CAMINHOS PARA O ENSINO DE TRADUÇÃO NA AULA DE LÍNGUA ESTRANGEIRA: UMA PROPOSTA PARA A TRADUÇÃO AUDIOVISUAL DE CORALINE EM AULAS DE INGLÊS COMO LE/ESOL

RESUMO: Apesar de seu status como “metodologia non grata” no ensino de línguas estrangeiras, a tradução tem muito que oferecer nas aulas de uma segunda língua. Neste artigo, argumenta-se que é possível reintroduzir a tradução no currículo do ensino de inglês como segunda língua ou língua estrangeira, pela reconsideração de conceitos pertinentes, que incluem tanto a fonte como o produto da tradução como um enfoque pós-método em vez de uma metodologia exclusiva do ensino de línguas estrangeiras. Por meio de uma série de atividades baseadas na novela Coraline, de Neil Gaiman, também se promove o papel do professor como motivador e animador dos alunos, como chave ao usar a tradução no ensino de uma segunda língua ou língua estrangeira.


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**ABSTRACT:** Despite its “metodologia non-grata” status in language teaching, translation has a lot to offer in the second language classroom. This article argues that a reconsideration of pertinent concepts, such as the source and product of the translation, as well as a post-method rather than an exclusivist approach to language teaching, can provide a gateway to re-introducing translation in the EFL/ESL curriculum. Through a series of activities based on Neil Gaiman’s *Coraline*, it also makes a case for the teacher’s role in motivating the student as the key to using translation in teaching a foreign or second language.

**KEYWORDS:** EFL/ESO. Audiovisual translation. Post-method. Motivation. *Coraline*.

**Introduction**

Translation, and interpreting for that matter, has acquired a bad name in language teaching, especially, in EFL / ESOL. It has long been associated with the grammar translation method, a supposedly antiquated way to acquire language, primarily through the translation of written texts. Based on nineteenth-century traditions of teaching Greek and Latin, admittedly “dead” languages insofar as not being spoken or transmitted from generation to generation, such an approach is now seen as unfit for the highly communicative environment of today. Meticulous analysis of lengthy written texts using bilingual dictionaries is also considered rather wearisome for twenty-first century students whose attention span has allegedly shortened to that of a mayfly’s existence. The question is, though, why could we not update the method to follow current conceptualisations of teaching foreign languages through the medium of translating texts?

This paper proposes to reconsider the key concepts of such an enterprise and challenge the two-pronged misconception that 1) translation is inappropriate in the language classroom; and 2) translation is restricted to transferring (pieces) of a text from one language to another. Following a short reflection on the origins of using translation in the language classroom as well as the relevant notions regarding translation and the concept of text, through the examination of various representations of Neil Gaiman’s *Coraline*, I will try to demonstrate how teachers can motivate language learners to engage in translation-related activities.

**Methods and approaches in teaching a foreign language translation**

**The grammar method**
With a marked emphasis on written skills, specifically on reading, and heavily relying on grammar and vocabulary exercises, the grammar translation method was one of the earliest recognised approaches in language teaching. Its “fundamental purpose of learning a language is to be able to read literature written in the target language” (LARSEN-FREEMAN; ANDERSON, 2011, p. 20.). As suggested by its denomination, the process of learning is supposed to occur through the translation of texts.

Students are taught to translate from one language into another. Often what they translate are readings in the target language about some aspect of the culture of the target language community. Students study grammar deductively: that is, they are given the grammar rules and examples, are told to memorize them, and then are asked to apply the rules to other examples. They also learn grammatical paradigms such as verb conjugations. They memorize native language equivalents for target language vocabulary words. (ibid.)

Furthermore, “high culture”, arts and literature, enjoy a privileged status and are regarded as the way to language acquisition (KELLY, 1969), which may have contributed to the emerging criticism about the method being too exclusivist or even elitist.

The post-method approach

So as to counteract the rigidity of this method (NAGARAJ, 1996), or at least its perceived inflexibility (HOWATT; WIDDOWSON, 2004), a number of approaches with a focus on oral communication emerged. Among them is the most well-known communicative language teaching (CLT) method that, although widely criticised, “in its modified form it still continues to be widely used in some parts of the world today” (RICHARDS; RODGERS, 2001, p. 6). As a consequence, even more recent trends, call for a paradigm shift in conceptualising teaching strategies. According to one of its most well-known proponents, Kumaravadivelu (2003, 2006), there is a way to overcome the conflict that had been taken for granted throughout the twentieth century. His new post-method framework allows for the integration of previously outcast approaches and, thus, also paves the way for the re-introduction of methodological resources, including translation, in the language classroom. Our next task then is to define translation in a sense that is sufficiently inclusive for such purposes.
Translation
Participatory translation

