
Tandem and Translation: A bilingual telecollaborative course in social science translation

LAURIE POSTLEWATE

Barnard College

Email: lpostlew@barnard.edu

LAYLA ROESLER

École Normale Supérieure, Lyon

Email: layla.roesler@ens-lyon.fr

We describe here strategies inspired by translation studies and implemented in a bilingual translation class pairing two student groups of native speakers of English (from Barnard College, Columbia University) and of French (from the École Normale Supérieure, Lyon). Student e-tandems use CMC (computer mediated communication) to collaborate on the translation of a set of French and English source texts from the human and social sciences, giving the language learners the experience of translating both into and from their own language. Using a workshop format, our approach emphasizes horizontal language learning through linguistic sharing, with students reciprocally developing their language skills by being paired with a learner whose mother tongue is their target language. To provide continuous stimulation for the linguistic exchanges, we assign each student pair a "real-life" task: that of translating two book reviews that are then submitted for publication in academic journals. This goal provides them with strong motivation to produce a careful and better-informed translation, while sensitizing them to the broader academic usefulness of their work. Our objective is to broaden language exchange by advancing collaborative translation into the realm of knowledge-sharing in the human and social sciences.

INTRODUCTION

A critical part of the mission of higher education is to encourage students in the early stages of their professional lives to participate in communities of knowledge-sharing and knowledge-making. Ideally, students will develop their own talents in the disciplines they specialize in, and become aware of the spheres of knowledge production to which they aspire to contribute in the future. They will develop a sense of the practical aspects of work in their chosen fields and ways to contribute to them as members of a community. The activity of translation, in that it entails exchange and transmission of meaning across language groups, can broaden and strengthen students' awareness of and participation in such knowledge communities. In this endeavor, the kind of translation work and the

means by which students engage in it are of paramount importance. Translation courses in foreign language departments on both sides of the Atlantic tend to work primarily with source texts that are literary in nature; this tendency is reinforced by the perspective of translation studies, which is dominated by discussion of literary works. We describe here a course that focuses rather on the translation of texts in the social sciences; this choice is guided primarily by a desire to promote translation as a way for students to participate in the production and sharing of ideas. The course combines 1) class activities of collaborative translation in the social sciences with 2) synchronous exchanges predicated on the tandem method. Our overall objective is to provide students with a hands-on L2 experience in a community setting and to foster an awareness of the challenges and benefits of translation, both in general and specifically in the social sciences. Though we have found this combination to be extremely productive in the setting of our advanced course of L2 acquisition, we have not encountered descriptions of similar curricula in the literature; it is our hope that the description of the course herein will contribute to discussion of the pedagogical value of translation in the classroom and present ideas for implementation that have a positive impact not only on the acquisition of a second language, but on how students actually use their skills in the present, and in the future.

The questions we will address:

- How can we prepare students to participate in knowledge-production in the social sciences not only by reading translations but by producing them as well?
- What are the possibilities for fusing the collaborative translation of social science texts with eTandem learning in the form of distance telecollaboration?
- How can such a collaboration be used to both enhance second-language acquisition and engage students in real-life practices that prepare them for future participation in knowledge communities?

These are the questions that have guided us in the development of a bilingual collaborative translation course entitled “Transatlantic Translation Workshop.” The class incorporates weekly sessions of distance eTandem collaboration via internet between two student groups of English and French native speakers, each physically located at their home university: Barnard College of Columbia University in New York City and the École Normale Supérieure in Lyon. The course is offered as part of the foreign language curriculum in each of our institutions: the French Department for Barnard College and the Centre de Langues for E.N.S.-Lyon. The student groups are similar, with undergraduates at Barnard, and Licence 3 or Master 1 level students at E.N.S.-Lyon. While one of the requirements for the course is prior coursework at an advanced L2 level, students come to the course with varying degrees of experience in translation: most have been exposed to translation in intermediate and advanced second language courses; others have had instruction in literary translation or have studied translation theory; more rarely students will have previously practiced technical or scientific translation. The primary work of the course takes place in two phases. At the beginning of the semester,

