

---

## Reflections

MAIRI McLAUGHLIN

University of California, Berkeley  
*E-mail: mclaughlin@berkeley.edu*

SARA LAVIOSA

Università degli Studi di Bari ‘Aldo Moro’  
*E-mail: sara.laviosa@uniba.it*

EMILY LINARES

Harvard University  
*Email: emilyzlinares@gmail.com*

LUCÍA PINTADO GUTIÉRREZ

Dublin City University  
*Email: lucia.pintado@dcu.ie*

LAURIE POSTLEWATE

Barnard College  
*Email: lpostlen@barnard.edu*

LAYLA ROESLER

École Normale Supérieure, Lyon  
*Email: layla.roesler@ens-lyon.fr*

DIANA THOW

University of California, Berkeley  
*Email: diana.thow@berkeley.edu*

---

This final article brings together reflections written by all of the contributors to the special issue on “The Future of Translation in Higher Education”. In August 2021, the final versions of each article were circulated to all of the contributors. Each person had the chance to read all of the articles together and to see the context in which their own contribution would appear. Each person was then asked to submit a short reflection. There was no set formula for the reflections: some general questions were shared to get the ball rolling but each person was free to focus on whatever they found to be most important.

Before submitting the reflections, most of the contributors were able to meet on Zoom in late September 2021. The aim of the virtual meeting was to personalize the process of contributing to—and editing—a special issue and to share ideas for the reflection pieces. That conversation was a highpoint for all of us as we talked about the experiences, both

rewarding and challenging, that we had all had as educators and scholars, as members of fields and of institutions. There were moments where experience, contexts and perspectives overlapped but there were also moments where sharp differences were revealed and those moments were often the most instructive. The conversation that we had on Zoom was inspiring both during the process of writing the reflection pieces but also more generally since such moments of connection and personalization had been so lacking since March 2020.

In what follows, each reflection is presented in turn following the order of the articles in the special issue. As we will see, the contributors intervene in a diverse range of ways. Some pieces bring out the most important themes and questions which cut across the special issue. Others situate the work done here more broadly, drawing attention to gaps in the field which should be filled by future research. Some contributors explore how their own take on translation in higher education evolved as a result of reading their work in the context of the rest of the special issue. Still others reflect on the changes that they will make to their own pedagogy after taking part in this special issue. However, they chose to intervene, the contributors' reflections offer a precious glimpse of the possibility of change coming out of activities such as this which are designed to promote the bridging of theory and practice, or of research, policy and pedagogy.

---

## INTRODUCTION

This final article brings together reflections written by all of the contributors to the special issue on “The Future of Translation in Higher Education”. In August 2021, the final versions of each article were circulated to all of the contributors. Each person had the chance to read all of the articles together and to see the context in which their own contribution would appear. Each person was then asked to submit a short reflection. There was no set formula for the reflections: some general questions were shared to get the ball rolling but each person was free to focus on whatever they found to be most important.

Before submitting the reflections, most of the contributors were able to meet on Zoom in late September 2021. The aim of the virtual meeting was to personalize the process of contributing to—and editing—a special issue and to share ideas for the reflection pieces. That conversation was a highpoint for all of us as we talked about the experiences, both rewarding and challenging, that we had all had as educators and scholars, as members of fields and of institutions. There were moments where experience, contexts and perspectives overlapped but there were also moments where sharp differences were revealed and those moments were often the most instructive. The conversation that we had on Zoom was inspiring both during the process of writing the reflection pieces but also more generally since such moments of connection and personalization had been so lacking since March 2020.

In what follows, each reflection is presented in turn following the order of the articles in the special issue. As we will see, the contributors intervene in a diverse range of ways. Some pieces bring out the most important themes and questions which cut across the special issue. Others situate the work done here more broadly, drawing attention to gaps in the field which should be filled by future research. Some contributors explore how their own take on translation in higher education evolved as a result of reading their work in the context of the rest of the special issue. Still others reflect on the changes that they will make to their own pedagogy after taking part in this special issue. However, they chose to intervene, the contributors' reflections offer a precious glimpse of the possibility of change coming out of activities such as this which are designed to promote the bridging of theory and practice, or of research, policy and pedagogy.

