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# Language Teaching in Higher Education within a Plurilingual Perspective

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The pedagogies that are currently being put forward within a broad multilingual paradigm in languages education endorse the general principle that learning is a collaborative and dialogic process engaging learners and teachers as partners that bring diverse linguistic, cultural and other knowledge into the classroom. The plurilingual approach to modern languages education adopted by the Council of Europe at the turn of the century is in line with the multilingual orientation embraced by educational linguists in the wake of migration and displacement on a global scale. This article deals with the implementation of the plurilingual approach in higher education, by focusing on the use of a particular type of cross-linguistic mediation in language teaching, namely written translation. Firstly, the article investigates how pedagogic translation is conceived of in applied linguistics. Secondly, it gives two examples of how translation is becoming an integral part of language teaching and testing in European universities. The concluding section contains some recommendations for future research.

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## INTRODUCTION

The *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001) and the *CEFR Companion Volume* (Council of Europe, 2020) (which contains the complete set of extended CEFR descriptors) endorse the principles underpinning the multilingual turn in Educational Linguistics, recognize that the language learner's communicative competence is built on the interrelationship and interaction between languages and cultures, and adopt a plurilingual approach to Language Teaching Methodology and curriculum design. Plurilingual individuals are thought of as drawing flexibly on their interrelated, uneven, and developing plurilinguistic repertoire to accomplish a variety of communicative tasks involving more than one language.

One such task is cross-linguistic mediation between individuals with no common language. In particular, translating a written text in speech and translating a written text in writing are cross-linguistic mediating activities that involve integrated skills, i.e. a mixture of spoken and written reception and production, plus frequently, interaction. More specifically, when translating a written text in writing, advanced language learners (C1 level of the CEFR) are able to translate abstract texts on social, academic and professional subjects in their field, successfully conveying evaluative aspects and arguments. At the C2 level, learners are able to translate technical material outside their field of specialisation, provided the accuracy of the subject matter is checked by a specialist in the field in question.

Given this general premise, my paper first expounds the notion of pedagogic translation as is conceived within the multilingual paradigm in applied linguistic research and praxis, particularly in Second Language Acquisition Studies, Bilingual Education, Language Teaching Methodology, and Applied Translation Studies. Then, it illustrates how translation

is being integrated in language teaching and testing as part of the syllabus design of modern languages degree courses in Europe. To this end, I examine translation as a form of cross-linguistic mediation in the CEFR *Companion Volume* (Council of Europe, 2020) and illustrate the approaches and methods adopted by two novel undergraduate coursebooks that draw inspiration from the plurilingual stance upheld in this European programmatic document. The paper concludes offering some recommendations for future interdisciplinary research into the use of translation in instructed language learning at university level.

## PEDAGOGIC TRANSLATION

Pedagogic (also referred to as pedagogical, educational or didactic) translation denotes the use of translation and translating in language learning and teaching. It is a transdisciplinary object of enquiry that has attracted widespread scholarly interest in recent years, particularly in Second Language Acquisition studies (SLA), Bilingual Education, Language Teaching Methodology, and Applied Translation Studies (Laviosa, 2014, 2020c, 2021 forthcoming; Laviosa & González-Davies, 2020). To a large extent, the advocacy of pedagogic translation is based on current critiques of the monolingual bias in applied linguistic research and praxis, which assumes monolingualism to be the norm in human communication and native-speaker models a firm basis for language education. The rejection of monolingualism and nativeness as organising principles for the study of instructed L2 learning has given rise to a new orientation that supports multilingualism as a societal and individual right and asset, and aims to understand “the cognitive, linguistic, and psycholinguistic mechanisms and consequences of becoming bi/multilingual later in life” (Ortega, 2014, p. 33) or a ‘multilingual subject’, as Kramsch (2009) puts it. This new inclusive paradigm is known as the ‘multilingual turn’ (Conteh & Meier, 2014; May, 2014). In the remainder of this section, I review a number of studies of pedagogic translation that are framed within a broad multilingual perspective in each of the aforementioned disciplinary fields.

In SLA, the investigation of translation is an integral part of research into the role played by the L1 in instructed L2 learning. Experimental studies have shown that in the early stages, when recurrent strings of sounds/written symbols are associated with uniquely identifiable meanings (i.e. their mental representations), L2 learners do not make direct links between L1 forms and their conceptual representations, but associate L2 forms with equivalent L1 forms (with the meaning of the L2 form being the conceptual representation that the L1 form is associated with). In later stages, with repeated encounters of L2 forms in context, a shift takes place in the development of L2 vocabulary. The form becomes directly associated with its own conceptual representation (i.e. its uniquely identifiable meaning). This may or may not be the same as the concept the L1 form is associated with. Moreover, the connections between L2 and L1 forms remain, though they are weaker. They are activated when translating from L2 to L1, but, when translating from L1 to L2, the connection between the L1 word and its mental representation is first activated and this in turn activates the connection to the L2 word (Hawkins, 2019, pp. 24-28). Current, usage-based models of the multilingual mental lexicon assume it to be one interactive and dynamic activation network of lexical items whose structure is continually changing. Novice learners will assume full conceptual overlap between L2 and L1 lexical items. With time and exposure to the L2, learners will discover new conceptual associations with L2 lexical items and this will lead to the restructuring of the links between lexical items and their mental representations. For example, in Dutch there is only one lexical equivalent of the two English words *last* and *latest*. The early-stage Dutch learner will assume full

overlap between the L2 word *last* and the L1 word *laatste*. When the learner is exposed to the new word *latest*, a restructuring will take place in the multilingual mental lexicon in order to create the activation pattern for this new word. The reconfiguration of the multilingual mental lexicon is an ongoing process (Lowie et al., 2010, p. 139).