students are paired: one L1-French student with one L1-English student; each group collaborates on the translation from French to English of a short (1500-2000 words) academic book review in the social sciences, with the work completed by the midpoint of the semester. New *binômes* are then formed so that the students are working with different partners for a second project which is again the translation of a book review, this time from English to French. Because the source texts are evenly split between English and French, the students have the experience of translating both into and from their own first language; this allows them to develop their linguistic skills while engaging in a sustained interaction towards a common goal. Using a workshop format, where the act of translation is the main activity, our pedagogical approach is horizontal (student-to-student) rather than vertical (teacher-to-student) language learning, and aims to follow the interconnected principles of reciprocity and autonomy that are a fundamental part of tandem learning (Tardieu & Horgues, 2019); i.e. through the sharing and mutual assistance of collaboration (reciprocity), participants develop the ability to take charge of their own learning (autonomy) in an environment that is attentively supported by the instructors. These objectives are enhanced by the very nature of the translative task, which involves negotiation, compromise and choice. We aim to provide a working environment that simultaneously enhances students' understanding of both the source and target languages and their experience of translation itself as a dynamic process of exchange (Baudrit, 2007). To give a fuller idea of the rationale and objectives of our course, we begin with a brief explanation of why we chose the social sciences as our textual focus and the tandem method as our means of implementation. This is followed by a description of the evolution and current form of the course; student comments from course feedback forms are provided to reflect the experience of our young translators. This leads us to reflect finally on translation as a collaborative process and as an effective tool in foreign language learning.

Translation in the Social Sciences

The activity of translating social science texts finds a special role in L2 learning in that it prepares students to participate in the “circulation of academic thought” (Schögler, 2019), even as they acquire and perfect their skills in a second language. One of the primary strategies of the foreign language classroom is to cultivate in students an awareness of linguistic and cultural heterogeneity. For example, the ability to recognize inadequate and false cognates and the non-equivalence of syntax and phrasing is a necessary step toward a higher level of understanding of the second language. One means of achieving this for advanced students is through the translation of social science texts which, by their focus on human thinking and behavior, deal heavily with concepts, the cultural contexts those concepts emerge from and the values they express (Wallerstein, 1981; Price, 2008). The advantages of translation for L2 learning find a parallel in the benefits that this activity affords to students' experience of the social sciences. When students engage with scholarly work translated from academic cultures other than their own, they are exposed to multiple perspectives and have access to a greater range of approaches. Regrettably,

communities of shared knowledge in the social sciences are often delineated along linguistic lines; students come to know almost exclusively those scholars whose work is written in their native language and those few works considered important enough to warrant translation. At a broader scale, this is also true of research in general, and is thus a limitation on the development of knowledge and a barrier to the exchange of ideas. And while English is sometimes conveniently considered a kind of *lingua franca* (Baker, 2009; Cogo & Dewey, 2012), this normative approach can have negative repercussions as it results in intellectual flattening for the sake of universal access.

The use of translation in the classroom can counter this tendency, and cultivate a more effective and nuanced understanding and transmission of the concepts that the texts in these disciplines communicate. For example, through translation, the student of politics learns that democracy is conceived differently from nation to nation; the economist views world markets and unemployment from a diversity of angles; the anthropologist perceives the myriad differences in the study of “man” and “culture” depending on the place in which it is undertaken and the language in which it is expressed, and so forth. The search for conceptual clarity--itself considered an impossible goal--compels the translator to grapple head-on with the dissymmetric overlaps between languages and to find a way to express the essence of the source concept in the target language. In an enlightening discussion of conceptually rich terms such as “labor,” “bewilderment,” “*saudade*,” and “*desnudo*,” Price (2008) has demonstrated the importance of taking into account these differences in translation without circumventing the difficulties they pose. An example from our own experience in the French-English translation classroom is seen when we ask students to translate “*laïcité*” into English, and “weird wave films” into French.

Of course, engagement with linguistic and cultural difference can be achieved by encouraging students to read and discuss texts translated by others; but the actual practice of translation places them in a more direct and active role, requiring them to explore translation strategies in spite of the inevitable difficulties. There is indeed no engagement with a text and the ideas it transmits as intense or “close” as that of translation, which requires not only consideration of connotations, nuances and context but also requires the “reader” to become a “writer” through interpretation and active commitment with a new product, the translation. This is demonstrated by the comments of one L1-English student: “Many times, when reading in French, it's easy for me to read through something and understand the main points of the passage, but when attempting to translate a piece of writing I really have to understand each sentence and the connotations behind every word used.”

We propose, therefore, that presenting students early on in their academic careers with the challenges of social science translation is of value in that it simultaneously engages them in active L2 learning and heightens their understanding of critical issues in those fields of inquiry. Indeed, the social sciences themselves have, in recent years, come to place greater importance on the role of translation in the dissemination of their particular forms of knowledge-sharing and to recognize the need for training translators in these disciplines (Matoussowsky, 2019; Berrichi, 2012). In addition, there is deeper

discussion of how to translate for the social sciences (Heim & Tymowski, 2006; Martorell, 2008; Price, 2008) and commensurately, how to teach this kind of translation (Price, 2017). We also see greater attention paid to the role of the various actors in the enterprise of social science translation (Bosser, 2012). One can say that by introducing students to translation, even at the undergraduate level, we are preparing them to participate in future communities of knowledge sharing and production.

