Translation within TEFL:
The Nonprofessional Skill

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Abstract:
With translation used, then banned, then reinstated in TEFL, the mixed expectations employers have from prospective workers about their linguistic competence entail distinct nuances the classroom context takes in what regards translation. Boris Naimushin's concept of a fifth skill has important consequences in the shift from a secondary role of translation in support of the other four skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) to a purpose of its own. The paper explores the border zone between professionalized translation and learner's translation starting from Naimushin's hypothesis. It aims to support the use of translation in language teaching while warning on the implications on the labour market of the existence of non-professional translation and translators. The references to Romanian learners reflect some specific aspects in the perception of translation as part of the foreign language experience. The paper also provides a few considerations on the impact of translation on learners of different levels suggesting that, should translation be included as a fifth skill, it should ideally have its own distinct descriptors in correspondence to those of the CEFR, for each level. This is another challenge in distinguishing between professional and learner's translation, but very relevant for employers who specifically want to recruit speakers of other L2 languages for jobs other than professional translation, but involving translation competences.
Keywords: translation, teaching, competence, techniques, skills, level descriptors

Introduction

The rise of new trends in the labour market entails a predictable orientation towards new skills and a more complex profile of employee eligibility, especially in communication. There is a growing need for speakers of foreign languages and, as Guy Cook shows in his book *Translation in Language Teaching* (2010), this need revolves around a very basic service of mediation between two languages at any level of international business. Mediation is a real-life end of using a foreign

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language – at a more or less professional level between translators, interpreters and amateur enthusiasts or simply speakers of English pressed by their job to do some translating on the side. The need for a form of mediation is as old as languages, but formal training in professional translation is very new (after World War Two, in professionally-oriented courses, and later, in the 1990s, as an academic discipline).

So, teachers, companies and language centres do their best to cover this need with language courses in a large variety (for adults, for specific purposes, for translators etc.), with translator training courses, training in communication skills, or even with negotiation packages (i.e., assistance provided by language and translation experts during business negotiation). This reflects the general awareness, today, that using a foreign language is not the same as being a translator – not in the recent sense of the word since the establishment of the legal status of the latter as a distinct profession in its own right, with specific qualifications and standards.

Nevertheless, on the labour market, the expectations regarding employability include translation skills as part of general communication in a second language, especially at B2 level and above – B2 being considered sufficient for business, education and research. Currently, language performance is described in terms of achievement in the four skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking, and language teaching is organized similarly, which makes it easy to standardize international criteria of equivalence between educational programmes in the field of modern languages. The problem stems from the fact that where employers require good knowledge of a second language – often demonstrated by a language certificate, be it an international exam or the company's own language test, they get maybe a good description of the candidate's proficiency detailed in the four skills (language certificates provide different kinds of reports on reading, writing, listening and speaking depending on the institution), but also expect their employees to be able to do some form of translation, either because they do not want to invest in professional translation services, or even despite already having an in-house translator.

Despite the obvious necessity of faithful transcoding between languages, can we include and give equal ranking to translation among the other four traditional skills? It would not be a first: in the past, translation was one of the aims of learning a foreign language. More than just a technique, it demonstrated a student's ability to translate literature, to read and translate critically, and to participate in bilingual negotiations. Translation was not a recognized job, but doing it reflected

knowledge of a second language. If one could not do translation, it was the same as not having sufficient knowledge of that language. In today's terms, an efficient effort of language acquisition should build a multi-linguistic competence (Malmkjaer, 1998:1).

But the probability of using translation varies with the learners' needs, in other words, it depends on the learner profile and the type of course. If the course is content-, or task-oriented, it will not place a special emphasis on translation. If we also consider the prerequisites for such an approach, this probability decreases even further. Not all learners of English have a good command of Romanian, even as adults – many of them happen to have fossilized linguistic idiosyncrasies, not many of them are philologically oriented students, not many of them understand or are willing to use metalanguage when learning grammar, few of them have previous experience using a dictionary, and even fewer are able to explain words in Romanian. In other words, most students outside secondary education have little to no experience in intralanguage translation and do not really expect to learn English to function as translators, but only to be able to communicate in English.

