

Center for Translation Studies
University of Texas at Dallas

Teaching Translation

Through a series of seminars and workshops, students are introduced to the practice and theory of literary translation. Translation workshops are offered on a regular basis each semester on the graduate and under-graduate levels. Initially, students are introduced to a series of exercises that focus on demonstrating the various steps that have to be taken to translate a text from a foreign language into English. To start with, students are asked to translate a text from English into English to introduce the research, thought processes, and methodologies that lead to the practice of translating literary and humanistic works. For example, an essay by Francis Bacon or Ralph Waldo Emerson may be chosen for this exercise. Students are asked to respond to the following question: "What kind of research has to be done to do justice to the interpretation of the text?" Students work with the *Oxford English Dictionary* to investigate the etymological and philological background of words and expressions. Great emphasis is placed on establishing a convincing interpretive perspective. After the various research methods and interpretive considerations have been discussed, students will translate either a portion or the entire essay into contemporary English. The methodologies learned from the translation of a text from English to English are then transferred to the translation of foreign texts into English. To introduce the specific problems that are related to the translation of various literary genres, students are asked to prepare a translation of short fictional, poetic, dramatic, and essayistic texts.

It is important that students learn something about the nature of interpretive perspective. To illustrate the distinct perspectives that translators bring to the interpretation and translation of texts, multiple translations by different translators of the same text will be analyzed and discussed throughout the semester. Examples of multiple translations would be "The Panther" by Rainer Maria Rilke, "Arte Poetica" by Pablo Neruda, "Correspondances" by Charles Baudelaire, scenes from Molière's "Tartuffe," and the opening passage from Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, to name a few of the possible text choices. Through the study of multiple translations, students begin to understand the nature of establishing an interpretive perspective in light of the linguistic, cultural, and historical forces that shape a literary text in a particular language.

In terms of the practical procedure for each meeting of the Translation Workshop, students prepare their exercises, which are then distributed to each member of the Seminar for discussion.

Once the basic tools for the practice of translation have been presented and studied, students are encouraged to work on a major project during the semester. In collaboration with the instructor, students focus on a contemporary writer or writers in their respective languages. The selection can comprise a novel, a collection of short stories or poems, a play, or a collection of literary essays. As the students begin to work on their projects, the various drafts of their translations are presented during the Workshop Sessions. Generally, students go through at least three or four drafts before they prepare a final version.