NOTES FROM THE CLASSROOM

Teaching Documentation for Translation Studies: The Key Discipline of Information Literacy

DORA SALES-SALVADOR

"The work of translation is above all a problem of documentation."

Roberto Mayoral
(Mayoral 1994: 118)

In today's ramifyingly complex information society, it is essential to stress the key importance of documentation in the field of translation studies, as a tool existing in relation to all the other disciplines involved in the educational process. We may usefully point out that in Europe all higher education courses in translation and interpretation include, as compulsory curricular elements, components intended to develop documentation skills related to the information retrieval and the evaluation of its quality, in the context of a multiplicity of formats. Certainly, the translator's documentary activity is a vital instrumental link in the chain of mediation and transfer of knowledge that makes up translation, an indispensable part of translational know-how. Documentary competence is essential for the practice of translation, and, therefore, for the translator's (ongoing) learning process.

In this connection and in the area of translation studies, the group PACTE (based at the Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona, Spain) has been stressing in its work the importance of this instrumental skill in the process of acquiring the general skill of translation (Hurtado Albir, 2001: 394-408). Authors such as

Consuelo Gonzalo García (2004) have defined this skill as documentary competence. A succinct definition of what we mean by this concept is provided by María Pinto, who sees it as "grounded in the handling of information, defining needs, programming search, employing strategies to locate and obtain information, sifting and evaluating information with a view to decision-making..." (PINTO, Coord., Portal e-coms. URL: http://mpinto.ugr.es/e-coms, my translation). In any process of transfer between an ST (source text) and a TT (target text), the translator needs to be trained in documentation, as an essential part of translational competence.

Following the position of María Pinto (forthcoming), we argue that it is ever more important that the translator should acquire the skill of information literacy, defining this process as the acquisition of skills, competences, knowledge and values enabling the access to, use of and communication of information in whatever form, with the aim of producing competent professionals and users, trained in the habit of identifying and registering information sources in appropriate ways, able to process and produce their own information, able to sift and evaluate the information process, and able to produce quality communication products (ACRL/ALA, 2000). This is a 'generic habit' which is of major importance in enabling people to successfully tackle decision-making, problem-solving or research. Information literacy comprises the whole range of experience in all its forms, detecting what forms and modes of information are relevant to different situations.

True, the Internet offers the translator an invaluable and inexhaustible source of information, a working medium and a means of communication which modifies the constraints of time and space. But in view of what many critical voices have called 'infoxication' (Cornellà, 2000) on the Internet, we need to stress the importance of maintaining a critical perspective when handling sources and evaluating their credibility.

Documentary search throughout the translation process entails learning how to locate, validate and correctly use the information sources offered by the library and the new technologies. Translators are faced with the challenge and the responsibility of becoming acquainted with and using the diverse means which now exist for the location, recovery, handling and dissemination of information, manipulating the new and extraordinary resources which information and telecommunications technology have made available for their work. In other words, it remains up to the translator to find the data, the information source; and the translator is responsible for knowing how to use it. To translate is to mediate between languages and cultures, to operate a constant decision-making procedure, and, most certainly, to know what documentation means. Otherwise, decision-making cannot be based on proper criteria. If one is to translate, acquiring the right documentation means knowing how to identify the informational requirements of the text to be translated, and knowing how to find the right solutions. Beyond all doubt, the field of documentation as applied to translation is a notably transversal domain, in which much research still needs to be done, along with much reflection on the necessary interdisciplinary strategies and methods that this training implies.

