



Modern & Medieval Languages

Task: translation exercise and commentary

Choose one of the three passages below (in French, German and Spanish) and translate the text into English. You are, of course, welcome to use a dictionary, but please avoid machine translation tools.

Once you've come up with your translation, choose five words, phrases or structures which presented interesting translation challenges. For each word, phrase or structure, write a short paragraph (100-150 words) in English on the challenges it posed and how you chose to resolve them. Relevant aspects might include, amongst others: style, syntax, tenses, vocabulary, register.

The point of the translation commentary is to allow you to reflect critically on your own decisions as a translator. There is no expectation that you use specific terminology, but you may find it helpful to consult the glossary of translation terms at the end of this document.

Developing your super-curricular interests

If you're interested in thinking further about the theory and practice of translation, you may wish to take a look at some of the following resources:

- 'What makes a translation good?': Podcast interview with translator and biographer David Bellos. <https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/david-bellos-what-makes-a-translation-good/id1260928157?i=1000401222750>
- 'The art and craft of translating fiction' – BBC Front Row (30-minute podcast): Novelist Naomi Alderman reports on the art of translating fiction, with writers Ian McEwan, AS Byatt, Ali Smith and David Baddiel, and joins three translators tackling Jules Verne. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b037v4gb>
- Cambridge Conversations in Translation: Video and audio recordings of workshops and panel discussions reflecting on questions such as: translation and poetry, translation and children's literature, translation and humour, translation and diversity, translation and gender. <https://sms.cam.ac.uk/collection/2089943>
- The Stephen Spender Trust: Organisation promoting multilingualism and creative translation, which runs competitions for poetry in translation. <https://www.stephen-spender.org/>
- YouTube channel for the British Centre for Literary Translation: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCybdW5A7bUNppkB-qQdtOEA>
- YouTube channel for Translators Aloud, a place for translators to read their own work: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjaq9OSpoEeohPmK8ZT-C7w/videos>

Reading suggestions

- David Bellos, *Is That a Fish in Your Ear? Translation and the Meaning of Everything* (Penguin Books, 2011)
- Kate Briggs, *This Little Art* (Fitzcarraldo Editions, 2017)
- Barbara Cassin, *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon* (Princeton University Press, 2014)

These books can often be accessed for free through your school or local library; however, we understand that not everyone will be able to easily access these. They are not required reading. Part of academic research is working with what is available to you and acknowledging its limitations.

Spanish

Contar mi vida... No sé por dónde empezar. Una vida la recuerdas a saltos, a golpes. De repente te viene a la memoria un pasaje y se te ilumina la escena del recuerdo. Lo ves todo transparente, clarísimo y hasta parece que lo entiendes. Entiendes lo que está pasando allí aunque no lo entendieras cuando sucedió...

Otras veces tratas de recordar hechos que fueron importantes, acontecimientos que marcaron tu vida y no logras recrearlos, sacarlos a la superficie... Si tienes paciencia y me escuchas y luego te las arreglas para ir poniendo orden en la baraja...

Si tú te encargas de buscar explicaciones a tantas cosas que para mí están muy oscuras, entonces lo intentamos. Pero poco a poco, como me vaya saliendo. No me pidas que te cuente mi vida desde el principio y luego, todo seguido año tras año. No hay vida que se recuerde así...

Para mí, por ejemplo, está muy claro el día que di por terminada la carrera. Yo acababa de cumplir diecinueve años. Era un día de octubre de 1923. Lloviznaba. Desde muy temprano había contemplado por la ventana los árboles del parque cubiertos de una gasa tenue y abajo, al final de la ladera, un pozo de luz lechosa, como una nube o un ovillo de hilos enredados que flotaba sobre el suelo.

Al levantar el sol, por la ciudad se extendería un clamor de sonidos mezclados; caballos, automóviles, gritos de niños, voces de vendedores ambulantes. La ciudad era Oviedo.