## SARA LAVIOSA

The articles selected for the special issue of *L2 Journal* fall clearly within the realm of the research domain that María González-Davies has named TOLC (Translation in Other Learning Contexts), by which she means “translation to acquire linguistic and intercultural mediation skills in fields other than

translator training, and translator and interpreter training proper, that is, translation to acquire professional translator competence” (González-Davies, 2020, p. 434). TOLC is an interdisciplinary research area and relates to a wide range of settings where translation – be it written, oral or multimodal – is an integral part of the pedagogical approach adopted. In this special issue TOLC includes bi- and multilingual primary education as well as L2 teaching and comparative literary studies in higher education. The methodologies used in the case studies vary and can be subsumed under the general category of classroom-based observations. These are generally conducted through ethnographic methods as well as surveys and interviews with students and teachers. What characterizes these case studies is that they are firmly grounded in theory, which in turn draws on second language acquisition studies, bilingual education, language teaching methodology and translation studies.

When adopting a translation-oriented pedagogy in higher education, all contributors consider learning translation theory vital for achieving their overall teaching objectives. It is therefore included in the syllabus, which becomes interdisciplinary and innovative because it opens students’ minds to new ways of conceiving translation that go beyond the traditional concept of transfer from one natural language to another. This is one of the many benefits of TOLC. It is also a challenge for teachers and learners alike. Striking the right balance between theory and practice in TOLC is not easy and the authors in this issue are very well aware of this critical question, which they have discussed from different perspectives. In my view this critical aspect of translation pedagogy in contexts other than translator education requires further reflection if it is to be implemented effectively.

Another observation that I wish to share is the dearth of experimental studies in this burgeoning research domain, coupled with a general neglect for translation assessment. Also, bi- and multilingual primary education presents its own challenges not only because it is implemented in a wide variety of settings, which are not always easily comparable, but also because it is underpinned by its own set of theoretical and practical concerns. This is underscored by the inclusion here of an article on translation in primary education. While the author highlights some important lessons for higher education, its inclusion draws further attention to the specificity of the primary context.

Looking to the future of TOLC in higher education, I envisage the use of a wider range of research methods and styles in a greater variety of educational contexts worldwide as well as further investigations into testing and curriculum design.

## EMILY LINARES

How can the language instructor shape the future of translation in higher education? This is a question that echoes throughout the special issue.

As some of the contributors suggest, instructors’ discomfort may make them reluctant to invite translation back into the language classroom. This move necessitates some degree of vulnerability on the part of the language instructor, whose unease may be rooted, among other factors, in their linguistic background, institutional or departmental expectations that class be conducted monolingually, or a lack of experience in the practice of translation. Thow (2022) recognizes that we should embrace some feelings of incompetence in the classroom, ceasing to restrict our discussions “for the purposes of our own institutional or pedagogical limitations.” Should we do otherwise, translation appears destined to remain more product than process: translations will continue to be read, the source text largely obsolete, much more than they will be developed through negotiations with other speakers or analyzed as iterations of an original presenting nonnegligible differences.

The authors of this special issue suggest ways in which language and literature instructors can give space to translation as a *process* in their classrooms. Instructors must dare to broaden their conception of translation as more than “a tool available [...] for scaffolding learning and improving

teaching,” but “as a form of mediated communication that is inherent in the makeup of our societies” (Laviosa, 2022, p. 25). In other words, they must rethink their professional identity: from instructors of the target language to facilitators of in-class cross-linguistic mediation (Laviosa, 2022). Ideally, during activities involving translation, they should “act as a guide rather than an instructor to allow sufficient space for the students to gain agency, while monitoring the progress of the learners and mentoring in their progress” (Pintado Gutiérrez, 2022, p. 44). The transition from instructor to guide/witness/supporter in translation signals the embrace of a “horizontal (student-to-student) rather than vertical (teacher-to-student) language learning” context (Postlewate & Roesler, 2022, p. 76). Within this new classroom configuration, class sessions may involve source texts written in languages that we do not understand and that our students will consequently need to explain to us (Linares, 2022; Thow, 2022). This kind of collaborative interaction in reading and translating emphasizes the negotiation that is central to language use.