One of the most important aspects for us to understand is that translation is not a privilege of professionals. While engaging in this activity on a professional basis obviously requires training and experience (MCDONOUGH, 2011), translation is open to enthusiasts and amateurs. In fact, it has been argued for well over a decade that undertaking unpaid work on a voluntary basis with the sole purpose of sharing information or artistic products constitutes a subversive act that challenges dominant discourses in a Bourdieusian sense (DÍAZ CINTAS; ORERO; REMAEL, 2006; O’HAGAN, 2011). In a similar vein to the post-method approach in language teaching, in terms of translation, this shift facilitates the involvement of foreign language students in translation activities from a theoretical perspective.

In no small part driven by technological advancement, translation has become a community of practice (LAVE; WENGER, 1991), a concept also familiar in educational circles. As Pérez-González (2014b) comments as regards translation, “Over the last decade, the development of networked and collaborative technologies has fostered the emergence of new forms of participatory citizenship in the new digital economy” (p. 125). Later he continues that “Readers and viewers are now able to archive, annotate and re-circulate media content, so their personal copies of audiovisual texts have the potential to provide unique reading experiences” (ibid). This, of course, calls into question the concept of authorship as well as that of authoritative versions, which leads us to ponder on the issue of the “correct” rendition of the source material.

Equivalence in translation

As a consequence of these emerging trends, some of the fundamental concepts of translation studies are also being re-evaluated. Among them, equivalence could be highlighted by drawing attention to recent definitions. For example, Anthony Pym, based on Gutt’s (1991) work argues that “Every text, in fact every translation decision, would have to have its own theory of equivalence” (PYM, 2007, p. 287). For the purposes of a language class it would be useful if the students realised that while practicing receptive skills, in their decoding the message from the source language, it is helpful to keep to a more formal equivalence in Nida’s (1964) terms or overt translation.
in House’s (1997) classification. However, when practising productive skills, dynamic or covert equivalence is appropriate, especially at higher levels of textual organisation (BAKER, 1992). Obviously, without such theoretical explanation, in simple terms it would be ideal if students understood that for educational purposes their translation may be just as relevant as acceptable as an “official” or even published version of a source text.

**Multimodal sources in translation**

With special reference to audiovisual translation, the concept of the source text has already been reconsidered. In Pérez-González’s words,

> The shift from the age of printed culture and mass media towards the era of electronic and, more recently, digital culture has had a significant impact on the dialectic between verbal and non-verbal semiotic resources in textualities that coordinate text and image, as well as on the consumption of and engagement with such texts. (2014b, p. 123)

Traditionally regarded as the transfer of written text, that is, a series of characters on a page, from one language to another, translation itself has been redefined in an increasingly multi-modal reality (BERMANN; PORTER, 2014; GAMBIER; GOTTlieb, 2001; KAINDL, 2013; O’SULLIVAN, 2013). Text itself has acquired an extension and diversification of meaning and can include visual and audio aspects. Such is the case of a range of audio-visual translation genres, including: dubbing, subtitling (PÉREZ-GONZÁLEZ, 2014a), fansubbing (SCHULES, 2012), scanlation (VALERO-PORRAS; CASSANY, 2015), comics translation (ZANETTIN, 2008), among others.

**Multimedia in the language classroom**

In a parallel development, the use of multimedia or multimodal sources has become prevalent not only in translation but also in language teaching. So much so that a dedicated *Routledge Handbook* has been published as recently as last year (FARR; MURRAY, 2016). Among the multimodal or multimedia authentic material, subtitled or dubbed films and videos in general have enjoyed particular popularity. In Belgium, it has been empirically proven that “pupils who frequently watch subtitled English television programs and movies perform significantly better on both tests” (KUPPENS,
2010, p. 65). Furthermore, a Europe-wide survey has revealed that younger generations “are convinced that subtitling is an effective tool for language learning” (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2011, p. 10). The three main conclusions drawn from the same study are:

- subtitling helps to improve the mastery of foreign languages;
- subtitling can raise awareness and provide motivation for language learning, in both formal and informal contexts, and consequently contributes to creating an environment that encourages multilingualism
- knowledge of foreign languages and university studies encourage citizens to choose subtitling rather than dubbing (p. 26).

