Translation and ideology in the history of language learning and teaching: changing purposes, practices and prejudices in the teaching and learning of modern languages

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Dieser Beitrag analysiert die Geschichte des Übersetzens im Fremdsprachenunterricht als eine Geschichte von sich abwechselnden Ideologien. Zunächst kaum berücksichtigt im Fremdsprachenunterricht, wird das Übersetzen erst im 18. Jahrhundert als eine Fertigkeit an sich aufgewertet, die es ermöglicht, dem neuerdings geschätzten Originaltext 'treu' zu bleiben. Als die Grammatik fast gleichzeitig aus anderen ideologischen Gründen in das Zentrum der Fremdsprachenpädagogik rückt, wird das Übersetzen in den Dienst des nun höchsten Ziels der Grammatikbeherrschung gestellt. Mindestens ein Jahrhundert lang wird das Übersetzen als möglichst effizienter Maßstab für das Leistungsniveau der Lernenden gepriesen, bis es im späten 20. Jahrhundert der vorwiegend monolingualen Ideologie der kommunikativen Methode zum Opfer fällt und aus den Stundenplänen wie aus den Klausuren verschwindet. Im 21. Jahrhundert ist eine Rehabilitation festzustellen, die zum Teil (und im Verbund mit der Sprachmittlung) mit der neu erkannten Notwendigkeit gerechtfertigt wird, die Herausbildung und die Stärkung dynamischer plurilingualer Identitäten zu fördern.

1. Introduction

This article adds to the well-charted history of translation (see, especially for the German context, Bernofsky 2002; Brown 2012, 2017) with an examination of the lesser known history of translation in language learning and teaching (see also Pym & Ayvazyan 2017), in which it has served many ends (Cook 2012: 737). The purposes it has served make it a bellwether, signalling wider developments and upheavals in the history of language learning and teaching (HoLLT), reflecting more profound ideological shifts, and sometimes revolutions, in what language learning has been understood to be about.[2] Surfacing the ideologies underlying seemingly objective decisions about methodology in the past can help inform debates today, when – especially in the UK – the value of studying languages other than English is not widely understood, with declining numbers taking up

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2   For recent overviews of the state of the art in HoLLT (History of Language Learning and Teaching), see McLelland & Smith (2014, 2018).

languages.[3] I shall first describe the place of translation in vernacular language learning until about the 17th century. I then consider the first revolutionary moment: the recognition, in the 18th century, of translation as a skill in its own right which can help learners encounter the target culture. The next change comes with the recognition that translation from the target language can, as a pedagogical tool, focus learners on linguistic peculiarities of the language. Most revolutionary of all, though, was the next step, from the late 18th century onwards: requiring translation 'into' the target language, in order to force learners to attend to and apply the grammatical rules that they learn in class. Translation into the target language was even, for a period, in the form of prose composition, considered the test *par excellence* of all-round ability, before it fell emphatically out of favour during the focus on the "four skills" in the later 20th century. It has now, tentatively, regained a foothold in English curricula and, more widely, in assessment frameworks such as the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) – with a new ideological underpinning.

2. The 16th and 17th centuries: translation alongside language learning; translation as language learning

Even before translation began to feature explicitly in materials to learn European languages, it played a role. Especially for women, translation was an acceptable pastime that also provided a focus through which they could legitimately participate in wider language debates in the 16th and 17th centuries, otherwise the province of male scholars, about the genius and capacity of their native language (see Brown 2009: 632-634; 2017; McLelland 2020). Translation between languages (including Latin) was a means to reflect on, and to encourage the elaboration of, one's own language; it might also improve one's own proficiency in one's own language.[4] Only incidentally might it help in learning a foreign language, and that potential received little attention in language teaching. The earliest printed manuals for language learning, with very few exceptions, presented model dialogues in two (or more) languages in parallel columns, an approach already well-established in earlier manuscript sources, too (McLelland

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3   The past fifteen years have seen a sharp decline in numbers of pupils taking languages to GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) and A-Level; and there was a drop of 22.8% in applications to study European languages at British universities in the 2017-18 applications round.

4   Humboldt made the same point in the 18th century, and the point was reprised by Walter Benjamin (1923) (see Bernofsky 2005: 30).