The Tandem Model

The tandem method, structured as a distance telecollaboration, serves in our course as a strong scaffolding for the development of the students' conceptual and linguistic skills; it does so through collaborative work which both creates a knowledge community within the context of the classroom, and gives the students the opportunity to share and produce ideas through translation. "Tandem" is broadly used in foreign language pedagogy to describe the bringing together of native speakers of two different languages, with each individual or group learning the language of their counterparts (Brammerts, 1996; O'Rourke, 2005; Vassello & Telles, 2006). Exposure to the linguistic patterns used by the native speaker(s) during the exchanges is intended to foster the target-language skills of the non-native learner(s), particularly with respect to listening comprehension and oral production. Initially a face-to-face, in-person interaction, by the late twentieth century, technological and economic developments in communication made it possible to transition to "eTandem," which, as its name implies, relies on internet technology to connect the partners (Cziko, 2004). It is this development that has been most useful to our course because it establishes a distance-communication framework within which students work together to develop the skills required of effective translation: perceiving and understanding cultural difference and negotiating the transfer of meaning from one language to another. Along these lines, one class participant made the following observations: "Having to translate a French text and working with a French student allowed me to see how there are certain cultural understandings in the texts that I might have not been aware of [...] I had the challenge of not only having to translate the text but also the culture associated with the text."

Although translation--and more specifically, the translation of social science texts--lies at the heart of our pedagogical enterprise, we should nevertheless stress that our collaborative class is first and foremost a shared language course combining learners of English and French. One of our primary goals has been from the outset to find a model that allows students to progress efficiently in their acquisition of the second language. Our experience shows that combining eTandem with the model of collaborative translation has a positive impact on *all* elements of second language acquisition. These include the more traditional written and oral production and comprehension elements, but also the ability to participate meaningfully in spontaneous, unrehearsed exchanges. As detailed in the section on the course description, our students are at an advanced level in their language learning. It is therefore eminently possible, and even desirable to provide them with activities that challenge them to push their limits. Moreover, the texts

translated in the course are authentic tasks accomplished for stakeholders external to the class; they are thus a highly functional means of engaging the students through a project whose impact extends far beyond the classroom by giving them an opportunity to participate in a community of knowledge production. We should be clear, however, that we are not offering professional translation training, but rather a course that uses translation activities in a pedagogical setting in which meaningful and productive linguistic exchanges between students can take place. We aspire to engage our students in translation in a way that emphasizes the value and interest both of translation in general, and of collaborative translation in particular; we hope as well to foster awareness of the diversity of perspectives in the social sciences and the important role that translation plays in those disciplines.

HISTORY OF THE COURSE

This is a course which has evolved considerably over the past few years in response to the obstacles and opportunities that we encountered and our own perception of the potential of translation to be more than a linguistic exercise in the foreign language classroom. Our detailed description of the course traces in steps the course from its inception to its current iteration, and we relate how this trajectory brought new awareness of the potential benefits of combining collaborative translation with the eTandem model for language learning. It is our hope that this detailed narrative of the course development will not only demonstrate the value of translation of social science texts in the foreign language classroom, but also provide pedagogical information of a practical nature. The earliest version of our course was not between France and the U.S.; it paired students from Britain and France, who, each in their own classroom setting, used a computer interface to communicate. Going beyond the eTandem email activities that had developed in the 1990s (Woodin, 1997), the goal of the class was to create synchronous, live exchanges between the students. Consonant, nonetheless, with the basic tandem method, the objective was essentially linguistic and cultural. This, however, rapidly showed its limitations. O'Dowd and Ritter (2006) report on the understudied notion of "failed communication" which happens when online interactions fall short of participants' expectations, giving rise instead to feelings of dissatisfaction. While O'Dowd and Ritter focus on intercultural misunderstanding, the problem of frustrated expectations is one that can plague any tandem approach in the sense that even when the linguistic dimension of the communication is authentic, the contents of the interactions can become sterile and artificial unless they have clear objectives and are carefully managed. In other words, the "fun" dimension of engaging in online interaction with a foreign partner is not enough to sustain engagement in the absence of specific shared objectives.