We can identify two major approaches in the study of the L1 in L2 learning. The psycholinguistic perspective examines the influence of the L1 in the development of the learner's interlanguage. It focuses on L1 transfer and has shown that differences between the L1 and the L2 need not be viewed as the main cause of negative transfer and similarities between one's own and the new language can facilitate learning. Negative and positive transfer are regarded as natural processes arising when learners are exposed to the L2. The social-psychological perspective, which includes the Sociocultural Vygotskian Theory (Vygotsky, 1978), views the L1 as a resource for mediating L2 learning by using it as inner speech, which guides the learner's thought, and as a means of scaffolding written and spoken production in the L2 by using literal translation or language switch. The L1 is also thought of as facilitating cross-linguistic comparisons which contribute to the acquisition of explicit knowledge that learners can draw on when they use the L2 in a planned way or when they want to monitor their output. The use of the L1 is also seen as a means of reducing learner anxiety and creating a rapport with the teacher, who is perceived to respect and value the learner's own language (Ellis & Shintani, 2014, pp. 74, 235-248).

Experimental studies that have investigated what effect the use of translation in particular has on L2 learning are still rare. The relatively few studies that have been undertaken to date in higher education settings have demonstrated the effectiveness of contrastive analysis and translation in learning vocabulary and grammar vis-à-vis other form-focused exercises (Vaezi & Mirzaei, 2007; Kälkvist, 2008; Laufer & Girsai, 2008). Moreover, research has shown that translation fosters student-teacher interaction. Using an ethnographic and experimental approach, Kälkvist (2013) studied three groups of upper-intermediate undergraduate students of English at a Swedish university, where all three groups were taught a module on grammar and writing over a 17-week period. The first group undertook a mixture of tasks that included the translation of eight sentences from Swedish into English. The second group carried out tasks that excluded translation. The third group was composed of language teacher trainees who performed a mixture of tasks that included translation. Student-initiated queries were more frequent when translation tasks were discussed. Moreover, the issues addressed were more varied, as they concerned not only features of L2 grammar, lexis and phraseology, but also cross-linguistic equivalence. Within the same line of enquiry, Lo (2019) carried out a study involving L1 Chinese students of English majoring in public administration. Her investigation shows that Chinese-English translation tasks facilitate student-initiated classroom discussions on lexis and grammar significantly more than essay writing in English.

Bilingual Education offers students the possibility of becoming bilingual and biliterate. Language minority students learn a language other than the dominant one, which they speak at home. Language minority students, such as immigrants, refugees and indigenous people, who speak a non-dominant language at home, learn the language used at school in ways that support their home language. To achieve these goals, Bilingual Education integrates language and content learning, and uses two languages as media of instruction and assessment (García & Homonoff Woodley, 2015, p. 135). In Bilingual Education, which overlaps with Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and Content-based Instruction (cf. Cenoz 2015), translation is conceived as a pedagogical strategy that is used within two different approaches: plurilingualism and translanguaging. Although the two terms are used interchangeably by many (e.g. Council of Europe, 2020, p. 31), they have different origins, goals and epistemologies. As

García, Aponte, & Le (2020, p. 85) explain, plurilingualism desires to build bridges across languages and cultures, “whereas translanguaging dwells in the entanglements of cultures and languages as it makes visible power differentials”. In Bilingual Education programmes that follow the ethos of plurilingualism, translation aims to foster plurilingualism as competence, i.e. the ability to learn and use more than one language, and plurilingualism as value, i.e. linguistic tolerance or equal valuing of all varieties of language used (García et al., 2020, pp. 87-88). In Bilingual Education programmes that follow the ethos of translanguaging, teachers use translation exercises not to develop intercultural communication with the appropriate language of the other, but “to empower bilingual children so that they use their unitary semiotic repertoire to make meaning for themselves as minoritized beings, and thus develop their agency as bilingual subjects” (García et al., 2020, p. 86). A translanguaging pedagogy might involve, for example, the teacher introducing new words and their definitions, followed by students translating the definitions into their home languages. The teacher would allow a student who finds it difficult to say something in the L2 during a presentation to ask a classmate to translate it; the student then repeats the translated utterance (García & Li Wei, 2014, p. 124).

The following examples illustrate how these perspectives underpin the use of pedagogic translation in practice. In a CLIL fourth grade classroom in France, the Spanish teacher asks the children to translate the first two sentences of a Spanish text into French to ensure they understand the content of the text they are reading. Since they are all L1 French speakers, the students do not have any difficulty in carrying out this exercise. Then the teacher asks the children to translate the French translation back to Spanish without looking at the original text. The teacher expects the oral and written translations to be very close to the Spanish text and corrects the accuracy of the children’s renderings (García et al., 2020, p. 89). In a CLIL high school classroom in Italy, the L1 Italian biology teacher regularly uses PowerPoint slides and the blackboard to introduce the content of the lesson. She regularly translates subject-specific terminology from English into Italian to enable students to acquire subject-specific knowledge in L2 and L1, as shown in table 1 and table 2 (Laviosa, 2020a, p. 137).

