listed by Ritva Hartama-Heinonen (1993: 80ff) are mostly subjective: insufficient understanding of the source text; source language interference; unfamiliarity with the proper use of dictionaries and other tools; uncertainty about the role of the translator; lack of time; and indifference to the quality of the translated product. All of these may be present in student work, where it is not always easy to distinguish commonly occurring subjective difficulties from intersubjective problems (see section 5.2. below). But intersubjective problems, whether pragmatic, cultural, linguistic or text-specific (Nord, 1997: 64), mostly result from differences between source and target language systems and cultures. In this article I will single out as intersubjective translation problems source-text metaphorical expressions and syntactic complexity. The translator needs to consider both of these in the light of target-cultural norms governing written communication (especially expectancy norms; see Chesterman, 1997: 64) in order to create functionally appropriate and clearly worded target texts. Aiming at fidelity, students may try to imitate as much of the source text as they can, forgetting that the target text needs to be readable, and so differences in source and target-language norms are disregarded. A third area briefly touched on below is the need to pay attention to different systems of measures and to numerals.

Intersubjective problems affect also translations done outside the university. Rosa Aaltonen in her Master's thesis (2006) considers translations of English texts by political columnists done for *Helsingin Sanomat*, Finland's largest and most influential newspaper. She asked six language expert informants (mostly experienced professional translators, some of whom were also used to revising the work of colleagues) for their comments on selected published translations of the columns and found that in the opinion of her informants, the translations were generally prone to three particular weaknesses which were nevertheless not language errors as such. The informants noted strange metaphorical expressions in the target texts, found that syntactic structures were sometimes un-Finnish, and felt that the translations sometimes lacked clarity because of unclear antecedents, interference from English, etc. In this article, un-Finnish syntactic structures and lack of clarity will be subsumed under one heading (5.2.).

5.1. Metaphorical Expressions

With metaphorical expressions, I refer to both creative metaphors (e.g. *her words like the bubbles of new wine*, Samuel Shellabarger, 1948, *Prince of Foxes*, p. 70) and non-transparent idioms (e.g. *to have a bee in one's bonnet*). Standard or conventional metaphors (*a sunny smile*) tend not to be translation problems but can be included in discussions of translation strategies. On the translation of creative metaphors in literary texts, I have argued, following Toury's (1995: 81-84) suggestion that target-text metaphors are solutions rather than problems, that translators may decide to insert value-adding metaphors (VAMs) in the target text as ways of resisting standardization and as expressions of their own creativity (Leppihalme, 2007). My concern in this article is with non-literary texts, where adherence to target-cultural norms is essential because readers of such texts mostly do not compare them to their source texts but see and evaluate them in the target-language cultural context, as target-language texts. If attitudes to metaphorical expressions are different in source and target-language cultures, this knowledge must guide the translator's decision-making.

Finnish expectancy norms for informative texts frown on very colourful language, and even text types with a vocative or expressive function, like newspaper columns published on the editorial page, are expected to express opinions in a sober way, avoiding rhetorical excesses. (Indeed, in the target culture, a source-cultural opinion may function more as an informative text than a vocative [operative] or expressive one: in other words, it may be assumed to inform target-cultural readers of the way a topic is generally seen in the other country.) Hence a fairly literal rendering of example (1a) as (1b) is in breach of target-cultural norms:

(1a) A smothering *blanket* of apprehension and dread *woven* by 35 years of repression – where even the smallest mistake could bring torture or death – won't be *cast off* in a few weeks' time. (Paul Wolfowitz, "Roots of Hope in a Realm of Fear", *The Washington Post*, 30 July 2003; emphases added)

(1b) He ovat joutuneet elämään 35 sortovuoden aikana *kudotun* tukahduttavan huolen ja kauhun *peiton alla*, jossa pienimmästäkin virheestä voi joutua kidutettavaksi tai tapettavaksi. Peittoa ei voi *vetää syrjään* muutamassa viikossa. (Wolfowitz, "USA murskaa Saddamin hallinnon kaikilla tasoilla", *Helsingin Sanomat*, 5 August 2003; emphases added)

The metaphor of a *smothering blanket* [...] *woven by 35 years of repression* [that] *won't be cast off* was retained in the published translation (1b), but the literal rendering given to *blanket*, *peitto*, is quite concrete in its meaning, most easily visualized as an actual bed cover. To transform it into a metaphor, especially when the concreteness is reinforced by rendering *woven* as *kudottu* (evoking a knitted sweater or pair of socks) and *cast off* as *vetää syrjään* 'pull aside', is an example of the quasi-correctness observed also in Finnish translations of Soviet journalistic texts by Inkeri Vehmas-Lehto (1989). In other words, the literal translation contains no actual language error but the decision to retain the metaphor was a translation error, breaking Finnish norms for the type of text in question.

