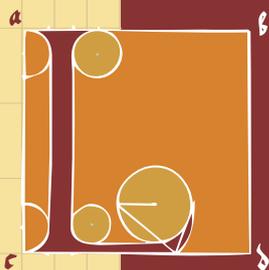
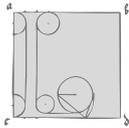


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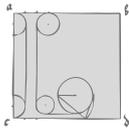


EARNING THE IMPOSSIBLE?

A course of translation
from English into Polish

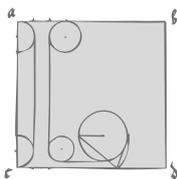


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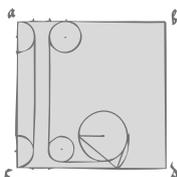


EARNING
THE IMPOSSIBLE?

Maria Piotrowska



EARNING
TRANSLATION



EARNING
THE IMPOSSIBLE?

A course of translation
from English into Polish

Kraków

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GOALS AND ASSUMPTIONS

- PREREQUISITES:** good command of English which is the language of original texts, (proficiency in speech and writing), mastery of the native tongue, i.e. Polish.
- TARGET AUDIENCE:** amateur and professional translators, students and teachers of translation.
- APPROACH:** comprehensive (eclectic); theory linked to practice.
- GOALS:** to improve quality in translation work by:
- * providing samples of texts in English for practice
 - * increasing familiarity with basic issues in contemporary translation studies
 - * developing ability to identify translation problems
 - * learning problem-solving techniques and useful translation habits (within specific text categories, e.g. advertisements, and concerning specific phenomena, e.g. proper names)
 - * improving language resources in English and Polish.
- STRUCTURE:** units including theoretical discussions and practical tasks.
Each chapter consists of preparatory exercises, corresponding basic concepts in translation studies, illustrative material for translation (material-analysed), concrete translation tasks (texts to be translated) related to theoretical problems, accompanying practicals and follow-up assignments.

INTRODUCTION

Translation is a very fertile ground for research and analysis, both from the pedagogical and the scientific perspectives. The discipline has gained an autonomous status only recently, and world-wide there are still very few academic translation departments although numerous vocational training schools exist. The shift of focus in translation studies from routine approaches (“translation is insignificant and consists in language to language transfer”) towards new versatile treatment of translation as communication (social behaviour and co-operation) has been one of the recent trends in the field. New subject areas, such as multi-media translation, LSP translation, think-aloud protocols, cultural knowledge, subject-area expertise, etc. are developing. Contemporary translation studies cover such topics as norms in translation, culture-specific translation conventions, creativity, strategic translating, social and cultural environment of the translator, translation and mass communication, and others.

During the period between the initial and the final paragraphs of this book were written (roughly years 1993–96) translation studies witnessed such a tremendous growth in the European and world-wide dimension and such a rapid advent of new ideas that the very doubtful colouring in the title has lost its original novelty. Nowadays, the possibility of translator training as a part of regular educational programmes is not questioned. What poses problems are the matters of organising curricula in a proper way and providing suitable teaching materials.

One of the major and most ancient dichotomies in the history of translation gave birth to the title of this textbook. Namely, the dichotomy between the art and the craft; the mysterious “dark” side of translation, not explicable, totally subjective, based only on the translator’s talent, a gift he is born with, as contrasted with a teachable, objective skill. In agreement with modern developments in translation thought and methodology, the book contradicts the statement that teaching translation is an impossible task. On the contrary, it is postulated here that the skill of translating can be acquired in the process of learning. However, the logic behind

theoretical and didactic considerations is not a linear sequence of arguments of the type: "A, and if A, then B." In spite of the slightly prescriptive approach to teaching, no model is imposed on students.

Certainly, some kind of compromise as a line of thinking (and teaching) is the best starting point in translation studies; the compromise between

- fundamentals underlying the mechanisms of transfer from one language to another (which can be studied and learnt)
- the element of individual interpretation and choice (the art which is impossible to learn).

A modern view on the eclectic character of translation studies is adopted for the purpose of the book, which is in line with contemporary trends in this field of knowledge. Eclecticism is revealed in multi-disciplinary feedback and the organisation of the curriculum.

The present book originated from the author's practice of teaching one-semester courses in translation from English to Polish in a teacher training college, hence the unidirectional character of the translation process in the set of exercises. Such translation courses rely heavily on students' participation. In fact, the methodology of a translation course absolutely requires the presence of the motivating factor. That is why it is reasonable to assume that the more adequate the curriculum is to the individual needs of the students, the better the overall results of the course. Accordingly, a variety of topics are covered, and a variety of texts are translated. British and American English texts introduced in the exercises reflect the present state of affairs in Poland. The translator is faced with a range of sources. There is no tendency among Polish translators to specialise in one of the two varieties, besides the difference between British and American texts is more important in translation from Polish.

There is a general preference of text-oriented to problem-oriented curriculum. Students appreciate actual text translation activities more than discussions on how to deal with specific problems. Assumptions and issues in the theory of translation, whose knowledge among students is relatively small, are much better remembered and understood when they are inferred from actual texts, especially that students' demand for specific text types is quite firm; they are often able to present their own choice of the source language material for translation. Hence an exten-

sive range of texts in different registers with everyday life orientation helps increase motivation during classes. Some topical discussions allow the students to gain more confidence in the field; they go beyond vocabulary and grammar, concentrating on contextual issues. The importance of translation as a skill which can be learnt and mastered is better understood. The instructor's hints are helpful and valuable as long as they do not hinder the very process of translation initiated and conducted by the students themselves.

Learning Translation – Learning the Impossible? can be recommended as a textbook on translation, which may be used by teachers who can get their students practically involved in some activities in the classroom (suggested for group work or general discussion). It may also be used by students, referring in a narrow sense to persons formally engaged in the educational process within the framework of a university; or in a broader sense – to persons who are enthusiastic about the subject and area of translation and want to study it on their own. The book should help them understand some phenomena and perhaps give more insight into some issues they are not thoroughly familiar with.

The target audience is labelled as students and teachers of the subject. Although, commonly, there is a rigid barrier between books designed for students, and those prepared for teachers, the present book combines the two seemingly opposite standpoints. On the one hand, some tasks can be done as classroom activities, and methodological hints that are given should facilitate the job of the instructor; on the other hand, topical discussions, presentations of concepts and many other exercises will definitely provide adequate learning material for the individual student.

Paradoxically, although the book is targeted at the Polish reader, English is used as the language of presentation. This paradox, however, can be easily explained. Firstly, the comprehension task involved in reading an English text is meant to provide additional practice for prospective translators, for whom this book is chiefly meant. Comprehending the original, which in this case will be any English text, constitutes an important phase in the translation process. Secondly, an English version of the book acquaints its readers with the necessary jargon of the “translators trade”.

The process of teaching translation as a university subject could be facilitated by interdisciplinary correspondences to other subject areas,