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*Developing Translation Competence*

# DEVELOPING TRANSLATION COMPETENCE

Edited by

CHRISTINA SCHÄFFNER

BEVERLY ADAB

*Aston University Birmingham*

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## Teaching Strategies for Emancipatory Translation

ANDREW CHESTERMAN

*University of Helsinki*

### Stages of Expertise

Whatever else it is, translation is certainly a skill. And like any other skill, it can be learned. When they have mastered this skill, translators are therefore *experts*. We therefore need a conception of what expertise is, how can it be learned, and how it can be taught.

In my own thinking about translation training, and during my practical teaching experience with translator trainees in Finland, I have been inspired by the view of expertise presented by the Dreyfus brothers in their well-known critique of artificial intelligence entitled *Mind over Machine* (1986). As the title suggests, this book is an argument against the computer metaphor of the human brain and human expertise, against the view that computers will one day be able to mimic human expertise in all its aspects. The aim of the book is to show that human expertise is something very different from anything that can be achieved in artificial intelligence. However, it is not this argument that concerns us here, but the view of human expertise itself, as presented by the Dreyfuses.

In this theory, five steps are posited, representing a progress from novice to expert. Stage one is the novice stage. In learning any skill, the Dreyfuses argue, the novice starts by learning to recognise objective facts and features that are relevant to the skill in question, and learns rules for determining actions that are based on these facts and features. The relevant features are explicitly defined (by the teacher), so that they appear to be context-free. This is the stage of simple information processing (and a computer can get this far!). They use the example of learning to drive a car: at the novice stage, the learner learns, for instance, that the brake makes the car go more slowly and the accelerator makes it go faster; that one must change gear from 1st to 2nd at a particular speed, and so on. At this level, behaviour is fully conscious. It is also atomistic:

the learner does not have an overall understanding of how to drive, but only operates in terms of particular, separate activities.

Stage two is that of the advanced beginner. As experience grows, trainees begin to recognise other relevant aspects of the situation, aspects that have not yet been defined or explicitly taught. The trainee learns to perceive similarities, to generalise from previous, taught, instances. Task features become situationalised, they are no longer so context-free. For instance, at this level drivers learn to change gear in accordance with the engine noise - something not so easy to define specifically. Behaviour is still conscious, but not so easily verbalised, and it is less atomistic: the driver associates both speed and engine noise with gear change.

Stage three is the competence stage. As experience grows, so the number of relevant features in the situation also grows, and the trainee has to develop a sense of priorities: one needs to make a selection from the situational features, to set them in a hierarchy of importance and learn which ones can be disregarded or overruled. This is where real decision-making enters the picture, where decisions are made between options. This means we have to see the task situation as a whole, in order to decide about priorities. We need to be able to make plans and carry them out. A competent trainee thus has a conscious sense of the goal of the task, an awareness of the task in terms of problem-solving rather than information-processing. In the driving example, this stage is illustrated by the way a driver in a hurry chooses the shortest route, maybe even breaking the traffic rules in order to meet a given priority goal. The competence stage thus also introduces an element of personal responsibility: the trainee is no longer someone who merely reacts, but someone who analyses a situation, makes a plan and carries it out in an optimal way. Because of this element of responsibility, there is also an element of emotional involvement at this stage, unlike the previous stages which were more purely *rational*.

Stage four is that of proficiency. So far, trainees have been following rules, processing information and making rational choices. At the proficiency level, personal experience and intuition play more of a role. Skilful behaviour is more holistic, but the rational, analytical element is still present. Intuition and rationality are used alternately, so that the trainee is sometimes *inside* what the Dreyfuses call "the world of the skill" (Dreyfus and Dreyfus 1986: 29), and sometimes detached from it. Imagine an experienced driver approaching a curve on a rainy day: there is an intuitive realisation that he is going too fast, followed rapidly by a rational decision about what to do: adjust steering, lift foot from accelerator or apply brake, or a combination of these.