Teaching and Translation

Today, the Grammar Translation Method well behind, the focus in teaching a second language is on communication, fluency, comfort, negotiated linguistic accuracy, self-confidence and learner autonomy. The reality of multicultural classes excludes the opportunity of translation, and teachers themselves may not know their students' mother tongue. Most mainstream methods of teaching English do not aim to train students in translation, or even require translation or the use of the mother tongue.

The Grammar-Translation method made translation unpopular as a *teaching* method. Robert Lado, with his book *Language Teaching, a Scientific Approach* (1964), is among the earliest authors who rejects translation in language teaching. Yet, its merit of language awareness (albeit written literary language, and at sentence level, and often aiming for the form as proof of language acquisition) is reappraised today (comparing and contrasting mother tongue and foreign language, reducing interference, easier acquisition, easy identification of language difficulties etc.). Other subsequent methods of teaching give only secondary priority to L1 use in class.

The need for translation in language teaching has reemerged at about the same time as the development of professional training for translators and interpreters, and for the first time with the purpose of mediation. But this is the difficulty in making room for a *fifth skill* in

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language teaching. In his article, *Translation in Foreign Language Teaching – the Fifth Skill* (2002), Boris Naimushin gives a teacher's perspective. He starts from the generally agreed assumption that being fluent in a foreign language is not the same as being a good translator and proposes to introduce translation as a distinct skill in its own right among the other four. The reality he describes suffers from the drawbacks of the communicative language teaching, namely that teaching a foreign language without any interference of the L1 even at low levels leaves a learner with difficult zones of grammar in the foreign language because he/she cannot imagine a correspondence with more familiar concepts in his/her L1. To make matters worse, the textbooks that follow the communicative approach are designed for an international audience and do not feature translation. This compels learners to interrupt their activities in order to confer with their peers or instructor in their mother tongue (if the teacher can use it too). Then, Naimushin suggests, why not reintroduce translation in a manner that meets the learner's need for L1 use, but does not lead to training in professional translation as they are very different things (Naimushin, 2002: 47–48). There is a relationship between translation and the other skills: basically, to be able to translate does involve good reading/listening and good writing/speaking. In recent terminology, professional translation is the visible result of the translational competence[1]. For non-professionals, that is, in the TEFL context, we refer to the multi-linguistic competence (Malmkjaer, 1998: 1). There are differences between professional translation and that used (and aspired to) in language teaching. One is the idea of level of competence and the corresponding syllabus.

In teaching English as a foreign language, all translation work is subordinated to the syllabi designed for each level of competence and, in fact, for each type of course and learner profile. Professional translator/interpreter training is independent of L2 level syllabi as it presupposes a very good command of the source and target languages, and very good translational competence (Campbell, 1998: 154) – which includes other factors too (the textual competence covers the linguistic component, but the other two components in Campbell's model, disposition and monitoring, cover the translator's endeavour to critically select from specialized domain, jargon, writing/speaking conventions, translation conventions, cultural factors, techniques, medium, purpose etc.).

Then, there's the approach to translation. In teaching English, translation is used to practice certain lexical and grammatical structures

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[1] EMT (European Master's in Translation) group, 2009.

in the foreign language (English). Thus, translation is L2 oriented, and the source text in L1 is designed so as to prompt the recognition of the situation in which a structure is used, and the production of that structure. In L2-L1 translation, the text is authentic (albeit adapted to the learner's level) and the purpose of the exercise is, again, to demonstrate understanding of certain structures in L2.

In professional translation, the focus may be on the Source Language (keeping the product as similar to the source as possible), or the Target Language (when the product is meant to serve a particular agenda, and thus is the result of a series of decisions on the amount and quality of information included, style, cultural and linguistic changes, and genre conventions).