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Language, Literature and Culture: Through the Prism of Translation

VANAMALA VISHWANATHA

From the Translation Firmament

If the fledgling discipline of Translation Studies has to take wing and soar high, what better ground can it seek other than this vast and varied 'translation area' called India, where several languages jostle animatedly - now in unison, now in confrontation - in the daily business of living? Conversely, if one is looking for new light on issues of language, literature and culture, where else can one turn with benefit but to the young discipline of Translation Studies? Translation Studies, which investigates both the processes and products of translation within a particular cultural politics, history and location, offers the following insights in the Indian context:

Translation, which is founded on the basic fact that cultures in contact negotiate (gain some, lose some), thrive and grow by establishing links between/among the languages and literatures of a region, compels us to add the plural suffix '-s' to all the three terms in the label to rewrite them as 'Languages, Literatures and Cultures' - only more so in the multi-lingual and multi-ethnic political economy of India.

a) Translation Studies, in the last two decades, is marked by a paradigm shift in the very definition and understanding of the phenomenon of translation. Translation is no longer seen as a simple matter of replacing one linguistic text by another. Even the translation of a simple sentence from one language to another presupposes a tacit knowledge of assumptions which are at once linguistic, textual, cultural and political. This insight forces us to rethink the punctuation marks that set up each term in the above

label as a separate and discrete entity in order to suggest the essential interconnectedness among them. Humanities education in post-independent India has witnessed a rather unproductive and artificial segregation between Language and Literature Studies with culture forcing a sly, backdoor entry into the classroom, thereby eclipsing the fundamental fact that language, literature and culture are essentially constitutive of one another.

b) Even within the area of Language Studies, the teaching of the first language bears no relation to the teaching of the second and third languages; the same is the case with the teaching of literature. For instance, a child in Karnataka makes no connections between the literary texts s/he reads in the Kannada class and the English or Hindi class. One hand does not know what the other is doing. That explains why textbooks in the English language, which is introduced only in the V standard in Karnataka, often contain lessons whose cognitive content is so elementary that it is an insult to the intelligence of any normal child. For, these texts are oblivious of what cognitive and communicative skills have already been in play in the life of the child in the context of the first language. The child who is at the centre of this education process is a single, organic, holistic being. The consciousness of this learning-self, despite our attempt at fragmenting it across the timetable, is still one and the same. Therefore, it is imperative that we make connections among the languages and literatures that are taught across the curriculum. To quote E M Forster, we need to "only connect", by establishing and strengthening the inherent connections between our teachings of languages, literatures and cultures within the discipline of Humanities. The holistic and integrating nature of successful communication, which is at the heart of all translation practice, is best captured using the metaphor of the six blind men and the elephant. Language, narrative, culture and history simultaneously inhere and cohere in a specific configuration and a unique chemistry to produce particular texts; they are organically related to one

another like the different parts of the elephant, without which the gestalt of the elephant would remain incomplete.

c) Perspectives derived from translation help us to build stronger bridges between the home and the world as well as the home and the school, by legitimately and systematically building into the curriculum the available knowledge and worlds that students already possess and bring in along with their *'world-view'*. This can form a tremendous if untapped resource in an educational system that is increasingly divorced from the challenges of 'real' life and living.

d) Translation works on the basis of two contradictory conditions, a fact that is described by the Spanish philosopher Jose Ortega Y Gasset (Gasset 2000: 49-64) as 'the misery and splendour' of translation. It works because of the dual and simultaneous possibility of shared ground as well as difference. To put it in A K Ramanujan's (Ramanujan nd.) inimitable words, when we are reading a translated work, we need to "attend carefully both to the uniqueness of cultural expression and to the universal elements in it, both to its specificity and its accessibility, both to its otherness and to its challenge to our ability to share it." This defining feature of translation, which deals with the traffic and transaction between/among languages of contact can help in fostering the two larger goals of Humanities Education - Articulation (communicative skills) and Awareness (critique-al abilities).

