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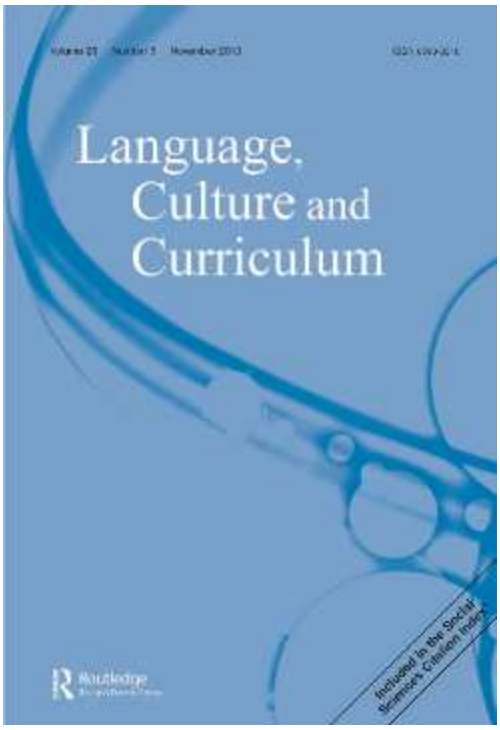

'We Actually Created a Good Mood!': Metalinguistic and literary engagement through collaborative translation in the secondary classroom

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Metalinguistic and literary engagement through collaborative translation in the secondary classroom

Abstract

This paper presents findings from observations of literary translation workshops with secondary school MFL pupils, revolving around a literary translation from L2 to L1 which does not require pre-existing language skills in the L2. Our research questions were: what skills do pupils mobilise when they work in groups on a literary translation? What can we say of the pupils' engagement and motivation? The data shows that pupils mobilise three categories of skills: metalinguistic, linguistic, and literary. Our first contention is that metalinguistic reflection feeds into both linguistic and literary aspects of the exercise and contributes to binding them together. The pupils displayed engagement most intensely when finding a translational 'solution' with expressive potential (that 'sounds good'). Their motivation was maintained through oral performance: pupils engage in vast amounts of vocalisation. We suggest that the spontaneous performative aspects of literary translation workshops help pupils process text, negotiate the linguistic territory across source and target language, and evaluate the aesthetic potential of their writing. Our second contention, therefore, is that translation in schools should maximise possibilities for moments of performance, opting for literary texts with strong expressive quality and potential for vocalisation.

Keywords: literary translation, metalinguistic skills, translation pedagogy, motivation, second-language learning, literary education

Introduction

This paper presents findings from observations of literary translation workshops in secondary schools, delivered by external providers, in the context of an MFL class. Similar workshops have been carried out in British schools for several years by professional translators; in the context of increasingly positive perceptions of translation in the classroom, those approaches are gaining increasing attention from policy-makers. However, there is currently little empirical data on the practice. This study is among the first in this area to focus on observation of the workshops and close analysis of recordings.

The pedagogical principle behind the workshops aligns with the model developed by the UK pioneer of the educational uses of literary translation, Translators in Schools. Such workshops allow pupils to work on a literary translation from L2 to L1 in a highly scaffolded way, without requiring pre-existing language skills in L2. The approach is thus principally experiential, and privileges collaborative work at all stages. This approach chimes with research highlighting metalinguistic skills for language-learning (e.g. Jessner, 1999 and 2005), challenging the 'immersion' model of monolingual use in language classrooms (e.g. Holmes, 2015a and 2015a; Jonsson, 2017), and supporting translanguaging and translinguistic skills (e.g. Li, 2018; Jonsson, 2019).

Our principal guiding question for the current study was as follows: what skills do pupils mobilise when they work in groups on a literary translation in a workshop context? We also had a secondary research question: what evidence can we gather of the pupils' engagement and motivation in the exercise?

We argue here that young people doing literary translation workshops mobilise three categories of skills that are relevant to both language-learning and literary education: metalinguistic awareness, linguistic competence, and an engagement with the literary (expressive) potential of language. Our first main contention is that metalinguistic reflection feeds into both linguistic and literary aspects of the exercise, and contributes to binding them together in the process of translation.

In terms of motivation, the pupils displayed engagement most intensely when decoding sentences (finding what 'makes sense') and when finding a translational 'solution' with expressive potential (finding what 'sounds good'). Their motivation was maintained through interactions

with peers, and, particularly, thanks to oral performance. It emerged from our data that the pupils engage in vast amounts of vocalisation, sometimes nonsensical or repetitious, both of the source text and of their translations.

We suggest here that the spontaneous, pupil-generated, performative aspects of literary translation workshops fulfil a crucial role both in mobilising the skills detailed above, and maintaining motivation. Through performance, pupils process the text, negotiate the linguistic territory across source and target language, and evaluate the aesthetic potential of sentences they write; they also galvanise each other and open up autonomous discursive spaces. It is our second main contention, therefore, that translation exercises in schools should maximise the likelihood of pupil-led, spontaneous performance, particularly by choosing literary texts with strong expressive quality and potential for vocalisation.