The debate about the use of translation in language teaching is ongoing. For example, although she highlights the merits of translation in developing the multi-linguistic competence, Kirsten Malmkjaer, in her book *Translation and Language Teaching* (1998), makes a strong case against using translation in the EFL classroom. The only concession she allows is for EFL teacher training programmes, but not really for EFL learners because it's time-consuming, devoid of practical applicability, a source of errors particularly in the case of word-by-word translation which misleads students into thinking they can extend a particular model of translation to other situations, a bad test for the fours language skills, a barrier against thinking in the foreign language etc. On the other side of the issue, Boris Naimushin supports the use of translation, because the opportunity for *contrastive analysis* of L2 and L1 provides the missing pieces in the foreign language puzzle. Indeed, to identify "systemic and functional equivalents" (Naimushin, 2002: 48) is to reduce the potential for error. This is a powerful argument. If thinking in another language comes from accumulating linguistic automatisms, then contrastive analysis helps consolidate and recover them in case they are forgotten. And contrastive analysis in TEFL is always based on the resources available to the learners at their level of language. The resources usually come from a pre-established syllabus for each level (see the international descriptors for each level, and teacher's handbooks for the syllabus of each level). If we are to accept translation as a fifth skill, it should be possible to get your students to do some form of translation even at very low levels.

Techniques

To move closer to translation as a distinct skill, here are some translation techniques that can be used in class. Techniques of direct translation include literal translation, borrowing and calque. Techniques

of oblique translation include modulation, transposition, adaptation, reformulation, and compensation.

For A1 and A2 levels, *literal translation* (word for word) could be used, and *borrowing* (within the limits of the syllabus, see topics and vocabulary – ie, *café*, *hamburger*, some other food items familiar to the learners as coming from their own culture, but now part of international cuisine). The limited range of vocabulary revolves around very familiar topics (one's family, school, daily routine, the home, the workplace). The words are selected from the high-frequency range (very frequently used), and the structures rarely involve building an extended sentence. Another factor is the learners' age. Children are bound to be interested in talking about their school and their favourite subject, whereas adults need frequently used words to talk about their place of origin, work and work place. That means borrowing will probably be more appropriate for A level adults.

Calque is loan translation: the phrase enters English as an already translated item from another language. This concept is better understood in the relationship between the mother tongue and the source language of the calque. Romanian students understand calque occurrences (from French, English, Russian, Hungarian, Italian, Greek etc. – i.e., cultures that have had an influence on local fashion and mores) in Romanian literature. But from the ELT point of view, such occurrences (especially coming from a third language, not English or Romanian) count as non-familiar topics and are, consequently, far beyond the A1 and A2 syllabus. From the *oblique techniques*, *compensation* too has a very limited applicability at low levels. For example, it is a must in the case of degrees of formality between Romanian and English, where the meaning of the pronoun 'you' is supported by the context – which requires special attention on the part of the teacher in preparing the assignment. *Modulation* in early stages can only come as a given lexical item to be learned automatically as it is (e.g., 'Cati ani ai?' – 'How old are you?').

At intermediate levels (B1 and B2) the syllabus indicates a certain degree of independence in communication, a certain degree of flexibility in discourse and implicitly more lexical variety. Independence in communication comes with a series of functions that may be transposed differently in L1 and L2. Illustrative examples taken from the B1 syllabus include "*Adjectives and their connotations*", "*Stating preferences and opinions*", "*Guessing*", "*Advising*", "*Talking about possibility/probability*" etc.. As a consequence, the range of translation techniques widens to cover all the direct ones. From the oblique category, in addition to the other oblique techniques used at A levels,

reformulation/equivalence can only be used within the range of idioms taught at this level. It must be said that B levels still confine the authenticity of materials and tasks used in class. Learners are exposed to accents other than British (or American), but varieties of English are in fact reserved for higher levels, and B level learners are not expected to produce English utterances in other accents (accent in fact is not actively taught, it is the learner's personal choice). Reformulation is a creative process that depends on the learner's knowledge of the source and target cultures and on his/her ability to manage discourse. *Transposition* (a kind of shift of word class) is very adequate for this level and has in fact been used for a long time in order to make students aware of the lexical and morphological potential of words in contrast to their mother tongue.

