

Gile, Daniel (2005). *La Traduction, la comprendre, l'apprendre*. Paris: Presse Universitaires de France, Linguistique nouvelle. Pp. 278 € 32 ISBN 2 13 052500 8

The Guts of Translating

This is the best and most useful book I have read on translation for a long time. Its eight chapters cover: an approach to teaching translation; translation quality; accuracy (fidélité) in translation; a sequential model of translating; the acquisition of ad hoc knowledge; the professional translator's working languages; the practical foundations of translation teaching; the basics of translation studies/theory/translatology. The bibliography is useful, but incomplete without the works of Juliane House, Werner Koller, several of Nida's books and Mark Shuttleworth's dictionary of translation terms. A list of translation periodicals would also have been helpful.

Daniel's book appeals firstly because it is practical. An exceptionally lengthy table of contents tells you precisely what is on offer, and the sentences tend to stretch far, since Daniel has a mathematician's urge to include everything in (which sometimes includes platitudes), but he has a scrupulous regard for the reasons for his inclusions.

The book is designed as a methodological manual for non-literary translation, for students and professional translators at universities. Daniel appears to restrict the aesthetic factor in language to literary translation, but he himself writes exceptionally well, and he emphasises the importance of the translator's mastery of style as well as of the mechanics of the target language. He stresses the enormous differences between translation and language learning courses, where the theme (prose) and the version the unseen are sacred in the French educational system; whilst in the UK, where the modern language syllabuses need radical rethinking and reformulating, (student numbers are dwindling catastrophically) translation classes and exams have all but disappeared outside specialised courses.

Daniel maintains that the translator's knowledge of source languages need only be passive and confined to the written language, but she must be acquainted with the culture of both languages as well as the general knowledge which will help her to understand idioms and allusions. Differences in translating texts for the purpose of evidence in a trial, for explaining ethnological terms, for strengthening arguments for political opposition, or for simply understanding the terminology of a text are clearly explained, but it is a pity that Daniel thinks that 'morality is mainly determined by social norms' (p.44). He has many admirable things to say about the translator's obligations towards the other players in the translation 'trio' (i.e. author, translator, reader; but add publisher, patron, critic etc to taste) but it is a pity he doesn't mention her duty to

the factual and sometimes moral truth. This section of the text would profit from brief bilingual examples, if only to clarify and sharpen the author's theses, though admittedly the paragraph-length examples and their judicious discussions, particularly of statistics and the range of medical language, are satisfying and enlightening; he is enlightening on 'information inferred from linguistic constraints,' e.g., that a French doctor is generally a medical doctor only.

The detailed description of a sequential model of translating that follows is fascinating. Firstly, the variety of poor originals is detailed. In a technical text, the better the translator knows the subject, the less she need rely on her linguistic knowledge. Three useful terms are introduced here: 'plausibility test', 'terminological drift' and 'loop of information' (*boucle de connaissances*), the latter being the knowledge that is gradually distributed through the text. French and English Writers go wrong because they are afraid of using the same word/term twice and so they resort to misleading synonyms. The stages of the process are categorized with a mathematician's precision, but perhaps Daniel goes over the top on p.130. He rightly warns against relying on bilingual dictionaries alone, but doesn't mention the other reference resources available. However, the book gives ample information on the use of translation tools up to 2004. The section on translation into the mother tongue, on the other hand, gives no indication of the flux of translator demand and migration.

There is a useful if basic section on the categorisation and correction of errors, which includes a list of reasons for errors, but nothing on (creative) *trouvailles*, which are admittedly much rarer. (A pity translation assessment is so negative). There is a warning that one or two students in the class may be brighter than the teacher.

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