The Shifting Grounds of English Studies

"English", whether as language, literature or culture, has always been a contentious project in India. It has played a pivotal role in our history as Indian society faced the impact of colonial modernity, the nation-state and more recently, globalization. English exists as the language of dominance simultaneously with the other languages of India as well as in the global village - buffeted and shaped by forces local and global. Within academia also, the

discipline of English Studies has been marked by changing constitutive discourses about English as a humanizing force, a functional subject (as the library language), a political /cultural project in a post-colonial nation and now, as the 'single window' to upward socio-economic mobility in a globalize India. The scholarship on English Studies in the last 10 to 15 years - Gauri Viswanathan's *Masks of Conquest* (Viswanathan 1990), Swati Joshi (Ed) *Rethinking English* (Joshi 1991) and Susie Tharu (Ed) *Subject to Change* (Tharu 1998) - has offered incisive critiques of established practices of English teaching. The questions of what and how are overshadowed by issues of who, why and where. Yet another force that has compelled us to interrogate the English classroom is the changing profile of students in higher education. What was once the preserve of the urban, English-educated elite has now rightly become more democratic and heterogeneous. In particular, the English classroom which was once dominated by young women (literature, being a soft option in market terms, was deemed fit only as a female domain) has today both women and men, coming from a wide variety of classes, castes, languages, ethnic groups and locations -village, small town and city. And thanks to globalization, a degree in English does offer job opportunities comparable to or better than disciplines such as Kannada Studies, Economics or Psychology. These larger realities have left us with no choice but to dislodge English Studies from its colonial moorings and relocate it in a setting of contemporary polemics.

As Braj Kachru *(Kachru 1998)* argues, English not only provides social status, it also gives access to attitudinally and materially desirable domains of power and knowledge, creating a new caste system. Access to this perennial resource called 'English' is not equally distributed among the people, thus creating a cleavage between the English-educated elite and all the others, especially from the regional language stream who have 'failed to make it'. Thus, government-sponsored institutions of higher education owe it

to the large majority of people who have been blithely bypassed by the system to offer credible courses, which meet market demands. This implies that English teaching programmes ought to fulfill a communicative function by providing students with the requisite skills and competence in using English. Catering to market forces demands conformity to standards set by the unseen hands of the market. This situation has given rise to many questions regarding the legitimate goal of English teaching such as - "Are we not merely producing 'cyber coolies' who have to carry out the fiats of our neo-colonial masters?" I wish to argue that courses in English should necessarily *equip* our students with the basic skills of the notorious foursome LSRW, which make for communicative competence in the language. This could justifiably be viewed as mindless enslavement to market forces if English teaching stopped at this. An equally imperative role that English *has* to play in our context is to counter the effect of its complicity in spawning an unequal power structure by enabling students to think critically and self-consciously about their situation, about important issues of public life in the 'largest democracy in the world'. It is, therefore, imperative at this stage in our history that the enabling potential of critical thinking which can fashion a cultural critique of globalization should be explored with commitment in the English curriculum at the UG and PG levels if we want to transform an entrenched tradition of imparting training for mindless cultural and political conformity to a 'pedagogy of the oppressed'.

The Case of / A Case for Modern Indian Literatures in Translation

Using the new perspectives offered by Translation Studies, I wish to argue that translation - both as process and as product - offers a potent ground for teaching both communicative competence and 'critique-al' thinking. One proposal of how this potential can be realized using the *process of translation* has been demonstrated in my earlier article "Literary Translation: A Technique for Teaching

English Literature in a Bi-literary Context" *(Vishwanatha 1998: 170 -180)*. Now, I would like to outline a curricular innovation based on using the product of translation.

a) The Context: By way of illustration, I will describe a course on *Modern Indian Literatures in Translation* (MILT, from now on), a compulsory paper at the PG level, offered by the Department of English, Bangalore University from 1998 -2003.I wish to acknowledge the inspiring and untiring support and participation of my colleague Dr Ramdas Rao, Reader in English, Department of English, Bangalore University in shaping and teaching this course with me. MILT was one of the many new courses introduced at the time such as English for Literary Study, Women's Writing, Literature and Film, and Teaching English Language and Literature. The claim to innovation comes from the perception that the MILT course made for a certain opening out of the boundaries of the discipline, which brought a new energy, stoking fiery debate and dissent in our classroom.

