Translation And Interpreting for Language Learners
An introduction

By Laurie Anderson, Laura Gavioli & Federico Zanettin (Università di Siena, Università di Modena e Reggio Emilia, Università di Perugia, Italy)

Abstract & Keywords

Keywords: formazione interpreti e traduttori, corpus-based translation studies, interpreting studies, translator and interpreter training, language teaching, translator education, guy aston, anna ciliberti, daniela zorzi

> *One of the tasks of applied linguistics is the formulation of pedagogic problems for which solutions may be obtained through the use of techniques derived from the linguistic disciplines: at the same time, the relationship between linguistics and pedagogy is a dialectic one, so that an applied linguistic approach to discourse may also provide insights of descriptive interest as well as ones of pedagogic relevance* (Introduction to The PIXI Project, Aston, 1988a: 12-3)

1. Rationale[*]

In the increasingly cosmopolitan and multilingual societies of our contemporary globalized world, translation is needed in both cross-border exchanges and everyday communication. The prominent role of translation is reflected on the one hand by the constant growth of translator and interpreter training institutions around the world (Caminade & Pym, 1995; Kim, 2013), on the other, by the renewed attention which translation has attracted not only in dedicated settings such as interpreter and translator training institutions, but also in academic language teaching settings more generally.

In the context of translator and interpreter education the need to share teaching problems and methods and to reflect critically on both has led, among others, to the publication of a dedicated journal, *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer* (since 2007). In the context of language teaching and learning, translation was for long mostly disregarded as a suitable type of activity, with only a few exceptions, most notably Alan Duff's pioneering book *Translation*, published in the Oxford Resource Books for Teachers series in 1989. The renewed interest for translation in the language classroom (e.g. Cook, 1999; Carreres, 2005; Zanettin, 2009) can be seen as both a consequence of critical reflection on the limits of the "direct" monolingual methods of the 1980s and a belated acknowledgment that foreign language learners are, by definition, speakers of at least two languages - their own and the one(s) they are learning (Cook, 2010).

Translation And Interpreting for Language Learners (TAIL) is a collection of papers that addresses a two-faceted pedagogic question: How can interpreter/translator training be enhanced by greater attention to what happens in the classroom, and how can general language learning be furthered by recognising interpreting/translating as abilities worthy of attention alongside the traditional "four skills"? The activities and reflections provided in this volume are a result of the contributors' academic experience, in their classes and with their students. The attempt is to take a "learner-centred" approach by providing suggestions about how students can be given opportunities to both practice and observe (Aston, 1988b) problems that arise when interacting in and/or comparing different languages for the purpose of communicating across cultures. The teaching/learning activities presented are offered "as examples" and are aimed at stimulating thought about other possible activities that can be created or adapted, using the same or different languages and language combinations.

Interpreting and Translation are here intended in a broad sense, i.e. as embracing questions related to the professional training of both students who are attending courses to become interpreters and translators, and those who need to mediate in various ways between more than one language, such as language teachers in language classrooms or (language) experts in international and intercultural communication. Thus, reflections on cross-cultural differences in communication, translating intra-linguistically from and into different registers, appreciating (and understanding) prosodic varieties, negotiating in native / non-native speaker interaction are all seen as abilities necessary to achieve expertise in mediating between languages and cultures. The contributions collected in this volume are written in three languages, French, English and Italian, but include translation in and from other languages, e.g. Arabic, Spanish and German. There are a number of reasons behind this choice. The predominance of the Italian language is due to the fact that most of the collected lessons arise from experiences in the Italian academy. However, translation necessarily involves bi- or plurilingualism, so a plurilingual volume seemed apt to deal with translation issues; indeed, anyone who is involved in translation needs to know at least two languages. Since most contributions deal directly with translation, most of the examples in these papers are given in two languages, which we hope will facilitate understanding. By mixing three different languages we would also like to suggest that this volume goes beyond specific linguistic pairs, addresseing translation problems more at large.