The final stage is expertise itself, where intuition takes over. Nonreflective involvement takes over from conscious rationalisation, you become one with

your car. Deliberation, when present, becomes a critical reflection on intuition. Intuition is the driving force of skilled behaviour, an intuition that is trusted because it is constantly tested and refined. The rational side functions as a kind of monitor that can be switched on at will; it is manifested as what the Dreyfuses call "deliberative rationality". Between the moments of monitoring, expert performance is experienced as a feeling of *flow*, euphoria, in which the performer is lost in the performance, totally involved in the task, even though the monitoring mind remains on guard, as it were. (Maybe the performer can become thus involved precisely *because* the monitoring mind is there, to provide the necessary security.)

What we have, then, is a picture of the growth of expertise presented as a process of gradual automatisisation, but one in which emotional involvement and intuition have important roles. The function of rationality, detached analytical thinking, is dominant at first, but gradually gives way to intuition, until its final task is to provide a kind of internal feedback, particularly at problem-points. What constitutes a problem, of course, varies widely from person to person, even between people engaged in the same task. But for real experts, things that might be problems for others are merely routine matters. The wider the range of problem-free functioning, the greater the expertise. In the Dreyfuses' words: "skill in any domain is measured by the performer's ability to act appropriately in situations that might once have been problems but are no longer problems and so do not require analytic reflection" (Dreyfus and Dreyfus 1986: 156). A good teacher of expertise might then be defined as an expert who normally exercises a given skill at the level of expertise, but who can access his or her conscious rationality *at will*, when asked, and verbalise about his or her performance, thus making it accessible to the consciousness of trainees.

### Basic concepts

How can we apply this view of expertise in the development of translation competence? An expert translator is seen as someone who works largely on intuition, on automatic pilot as it were, but who retains the ability to draw on critical rationality when the need arises, for instance in solving particularly tough or unusual problems, or when justifying solutions to the client. Some text-types obviously involve more conscious monitoring than others: tasks where the translator deliberately sets out to break some prevailing norm or reader-expectation, for some reason or other, presumably require more continuous monitoring. The intuitive or routine element is less evident here.

But where shall we start? Notice that conscious awareness enters the picture at two points, in two different ways. At the beginning, certain rules and concepts have to be learned consciously; in the later stages, consciousness enters as a monitor. At the beginning, consciousness is switched on all the time; later, it is used more selectively. Conscious rationality seems to be the door through which we must pass, although we do not need to stay stuck in the doorway forever.

If the Dreyfuses are right, the rough outline of what we need to do seems clear. First, we need to teach certain things quite overtly: whatever corresponds to their situationally relevant features and facts, their rules. (This is how you start the engine. This is the brake: press here to stop the car. To turn left, do this ... Drive on the right. Stop at red traffic-lights.) Then we need to teach decision-making skills. Then we need to teach trainees to increasingly trust their intuition (and therefore to work faster), but without losing hold of the critical faculty altogether; we need to give them the experience of *flow*, plus the experience of self-monitoring.

Translating is like, say, carpentry, in that both are skills and both need tools. Some translation tools are physical (computer aids etc.) and some are conceptual. I will focus on the conceptual ones. A training course will presumably start with the most basic concepts, which correspond to the Dreyfuses' basic facts, situational features and rules. Here I take translator competence in the purely linguistic sense defined by Pym (1992a: 175) as the ability to generate various target-language alternatives plus the ability to select the most appropriate one in a given task situation. (However, I do not underestimate the importance of other necessary competences.) Opinions on what the most basic concepts actually are may vary to some extent - I start with the ones listed below (for further discussion, see Chesterman 1997: 7ff). In class, I encourage a critical discussion of each one. Each raises a whole mass of problems, of course, which I will not go into here. Each can be seen as a primary node in a network of ideas, in a mind-map (cf. Figure 1).