2004).[5] Below, as an example, is part of the first page dialogue in Beiler (1731: 246). It still bears traces of an older tradition of dialogues as vocabulary learning in context (e.g. McLelland 2017: 7-8; see also Hüllen 2005: 49), as several alternative answers to the question "What a Clock is it?" are given, showing the contrasting ways in which the time is told in German and English. Teachers might use parallel texts to draw learners' attention to differences in a form of contrastive analysis, such as *halb acht/half past seven* (below), or to peculiarities such as the colloquial *Wo es nicht geschlagen* (omission of auxiliary, *wo* as flexible conjunction not restricted to lit. 'where'). Implicitly, then, comparison of texts in parallel could be used as a method to focus on form, but translation – although necessary to the process – was under the radar. The primary focus was on the spoken language.

Wie viel Uhr ist es?	What a Clock is it?
Es ist sieben.	It is seven.
Ein viertel auf acht.	A quarter past seven ? [sic]
Halb acht.	Half an Hour past seven.
Drey viertel auf acht.	Three Quarters past seven.
Auf dem Schlag acht.	Upon the Stroke of eight.
Hat es schon geschlagen?	Has it struck already?
Wo es nicht geschlagen/so ist es nicht weit davon	If it hasn't struck, it is not far from it.

Beiler (1731: 246)

Another dialogue from the same manual, recycled from Lediard (1725) (and already much-cited in the literature; see e.g. Klippel 1994: 88), outlines explicitly the original author's view on the place of translation in language learning (see below). A language master recommends translating letters, yet for Lediard's German learners of English, the starting point is not even their own language, but French or Italian, whose style is apparently closer to the English style (see McLelland 2020). Coming to a target language by means of an intermediary one was common in the period. Even publishing translations of translations was common in the 18th century, thanks to the shortage of expertise in foreign languages other than French (Bernofsky 2005: 5).[6] Scant weight was given to the status of the original.

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5   The first German-English language learning manual (Aedler 1680) was a rare exception to the rule in not including dialogues (and the fact that its author went bankrupt might be an indication that he misread the market (Van der Lubbe 2007: 72, 104).

6   As an anonymous writer in the "Critical Review" observed in 1775, "German literature is at present of much greater consequence than is commonly apprehended […] at present we [i.e. in England] know scarce anything of it, *excepting through the medium of French translations*" (my emphasis; 1775 review of Wendeborn 1774, and reprinted in Boehning 1977: 266). Even learners could publish their translations: an extreme case of 'learning by doing' whose results could be of very variable quality (see Klippel 1994: 52).

Was soll ich in ihrer Abwesenheit thun?	What shall I do in your Absence?
Lernen sie erst das *Vocabularium* auswendig.	First learn the Vocabulary.
Als denn die kurtze *familiere Phrasen*.	Then the short familiar Phrases.
Diesem nach die Sprich-wörter und *familiere* Gespräche.	Afterwards the Proverbs and familiar Dialogues.
Zuweilen die Regel der *Construction*, und derselben *Exempeln*.	At Times, the Rules of Syntax and their Examples.
Und darnach kommen Sie zu der Ubersetzung.	And then proceed to Translation.
Was soll ich übersetzen?	What shall I translate?
Einige kurtze Italiänische oder Frantzösische Briefe.	Some short Italian or French Letters.
Warum nicht Teutsche.	Why not German?
Weil die andern/bevoraus aber die Frantzösische/mit dem Englischen *stylo epistolari* am besten übereintreffen.	Because the other, especially the French, are more adapt to the English Epistolary Style.

Beiler (1731: 287, from Lediard 1725)

As English and German interest in learning more of each others' languages, cultures and literatures grew in the 18th century, the first revolution in language teaching was to attend to translation at all. When it happened, it was part of a wider shift to focus more on the written language in teaching (cf. Coffey 2019: 141-142 with regard to French-English manuals). For example, Bachmair's German grammar (1751, 1771) used literal translations in a way that had been used on and off in Latin language pedagogy for centuries, but that was new for vernacular language learning, supplying literal English translations of the German: "the English runs according to the German Construction, which is obvious: but it will greatly assist the Learners to understand and translate the German right" (Bachmair 1771: 263).