All the papers in the volume share a common concern with bridging (data-based) research and teaching/learning activity and with illustrating how linguistic and translation research can inform language pedagogy. Efforts to make these two aspects interact are observable on two levels. First, all the studies in the collection deploy authentic samples of language use, be they recordings, transcripts, concordance extracts or single texts. The samples have been selected as evidence of "items" which may be relevant for the learners to grasp, be they

language patterns which are "interesting" in the two languages or mechanisms which may facilitate communication in international, intercultural settings. Second, these items are treated in a teaching/learning perspective, e.g. they are inserted into language learning tasks that give the students opportunities to explore their relevance or are addressed as problems that may lead to cross-linguistic or cross-cultural (mis)understanding. The relationship between linguistic research and language teaching/learning is dealt with transversally in the contributions, which – as a careful reading will show – taken together detail that, while research on language use and research on language pedagogy can (and possibly should) fruitfully contaminate each other, much remains to be learnt about how to bring them to bear in a mutually informed way on classroom practice.

The volume unites approaches from interpreting/translation studies and applied linguistics, and includes considerations of sociolinguistic aspects relevant to both. Teaching/learning interpreting and translation are complex activities that include working on the languages involved and their specialised registers, mastering translation tools and technologies, handling problems of linguistic comparability and pragmatic and discoursal equivalence, and implementing teaching methodologies based on learning by doing that foster students' active participation in classroom communication. Below, we provide a short outline of the volume.

2. The volume in brief

The volume is divided into four parts, the first two dealing more directly with interpreting and translation activities, the second two with language learning and methodological concerns which we feel merit attention by those concerned both with teaching and learning translation and learning through translation. Part 1 (Interpreting and Mediating) collects seven papers, the first two of which focus on teaching and learning conference interpreting. In the first article Mariachiara Russo shows that in simultaneous interpreting, the very action of producing lexical units that are semantically and pragmatically sound in the target language is not easily learnt. Russo reports on classroom activities in which students compared interpreted speeches they had produced with those of professional interpreters. Students were asked to reflect on the different translation choices that were made. By looking at the comments she collected, Russo notes that this comparative work allowed students to observe and develop techniques which enabled them to handle larger units of discourse than would otherwise have been the case, in terms of both comprehension and production. In the second contribution Caterina Falbo addresses the issue of speech prosody in interpreted discourse. She highlights the importance of identifying cues that may favour or hinder understanding of the main pragmatic purposes of speech, both as regards the source speech/text and as regards the interpreter's rendering. She suggests that by working on these cues the students may improve their prosodic control so as to produce more effective interpreted speeches.

The next five contributions all deal with dialogue interpreting. The first two focus on how observing transcripts of interpreter-mediated interaction can lead students to appreciate the features of this type of interaction. The activity proposed by Anna Claudia Ticca revolves around a single extract recorded in a psychotherapeutic setting. Ticca highlights how the interpreter needs to cope both with interpreting what is said in the two languages and displaying the moods and reactions of the patient, since conveying both is necessary for the therapist to correctly diagnose the disease. The patient's responses reveal that cultural adjustments may be required while interpreting in order to help the patient feel at ease and thus collaborate more effectively with the doctor in piecing together the relevant details. Elena Davitti and Sergio Pasquandrea suggest instead that learners be invited to compare different case studies. Through observation, analysis and discussion of different cases, they illustrate how students can be led to understand the interpreting process and the interpreter's role and conduct in relation to a variety of communicative situations. In terms of training for professional practice, the module the authors present is thus intended to help students develop strategies for coping with challenges arising in different contextual constraints. The fifth paper in the first part, by Natacha Niemants, suggests a series of activities designed to help students deal with typical difficulties that can arise while engaged in dialogic interpreting. These include understanding unusual accents, making sense of sequences of action in the interaction, becoming familiar with the coordination activities that the interpreter - as the only bilingual speaker in the interaction - needs to perform. While observing interaction is part of the story, Niemants highlights that specific training is needed to help learners develop abilities like grasping meaning from less familiar accents and controlling dyadic and triadic sequences.

The contribution by Claudio Baraldi consists in a reflection on video-recordings of two sociology lessons and derives from class discussion of transcripts of interpreter-mediated interaction in healthcare settings. Some sequences containing "problematic" turns produced by the healthcarers (either because they were very short and implicit or long and technical) were presented to the students, who were asked to provide their own renditions and then compare them to those of the mediator who participated in the encounter. Baraldi shows how the class discussions triggered such comparisons was very useful in leading the students to understand what is involved in rendering in interaction; the contribution also provides food for thought about how teachers can fruitfully coordinate such student discussions. The last paper in the first part of the volume reflects on the relationship between data-based research and research-informed teaching and learning. In it, Laura Gavioli argues that while research on authentic transcripts of interpreter-mediated interaction provides a number of suggestions for dialogue interpreting teaching and learning, creating activities which favour authentic learning requires yet a further step forward. What this involves in pedagogical terms is discussed by looking at transcriptions of and students' comments on a roleplay they performed based on a "really-occurred" situation.

