

The didactics of foreign languages and multimedia technology: teaching to translate

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ABSTRACT. This article aims to provide an example of the application of multimedia technologies to the learning of foreign languages. We will present the case of a French Language and Translation course for intermediate learners implemented at Guglielmo Marconi University. The course is divided into two parts: the first part is composed of a multimedia course created by other teachers of the University, while the second consists of ten video lessons recorded by me and devoted to the theory and practice of translation, referring specifically to Italian and French.

KEYWORDS: *Didactics of foreign languages; French language; Translation*

The multimedia French Language and Translation course for intermediate learners at Guglielmo Marconi University aims to impart the language skills associated with levels B1 and B2 by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, which correspond to the profile of the independent user. These skills are summarized by the Council of Europe as follows:

“Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialization. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various opinions.” (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 24)

This description is organized in accordance with the four “language

activities”: reception (following an oral speech, reading a text), production (expressing oneself in an autonomous way, writing), interaction (taking part in a conversation), and mediation (translation, interpretation). Most of these skills are strengthened by the various activities proposed by the course according to an approach which, as the Common European Framework requires, is mainly action-oriented

“in so far as it views users and learners of a language primarily as ‘social agents’, i.e. members of society who have tasks (not exclusively language-related) to accomplish in a given set of circumstances, in a specific environment and within a particular field of action.” (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 9)

Such linguistic competence is important in a variety of functions, especially social tasks. Animated videos using recurring characters not only stimulate listening skills, but also sociocultural competencies, creating conversational situations where the student learns polite expressions, interactive modalities linked to personal or working contexts and cultural differences. The main character of the animated videos, Italian Elisa, works as a free-lance interpreter for the European Institute. Therefore, in the different episodes of the story, the student can hear discussions involving technical issues such as the profession of an interpreter, climate change, coastal erosion and so on, according to one of the specific goals of level B2: understanding long speeches involving technical terms and complex lines of argument. Moreover, the student finds voice recognition exercises that ask him to write down a phrase or a sequence of phrases he hears by a recorded voice and then he can send the transcript to the teacher. There are also texts with blank spaces that must be filled or texts with mistakes to correct on hearing a recorded voice. This kind of activity not only stimulates hearing skills, but orthographical and pronunciation competencies, a consistent and complex problem for French language learners. As far as reading and written production are concerned, there are texts with blanks to fill and sets of questions with open answers on videos and texts. And naturally, there is grammar which comprehends a large set of exercises. There is a section devoted to phonetics where one can hear and reproduce the pronunciation of all possible groups of vowels and consonants, a section of vocabulary organized by subject and a set of texts on various topics related to French civilization or other topics related to the animation videos (European institutions, interpreting methods, and so on). The student gets immediate feedback from the information system on all the above-mentioned exercises, or has the option of sending the completed exercise to the teacher and receive the solutions in a short amount of time.

However, a unique aspect of this course is the set of video lessons devoted to translation. Referring to the Common European Framework of Reference, translation is part of the mediation activities that bring into play more specific skills, particularly the ability to formulate a thought, not only from a linguistic code to another, but within the same linguistic code. Roman Jakobson, a renowned leader of structuralism, underlined this aspect. In a founding article, the Czech linguist attributed a fundamental importance to translation establishing the distinction between: “intralingual translation” or “rewording”, which is “interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language”; “interlingual translation” or “translation proper,” that occurs when we have “an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language”; and “intersemiotic translation” or “transmutation”, which consists in transferring a text from a semiotic system to another, for example “the translation in word” of an image or the movie adaptation of a novel (Jakobson, 1959, p. 233). Jakobson gives the