For C1 and C2, *adaptation* can be used given the presence of other cultural components in the syllabus – literature, arts, politics, sciences, environmental issues, social issues etc. This technique, even though adequate for this level, demonstrates creative interpretation and intercultural knowledge more than linguistic accuracy, and should not be used as a representative indicator in the assessment of the L2 language. Admittedly, this is the point where professional translator training begins. *Compensation* also requires the learner's ability to rely on the context and cultural factors in order to make up for untranslatable pieces somewhere else in the text.

All these aspects do not necessarily entail that a C2 student who has been practicing the above techniques can actually function as a translator. This only happens after specialized theoretical and practical training. At least in the Romanian system of education, even in the case of intensive and bilingual courses of English, the students do not receive instruction in advanced linguistics (semantics, pragmatics) or in translation theory. If they did, there would probably be a few voices suggesting the necessity of some translation theory in EFL teaching. Naimushin believes this is the case: in his article he suggests using translation (plus some basic translation theory) with students of "various levels of instruction" – though in his class they are all university students, which means they have recently been exposed to the study of language and can handle theories of translation. The exercise he illustrates involves authentic non-edited texts for which students provide a simplified translation to demonstrate they understood the text.

But this is only included in tertiary education. In fact, for the time being, the national curriculum for any level of pre-university English learning does not even include translation as a separate skill besides the traditional four, as the general view of the desired competences in learners has not yet reached the 'multilingual' stage.

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However, I do not believe that teaching translation in pre-university schools, up to level B2, has to go that far into the abstract. Naimushin's view is based on the premise that (his) learners are comfortable enough using abstract concepts about the language (L1 and L2). But practice shows that even experienced users of L2 may not know, or be interested in, metalanguage to the extent to which they can justify a certain version of translation, and may in fact have a very weak interest in the theory of translation even though they may be able to convey the meaning. In reality, immigrants (who learn English) can perform a basic type of translation which is not necessary as literal as classroom translation because they automatically adapt to the function, style, register and local conventions of the L2 when they immerse in the L2-speaking environment. They notice[2] all these aspects and test them in an autonomous manner even beyond the limits of their L2 (English) course syllabus. This particular category of students is evidence that translation should be used as early as possible in the study of English. I would add here another example in support of this view: the way linguistic dictionaries of English are different from so-called *Learner's dictionaries*. In the history of learner's dictionaries, A. P. Cowie shows that 'vocabulary control' was the original preoccupation at the root of such an instrument (Cowie, 1999: 15). Language teachers of the 1920s were trying to put together a limited selection of lexical structures to help their students and the efforts of categorizing these structures for teaching purposes were later embodied in dictionaries, which in turn became very complex reference tools with pictures, annexes, multimedia and interactive technologies added to them. So, monolingual learner's dictionaries create the context for noticing and encourage contrastive analysis.

Classroom Activities

In terms of *classroom activities*, some of them have already been used as a way to teach the other four skills. Guy Cook (Cook, 2010: 127–141) makes a few suggestions, for example:

- close translation (to transmit *ideas* as closely as possible);
- word-for-word translation to emphasise the differences between common utterances in two languages;
- analysis of video subtitles;
- sentence building, where alternate students add a word to a short sentence, and translate it in turn.

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[2] In his article *Seeing what they meant: transcribing as a route to noticing*, Tony Lynch refers to noticing as a factor enhancing language awareness (Lynch, 2001: 25).

Only the last can be used at lower levels, as all the others involve good knowledge of both languages and cultures, and communication on complex topics. The most difficult is critical appraisal of video subtitles. In Romania, despite newer trends (dubbed cartoons mostly), most TV programmes are broadcast in the original language and subtitled. Learners have a real opportunity to think of the appropriacy of the translation in the subtitle, and this has been a popular method of learning a foreign language regardless the age. In other countries, this opportunity is not as frequent outside the classroom as many programmes are dubbed. In the absence of constant exposure to subtitled programmes, it is difficult to raise the learner's interest in subtitling – watching a dubbed movie is a different kind of receptive activity, it excludes simultaneous reading. But no matter the opportunity itself, the activity is a bit ambitious in the absence of pre-established criteria for analysis, which means it is necessary to complement the task with some theoretical explanations.