The solution to that problem was to focus on the task-based activity of translation, which allowed both student partners to interact through a shared activity that had resonance in the situation. Risku (2002) writes on the "paramount" importance of integrating authentic translation tasks into teaching. Along these lines, we sought a project-based linguistic task that involved real-life communication and that was not

simply an exercise undertaken by students for the sole purpose of passing the course. We provided each student pair with two texts to translate (English to French and French to English; partners were thus able to share the role of “expert” as the native speaker of the target language and also develop their intercultural and L2 language skills, which were the primary goals of the course [Roesler & Dumontet, 2018]). At that juncture, our focus was activity-based, and the main criterion in the selection of texts was that they should not have been previously translated. In order to reinforce the authenticity of the task, and also because those students were at the master’s and doctoral level, we explored the possibility of publishing their translations, casting a wide net to include a variety of English-language and French-language media: online and print humanities and social sciences academic journals; websites providing resources in literary research; institutional websites for ESL (English as a Second Language) and FLE (Français Langue Étrangère), among others. Though the publishing potential was a powerful motivating factor for students at the early stages of their academic careers, we encountered two main problems in this earlier version of the course: variety and length of the source texts; difficulty in finding publishing venues. Indeed, though the heterogeneous character of sources gave students a broad range of choices, because the texts were of diverse types and uneven length--some 20-plus page academic articles, contrasting with relatively brief opinion pieces--they required different levels of engagement from the student pairs in order to accomplish the task within the time constraints of the course. Additionally, the great variety of sources rendered the instructors’ quest for publishing outlets relatively complex: although some articles were indeed published, many of the student groups were frustrated inasmuch as their translations served only to fulfill course requirements. The problems encountered in the first few years of the course led to a reformulation with a new partnership alliance, this time between France and the U.S. The following description of the logistics of the course provides a framework for explaining the modifications that were made and the new direction the course has taken.

CURRENT COURSE

Rebaptized “Transatlantic Translation Workshop,” the current course has built upon and away from some strategies used in the earlier course. The changes have radically transformed the way we perceive the course and its objectives, leading to increased reflection on the intellectual and epistemological structures that inform the course contents. We first offered the revised course in the spring of 2018, and it continues today with very stable registration and student course evaluations that are consistently positive. As we have mentioned, the students in our course must have an advanced level of L2 preparation; this would be in French for the students from Barnard College, and in English for the students from E.N.S.-Lyon. Otherwise, they are typically a quite diverse group with some important points in common. The first is that they choose to take the course which is, in the curriculum of both institutions, an elective; in the initial course survey, students generally express curiosity about translation and a desire to explore this activity in conjunction with the disciplines which they are studying and which they may

pursue professionally. Because the course is announced as focusing on social science texts, it draws mainly students from those fields. Consistently, however, a few majors in language and literature, as well as some students from the exact sciences register. Additionally, students are also eager for an experience that will allow them to collaborate with peers located in another country, and the opportunity to speak and have social interaction with L1 speakers of the language they aspire to speak themselves is of strong appeal. Finally, both of our schools are institutions of higher learning in which a high percentage of the students will pursue research, with many hoping to incorporate some element of international contact and exchange into their careers. Thus, the course attracts students both for its content and for the classroom method we employ.

Basic Structure

Our course is structured to maximize the effectiveness of student interactions and to facilitate the execution of collaborative work. We limit the enrollment to 12 from each institution, which facilitates the coordination of classroom components and allows us adequate time for focused interaction with the students. The collective part of the course with all students present is synchronous, taking place once a week at 10:00 a.m. in New York and 4:00 p.m. in Lyon. Over the course of the semester, we hold 12 sessions of 75 minutes; each session is divided between collective meetings of all students and small group meetings of the student pairs for project work. The collective meetings include a variety of activities: discussing seminal readings on translation; identifying problems and challenges of translation in the social sciences; examining specific examples drawn from student work. In the small group meetings, partners connect to work on the translation of social science texts they have chosen together. (See below for discussion of the source texts.) In the first two years of the course, we relied on institutional teleconferencing tools for the collective sessions, and then allowed partner groups to choose their means of connection for the latter; commonly used were Skype, Facebook video chat, and Whatsapp, among others. Since mid-March 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic forced education online, we have come to use Zoom for both the larger meetings and the in-class partnership work.² The use of multi-party connection platforms has truly transformed our work during class time; we can now all see and hear each other clearly, and the use of Zoom breakout rooms has facilitated considerably the collaborative classwork between students. Students continue to connect outside of class time on different platforms of their choosing. In addition, there is some exchange via email and the use of Google docs. We use the open-source software TraduXio (<https://traduxio.org/>), whose interface places the original text and translation in vertical parallel segments of the screen, and allows for comments; this tool greatly facilitates the students' collaborative translation and our ability to give feedback as the work progresses.

As we mentioned, the two class groups, one in France and one in New York, also meet separately according to the contact hour and scheduling requirements of each institution. For example, the Barnard College group meets an additional day every week for 75 minutes, while the E.N.S-Lyon group meets for 45 minutes at the end of the

collective session. These meetings are used to address the particular difficulties experienced by each language group of translating toward English and toward French. It is also a time for the students to interact with each other and with the instructor of their home institution who will ultimately assess their work for a grade. (See more below on assessment.) Administratively, “Transatlantic Translation Workshop” is a distinct and independent course for each of our institutions, initiated by the instructors with the approval and assistance of higher administration. The success of this collaboration demonstrates that it is possible to bring together two groups of students in a productive and beneficial way, even when those groups come from different institutional frameworks, with distinct schedules, requirements, and grading systems. It is a matter of arriving, through discussion, creative planning and use of online platforms, at common objectives and a positive working environment.