greatest extent to the notion of translation, and in doing so highlights how complex and essential this operation is in human life¹. During translation, we do not simply transfer linguistic signs from one code to another, but we transfer also concepts between cultural systems. This is not only a linguistic activity, but a semiotic one. Therefore, translation is not merely a “bookish” occupation; on the contrary, it enforces the multilingual and multicultural approach, the logic of interaction between different languages (and cultures) that the Council of Europe promotes: languages are not watertight compartments, they must interact. Today, no one no longer claims to “produce” bilingual students, according to a fallacious ideal of spontaneity excluding the mediation of maternal language from the learning process. Rather, more and more stress is put on the capacity of connecting different linguistic systems, included one’s own (Ladmiral, 1994, pp. 23-83), and translation then becomes a fundamental experience to improve one’s skills in another language as well as the maternal language. This is why I decided not to center the whole course on translation from Italian to French. Indeed, the two operations are quite different: translating to a foreign language is quite an artificial activity with a mainly didactic goal to test the student’s acquired language abilities; translating to one’s own maternal language is an activity that satisfies the real needs of the publishing market (Ladmiral, 1994, pp. 40-45). In practicing the first operation, the student aims primarily to prove his knowledge of a set of “rules”; in the second operation he brings his freedom of interpretation more into play, the competence of expression in his maternal language and the ability to render the connotative level. Nevertheless, in consideration of the plurilingual approach of the document, the habit to pass from a linguistic code to another in both directions means becoming increasingly aware of the peculiar features of the two codes, and that means the student must avoid the illusion of equivalence between the two codes. The course aims to reduce as much as possible “undue interferences” between the two systems: so I adopt a mainly “cibliste” approach, to quote Jean-René Ladmiral’s expression², which means a “reader-oriented” approach. What is the best way to present translation in its most difficult aspects? Students have already attended two language courses: therefore they already have a solid knowledge of the French language on morphological, syntactic and lexical grounds. They already practiced translation in the preceding courses, but mainly to strengthen and test their comprehension of grammar rules and syntactic structures of the French language. The

1 See the criticism of Jakobson’s extreme extension of this notion by Umberto Eco (2013, pp. 225-253).

2 Jean-René Ladmiral 1986, 33-42. “Sourciers” et “ciblistes” are two neologisms introduced by the French scholar: they are built with the words “source” et “cible.” The “sourciers” are the supporters of a source-oriented translation, “ciblistes” of a target-oriented translation. The vision of “ciblistes” can be resumed by these words of Shapiro: “I see translation as the attempt to produce a text so transparent that it does not seem to be translated. A good translation is like a pane of glass. You only notice that it’s there when there are little imperfections – scratches, bubbles. Ideally there shouldn’t be any. It should never call attention to itself,” quoted by Lawrence Venuti (1995, 1). It’s an ideal that aims to erase from the target text any “interference” with the source language, any trace of linguistic calque. The reader must forget that he is reading a translation. On the contrary, the theoreticians opposed to linguistic theories of translation refuse this conception, by maintaining that the reader should perceive the trace of “foreign” (“étranger”) to avoid the danger of an “ethnocentric” translation: see Antoine Berman, (1984, p. 17). The approach I adopted in this course, though simplified for didactic reasons, tries to conciliate on a pragmatic ground these two opposite visions of translation practice. As Josiane Podeur points out, it’s the target of the text, the literary genre to which it belongs to dictate a “cibliste” or “sourcier” approach. If in such genres as the comic strip or children’s literature, in advertisements, in a movie script, but also in informative texts it’s mainly the effect on the target public that counts, so the approach can’t be other than “cibliste”, in the translation of a literary text we can choose within certain limits to give the reader the experience of estrangement, by not wiping out the cultural difference. See Josiane Podeur (2002, p. 113).

translation exercises do not involve specific translation competencies, but other kinds of skills. Translation represents an evaluation tool related to the contents of the course, rather than an autonomous practice.

In the third course, we try to take a step forward and consider translation as a peculiar practice which involves specific competencies. As we have already suggested, translation is closely connected with the wider field of interpretation (Jakobson, 1959). It's a complex operation that requires linguistic and cultural competencies. It does not involve the mere comparison of two linguistic systems, but two cultural systems that can have many points in common, as it so happens for French and Italian. "Transculturation" work is needed, which can pose complex problems. That's why a discussion arose on impossibility of translation, on "untranslatability" of certain concepts from a linguistic system to another. In fact, instead of focusing on "ineffability" of the linguistic message, on what is necessarily "lost in translation", we should focus on the techniques that the translator can use to maintain the effect that the message has on the source-reader. From a didactic point of view, the most useful principle is "to reproduce the effect", based on the idea of a "functional equivalence", rather than equivalence of meaning (Eco, 2013, p. 80). In short, translation ought to reproduce approximately the same effect that the original text produced on the source-reader. This requires the translator to formulate an interpretative hypothesis on the effect of the text. Therefore, putting translation at the center of the learning process means also measuring the students' skill of interpreting a text, not only their linguistic competencies.