Literary Translation in Schools: A review of the literature

Research on translation in language-teaching (TILT) shows evidence of its worth for language-learning (see Malmkjaer, 1998; Butzkamm & Caldwell, 2009; Hall and Cook, 2012, Laviosa, 2014; González-Davies, 2004 and 2017), student engagement (Barnes, 2018), teacher satisfaction and inclusion of EAL students (Stephen Spender Trust, 2019), alignment with multicultural and multilingual education (Cook, 2010), and encouragement of creative multilingualism (Holmes 2015a and 2016b; Ardizzone and Holmes, 2020). Building on those researchers' work, we look at the skills that translation mobilises in pupils; but our work specifically focuses on *literary* translation in the classroom.

While literary translation, historically, was a prominent method for both language-learning and literary education (Houdart-Mérot 2018, 11), in anglophone countries approaches focusing on immersive, L2-only pedagogies have dominated the second-language classroom, and translation was long considered undesirable (Cook, 2010). Yet, recently, a resurgence of translation in language learning became enshrined formally in the new GCSE guidelines that learners should be able to translate a text from L1 to L2 (DfE, 2015). In the past decade, a number of initiatives have sprouted across the English-speaking world to bring translation to the classroom. In the UK, Translators in Schools, delivered by the Stephen Spender Trust, has trained professional translators since 2014 to work with schools on literary translation. Shadow Heroes, an independent provider, focuses on translation for exposure to cultural difference. In

the US, the Center for the Art of Translation's Poetry Inside Out programme has offered similar services, focusing on the translation of poetry (Rutherford, 2009).

Most such initiatives tend to display the following stages: firstly, the discovery of a literary text in the source language, and its contextualisation; then a decoding stage, often using a glossary, leading to a rough literal translation; finally, a creative reformulation stage, where pupils are invited to rework their literal translation into a text that 'sounds good'. Another common trait is collaboration, as pupils are generally working in small groups.

There are solid reasons, well-explored by translation theory, to take seriously the benefits of literary translation for both language and literary education. Since literary texts are defined by their expressive nature, namely the (to varying degrees) inseparability of form and content, literary translation resists literalism and straightforward equivalence. The exercise of translating a literary text is informed by a mixture of metalinguistic awareness, cultural sensitivity and literary skill, personal sensibility and the occasional eureka moment. Those demands make literary translation valuable not just in the second-language classroom, but also in the L1 classroom.

Regarding the practice of collaborative literary translation, research shows benefits that go beyond the linguistic: for mental health (Dompmartin-Normand 2016, Greaves and Di Stefano, 2017), symbolic competence (Gyogi 2019), intercultural awareness and analytical skills (Park 2015), enhancing plurilingual competence (Muñoz-Basols 2019), helping preliteracy skills in kindergarten (Kultti and Pramling, 2018) or enhancing literary understanding at university (Brookman and Robinson, 2016).

However, there is still little empirical research on the practice, and less still any theorisation. Because most practices involve scaffolding and experiential learning, socio-constructivist approaches have defined most methodological and epistemological premises. Translation theory is a potent theoretical framework, but still rather untapped. So is literary theory, especially studies of genre, style, and reader-response, which could more strongly inform the choices made by workshop leaders regarding the texts chosen for translation (Beauvais 2020). We contend that the three perspectives should be in constant articulation. As translation theorists and translators have discussed, literary translation is always a process of literary analysis, linguistic skill, metalinguistic awareness and creative writing, aiming at rendering not just a source text, but one's *reading* of that text, into a different language (Bonnefoy 1979, Spivak 1992, Scott 2012, Briggs 2017). That relation is always dynamic and recursive, contextual, and aided by resources.

We chose to focus in this study on observation and recordings of classroom interactions during a literary translation workshop. We hoped that, firstly, some of the skills mobilised by the children during a translation workshop would become identifiable by analysing group discussions; secondly, that those discussions could help us gauge pupils' motivation and engagement. We were particularly interested in the entanglement of literary, linguistic and metalinguistic skills in those interactions.

Our research questions were as follows:

1. What skills do pupils mobilise when working in groups on a literary translation in the context of a workshop?
2. How motivated and engaged do pupils appear to be during such workshops?

The workshops

Design and delivery

Each of the three 90-minute workshops was designed and delivered by two Modern and Foreign Languages students from a British university. The students, some undergraduate and some postgraduate, had volunteered to be trained for that purpose by translation workshop provider Shadow Heroes, in partnership with the Stephen Spender Trust.

The workshops were made up of three parts: warm-up activities revolving around questions of translation; a translation exercise; and check-out activities involving, generally, readings of the pupils' productions and reflective discussion. Warm-up took an average of 20 minutes. The translation exercise ranged from 40 to 60 minutes.

Despite variations, the workshops broadly conform to the method developed by Translators in Schools and Shadow Heroes. Their centrepiece is the translation of a literary text, and their purpose the production of a creative translation. They engage participants, through classroom discussion, in ongoing reflection on translation, literature and language. They are playful and non-evaluative. Importantly, the workshops do not require that the students should have any prior acquaintance with the source language. Semantic elucidation occurs by means of a glossary. For each word, one or two translations are given, but the pupils are told that they should feel free to look for other meanings. The students can also ask workshop leaders for clarification.