As Rabassa (1989) writes in *The Craft of Translation*, “[w]e cannot be sure of ourselves. Translation is a disturbing craft because there is precious little certainty about what we are doing [...] [The translator] must always be dissatisfied with what he does because ideally, platonically, there is a perfect solution, but he will never find it” (p. 12). It is incumbent upon us to reflect with our students on the complex search for approximation between languages, considering such features as the sounds, word choice, and cultural milieu of a text. By incorporating translation as process in language education, within K-12 and higher education settings alike, educators can model translingual and transcultural competence as a perpetual work-in-progress.

## LUCÍA PINTADO GUTIÉRREZ

After reading the articles included in this special issue, a powerful image comes to mind, and it is that of translation as a prism that captures the light and splits it into different colours depending on the angle and how we look at it. If I were to highlight one single aspect about this special issue it would have to be the way all contributions capture, in their own way, the great advances that have come about in translation and (language) education across different educational levels and disciplines, under a broad array of approaches. The multidimensional nature of translation indeed allows us to build bridges that reflect efforts in bolstering student engagement, and student-teacher horizontal interactions under a greater, more inclusive, range of approaches, frameworks and models that allow students to build and share meaningful knowledge. All articles provide different angles, forms and applications of translation in education under the auspices of a transversal understanding in this field. The critical mapping of translation in language education within the plurilingual approach discussed by Laviosa (2022) offers an inspiring and sophisticated closer look at where we are now in terms of recent developments and future directions. Her contribution sets the tone and provides some of the key tenets of holistic pedagogical translation, some of which are so well illustrated in this volume: “The pedagogies that are currently being put forward within a broad multilingual paradigm in languages education endorse the general principle that learning is a collaborative and dialogic process engaging learners and teachers as partners that bring diverse linguistic, cultural and other knowledge into the classroom” (Laviosa, 2022, p. 12).

The editorial work by McLaughlin, and the examples provided by Laviosa (2022), Linares (2022), Postlewate & Roesler (2022) and Thow (2022) speak about a world of possibilities all of which place the student at the centre of the learning process and seek to enhance student engagement. Although not necessarily new, it is refreshing to read that translation allows students to develop rich transversal skills such as critical thinking, autonomy, negotiation, linguistic and intercultural awareness, or close reading in different educational settings.

Having done research in translation and language education for well over a decade, I admit that it was encouraging to see that we conceive of translation as a plural, non-prescriptive space that facilitates countless learning opportunities. All articles put forward enriching and innovative pedagogical practices which promote plurilingual and intercultural values and embrace both individual and group work, and encourage presence-based and virtual teaching modalities, or even a combination of everything. Personally, it is heartening to see the strong enthusiasm and commitment to good practice shown by the fellow authors in this special issue on both sides of the Atlantic. At the same time, it is also reassuring to know that sound practices in pedagogical translation are here to stay.

### **Laurie Postelwate and Layla Roesler**

It was truly a pleasure for us to read the contributions of our colleagues in this issue of *L2 Journal*. Each article demonstrates in its own way how the activity of translation in the language classroom promotes the plurilingual learning environment that is a critical part of L2 acquisition. The contributors foreground how the multilingual turn favoring the use of translation in second language teaching is accompanied by a rethinking of what translation is and what a translator does: from the idea of translation as transfer of meaning in a unidirectional, linear way we have fortunately arrived at a more dynamic and productive exchange of meaning-discovery; from the former notion of the translator as conduit of fixed equivalence emerges the translator as cross-linguistic and cross-cultural mediator.