The choice to put particular emphasis on literary translation springs not only from my specific background, but from the decision to underline precisely the topic of interpretation: to translate a literary text primarily means to be an expert reader, to feel at home in the imaginary world of an author, to have already formulated an interpretation of the text while reading (or reading again) that accounts for the isotopies, the lexical networks, and the connections with author's ideology³. The translator of a literary text must not only render the denotative contents of the message, but all the connotations that it conveys as well. All these ideas that form our reading of the text must then guide the translating activity, searching for a balance between two opposite requirements: readability and fidelity to *intentio operis* (Eco, 1979). The hesitation between a reader-oriented and a source-oriented translation must not be carried to the extreme⁴. On the contrary, one should always find a different compromise between these two trends. Readability must be tempered by the will to preserve the cultural distance that separates us from the source-culture, at the cost of asking the reader a greater effort to enter into a universe that charms him precisely because of its strangeness. So, we must avoid an excess of normalization, of cultural assimilation, of paraphrase (Eco, 2013, pp. 172-181). The approach adopted aims for a conciliation between the two great theoretical families in the field of traductology: the one that attaches translation to linguistics and the one that wants to separate translation from linguistic studies in order to redefine it as a writing experience, a creative or re-creative activity⁵ If we give ampler space to linguistic theories of translation because

3 I chose anyway to exclude from this course the question of poetic translation, that poses particular problems. It's in the debate on poetic translation that prevail the theories which suggest to identify translation with re-creation, in conformity with the model of "poetic transposition" (Walter Benjamin).

4 This is how Friedrich Schleiermacher resume this fundamental option following Antoine Berman's French translation: "Ou bien le traducteur laisse le plus possible l'écrivain en repos, et fait se mouvoir vers lui le lecteur; ou bien il laisse le lecteur le plus possible en repos, et fait se mouvoir vers lui l'écrivain" (Berman, 1984, p. 235).

5 Edmond Cary expresses the hostility of many towards the linguistic theories of translation: "La traduction

they furnish extremely useful analytic tools and practical rules, the other point of view is not put aside, as we always underline the necessity of respecting the literary nature of the texts that are to be translated. We cannot translate a literary text applying and adhering to the same principles we would use for an informative text: even if we use the same techniques, the text has shifted from a mainly pragmatic function to an aesthetic function. That's why the concept of connotation becomes central; theoretician Jean-René Ladmiral puts it at the core of his reflection. He introduces the "connotateur" as a basic unity and he maintains that most of the time the translators need to practice "dissimilation": "Il s'agit d'autoriser et même d'encourager le traducteur à *dissimiler*, c'est-à-dire à s'éloigner du connotateur-source, pour choisir un connotateur-cible qui ne lui est pas *ressemblant* au plan du signifiant mais qui connote bien le même signifié" (Ladmiral, 1994, p. 190). According to these premises, for Ladmiral just as for Umberto Eco, the notion of compensation is of the greatest importance. In my course, I illustrate it particularly with reference to word puns, an extreme case of untranslatability. It is rarely possible to translate word puns by a simple transcoding. In most cases, the pun must be reproduced but replaced with other elements or forms in the text. The aim is to reproduce the connotation, without remaining entangled in the way the source-text chooses and structures its signifiers.

Therefore, the course aims to convey some translation theories, which nevertheless must be susceptible to becoming immediately operative. Part of the first lesson is devoted to translation theory and several remarks that punctuate the rest of the course, but the essence of the course consists of the analysis of concrete cases, drawn from translations of classical or modern texts available on the market. Comparing two translations often helps facilitates the perception of the principles that oriented the translator. Before practicing translation, one must know how to analyze it (Oustinoff, 2003, pp. 62-63): it's the proper field of so-called "critique des traductions", to quote Antoine Berman, which consists in inferring from the analysis of translation techniques a "translation project" that accounts for the "translator horizon" (Berman, 1995). Students, in this perspective, should be able to recognize the procedures carried out by the translator; the principles that guided his choices. All the examples are referred to the specific cases of Italian-French and French-Italian translation, in order to focus all attention on the similarities and differences between two linguistic and cultural systems that tend to conceal their differences by means of their proximity. A contrastive approach allows for the discarding of the transcoding temptation.

In the first lessons, following the approach of an excellent book on this matter by Josiane Podeur (2002), we take into consideration some specific translation devices which involve an increasingly high degree of transformation with regards to the source-text: transposition, modulation, adaptation and transcription⁶. What is transposition? It is a change of the source-text that consists in respecting the signified, through a rearrangement of the signifier. This rearrangement may consist of simply shifting a word from a grammatical category to another. It is what Vinay and Darbelnet call "recatégorisation". For those who have a translation experience, this is one of the most frequent devices. French

littéraire n'est pas une opération linguistique, c'est une opération littéraire" (*Comment faut-il traduire?*, quoted by Georges Mounin, 1963).

