Reviews of Books

Guy Cook: *Translation in Language Teaching*
Oxford University Press, 2010 ISBN 978-0-19-442475

The book addresses the highly controversial issue of translation as a tool for foreign language teaching. It pleads for a less biased approach in language teaching, which should include the use of translation and the students' first language for acquisition of a second/foreign language. The author, a linguist with English teaching experience in Egypt, Italy and the former Soviet Union, focuses on English for a variety of reasons, such as the richness of theoretical material about teaching English as a second or foreign language and the increasing importance of English as the lingua franca of our globalized world. He stresses that, despite its negative association with the obsolete Grammar Translation method, translation has been effectively (and sometimes subversively) used in English language teaching all over the world. The author argues that monolingual language learning may not always be effective due to the complexity of cultural and pragmatic realities involved in teaching a foreign language. Moreover, he says, while the direct, monolingual method may be adequate for some specific purposes, such as daily conversation, it may be unsuitable for more specialized disciplines, such as translation.

Grammar Translation as a method of language learning was introduced in Prussian secondary schools around the 18th century. It consisted of a set of grammatical rules, which were taught gradually, with explanations in the first language followed by examples. Vocabulary was considered important only insofar as it served the purpose of understanding the examples. The method, considered dull and tedious, was based on repetition, memorization and, according to critics, featured unrealistic and often hilarious examples, such as '*The cat of my aunt is more treacherous than the dog of your uncle/ We speak about your cousin, and your cousin Amelia is loved by her uncle and aunt/ My sons have brought the mirrors of the duke/ Horses are taller than tigers*" and so on (Sweet, 1899, cited on p. 16).

From the 19th century, the pursuit of the American dream by poor immigrants, as well as the expansion of industrialization, tourism and trade, required a more direct and interactive approach to the study of languages. This trend coincided with the advent of the communicative method and private language schools such as Berlitz. Grammar Translation, although widely used in many self-study textbooks, was deemed unsuitable for communicative purposes and banished from language learning. The new, revolutionary methods advocated a direct, communicative teaching, devoid of the tedious grammatical explanations and absurd examples. It focused on form rather than on the grammatical correctness of utterances, starting from the premise that the classroom atmosphere should closely resemble everyday situations, and that the students should acquire language by using it, in the same way that small children learn a language. This goal advocated the belief that the ideal language teacher should be a native speaker and that instruction should be exclusively in the second language.

Towards the beginning of the new millennium, the author notes, the climate was favorable for a new recognition of the utility of translation in language teaching. Politically speaking, mass migration and globalization shifted the perception of national culture, identity and language. In consequence, more

and more people find themselves in a situation where they are compelled to use a second language (most often English) in order to function in a new environment. English is considered the lingua franca of globalization, of which "native" English has been considered, until recently, the only acceptable variant. However, in recent years, the so-called "new Englishes," or the varieties of English spoken as a second language, have become accepted as well. The other side of the coin is that, while the world becomes more adept at communicating, minor languages are facing extinction, with a concomitant loss of their traditions and cultural identities. Cook considers that the relationship between English and other languages is based on unequal terms, and forbidding students to use their first language in class mirrors this dominance of English. From this perspective, translation is no longer about mediating between two languages and helping establishing communication; it acquires a political significance as well. Thus, use of translation from L1 represents teachers' and students' option NOT to use the second language only, to thereby resist this linguistic domination. At the same time as translation and bilingual teaching increases weaker students' motivation and provides a sense of shared identity in a less threatening atmosphere, this choice may be seen as preserving one's cultural identity, in a sort of pragmatic reaction to the supremacy of English.

What then is the purpose of language learning? Cook points out that language learning cannot be dissociated from translation. Do we learn a language *through* translation or *for* translation? Is translation a means or a purpose? Some authors like Sridhar and Sridhar (1986:5) point out that the goal of SLA should be bilingualism, that is, one's ability to translate from one language into another; therefore there should not be a distinction between translation as a means and as an end.

The author presents educational and pedagogical arguments in support of translation. He refers to scientific research, which has proved that bilingualism is more beneficial than monolingualism. According to the research, bilinguals were found to be more successful than monolinguals in making the correct choices in translation tasks. Moreover, although supporters of the direct method have argued that constant reference to the first language is detrimental to the speed of communication, the author contradicts this belief by referring to the case of simultaneous interpreters, bilinguals who can effectively negotiate between two languages, often with no delay. The author points out that, in so far as educational and pedagogical arguments are concerned, the interdependence of the modern world makes it necessary to nurture speakers who can not only express themselves fluently in a second language, but who can also enable communication between people who do not share a common language.