An alternative rendering could go as follows:

(1c) Irakilaiset eivät voi vain muutamassa viikossa vapautua pelosta, joka on 35 vuoden ajan heitä ahdistanut. Pieninkin virhe saattoi johtaa kidutukseen ja kuolemaan. 'The Iraqis cannot in only a few weeks become free of the fear that for 35 years has oppressed them. The least error could [then] lead to torture and death'

(1c) deletes most of the metaphors but focuses on the meaning. *Apprehension* and *dread* are subsumed under one word, *pelko* 'fear'. The verb *ahdistaa* for *smothering* is mildly metaphorical (it derives from *ahdas* 'too tight', hence making it hard for a person to breathe); it is given c. 20 English equivalents from *pinch* to *oppress* in a Finnish-English dictionary. For *cast off*, a non-metaphorical rendering, 'become free of', is chosen. The syntactic reformulation of (1c) will be taken up in the next section.

The retention of a norm-breaking metaphor in (1b) can be explained both by the translator's lack of time for revision and by a desire to not alter the source-text writer's style, yet discussions in class on the effects of such metaphors in a Finnish text reveal that like Aaltonen's (2006) informants, the students too think that the metaphors make the text less persuasive and raise the question of whether the text should be taken seriously at all. Similar results were obtained in Vehmas-Lehto's (1989) experiments. Some students comment that it is annoying to read a text that does not feel like Finnish and which actually obscures the point the writer is making. If an original Finnish text with very frequent metaphors and idioms is read for comparison (examples are most easily furnished by sports pages), it tends to be received as a joke or a parody. With political texts it is noted that non-literal expressions can also be used as a protective screen, enabling the writer to suggest something but allowing him/her a chance to rebut the interpretation if challenged.

An exercise on source-text metaphorical expressions may invite students to try out both metaphorical and non-metaphorical target renderings, with discussion in class of their effects. For example, the conventional idiom *flogging a dead horse* 'wasting one's time or efforts' can elicit half a dozen metaphorical suggestions (e.g. *lyödä päätään seinään* 'knock one's head against the wall', *puhua seinille* 'talk to the wall', *potkia tutkainta vastaan* 'kick against the pricks' (pointed sticks used to goad cattle to move faster), with the students finally concluding that none of these is really appropriate in the mouth of the fictional character who uses the idiom in conversation in a detective story. Other renderings then result from a focus on the meaning of the phrase and may be thought to be more appropriate in the context: *toivoton yritys* 'hopeless attempt', *ennakolta tuhoon tuomittu* 'doomed in advance', *ajan haaskausta* 'waste of time'. Alternatives may of course also be stylistically similar, and then preferences for one or the other may depend on each student's idiolect: *I took to my heels* has been rendered for example by *pötkiä tiehensä, lähteä kypälämäkeen, ottaa jalat alleen, lähteä lätkimään, lähteä livohkaan, pötkiä pakoon*. The acceptability of the highly domesticating *ottaa ritolat* 'do a Ritola' (which alludes to the famous Finnish runner and Olympic gold medallist of the 1920s, Vilho "Ville" Ritola) is, however, likely to be limited.