It has been especially interesting to discover that our own experience in a classroom context, which has evolved over a number of years in response to learner results and feedback, intersects with both theory on pedagogic translation and the practical experiences of other language teachers. From the outset, the main impetus behind Transatlantic Translation Workshop as a tandem course has been to engage students in a plurilingual, task-based exchange permitting cross-linguistic mediation; this occurs by empowering each member of the class to become what Laviosa (2022, p. 19) describes as “a social agent who creates bridges and helps to construct or convey meaning.” In our case, the task of translating social science texts has proven particularly effective for fostering mediation in that it involves in a very clear and intense way the creation of conceptual “bridges” and of what Pintado Gutiérrez (2022) highlights from the work of Kramsch as a “rethinking of one context in terms of another” (cited in Laviosa 2014, p. 88). Laviosa’s (2022) description of the multilingual mental lexicon and the shifts in how language learners associate terms and concepts in both L1 and L2, has special resonance with observations of our own course in which the L1 of each group is the L2 of the other; we have witnessed just how powerful translation can be in expanding the multilingual mental lexicon and in making that process visible to the learners. We have also observed how translation encourages critical reflection on language in general, what Linares (2022, p. 54) describes with precision and clarity as “reflexive translation,” leading indeed to a re-consideration of translation itself. In close proximity to what Thow (2022) explains in the context of the literature classroom, our students come to realize through their collaborative translation work that they are engaging in acts of interpretation and mediation, acts that are shaped by time, place and situation. A final thread connecting all of the articles in this volume is that translation is an empowering tool in second language learning because it replaces the formerly vertical relationship of teacher/master translator and student with a horizontal model of negotiation and collaboration which, in many ways, seems to us to replicate the reality of the act of translation: a dynamic process that produces meanings we agree on and fosters a plurilingual environment in the classroom that, in turn, prepares students for the plurilinguistic and pluricultural environment of today’s world.

## DIANA THOW

The contributions to this special issue led me to reflect on the ways in which translation in higher education responds to the presence of multilingual students, and the ways it supports their contributions to our campus communities. While multilingualism is one of the central issues in the Comparative Literature discipline, and many students speak languages other than the language of instruction, reading these articles about translation in the language classroom challenged me to think about multilingualism in the literature classroom, and how the study of Comparative Literature can further support multilingual and plurilingual students. I have felt limited as an instructor of translation in general education classes by the fact that I cannot require students to have familiarity with another language, due to the logistics of enrollment policies in U.S. institutions. But the work represented in this special issue has shown me how, by allowing this logistical formality to shape my pedagogy in the literature classroom, I have shut down a variety of pedagogical connections between multilingualism and the study of literature in translation. As I noted in my article, whether or not they have acquired another language in college, I've found that many of my students do already have familiarity with translation and moving forward I want to work to recenter my pedagogy around a multilingual student experience, using some of the models and inspiration I've found here. For, while students without access to a second language are often present in every class I teach, they are likely an exception rather than the norm. Shifting my focus to center multilingual students in the translation classroom would not mean excluding those who do not have access to a second language, as accommodations can always be made in assignments with monolingual students in mind. As my efforts as an instructor turn increasingly towards equity, representation, and antiracist approaches in the literature classroom, I grapple with the ways that second language acquisition in the U.S. college setting can be itself a form of privilege, and there's more work to be done in making Comparative Literature, and literary translation, more inclusive. Building from the skills and experiences already present within the multilingual classroom (in my current classroom Arabic, Spanish, Italian, Farsi, Mongolian, Cantonese, Mandarin, Hindi, Marathi, and Tamil), would make the jump to translated poetry, for instance, less of a jump for multilingual and plurilingual students and more of a continuation or pivot. I'm interested to do some research into how prioritizing translation in class can assist in the efforts of decentering and decolonizing the Comparative Literature syllabus, considerations at the forefront of many literature instructors' minds at my institution.