b) The Choice of Texts: We wanted to focus not on ancient or medieval Indian literature or on Sanskrit literature in translation but solely on *modern*, bhasha (=vernacular) literatures in order to interrogate the constitutive categories of the notion of India. We selected texts from Kannada, Bengali and Malayalam in English translation keeping pragmatic considerations such as availability of translations, cost, length and accessibility to students. Please refer to Appendix A for details on texts and their organization. A section on the critical texts necessary to contextualize the debates in the study of Indian Literature was built into the course in order to historicize our reading of the texts.

c) The Critical Frame for Reading Texts: In evolving a mode of reading diverse literatures, we wanted to steer clear of two available models: on the one hand, the nationalist paradigm dominant in Commonwealth Writing, especially, Indian Writing in English,

which sees literature as an authentic expression of a homogenous identity called 'the nation'; and on the other, the nativist paradigm that is largely evident in the Indian Comparative Literature and Indian Literatures scene (Kannada literature teaching, for example) in which texts are studied as regional - an essential expression of a specific language/culture/region complex, based on the ideology of cultural nationalism . As opposed to the homogenous identity of the nation, this model posits a harmonious, unproblematic plurality using the slogan 'unity in diversity'. Despite their rival claims, the nationalist as well as the nativist paradigms have both participated in the construction of a homogenous identity - that of the Indian nation, practicing the very same exclusions. The constituents of this identity are male, upper caste, middle class and Hindu. Using the cultural discourses on gender, caste and religion available within in Cultural Studies, we have attempted through the MILT course to unpack the ideology of the nation and the national-modern.

d) The Mode of Teaching: Typically, each category was introduced with an elaboration of the issues and debates that mark the territory, then moving on to the texts themselves to see how these issues are represented in the text, leading to a comprehensive discussion of all the three texts vis a vis the questions raised by the category/ies under discussion. Rather than reading the texts as *literary texts*, a bibliography of cultural and critical texts was put together for use by the teachers and student presenters for supporting our cultural analysis and discussion. Many workshops were conducted for the teachers teaching this paper in the three PG centres to facilitate a shift to an unfamiliar mode of reading these texts using the Cultural Studies model.

Instead of the usual teacher-fronted way of teaching, teachers and students in a team-teaching mode shared the agony and ecstasy of teaching. Students largely lead the discussions after making sure that the contours of the text were established in class. We productively made use of the film texts of *Phaniamma* and

Agnisakshi, while the local theatre productions of *Taledanda* and Rudali provided an extra edge to the mediation of these texts in class.

While most students read the texts in their English translation, many students especially coming from rural backgrounds read nine out of the twelve texts in the Kannada original or in Kannada translation. In an educational set up where guidebooks have obliterated the need for reading primary texts, what was very heartening was that our students were able to read the texts in the language of their comfort. On occasion, even when a few had not read the text, they still participated meaningfully in the class discussion because the focus was on issues within their experiential universe.

e) Mobilization of Resources: Our students who brought in their first-hand experience of the issues of caste, gender and religion constituted our most inspiring and dependable resource. An array of resource persons from across the disciplines of History, Sociology, Kannada Studies and Political Science, Malayalam and Bengali literatures were invited to fill in on the many aspects of the texts that we had no access to in the English department. Film critics and Cultural commentators made significant contributions to our programme.

Our enthusiasm and energy was matched by the patronage offered by Katha (who made it possible for us to bring the resource persons from outside) the Sahitya Akademi (who offered us books worth Rs.5,000, for the purpose) and our University administration who partially funded the Annual Seminars on MILT regularly for 4 to 5 years. Using the financial resources made available by Katha, we managed to compile an anthology of cultural criticism - readings of texts and issues in the paper - contributed by experts, teachers and students alike. In the absence of readily available critical material on

the subject, this anthology served the needs of our students to a great extent.