It is true that some idioms and metaphors are similar in both languages and that some loan translations of English metaphorical expressions are being adopted into Finnish; with those, there is no real translation problem after the loan has been accepted by

readers. New loan translations, though, can be impenetrable without knowledge of English. Students may use loan translations of English idioms when conversing among themselves to demonstrate belonging to an in-group: for example they may refer to a very small amount of, say, money, as *pähkinöitä* '(pea)nuts' (as in *working for peanuts*). But in a translated extract of a newspaper editorial published in a Finnish tabloid, the same word appears strikingly ill-chosen and quite possibly unclear in its meaning:

(2) Mutta se mitä Irakista löytyy saattaa olla *pähkinöitä* verrattuna Venäjän asevarastoihin. 'But what they will find in Iraq may be peanuts compared to the arsenals of Russia.' ("Maaileman lehdet" [World Press], translated extract of an editorial in the *Los Angeles Times*, published in *Ilta-Sanomat*, 8 October 2002; emphasis added)

In example (3), noticing that the italicized words form an extended metaphor (and one that may be thought to apply better to women than to men) will allow students to assess their own renderings: perhaps the somewhat derogatory idea of aging and so becoming less efficient can be rendered in the target text without imitating all of the source-text elements adding up to the *menopausal feeling*.

(3) Neither Prime Minister nor government will be able to deny to themselves what everyone else can see: they are *middle-aged*. Coming to a head will be the *menopausal* feeling that has afflicted New Labour in the year that is just coming to a close. Ministers have been sounding *tired* and looking *flushed*, but not too often with success. *Shorter of breath*, they find it increasingly hard to hide the *ravages of time*. (Andrew Rawnsley, "Tony Blair's *midlife crises*", *The Observer*, 29 December 2002; emphases added.)

Note also the suggestion by Andrew Chesterman (2007) that the "rhetorical salience threshold" of different languages may differ and therefore in translation there is a need for "salience adjustment": toning down of for example such elements as superlatives, intensifiers and figurative expressions, or conversely, toning up text that feels too weak. He argues, comparing some examples from original text in a British and a Finnish quality newspaper, that English has a lower salience threshold than Finnish and requires more compensatory "supplements". If these are transferred to the Finnish translation, the result will not feel authentic but "cluttered, sensationalist or the like" (2007: 233). He also refers to the work of Candace Séguinot (1982), who found that revisers of translations of French journalistic texts into English tended to reduce emotive and figurative language. This would imply that the salience threshold is highest for Finnish and lowest for French, but Chesterman admits that so far, the evidence is circumstantial only. The work done at the translation course supports his ideas as far as English and Finnish are concerned. Translating *menopausal* with the medical term *vaihdevuodet*, for example, would be thought too striking for the context — and even inaccurate when used of male politicians —, while a dictionary equivalent for *shorter of breath* 'increasingly unable to breathe very well' is mostly thought in Finnish to refer to panting after a particular physical effort, and therefore would not work well as a metaphor for a general loss of energy due to aging.

5.2. Syntactic complexity and lack of clarity

Students regularly comment on the long sentences and complex syntactic structures of English texts, and indeed it appears that recognizing in what kind of relationship the

various phrases and clauses stand to one another may require considerable L2 reading experience. Furthermore, target-language reformulation of such texts requires a willingness to make the cognitive effort. If target texts are not rewritten with attention to target-language norms, they are less successful as target texts.

Finnish norms for (mainly) informative texts are expressed in various writing guides. Their consequences for translation are the topic of an article by the experienced translator Risto Varteva (1995), who points out that the only way to avoid foreign sentence structure is to rethink the whole text in the target language. He argues that if the foreign sentence structure is retained, it will hide connections and relationships, making the target reader first work on uncovering those before s/he can start thinking of what the writer's actual point is. He sees Finnish as such a singular language structurally that translation really requires rewriting the whole text.

A quantitative analysis of original Finnish informative text shows that sentence length is usually between 18 and 20 words and there are two or three clauses per sentence. (When comparing sentence length, note that Finnish has no articles or prepositions.) Effective Finnish informative text addressed to general readers is expected to be logical and clear, to avoid heavy left-branching constructions and abstract expressions like nominalizations. Revision of student translations also often leads to changes in word order because of differences between the languages as regards theme, focus and information processing.