In the reality of the classroom, just like concepts about grammar, most theory about translation can be avoided with careful wording of the teacher's instructions. Examples of translation activities (for individual, pair or group work):
- dictionary research
- finding a simpler phrase
- mime play
- identifying the correct translation (either in L1 or in L2)
- role play on a given script, where one participant is a foreign traveler and one is the local (or even a third party as a translator or even interpreter, as long as the script keeps to the adequate level of listening and speaking)
- guessing the meaning of words from the context
- giving the gist in the other language
- paraphrasing
- giving a definition or a description for a word in the other language
- word-by-word translation, especially in learning grammar structures
- picture mediation: L2 phrase + picture = L1 phrase (for reformulation/equivalence)
- changing the order of words (for transposition), ie. numbering/arranging them etc.

It is worth mentioning a special difficulty in using translation with EFL classes. We start from the premise that students are familiar with intralanguage translation in L1, which in reality is just a hypothesis. Another hypothesis is that they can negotiate meaning in L1. Ideally, we

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should first make sure that learners are able to explain, define, describe, clarify, synthetize, summarize, or reformulate information in their own language at least, if not in both L1 and L2, before attempting translation – or at least this is the case of professional translation. Unfortunately, in Romanian lessons this does not happen. This is due to the fact that, typically, Romanian students do not study Romanian grammar after the eighth form (age 15) and, in the years they do study the grammar of Romanian, they are very rarely required to do certain activities designed to train their ability to negotiate meaning (i.e., rephrasing). The reality is that, in the process of learning English, many students are only beginning to understand the possibilities of intralanguage translation in their mother tongue.

Materials

The materials have to comply with the same description as those used for other skills (reading, listening), within some limits. For example, since literary translation is a specialized branch of professional translation, there is no point in forcing it upon a non-professional translation class even if literature is part of the syllabus. In real life, the average user of English will rarely be in the situation of giving a literary translation. Also, technical or specialized language should be avoided since what is taught is general, possibly standard or international English. Then, the texts should represent contemporary English and not other stages in the history of English. As for the geography of English, non-professional translation for didactic purposes should be limited to what can be found in the syllabus for each level. For advanced learners though, care should be taken not to turn the English class into a professional translation course. The fact that close-to-native speakers get to understand English in most varieties and accents and are trained in discourse management does not make up for the formal translator training. At the end of the day, what is relevant for all students regardless their level is whether they can function in English, not how much they can translate it. Besides, even before the reintroduction of translation, the matter of varieties and accents in English teaching was already clear: they are the learner's personal choice. The teacher can only give some guidance in terms of consistency in the learner's choice (help with spelling, lexis, grammar and the adequate dictionary), but not actively teach a particular variety (except for a special purpose, e.g. for acting). The same goes for translation. In any case, the selected material for class work should be short and always open for discussion. The teacher will make it clear to students that, despite the permanent

emphasis on linguistic accuracy, there is always room for an alternative translation.

The context for the word/phrase/fragment to be translated is a must, translation is impossible without it.

Also, the sample should be subordinated to the linguistic priorities of the lesson. After all, one main reason for using translation is linguistic awareness in both L1 and L2. If, for example, a particular unit focuses on conditionals, then the text selected for translation within that unit should, in turn, exploit the same structure and not something else.

Finally, reference sources. At non-professional level, it is difficult to introduce highly specialized dictionaries, glossaries, or terminological databases. But students can be expected to consult several types of bilingual and monolingual dictionaries: linguistic, didactic, encyclopedic, thesaurus, along with other sources available now even online, such as maps, pictures, multimedia materials, interactive applications etc.