Course Logistics

At the first collective class meeting of the semester, we present the course objectives and the syllabus for the semester, and students present themselves to the entire group. We also introduce the *Guidelines for Translation of Social Science Texts* (Heim & Tymowski, 2006; Poncharal, 2007); this document presents an overview of the particular challenges and opportunities in translation for the social sciences and it provides a theoretical starting point for our practical work throughout the semester. Toward the end of the first session, the instructors divide the students into partner groups and give them a list of book reviews in French found on *Lectures*, an online journal dedicated to the dissemination of research in the social sciences.³ (We discuss this source in more detail below.) The student pairs meet outside of class to discuss their preferences with each other and then select the review they will translate together based on common interest. These texts are 1500-2000 words in length; we divide them into segments for the purpose of weekly assignments and establish a work schedule to ensure progress. It is also strongly recommended that the students consult the book that is the subject of their review, as some knowledge of the source can be helpful in understanding and thus translating the review itself.

By the beginning of the second class meeting, student pairs have made their book review selections, and we establish a set pattern of work which will take us through the following four weeks. We begin each collective class session with discussion of the process, organization and logistics of the FR>EN translation, as well as issues like the translation of concepts. This portion of the class typically lasts from 20-30 minutes. Students then meet in their pairs to work together in the following manner for the remainder of the class time:

- As homework prior to each session, students translate individually in TraduXio the assigned segment of their source text. In class, students are directed to discuss their individual translations, and then begin negotiating a common translation.

- During this time, the instructors circulate among the groups in order to answer questions and discuss the ongoing work.
- The instructors set intermediate translation targets to attain every week; the students then continue their work as needed outside of class time, both individually and in pairs, with the objective of achieving the target for the week.⁴

Feedback and Assessment of Student Translations

Because of the collaborative nature of the course, feedback is an essential component of the ongoing work, and this takes place at multiple levels. First of all, we present in a collective meeting early in the semester, an overview of the main theoretical frameworks by which the quality of translation is evaluated. Among these we can cite, the concepts of equivalence, adequacy and purpose, and how these might relate to assessment (Jacobson & Angelelli, 2009). We find it useful to have this discussion after the students have begun their own translation work, when the thorny issue of remaining “faithful” to the source begins to confront the realities of translation. As a collaborative exercise with the students, we establish a rubric for evaluation of translation that we use for peer assessment as well as for instructor feedback and final grading (Angelelli, 2009). (See Appendix.) While the students have input in the creation of the rubric, we guide the criteria so that it reflects a reader-focused approach to social science translation; this allows us to discuss the need for accurate communication of the content and even the style of the author, while also bringing the importance of overall comprehensibility and clarity in the target text.

At the level of the *binômes*, students fluidly respond to each other’s work, discuss their own translation choices, and explore alternatives. This interaction is critical to the objectives of the workshop as an L2 language experience; students also consistently describe it as one of the most productive and interesting elements of the course. One L1-French student said: “The collaboration was very stimulating, as we both had complementary skills [...] For example, sometimes for an uncommon word my partner knew how unusual the word felt in English, and I knew how unusual the original text felt in French.” As instructors, we have observed that the frequent meetings between partners and the focused incremental work on the translation is conducive, in almost all cases, to a relaxed and open dialogue between student partners. For instance, another L1-French student enthusiastically remarked: “We switched a lot between speaking in French and in English, this was really fun!” In addition, we periodically hold collective class meetings to discuss specific difficulties they have encountered and solutions they propose. We have noticed that this activity encourages an environment of collegial sharing and enhances the sense of community we seek to promote. Nevertheless, while we want to promote student-to-student exchange of ideas, we also recognize the responsibility of the instructor to inform and ultimately assess the translations. The use of TraduXio allows us as instructors to monitor the work that students are executing, both individually and in their paired

groups, and to make comments in a separate column. Meetings outside of class time between instructors and students, on an individual basis and in student groups, also take place at least every 2-3 weeks throughout the semester. Students clearly benefit from ample feedback and the chance to dialogue with each other and with the instructors as they are revising. In our individual consultations with the student pairs, they express that they particularly appreciate receiving focused guidance throughout the whole process and not just upon completion of the project draft. Finally, students are required to keep a translator's log throughout the semester, on a document that is shared only with their respective instructors. The logs are a way for students to record the time they have spent outside of class and the electronic means of communication they used; they also write about the exchanges they have had with their partners and on the translation process itself in response to prompts given by the instructors. For the students, the logs provide a reflective exercise to develop metacognitive as well as translative skills; for the instructors they furnish valuable documentation of those elements of the course that would otherwise remain invisible, including the various aspects of reciprocity as discussed by Cappelini et al., (2019).