⁶ These categories repeat in a simplified way those proposed by Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet in their fundamental work, *Stylistique comparée du français et de l'anglais* (1977 [1958]). The authors establish the distinction between "direct", that is literal, translation and "oblique" translation. Among the procedures they catalogue, the only one who is part of direct translation is transposition, the others belong to oblique translation. In the authors' opinion, direct translation is not to be rejected in any case; it's only when it doesn't produce an enunciation equivalent on a linguistic and stylistic level that the oblique translation is needed.

language, for instance, increasingly prefers the use of nominal expressions or structures where a linking verb almost void of meaning goes with a noun that takes on all the semantic weight of the expression: one will say more willingly “pousser un cri” than “crier”, or “prendre un verre” rather than “boire”⁷. The Italian language hasn’t known an evolution of the same kind. In this case, the translator will often adopt a noun-verb or verb-noun transposition in the passage from a language to another. On the contrary, Italian language tends to use verbs “passe-partout” followed by adverbs which define their meaning: “andare giù”, “tirar su”, “portare avanti”, “buttarsi giù”, and so on. In most cases, these expressions don’t have an equivalent in French language: therefore, the translator needs to use an adverb/verb transposition. In a phrase like the following – “Si è tirato dietro tutti gli amici” – he will resort to the synthetic verb “entraîner”: “Il a entraîné tous ses amis”. What should we say of the use, so typical of Italian tradition, of the “altered” forms of augmentative, diminutive, pejorative nouns? Translators from Italian to French are almost always inclined to soften this expressiveness of Italian language, sometimes dividing the expression into a structure noun + adjective, sometimes removing altogether the connotative element. For instance, one can translate “poveraccio” with “pauvre diable”, but “tazzina” will become merely “tasse”. The second sort of transposition applies in general to ampler discursive segments: we often need to transform the word order and the whole arrangement of the phrase. It is well known that phrasal arrangement in French obeys strict rules, whereas the Italian phrase enjoys of far more liberty. French phrase is submitted to the so-called “progressive sequence”, which is the “subject + verb + complement” order, but also “noun + noun complement” order. Italian phrase often adopts a regressive sequence: for instance, “Lo capiscono tutti”, which gives in French “Tout le monde comprend cela” (Podeur, 2002, pp. 54-55). That’s why we often make use of transpositions of a “syntactic” kind. We paid particular attention to active-passive transposition: passive form is far more used in Italian than in French, where it is typical of administrative language. But passive-active transposition from Italian to French often requires introducing the impersonal pronoun “on” when the Italian phrase has no agent complement. The use of “on”, a pronoun that has no precise equivalent in Italian is particularly difficult for students. Thus we decided to insist on its different functions and different ways of translating it.

These are only some examples that show the importance of a compared analysis of the two languages’ different habits. A reflection of this kind gets students used to transferring a message in both directions not in a mechanical way, but using the suitable transpositions. The explanations contain obviously a large set of examples, but at the end of the lesson devoted to a subject, we propose some exercises to the students: some of them ask to practice the techniques that have been explained, while others ask to recognize them in a translation made by a professional. In fact, the first necessary competence is that of analyzing a translation, recognizing the main translation devices so that one can learn to use them.

The second device is modulation: it does not concern just the morphological and syntactic level, but touches categories of thinking as well. It involves a shift in the point of view, a different lighting cast by the two linguistic systems on the same concept. For example, an expression as “lavaggio del

⁷ See Heinz Wismann’s reflections on compared syntax of French and German, where the phrase structure determines the thought structure and eventually changes altogether the way of seeing reality: “La structure de la phrase latine est comparable à une équation dans la mesure où ... le sujet et son prédicat sont censés être mis dans une relation d’équivalence par la copule (le verbe être). Le prédicat (l’attribut) en français, s’accorde avec son sujet en genre et en nombre, en fonction de l’accord présupposé, la copule ne jouant qu’un rôle subalterne: c’est d’ailleurs un verbe qu’on appelle ‘auxiliaire’. Le propre de l’allemand, en revanche, est de conférer aux verbes un rôle bien plus important.” (Wismann 2014, p. 77).

