

LITERARY TRANSLATION FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS. A PRACTICAL GUIDE

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Born of the need for adequate material to be used in a translation course for students with a proficiency in English ranging from intermediate to advanced, the workbook *Translation for Beginners* (issued in 2021 by “Ștefan cel Mare” University Press, Suceava) is ultimately designed as “a student-friendly tool to be used by anyone with an interest in translation” (*Prefatory Note*, p. 9). *Translation* is to be understood from an intrinsically pedagogical point of view, as the aim of the book is twofold: on the one hand, it details upon the mechanics of the translation process, while on the other, it relies upon it to make language learners more aware of various linguistic, pragmatic, semantic, or cultural aspects related to English (as a foreign language) as contrasted to Romanian (their presumed mother tongue). Students are thus gradually and consistently encouraged to reflect upon the languages they are working with.

The book is structured in seven chapters of unequal length, each of which defines a particular translation problem, provides examples to illustrate the point, introduces a method of dealing with it, and concludes with a practice session. The final chapters (VI and VII), in particular, are intended to provide a global application of the principles taught.

Introducing Translation, the first chapter, delves into translation first as a dual concept (i.e. process and product) and then as yielding a wide range of sub-types (i.e. human translation vs. machine translation; literary vs. non-literary translation; oral vs. written translation; last but definitely not least, Jakobson’s 1959 triad: intralingual vs. interlingual vs. intersemiotic translation). A series of examples of translation (mis-)used around the world is meant to raise awareness as to the roles translation/translators may play in society.

The second chapter offers the conceptual “basics”: source vs. target, the intrinsically variable translation unit, and literal translation vs. idiomatic idiomatic translation.

The third chapter introduces ten translation techniques: there is, in a first instance, the well-known list of seven procedures enumerated by Vinay and Darbelnet (1958) (three direct: borrowing, calque, literal translation, and four indirect: transposition, modulation, equivalence, adaptation). This list of techniques is then completed with three more: omission, addition, and compensation.

By far the most substantial chapter is the fourth, *Common Translation Challenges*, which draws attention to and offers solutions to possible traps in translation posed by issues such as: polysemy, synonymy, connotations, figures of speech, specific source language concepts, cultural meanings of words, false friends, collocations, idioms, phrasal verbs, *-ing* forms, verb tenses, active vs. passive voice, modal verbs, dialect, prominence, concordance and consistency.

The four T's (or the four main elements of a translation project), namely the text, the target, the team, and the tools are detailed upon in the fifth chapter, while the sixth (*Steps in a Translation Project*) speaks about the main stages in the process of translation, each with its own sub-stages, from the initial thought to the thorough, often disagreeable but necessary revision of the final draft.

The last chapter, *Guidelines for the Translation of Literary Prose*, relies on one of Joseph Jacobs' tales (i.e. *Mr. Vinegar*) as a sort of test-case for the main translation phases. Issues such as translating titles, names, and *realia*, or translator's notes, are also dealt with in the process.

Apart from Joseph Jacobs' story, the workbook also capitalizes, be it fragmentarily, on literary texts by Julian Barnes, Lewis Carroll, Agatha Christie, Charles Dickens, Arthur Conan Doyle, Ernest Hemingway, Ann Howard Creel, James Finn Garner, Jerome K. Jerome, John Le Carré, George Orwell, Edgar Allan Poe, Phillip Roth, Virginia Woolf, etc., as well as on some non-literary texts, by Winston Churchill, H. J. Eysenck, M. D. Vernon, etc.

The multilingual glossary at the end of the workbook (pp. 115-132) contains 70 terms related to Translation Studies (e.g. *adaptation, addition, (back-)translation, calque, compensation, domestication, equivalence, foreignization, modulation, version*, etc.). The glossary includes Romanian, French, Spanish, Italian, and German counterparts of the terms discussed, thus aiming at students whose minor is French and/or Spanish/Italian/German, besides English.

Relying on a minimum of technical terms, the workbook is constructed as an attempt to convince the potential translators to move beyond literal translation and aspire to achieve an “idiomatic” (i.e. meaning-based) rendition of any text they wish to translate. The carefully chosen quotation from C. Landers, used as the epigraph of the volume, praises literary translation as the key to both the creative process and to “the aesthetic joys of working with great literature” and, with these in view, Daniela Hăisan provides a useful and generous guide.

Daniela HĂISAN, (2021),
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