JOSEFINA ALDECOA

French

Le 25 juin 1832, Delacroix débarque à Alger pour une courte escale. Il vient de séjourner durant un mois au Maroc, immergé dans un univers d'une extrême richesse visuelle (splendeur des costumes, furia des fantasias, fastes d'une cour royale, pittoresque de noces juives ou de musiciens de rues, noblesse de félins royaux : lions, tigres, etc.).

Le Maroc se révèle ainsi lieu de rencontre du rêve et de l'idéal esthétique incarné, lieu d'une révolution visuelle. Delacroix peut justement écrire un peu plus tard : « Les hommes et les choses m'apparaissent sous un jour nouveau depuis mon voyage ».

A Alger, Delacroix ne séjournera que trois jours. Ce bref passage dans une capitale récemment conquise l'orienta, grâce à un heureux concours de circonstances, vers un monde auquel il était demeuré étranger lors de son périple marocain. Pour la première fois, il pénètre dans un univers réservé : celui des femmes algériennes.

Le monde, qu'il a découvert au Maroc et que ses croquis fixent, est essentiellement masculin et guerrier, viril en un mot. S'est offert à ses yeux le permanent spectacle d'une extériorité toute en fastes, bruits, cavalcades et mouvements rapides. Mais passant du Maroc à l'Algérie, Delacroix franchit en même temps une subtile frontière qui va inverser tous les signes et être à l'origine de ce que la postérité retiendra de ce singulier « voyage en Orient ».

ASSIA DJEBAR

German

Ich habe das Merkwürdigste gesehen, was die Welt dem staunenden Geiste zeigen kann, ich habe es gesehen und staune noch immer – noch immer starrt in meinem Gedächtnisse dieser steinerne Wald von Häusern und dazwischen der drängende Strom lebendiger Menschengesichter mit all ihren bunten Leidenschaften, mit all ihrer grauenhaften Hast der Liebe, des Hungers und des Hasses – ich spreche von London.

Schickt einen Philosophen nach London, bloß keinen Poeten! Schickt einen Philosophen hin und stellt ihn an eine Ecke von Cheapside, er wird hier mehr lernen als aus allen Büchern der letzten Leipziger Messe; und wie die Menschenwogen ihn umrauschen, so wird auch ein Meer von neuen Gedanken vor ihm aufsteigen, der ewige Geist, der darüber schwebt, wird ihn anwehen, die verborgensten Geheimnisse der gesellschaftlichen Ordnung werden sich ihm plötzlich offenbaren, er wird den Pulsschlag der Welt hörbar vernehmen und sichtbar sehen – denn wenn London die rechte Hand der Welt ist, die tätige, mächtige rechte Hand, so ist jene Straße, die von der Börse nach Downing Street führt, als die Pulsader der Welt zu betrachten.

Aber schickt keinen Poeten nach London! Dieser bare Ernst aller Dinge, diese kolossale Einförmigkeit, diese maschinenhafte Bewegung, diese Verdrießlichkeit der Freude selbst, dieses übertriebene London erdrückt die Phantasie und zerreißt das Herz. Wieviel heiterer und wohnlicher ist es dagegen in unserem lieben Deutschland! Wie traumhaft gemütlich, wie sabbatlich ruhig bewegen sich hier die Dinge!

HEINRICH HEINE

Glossary of translation terms

Adaptation: Process of converting information into an appropriate format for the target language and culture.

Ambiguity: Situation in which the intended meaning of a phrase is unclear and must be verified – usually with the source text author – in order for translation to proceed.

Antonym: Antonyms are opposite words that reside in an inherently incompatible binary relationship, e.g. in the pairs long : short, up : down, and precede : follow.

Back translation: Process of translating a previously translated text back into its source language.

Cognate: In linguistics, cognates are words that have a common etymological origin. An example of cognates within the same language would be English shirt and skirt.