In reflecting on my own contribution after reading other articles represented in the issue, I wanted to respond in particular to a point brought up by Laviosa (2022), whose article "Language Teaching in Higher Education within a Plurilingual Perspective" addressed a different application of instrumental and hermeneutic models of translation. While my emphasis was primarily in U.S. higher education, Laviosa's (2022) article reveals how a distinction between instrumental and hermeneutic models of translation is central to how language is taught and assessed on an institutional level in Europe, as she shows through her analysis of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (Council of Europe 2001) and the *Companion Volume* (Council of Europe 2020). Laviosa (2022) demonstrates how the instrumental model is prioritized for beginning level and pedagogical translation, and hermeneutic models are reserved for more advanced classes and professional translator training. Though these are dramatically different applications, it did lead me to reflect on how I employ the hermeneutic model in beginning literature classes as well as advanced ones, and Laviosa's (2022) reading of the CEFR guidelines has helped me further parse the resistance that may underpin critiques of this approach. While professional translation in the U.S. is certainly not as developed a field as it is in Europe, Laviosa's (2022) argument leads me to wonder to what extent the institutional prejudice in

the U.S. regarding the implementation of the hermeneutic approach in the beginning literature classroom emerges from, or overlaps with, this pedagogical/professional binary.

## CONCLUSION

As was indicated at the end of the introduction to this special issue, there is no way to offer anything like a complete picture of “The Future of Translation in Higher Education” in just one edition of a journal. However, based on the work presented and referenced in the special issue, the reflections shared here do help us to sketch some general contours about what translation is, about what its place in higher education should be, and about how it should be practiced and taught.

Translation emerges here as a breadth of dynamic practices rather than as a simple transfer of meaning from Code A to Code B. It is conceptualized now as a core practice of multilingual and multicultural speakers and societies rather than just as a specialized professional practice. As such, translation deserves more space than it traditionally has had in higher education, especially in the Anglophone world. Translation will naturally remain at the heart of translator training, and its return to the language classroom looks increasingly likely. However, there is a loud call here for students, educators and scholars in other fields to draw on translation too. And within each disciplinary space, translation demands interdisciplinary approaches and perspectives. Translation, either as a practice or as an object of study, critique and theorization, is remarkably versatile in its ability to help students and teachers meet a wide range of learning objectives. There are some common themes in how translation is best practiced and taught in higher education. It suits a horizontal rather than a vertical classroom arrangement: learners and instructors work together in collaboration rather than in isolation. This aligns with a theme emphasized very strongly in some of the reflections, namely that translation is an invaluable tool for developing more equitable pedagogies in higher education.

Translation pedagogy emerges clearly from this special issue as a whole as a site of innovation today and although we have come very far in the last two decades, there is still work to be done. It is our common hope in putting together this special issue that we have demonstrated the immense potential for translation positively to impact higher education and that this makes it worth continuing the work to address some of the common implementation problems that we face.

## REFERENCES

- Council of Europe (2001). *Common European framework of reference for languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*. Cambridge University Press. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages>
- Council of Europe (2020). *Common European framework of reference for languages: Learning, teaching, assessment - Companion volume with new descriptors*. Council of Europe Publishing. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages>
- González-Davies, M. (2020). Developing mediation competence through translation. In: S. Laviosa & M. González-Davies (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of translation and education* (pp. 434-450). Routledge.
- Laviosa, S. (2014). *Translation and language education. Pedagogic approaches explored*. Routledge.
- Laviosa, S. (2022). Language Teaching in Higher Education within a Plurilingual Perspective. *L2 Journal*, 14(2), 12-31.
- Linares, E. (2022). The Challenges and Promise of Classroom Translation for Multilingual Minority Students in Monolingual Settings. *L2 Journal* 14(2), 51-74.
- Pintado Gutiérrez, L. (2022) Current Practices in Translation and L2 Learning in Higher Education: Lessons Learned. *L2 Journal* 14(2), 32-50.
- Postelwate, L. & Roesler, L. (2022). Tandem and translation: A bilingual telecollaborative course in social science translation. *L2 Journal* 14(2), 74-90.
- Rabassa, G. (1989). No two snowflakes are alike: Translation as metaphor. In J. Biguenet & R. Schulte (Eds.), *The Craft of translation* (pp. 1-12). The University of Chicago Press.

Thow, D. (2022). Translation Pedagogy in the Comparative Literature Classroom: Close Reading and the Hermeneutic Model of Translation. *L2 Journal* 14(2), 91-106.