Overview

Below is an overview of the three workshops. For indicative purposes, the Appendix comprises examples of pupils' translations of each text.

School	Workshop Leaders	Warm-Up and Wrap-Up exercises	Text for the translation exercise
Martins Academy	Tom, third-year UG in German, and Melanie, 1st-year PhD student in Modern Languages, and a former translator.	- How many languages can we speak in this room? - Looking at creative translation of names in Harry Potter - Creative translation of a Haribo slogan - Guessing names of famous fairy-tale characters in German - General discussion about translation --- - Wrap-up: reading and discussion of all the students' translations; general discussion about the activity	Extract from, *Leberkäsjunkie: Ein Provinzkrimi*, by Rita Falk (German) Literary translation in 2 steps (literal, then literary) on the basis only of a glossary. The students were also able to ask questions of workshop leaders or teachers.
Beech School	Guinevere, first-year UG in German and French, and Charles, first-year UG in German.	- Write names on labels + one word they like in a different language - Guessing the meanings of idioms in different languages - General discussion on translation --- - Wrap-up: reading and discussion of all the students' translations;	Extract from *Nach Mitternacht*, Irmgard Keun (German) Literary translation in 2 steps (literal, then literary) on the basis only of a glossary. The students were also able to ask questions of workshop leaders or teachers.

		revelation and discussion of the 'official' published translation; general discussion about the exercise; presentation of MFL courses at the university	
Cornfield Grounds	Melanie (as above) and Peter, first-year UG in Philosophy and French.	- How many languages can we speak in this room? - General discussion on translation - Classroom discussion around the question of what home is. - Wrap-up: reading and discussion of the students' texts; general discussion on translation.	Poem "San Martino", by Giosuè Carducci (Italian) Literary translation in one step (literal and literary combined) with a glossary, as above. From the students' various translations, a translation was collectively worked out and written on the board by the leader. Followed by a creative writing exercise (poem on the theme of home)

Setting and sampling

The workshops took place in three different state schools, on the outskirts of an affluent British city, within the pupils' normal language-classroom setting, in spring. Pupils who received the workshops were aged 13-15 (Years 9 and 10). There were thirteen to twenty pupils per workshop. The schools were free to choose whom they invited to participate in the workshops. Martins Academy selected students they judged to be hard-working. Cornfield Grounds pupils were volunteers, who were all planning to do Languages at GCSE. Beech School offered the workshop to pupils identified by their teachers as good linguists. The pupils in all workshops thus had at least some pre-existing interest in modern languages. The classrooms were mixed,

with a clear gender imbalance only at Beech School, where there were three boys and ten girls. As became clear in the warm-up activities, a majority of students were native monolingual English-speakers. However, the classrooms were ethnically and culturally diverse, with at least four students in each workshop self-disclosing as speaking another language. Other languages disclosed were Arabic, French, German, Hindi, Kinyarwanda, Polish, Punjabi, Romanian, Spanish and Swahili.

For the parts of the workshops involving group work, the students were free to split up into pairs or groups of three of their own choosing. A small minority of students in each workshop made the choice to work alone.

Language teachers were present, but they did not participate in the workshop delivery. They assisted the workshop leaders by going around the classroom during group work, but they were cast less as educators than as helpers and co-learners. In two of the three workshops, the teacher's specialist language was not the source language of the translation.

Method

Data collection

Our data comes principally from observation and recordings of the workshops. The sessions were audio-recorded, with discussion captured both during whole-class discussion and within small-group discussions. Audio files were integrally transcribed.

Aside from the transcripts, we referred to notes taken by the researchers during the workshops, and to material generated by the workshop leaders (handouts translation exercises, Powerpoint slides, photographs of the whiteboard). Photographs of the pupils' own translations were collected and transcribed, including visible edits.

Ethical approval was obtained from the University of York in April 2019. No personal data was collected; all names heard incidentally were pseudonymised during transcription. Workshop leaders were also pseudonymised, and the schools' names were changed.

Coding

The data was coded part-deductively, part-inductively. Our pre-existing coding categories were the skills mobilised by the exercise (or failure to mobilise such skills), and signs of

motivation and engagement (or lack thereof). For the latter, we used some categories developed within engagement studies (e.g. Riu and Lombardi 2015). Following transcription, it appeared that instances of pupil-generated performance and vocalisation were so significant as to deserve their own coding category and, as such, were inductively coded.

Code book:

Skills mobilised by the exercise	Signs of motivation and engagement, or lack thereof	Performance and vocalisation
- Metalinguistic awareness: knowledge of how language works more generally - Linguistic awareness: knowledge of how English or a specific foreign language works - Literary awareness: a sense of what makes language aesthetically pleasing - Translation literacy: a sense of what literary translation is - Cultural awareness: a sense of cultural or historical references - Failure to mobilise one of the above skills	- Group interactions: discordant, sharing ideas, mutual and distributed. - Self-motivational statements - Assertions of linguistic in/competence - Enthusiasm, joy, celebrating success - Joking - Laughing - Positive frustration: perplexity, curiosity - Questions to self and others - Epiphany/ Eureka moment - Negative frustration: discouragement, boredom - Shyness, tentativeness - Mocking others or self	- Pronunciation of foreign language words - Echolalia (repetition of sounds or words with no apparent goal) - Voicing of sentences in English - Mimicking accents, non-linguistic utterances - Acting out a text in English

Results

Skills actively and passively mobilised by the exercise

Our data shows that pupils during literary translation workshops principally mobilise three different types of skills: metalinguistic skills, literary skills, and linguistic skills in English.