3. "Service" translation and faithfulness to the original

In the later 18th century, literary passages for translation were increasingly included in language manuals. The manuals tackled this in different ways. Wendeborn (1790) used German versions from the "Spectator"; learners could check their translation against the English original; Render (1799) included extracts from Kotzebue and Schiller with published translations in parallel, although he was primarily interested in learners becoming able to read German texts in the original "in order to peruse the works of German writers in original; to have as it were, free and unconstrained access to the treasures of knowledge" (ib. viii-ix), and recommended many works to his readers. Render's frustration

with published translation errors that "perverted the sense" (Render 1804: xix) reflects a new concern for accuracy measured against a known source text.[7]

Common to both Wendeborn and Render, then, is the value both placed, in different ways, on the original text. They express, in a language-learning context, the same respect for a translator's fidelity to the original that was emerging in later 18th century discussions of translation theory, as "the labors of authorship and translation came to be sufficiently differentiated for their combination in a single person to seem in any way remarkable" (Bernofsky 2005: 1).[8] Accordingly, language teachers might allude to translation as "a skill" to be "exercised": a description of London in German "may serve the English learner of the German Language to exercise his Skill in translating it into his Mother-Tongue" (Anon. 1758: 55). Bernofksy (2005) has used the term "service translation" to describe this newly emerging concept of translation, underpinned by a new ideology that the cultural content of an original source text should be conveyed as accurately, faithfully and sensitively as possible.[9] The growth in translation as a recognized activity in language learning is, then, part of this wider revolution in thinking about translation.

4. Translation in the service of grammar (from the second half of the 18th century)

Contemporary with the "service translation" model, and competing with it in language teaching, was a different kind of translation "service". It marks the second key change in the history of translation in language learning and teaching:

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7   For example, Render criticized a published translation of Schiller's "Kabale und Liebe", where the failure to recognize the double meaning of *Ihr* created misunderstandings, and where the translator had furthermore added material "of his own fancy" (Render 1804: xxiii). (*Ihr* is 'your', but differs from *ihr* 'her' only in the capitalization, a subtlety evidently not registered by the translator whom Render criticized.)

8   Bernofsky (2005:1) contrasts this with the older tradition of *Nachdichten* (re-telling) that left the writer scope to paraphrase, "alter the tone, style, diction or form of a work", add or delete material. Hartmann von Aue's German retellings of Chretien de Troyes' Arthurian romances are obvious examples of such an approach.

9   Bernofsky, dealing with the German context, dates this change to the 18th century, specifically with the "pioneering" work of Johann Heinrich Voß, not least his translation of Homer's Odyssey published in 1781 and the discussion it unleashed between August Wilhelm Schlegel, Voß and others. In the English tradition, the notion of faithfulness is expressed rather earlier, and was received in Germany earlier too, at least in some quarters – Arnold (1725: 14) quotes Howell's "Familiar Letters" (Howell 1645: vol. 3, letter 21, p. 442), where Howell reflects that "The greatest fidelity that can be expected in a Translator is to keep still […] entire the true genuine sense of the Author with the main design he drives at".

translation in the service of grammar emerging around 1800, as Render (1799), Crabb (1800) and Noeden (1800) all exemplify in differing ways.

Render (1799), who wrote his German manual based on his experience of teaching families in London and students at Oxford and Cambridge Universities (Render 1799: xi), provides translation exercises from the target language German into English "for the purpose of explaining the peculiarities of it" (ibid.: xiii). An example is given in Fig. 1 (Render 1799: 45). Noehden (1800) saw translation as an activity to reinforce and test grammatical knowledge. He included longer German literary passages from "four eminent writers, now living in Germany" (they are Wieland, Herder, Goethe, and Schiller), "as conspicuous for their learning and genius, as they are distinguished by the purity and elegance of their language (Noehden 1800: 417). The activity of translating offers the learner "an adequate test" for their application of the rules given in the preceding grammar. Noehden supplies his own English translations "as accurate and literal, as the difference of the two languages would admit of" (ibid.).