Motivation

While it does not come as a surprise that motivation is named as one of the most important variables, we should contemplate what kind of motivation we can engender as teachers. For beyond the well-known instrumental-integrative (GARDNER, 1985) and extrinsic-intrinsic (VALLERAND, 1997) distinctions, or even claims to the socio-culturally posited nature of motivation (see, for example, SVANES, 1987), the question remains: How can we, teachers, motivate the students both inside and outside the classroom (GARDNER, 2007)? In other words, our concern is how the teacher can encourage motivation in the student. Almost two decades ago, Dörnyei and Csizér drew up the following list,

1. Set a personal example with your own behaviour.
2. Create a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere with your own behaviour.
3. Present the tasks properly.
4. Develop a good relationship with the learners.
5. Increase the learners’ linguistic self-confidence.
6. Make the language classes interesting.
7. Promote learner autonomy.
8. Personalize the learning process.
9. Increase the learner’s goal-orientedness.

At the top of the list we find a number of items that focus on the teacher’s personality, behaviour and relationship with the students, which is not a priority for the current article, as we are now concerned with the content and presentation of the
material to awaken the students’ interest in translation or translation-related activities. In the case of the last item, it is already widely accepted that introducing authentic material in the classroom is a motivating factor, and the wider variety of materials are presented, the greater understanding the students can develop of how diverse that target culture may be. Therefore, during the upcoming case study of using on multi-modal translations of *Coraline* in the classroom, I will focus on how we as teachers can promote learner autonomy, increase the learner’s goal-orientedness and personalise the learning process through introducing translation in the language classroom.

**Coraline: a case study**

Based on the considerations above, in the following section I will share a series of activities centred around Neil Gaiman’s *Coraline* (2002) that could be used in the language classroom. I will utilize Jakobson’s (1959/2000) taxonomy of the types of translation as an organising principle. In Jakobson’s definitions:

1 Intralingual translation or rewording is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language.
2 Interlingual translation or translation proper is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language.
3 Intersemiotic translation or transmutation is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems. (JAKOBSON, 1959/2000, p. 114)

In the following sections, I will present the activities under these respective headings.

**Activities based on intralingual translation**

Intralingual translation activities provide a valuable source of integrating skills in the language classroom. Both oral and written receptive skills can be practiced first, followed by productive skill exercises. Any four variations (reading + speaking; reading + writing; listening + speaking; and listening + writing) could be considered. As the focus is “rewording is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language” (JAKOBSON, 1959/2000, p. 114), the output can constitute summary

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2 For one of the original covers, see Figure 1. Below.
of an extract from the novel or a retelling of the plot. Given the nature of the text, perhaps it is best to aim at higher level students.

**Working with the written word**

Gaiman’s rich language may not seem the most digestible source text to start with but due to the relatively condensed format, it can serve as the semester’s choice for extensive reading, which refers to “reading […] at length, often for pleasure and in a leisurely way” (HARMER, 2001, p. 204). A weekly reflective diary could accompany the reading exercise in order to make the most of the experience.

**Listening activity using authentic material**

As it happens, Neil Gaiman and his friends have been generous and given up their time to read the novel for fans around the world to enjoy. A video of each chapter is available (LAFUENTE, 2015) with Spanish subtitles, that facilitate easier understanding, see Figure 2). For advanced students, however, the audio only can be played to be summarised in spoken or written form.

**Figure 1:** Novel cover

**Figure 2:** Gaiman reading his own work

Fonte: Gaiman (2003)
Motivational aspects of intralingual translation

Although extensive reading may not seem to be especially riveting for students, those of a more introverted nature who find it difficult to express themselves in front of their peers can look for a creative outlet in writing a reflective diary. This does not only increase their self-confidence, but also promotes autonomy and gives them the freedom to make their diary as personal as they wish. In keeping with these goals, the evaluation process should not centre on accuracy, rather on fluency and the creative aspects of the task.

In contrast, the listening-speaking exercise may favour students with a more outgoing and confident personality, who can add a personal touch to the story already told by luminaries of the target culture. In addition, being able to recount a story in their own words will also increase their self-confidence.

Activities based on interlingual translation

Staying within the boundaries of the same semiotic system, that is, a linguistic transfer from one language to another, Gaiman’s text can be further exploited. We can start from a more traditional pen-to-paper translation that involves literally rendering a short extract from the original into the student’s mother tongue and then move on to more specialised areas of audiovisual translation, including dubbing and subtitling.

Translating the written word

Once again, working with B2+ level students, we could encourage direct translation into the mother tongue. While this is obviously easier to organise in a linguistically homogenous foreign language classroom than in a multilingual second language context, the latter could also function, provided we have at least two speakers of the same language to share their ideas. Directionality is also worth contemplating. Inverse translation is only recommended for professionals with C2 level in their L2, as the lesser efficiency of translation out of the mother tongue has been documented (FERREIRA et al, 2016).