cervello” will be rendered in French by “bourrage de crane”. The idea is the same, but the image that represents it, a metaphor, is different. So the purpose of modulation is to produce an “idiomatic” expression that doesn’t seem to simply be a calque. We take into particular consideration the “figurative expressions”: when they are lexicalized and commonly used, translation is generally required and suggested by the dictionaries themselves. But there are cases where the translator’s linguistic sense, his knowledge of the slightest nuances of language, is of the utmost importance to find a suitable equivalent, such as in the following example supplied by Podeur: “Stamani m’è piovuta un’idea nel cervello”, “Ce matin, une idée a germé dans mon cerveau” (Podeur, 2002, p. 87). Here transposition that restores the progressive sequence is joined by the change of metaphor: in French an idea can “germer dans le cerveau”, not “pleuvoir”. In such a case, bilingual dictionaries are generally of little help, what is most important is the familiarity a translator has with the expressive habits of the target language. Making a modulation means also possessing the tools for textual rhetoric analysis, since modulation can be of a metaphorical genre but also be based on metonymy, synecdoche or antonomasia. In a word, it’s the classical figures of rhetoric tradition. Still, they’re no more applied, within a linguistic system, to the relation between figural expression and an ideal degree zero, but to the passage of a proposition from a linguistic system to another. This figure can appear in the source text, and the translator must then decide if he wants to maintain it, if necessary through a proper modulation, or to remove it, effacing this way the figure of the source-text. Otherwise it can be the translator himself who decides to insert a figure of this kind in order to solve a translation problem. Naturally, inserting a figural element in the target-text risks introducing connotations that were absent from the original text, and in a way, one might say that the translator yields to the temptation of “embellishing” the source-text. As such, we must be moderate in resorting to this device: it should be used mainly when the figural expression introduced is sufficiently natural and common in the target language to go unnoticed, then it will not change the general expressive standard of the source-text. For instance, a generalizing synecdoche is one of the devices one can adopt when confronted with a concept or reality absent from the target culture. With a procedure of this kind, we are at the frontier between modulation and adaptation.

Adaptation and transcription are two opposite devices one can have recourse to in case he is confronted with situations and objects that don’t have any equivalent in the target culture. What should the attitude be towards translating gastronomic specialties that don’t exist in the target culture? How should we translate “panettone” in French or typical French cheeses to Italian like “reblochon” or “morbier”, scarcely known in Italy? These are the kind of situations where untranslatability becomes more evident. There are two possible attitudes: we can assimilate the reference to the target culture, opting for adaptation, or we can choose to reproduce a foreign word exactly as it is, adding, if necessary, an explanatory note. Nevertheless, there’s no sharp dichotomy between these two attitudes: different kinds of adaptation exist, and even transcription can be practiced in different ways. For instance, if we want to translate French “reblochon”, we can decide to use an Italian cheese not less typical (“stracchino”), but only when we don’t need to respect a French setting and a French atmosphere, otherwise we can opt for a generalizing synecdoche and simply translate “formaggio”, but this involves a loss in connotation and local color. In all these cases we have made an adaptation. But if we decide to maintain the word “reblochon”, inviting the reader to a sort of cultural disorientation, we have made a “transcription”. In this case we can decide to add an explicatory note (“fromage à pâte grasse fabriqué en Savoie”), or to let the reader search for additional information, if he wants to, on a reference that is not clear for him. But we

also have another choice, the so-called “translation pair”⁸, which consists of adding within the text the hyperonym “formaggio” beside the foreign word to explain what it is. Only the translator’s linguistic sense can decide, taking into account the nature and the communicative intentions of the text, between all these different solutions, and the readers will judge if the choice was good or not. All these translation techniques are presented to the students in a problem-solving approach: they become tools one can positively adopt to solve specific difficulties.