f) The Evaluation Scheme: Experience has taught us that any innovation is best achieved by catching the tiger by its tail. So we had to ensure not only a new mode of teaching but also put in place an evaluation scheme that would reflect the thrust of the MILT course. See Appendix B for a copy of the question paper. Our aim in devising this kind of question paper was to make it student-friendly while still maintaining a degree of integrity to the founding principles of the course and retaining the intellectual challenge of the programme itself. There were three sections: a 15-mark General Section on the Critical Texts which framed the study of Indian Literatures; a 45-mark Comparative section in which the students had to answer any three out of four questions, discussing the various issues in comparison and contrast; and a Single-text Section of 40 marks consisting of short notes on any four texts, a format students are comfortable with. Thus we tried to ensure that the texts were read in earnest keeping the larger intent of the course intact.

Looking Back and Moving On

To talk about the failure of success,

Though the original impulse behind the course was to move away from a 'Literary Studies' to a 'Cultural Studies' model, because we based the teaching on an established literary form like the novel, we seem to have legitimized a pre-dominantly text-centric approach to the reading of only literary texts. Hence, we have currently brought in shorter and more varied texts both literary and non-literary, to gain the advantage of juxtaposition and contrast.We discovered that our choice of texts, which was based on pragmatic reasons of access and availability, ended up containing texts written only by 'upper caste' writers where the writing was marked by the brahminical ethos. This is as much a comment on the cultural politics of what texts and whose texts are being translated and marketed

today. In our search for difference, we had come upon an uncanny 'centre', brahminical and patriarchal in character. 'A terrible unity' had been born. For instance, the female protagonists of all the three novels from regions as far apart as Karnataka, Kerala and West Bengal - M K Indira's *Phaniamma*, Lalitambika Anterjanam's *Agnisakshi* and Jyotirmoyee Devi's *The River Churning* - compulsively visit Kashi to purify themselves and for a sense of sanctity, indicative of their co-option by a brahminical patriarchy. We are now trying out a full-fledged, compulsory paper in Gender Studies where issues in/of gender are being discussed using diverse texts including marginalized narratives and genres that offer other utopias.Our assessment of the course is that both the communicative and critical thinking objectives were largely achieved through the course. There was even some carry over effect into other papers by way of questioning a purely aesthetic approach to literature. While the course positively impacted the listening, speaking, reading and thinking skills (many students reported just how confident they felt after the MILT class presentations to go out and face a class in real life when they launched out on a teaching career or when they had to face an interview for a job), their writing skill as evidenced in the final examination could not adequately express their complex understanding of the texts and issues. As the evaluation in the annual scheme was entirely based on the end-of-the-year written examination, the students often felt let down by the results, which did not match their own sense of involvement and interest in the course. Now, as we have changed over to a semester scheme with 25% marks in each paper earmarked for internal assessment, we will be able to do some justice to the students by valuing the work they put in through the term by way of oral presentations and group discussions.

And yet,

The most gainful aspect of the course, however, was the way translated texts from the bhashas (= the vernaculars) could build

bridges between the world of teaching/learning and the world of many languages that our students live in with all its challenges. We were able to bring together through translation the two destabilized and interpenetrating poles of *English and India* (not to forget that the in-between and illegitimate Indian Writing in English, as Susie Tharu characterizes it, an angle which also created newer questions in class) to make it *English-in-India* or *India-in-English*, if you like, with its richly textured life of/in/with several languages/literatures/cultures, which have been kept clinically separated until now in our curriculum. The juxtaposition of the two poles in the context of their contrasting historical formation and their location in contemporary politics, calling into question both the poles made for animated discussion and dissent, creating the right ambience for developing critical thinking. The experience of being connected to the many worlds around us was (not to speak of its relevance, power and affective appeal) as af-firming and enabling as walking with both feet firmly on the ground.