When the first drafts of the FR>EN translation are completed, each pair of translators shares their work with another group, and they provide verbal and written feedback on each other's translations. After this peer assessment work, a final revision is submitted for grading. We subsequently schedule a meeting with each binôme to review and confirm their translation choices. We also set a collective meeting where we discuss the FR>EN translation experience and form new partner groups for the EN>FR translation. The same process of collaborative work and review is repeated for the second translation, taking us to the end of the semester. Our final collective meeting consists of a conversation about the course overall and about translation. At this meeting, the students share what they experienced as the course's strong points and also those elements they think could be modified; how their perceptions of translation and the work of the translator have changed during the semester; how they imagine they might use translation in future work in their chosen disciplines. For example, an L1-English student preparing for law studies commented: "I think that studying translation is an invaluable career asset [...] I am preparing for a career in international law and I hope that translation will be part of my work." Another student commented along the same lines: "Having the option to choose French sources is super helpful in a career or an academic setting."

Altogether, the combination of predominantly oral interactions promoted through the eTandem method, with the close reading and textual analysis needed to embark in translation, results in the acquisition of a robust set of foreign language skills. Indeed, the synchronous and asynchronous exchanges between the student pairs lead to higher proficiency in both listening comprehension and speaking skills. An L1-French student noted: "One advantage of the sessions with my partner on Zoom is that as time goes by, my fluidity in English improves. I pay attention to the vocabulary and the expressions she uses in context, and I try to remember and use the same idioms afterwards." At the same time, the intense focus on written language needed for effective translation also contributes to enhancing students' reading comprehension and vocabulary development. An L1-English

student wrote: “I now have a better grip on formal French. It scares me less than it used to because I have figured out how to decipher long and complicated sentences.” Finally, the finished translation is a written product that requires close attention to the relationship between style and content; students have commented on how the translation work sharpened their awareness of their first language, and influenced their own L1 writing process. Another L1-English speaker addressed this in a comment about the effects of translation on her writing in English: “My translation work [...] has made me pay so much more attention to syntax and semantics and really focus on the meanings behind words and phrases. I have loved it! I am thinking in a totally different way.”

Source Texts: Book Reviews for the Social and Human Sciences

It is important, at this point, for us to address in more detail the source material for our course and how we arrived at the academic book review. This focus has expanded the scope of the course’s objectives both as an eTandem and a translation experience. As mentioned above, our choice of social science texts stemmed from the desire to find source material that would correspond to the activity of translation as active exchange and engagement with a community of knowledge-sharing. When it came to deciding on the source text form, we circled back to the objective of authentic tasks. Our initial experience, as well as additional research, consolidated in our minds the importance of real-life projects that are undertaken for a purpose external to the classroom situation (Kiraly, 2005; Risku, 2002). Indeed, as Kiraly writes, “a migration from classroom activities as **exercises** to **pieces of work** [entails] radical changes in students’ relationships to their instructors, their fellow students, [...] as well as in their understanding of the learning and teaching process” (Kiraly, 2005).

We quickly realized that book reviews were the ideal format for a project-based task that students could successfully manage over the course of a semester. This choice led to seeking out academic publishing venues that consistently feature book reviews. On the French side of our partnership, contact was made with *Lectures*. Though associated with E.N.S.-Lyon, the journal has an independent editorial board and specializes in publishing reviews of academic books in the social sciences. *Lectures* proved to be interested in disseminating the contents of their reviews to a broader readership. Indeed, for *Lectures*, one of the explicit goals of our partnership is that research produced by French-language social scientists find a wider audience and become part of an international dialogue in their disciplines. From that point, we adopted a regular procedure whereby the editorial staff of *Lectures* selects the reviews they would like to have translated into English for publication along two criteria: first, reviews discussing books whose research and ideas are innovative and deserving of international exposure; and second, reviews of books whose themes are already part of an international discussion and which are therefore likely to be of interest to non-French language readers. Our arrangement with *Lectures* allows us to introduce our students to the technical aspect of the real-life task of translating for publication. The students attend a session on the publication process where they are introduced to the formatting requirements in the pre-publication process (font,