<i>Source-target</i>	(limitations of this metaphor)
<i>Equivalence</i>	(sameness or similarity? different types)
<i>Translatability / untranslatability</i>	(prejudices; folk beliefs)
<i>Free vs. literal</i>	(possible to generalise? other parameters?)
<i>All writing is translating</i>	(from meaning to form; no such thing as an original text, deconstructionism?)

Figure 1: Basic concepts

My choice of these basic concepts is guided partly by their traditional centrality in translation theory. More importantly, however, they are strongly present in the layman's understanding of what translation is about; and by *layman* I include also the typical translator's client. In negotiating with a client about the aims and form of a given translation, a professional translator does well to bear in mind the client's *folk concept* of translation.

Let us now consider some additional useful training concepts: a set of role metaphors, a set of translation strategies, and a set of translation norms. All these sets are *portable* - they are easy to memorise. They are all part of my *teaching strategy*, and I would expect a translator trainee to learn about them at some point.

### Role metaphors

A brief survey of role metaphors is useful because it makes trainees aware of the various roles that translators have been seen to play at various periods of (western) history, and encourages them to develop their own self-concept as prospective translators. (See Mossop 1994 for further justification of this.) An overview of the history of translation, and of the ways people have thought about translation, helps to socialise trainees into their future profession. Some of the dominant role metaphors are the following in Table 1, in roughly historical order (see Chesterman 1997: chapter 2 for further discussion).

Table 1: Role metaphors

Metaphor	Role	Background
Rebuilding	Bricklayer	Classical Greece
Copying	Copier	Early Biblical translation
Imitating	Mimic	Rhetorical tradition, belles infidèles
Creating	Artist	German Romantics and their successors
Transcoding	Cryptographer	Linguistics, machine translation
Sending	Intermediary	Sociolinguistic focus, translational action
Manipulating	Controller	Polysystem approach, ideologies
Thinking	Subject	Cognition, protois

These role metaphors can then be compared with those suggested by the trainees themselves, and of course others can also be proposed that might be

more appropriate. The overall historical progress nevertheless seems to be one towards increasing status and autonomy for the translator.

### Strategies

My third category of useful concepts is that of translation strategies. Here there is a jungle of terminological differences of opinion of course, which I shall skip over here (strategies vs. tactics vs. procedures, for instance). Strategies are of many kinds, and can be classified in many ways. A preliminary general definition states that strategies are potentially conscious, goal-oriented procedures for solving problems. Strategies represent well-trying, standard types of solution to a lack of fit between goal and means; they are used when the means that first appear to be at hand seem to be inadequate to allow the translator to reach a given goal. So: either we have to adjust the goal (for instance replace it with another goal that we can attain), or else try some other means. My assumption is that professional translators are aware of these strategies, that they use them frequently either consciously or without thinking, and that they are therefore things that should be overtly taught to trainees and consciously practised, so that they become automatic, part of the conceptual toolkit.

A discussion of strategies can start by distinguishing between (a) *search* strategies, (b) *creativity* strategies, and (c) *textual* strategies. Search strategies are used for the solution of specific comprehension or production problems, often terminological: use of the Internet, brainstorming a colleague, phoning that friend at the Ministry, checking through parallel texts, and so on. Creativity strategies include taking a coffee break, going for a walk, allowing the unconscious to take over, shelving the problem until later, trying to verbalise it, redefining it, *incubation*, sleep - anything that encourages or releases creativity when the translating flow gets stuck (cf. Kussmaul 1995). I will not discuss these two types further here, although they might warrant considerable discussion in the classroom.

By textual strategies I mean explicit textual manipulation of units of translation, the kind of thing some authors refer to as shifts or procedures. Here again, different classifications abound. I use a basic set of thirty textual strategies, drawn from a variety of sources including Catford (1965), Vinay and Darbelnet (1958) and Leuven-Zwart (1989/1990). Ten are syntactic (manipulating syntactic structure, e.g. changing the word class), ten semantic (manipulating meaning, e.g. moving from concrete to abstract), and ten pragmatic (manipulating the message itself, e.g. adding or omitting

information). Some may be obligatory during translation between given languages; in practice, most are optional but nevertheless motivated. (For details, see Chesterman 1997: 94ff.)