In the second part of the course, I go from these general procedures to some more specific cases that concern the lexical level. It is like the problem of false friends, particularly perceptible in the relation between two linguistic systems close to each other such as Italian and French⁹. In this case, we adopt a decidedly “cibliste” approach, in a didactic perspective: the student must get rid of degrees of interferences and unintentional “calques”. We present some cases where the evident resemblance between two or more words hides a difference in meaning, which can be total (false friends) or partial (semi false friends). Examples range from evident cases where the context makes misinterpretation unlikely:

Affolé → Sconvolto

Affollato → bondé

To cases where the risk of confusion is higher:

Propos → discorso

Proposta → proposition

But there are also cases where translation becomes extremely difficult. Let’s take the Italian verb “portare”: it is a verb that covers a wide semantic area, and that can have several acceptations, some of which are specified by adverbs like “giù”, “su”, “avanti”, and so on. French language is much more precise in distinguishing different meanings through different verbs. First of all, it distinguishes between bringing someone or something, between taking someone or something away from the place it stands and taking it towards where the speaker stands, and so forth. Even to suggest the direction of movement (i.e. Italian “portar su”, “portar giù”, etc.), French uses different verbs instead of adverbs. These distinctions give the following pattern:

Portare

- *porter*. Ex. porter une veste
- *apporter*. Ex. Quelles nouvelles nous apportez-vous?
- *rapporter*. Ex. Un cadeau que son père lui a rapporté d’Italie
- *emporter*. Ex. Une ambulance a emporté les blessés à l’hôpital
- *mener*. Ex. Mon voisin mène son chien en laisse
- *amener*. Ex. Le taxi nous a amenés à la gare
- *emmener*. Ex. J’emmène mes enfants à la campagne
- *monter*. Ex. Je monte mes bagages au grenier

⁸ That’s my translation of what Pondeur calls “binôme traductif” (Pondeur, 2002, pp. 161-162).

⁹ To prepare this part of the course I used particularly Nadine Celotti, Marie-Thérèse Cohade (1994) and the very useful Raoul Boch’s dictionary of false friends (2009).

- *descendre*. Ex. Je descends ces vieux objets à la cave
- *sortir*. Ex. On a sorti les blessés des décombres
- *rentrer*. Ex. Il a rentré sa voiture au garage

It is particularly important that students get to know these nuances, due to the frequent usage speakers make of these verbs. In a case like this, the distinction between so many different forms is narrow and it often occurs that even native speakers don't respect them completely.

In this second part, the course is based on:

1. Exercises that imply the combined use of monolingual and bilingual dictionaries in order to discover false friends and propose the correct translation of some phrases. It is fundamental to learn how to use both dictionaries in an intelligent and non-mechanical way.
2. Investigation on the vocabulary of some institutions where differences between French and Italian – and consequently the risk of imprecise translations – become higher. We present, in particular, university and secondary school system vocabulary and theatre vocabulary).
3. Lexical files that analyze the case of words that bring up particular problems of equivalence between the two languages.

I will briefly explain the second point. Let's take the case of French secondary school. It is based on a division into two cycles: the first one is four years long and is taught in the "collèges" with a regressive numbering of years (classes de 6ème, 5ème, 4ème, 3ème); the second one, three years long, is taught in the "lycées", with the same kind of numbering (2ème, 1ère, terminale). We do not only need to know this system well when we translate texts related to the school world (and bear in mind that France, like Italy, has modified several times its instruction system, always changing the vocabulary, so the translator will always consider the publication date of the text he translates), but we must also bear in mind the "irreducible" differences. Italian system is based on an inferior secondary school that lasts three years and on a superior secondary school lasting five years. Therefore there's not only a lack of numerical correspondence between the four cycles – the first cycle in France is longer than the second, in Italy it lasts less – but even the total amount is different, because the French student ends his school course a year earlier. How shall we translate "classe de 3ème" in Italian? Most of the time, the translator chooses "seconda liceo" (or "quinta ginnasio"), because it's the class that precedes the three years that lead to "baccalauréat". But if we consider the age of the students, we should translate "prima liceo" (or "quarta ginnasio"). Anyway, an adaptation is needed.

In the third part of the course, translation is viewed not only from a lexical standpoint, but as it regards grammar. In particular, attention is focused on verbal systems, mainly examining some aspects that are particularly difficult for Italian speakers. We have followed the approach adopted by a well written book that is rich in examples and details in the analysis of particular cases, Charles Barone's *Viceversa* (Barone, 2005). Certainly, the timing of the course required a drastic selection of the materials. The particular complexity of this book, aimed at higher-level students, prompted me to integrate it with other simpler and more selective manuals (Merger, Sini, 2013; Bidaud, 2014). The first subject is the use of the auxiliary verbs in the compound tenses, which presents important differences between the two languages. Not only does the choice between "to have" and "to be" follow different rules, but for some French verbs both constructions are possible with a different

