Client's report

This semester, we were presented with the challenge of translating a text which was longer than is usual for a translation class (22 pages). To gradually ease the students into translating a complex text, I asked the students to translate the beginning of the text in small groups, where they had time for a great deal of discussion and questions. I encouraged communication / negotiation with other groups and with me as the client / teacher, in the true spirit of *skopos* theory.

I then allocated the rest of the text to individual students: each student was responsible for roughly two and a half pages. This proved to be a positive experience, as I found that students took their task seriously and really did feel responsible for their section of text. I focused here on applying Vermeer's ideas on translation ethics, i.e. that freedom goes hand-in-hand with responsibility.

As we were working in a class environment, I wanted the students to be very aware of the rereading stages of the process, especially the level of "perfection" that has to be reached before a text is ready for publication. I explained that rereading only works well when divided up into stages. In general (and in an ideal world with no time constraints!), you begin with a detailed comparison of the source and target texts, looking for mistakes, typos and problem areas. The next stage is to read only the target text to check that it sounds "natural" (here, you can identify interference from the source language / culture). This is followed by several mini-stages where you focus on a specific issue at a time, e.g. the use of italics and bold (mostly layout and formatting issues at this point). The final stage is a comparison of the source and target texts to make sure the translation has not strayed too far away from the meaning of the original text. Of course, as Vermeer would stress, all translation decisions made are subjective at each stage of the way, even with a project style guide and glossary to hand.

I asked students to reread each other for rereading practice. They found this a good learning experience. Of course, this was only the first revision of the text. I wanted the students to also be aware of how the text changes as it goes through several re-readers. I chose to use our internet-learning platform to demonstrate how this works. Each time the text was revised it was visible through "track changes". A little reassurance was called for here, as I explained to the students that the number of changes was normal for a text being corrected by more experienced translators, especially when the text should not feel as if it were translated by a group. It should feel as if there were only one "voice" throughout the text, so that it is coherent for its audience.

These were the strategic decisions made by me, but it is only half of the story. The other half will become clear in the team report produced by the students.

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