Table 1

*Translating Subject-specific Terms from L2 to L1 with a Metalinguistic Marker*

Exchange type	Initiation	Act
Informing	Carbohydrate is composed of carbon + hydrate. A hydrate is composed of hydrogen and oxygen. So, a carbohydrate is a molecular compound made up of three elements: carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen. In Italian we say: idrato di carbonio.	Informative

Table 2

*Translating Subject-specific Terms from L2 to L1 Without a Metalinguistic Marker*

Exchange type	Initiation	Act
Informing	There are different types of carbohydrates: glucose, galactose, and fructose. Glucose contains an aldehyde functional group (gruppo aldeidico). Fructose contains a ketone functional group (gruppo chetonico).	Informative

The translation pedagogies illustrated so far are informed by the principles underpinning a plurilingualism perspective. The following examples illustrate the use of translation conceived within a translanguaging perspective. The first was recorded during an observational descriptive study that was carried out in a bilingual second grade classroom in the USA, attended by children from Mexican heritage families (Hopewell, 2017). The school offers a two-way biliteracy programme in which all students learn to read and write in both Spanish and English. The teacher adopts a novel approach that involves the coordination of home-school language and literacy experiences based on the general principle that what children learn or experience in one language can contribute to what they express and understand in the other. The teacher collects picture books and texts from the school library that relate to a particular theme that is culturally and personal relevant to the children. She reads aloud multiple versions of a legend in the English language literacy block. As homework, the children retell in Spanish one of the versions of the legend they heard in class, and ask their parents to talk about their experience of the legend. Then, in the Spanish language literacy block, they write about what they learned from their parents. One of the legends is *La Llorona* (The Weeping Woman), a popular Latino legend where a crying woman calls out for her children who drowned in the river. In some versions, she is thought to have drowned her children. In others, the children are believed to have died because of their mother's neglect. The different morals that parents share with their children in their home language enable them to pass on life lessons about parenthood. As Hopewell observes, "the culturally familiar story, although experienced in school only in English, served as a powerful basis for developing language, literacy and life lessons through homework that engaged parents as partners" and enhanced the home-school connection (Hopewell, 2017, p. 84).

The second example of translanguaging as pedagogy is Carol McCarthy's "Poetry in translation" teaching unit, which she submitted to the Academic of American Poets ([Poetry in Translation | Academy of American Poets](#)) on 4th May 2005. A teacher at Flushing High School, in Queens, New York, McCarthy proposes a unit of eight Class Periods designed for her multilingual eleventh grade students. In the introductory lesson plan, through a series of individual and small group activities, students investigate poetry through the lens of their individual cultural backgrounds, and write and translate their own poems. The goal is to help each student to find their place in a poetic tradition. Students are invited to complete several of the following tasks:

- a) Select a poet of particular interest from one's native country or ethnic heritage.
- b) Research the life and work of the poet.
- c) Explore the poet's work in the original language and find or write a translation of a selected poem.
- d) Compare one's own translation to one done by another poet.
- e) Find cultural material, via a search engine, related to the socio-political milieu from which the poet comes.
- f) Illustrate with original art.
- g) Write a poem in one's home language and translate the poem into English.

The expected outcomes are: learn to plan and organize, refine research skills, become better problem solvers, recognize inter-disciplinary connections as a result of the research, develop communication and collaborative skills, recognize cultural connections and

differences and see how poetry can cross barriers and bring the global community together. The sample pedagogies illustrated here show that the posited difference between plurilingualism and translanguaging is not as marked as is thought to be. The extent to which they are applied depends on the specificities of the educational setting, curriculum design, subject taught, learning objectives, and expected outcomes.

In line with the tenets upheld by the multilingual turn, educational linguists have put forward novel approaches and methods in the field of Language Teaching Methodology and Testing. Among them is Guy Cook. In his landmark monograph, *Translation in Language Teaching*, Cook (2010, p. xv) argues in favour of rehabilitating translation as “a major aim and means of language learning, and a major measure of success” particularly in single-language classes taught by bilingual teachers. He creates the acronym TILT (Translation in Language Teaching) to refer to the use of translation as “an integral part of the teaching and learning process as a whole” and as “a part of the general revival of bilingual teaching” (Cook, 2010, p. xx). Cook’s translation-oriented pedagogy is framed within a perspective on curriculum theory of language teaching that draws on the principles of four major educational philosophies: a) technological, b) social reformist, c) humanistic, and c) academic. He explains the principal tenets of these philosophies as follows (Cook, 2010, p. 105):

- a) Education should serve practical purposes, providing individuals and society with necessary skills, both general (numeracy, literacy, IT, etc.) and specialized (for example, medical training).
- b) Education is a means of bringing about desirable social change, developing certain values, beliefs, and behaviours. It might be used, for example, to indicate good citizenship, a particular religious faith, or a political credo.
- c) Education should provide personal fulfilment and development for the individual, not only for practical or social reasons, but also as an intrinsic good.
- d) Education should preserve, develop, and transmit knowledge and understanding of an academic discipline.

More specifically, from a technological perspective, Cook (2010, pp. 109-112) contends that in today’s increasingly multilingual and multicultural societies, translation is a much needed skill for many reasons: personal (e.g. mixed marriages), educational (e.g. to pass a language exam), social (e.g. with immigrant communities), and professional (e.g. international communication). From a social reformist perspective, translation can promote liberal, humanist and democratic values, because it facilitates language and cultural encounters together with an understanding and awareness of difference. Also, because it maintains the presence of the L1 in the L2 learning process, translation can help in “preserving the identities of the speakers of threatened languages and promoting awareness among speakers of powerful languages of the nature and predicament of others” (Cook, 2010, p. 116). From a humanistic educational perspective, Cook claims that translation as a form of bilingual instruction is looked upon favourably by students. Finally, from an academic perspective, “instruction in translation is likely to involve an academic element, in that it necessarily involves explicit knowledge about language and languages, and a metalanguage for their formal description” (Cook, 2010, p. 121).