> *EXERCISE*
>
> ON
>
> THE FOREGOING SUBSTANTIVES, &c.
>
> ———
>
> Johann! Wo ist der Schlüssel[1] zu meiner Stube[2]? Hier ist er, mein Herr! Geh und hole[3] meinen Spiegel[4] und vergeß[5] nicht meinen Kamm mitzubringen.[6] Wo sind meine Strümpfe[7] und Stiefel[8]? Hier sind ihre Strümfe und dort in der Ecke[9] stehen ihre Stiefel. Wo ist meine Mutter? Sie ist in der Küche[10]. Unser Nachbar[11] hat eine schöne Tochter[12]. Von den Bürgern[13] und Bauern[14] muß man nichts fordern,[15] als was recht und billig[16] ist. Mein Bruder fieng[17] heute einen Vogel[18] in unserm Garten. Diesen Apfel hat
>
> | | | |
> |---|---|---|
> | [1] key | [7] stocking | [13] citizen |
> | [2] room | [8] boot | [14] boor |
> | [3] to fetch | [9] corner | [15] to ask |
> | [4] looking-glass | [10] kitchen | [16] reasonable |
> | [5] to forget | [11] neighbour | [17] to catch |
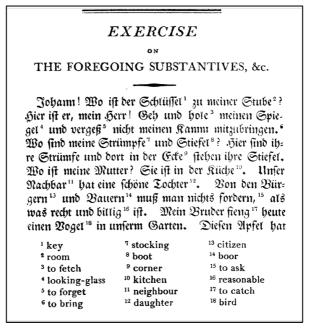> | [6] to bring | [12] daughter | [18] bird |

Figure 1: A translation exercise in Render (1799: 45)

Crabb's "Selection of prose and poetry" (1800), intended at least in part "for the use of young learners", likewise shows the beginning of using translation as a means to the primary end of applying and/or testing knowledge of grammar. A series of questions follows each translation passage; their purpose is to "call the

attention of the scholar to the rules and mechanism of the language, by examples immediately before the eye. A constant and fixed attention to the examples cannot fail of impressing the mind very strongly" (Crabb 1800: iii) (note here the focus on the "mechanics", rather than on faithfulness to style). As Crabb explains in "An Observation for the Teacher" (in what I believe to be the first such instruction in the English history of German as a Foreign Language on how to approach translation with learners), "It would be proper for the learner to find answers to the questions previous to translating the fable, as they will greatly assist him in looking for words in the Dictionary" (ibid.: 20). An example is given below (ibid.: 25-26; Fig. 2). The task amounts to construing, as practised at least since the 14th century in Latin learning, though with older roots in classical rhetoric, too (Kelly 1969: 134); such construing was, in Latin classes, always the "first step" in translation (ibid.: 138).

Von einem Raben und einem Fuchse.

Ein Rabe setzte sich auf[1] einen Baum um[2] einen Käs zu fressen, den[3] er an einem Fenster gestohlen[4] hatte[5]. Ein Fuchs der ihn erblickte[6], hatte[5] Lust einen Theil davon[7] zu haben. Er fieng[8] also an, ihm[10] mit der Schönheit des Gefieders zu schmeichelen[9]. Da nun dieses Lob dem[10] Raben sehr anständig war, so fuhr[11] er fort und sagte zu ihm, daß es sehr Schade wäre, daß seine Stimme nicht mit so vielen schönen Eigenschaften des Raben überein[12] käme. Dieses einfältige[13] Thier wollte zu erkennen geben[9], daß es singen könnte[5]; es machte[11] den Schnabel auf. Der Käs fiel[14,11] herab: der Fuchs erschnappte[6] ihn[15] und fraß[15] ihn auf.

S.L. [=Sittenlehre]: Die Lobsprüche unserer Feinde sind lauter Fallstricke, welche sie uns legen[5], unser Vermögen zu bekommen.

[Vocabulary is supplied]
Questions.
1. Why the accusative after *auf*?
2. Why *um* separated from *zu*?
3. Why the masculine? Why the accusative?
4. III.1.Gr. [a reference to grammar rules given on earlier pages, N.M.]
5. What words transpose these words?
6. Is there any prefix here?
7. Why is *von* used here?
8. Has this verb any separate preposition belonging to it?
9. What rule for the position of words does this fall under?
10. Why the dative?
11. Has this verb any preposition?
12. Why do the verb and preposition unite?
13. Why *einfältige* and not *einfältiges*?
14. What preposition has it?
15. I. 3, Gr. [a reference to grammar rules given on earlier pages]
16. How englished?