To return to example (1a), the text examined for its metaphors in section 5.1., it is easily seen that the published translation (1b) hardly breaches the quantitative norms: the translator has cut the source-text sentence (32 words) in half, with the result that the first sentence has 22 words, the second, seven. The alternative version (1c) is somewhat shorter, with 15 words in the first clause, seven in the second. But the reason why (1c) is easier to process and hence clearer as a communication is the order of the propositions: Finnish readers expect to see the main point early whereas in English, the main point may come only after several subordinate points. The translation (1b), which follows the ST order of propositions, starts with the long time Iraqis have had to live in fear under repression; the alternative translation (1c) rearranges the propositions and begins with the thought that they will not be able to let go of their fears very quickly. Readers of (1b) need to process the (norm-breaking) metaphor before coming to the writer's main point: he argues that it will take time for the people of Iraq to adapt to a new situation. Such processing adds to the cognitive effort required.

Example (1b), then, aims at faithfulness on the word level whereas (1c) attempts to conform to target-cultural communication norms and to avoid quasi-correctness. The latter aim is also served by the considerable toning down of the metaphorical expressions in (1c) (see 5.1.).

Sentence length is not the only factor complicating English source texts. Example (4) below, where source-text sentence length is not an obvious issue (it ranges between 10 and 31 words), illustrates both syntactic and lexical difficulties as well as those due to insufficient world knowledge. As noted above, in student work it is not always easy to distinguish between intersubjective linguistic problems and a subjective lack of world knowledge and even insufficient reading comprehension; in many texts, problems and

difficulties are interlinked. If a student is unaware of *legislation* concerning *freedom of information*, s/he may not understand the phrase *freedom of information legislation* but may think that the writer has in mind *information legislation* which in some sense is *free*. The contrast between a politician's *standing* 'status, reputation' and his *argument* 'reason(s) for what he tries to persuade people of' is not only lexical but presupposes some awareness of attitudes to politicians. Students who have not encountered the phrase *the lunatic fringe* 'members of a society or of a group regarded as holding extreme or fanatical views', (*Cassells Concise English Dictionary*, 1994) in other texts and so are unaware of its being a conventional description may choose unconventional renderings that are too strong (e.g. *mielipuolinen ääripää*).

(4) Researchers for the right-wing think-tank in Gore's home state used freedom of information legislation to access the fuel bills of his Nashville mansion. They found that while Gore was filming pleas for Americans to save energy, the Gore family consumed more electricity in a month than the average American household did in a year. The story went round the world but, sensibly, the media treated it as a joke. Exposing a politician or anyone else as a hypocrite damages his standing but not his argument. The case that man-made global warming is causing climate change stands whether Gore leaves his lights on all night or not. The centre hadn't denied global warming; if anything, its call for Gore to practise what he preached was a small contribution to the campaign to mitigate its worst effects. The furious reaction of American environmentalists, therefore, took it aback. (Nick Cohen, "Beware the noxious fumes of eco-extremism", *The Observer*, 15 April 2007)

But apart from such difficulties, it is the syntactic complexity of the source text that may result in a translation that lacks clarity, or even in a "mismatch of the denotative meaning" (House, 1981: 208-209) of the whole passage if the relationships of the various elements are confused. Attempts to copy source-text structures may leave antecedents too far behind or lead to the choice of a wrong antecedent. In the above example, *its worst effects* refers to the effects of *global warming*, not of *the campaign*. There is a similar problem with the penultimate word, *it*: its antecedent is *the centre*, not *the campaign*. But even if the novice translator is able to follow the writer's argumentation, s/he may still not find it easy to reverbilize it in the target language in a clear and concise way. It is here that theoretical concepts in the classroom discussion can be helpful. Students often comment that when they work alone, they can only think of one way of creating a translation but when they see what others have done, it enables them to think of more alternatives and to learn to gauge what is and what is not successful. This will in turn lead to an ability to see alternatives in the light of theoretical concepts and to verbalize their reasons for preferring one solution to another. This again will be useful to a professional in working life and emphasize his/her position as a language and communication expert.

5.3. Measures and numerals

Under this heading, some issues are brought up that students in the arts and humanities may not consider particularly important but which in real life would easily reveal the language professional's lack of competence. I refer to measures and numerals. A text that I have been using for over a decade illustrates the former, and furthermore brings it home to students that a translator needs to check calculations to avoid repeating the original writer's possible mistake. The short source text (see Appendix 2) was published

in the *National Geographic* in May 1995 and reports on the unexpected results of a botanical study. Buckets placed on the ground by botanists to collect falling leaves and twigs turned out to contain lizards as well. Students working on their translations at home make commendable efforts to identify the type of lizard, finding and making use of its scientific name, *Sceloporus occidentalis*, on the Internet. But what they do not often stop to consider is the description of the experimental setup and its results: “In two years 198 lizards turned up in buckets covering an area of 422 square feet. This works out to 30,000 lizards a year on an acre” (Anonymous, “Leapin’ Lizards Can’t Get a Grip”, *National Geographic*, May 1995).