Furthermore, Cook addresses a number of issues related to the implementation of translation in language teaching and suggests different types of classroom activities. His point of departure is that “the type, quantity, and function of translation activity must vary with the

stage which learners have reached, with their ages, and with their own preferences, learning styles, and experience” (Cook, 2010, p. 129). With adult beginners, the function of translation is mainly to enhance explanation and resolve difficulties, but it can also be a specific activity in itself. With intermediate learners “the amount of TILT for explanation may decrease, while the amount of TILT for developing translation skills and explicit knowledge may increase” (Cook, 2010, p. 132). Advanced learners can develop the ability to translate as a skill in its own right. They can also use it to understand culture-specific meanings and problematic language forms as well as deepen their declarative knowledge of the relationship between their own language and the new one. Cook (2010, p. 74) contends that “[a]s learning progresses, translation as a means with its early focus on the literal can transform into translation as end with its focus on discourse”. Hence, the proposed activities have traditional and communicative focuses, these being regarded as complementary. Cook’s important work has the merit of having provided a valid rationale for reappraising educational translation not only as an activity among other forms of bilingual instruction, or a skill in its own right, but, most importantly, as a long-term interdisciplinary research endeavour, that is fully committed to legitimizing and developing translation in language pedagogy “in the way that it deserves” (Cook, 2010, p. 156). Cook’s seminal book has inspired other educational linguists and educators to elaborate translation-oriented methods in language teaching and assessment in Europe, Canada and the United States (Tsigari & Floros, 2013; Floros, 2020; Huffmaster & Kramersch, 2020; Carreres et al., 2021).

Scholars in Applied Translation Studies have recently investigated the form and function of pedagogic translation in primary, secondary and higher education, and have elaborated language teaching approaches and methods framed within a broad plurilingual perspective. Among them, Pym, Malmkjær, & Gutiérrez-Colón Plana (2013) have focused on the use of translation activities in courses where the main aim is the acquisition of a second language. Based on the responses of teachers, teacher trainers and researchers in seven European nations as well as China, Australia and the United States, the survey study reveals that translation tends to be used by primary school teachers and pupils as a form of translanguaging. Teachers use it to aid learners’ understanding of the L2, and pupils use it spontaneously by translating mentally, as a way of scaffolding the learning of a new language with the help of the L1. In secondary and higher education, translation is used more frequently and as a complex communicative task. The pedagogies that have been proposed, particularly for modern language degree programmes, advocate the use of written translation (Hubert, 2016) as well as interpreting (Lee, 2014) and subtitling tasks (Incalcaterra McLoughlin & Lertola, 2014; Talávan & Rodríguez-Arancón, 2014). Translation is considered a means of enhancing language learning and a skill in its own right on the basis of the overlap between the communicative, textual, cultural and intercultural components of professional translation competence and the translanguing and transcultural abilities that language graduates are expected to acquire (Carreres, 2014).

The use of translation is also upheld as a cognitive, metacognitive and socio-affective learning strategy (González-Davies, 2014). Moreover, when combined with translanguaging activities – such as the analysis of metaphor or the modal system in English and Greek parallel texts – translation contributes to raising language learners’ awareness of cross-cultural variation between the L1 and the L2, thus enhancing their critical thinking and intercultural sensitivity (Sidiropoulou & Tsapaki, 2014; Sidiropoulou, 2015). Finally, based on the convergent principles underpinning symbolic competence (Kramersch, 2009) and holistic cultural translation (Tymoczko, 2007/2014), holistic pedagogic translation is valued for its capacity to develop translanguing and transcultural abilities that enable multilingual individuals



to reflect critically on the world and on themselves through the eyes of another language and culture (Laviosa, 2014). Applied Translation Studies is increasingly opening up to adjacent disciplines such as SLA, Bilingual Education and Language Teaching Methodology, and endorses the principles of the paradigm shift towards multilingualism (Laviosa & González-Davies, 2020). This orientation, which fully supports translation and translanguaging as language pedagogies, is reflected in the new descriptors laid out in the CEFR *Companion Volume* (Council of Europe, 2020), to which I now turn.

### THE CEFR *COMPANION VOLUME*

Language policy makers in Europe are rising to the challenges posed by our increasingly multilingual communities by elaborating new competence frameworks for languages education. One such framework is laid out in the CEFR *Companion Volume*. First published online in February 2018, it was updated in 2020. It presents the key messages of the CEFR and contains the complete set of extended CEFR descriptors. The CEFR *Companion Volume* embraces the main tenets of the multilingual turn and places great emphasis on plurilingualism, which is linked to pluriculturalism, and is presented as “an uneven and changing competence, in which the user/learner’s resources in one language may be very different from their resources in another” (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 30). These resources form part of a *single*, interrelated repertoire that plurilingual individuals draw on and combine with their general competences and various strategies to accomplish a host of tasks involving more than one language or dialect or variety (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 30, original emphasis). One of these tasks is to “mediate between individuals with no common language (or dialect, or variety), even with only a slight knowledge oneself” (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 30).

Mediation requires that the user/learner is able to act as a social agent who creates bridges and helps to construct or convey meaning, sometimes within the same language, and sometimes from one language to another (cross-linguistic mediation). The context can be social, pedagogic, cultural, linguistic or professional. Mediation involves the integration of written and oral reception and production, plus frequently, interaction. There are different types of mediation tasks, each requiring specific integrated abilities that are carefully described in the CEFR *Companion Volume*. These are: a) mediating a text (within the same language and between languages), b) mediating concepts, and c) mediating communication. Mediating a text between language A (the learner’s best language) and language B (the learner’s new language) includes the following oral and written activities:

- relaying specific information given in a particular section of an unabridged text;
- explaining data presented in graphs, diagrams or charts;
- processing a text, e.g. summarizing it;
- translating a text.