### Teaching with Strategies

At the *novice* stage in the growth of expertise, if the Dreyfuses are right, we need an explicit presentation of key concepts. This was my justification for introducing the basic concepts and role metaphors, and the same applies here. We can start by going through the textual strategies quite explicitly, with the aid of a translation plus its source text, pointing out examples of each (*strategy exemplification*). This is thus an exercise in initial understanding. The next step is to elicit examples, i.e. requiring the trainees to find examples (for example, asking them: "Find three transpositions in the second paragraph ..."), for instance working in pairs. This requires active *strategy recognition*.

At the *advanced beginner* stage, trainees can be asked to examine a translation alongside its original, and investigate the strategies that have been used (*strategy analysis*). This might later lead to generalisations such as the following. In this translation, all proper names have been transferred unchanged except this name here, which uses a double presentation. Or: all sentences of more than x words have been manipulated according to the sentence-change strategy. Or: we found these instances of information that had been added or omitted. Or: something strange has happened to the figurative language in the translation: metaphors of this sort have been translated this way, and metaphors of that sort, that way (trope change). Or (more sophisticated, now): the ratio between nouns and verbs has changed markedly in the translation: evidence of a particular transposition strategy. - This kind of work provides practice in recognising strategies in context, and in learning to think about them analytically.

Following on from this increased familiarity with the concepts, we can devise exercises that train the active use of the strategies. Specific strategy practice can be offered: trainees can be asked to translate particular sentences or parts of sentences using a given strategy (*strategy practice*). The task could be formulated as: "Translate the marked sections using a cohesion change; changing the verb from passive to active (clause structure change); so that the clause-initial adverbial in the original becomes the subject in the target version (clause structure change); using a converse; using a transediting strategy; using cultural filtering ...".

Yet another type of exercise would be to specify a contextual factor (e.g. translation function (skopos) plus kind of readership) and then ask where in a given text a strategy of type such-and-such might be useful (e.g. information change). This is an exercise in *strategy contextualisation*. With longer text segments, the teacher might edit these in advance, using code abbreviations for strategy types: at certain points, a code mark indicates what strategy might be used there (*strategy-prompted translation*).

If a given translation has used a particular strategy at a certain point, trainees can be asked to suggest other strategies that might also have been used (*strategy alternatives*). This exercise brings in the issue of freedom of choice: some strategies seem more or less compulsory under certain conditions; others seem more like options, where the translator has more freedom. It is obviously important to realise when there is a choice and when there really is not. (Compare Pym's distinction between binary and non-binary errors, 1992b.)

We can also ask trainees to try different strategies for the *same* section of the source text: this is one way of beginning to focus on flexibility, on the ability to come up with several alternative versions. Alternative strategies are most easily selected from the same group (syntactic / semantic / pragmatic), because there is inevitable overlap between the groups - a pragmatic change usually involves a syntactic one as well, etc. Typical instructions might be: "Translate the marked bits using (i) a phrase structure change, (ii) using a literal translation; (i) using the antonymy strategy, (ii) using a paraphrase; (i) using an interpersonal change, (ii) using an explicitness change." (*Strategy flexibility*.)

These last two exercises merge into the Dreyfuses' third stage, that of *competence*, characterised by conscious decision-making. In order to make decisions, we need to know what choices are available, and what the priorities are, why certain choices are probably going to be better than certain others. So we now begin to focus less on *what* and more on *why*: first in the analysis of published translations and then in discussion of translation work in process (*strategy justification*). Why did this translator use this strategy at this point? Why not that strategy? Why is this one better than that one here? What priority did this translator seem to have in mind at this point? This kind of analytical work can be most rewarding if several translations of the same source text are compared: all in the same target language, perhaps at different periods, or by different translators, or even in different target languages (*strategy comparison*).