For those few students who had some prior knowledge of the source language, linguistic skills in that language were occasionally mobilised too.

Those skills are not activated equally over the course of the whole workshop. Linguistic skills are more mobilised early on, when pupils grapple with semantic questions. Literary skills are heavily mobilised towards the end, when pupils write their translation and critique each other's. Statements about language are typically categorical, evaluative or punitive (e.g. 'You can't start a sentence with "And"'), while literary-related statements are open-ended, vague or inquisitive (e.g. 'You just have to make it make sense'). Metalinguistic considerations arise throughout the workshops, from discovering the text to writing the translation.

In warm-up activities, pupils showed almost no evidence of translation literacy, namely understanding of what literary translation entails. However, the wrap-up activities showed that the pupils' reflection on the complexities of literary translation had become sophisticated. We surmise that doing literary translation equips pupils with some experiential knowledge of key aspects of literary translation, despite little to no previous exposure to theoretical reflection.

Below, we delve more deeply into different aspects of those findings.

Metalinguistic insight

The pupils consistently mobilise metalinguistic skills throughout the workshops, whether while elucidating semantics, or while attempting literary translation. Their metalinguistic reflection is not necessarily consistent: one same pupil's vision of how language works can range from assertions of functional equivalence to assertions of linguistic relativism. The pupils were very apt at mobilising those reflections to help them with the exercise.

Students used their metalinguistic skills at key points in the workshops. First, to crack the source text at the semantic stage. Below, to elucidate a complex sentence, Maya, who does not study German, hazards a guess as to sentence structure in German; she guesses that the grammar may function differently from English. For this, she extrapolates knowledge from a language she knows (French):

> Klara: From the spring. It's probably from the spring!
>
> Maya: No but look, there's that sentence you know like in other languages they do it weirdly, like in, erm French so when you say your name [sic] it's like I *have* seven years. (…) So it might be like that's the thing they're doing, different.

The metalinguistic knowledge that other languages are not directly equivalent to English in syntax, vocabulary, style, etc., and that this has an impact on the representation of ideas and feelings, was often spontaneously mobilised by pupils. Articulating this thought, however, is difficult. At Beech School, Katia makes a valiant attempt:

> Katia: Translation doesn't necessarily, like, want you to translate, like, literally as it is, like you could put it into like different words because obviously a different language, like, wants to put in different words cos you can't, not in every language you can put it exactly as it is in English cos it's not going to make sense.

Katia's thinking aligns with a key working assumption in literary translation theory, namely the fact that, in the absence of linguistic equivalence, translators must, in St Jerome's famous words, 'render not word for word, but sense for sense'. Pupils, it seemed, intuited those principles thanks to pre-existing metalinguistic insight.

Questions of a literary order were also raised in reference to how language works in general. Pupils were aware that a sentence they could not understand might be an idiom:

> Maya: How about the final phrase? I can't even be a dog.
>
> Petra: That must be like a phrase.
>
> Maya: Like lazy.

The pupils audibly took pleasure in invoking different webs of linguistic references. Translinguistic engagement happened, for instance, as wordplay:

> Simon: Some of the words in this stanza I don't get. What does "lo" mean? Is it like "the"?
>
> Teacher: Yeah, every time you see "le", "la" and "lo" it's just "the".
>
> Simon: "Lo and behold!"

Metalinguistic insight, and playfulness in handling such insight, fed into literary reflection, as we explore later.

Linguistic skills

Contrary to metalinguistic statements, statements that focused purely on linguistic competence were typically associated with negative frustration, self-belittlement or shame. Pupils

often invoked linguistic similarity between two languages as making translation 'easier': e.g., translation is 'easier if languages are similar, cause if they're different… [dramatic silence]'. Conversely, pupils justified failure by invoking their lack of language competence:

Lia: Oh I give up ; German is [inaudible] which is very different from Spanish.

Cora: I'm doing French!

Lia: French is easy, cos I speak Spanish. I just don't get …

Workshop Leader: There's similarities between Spanish and German.

Lia: Really? How?

[Workshop leader explains in relation to one word]

Lia: That's only one word though, that's only one thing.

Significantly, pupils mocked each other for perceived failure of linguistic skills (in both English and the source language) but never for perceived failure of literary skills.

Workshop leader: OK umm Sleeping Beauty (…). The German though, *Dornröschen*, is something different. (…)

Boy: Oh, *Dorn* is like when you wake up, isn't it? [dawn]

Leader: Nope, no.

Girl [giggling, whispering]: He does German, as well!

In all three workshops, when probed about their home languages, bilingual pupils were fairly positive about their identities. However, assertions of linguistic incompetence outnumbered assertions of linguistic competence. Furthermore, questions from the workshop leaders that required pupils to call upon existing *linguistic* skills, rather than guesswork from metalinguistic insight, were often met with silence or even distress. In the following extract, the teacher, to highlight the difference with the German word *Oma*, asks the pupils:

Teacher: So what's Grandma in French?