At the higher levels of linguistic proficiency (C1 and C2) the abilities required to translate a written text in writing, which is the focus of the present discussion, are as follows:

**C1** Can translate into (Language B) abstract texts on social, academic and professional subjects in his/her field written in (Language A), successfully conveying evaluative aspects and arguments, including many of the implications associated with them, though some expressions may be over-influenced by the original.

**C2** Can translate into (Language B) technical material outside his/her field of specialization written in (Language A), provided subject matter accuracy is checked by a specialist in the field concerned.

(Council of Europe 2020, p. 103)

It is worth pointing out that the CEFR *Companion Volume* deliberately does not address the issue of translating into and from the mother tongue. This is because for a plurilingual person the mother tongue and best language are not necessarily synonymous. So, language A is the learner's source language and language B is the target language.

According to the competence model presented in the CEFR *Companion Volume*, translating a written text at C1 and C2 levels involves processing the source message and articulating it in the target language. The key functional abilities required to transfer meaning from one language to another are a) comprehensibility of the translation, b) adherence to the relevant norms in the target language, and b) capturing nuances in the original. Therefore, the CEFR *Companion Volume* fully endorses translation in language learning and teaching as a cross-linguistic mediation activity that plurilingual individuals can carry out in a personal, social, academic, or professional context. Furthermore, the CEFR *Companion Volume* reappraises translating not just as an exercise in contrastive grammar, a means of achieving communicative competence or a test of students' knowledge of the target language, but, most importantly, as a valuable skill in its own right. A competent plurilingual individual develops this skill in degree programmes where one or more languages are taught up to C1 or C2 level. One can readily detect a significant shift from the traditional view of translation *for* language teaching towards the emerging view of translation *in* language teaching. Does this mean blurring the long-standing distinction between pedagogic and professional translation? Not really, and with good reason. The CEFR *Companion Volume* is very clear on this point:

“Translating a written text in writing” is by its very nature a more formal process than providing an impromptu oral translation. However, this CEFR descriptor scale is not intended to relate to the activities of professional translators or to their training. [...] On the other hand, plurilingual users/learners with a more modest level of proficiency [compared with that required of fully trained translators] sometimes find themselves in a situation in which they are asked to provide a written translation of a text in their professional or personal context. Here they are being asked to reproduce the substantive message of the source text, rather than necessarily interpret the style and tone of the original into an appropriate style and tone in the translation, as a professional translator would be expected to do (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 102).

The distinction drawn by the CEFR *Companion Volume* between didactic and professional translating lies, in my view, at the heart of the difference made in Translation Studies between translation conceived as transfer of meaning (consonant with the instrumental model) and translation viewed as an interpretive act (consonant with the hermeneutic model) (Venuti, 2017; Laviosa, 2019). These two models are reflected in the Petra-E Framework of Reference for the Education and Training of Literary Translators (Framework Literary Translation | Universiteit Utrecht (petra-educationframework.eu)). In this framework, the C1 and C2 levels of the CEFR are required respectively for the first and the second level of a five-level scale from beginner to expert (beginner, advanced learner, early career professional, advanced professional, and expert). Each of these five levels has its own descriptors for each of the eight

competences that translator trainees are expected to achieve in order to become professional literary translators. These are transfer, language, textual, heuristic, literary-cultural, professional, evaluative, and research competences. Therefore, translation pedagogy in higher education can be conceived as a continuum that starts with translation in language teaching as cross-linguistic mediation and may progress towards translator training in postgraduate degree programmes. In the next section, I illustrate how pedagogic translation has been incorporated in the syllabus design of undergraduate degree courses in modern languages in two European universities, in line with the competence framework presented in the CEFR *Companion Volume*.

## TEACHING TRANSLATION AS CROSS-LINGUISTIC MEDIATION

The first methodology I am going to illustrate is adopted in a textbook, *Mundos en palabras: Learning advanced Spanish through translation*, published in 2018, and authored by Ángeles Carreres and María Noriega-Sánchez (University of Cambridge, UK) and Carme Calduch (Queen Mary University of London). The intended target readership consists of advanced undergraduate students of Spanish (C1 level) with English as language A. The aim of the book is to develop cross-linguistic and cross-cultural awareness as well as foster the ability to translate a wide range of authentic texts from English to Spanish. The pedagogic approach adopted is task-based language learning and the activities are designed around two key tenets, i.e. translation is conceived as a form of mediated communication and learning as collaboration among peers and between students and teacher. This stance is in line with the approach adopted by the CEFR *Companion Volume*, where mediation “focuses on the role of language in processes like creating the space and conditions for communicating and/or learning, collaborating to construct new meaning, encouraging others to construct or understand new meaning, and passing on new information in an appropriate form” (Council of Europe, 2020, 90).