Pre-translation work can also be exploited here (*strategy preparation*). In preparing for a translation assignment, we can go through the source text and discuss what possible strategies might be used at various points, eliciting

different options; trainees make notes of what seems to be a good choice, and use these notes when doing their own translation after the preparatory group discussion. In discussing different options, it is important to include the suggested justification for each.

In other words, the discussion moves towards questions of motivation, and at the same time highlights issues of quality control; different options are not just alternatives, but usually some seem better than others. So what do we mean by *better*? And why are some options better? There are many reasons, of course, having to do with grammaticality, stylistic appropriateness, semantic accuracy, readability, closeness to the original, probable effects on readers, and so on. These will in turn form the basis for the presentation of translation norms and their associated values, which we come to below. The useful concept of compensation can also be introduced as one possible reason for using a particular strategy at a particular point.

The *proficiency* stage stresses intuition rather than analytical thought. Here, we can exploit factors that encourage intuition, such as working under time pressure. Trainees can be required to produce a first version fast, and then switch on their mental monitors and engage in some detached critical analysis of their own (or their neighbour's) translation. Group participants can compare their initial intuitions, and evaluate the various strategies used (*strategy evaluation*). New strategies might also emerge here.

One way of encouraging the intuitive element is to use source texts that the trainees have written themselves; I call this *personal translation*. Such texts might be short personal essays (for instance on *my concept of translation*) which had been written as a separate exercise, without the writers knowing that they would later be treated as source texts. Translating one's own source text, or revising someone else's translation of it, is a strangely emotional experience. (Incidentally, translation strategies offer a rich field for topics for MA and doctoral theses in translation studies. How to classify them in an optimal way? What are the conditions under which particular strategies tend to get used, in translating between given languages? What is the range of strategies typically available for the solution of particular kinds of translation problems? - And so on.)

### Norms and values

A discussion of motivation leads easily to the concept of translation norms. Strategies are means, in fact, and norms are ends: we use particular strategies in order to meet particular norms. In modern translation research, norms are

treated descriptively, as representing regulative ideas that appear to govern a translator's decision-making processes. Norms vary over time, and also across cultures (see Toury 1995 for a comprehensive account). As norms change, translator roles also change. In the translator's conceptual toolbox, I think, there should be the concept of a norm, plus an understanding of the main types of norm that affect the translation process. I have suggested a set of four such norms (Chesterman 1997: 64f).

*Expectancy norms*: a translation should meet the expectations of the readers, and also of the client and other parties involved. (Expectancy norms govern the form of the final product. They also affect the process which leads to this product: the other three norms govern this process.)

*Relation norm*: a translator should act in such a way that an appropriate relation of relevant similarity is established and maintained between the source text and the target text. (This is a linguistic norm, concerning intertextual relations.)

*Communication norm*: a translator should act in such a way as to optimise communication, as required by the situation, between all the parties involved. (This is a social norm.)

*Accountability norm*: a translator should act in such a way that the demands of loyalty are appropriately met with regard to the client, the readers, and other parties involved. (*Other parties* might even be understood as including other members of the translation profession itself: act in such a way that the profession continues to be trusted. This is an overtly ethical norm.)

Norms are not laws. They can be broken, but norm-breaking behaviour needs to be justified. One way of justifying norms is to appeal to the values which underlie them, and to argue that certain norm-breaking behaviour can better express a particular value in a given case. I think the values underlying these four norms are the following (cf. Figure 2):

Expectancy norms:	clarity
Relation norm:	truth
Communication norm:	understanding
Accountability norm:	trust

Figure 2: Norms and values

These values are further discussed in Chesterman (1997: chapter 7). In translator training, it seems valuable to present and discuss these norms and associated values overtly. They are concepts which raise awareness and prompt questions and discussion, even disagreement. I want to stress once again that they are not prescriptive dogmas, but rather hypotheses: it seems to me that these are norms and values that regulate a translator's work.