In my experience, a collaborative-comparative approach can also be applied to Gaiman’s novel with an added twist. Whenever I used the text, I concealed its identity and consistently changed the names as seen in the following edited extract:

In the flat above Marian’s, under the roof, was a crazy old man with a big moustache. He told Marian that he was training a mouse circus. He wouldn’t let anyone see it.
“One day, little Mary Ann, when they are all ready, everyone in the whole world will see the wonders of my mouse circus. You ask me why you cannot see it now. Is that what you asked me?”

“No,” said Marian quietly, “I asked you not to call me Mary Ann. It’s Marian.” (highlights by the author)

The students were asked to translate a short paragraph or extract which then could be peer edited in a pair work setting or discussed in small groups or involving the whole class. In addition, the translated versions can also be compared to the official translation (in the case of Spanish, see, for example, GAIMAN, 2003). This may be a particularly stimulating exercise if the students use a variety of the language that is significantly different from the official publication, as is the case of the Castilian Spanish version with respect to English classes in the Latin-American context.

Audiovisual examples

Such differences are even more poignant with regard to the cinematic version, where different subtitled and dubbed versions are available. For the purposes of a language class, the trailers could be used in English (FOCUS FEATURES, 2008), with Spanish subtitles (TRAILERS V.O.S.E., 2010) and in dubbed “Latino” Spanish (RUDY3E, 2009). While “Latino” Spanish is quite a vague term, it does signal the importance of the target audience, a key concept in terms of professional translation that can also be discussed in class.

As regards the activities, there is a broad range of them applicable depending on how digitally native the students are. If they have the know-how and access to a computer, they can work on the subtitling of any part of the movie adding their own personal touch. For example, they could use Movie Maker which is freely available and works on a Windows platform. In case the resources are scarce, they can prepare old-fashioned captions in their mother tongue on sheets of paper imitating the Christmas carol scene in Love Actually (see Figure 3.). One smart phone among them and a television screen with the movie being played is sufficient to record their work.
They could also improvise a voice-over both repeating the original English voices, which is an excellent way to practice pronunciation and intonation, and interpreting the English source text into their own language with preparation and a few dry runs.

Motivational aspects of interlingual translation

Despite recent calls for empirical research into the cognitive, social and critical facets of the effect of using multimodal material in language learning and teaching (FARÍAS et al., 2007), it is generally seen as a positive addition to the educational repertoire, because it is attractive to students and because it prepares them for their future work environment (GILAKJANI et al., 2011; KRESS et al., 2001; STEIN, 2000), hence plays into both the intrinsic and the instrumental aspects of motivation. This makes the teacher’s work somewhat easier in terms of giving interesting classes, while the task- or project-based activities, such as the subtitling exercise, provide a clear framework for goal-oriented exercises as well as promote learner autonomy.

Activities based on intersemiotic translation

Expanding the boundaries of translation and relying on Jakobson’s classification, perhaps the most exciting form of translation, the “interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems” (JAKOBSON, 1959/2000, p. 114), ventures into task-based learning / teaching (ECKERTH; SIEKMAN, 2008; ELLIS, 2003; NUNAN, 2004; VAN DEN BRANDEN, 2006) and project-based instruction...
(FRIED-BOOTH, 2002) territory. Due to the popularity of both the book and the movie, the adaptation examples abound. A lesson plan could include watching one, or a number, of these examples and then letting the students’ imagination run wild.

Motivating students through using mixed-method activities in class

Such an approach may not be the most appropriate in terms of developing accuracy, but it will most likely help motivating the students. Whether a parody (CANAL DE AYLENZITARP, 2012), a time-lapse painting video (BECKIE JANE BROWN, 2015), a video game problem solver (JUGADO; RESUELTO, 2015) or Halloween make-up tips (MIKU, 2016), all the adaptations, spin-offs and fan productions can lead on to project work or, at least, spark a discussion. While the latter will allow for creating a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere and increasing the learners’ linguistic self-confidence, once again, project-based work will promote learner autonomy, and personalise the learning process.

Conclusion

Even a rather brief insight into post-method second language teaching approaches, more comprehensive conceptualisations of translation and the multimodal construction of text has allowed for the rebuttal of the apparently widespread belief that translation has little place in the language classroom. Hopefully, the activities inspired by Neil Gaiman’s Coraline presented here will encourage teachers to challenge the often self-imposed limitations and seek new ways of including translation-based exercises, tasks and projects in their repertoire. For it appears that not only can such activities help us motivate our students by creating a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere, increasing the learners’ linguistic self-confidence, promoting learner autonomy, personalizing the learning process and familiarizing learners with the target language culture, they can also aid us in introducing them to the weird and wonderful world(s) of translation.

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How to cite this text


Submetido em: 24/02/2017
Revisões requeridas: 07/08/2017
Aprovado em: 02/11/2017