Consistency: Measure of how often a term or phrase is rendered the same way into the target language.

Context: Information outside of the actual text that is essential for complete comprehension.

Cultural adaptation: Adjustment of a translation to conform with the target culture.

Culturally sensitive translation: Translation that takes into account cultural differences.

Domain: Area of knowledge that is communicated within a text, translation, or corpus.

False friends: False friends are pairs of words or phrases in two languages or dialects (or letters in two alphabets) that look or sound similar but differ in meaning.

FIGS: Abbreviation for French, Italian, German and Spanish.

Gist translation: Use of human or machine translation to create a rough translation of the source text that allows the reader to understand the essence of the text.

Globalization (G11N): Globalisation (or globalization) describes the process by which regional economies, societies, and cultures have become integrated through a global network of political ideas through communication, transportation, and trade. Globalization is referred to as a cycle, rather than a single process. G11N is an abbreviation for globalization, with the number 11 representing the number of characters between the G and N.

Glocal: Combination of the words 'global' and 'local,' used to describe products or services intended for international markets and have been customized for different languages, countries, and cultures

Glossary: A glossary, also known as an idioticon, vocabulary, or clavis, is an alphabetical list of terms in a particular domain of knowledge with the definitions for those terms. Traditionally, a glossary appears at the end of a book and includes terms within that book which are either newly introduced, uncommon or specialized. A bilingual glossary is a list of terms in one language which are defined in a second language or glossed by synonyms (or at least near-synonyms) in another language. In a general sense, a glossary contains explanations of concepts relevant to a certain field of study or action. In this sense, the term is related to the notion of ontology.

Homonym: A homonym is one of a group of words that share the same spelling and the same pronunciation but have different meanings.

Literal translation: Translation that closely follows the phrasing, order and sentence construction of the source text.

Meaning-for-meaning translation: Translation for which the words used in both languages may not be exact equivalents, but the meaning is the same.

Mega-language: One of the ten most important languages on the web, including Chinese, Dutch, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish.

Morpheme: Smallest unit of meaning in a language.

Mother tongue: Native and first learned language of an individual.

Native language: First language that a human learns naturally, usually since childhood.

Paraphrasing: A paraphrase is a restatement of the meaning of a text or passage using other words. The term itself is derived via Latin paraphrasis from Greek, meaning “additional manner of expression”. In the past, paraphrasing and translation were considered to be unconnected language processing tasks. Now we can consider paraphrasing a translation technique due to its utility in improving the structure and the message of the text.

Proofreading: Practice of checking a translated text to identify and correct spelling, grammar, syntax, and coherency and integrity errors, usually carried out by a second linguist or translator, but not necessarily; proofreading can be done by editors with no second language.

Register: Measure of formality of language dependent upon the tone, terminology, and grammar implemented.

Repetition: Sentence or phrase that is repeated in the source text, often referred to a Translation Memory analysis.

Segment: Sentence or phrase that is separated from the rest of a text based on language construction rules such as punctuation.

Source language: Original language of the text that to be translated.

Source text: Text to be translated.

Source text analysis: Analysis of the source text prior to translation that provides a better idea of the difficulty of the translation.

Synonym: Synonyms are different words with almost identical or similar meanings, e.g. Student and pupil.

Syntax: Study of structure and elements that form grammatical sentences.

Target audience: Group of people who receive the information rendered by the interpreter in the target language.

Target language: Language into which the text is translated.

Translatability: Degree to which a text can be rendered into another language.

Translation: Process of rendering written communication from one language into another, or the output that results from this process. Translation is the communication of the meaning of a source-language text by means of an equivalent target-language text. The word translation derives from the Latin translatio (which itself comes from trans- and fero, together meaning to carry across or to bring across).

Transliteration: Process of converting words from a source text or audio file into a written text that facilitates pronunciation of the words.

Word count: Total number of words in a text, typically used to price translation projects.