Pupil A: Ohhh…

Teacher: Well, we're doing it in German, so don't worry. Go on.

Pupil A: It's gone out of my head. Every French word has just gone out of my head. Every – every…

Pupil B: In Spanish in Spanish it's *abuela*. That's grandma.

Pupils' spontaneous reactions to this (unnecessary) question are of self- and mutual evaluation.

In all workshops, the teachers and the workshop leaders occasionally asserted their own linguistic incompetence. Such assertions were very welcome by the pupils, and triggered interest or playful intimacy:

Pupil A: It says "term of endearment" there. [in the glossary]

Teacher: "Term of endearment".

Pupil A: For "Bub".

Pupil B: Yeah it's weird.

Pupil A: Endearment.

Teacher: Yeah, "term of endearment".

Pupil A: Yeah…

Teacher: I've learnt something.

Pupil A: Yeah.

Teacher: Errrr…

Pupils and teacher: [laugh]

Overall, statements and actions linked purely to linguistic skills were coded more negatively than metalinguistic and literary-related statements. They were also often framed as binaries (right/ wrong answer) and more often associated with negative frustration ('It doesn't make sense.') than positive frustration (inquisitiveness, curiosity).

Literary awareness and translation literacy

Statements and actions involving literary and aesthetic skill, contrariwise, were generally positively connoted. Interestingly, pupils seem to evolve, throughout the workshop, from a position regarding literary translation framed by a permission/ prohibition binary ('are we allowed to…?') to a keen appreciation of their creative freedom, and a prioritisation of literary strategies.

Pupils' awareness of what translation involves was low in warm-up exercises and group discussion. Pupils had extremely limited knowledge of translated works; at Martins, only one pupil could name a book in translation (the Koran). When asked about differences between translations of the same text, students required significant prompting; they were silent, or their comments vague ('Different people interpret different things').

Yet, as the workshops advance, literary reflection begins to appear and be applied to the task. Groups spontaneously ask the question 'would you say…?', showing that the move towards literary translation begins with an aspiration to naturalness. For instance, at Martins Academy:

> Pupil A: Ok so "I, police". So "I'm with the police".
>
> Pupil B: Yeah. Is that what you would say, though?
>
> Pupil C: Yeah, I'd say "I'm with the police".
>
> B: "With the police?"
>
> A: Yeah or like, "I'm with" – "I'm with the police", like –
>
> [pause]
>
> C: Or "I'm at" – at at – "at the police" – station – "I'm with"…
>
> A: "I'm with the police officer".
>
> B: Would you? Say "I'm with the police"? I would say "I'm at".

Expressions of joy arise principally when students elucidate not just the semantic meaning, but also the literary *meaningfulness* of a sentence. Here, a group attempts to solve a mysterious insert, literally translated as 'that you know':

> Pupil A: "That you know, and not"… what does that mean? "I work for the police, Grandma", "I - I work for the police, Grandma*, that you know*, and not one of the fire brigade." (…)
>
> Pupil B: "Don't you know"…
>
> A: "You know that, don't you?" So like, like "you know."
>
> B: Aaaahh!
>
> A: "You know that, don't you?"
>
> B: Aaaah, ok!

A: So like, you know, you know that I work for the police, and not the fire brigade.

B: Yeah. [With others] Yeah. Yeah. Yeah! Yeah!

A: So like – OK. OK. Cool.

Pupils asked questions such as 'how would you say…?', and also questions explicitly framed as 'how would you *write*…?'. That reflection was often contextualised: they attempted to visualise the actions described, to capture their significance for characterisation and plot, and sometimes to mimic them:

Pupil A: *Wave* my *hands* and *feet*? [dramatic tone]

Pupil B: Yeaaah [laugh]

A: And waaave my hands [comic tone] (…)

B: Cos I don't know how you'd translate 'waving my hands and feet' [laughs]

A: I mean… It's quite frantic. (…)

B: Yeah. Erm. Waving my hands. (…)

A: Like… Someone having a seizure! (…) How do you *write* that? (…)

B: Throwing hands and feet in the air…

A: Hands and feet!

B: Not *and* feet… [laugh] (…)

A: Jump?

Teacher: Jump. Yeah.

A: Umm I think it's a sign of panic.

Throughout, some 'hotspot' words attracted sophisticated reflections across literary, linguistic and cultural fields:

Pupil A: I think he should address her as *woman*.

Pupil B: Give me your address Miss.

A: Mrs. I think what we want is, Mrs.

B: No I think it's more like, cold. (…)

> Workshop leader: But what would they say in English though? If maybe someone were speaking to a woman they didn't know and trying to… you're right, they wouldn't say just woman, so what do you think they'd say?
>
> B: Miss?
>
> Pupil C: Like Ma'am?
>
> Workshop Leader: Yep?
>
> [students laugh]
>
> B [posh accent]: Ma'am!
>
> Workshop leader: So decide which one you…
>
> A: I guess like, I mean, *Frau*… it depends what context. I think like Germans would know what you're talking about, like, you know what I mean. They'd all know you're saying 'Miss' or something like that. So I guess you could say both 'Frau' and *Frau* [English pronunciation].