Figure 2: Example of a passage for translation with guiding questions
(Crabb 1800: 25-26)

These are tentative steps by Render, Noehden, and Crabb – aimed at different levels and ages – toward using translation as an explicit pedagogical tool to draw attention to grammatical rules and idioms in the target language. However, they all understand translation solely as an activity out of the target language. That was about to change, as the task of translation into the target language was invented.[10] That new task became the cornerstone of what became known, retrospectively and pejoratively, as the grammar-translation method (Kirk 2018: 26). It is worth emphasizing Kirk's finding that this approach (or group of related approaches, sharing a bundle of features identified by Kirk 2018: 22) did not, as is sometimes assumed, arise by copying a widespread method using for the teaching of Latin since time immemorial, but emerged first in the teaching of modern European vernacular languages.[11] As Kirk (2018: 26) reminds us, "the first textbook credited with using the Grammar-Translation method was not a Latin textbook from antiquity, but an 18th-century textbook for French [i.e. Meidinger 1783]"; and "the authors who initiated, imitated and refined this method were Prussian authors of modern language textbooks" (see also Kelly 1969: 51-52).[12] For Meidinger and many others like him, translating sentences from the learners' own language into the target language was central to their newly practical method, and that was its revolutionary value. Admittedly, Meidinger's text was not quite as ground-breaking as has long been assumed, for its use of targeted translation exercises has antecedents, such as in Chambaud (1750, 1765) (see McLelland 2017: 95-97; now also Coffey 2020), but that merely changes the date and locus of the revolution. Revolutionary it still certainly was to require learners to practise applying grammatical rules (hence "practical" grammar), and to make sure they were forced to attend to all rules, reinforced by repetition, by the simple expedient of coming up with sentences that covered the grammatical points systematically and in turn. That is the positive evaluation; viewed negatively, learners were set a task with low context validity, as testers today would say (they were unlikely to have to do it in the real world), but as an exercise, it was now considered crucially important.

What prompted this revolution? The reasons were in part both social and ideological. First, placing greater emphasis on grammatical accuracy allowed (self-proclaimed) qualified, educated language teachers, equipped with the necessary metalinguistic knowledge and expertise, to differentiate themselves in

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10 That major shift is missing entirely from Pym and Ayvazyan's (2017) recent consideration of translation in the history of language teaching.

11 Just 17 out of Kirk's corpus of 100 19th-century Latin language teaching texts "present opportunities to translate both into and out of Latin" (Kirk 2018: 29). For many centuries, most Latin learning manuals were simply entirely in Latin, often taking a catechistic question-and-answer form (ibid.).

12 Latin grammar had generally been taught through a catechistic method or other versions of learning grammar in a form to be recited back to the master.

a crowded market from mere native speakers who offered language teaching without that expertise. Second, in an era of growing patriotic and, later, national consciousness, it was a point of principle that Europe's vernacular languages must be treated with the same rigour as Latin. The next step in the chain of reasoning, though, was pedagogical: the conviction that learners would learn better if given the chance to practise applying the grammar. The new focus on grammar could then in turn be used to raise the status of European languages in schools. That too, was ideological, securing languages a place in the standardized education system. If the essence of learning was mastery of grammar, then modern language learning could demonstrably be seen to promote mental rigour. To repeat the oft-cited words of the Headmaster of University College School, Henry Weston Eve (died 1910), to the Headmasters' Conference in 1879, "Your first object is to discipline the mind; your second to give a knowledge of French or German." (McLelland 2015: 98; cf. Hawkins 1987: 113).

5. Translation as king: translation as the test of ability *par excellence*

When the first school-leavers' examinations were established in the 1850s in England (first set in 1857-58, initially by university boards),[13] translation from the foreign language into English was central to the examination. In 1858 the UCLES German and French Senior examinations included two passages for translation into English, the first taken from one of the set books that pupils had been studying, the second an "unseen", and the format continued for decades. Translation from the target language into English was both a test of basic comprehension and of the skill of rendering the original sense in idiomatic English. A 1920 examiners' report on the Junior French examination was critical of "un-English translations", where candidates were being prepared "without being trained to express themselves in idiomatic English" (UCLES 1920, Report on the Junior examinations: 10-11). Such comments show the continued value attached to translation as a skill requiring both sensitivity to the source language and accuracy in the grammar and style in one's own (the tradition of service translation in Bernofksy's sense) and, arguably, the still older view that translation can develop one's writing in one's own language, and tests that ability.