An informative and persuasive reading, the book seeks to defend translation from the sweeping generalization which associates it with grammar translation. However, concrete solutions regarding the applicability of translation in language teaching are scarce. The reader who seeks practical solutions will be disappointed to find a rather long and tortuous explanation of the arguments in favor of the translation method instead. Although the author criticizes the modern methods of second language acquisition (the direct method, the monolingual approach), and seeks to rehabilitate translation as a valid language teaching method, he fails to observe that a synergy between the positive aspects of both methods would be more effective in language teaching.

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Ken Beatty. ***Teaching and Researching Computer-Assisted Language Learning. Applied Linguistics in Action Series*** **(Eds. C. N. Cadlin & D. R. Hall). 2nd Ed. London: Pearson Longman, 2010. 304 pp. ISBN-10: 1408205009, ISBN-13: 978-1408205006.**

Whether you are a supporter of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) or not, Ken Beatty's book is a useful contribution to your library. One obvious proof of this statement is that *Teaching and Researching Computer-Assisted Language Learning* has seen its second edition, after first being published in 2003. This is quite a remarkable fact for a publication on computer technologies and applications, a constantly developing and changing field. What warranted the need for a new edition is the widespread praise for its design and content, which, according to the series editors, have widely supported practice and research. The new edition has been thoroughly updated, with the addition of new relevant material and accounts of the research and practice that have appeared since the first publication. This makes the book absolutely eligible for a new publications review.

The book design is quite original, indeed. Beatty sees the field of CALL as a territory, which includes areas either unknown or requiring deeper exploration; therefore he designs his book as a map, suitable for the needs of various readers, mostly teachers and researchers, who are, increasingly, the same people. Such design works well with the principles of hypertext, and those familiar with hypertext will recognize this form in the way the manuscript is composed. Essentially, it is a printed hypertext with numerous links, or pathways, branching out of the basic text to provide additional references, interesting quotes, historic vignettes, examples or illustrations, and so on. Readers can explore these links as supplements to the main narration or instead of it should the latter appear too basic for them. These nonlinear fragments of text are even arranged as "windows," separated by borders and shading from the rest of the text.

To illustrate my point, let's look at Chapter 3, *Hypertext, Hypermedia and Multimedia*. The fifteen pages of this part of the book provide a brief explanation of the concepts behind the chapter title, and lead the reader through the history of their development, from the antecedents of hypertext and multimedia to their connection to science fiction and their applications for general learning and CALL. All the landmarks on this map are present – Bush and *Memex*, Nelson and *Xanadu*, Gibson and *cyberspace*, the latter accompanied by a snapshot of a Virtual World program with avatars as an illustration of sci-fi ideas coming true. The brevity of the text itself is enriched by eight highlighted quotes from the leading authorities on the subject, framed definitions of supporting concepts, such as "affordances," "misaffordances," "interface," "database," and others, as well as *Further Reading* suggestions. Essentially, the chapter provides all one needs to know about hypertext and multimedia, either as a starting point for further exploration or as a thorough overview of these basic computer concepts. Beatty even brings in the comparison of printed books and online texts and highlights the implications of both types of literature for learning. Nevertheless, there are some basic issues missing from Beatty's rich vignette. Notably, there is no reference to the heated discussion about the fate of printed books in the era of computer revolution and to the manifesto of this dispute, Coover's *The End of Books*. Similarly missing is Derrida, the guru of nonlinear writing, and reference to M. Joyce's *Afternoon*, the first hypertext literature masterpiece. But perhaps inclusion of these topics would have extended the boundaries of *Teaching and Researching Computer-Assisted Language Learning* beyond its main focus. Perhaps, also, my expectations have been "spoilt" by a fundamental (353 pages) manuscript on hypertext by G. P. Landow (not included somehow in Beatty's otherwise very extensive reference list).

There are ten such chapters in the book, divided into four sections: *Key Concepts, The Place of CALL in Research and Teaching, Researching CALL*, and *Resources and Glossary*. In the first section, besides the Chapter 3 described above, there are chapters on the emergence of CALL, its brief history and various applications. Of these, Chapter 4, *Eight CALL Applications*, is probably the most essential route for a

novice as it covers basic computer applications – from word processing to mobile phones, to games, and WWW resources. As for researchers and practitioners familiar with the area, this part of the manuscript may seem a well-trodden path. Such CALL-experienced readers may rather note down some important and/or most recent papers on each subject in the eight *Further Reading* "windows" inserted in the main text. Such links help the author cater for diverse readers' needs, and thus escape criticism for covering old ground.