Assessment

If we want to regard translation as part of the process of acquiring a language, assessing non-professional translation must be regarded within the framework of teaching English and less as a distinct professionalized activity. As a fifth skill, (written) translation relies on other two: reading and writing. We could, of course, ask our students to try their hand at interpreting as well (so as to include listening and speaking in the discussion), just for the fun of it, but at a non-professional level it still relies on repetition, transcribing and translating eventually. We started from the premise that translation is an instrument in language teaching and an indicator of language proficiency, which unfortunately means that what gets assessed is still the language rather than the translation. The fifth skill helps learners develop the other four, it makes them better readers and writers, but its original premise was a new and necessary competence.

Professional translator training now in full swing (at graduate and postgraduate level), the idea of translation competence reflects the need for standardization in this profession at many levels: assessment, quality control, quality assurance, good practices, research and development etc. There are multi-component models for the translation competence. The model issued by the EMT group (2009) envisages the translator training programmes. Its definition of competence is "the combination of aptitudes, knowledge, behaviour and knowhow necessary to carry out a given task under given conditions" (EMT, 2009: 3). For professional translation, the components of this competence include: translation

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service provision competence, language competence, intercultural competence, information mining competence, thematic competence, and technological competence. Another model comes from the Barcelona-based PACTE group and comprises five sub-competences: bilingual, extra-linguistic, knowledge about translation, instrumental, and strategic, as well as a number of psycho-physiological components (O'Brien, 2011: 36–37).[3] It suffices to say that it is not appropriate to apply these definitions of translation competence to TEFL translation.

But this does not mean it is not possible to assess non-professional translation. The literature gives examples of assessment scales for translation: we find linguistic criteria (spelling, syntax, semantic coherence, terminological pertinence and precision, stylistic and idiolectic quality of translation), accuracy (semantic equivalence/similarity) vs. expression (readability) criteria on a sentence-by sentence basis (preset number of sentences to be translated) (Tsagari, 2013: 5–6), or closeness of meaning vs. fluency/readability. In her article Teaching Translation (Shore, 2001: 250) she distills the factors that influence the assessment of a translation product down to the central concept of *equivalence*. She proposes another term for this, *correspondence*, to accommodate the idea of flexibility in translation. She finds there are many levels of correspondence between the original text and a translated version of it (textual, graphological, morphological, lexical etc.), and that is why our decision on the equivalent version depends on the way we prioritize (or 'weight') certain types of correspondence at a given moment – with the obvious awareness that other types will be ruled out in the process. This is a key aspect in assessing TEFL translation. In this context, there is no pre-established scale of assessment but teachers have to make a new one each time they assess translation. In other words, the scale changes with the learner's progress.

I have found studies presenting class experiments of TEFL translation where professional criteria were used to assess a class of English learners (Tsagari, 2013: 5). In one instance, the teacher designed a scale with 6 bands for 'accuracy' (meaning equivalence), and a scale of 4 bands for 'expression' (meaning understandability). Her purpose was to explore reading comprehension issues in her class in order to further plan remedial work with her students. It is tempting to try and apply assessment criteria from another domain, of course, and it never hurts students to get a glimpse of at least one aspect of professional

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[3] A more complete presentation of the translation competences is given by Dorothy Kelly in her book *A Handbook for Translator Trainers* (2014).

translation. But it should only be a leisure experiment. Teaching professional translation involves a series of courses in advanced linguistics, text analysis, discourse analysis, and translation analysis. As long as these components are absent from an *English as a Foreign Language* syllabus, translation must also be assessed without them. In fact, since non-professional translation depends on, and is a reflection of, reading and writing, its assessment must be at least similar to these.

For those who insist on treating translation as a separate skill in its own right I have two suggestions.

1. One is a set of *general* criteria that is easy to use for teachers. It is only applicable for non-professional translation as part of TEFL:

Content: this criterion is similar to equivalence of meaning or accuracy and can be assessed on a sentence-by-sentence basis.