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13 While other Universities' examinations boards became, or merged with, separate entities, the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES), now under the brand name Cambridge Assessment, remains part of the University of Cambridge.

However, alongside translation out of the language, translating into the target language (often known as "prose composition") was also valued as a reliable test of good all-round ability, because it required candidates to tackle a wide range of structures, to draw on a wide range of vocabulary, without the option available in free composition, of simply changing what one wants to write in accord with what one knows how to write. The Senior (A-level equivalent) German paper of 1858 required pupils to translate a passage from the philosopher John Locke, beginning "He that would seriously set upon the search of truth ought in the first place to prepare his mind with a love of it: for he that loves it not, will not take much pains to get it, nor be much concerned when he misses it" (UCLES 1858/2008: 95). At the lower examination levels, translation into the target language took the form of disconnected sentences dreamed up by the examiners to test specific grammatical points. The Junior French candidates had to translate phrases and sentences including "give him some; do not give him any [...] I am going to speak; I have just spoken; I am to go; I ought to go [...] France is the oldest monarchy in Europe; the longer the day, the shorter the night; is it wine you are drinking?" (ibid.: 42).[14]

Before demonizing the instrumentalization of translation as a testing tool, we should note that in the late 19th century, regulations for both Junior and Senior age groups specified that it was not necessary to pass the translation into the target language, even if a distinction could not be obtained without it (McLelland 2017: 137-138). In other words, translation into the language was used as a discriminator between merely passable and very good candidates; it was not expected to be achievable by all, even at a time when these examinations were taken by a small elite of pupils. On that understanding, and with only minor amendments (ibid.: 135-139), translation both into and out of the target language remained the core test of language ability for decades. In 1952, it still seemed "indisputable that translation tests, if wisely set, are of validity unsurpassed" (IAAM 1952: 305). The Reform Movement of the late 19th century set the direction of travel for a gradual shift in emphasis, over several decades, towards the spoken language in teaching, and from Viëtor (1882) onwards it challenged the value of teaching based on disconnected sentences; but it did not succeed at all in shaking the place of translation in assessment.

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14 Lower-tier UCLES papers did not require any translation into the language. For comparison, for admission to Sandhurst in 1881, candidates sitting the preliminary German paper also had to translate a few phrases and short sentences into German: "half-past three; the day before yesterday; I was writing a letter when my friend called; they went out as he arrived" (Rühle 1884: 21).

6. The decline of translation in language curricula and testing

Translation into the target language as an all-round test of ability for able pupils came under challenge only with the expansion of secondary education and its democratization, which, in Britain, took the form of comprehensivation of state schools. From the 1960s vastly more pupils than ever before were encouraged or required to take a language in Britain (generally French), and assessments now had to discriminate effectively between candidates in the lower ability range. Alternatives to translation into the language were increasingly offered; by 1970, across the different examination boards at O-level (Ordinary level exams taken at 16), alternatives included free composition, a written comprehension test, and a "much enlarged oral/aural test" (Page & Shortt 1970: 14). Translation was viewed by its detractors as a cause of errors in pupils' writing, and so Page & Shortt (1970: 11) observed in their review of O-level examinations that "the abolition of translation has produced a distinct improvement […]. Anglicisms still occur, but the habit of thinking it all out in English first is dying."[15] By 1980, the analysis by Moys (1980: 253) noted that once "the mainstay of most language examinations", the "prose composition" was losing ground. Two English boards, as well as the Northern Irish and Scottish boards, no longer included translation at all at O-level. In all the others except the Welsh board, it had become optional. Yet the majority of teachers still chose to enter their pupils for it (ibid.: 252). However, as testing grew, and the importance of school qualifications grew, so too did the science of testing (see e.g. Weir et al. 2013), and with it a new ideology of ensuring tests' "validity" emerged: tests should demonstrably measure what we think they measure. Without yet using that terminology, Moys was highly critical of the low cognitive, context and scoring validity of translation tasks in exams. First, they lacked scoring validity – they were inappropriate to the level of proficiency of the learners (Moys 1980: 253). Second, they lacked cognitive and context validity: the passages of narrative prose varied "only in degrees of remoteness from the candidates' sense of the world" (ibid.). Moys would have found more appropriate a test based on the kind of material "which might normally require translation in real life" (a letter, recipe, or assembly instructions, for example). In the damning assessment of Moys (1980: 252-253), "[o]n the whole, the texts [for translation at O-level] remain the pieces of deathless prose