Section II of the book investigates the place of CALL in research and teaching and shows how ideas about CALL have been integrated into practical (and sometimes widely impractical) curricula, teaching materials and testing. It starts with a brief overview of Second-Language Acquisition (SLA) and discusses two major theories instrumental to CALL – behaviorism and constructivism. The overview's brevity is somewhat extended by 22 quote "windows" and references for further reading. The material of Chapter 5, thus organized, is sufficient to understand why the computer has become an ideal vehicle for programmed learning and mastery learning models favored by behaviorism, and why SLA practice has sought other applications supportive of collaboration and negotiation of meaning. These two concepts, essential for a constructivist, problem-learning approach comprise the topic of the next chapter, which shows other ways in which technology can facilitate language acquisition.

I want to emphasize one point in Beatty's treatment of collaboration viewed as one of the most useful ways of acquiring new language at the computer, as well as the means of developing social and thinking skills. In Chapter 6, Beatty shows how this activity develops discourse, leads to comprehensible input and output, promotes awareness, improves literacy and motivation and so on. Here, I was surprised by the author's statement that collaborative language use among learners working at one computer is often overlooked in CALL. To my knowledge, it was one of the earliest disclosures about computers in education hailed by researchers decades ago. Still his elaboration on the analysis of discourse as the means of assessing collaboration, as well as detecting challenges to discourse, may help language practitioners avoid overlooking this aspect of SLA in their work.

In Chapter 7, Beatty tries to develop a model of CALL on the basis of the traditional model of learning suggested by Dunkin and Biddle (1974). In his attempt, he manages to redefine only the initial stage of the model, presage variables, which show how a computer differs from a teacher in the learning process. He also brings forward the way the context variables and locus of control change with CALL, especially in virtual classrooms and on *Second Life* campuses. However, he does not define the product variables of the CALL model, which accords with the author's belief that the potential for teaching and learning through CALL has not yet been sufficiently explored. The section ends with the review of theoretical and pedagogical concerns, where the author brings together all current criticism of CALL, such as lack of funds and expertise, insufficient critical approach to materials and functions of the computer, plagiarism, and cyberbullying. These problems suggest directions for various CALL research projects, which comprise the book's third section.

Section Three, *Researching CALL*, deals with current research interests in CALL by reviewing and categorizing 102 recent publications in the field. It further provides summaries of some articles to illustrate major concerns and to highlight the range of issues. In his survey of current studies in CALL, presented in Chapter 9, the author points out the heavy focus on the English language, while studies in other languages are far less numerous. As for the skills being currently investigated, writing with computer and text-based virtual reality are the most popular subjects, as the data is easily accessible. The survey of the processes involved yields two unsatisfactory conclusions. The first is that the term "research" used in many studies actually covers literature reviews rather than innovative investigation of newer technologies and techniques in the field. The second disturbing fact is that there are no predictive studies since many researchers shy away from committing themselves to the future of CALL. Beatty also notices the imbalance in the selection

of subjects in CALL projects, which are conducted mostly on the secondary school and university levels and do not include children as CALL users.

The last chapter is about how to conduct research in the field, where the author adapts for the context of CALL general research guidelines: setting theme and aims, designing procedure and selecting participants, collecting and analyzing data, reporting results, and so on. This part may serve as a useful manual for graduate students embarking on independent CALL research. More experienced researchers can easily skip it or use it as a checklist for their current research projects. But for all interested in doing CALL research, one part of the chapter can serve as a useful idea tank for future research projects. It presents eight different research designs, or "contexts," as Beatty calls them, such as experiment, survey, ethnographic research and others, and gives suggestions for possible CALL research in each design.

As the title of the book suggests, *Teaching and Researching Computer-Assisted Language Learning* is quite an ambitious book as it aims to tackle such a huge and fairly unknown territory as CALL. This is not an easy terrain, and the author tries hard to make its navigation easier with his links, quotes and illustrations. The final section of the book, *Resources and Glossary*, also serves the purpose to facilitate CALL navigation and is designed as a map legend. This makes Beatty's chart of the area complete, and, as such, a worthy contribution to the field of CALL.

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