In the introductory chapter, the authors outline the tenets that underpin the book and its goals. They explicitly refer to the fact that they are trying to reconcile two ways of conceiving translation in language learning, i.e. as a means (a tool to aid acquisition) and as an end (skill). This, they state, is a distinctive feature of the book since few if any books of this kind have explicitly set out to teach *both* language and translation. The overarching goal is, therefore, to build bridges between language teaching and translator education. After the introduction in English, the coursebook is divided into 12 chapters. The first two expound the concept of translation underpinning the pedagogic approach adopted in the coursebook, and introduce a number of key concepts, such as translation equivalence, translation strategy, and translation competence, among others. Chapter 3 deals with the use of lexicographical and terminological resources and tools that students need when undertaking translation tasks either in class or by distance learning. The remainder of the coursebook presents authentic translation activities that focus on text-types as varied as recipes, fiction, poetry, humour, theatre, advertising and audiovisual texts. The last chapter is devoted to the translation of language varieties such as Spanglish. The companion website contains a) complementary exercises that require the support of online language learning resources, b) additional activities, c) downloadable learning materials, d) suggested answers to most exercises. The latter are meant to be pointers for reflection and self-evaluation (<https://routledgetextbooks.com/textbooks/9780415695374/default.php>).

By way of example, I illustrate one cross-linguistic mediation task selected from chapter 2, whose learning objectives are: Aprender algunos conceptos teóricos básicos; Reflexionar sobre cómo abordar un texto a la hora de traducirlo según su finalidad; Identificar

problemas de traducción y desarrollar estrategias para su resolución; Familiarizarte con las diferentes técnicas de traducción; Identificar los tipos de errores de traducción; Familiarizarte con la corrección de traducciones. In particular, section 1.3 introduces the principles of the modern functionalist approach to translation theory and explains the concept of ‘encargo de traducción’. This concept is then applied in Actividad 3. Students first read an English text on the topic of the human reproductive system, adapted from Wikipedia. Then, they are divided into two groups.

Group 1 receives the following translation brief:

#### Encargo 1

- a) Finalidad: explicar a niños de 9-10 años el sistema de reproducción humano.
- b) Destinatario: alumnos de educación primaria (10 años).
- c) Lugar de publicación: un libro impreso con un CD-Rom interactivo para un curso escolar de ciencias naturales.

Group 2 receives the following translation brief:

#### Encargo 2

- a) Finalidad: traducir el artículo de Wikipedia para la versión en español de la Enciclopedia Libre.
- b) Destinatario: público adulto sin conocimientos especializados de biología.
- c) Lugar de publicación: Internet.

(Carreres et al., 2018, pp. 23, 29-31).

With regard to their formative assessment, students are given translation passages to work on, which are marked by the teachers. Formal assessment is based on the final exam, which is not designed by individual teachers, but adheres to the Faculty’s exam format at the University of Cambridge. The final written exam consists of one passage to translate from Spanish into English, and one from English into Spanish, with the simple instruction “Translate the following passage into X”. There is no contextual information or brief other than the author’s surname, this being exactly the kind of format that has been the object of so much criticism at least since the revival of translation in language learning. An exception is the Year Abroad Project, where students do have the option of doing a Translation Project. They choose their own text (prose, poetry, or a screenplay) and work on a translation of some sections, providing an introduction and translator’s notes (see: [https://www.mml.cam.ac.uk/sites/www.mml.cam.ac.uk/files/yap\\_handbook\\_tripos\\_2021\\_-\\_mml.pdf](https://www.mml.cam.ac.uk/sites/www.mml.cam.ac.uk/files/yap_handbook_tripos_2021_-_mml.pdf)).

More recently, though, as Carreres explained to me, owing to the emergency situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the traditional format was replaced by a take-home exam.

Students were allowed to use any documentation resources they wished in order to complete their translation, except for translation engines and published versions. Moreover, they were asked to choose five elements of the text that posed a challenge to them and explain briefly how they responded to it. In order to prepare students for this new exam format, teachers assigned this kind of task as homework and students found it interesting. The teachers' impression in marking the students' notes matched the students' feedback. They realized that "this new element adds something really valuable" to the traditional exam format (Carreres, personal communication via email, 8<sup>th</sup> May 2020).

Reflecting on this new mode of assessment a year later, Carreres observes that annotated translations enabled language instructors "to make more nuanced judgements when assessing a particular translation choice", and gave them "an insight as to the overall coherence of the strategy the student was applying" (Carreres, personal communication via email, 15<sup>th</sup> May 2021). Although there has not been a formal review of this new type of evaluation, there is consensus among language teachers as to its pedagogical value beyond formal assessment. Writing notes has now been integrated in translation teaching and formative assessment throughout the year. "As a result", Carreres points out, "I feel students are more comfortable with the notion of formulating clear explanations for their choices, and this leads, I feel, to a more reflective approach and more interesting debates in class" (Carreres, personal communication via email, 15<sup>th</sup> May 2021).

The second methodology I am going to illustrate is presented in the textbook *Linking wor(l)ds: A coursebook on cross-linguistic mediation* (Laviosa, 2020b). Conceived within a multilingual perspective on language learning and teaching, this coursebook fully recognizes the value of pedagogic translation and other cross-linguistic mediation activities in fostering plurilingualism. The book focuses on written translation, and is aimed at undergraduate students of English with an excellent command of Italian at European Level C2 or above. More specifically, the book is written for learners of English from upper-intermediate level (European Level B2) up to advanced level of language proficiency (European Level C1). By the end of the course, students will become familiar with a number of linguistic concepts that will enable them to analyse the morphemic structure of words, lexical and sense relations, word classes, as well as the structure of phrases, clauses, and sentences. They will also become aware of the relevance of these key notions for examining the similarities and differences between English and Italian, and developing the integrated receptive and productive skills necessary for translating a variety of written texts, in accord with the new descriptors laid out in the CEFR *Companion Volume*. *Linking Wor(l)ds* includes mediating tasks between English and Italian as both source and target languages. When translating into English the language abilities required are those described at European Level C1. When translating into Italian the abilities required are those described at European Level C2.