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15 Shortt remained an advocate of translation into the target language at A-level as "a valid test for the university aspirant", but acknowledged the now widespread view that for many learners "it is of doubtful value as a means of learning the foreign language and preparing for it wastes too much valuable time that could be better spent in building up experience." (Page & Shortt 1970: 18). Prose composition remains a key assessment element in at least some British Universities today (see Towell 2012).

they always were: events of mind-deadening triteness heavily contrived to include the grammatical points the examiners wish to test". Here Moys implicitly measures the tests against a criterion for language learning tasks and assessment that had been struggling for recognition since the Reform Movement: authenticity, both of language and of task. Translation into the target language (in the form it was now practised) started from and produced artificial texts; and the task itself was artificial, something that few language learners would ever be required to do in real life, and so of little real-world validity. Moys (1980: 253) noted that the only ability tested by translation and not also tested by the newly introduced reading comprehension tests was "how well they can express themselves in English".

The implicit appeal to authenticity reflected a major reconfiguration of language teaching underway. As communicative language teaching became mainstream from the 1980s, language teaching and assessment was conceptualized and structured around the "four skills" in the target language. Translation had no place in this neat but closed structure, which offered no conceptual space for mediation between the target language and the first language (Fig. 3).

The reasons for sidelining translation were in part pragmatic, too. Translation is less practicable in a multilingual classroom, where the teacher may not speak the learners' language, of the kind common to much English Language Teaching, which has tended to set the agenda in language teaching research. When the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) was developed, the word "translation" did not occur in the published global scale and descriptors, which were structured (somewhat differently to the "four" skills) around understanding, speaking and writing (Council of Europe 2001: 25-30).[16]

	Spoken	Written
Producing	Speaking	Writing
Receiving	Listening	Reading

Figure 3: A common representation of the domains of language teaching and learning as four skills (following Widdowson 2012: 631; Widdowson himself critiques the simplification

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16 However, mediation (under which translation was considered) featured in earlier drafts (see Council of Europe 2018: 32, 45) and is considered in some detail at several points in the full document. See also below.

7. Beyond the four skills: A revival of translation based on a new ideology

In the 20th century, translation out of the target language was for a time considered a straightforward comprehension test, with the advantage, for the few candidates capable of it, of showing sensitivity to nuance. Later, it was viewed as a skill that was first, too difficult, and then irrelevant to the core business of acquiring the "four skills". Translation into the target language was judged to be even worse, a highly artificial task, and too difficult for most learners. As Moys (1980: 253) had noted, "[p]recise translation […] is a demanding skill which it is unrealistic to expect" in examinations taken by 16-year-olds. Two other factors also tended to marginalize translation in language teaching. One was the establishment of translation as a profession requiring specialist (often postgraduate) training, making Translation Studies a field of study in its own right. It is accepted that to carry out translation at a professional level is likely to require a far higher proficiency level than most proficiency scales even reach: "[P]rofessional translators operate at a level well above C2 [i.e. the highest level of the CEFR]. For instance, C2 is the third of five levels for literary translation recently produced in the PETRA project" ("Plateforme Européenne pour la traduction littéraire"; Council of Europe 2018: 35). Second, exponential advances in machine learning and the ubiquity of translation apps mean that people are far less likely to recognize the practical need for any individual to be capable of translation (or any form of mediation) for basic transactions.