The pupils' literary reflection was enhanced by those discussions, which grew in intensity throughout the workshops. Their playful engagement did not preclude criticality: 'You could summarise that in one word, all that literature!', says one student about a long sentence.

By the end, the children's reflections had moved from 'it does/ doesn't make sense' to 'it sounds/ doesn't sound good'; namely, they had developed an aesthetic strategy. The wrap-up activities, where the pupils comment on each other's translation, were especially rich in considerations of an aesthetic nature:

> I like the fact that they like kept the *clattering* three times because it makes it sound a bit like… poetic and it sets like a better atmosphere.
>
> They said like 'good woman' which isn't like… umm. It's not like… *that* formal, but I don't know, it's like in the middle of being impolite and formal.

Such reflections show sophisticated thinking about register and style, and correspondence between lexicon and historical context.

The children also developed critical opinions on what constitutes a good translation. In the following assessment by a pupil of the 'official' translation, by Anthea Bell, metalinguistic and

linguistic reflection merges with literary reflection to articulate an argument against literal translation:

> Pupil: Yeah it seems to kind of translate, like literally translate, some of the things I think we have been, like, more done their way. (…)
>
> Workshop Leader: Any specific bits that you think are too literal? (…)
>
> Pupil: The bit where it says 'and more and more people keep coming in', it could have maybe been said more interestingly, coz in the original thing it said like 'streaming in'.

By the end, a majority of opinions endorsed what Lawrence Venuti calls a domesticating view of translation:

> Pupil: I like how none of it sounds really clumsy, so not like a translation like if you write it, it sounds English.

However, some had nuanced views, allowing for what Venuti would welcome as a more foreignizing approach:

> Pupil: I don't know. The most important thing is make it grammatically correct, but still, like, still keep the sense to it (…) but keep it grammatically correct and keep it close to the language, cos obviously if you had to stick to exactly to that language it wouldn't make sense.

Domestication was nonetheless favoured largely because, we surmise, of prompts by the leaders, repeatedly ask pupils to 'make their translations flow' and 'sound English'.

Thus there was, clearly, high-quality literary reflection on translation by the end of the workshops, nourished by the metalinguistic insights activated throughout.

Instances and levels of engagement

The data shows far more evidence of positive than negative engagement in group discussions. Laughter, excitement and jokes are common. Questions – to self and to others – arise constantly. Pupils displayed large amounts of self-motivation and motivated others, enjoining peers to hurry or slow down, asking for advice or opinion. Analysis of tone is important, evidently, when identifying negative or positive engagement. 'Everything is weird!' thus squealed one pupil, but with evident delight.

Negative engagement was by no means absent. There is a fine line between the kind of frustration that perplexity or inquisitiveness affords, and discouragement or self-belittlement: 'I can't figure it out. I can't even see what it must be about', or 'why are we doing this? It's like being in detention'. Voices sometimes convey audible boredom or irritation. However, those instances were infrequent. Negative frustration was mostly linked to perceived incompetence in foreign languages. Positive events, however – such as epiphanies or eureka moments, when students find a solution that 'clicks' – were framed as assertions of literary competence. We thus contend that students may be negatively triggered by language-related frustration, and positively motivated by literary and expressive experiences. The positive reinforcement of literary and metalinguistic success seemingly overshadows the negative reinforcement of perceived linguistic incompetence.

The workshop at Cornfield Grounds was the most marked by negative engagement. Several pupils expressed discouragement - 'it doesn't really make sense', 'we've tried different meanings, it doesn't work', 'I'm confused', or 'I don't get it'. It is there that group work appeared most difficult, with a pupil stating 'I don't work well with [another pupil]', and many working on their own. The negative engagement in that class might be due to the exercise, which did not quite carry the promise of literary translation to the end (it stopped at the literal translation stage) and did not allow for as much group work.

Performance and vocalisation

We needed a supplementary grid of analysis to code for instances of spontaneous performance of the texts, both in the source languages and in English. Performative moments were varied and unprompted by workshop leaders. Importantly, this performative dimension occurred in both L1 and L2. We suggest here that the performative dimension of the workshops fulfils the double function of linking together the skills detailed above, and of helping maintain motivation.

Performing and vocalising the text in the *source* language – including mimicking accents, practising pronunciation, repeating words, etc. – had a dynamic impact on linguistic comprehension and on metalinguistic considerations. Performing and vocalising the text in the *target* language – including repeating the sentences until they 'rang' right, tuning the tone, acting out – was dynamically entangled with the literary work. The performative aspects also helped, and were an integral part of, teamwork and group cohesion.

Thus we contend that literary translation in the classroom should be considered in its performative and vocal/oral aspects as much as in its textual and linguistic aspects. The pupils spontaneously took the texts in their mouths and bodies, and embodiment, voicing, echoing and re-voicing were a key part of translation proper. Performance seems to allow for fluid motion from one language to the other, and from the 'literal' to the literary (creative) translation.

