From the "Protective Workshop" to Professional Reality: Grading the Difficulty of Translation Tasks

Christiane Nord

University of Applied Sciences Magdeburg-Stendal, Germany

A translation task must be geared toward the students' level of competence. If the task presents too many difficulties, the learners will not be able to show what they have learned already, and the motivation is lost. Drawing on a functional approach to translation, the author argues that in translator training programmes and courses as well as individual classes should be organized according to an appropriate learning progression. The distinction between inter-subjective translation problems and individual translation difficulties can be used as a tool to grade the difficulty of translation tasks and to choose learning and teaching materials in such a way that students are guided from easy to exacting tasks without losing their motivation to prepare for the profession. A few examples from a translation course for beginners are used to show how this can be done.

1. Preliminary remarks

Remembering my own training, many decades ago, I can still feel the frustration and disappointment about the little progress I seemed to make from one translation task to the next. I was stabbing around in the dark, trying to get hold of some guiding principle which would help me solve the ever recurring translation problems. But then, the next task was so different that it was impossible to "re-use" the solutions we had discussed in class.

I do not think things have changed very much over the years. Trial and

error still seems to be the favourite problem-solving strategy in the translation classroom. Teachers choose the source texts according to their own preferences and intuition as to what might be useful for the students' learning progress without spending too much time on aspects like systematic problem-solving or learning progression.

In the following paper, I would like to suggest some basic principles and guidelines that may help translation teachers to select their teaching material in line with an appropriate learning progression.

2. A systematic approach to translation teaching

There are people who think that translation is learned by translating. Because this is how we learn to communicate in our native language. But students of translator training institutions are not one-year-olds who learn to communicate by communicating, trial and error, feedback and correction. Students who want to be trained as translators do not have the time to translate all day long, one day after another, for months or even years, waiting for the teacher to correct their solutions. But they have a learning experience, they have learned other things before, among them at least one foreign language in addition and in comparison to their own, and they have some experience of the world.

For them, "to learn" means to recognize something heard or seen before, establishing analogies in order to re-use similar problem solutions for similar cases. This is easier if a problem can be named and classified. Repetition of similar problems helps remember solutions. Analogous problems can be solved using analogous solutions if the conditions (i.e. the translation brief) are analogous.

Applying these well-known facts to translation teaching, we find that it might be useful first to make a distinction between translation problems and translation difficulties, which will be classified into four types each (first published in German in Nord 1987, cf. also Nord 1997: 59-67).

2.1. Translation problems

In a translation task, translators encounter two types of stumbling blocks: translation difficulties and translation problems. Translation problems are

person-independent and objective, or at least inter-subjective tasks that have to be solved in order to produce a target text which fulfils the intended function(s). Translation difficulties are subjective and individual: what is difficult for one translator or trainee may be quite easy for another one, depending on their competence with regard to language, culture, general and specific knowledge etc. Difficulties are overcome by using the appropriate tools for documentation and research. Translation problems will always be present in any translation task even though a translator may have learned to deal with them rapidly and effectively. Translation difficulties, in turn, should become less frequent as competence and experience increase.

For pedagogical purposes, translation problems may be classified as pragmatic, cultural (i.e. behaviour-related), and linguistic. A fourth category includes those problems that are encountered in one specific text. We will call them specific problems. The four categories of translation problems are ordered top-down, according to their "generalizability."

2.1.1. *Pragmatic translation problems (PTP)*

Each text is a communicative occurrence embedded in a particular communicative situation, which, in turn, is determined by the culture in which it takes place. This applies to both the source and the target text. Comparing the (prospective) situation in which the target text will be used with that of the source text, we will find that some of the situational factors are different. Examples: Source-text elements of local deixis like *here, our government* cannot be used in the same way in the target text. Source-text elements of temporal deixis like *tomorrow, next week* cannot be used in the same way if the target text is supposed to be read two weeks later than the source text. The first person plural used by the author to refer to him or herself together with the addressed audience, as in: *We are looking back on a successful year in our country,* will not work for an audience that does not live in the same country as the author.