And yet, in the UK at least, translation has regained a modest but explicit place in languages curricula. When new GCSE curricula were introduced in 2014, to be implemented from 2016, translation was reinstated, under the heading of "writing and grammar", both to "translate a short passage from the assessed language into English"; and to "translate sentences and short texts from English into the assessed language to convey key messages accurately and to apply grammatical knowledge of language and structures in context" (Dept. of Education 2015: 6-7). The announcement was met with dismay by those who feared a return to "a widely discredited approach to language learning" (Smith 2013: paragaph 3 [n.p.], cited Kirk 2018: 30), even though translation had never been banished as firmly as many might have assumed.[17] The CEFR did allow for translation as a task, activity or strategy (e.g. Council of Europe 2001: 10, 14, 87, 99, 136), including even the much-maligned "translation of example sentences from L1 to L2" under the heading of optional "formal exercises" (ibid.: 152).

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17 See Cook (2010) for a more balanced assessment of the role of translation in language teaching.

In the latest Companion volume to the Council of Europe (2018), the omission of translation from the original 2001 descriptors – never an ideological omission (cf. ibid.: 47) – was redressed. The updated descriptors now give ample space to translation – significantly, under the wider heading of "mediation" (Table 1; ibid.: 114),[18] itself deliberately given far greater prominence this time in the CEFR: "[O]rganisation by the four skills does not lend itself to any consideration of purpose or macro-function. The organisation proposed by the CEFR is closer to real-life language use […]. Activities are presented under four modes of communication: reception, production, interaction and mediation" (ibid.: 30). In addition to signalling Europe's multilingualism, this conception of "real-life language use" is also socially inclusive, acknowledging the experiences of minoritized language speakers and migrant populations. Learners are assumed to be "plurilingual, pluricultural beings". Plurilingualism, understood as "the dynamic and developing linguistic repertoire of an individual user/learner", is deliberately – ideologically – presented as normal, rather than exceptional (ibid.: 23, 27, 28). Even if learners do not begin with a plurilingual identity and repertoire, Cook (2013: 739) makes a case for translation in language learning to support the formation of learners' bilingual or multilingual identities, arguing that translation can "allow students to maintain their own sense of first language identity by relating the new language to it, while also building a new bilingual identity" (Cook 2012: 739). The terminology and the perspective is slightly different, but both defences of translation share the ideological position that learners should be able to develop, express and explore their dynamic and plural cultural and linguistic identities, and that translation makes that possible. That is the latest in a long history of ideological positionings of translation in language education. Whether we shall see another "paradigm shift" in favour of reinstating translation predicted by Cook (ibid.) remains to be seen.

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18   Similar descriptors are given for "Translating a written text in writing" (Council of Europe 2018: 114).

Table 1: CEFR descriptors for "Translating a written text in speech" (Council of Europe 2018: 114)

	TRANSLATING A WRITTEN TEXT IN SPEECH **Note**: As in any case in which mediation across languages is involved, users may wish to complete the descriptor by specifying the languages concerned.
C2	Can provide fluent spoken translation into (Language B) of abstract texts written in (Language A) on a wide range of subjects of personal, academic and professional interest, successfully conveying evaluative aspects and arguments, including the nuances and implications associated with them.
C1	Can provide fluent spoken translation into (Language B) of complex written texts written in (Language A) on a wide range of general and specialised topics, capturing most nuances.
B2	Can provide spoken translation into (Language B) of complex texts written in (Language A) containing information and arguments on subjects within his/her fields of professional, academic and personal interest. Can provide spoken translation into (Language B) of texts written in (Language A) containing information and arguments on subjects within his/her fields of professional, academic and personal interest, provided that they are written in uncomplicated, standard language.
B1	Can provide an approximate spoken translation into (Language B) of clear, well-structured informational texts written in (Language A) on subjects that are familiar or of personal interest, although his/her lexical limitations cause difficulty with formulation at times. Can provide an approximate spoken translation into (Language B) of short, simple everyday texts (e.g. brochure entries, notices, instructions, letters or emails) written in (Language A).
A2	Can provide a simple, rough, spoken translation into (Language B) of short, simple texts (e.g. notices on familiar subjects) written in (Language A), capturing the most essential point. Can provide a simple, rough spoken translation into (Language B) of routine information on familiar everyday subjects that is written in simple sentences in (Language A) (e.g. personal news, short narratives, directions, notices or instructions).
A1	Can provide a simple, rough spoken translation into (Language B) of simple, everyday words and phrases written in (Language A) that are encountered on signs and notices, posters, programmes, leaflets etc.

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