The second part in the volume (Corpora and Other Tools in Translation Teaching and Learning) deals with uses of language resources for learning how to translate and for observing features which may be useful in cross-linguistic education. In the first article Alan Partington illustrates how data-based teaching can feed into research by describing a corpus-based investigation of the English suffixes -*cracy* and -*archy*, first carried out with a group of translation students, and subsequently expanded with the help of large newspaper corpora. He shows that even language units below the level of the word may carry a more or less pronounced semantic prosody - that is, a positive or negative evaluation. Further, he examines the productivity and potential for irony of these particles, and concludes by suggesting that comparing the evaluative prosody of lexical items generally considered translation equivalents can be a valuable learning activity. The next article, by Silvia Bernardini and Andy Cresswell, focuses on a study of citations expressed through projecting clauses, an issue which was tackled as part of both a language course and a linguistics course for translation and interpreting students at Master's Level. The students in question were engaged first in classifying and describing concordances from a corpus of academic English, then in comparing findings from this corpus with those from a corpus of English as a lingua franca. Though the activities proposed proved to be rather challenging, they helped the students develop analytic skills and greater research autonomy. In the following article, Letizia Cirillo illustrates a module designed to provide

undergraduate students with hands-on experience of corpus aided translation. She describes how she first introduced students to the key concepts of concordance and collocation and then guided them to familiarize themselves with a variety of corpus types. Finally, students were shown how to design and compile their own specialised comparable corpora from the Web, and use them as resources to translate both into and out of Italian. She presents evidence showing how the activities proposed increased both the students' metalinguistic and metatranslational awareness, a finding that supports the case for data-driven activities.

While the students in these first three contributions in this section can be described as vocational learners, the students focused on in the next two studies are non-specialists, i.e. students not enrolled in translation or language departments. Both Cesare Zanca and Federico Zanettin deal with the use of language corpora and other tools to help such students translate as well as to engage in other types of reading and writing activities. They suggest that students can be guided to discover patterns of language use by introducing corpora and corpus linguistics methodologies gradually through other online resources that as "digital natives" students are more familiar with, including dictionaries and search engines. Zanca provides a comprehensive overview of a range of online resources, while Zanettin illustrates how the students he worked with used this type of resources to carry out translations and summaries. Among the resources discussed by Zanettin are machine translation systems, which are the specific focus of the last article in this part of the volume. In it, authors Christine Heiss and Marcello Soffritti discuss DeepL Translate, a recent system based on neural networks which has been hailed as a major step forward in the field. Heiss and Soffritti evaluate the system's output relative to different types of technical texts, comparing it to published human translations and to the competing Google Translate system. They find that while the translations produced by DeepL Translate show considerable quality improvements over previous results, the need for human post-editing is still present. They also point out that the emergence of more sophisticated machine translation systems highlights the need to systematically incorporate MT output evaluation and post-editing into the training of professional translators, and provide some suggestions about how best to do so.

Part 3 (Learning Another Language and Our Own) and part 4 (Reflections on (Cross) Language Issues) of the volume tackle issues pertaining to the education of intercultural specialists more generally, that is, issues that regard not only matters of language learning in the training of translators and interpreters, but also in foreign language teaching/learning more generally. Part 3 focuses on language learning in interpreting and translation curricula and "translation" learning in foreign language curricula. The first contribution by Dominic Stewart presents and comments on a lesson intended for interpreting trainees and advanced learners of English, designed to help them reflect critically upon why, within a European context, the form of pronunciation of the English language known as RP still constitutes a target for students and teachers of English as a foreign language. Stewart's jocular reflection on the status and significance of English RP will help prospective interpreters and teachers make more aware choices when using or teaching pronunciation. The second contribution by Francesca La Forgia focuses on teaching/learning Italian as a first language in interpreter training. Through a series of activities based on reformulation and text comparison, La Forgia aims at enabling interpreting students to recognize and analyze different forms of institutional communication, a type of discourse that can trigger a number of linguistic and cultural problems in rendering bilingually. The third contribution, by Francesca Gatta, concentrates on writing as an instrument through which to critical reflect on one's own linguistic behaviour. She argues that written and oral communication, together with text comprehension, are central to interpreter and translator training, and supports this view by drawing on examples from students' written production.