There are two problems in translating this account for a Finnish popular science magazine. The first is that the imperial measures (see Table 1) need to be changed into measures of the metric system for the benefit of Finnish readers, for whom the imperial measures are uninformative and who would usually have no grasp of how large an *acre* is. Reporting on the results also involves checking the arithmetic calculations.

Imperial	Metric
Sq ft (1 foot x 1 foot = 1 ft ² = 0,09 m ²)	Sq meter (1 m x 1 m = 1 m ²)
Sq yd (1 yard x 1 yard = 9 ft ² = c.0,8 m ²)	Are (10 m x 10 m = 100 m ²)
Acre (= 4,840 yd ² = 4,047 m ² , hence c. 0,4 hectares)	Hectare (100 m x 100 m = 10,000 m ² = 100 ares)
Sq mile (= 640 acres = c. 259 hectares)	Sq kilometer (= 1 km x 1 km = 1,000,000 m ² = 100 hectares)

Table 1. Some measurement units in the imperial and metric systems for measuring surface of land (sq = square).

The students normally make the change for the first measure found in the text (422 square feet), reporting that the buckets were placed on c. 39 or 40 square meters. The source text then goes on to say (or imply) that if an equal density of lizards in buckets were to be found on an area covering an acre, there would be 30,000 lizards found there each year. The novice translators often render the *acre* (a measure not used in Finland), correctly but inappropriately as *eeckeri*, though this makes the reported result hard for target readers to grasp.³ Some students change the acre into an *are* (a much smaller area than an acre) or occasionally even into a square kilometre, a very much larger area. But the number of lizards also needs to be checked. Mostly the student translations retain the number 30,000, but their numbers may go as high as two million per hectare or as low as 8,000 per km². The source-text details (c. 100 lizards per year on 422 square feet,

³ In a literary translation, however, imperial measures are often retained. Kristiina Latvanen (2007) in her Master’s thesis examined five Finnish translations of Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* (1848) dating from 1927 to 2006. She found that the earlier translations avoided the foreign flavour by rendering *gallon* as *viisi litraa* ‘five litres’ or using a superordinate term whereas the two newest ones use the imperial unit. For *yard*, the older solutions vary from *yardi* to *kynnärä* ‘ell’. The choice is not always consistent: the newest translation uses both *jaardi* and *metri* for *yard* and also replaces the precise measurement with a vague *jonkin matkaa* ‘some way’. *Mile* is always retained in its conventional Finnish spelling as *maili*.

in other words on roughly 40 m²) show that the true annual result must be 10,000 per acre or 25,000 per hectare.

In this context students are reminded to be especially careful with the word *billion*, which in economic texts means ‘a thousand millions’ though its Finnish cognate *biljoona* means ‘a million millions’ (English *trillion*). To avoid confusion, ‘thousands of millions’ are to be preferred over both *billion* and *miljardi*. In scientific and technological texts, of course, superscripts are the normal option, with 10⁹ indicating the number with nine zeros. The different punctuation conventions with numerals are also pointed out: in English punctuation, commas come between thousands, but in Finnish, commas separate decimals from whole numbers.

Lack of space prevents discussing other work done at the course. Other areas include for example writing a summary, some use of Internet resources and translation of dialogue or humour, but in view of the shortness of the course, these can be dealt with only briefly.⁴

6. Feedback

Feedback is collected with feedback forms inviting students to express their opinions on text selection, classroom work and their own contribution to it and to suggest improvements to the way the course is run. The questions are open-ended (e.g. “What was the best/worst thing about the course?”).