The book is divided into 12 chapters, each corresponding to a teaching unit requiring about two to four hours of seminar time. Each teaching unit is composed of a) an introduction presenting the learning objectives; b) an explanation of linguistic concepts; c) illustrative examples from a wide range of texts; d) monolingual and bilingual language activities that can be carried out individually, in pairs, or in small groups for practice, revision and consolidation; e) a discussion of the translation problems that may arise when there are differences across English and Italian at various levels of linguistic analysis; f) translation tasks for which students will be able to apply some of the translation procedures commonly used by professional translators to address problems of non-equivalence at the level of lexis or syntax; g) a summary of the main points to remember. At the end of the book there is a Glossary that gives an index of terms and the corresponding definitions. The Key is intended for self-study; it includes

suggested translations and provides answers to the language activities. Additional Mediation Tasks are provided at the end of the book for extra practice on other forms of cross-linguistic mediation beside translation, namely relaying specific information, explaining data, and processing text in speech and in writing. *Linking wor(l)ds* is accompanied by a digital workbook, *English lexis, grammar and translation*. Divided into 12 units, the workbook offers activities with examples of real-life language use taken from a wide variety of sources such as newspapers, magazines, tourist brochures and billboards, advertising, BBC comedy, songs, poetry, novels, academic writing, and web sites (Braithwaite, 2020).

The following sample activities are taken from chapter 5 in the digital workbook:

#### 5.4 Metaphor in poetry

Analyse the metaphors created in the poem “Tutti i colori”, authored by Elena Malta.

#### TUTTI I COLORI

Tutti i colori  
del mondo  
si danno invito  
sui rami e  
nei prati

ma il vento  
li frusta e  
disperde

il freddo  
li ghiaccia e  
li nega

chiuso  
li avvolge  
di buio  
il cielo  
geloso e  
incapace  
di tanti colori.

From: *Un abito qualunque: Poesie*, a collection of poems authored by Elena Malta with a preface by Vito Moretti (Pescara: Edizioni Tracce) © Elena Malta 2011.

#### 5.5 Translating metaphor in poetry

Translate the poem “Tutti i colori” into English. Your aim is to achieve lexical and grammatical accuracy as well as stylistic fluency. Also, reflect on the procedures adopted to relay the creative metaphors examined in exercise 5.4 above.

There is no formative assessment and formal assessment consists of an end-of-the-year written test and an oral exam. The written test lasts four hours and is composed of an essay, a translation into Italian and a translation into English (see Appendix for an example). The oral exam consists of a 10-minute presentation in which students illustrate and discuss the translation problems encountered when undertaking one of the translation tasks contained in the coursebook or in the digital workbook. Student's feedback on the coursebook has been largely positive. Here are some illustrative comments elicited by an instructor at the University of Bari 'Aldo Moro', who uses *Linking Wor(l)ds* with third-year Italian undergraduate students majoring in English:

Si è dimostrato utile e chiaro ai fini dello studio della lingua inglese, con spiegazioni dettagliate ed esercizi di traduzione adatti agli argomenti trattati durante le lezioni. (Student 1)

È uno strumento molto utile e facile per noi studenti, personalmente mi ha aiutato a comprendere molte cose del lessico e della grammatica inglese. Inoltre, fornisce molte traduzioni per esercitarsi in vista dell'esame scritto. (Student 2)

Gli argomenti sono spiegati in maniera esaustiva e molto comprensibile nel libro. Personalmente ho trovato molto utile la scelta di integrare le traduzioni con le rispettive correzioni. Gli esempi agevolano la comprensione dei concetti. Ho apprezzato anche il digital workbook. (Student 3)

Penso che il libro sia strutturato bene, con unità brevi per apprendere meglio, gli esercizi alla fine di ogni capitolo sono risultati molto utili ai fini dell'apprendimento. Inoltre le soluzioni alla fine del libro risultano essenziali in caso non si possano seguire le lezioni. (Student 4)

Il libro espone i concetti in modo molto chiaro e conciso. È veramente un piacere da leggere, molto scorrevole e ha anche una sezione "Summary" alla fine di ogni capitolo, il che rende molto più semplice studiarlo, qualora nella sezione principale si abbiano avuti problemi a fissare alcuni concetti. (Student 5)

E' uno strumento molto valido: spiega bene, in maniera approfondita e ha esercizi validi. Le traduzioni sono di difficoltà diverse che permettono allo studente di confrontarsi con i suoi colleghi e il docente di riferimento. (Student 6)

Un ottimo libro per chi desidera scrivere testi in inglese. Offre una panoramica dettagliata della morfologia e della sintassi della lingua inglese. Geniale l'idea di introdurre le soluzioni e di integrare il libro con gli esercizi del digital workbook. (Student 7)

Summing up, the methodologies adopted in *Mundos en Palabras* and *Linking Wor(l)ds*, two examples of undergraduate textbooks for L1 English students of Spanish and L1 Italian students of English respectively, embrace the principles of the multilingual turn in applied linguistics and are in line with the guidelines of the CEFR *Companion Volume* (Council of Europe, 2020). More recently, another textbook, aimed at advanced learners of French, has been published in England, *English-French Translation: A practical manual*, authored by

Christophe Gagne (University of Cambridge) and Emilia Wilton-Godberfforde (Open University) (2021). The coursebook is intended to develop translation and writing skills. It provides explanations of French grammatical structures, widens knowledge of vocabulary and idiomatic language, and fosters understanding of the nuances of different styles and registers.