nuance of meaning: auxiliary “avoir” expresses the process, the action in progress, whereas “être” expresses the state resulting from an action accomplished. For instance: “Elle est bien changée après ce qui lui est arrivé” and “Elle n’a pas changé depuis la dernière fois qu’on s’est rencontrés”. But for many verbs this rule exists only in theory and the choice depends rather on the preference of an author than on a real difference. In the same lesson, I address the differences between Italian and French regarding pronominal verbs, auxiliary syntax, and the expression of linguistic “aspect”. In the second lesson I discuss a crucial problem from a translation perspective: it is the use of *-ant* forms, which are present participle, verbal adjective and gerund. These forms frequently used in literary prose imply complex differences between the two languages. If the gerund is of frequent usage in Italian, it appears much less used in French and is subject to precise conditions. Therefore, the Italian gerund will be translated often with a present participle, or even more often with an explicit subordinate clause or two coordinate clauses. Here we find again one of the techniques discussed in the first part of the course, which is syntactic transposition. In the course of the lesson, I present first usage rules of present participle, verbal adjective and gerund in French, then the principles that must guide translation from French to Italian. It is one of the most complex themes, also because of the multiple values that these forms can express: a participle or a gerund can take the place of a causal clause, a relative clause, a time clause, a concessive, a consecutive clause, and so forth. These different values require different translations. Therefore, the student must possess solid competencies in period analysis, a prerequisite which is not always respected. Finally, in the penultimate lesson, I present the difficulties concerning past participle use (participle concordance and participial propositions) and in the last lesson, the use of the pronoun “on”, the conditional clause and the indirect discourse.

The course, in conclusion, aims to expound, by a sample method, some translation procedures and some particular difficulties in translation between French and Italian without any pretention to exhaust such a vast subject. The goal is to supply the students with a frame of reference to learn how *conceptualiser la pratique* (“to conceptualize the practice”), to quote Ladmiral’s expression. As I wrote above, students are accustomed to practicing translation concretely, because translation is always used as a didactic tool or as an evaluation instrument from the courses of a basic level. But they are not accustomed to reflect on the specific problems and techniques of this activity, which represents one of the outlets for graduates in foreign languages. This course tries to fill this gap, joining the “normative” with “theoretical” approach. On one hand, we try to supply some rules to guide the students in specific problem resolution, while on the other hand the universal validity of these rules is constantly limited by the idea that there’s not only one possible translation, but often many different solutions and there are no rules that can exempt the translator from the responsibility of making a choice. Another principle adopted in this course and linked to the former is the following: the examples and exercises proposed are based partly on “artificial” phrases, or rather examples conceived to verify the student’s ability to put rules into practice, and partly on phrases drawn from literary texts. In the latter case, the examples are usually more complex and not conceived to illustrate a grammar topic. Therefore, the sheer application of rules is not enough; the student’s linguistic and literary sensibility is involved, as well as the capacity to reproduce at denotative and connotative levels. Clearly, the shortness of a phrase taken out of its context will make it impossible to seize all the text implications and connotations, but part of them will remain perceptible. Therefore, even the exercises follow the same double perspective: normative “approach” and “re-creative” approach. This almost reproduces the dichotomy between linguistic and “literary”

theories of translation.

This leads us to introduce the more original part of this course, the multimedia viewpoint, which is the final test under way at the moment. It is a test entirely meant to verify the competencies acquired at the end of the course. It is conceived as a translation laboratory devoted to four important literary authors, two Italian and two French. This serves to explain that translation is not just a set of procedures applicable without distinction to any text, but – especially in the case of literary translation – cannot be separated from the interpretation of the text we are translating and from the knowledge of the historical and cultural context where it originated. In all the sections, each of them devoted to an author, the student has the possibility to open a file where he can find information about the author and the book at hand, with elements of analysis that can be important to orient the translation activity.

There are four translations to do, progressively more difficult. In the first two sections we have a text already partially translated (an Italian and a French text): in the same screen, one can see the source text on the left and the target text on the right, which is a partial translation with blanks that the student must fill in. The blanks can refer to expressions or grammar topics explained in the course, otherwise they require that the translator use one of the procedures shown at the beginning of the course (transposition, modulation, adaptation, transcription). So, the student can focus on the problematic points of the translation without dispersing the attention on the whole text. In this way, he learns to divide the text into “translation unities”, a crucial concept expressed by Vinay and Darbelnet. Obviously, translation unity does not correspond to the single word, but to the lexicological unity: for instance, the expression “petite fille” will form a single translation unity. This practice, segmenting the text to be translated, is partly arbitrary but of an undoubted practical help. The student will translate first in their order the lexicological unities, tackling translation by consecutive problems; then, at the end of this first stage, he will value if the source text effect has been respected. At the end of the exercise, the student gets an immediate feedback on his translation, so he can visualize the complete and correct translation of the text he has been working on by clicking on an icon on the right in the lower part of the screen. By complete and correct translation, I mean a translation proposal that marks out also all the cases where the translation choices could have been more than one. Two other icons will let the student get to:

1. a teacher’s comment on the specific problems posed by the translation, on the mistakes one could easily make and on the translation procedures most likely to be used in the text
2. different translations of the text in question executed by professional translators

The latter resource is particularly useful to concretely show the variety of solutions adopted by professionals to solve a translation problem. The student will have the opportunity to compare different solutions and to value their respective effectiveness.

In the two following sections, there’s a text to translate entirely. The operation is more complex because the student’s attention is not pointed from the beginning towards some specific difficulties – he must identify on his own the passages on which he must focus his attention for a correct and effective translation. Evidently, this is the final aim of the course: teaching the student to tackle a translation without any support whatsoever, so the final test can consist in nothing else than this. In these two sections, the students will have the same tools as in the former: information on the author and the text, accessible from the beginning, and comments on translation and professional

translations to compare at the end of the exercise.

Why did I decide to propose two Italian and two French texts? Precisely to train the student to translate both into his own language as well as into a foreign language – this passage in both directions is very important to become aware of the affinities and differences between the two languages in both their structure and their way of cutting reality referents.

Obviously, the final exam must consist in two short translations, one from Italian to French, and the other from French to Italian. However, the student must not only translate but comment and justify his translation choices using the theoretical notions supplied by the course. He must prove that he has learned to conceptualize his practice.

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Sintesi

L'articolo si propone di fornire un esempio di applicazione delle tecnologie multimediali all'apprendimento delle lingue straniere. Il caso specifico che viene presentato è quello del corso di Lingua e traduzione francese IV attivato presso l'Università Guglielmo Marconi, che ha come obiettivo da una parte quello di fornire agli studenti le competenze linguistiche indicate dal Quadro comune europeo per i livelli B1 e B2, dall'altra quello di approfondire le tecniche della traduzione applicate al caso specifico dell'italiano e del francese. Il primo obiettivo è perseguito tramite materiali multimediali realizzati all'interno dell'Università Marconi, il secondo obiettivo è perseguito tramite una serie di videolezioni in cui vengono presentati alcuni principi teorici della traduttologia ed una serie di casi e di esempi specifici. Facendo riferimento ancora una volta al Quadro comune europeo, la traduzione rientra nelle attività di mediazione, che mettono in gioco competenze fondamentali come la capacità di riformulazione di un pensiero, non soltanto da un sistema linguistico ad un altro, ma anche all'interno di uno stesso sistema linguistico. In questo senso, si tratta di un'attività niente affatto "libresca", ma che dà concretezza a quell'approprio plurilinguistico e pluriculturale, a quella logica di interazione tra lingue diverse (e culture diverse) promossa dal Consiglio europeo: le lingue non sono compartimenti stagni ma devono entrare in relazione. Se un tempo l'obiettivo ideale era quello di "produrre" degli studenti bilingui, secondo un ideale illusorio di spontaneità che escludeva la mediazione della lingua materna dall'apprendimento della lingua straniera, oggi si ritiene prioritaria e molto più feconda la capacità di mettere in relazione sistemi linguistici diversi, compreso il proprio. La traduzione diventa allora un'esperienza centrale per accrescere le proprie competenze sia nella lingua di partenza che nella lingua di arrivo. I procedimenti traduttivi (trasposizione, modulazione, adattamento, trascrizione) sono presentati agli studenti in una logica di problem-solving. Al termine del percorso, che prende in esame anche in modo più specifico il piano lessicale e il piano sintattico, un'esercitazione in modalità multimediale consente di mettere alla prova le competenze acquisite. L'esercitazione è concepita come un laboratorio di traduzione dedicato a quattro autori letterari importanti, due italiani e due francesi e comporta una progressione di difficoltà. Lo studente ha la possibilità di ricevere subito un feed-back sulla sua proposta di traduzione e, una volta terminata l'esercitazione, può mettere a confronto con la propria traduzione quella di diversi traduttori professionisti.