In their comments (the quotes below are my translations), students like the variety of texts and proclaim the texts interesting and challenging. They also welcome an approach whereby texts are analysed in detail and considered as a whole rather than as a string of sentences. “I really learned to think about the text instead of just copying it”, “we did not just translate, we also read and analysed”, “my view of translating got wider”, “I learned things that are of practical use”. There are also comments on other aspects: “I worried about our names being shown with the translations but it was not too stressful, and after all, translators do not work anonymously either”, “there was no need to be afraid of asking questions”. They like the arrangement that there are two student translations distributed for each text. This helps students assess alternatives and see that there is not just one “correct” translation.

Very few students suggest improvements to the course but some say it could be longer and also deal with some special domains. The system whereby there is no continuous assessment but grades are given on the basis of one translation done under exam conditions after the course is also sometimes criticized. (Continuous assessment has been introduced for the optional Advanced course.)

⁴ An administrative restructuring in the University of Helsinki in 2009 will mean closer links between language departments and translator education. How it will affect translation teaching in language departments is currently being discussed. It may offer language students interested in translation an opportunity to profit from courses for the university’s students in translation studies, who for historical reasons have so far been trained at a separate department of translation studies in a fairly distant location.

8. Conclusion

As this article has shown, I see translation theory and practice as necessary components in the education of language professionals, but my approach is slightly different from those syllabi which favour presenting various translation theories separately. Elements of the theories that have affected my approach to translation the most, can easily be singled out in this article (such as the emphasis on target-text function and target-cultural norms). Still, rather than identify with one school of thought, I prefer to think that increasing familiarity with translation theories over the past 20 years coupled with long experience in teaching translation has fostered the growth of a personal, holistic, multi-faceted theory of translation which includes ideas I consider particularly useful for work with language students. My way of thinking includes not just the intellectual side of teaching but also the emotional side of it: when a teacher has internalized ideas that are important to him/her and brings them to class, the ideas may well find an echo in the minds of the students, who will, as a result, be encouraged to formulate their own views on translating and to build on those. We need knowledge of theories, but we also need to allow individual teachers to choose what to emphasize, and by extension allow students to gauge the value of the various views offered in their education while their own experience of life and translation keeps growing.

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Appendix 1.

Bakunin's Children (extract)

In any discussion of the political future of the countries of the Free World, we have to consider seriously the danger that the youth movements represent to the cause of traditional liberty. Such a statement will seem nonsensical to youth itself, which believes it is the sole custodian of freedom in an age when the old seem desirous of limiting it more and more. It is true that age seeks to limit the freedom of youth but only because this freedom is properly licence. If men are born free it is only in the Ingsoc sense that animals too are born free: freedom to choose between two courses of action presupposes knowledge of what the choice entails. We gain knowledge through direct experience, like the burnt child fearing the fire, or else through the experience of others, which is contained in books. The voice of the neo-anarchists is that of the film-maker Mr Dennis Hopper: 'There ain't nothing in books, man,' or that of the British pop-singer who said: 'Youth don't need education. Youth susses things out for itself like.' Dr Samuel Johnson, having listened to an exponent of primitivism, said: 'This is sad stuff, sir. This is brutish.' It is cow-like rather than lion-like. It takes a long time to gain, by browsing over a field, the protein available in a quick meal of meat. We old offer the meat of education; the counter-culture goes back to grass.

Education consists of taking swift and economical meals out of the larder called the past. - -

Anthony Burgess (1978:74-75), 1985. London: Hutchinson.

(More of the source text is not reproduced here for copyright reasons. The text used for the course consists of three successive paragraphs in all.)

Appendix 2.

Leapin' Lizards Can't Get a Grip

Surely the world's most arboreally challenged reptile is the western fence lizard of California. In Monterey County the trees rain lizards, as a trio of botanists inadvertently discovered. While they were studying the nutrient cycle of an oak woodland, they placed buckets around trees to collect falling leaves and twigs. Besides the litter fall, they got "lizardfall".

In two years 198 lizards turned up in buckets covering an area of 422 square feet. That works out to 30,000 lizards a year on an acre. Many lizards take the plunge repeatedly; by marking individuals, the researchers found that the average western fence lizard falls six times a year.

"In spring, most that fall are males," says William H. Schlesinger of Duke University. "They do push-ups on tree limbs, a courtship display females find attractive. Perhaps some overdo it and fall." Another possibility: An insect flies by and an overzealous lizard pursues it – right into space.