## CONCLUSION

As I have maintained throughout this paper, pedagogic translation in higher education is nowadays framed within a plurilingual and pluricultural perspective that draws on the tenets underpinning the multilingual turn in applied linguistic research and practice. Within such framework, pedagogic translation is no longer conceived as merely a tool available to the language educator for scaffolding learning and improving teaching. Instead, translation in the undergraduate language classroom is construed as a form of mediated communication that is inherent in the makeup of our societies. As such, it has to be taught, not just effectively, but sensibly and responsibly and with a deep awareness of the opportunities it offers and the challenges it poses in Language Teaching Methodology and Testing at all levels of the language curriculum. In order to foster this awareness among scholar-teachers it is crucially important to progress from current transdisciplinary research - which investigates translation within the permeable boundaries of domains as varied as SLA, Bilingual Education, Language Teaching Methodology, and Applied Translation Studies – to interdisciplinary, collaborative research, which is carried out by teams composed of translation and interpreting scholars and practitioners, educationalists and educators, sociolinguists and psycholinguists. Some topics that may be addressed are: the development of coursebooks and teaching materials in different source and target languages and in different media (print, digital and online), novel modes of assessment, multimodality and translation, use of IT resources such as corpora and machine translation, specialized languages and translation, literary translation, audiovisual translation, ethics, cognition, and learning styles. A wide array of research methodologies are recommended to undertake these research endeavours, e.g. experimental and longitudinal studies as well as ethnographies and surveys. The goal is to open the boundaries of Applied Translation Studies to neighbouring disciplines, reconcile the different assumptions about the nature of translation, and valorise pedagogic translation within a plurilingual and pluricultural perspective in higher education.

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## APPENDIX

### Essay Question:

*La parola collega la traccia  
visibile alla cosa invisibile,  
alla cosa assente,  
alla cosa desiderata o temuta,  
come un fragile ponte di fortuna  
gettato sul vuoto*

Italo Calvino

Reflect on the meaning of this quotation on the basis of your experience as a student of modern languages.

**Translation task 1:** An English friend of yours is planning a trip to the Canary Islands. She's asked you to translate for her the following text taken from the blog on sustainable tourism *Viaggiare Libera* created by Valentina Miozzo. **You should aim to produce a translation that is comprehensible, accurate and fluent.**

IL SILBO, UN'ANTICA LINGUA FISCHIATA CHE ESISTE SOLO A LA GOMERA – CANARIE

Il Silbo è qualcosa di straordinario, qualcosa che è difficile immaginare. Il Silbo nasce in un'epoca lontana come metodo di comunicazione tra i pastori, da una vallata all'altra. Nel 1999 il governo locale ha dichiarato il Silbo Patrimonio Etnografico delle Canarie e nel 2009 è stato dichiarato dall'UNESCO come un capolavoro del Patrimonio Orale e Immateriale dell'Umanità.

Il Silbo è stato creato dai Guanci, l'antico popolo delle Canarie. Quando nel Medioevo i primi europei arrivarono alle Canarie, i Guanci vivevano ancora nelle caverne, erano circa 80.000 ed erano ancora all'età della pietra. Gli ultimi indigeni di questa popolazione vissero fino al 1496, poi la loro cultura è scomparsa, ma ha lasciato le sue tracce. Fino al 1600 il Silbo veniva usato dai pastori nelle isole de El Hierro, Tenerife e Gran Canaria. Oggi sopravvive, con orgoglio della popolazione locale, solamente nell'isola de La Gomera.

La lingua sopravvisse a lungo perché era facile da apprendere e perché permetteva di comunicare a grandi distanze. Il suo utilizzo diminuì considerevolmente verso il 1950, con l'arrivo del telefono, ma uno dei motivi principali fu l'abbandono della pastorizia e dell'agricoltura.

From: Il Silbo, un'antica lingua fischiata che esiste solo a La Gomera - Canarie (viaggiarelibera.com)

**Translation task 2:** Imagine you are a member of the Associazione Italiana di Anglistica (AIA) and have been asked to translate the following text to be posted on the Facebook page of the association. The text is taken from INTERSECT: A Newsletter about Interpreting Language and Culture and an article by Raphael Minder (*The New York Times*, 18 February 2021). **You should aim to produce a translation that is comprehensible, accurate and fluent.**

## To Whistle a Language



You have probably heard about languages that have a number of clicks acting as consonants.

But what about a language without words — a language made of whistling?

An indigenous whistling language can be found in one of the Canary Islands, La Gomera. Yes, the language is *only* whistling, and it appears to be the only one of its kind.

Mr. Márquez is a proud speaker of La Gomera’s whistling language, which he calls “the poetry of my island.” And, he adds, “like poetry, whistling does not need to be useful in order to be special and beautiful.”

The whistling of the Indigenous people of La Gomera is mentioned in the 15th-century accounts of the explorers who paved the way for the Spanish conquest of the island. The language, officially known as Silbo Gomero, substitutes whistled sounds that vary by pitch and length for written letters.

In 2009, Silbo Gomero was added by UNESCO to its list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity; the United Nations agency described it as “the only whistled language in the world that is fully developed and practiced by a large community,” in reference to La Gomera’s 22,000 inhabitants.

But with whistling no longer essential for communication, Silbo’s survival mostly relies on a 1999 law that made teaching it an obligatory part of La Gomera’s school curriculum.

On a recent morning at a school in the port town of Santiago, a classroom of 6-year-olds had little difficulty identifying the whistling sounds corresponding to different colors, or the days of the week.



Students at a class on the island of La Gomera, where they are taught Silbo Gomero.