As a case study of how performance binds those different operations together, we focus on one exchange by a group of girls at Beech School. They were translating the last sentence of a text from *Nacht Mitternacht*[1]; it was audibly the passage that engaged them most, perhaps because it triggered reflections spanning literary style and mood, and linguistic, metalinguistic, and cultural questions. By repeatedly performing the sentence, moulding it through orality, the girls moved towards a literary rendering.

First the girls focused on the word 'klattern', which their glossary translated as 'to clatter away'.

Patricia: [laugh] I think it's clatter, clatter, clatter, clatter.

Sonia: 'Clatter away'.

Keira: Yeah like [laugh] 'and clattering on the typewriter'.

Sonia: Typewriter, clatter clatter [laugh]

Patricia: OK let's do 'clattering'.

Forty minutes later, as the group went over their translation once more, rereading their sentence prompted reflections of a more literary nature. They uttered the word 'clatter' many times. The word's repetition and sonority seemed to delight and intrigue them:

Keira: Errr. The typewriters… clatter.

Patricia: Clatter.

Sonia: Clatter.

Patricia: Clatter clatter.

[1] 'Und die Schreibmaschinen klappern, klappern, klappern, alles wird zu Protkoll genommen, alle Anzeigenden warden gut und freundlich behandelt' (Literal translation: 'And the typewriters clatter, clatter, clatter, clatter, everything is recorded, all the people reporting something are treated well and in a good manner')

Sonia: Yeah, clatter clatter clatter. Three times! [laugh]

Keira: Quite frightening.

Immediately after, one of the girls raises a doubt about the glossary's reliability:

Sonia: I feel like… In English, typewriters don't clatter.

Patricia: [indignant inaudible mumble]

Sonia: Do typerwriters clatter? What do typewriters do in English?

The girls, understandably, are not familiar with typewriters. They acted as literary translators by checking different resources; first, asking the workshop leader:

Sonia: Generally. Do they sound like they clatter?

Workshop leader: Yeah, they sound like they clatter!

But questions continued:

Sonia: Isn't it more like… [fingers tapping on desk]

Patricia: No, they like… clatter, I saw it in a film.

Keira: My great grandma still has a typewriter! The last one [inaudible] banging.

The discussion locates typewriters as objects of fiction or antiques. The identification of 'banging' rings true for very old typewriters. There is clear effort here to link world and language towards the loyal restitution of an atmosphere.

The next move shows clear translation fatigue:

Patricia: Of course they clatter. I keep thinking we should stick with clatter then.

Keira: Yeah, let's put clatter. No one cares, seriously, like.

However, the word 'clatter' can still be heard numerous times as they continue to work, and becomes a recurrent occurrence in the soundscape of their groupwork. This is a typical instance where one word is repeated relentlessly. This spontaneous echolalia, we hypothesise, helps the pupils in their literary endeavour.

As the translation progresses, the performative and oral aspects increasingly command even grammatical decisions:

Patricia: Shall I put a comma after clatter?

Sonia: We'll see when we read it out loud. (…)

Keira: I forgot it was past tense, let's add *-ed* on at the end. OK and umm. 'Everything has been recorded.' 'Everything *had* been recorded.'

The girls' performance also aids imagining and extrapolating:

Patricia: Imagine if the police actually did *that*, typed in and was like 'Everything has been recorded' [funny voice] [laugh].

Sonia: That's more like a threat.

Questions of performance intensify as the girls encourage each other to act out the sentences:

Sonia: 'Everything was recorded' or whatever.

Patricia: 'Everything has been recorded'.

Sonia: Do it like in a, in a like low-tone voice [laugh].

Keira: So it's 'everything'…

Patricia: '*Everything*'! [funny dark voice]

Sonia: 'has been recooorded' [laugh]

[High-pitched laugh]

The girls' performative focus on this sentence gave them a theatrical and literary key to reinterpret the whole text. It is a moment identifiable as what Beauvais (2020) has termed the emergence of the literary, namely a point in a translation workshop where aesthetic purpose suddenly arises sharply. Here, for instance, a girl recognises the literary power of her solution:

Sonia: 'The reporter was'…

Patricia: 'The reporter was' like er…

Sonia: 'Praised'…

Patricia: 'Rewarded and congratulated for their job well done'.

Keira: For, oh! Oh!

Sonia: That was good. (…)

Patricia: Because that gives *mood*, d'you know what I mean.

The word 'mood' had been introduced by the workshop leaders; the experiential process of the translation helped the girls hook their literary finding onto a conceptual frame. The term emerged again when they proceeded to read the extract they had translated:

> Patricia: 'Give me your address, Miss,' the officer demanded. (…) Typewriters clattered, [interrupts her own reading] No, that's it. I will have the typewriter add more words, clattered, clattered.
>
> [laughs]
>
> Everything had been recorded. The reporter was praised and congratulated for a job well done.
>
> Sonia: [simultaneously in dramatic voice] 'Well. Done.'
>
> [laughs]
>
> Patricia: *That* is good mood! We actually created a good mood!
>
> Keira: 'Everything has been recorded'. I think that should be 'and'.
>
> Sonia: No but honestly we have to say [laugh] '*Everything has been recorded.*' That's part of the style. [laughs]

The dramatic rendering of the text was as crucial to the literary exercise as the writing. The achievement clearly triggered joy. When the pupils prepared to share their translations with the class, the girls planned their performance:

> Sonia: You got it, Patricia?
>
> Patricia: Yeah. [laugh]
>
> Sonia: OK so try it again.
>
> Patricia: 'Everything'…
>
> Sonia: Clattered. Clattered. CLATTERED.
>
> Patricia: [laughs]
>
> Sonia: Clattered!
>
> Patricia: Yeah I get it!
>
> Sonia: And then.