Some training exercises to increase sensitivity to these norms are suggested in Chesterman (1997: 154f). They include the following:

For expectancy norms: the study of parallel texts, of translationese, of target-language prescriptive statements concerning good style.

For the relation norm: the study of a wide variety of texts that are claimed to be translations (in order to broaden the trainees' concept of what a translation can be), the study of how different skopos-requirements affect translations of the same source text, the critical study of explicit guidelines for translators, e.g. national codes of translator ethics.

For the communication norm: practice in writing target texts before actually translating, study of parallel texts, use of background material in the target language and in the source language, the classroom use of genuine translation assignments, source-text rewriting.

For the accountability norm: the personal translation exercise mentioned above, summary translation, process writing methods.

## Emancipatory translation

Emancipatory discourse has become a major topic in critical linguistics, and in the language awareness movement (see, for example, Fairclough 1992). The term refers to a kind of discourse that liberates speakers from unnecessary constraints, that allows them to become empowered as participating members of society, and that promotes democracy and self-fulfilment. The basic idea is that language learners should be taught norms, but also that they should be given the freedom to break norms if they wish and if they accept the consequences. Speakers thus assume responsibility for their use of language. I can choose to write an academic article in a non-academic style, but this may mean that the editors will demand some revision, or (if it is published) that people will think I am a bit strange, or whatever. There are obvious ideological issues at play here, illustrated by the following (Janks and Ivanič 1992: 317):

Learners need to understand that rules of accuracy and appropriacy are not fixed, but subject to social forces. Moving beyond passive awareness to

action means learning to choose when to conform to the conventions as they are, or to challenge them, and so help to break new ground. Action involves knowing how to choose, when to choose and whether to choose. People have to choose between conventional language use on the one hand, and practising emancipatory discourse with its commitment to some sort of change on the other.

This position is also of some relevance in translator training. The translator's role metaphor no longer needs to be that of a humble slave. If we, as trainers, wish to further promote the emancipation of the profession, we might think of emancipatory translation as some kind of ideal, an ideal we would like our trainees to aspire to. This implies that our trainees should be aware not only of the prevailing norms and the values underlying them, but also of the possibility of refining or breaking these norms, of finding better ways to meet prevailing values, of refining the values themselves. In this way, translators can play a role in social progress in the largest sense, in improving the quality of intercultural life: this, after all, has often been acknowledged as the ultimate aim of translation.

Extreme examples of emancipatory translation are provided by some feminist translators, or by deliberately slanted translations of the Bible (such as Jordan's New Testament). Less extreme examples can be found in the everyday work of professionals who feel free to use a transediting strategy without mercy when translating badly written administrative documents, for instance. Such translators take full responsibility for their work, playing a fully visible role in full awareness of what they are doing and why they are doing it.

I summarise this concept of emancipatory translation in terms of three principles. I offer these as ways of describing the Dreyfuses' final stage of expertise (from Chesterman 1997: 189-194).

1. *The TIANA Principle*: There Is Always an Alternative. This principle relates to the relation norm, and highlights the flexibility and freedom of the translator: translating is a creative act.
2. *The Dialogic Principle*. The translator exists in a state of dialogue, both with the source text and with the various parties involved in the translation situation, from writer and sender to readers and critics, and including other translators. This principle concerns the communication norm: translating is a social act.
3. *"Nur das Ich kann reden"* (Ebeling 1971: 193). Only the I can speak. This comes from Ebeling's theological theory of language, and stresses the translator's moral responsibility (cf. the accountability norm). As a

translator (*even* as a translator) my words are mine, I am responsible for them, I am not anonymous, I establish and maintain my own trustworthiness.

In sum: the learning task for translator trainees is to internalise concepts such as these, and to become fluent in their appropriate application; the challenge for teachers is to create conditions under which this internalisation can take place.

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