The paper by Paola Leone focuses on mediation as an interactional activity and as a resource for negotiating meaning in native-nonnative conversation. Leone looks at so-called "tandem-learning", where pairs of language students, via Voice-over protocols such as Skype, chat together for half an hour in their own language and half an hour in the language they are learning (and which is the other student's mother tongue). She describes how, by keeping track of such conversations, teachers can highlight communication features and strategies adopted in interaction between speakers of different languages and propose them to students for subsequent analysis. The last contribution in part 3, by Laurie Anderson, illustrates how role play and other task-based activities designed to get learners to engage experientially with the fictional world of literary texts can used in the university classroom to help students develop a greater metalinguistic awareness of differences between linguistic systems and an ability to translate more successfully into their 'non-mother' tongues by stimulating a pragmatic, plurilingual perspective on language use.

While the contributions in part 3 focus on different aspects of language learning which can support interpreting and translation activities, those in part 4 address problems that have to do with linguistic analysis and teaching methodologies. The first two concentrate on linguistic analysis. Greta Zanoni's lesson deals with the use of impolite expressions, looking specifically at how to deal with "bad language" when a foreign language is concerned. Zanoni's examples are from lessons of Italian L2, but her reflection embraces foreign language teaching more in general. Cross-cultural issues related to how to deal with (im)politeness in a foreign language are pertinent, in fact, whenever face-to-face interaction is involved, not least in (dialogue) interpreting. Piera Margutti, in the second contribution in this part, poses a fundamental problem in interpreting/translation and, more in general, in intercultural communication, i.e. the extent to which social actions performed in different languages are actually comparable. Drawing on suggestions interaction studies, including Grice's conversational maxims, politeness theory and conversation analysis, Margutti asks students to tackle the problem of the legitimacy and plausibility of what we compare cross-linguistically through pedagogical activities grounded in actually-occurring interactions.

The two final contributions focus on teaching methodologies designed to enhance intercultural awareness and student participation. This section thus extends the purview of the volume from the role of language teaching/learning in interpreting/translation curricula to critical reflection on teaching objectives and methods in a broader cross-lingual and cross-cultural perspective. While such methods are appropriate for many language teaching/learning environments, they appear indispensable in our view in curricula involving translation activities. The module proposed by Luciana Fellin implements a student centered reflective pedagogy based on collaborative and experiential learning, a highly innovative approach in the US academic foreign language teaching context: students explore a new space, in this case a museum, by taking roles such as communications and marketing expert, art dealer and curator. Reflection on and documentation of their experience leads them to eventually elaborate a final product that can take the form of a video guide, brochure, poster, or another product suggested by the students themselves. The last paper in the volume, by Paola Polselli, focuses on project-based work on the language of the media and on the role of both interlinguistic and intralinguistic translation in appreciating

differences in text and medium variation. Polselli describes examples of some activities and tasks where students are engaged in exploring spoken communication on the radio. She shows how mediation of what is said and linguistic practices designed to highlight variation favour students' language awareness and their acquisition of discourse competence, including a greater awareness of discourse types and register changes.