Keira: Patricia's doing this, are we like the… are we… go on.

All together: 'Everything. Had been. Recorded.'

Sonia: I love that.

Patricia: I think we did quite well!

The girls shared their translation to great applause, and their quiet debrief shows to what extent the words lingered:

Patricia: [whispers] I was cracking up when I was reading 'Everything is being recorded'!

[giggles]

Sonia: 'Everything was being recorded'.

In the above we focused on one particularly long-drawn instance of productive performativity, but this dimension was present in all workshops. It helped secure the translation, justify word and syntax choices, trigger literary reflection, and maintain intimacy, playfulness and motivation. We therefore argue that the performative aspects of the literary translation workshops play a key role in the translation proper, and one unscripted by the workshop leaders – although the workshops' scaffolding allowed for ample space and time for its deployment.

Conclusion

The data analysed here can lead us to tentative conclusions and recommendations concerning literary translation workshops in the secondary classroom.

Firstly, we contend that those workshops visibly lead students to mobilise three key skills relevant to both literary and language education: metalinguistic skills, literary skills and linguistic skills. Linguistic skills, however, are more reluctantly activated, lead to more ambivalent engagement and are often invoked to justify perceived 'failure'. We thus suggest that literary translation workshops ideally should avoid presenting the exercise as a linguistic one. 'Adult' leaders' assertions of their own linguistic incompetence seem to be motivational for pupils; the exercise can be presented as exploratory for everyone.

Secondly, it appears beneficial to pick literary texts that are as performance-inducing as possible. Pupils clearly gain great enjoyment from texts that can be read out loud dramatically; and the performative aspects trigger high-quality literary insights. We also suggest that those texts

should contain 'hotspots', namely phrases that are especially likely to crystallise reflection at the intersection of literary, (meta)linguistic, cultural and translational reflection. A word as simple as 'Frau' generates high-quality discussion and, arguably, heightens metalinguistic and literary awareness.

Finally, we note that group work is not the only way to trigger high-quality translations. Certainly, the students who most audibly displayed negative engagement were working alone or responding only to adult stimulation. However, it is far from established that *not* engaging in group-work led to less gratifying experiences. The translations we collected show that several students who chose to work entirely alone produced literary texts of excellent quality. Thus, we advocate flexibility in the running of the workshops, and caution against stating that collaborative work is always key.

Future research, evidently, is needed. We call for more mapping of practices, and gathering more data from observations and recordings. We also need data from longitudinal studies involving the same classrooms. Finally, we need theoretical work where educational theory and second-language learning can meet literary theory and translation theory, to reinforce the place of literary translation in the classroom for L1 as well as L2 teaching.

Appendix

Examples of pupils' own translation of the texts in each workshop. Occasional spelling and grammar mistakes have been preserved.

Translation of an extract from Keun (2017), *Nach Mitternacht : Roman*.

> 'Give me you address Miss,' the officer demanded. 'Everything will be fine'. Quietly but firmly the woman asked, 'Where is my husband?'
>
> A constant stream of people flood into the Gestapo room, that appeared orderly and calm. Mothers reported their daughters in law, daughters reported their fathers in law, brothers their sisters, sisters their brothers. Friend turned on friend, colleagues on colleagues, neighbors on neighbors.
>
> Typewriters clattered, clattered, clattered. Everything had been recorded. The reporters were praised and congratulated for a job well done.

Translation of an extract from Falk (2016), *Leberkäsjunkie: Ein Provinzkrimi*.

'Mooshammerin is burning, Bub,' Grandma shouted from the door, making me jump in surprise. 'Now hurry up and get dressed.'

'I'm with the police now Grandma, not with the fire brigade, you know that.' I say with exhasperation. 'Also, I live in Munich now not Niederkaltenkirchen.'

I should from my sofa bed at her, waving my hands at her to get her to leave. She was basically deaf, yelling wasn't working. I looked at the alarm clock. It was 2:15. Ludwig was lying on the floor in front of me, turning his head to look between me and Grandma, in the end choosing to turn away from both of us and go back to sleep. It must be nice to be a dog.

Translation of the poem "San Martino", by Carducci (1887) (worked out collectively by the whole class, following small-group work):

The mist to the ragged hill
Light rain rises
And beneath, the wind
Screams and whitens the sea.

Through the rows of the town
From the bubbling of the wine casks
Goes the sour smell of wine
The souls to cheer us up.

Spins around on logs alight
The skewers spitting
The hunter stands whistling
On the doorway, looking out

Amongst the red clouds
A large cluster of blackbirds
Like exiled thoughts
In the evening migration

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