Literary Self-Translation and Language-Learning Attainment

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Abstract

In this paper, I will discuss the view that literary self-translation can be seen as the ultimate stage in language-learning attainment as well as in inter-cultural communication/mediation and I will go on to suggest the inclusion of creative writing exercises in the foreign language curriculum. Translation studies scholars such as the Belgium André Lefevere and the British Susan Bassnett [1] view self-translation as a form of re-writing of literary texts. To do so, a self-translator needs to be functionally bilingual and bi-cultural and to belong to at least two different linguistic and cultural fields, their identity shaped by such an experience. We might agree for the purpose of this exercise that creative writing is the highest point of language-learning attainment in any given language. Such a development point is characterised, among other things, by the ability to transgress linguistic rules in order to achieve desired effects [2]. Such competence is therefore, beyond the remit of formal linguistic education as it requires the student not only to master but also to break the given rules. Most native speakers however, are not writers and do not achieve this ultimate level of language proficiency, of course. It must also be said that most self-translating authors had exposure to their languages well beyond the formal educational setting. To conclude this paper, I will describe a creative writing activity where I asked students to express in the target language thoughts set in motion by watching the short video Lo Sguardo di Michelangelo by Michelangelo Antonioni.

Keywords: *Self-translation, intercultural competence, communication, identity, language learning.*

References:

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