

Finishing with a bang and applying lessons learned (SS 2012)

Marina Dudenhöfer

My main focus this semester was to apply the lesson learned from the previous semester: a less experienced group needs to spend much more time on the preparatory stages of such a project. By this, I mean all the groundwork before translation even begins, thus I structured the class time in such a way that the students spent a long time on activities designed to ensure that they understood the ST (“Die Aporie und die Freiheit des Translators”, Chapter 10 in *Versuch einer Intertheorie der Translation*, Hans J. Vermeer, Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2006, 367-376) before beginning on their translation work.

Before the class even began, all students were expected to have read several background texts. In our first lesson, the two most experienced members in the group presented our “mission statement” to the rest of the group. This worked very well with Amanda and Anna sharing what they had learned in the previous semester with the rest of the class (whilst cementing their own understanding of the mission statement). The next stage involved all the students reading the text several times before we discussed it as a group. I then split the group into pairs and each pair put together a summary of the ST (in English). I gave students much more feedback than in the previous semester at this stage, as I realised that waiting for students to ask questions only works if they know what questions to ask.

Another important activity was to make sure everyone understood the translation theories behind the text. The text required an understanding not just of Vermeer’s *skopos* theory but also of Luhmann’s social systems theory. Most importantly, the students had to be able to distinguish between when Vermeer was describing Luhmann’s ideas and when he was manipulating them for his own purposes. I split the group into different pairs and asked one pair to summarise their understanding of *skopos* theory, another to summarise their understanding of social systems theory, and the most experienced pair to summarise how Vermeer uses Luhmann’s theory with regard to translation. This activity really helped the students clarify their understanding of the theoretical framework behind our text.

Only after this groundwork had been done was each student made responsible for translating a section of the ST. The students had time to consult with each other and with me whenever they had questions. They also received extensive feedback on their translation work from me. As usual, discussion of some translation issues will continue into the semester break.

One major difference in this semester is that we met up as a group over four Saturdays in a row (spending the entire day together), rather than meeting up once a week for an hour and a half. This class format worked very well with such a complex ST. A lot of communication happened outside the classroom, both between the students themselves and the students and the teacher, as is common for blended-learning classes.

Finally, this was the last ST which was translated as part of a classroom environment (the remaining four texts will be translated by me, with extensive rereading from Anna-Lena, Dilek, Sebnem and myself). We had a small but very enthusiastic group of six students (Amanda, Anna, Bobbye, Kris, Prerna and Silke) and there was an excellent group dynamic which really facilitated working on such a hard text. It was a good way to finish this stage of the project.

Finally, I would like to thank Christiane Nord who spent time with the students both in this and the previous semester. She has also agreed to become a “test reader” for our translations before they are published, which is part of the rigorous rereading process all the translations for this project will undergo.