3. The PIXI project[1]

In the mid to late 1980's, Anna Ciliberti, Daniela Zorzi and Guy Aston worked together within the PIXI (Pragmatics of Italian/English Cross-Cultural Interaction) project, a pioneering and highly innovative undertaking which combined a focus on a number of aspects now considered fundamental in linguistic research: spoken language and its features, corpus-based studies, issues and problems of comparability and equivalence, interaction as co-construction and participation, sequential patterning and "grammar" as occurring in language use. The PIXI project was also one of the first projects to place centre stage the question of data-based, research-informed language teaching and learning. Some short pictures of what the PIXI project was as a research, human and intercultural experience are contained in the post-scriptum section of this volume, where several researchers who participated in the PIXI group reflect on their learning experience within the group and what this experience meant to them. Gillian Mansfield discusses how it proved seminal to the development of the inquiry-based approach to teaching/learning that has underpinned much of her subsequent professional activity, one in which students are led to investigate corpora through a three-pronged process involving *noticing language*, *awareness raising*, and *critical reflection*. Gordon Tucker's contribution is an invitation to reflect on an aspect of academic practice – that of mentoring younger academics – which is rarely explicitly addressed. His description of his participation in the PIXI project as an academic research "apprenticeship" is not only a homage to a leadership style that was at once both authoritative and truly democratic, but also a useful reminder – in a climate of funding constraints in which a premium is placed on projecting detailed research outcomes and on rigorous, lock-step micromanagement – of the importance of fostering values of broader importance to collaborative research, such as an openness to multiple analytic perspectives, intellectual respect and an equitable division of labour. In her contribution, Susan George draws on a dance metaphor both to highlight what in her opinion made the project unique – an engagement in data-focused "generative listening" by researchers from different methodological and linguistic backgrounds – and to describe the project's substantive legacy - a elucidation of how social order is achieved in different linguistic and cultural settings "by dancing the steps of known interlocking routines". Finally, in the concluding contribution to this section, Jocelyne Vincent provides a rare glimpse into the dynamics of research as a situated practice by detailing, through a fond but critically informed reflection on the PIXI project and her participation in it, how individual research agendas and academic trajectories intersect with the broader concerns of disciplinary communities which are both historically and geographically situated.

4. Envoi

This volume is dedicated to Anna, Daniela and Guy, and is a joint publication by the Italian Association of Applied Linguistics (AItLA) and the online translation studies journal inTRAlinea[2]. The volume is opened by **a cover illustration by Ruey Brodine**,[3] a fellow traveller and PIXI who thus makes an apt non-verbal contribution to the volume, and closed by a bibliography of the works of Anna Ciliberti, Daniela Zorzi and Guy Aston, which provides a further idea of their theoretical and methodological contribution.

The volume is also the "tail" of our growing as students and colleagues with these three maestros who have dedicated their work to making learners protagonists of their own learning process. Anna, Daniela and Guy shared their academic lives with the contributors to this volume, and all of us were privileged to be - in different ways and in different circumstances - their learners. We thus think it particularly appropriate to dedicate to them a book in which we, in turn, think of our own learners as protagonists, in the hope that the "tail" of research on this topic will grow longer and that more and more tales of learning will be told.

References

Aston G. (1988a), Introduction, in Aston, G. (ed.), *Negotiating Service*, CLUEB, Bologna: 1-23.

Aston G. (1988b), *Learning Comity*, CLUEB, Bologna.

Carreres A. (2006), Strange Bedfellows: Translation and Language Teaching. The Teaching of Translation into L2 in Modern Languages Degrees: Uses and Limitations, in *Sixth Symposium on Translation, Terminology and Interpretation in Cuba and Canada: December 2006. Canadian Translators, Terminologists and Interpreters Council.* **http://www.cttic.org/publications_06Symposium.asp**

Cook G. (2010), *Translation in Language Teaching*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Cook V. (1999), Going beyond the Native Speaker in Language Teaching, *TESOL Quarterly* 33(2): 185-209.

Duff A. (1989), *Translation*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Kim M. (2013), Research on Translator and Interpreter Education, in Millán C. & Bartrina F. (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Translation Studies*, Routledge, London: 102–116.

Caminade M. & Pym A. (1995), *Les Formations en Traduction et Interprétation. Essai de Recensement Mondial.* Special issue of *Traduire*, Société Française des Traducteurs, Paris.

Zanettin F. (2009), Corpus-based Translation Activities for Language Learners, *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer* 3(2): 209–224.

Acknowledgements

Notes

[1] The contributions contained in this section were offered as personal tributes to the colleagues to whom this volume is dedicated, and therefore did not undergo peer reviewing.

[2] Anna, Daniela and Guy were among the founders of AItLA and many of the contributors to this volume have benefited from the scientific initiatives and contacts of this association. InTRAlinea is published by the Department of Translation and Interpreting of the University of Bologna, which Guy, Daniela and many of the contributors to this volume contributed to shape. The volume is available both in print and online at the following addresses: **www.aitla.it/pubblicazioni/studi-aitla** and **www.intralinea.org/specials/tail**.

[3] In the printed version published by AItLA.