Compliance with the syllabus: this is especially relevant at higher levels, since there is a tendency for students to use the simpler word instead of a more complex idiomatic construct they are expected to be able to use.

Stylistic equivalence: this criterion is not relevant at lower levels, but it demonstrates knowledge of style, register and genre in writing from intermediate levels up.

Grammatical accuracy: it includes all aspects studied in class which are subject to evaluation, it is a sine qua non in the context of using translation for teaching English.

Promptness of reaction: provided the test is set against a time limit, or uses oral translation, it demonstrates easiness in expression and fluency in English. This criterion however can be ruled out if dictionaries are allowed.

Situational adequacy: It demonstrates a good understanding of the source text and the context of the translation sample.

This list can generate a number of assessment scales for each level as it is not possible to assess these indicators/descriptors at all levels in the same degree of achievement. For example, at A1 and A2, *grammatical accuracy* and *stylistic adequacy* would only demotivate learners as these aspects are in fact not expected at this level. Also, since hesitation is normal, *promptness* cannot be assessed.

At B levels, we can expect *grammatical accuracy* and *stylistic adequacy* within the limits of the syllabus, and some *syllabus compliance*. *Situational adequacy* can become of interest at level B2.

For C1 and C2, all criteria apply within the syllabus. If in Writing and Speaking learners are expected to demonstrate a very good knowledge of a variety of vocabulary and grammar structures, this

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should also feature in translation. However, this does not include varieties of English, as shown above.

The above list is a helpful suggestion for those teachers who resort to professional criteria because there is no other reference standard. It illustrates the view that translation is relevant *as an end-product*. But we should keep in mind that, basically, translation in the classroom is mostly an exercise of *contrastive analysis* between L1 and L2, and an opportunity for genuine discovery, it is used more as *a process*. And here is the second suggestion:

2. In the light of Susanna Shore's idea of 'weighting', teachers could decide on a set of correspondences to be assessed at one time. For each level – i.e., within the boundaries of each syllabus – it is possible to give priority to a particular grammatical/lexical structure, register, style, genre, discourse feature etc. and create a band system for evaluating equivalence in translation. This approach relies on the language syllabus, in other words, whatever is taught in terms of language and communication, it will be practiced in translation, too.

Of course, we can make an analogy with Speaking and Writing (other productive skills) and reflect upon the communicative nature of these activities – the general opinion is translation is not communicative –, and the authenticity of the task itself. Translation can be published, there are translation competitions for students, and teachers make efforts to motivate their students by offering them non-conventional translation "toys" such as brief exercises of subtitling and interpreting. But this never goes as far as standardized assessment.

Consequences

There are a number of important consequences to the attempt of defining assessment criteria for the fifth skill. Even though they can be standardized in alignment with the syllabus for each level, and translation can be assessed in a standardized and objective manner even in non-professional terms (or, perhaps especially here), the status of the multilingual competence is not yet clearly defined among other competences. If it were, it would change the world of standardized language descriptors and exams. This fifth skill would create confusion among institutions which require a language certificate for education or work purposes. What could they make of a candidate's ability to translate (whatever the level) – which is different from a formal qualification?

Secondly, since non-professional translation focuses on L2 regardless of which language is Source and which is Target, how could the examination task be divided between an assessor of English and a

native speaker of any other language? And if, realistically, translation can only be used in some classes (consider, for example, the case of international students and international teachers who are not native speakers of English but do not speak their students' L1 either), isn't it unfair to try to standardize procedures of assessment? Not to mention the impact on the English Teaching market – all of a sudden all the native English teachers – now in high demand should either study a foreign language or pair up with non-native teachers of English.

The way out of this fatality is to accept that this fifth skill cannot be given equal footing in standardized international tests yet. It can only remain an option, an instrument for an easier understanding of similarities and differences between mother tongue and foreign language, but it is bound to remain in subordination to the other four skills. While we can teach and test translation, the outcome of this effort will, for the time being, only be recognized in the quality of the learner's reading and writing.

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