titles, colors, organization of the peritextual information, and so on), then prepare their final draft for publication and submit it for review by the instructors and eventually the editors of *Lectures*. This arrangement has made possible the publication of a good number of the translations done in the class and has proven to be a strong incentive for the students and an invaluable experience for all. The comments from our students on this aspect of the course are overwhelmingly positive: “Working for publication made me feel like a real translator. Sometimes, academic exercises feel a little pointless, and like they are completed in a vacuum. I liked the responsibility of producing a good translation.” Another student remarked: “Publication made everything very real and made me more invested in the quality of my translations. It put all of my decisions as a translator in perspective.” Regrettably, for a number of reasons that would be too lengthy to detail here, we have not yet been able to extend the publishing dimension of the FR>EN translation to its EN>FR counterpart. Therefore, we obtain similarly calibrated book reviews in English from different venues, and for their second project, the newly formed student pairs translate them into French in a task that more closely resembles a traditional classroom language exercise. Though some students express a level of disappointment with this situation, others, like this L1-French student, report that they are satisfied to have a less intense second exercise with a lesser degree of responsibility: “Knowing our translation would be published was a little stressful, but very challenging and motivating as well. However, I think that the fact that only one out of the two translations we did in class was intended for publication was better, because it was a great amount of work and it felt good to have less pressure with the second book review.”

Globally, the shift of source material to book reviews has been a positive one on a number of levels. First, as a translation exercise, the book review text is a complex form incorporating multiple voices and rhetorical positions: there is the discourse of the book being reviewed, its authorial voice, its conceptual and lexical specificities, and its situation in the history of the discipline; to this are added the voice of the reviewer and the rhetorical and evaluative strategies superimposed on the material reviewed. The complexity of the task of translating multiple layers, which might be daunting for a student translator, is mitigated by similarities across the genre; parallels and comparisons can be drawn between book reviews, and these give rise to productive class discussion on how to translate them. On a practical level, the typical book review is an appropriate length for an assignment in which two translators must read closely, discuss, negotiate and revise, all within the time limits of a semester. One student commented that they appreciated that the texts were of manageable length and “the fact that they were complete texts provided more clarity, context, and a sense of a conclusion at the end.” Also, in the case of the FR>EN translation, our own arrangement with *Lectures* has allowed us to give the course a professional dimension which benefits the students. This was expressed by one student: “I appreciated that we worked with texts that had not previously been translated, so we were really breaking new ground.” Indeed, we can be fairly sure that the student translations (after thorough editing by us) will be published.⁵ Finally, a collateral benefit for the students is found in the possibility of documenting

their accomplishment on their CVs, a non-negligible added value as they move into their careers.

The choice of the book review form quickly led us to see even more far-reaching advantages of this translation task for students making a place for themselves in the academic world. A first point is that reviews expand the reach of inquiry and research, facilitating the disciplinary engagement of a community. As Schögler (2018) points out, the translation of academic material is a conduit of thinking and information that might otherwise remain within the linguistic confines of the review's language. He writes: "perhaps the most distinctive specificity of translation of academic thought lies in its potential to form and transform knowledge." (p. 15). A very similar phenomenon is at work in the translation of the book reviews: as a form of academic discourse, book reviews participate in disciplinary discourse (Hyland, 2009); their translation allows students not only to become familiar with and engage in the critical thinking of the discipline, but also learn a skill that will be transferable to their careers, i.e. the ability to reproduce the rhetorical tactics of the form (Dontcheva-Navrátilová, 2018). This was observed by one student as follows: "I am positive that my French has improved through the work and collaboration I did and experienced in this class. I am now more familiar with French academic styles of writing as well as the common syntactic and lexical styles that are used in this area." While it is true that the students are not remunerated for their published translations, their academic contribution replicates that of the book reviewers, with the added benefit of giving the students, at an early stage in their academic careers, an appreciation for the feasibility of publishing, enabling them to see it a practical possibility rather than a daunting future goal. Moreover, as Marczak (2016) has documented, the social interaction of bilingual telecollaboration that produces a collective finished project fosters the development of soft skills such as negotiation, problem-solving, and intercultural communication which are so valued in the job market and in professional circles.

COLLABORATIVE TRANSLATION AS PEDAGOGY

It will be apparent from the above description, that our course is deeply invested in collaboration; as a pedagogy of translation, its benefits are significant. First, in the broadest sense, learning takes place through the shared activities of a collective, which enhances cognition (Kiraly, 2005; Bruffee, 1999.) In the translation classroom, the students' field of cultural and linguistic vision is immeasurably expanded by the collaboration across languages, between a native speaker of the source and a native speaker of the target language. The students in our course, including those with some previous translation experience, have reported at the end that the collective work they did with their various partners during the semester had a positive effect on their overall experience of translation. An L1-English student confirmed this in the following: "I think it is useful to have two perspectives on a translation...I particularly enjoyed having a partner who was a native speaker of the other language in the translation." In addition, after the experience of collaborative translation, they felt more willing to seek out