NOTE:

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Appendix A

Bangalore University, Department of English

Syllabus for II M.A. English 1998 - 2003 (English)

Paper VII: Modern Indian Literatures in Translation

One of the chief concerns of Modern Indian Literatures has been the construction of a viable and vibrant national and cultural identity. In the context of India's transition to modernity, such an identity hinges on and is largely constituted by the interplay of four elements: 1. Nationalism, 2. Religion, 3 Caste, 4. Gender. This paper presents a selection from three Indian literatures (Malayalam, Bengali and Kannada), of modern texts on these themes as well as critical texts that provide a framework for their study. All texts are available and will be studied in English translation.

A. Nation

1. O.V.Vijayan - ***The Saga of Dharmapuri*** (Malayalam)
2. Tarashankar Bandopadhyay - ***Ganadevata*** (Bengali)
3. Shivarama Karantha - ***Back to the Soil*** (Kannada)

B. Religion

1. Tagore, ***Gora*** (Bengali)
2. Vaikkom Mohammed Bashir - ***Me Grandad had an Elephant*** (Malayalam)
3. U.R.Ananthamurthy - ***Bharathipura*** (Kannada)

C. Caste

1. Chandu Menon - ***Indulekha*** (Malayalam)
2. Mahashweta Devi - ***Rudali*** (Bengali)
3. Girish Karnad - ***Taledanda*** (Kannada)

D. Gender

1. Lalithambika Antarjanam - ***Agnisakshi*** (Malayalam)
2. Jyothirmoyee Devi - ***The River Churning*** (Bengali)
3. M.K.Indira - ***Phaniamma*** (Kannada)

E. Critical Texts

1. Umashankar Joshi - ***"The Idea of Indian Literature"*** (Sahitya Akademi Samvatsar Lectures: Three, 1990)
2. Meenakshi Mukherjee - "From Purana to Nutana" (3-18) in ***Realism and Reality*** : ***The Novel and Society in India.***
3. Aijaz Ahamad, "Indian Literature: Notes Towards the Definition of a Category" in ***In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*** (1992)
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Appendix B

The Question Paper: A Sample

Final M A Examination, May-June 2000
(New Scheme)

ENGLISH
(Paper 7) Modern Indian Literatures in Translation

Time: 3 hours **Max Marks: 100**

SECTION – A

Attempt **one** of the following questions:

(15x1=15)

1. Comment on the idea of 'Indianness' in Indian literatures as debated by any two prescribed critics.

OR

2. What are the problems faced by a historiographer of Modern Indian Literatures? Discuss with reference to two or more critical essays you have studied

OR

3. Write short notes on **any two** of the following :
    a) pre-novel narrative traditions in India
    b) Colonialism and the rise of the Indian novel
    c) 'Marga' and 'Desi' traditions in Indian Literatures

SECTION - B

Answer **three** of the following questions with reference to at least **two** prescribed texts: **(15x3=45)**

1. a) "The novel is the narrative of the nation". Comment.

OR

b) Back to the *Soil* and *Ganadevatha* are not merely regional novels but texts of the nation." Discuss.

2 .a) "The assertion of religious identity in modern India has been based on the myth of a golden past" Comment.

OR

b) "Hinduism in practice functions not so much as religion but as caste." Discuss this view with reference to *Gora* and *Bharathipura.*

3. a) "In Indian society, caste oppression inevitably entails consequences for the woman." Substantiate.

OR

b) Comment on the changing representations of caste in different historical contexts.

4. a) Discuss the relationship between gender and modernity as portrayed by any two novelists prescribed.

OR

b) Write an essay on the role of marriage in a woman's life as imaged in any two modern Indian novels you have studied.

SECTION - C

Write short notes on any **four** of the following: **(4x10=40)**

a. Widowhood in *Phaniamma.*
b. Treatment of the Muslim community in *The River Churning.*
c. Relationship between Basavanna and *Bijjala* in *Taledanda.*
d. The role of Dulan Ganju in *Rudali.*
e. Significance of the title *Me Grandad* 'Ad *and Elephant.*
f. The Saligrama episode in *Bharatipura.*
g. Nagaveni in *Back to the Soil.*
h. Motherhood as portrayed in *Agnisakshi.*