feedback from their peers and their instructor, less concerned that sharing their work would reveal an inability to translate “correctly,” and more confident in offering feedback to others. This was expressed by one student, not a novice translator, who said that she felt liberated in her own process of translating, more open to experimenting, to making “mistakes” to revising--and revising again. This, in turn, allows us to reinforce the importance of the give-and-take of the translative process itself (González-Davies, 2017) and to encourage deeper reflection on the nature of translation in general. By taking the act of translation out of the hands of a single individual and presenting it as an exchange between two partners, we make visible and tangible the dynamic negotiation of meaning that goes into any translation product. The choice of source material plays a key role in the benefits observed: in our case, the translation of book reviews in the social and human sciences as an authentic collaborative activity has allowed the students in a small way to enter into communities, both academic and professional, that they might otherwise not have known until later in their careers. As one end-of-the-semester comment highlights, this plays out on an interpersonal level that is a first step toward the formation of broader communities: “We were sad that it was our last meeting as a translating group, since we both really appreciated working together and learned a lot from the other’s perspective. We want to keep in touch and we will be hoping to see each other in a not so distant future.” Altogether, collaborative translation as foreign language pedagogy produces results that go far beyond a simple intercultural and linguistic interaction that the tandem method overall tends to see as its primary benefits.

Over the past few years, translation in the foreign language classroom has enjoyed a rebound in the evaluation of its capacity to develop both linguistic and intercultural competencies. We have seen a similar revival of acknowledgment and appreciation of collaborative translation, which, until the post-Enlightenment period, was a standard procedure (Cordingley & Frigu-Manning, 2017). Recent scholarship attests to the momentum that the concept of collaborative translation has gained (Fournel & Zancarini, 2017); and this includes recognition of its pedagogical effectiveness. (González-Davies, 2017). We propose the eTandem-based collaborative course of social science translation developed in our “Transatlantic Translation Workshop” as an example of the multi-faceted potential of these combined practices and pedagogies in second language acquisition.

NOTES

The term “collaborative,” as opposed to “cooperative,” is justified by the active exchange of ideas and negotiation of solutions that characterize our course methodology.

² The collective meetings of the class were held online during part of the 2020 session and for the entire 2021 session, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and cancellation of in-person teaching. One E.N.S.-Lyon student commented on the value of the class during this difficult time: “It was great having this partnership with Columbia, and I can’t stress enough how much it helped me with my English in general, pronunciation, etc. Also during COVID, it allowed me to escape that feeling of being imprisoned!”

³ <https://journals.openedition.org/lectures/32689>

⁴ These intermediate targets reflect the student input impact on the evolution of the class. Several years ago, in keeping with the collaborative nature of the class, it was the student pairs themselves who determined their own rate of progression by themselves. In a number of instances, this led to poor time-management and stress as the deadline for the finished work approached. In their feedback, it was the students who suggested greater intermediate accountability.

⁵ For samples of published student translations, see Pencolé, M.A. (2021) [Review of the book, *La comédie humaine du travail*, by D. Linhart] (B. Busquet & C. Melaco, Trans.) *Lectures*. (Original review published 2015) <https://journals.openedition.org/lectures/47480> and Feyeux, A. (2021) [Review of the book, *Ethno-psychiatrie*, by H. Ellenberger] (A. Goer de Herve & E. Staples, Trans.) *Lectures* (Original review published 2018)

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APPENDIX

Sample rubric for assessment of student translation work

I. Micro-level of individual words and sentences

- **Terminology:** does the translation accurately and appropriately render technical terms?
- **Grammar and spelling:** is the translation free from any glaring grammatical errors or spelling mistakes?
- **Clarifications:** are parentheticals and footnotes incorporated smoothly and effectively throughout the translation? Are specific phrases or events that may have a clear meaning to the source text's audience properly explained for the target audience?
- **Syntax:** does the translation render the syntax of the source text in a comprehensible and accurate manner?

II. Macro-level of overall composition

- **Clarity:** is the translation comprehensible to an L1 speaker of the target language?
- **Overall composition:** does the text read as a single work or does each sentence read as if translated individually?

- **Content and meaning:** does this translation accurately reflect the content of the source text? Have nuances and meanings been conveyed accurately?

III. Literal vs. adapted

- **Balance:** is there a good balance between the literal meaning of the text and more adapted or figurative meanings?
- **Necessary cultural adjustments:** are there cultural differences between the languages that need to be noted? How is this accomplished: (footnotes, translator's preface, etc.)?

IV. Purpose and register

- **Purpose:** does the translation seem to fulfill the same purpose as the source text?
- **Tone and Register:** does the translation reflect the tone and register of the source text?