Pragmatic translation problems occur in each and every translating or interpreting task. Even in simultaneous interpreting, where situational conditions are the same for everybody involved, there will be pragmatic translation problems related to the addressees with their specific socio-cultural knowledge and horizon. Pragmatic problems are usually not difficult to solve if they are anticipated by the translator, but a failure to solve them puts the whole communicative interaction at risk, particularly in the case of temporal, local or personal deixis, where the target readers or listeners would not even be aware of

receiving a wrong piece of information. Therefore, pragmatic problems may be regarded as the most important category and should be taught at the beginning of any training.

2.1.2. Culture-pair specific, behaviour-related translation problems (CTP)

Each translational interaction involves members of two cultures with their culture-specific modes of behaviour and value systems. A difference in behaviour conventions may cause translation problems which usually do not make communication impossible but more difficult or may shed a negative light on the speaker (e.g. lack of politeness). Behaviour conventions make behaviour predictable, and a target text that does not conform to target-culture norms and conventions will be more difficult to process for the target audience.

Cultural translation problems can refer to any form of behaviour, from measuring weights and sizes through citations to forms of address and use of honorifics or genre conventions. Even translating may be governed by culture-specific conventions (e.g. dealing with proper names in the translation of fictional texts).

2.1.3. Language-pair-related translation problems (LTP)

Linguistic translation problems are caused by the structural differences between the two language systems involved in the translation process (e.g. with regard to syntax: gerund in English vs. no gerund in German; with regard to lexis: a huge variety of diminutive suffixes in Russian vs. hardly any diminutive suffixes in English; prosody: fixed intonation with end focus in English, flexible intonation with focus on any sentence part in German, etc.).

2.1.4. Specific translation problems (STP)

These are problems that appear in one specific source text, like puns or word-play, creative language use of a particular author, intentional deviations from language norms, dialect and slang, meta-language, etc. These problems ask for the translator's creativity and lateral thinking. This kind of problems may be solved more easily if they are dealt with on a "higher" level, e.g. looking at the function an author wants to achieve by means of a pun or a meta-linguistic commentary. For example, the function intended by a play on words may be achieved by other stylistic means like an original metaphor or comparison.

The classification of translation problems is a tool for both the teacher and the student. When preparing a task for the translation classroom, the teacher should analyse the source text in order to make sure that it presents some problems the students are already familiar with and a limited number of new ones. Source texts can be grouped according to the types of problems they present. On the other hand, students may prepare for exams by revising all the translation problems dealt with in class.

2.2. Translation difficulties

In contrast, the classification of (assumed) translation difficulties is a tool for grading the difficulty of translation tasks.

2.2.1. Source-text related difficulties

Regardless of the abilities and competences of a particular recipient, some texts are more difficult than others. This may be due to the complexities of lexis (e.g. a high proportion of technical terms, neologisms, long and complicated compounds), syntax (e.g. nominal vs. verbal structures, gerund constructions, elliptic sentences), a relatively large number of non-verbal elements (e.g. tags in electronic formats), text deficiencies (e.g. typos, incoherences) or the poor quality of text reproduction (e.g. a photocopy of a photocopy sent by fax). These difficulties would slow down the translation process for anybody, they may also force the translator to clarify certain aspects with the client or the agency.

2.2.2. Translator-related difficulties

Of course, for a trainee who has not learned yet to solve translation problems, any task will be more difficult than for a professional with many years of practice and routine. Teachers who are or have been practitioners often make wrong assumptions as to the difficulties a task presents for their students. These difficulties may be due to an insufficient proficiency in the source or target languages and cultures (e.g. unknown culture-bound terms), inadequate knowledge of the topic or the terminology (e.g. unfamiliarity with a company's specific terminology), but also to a lack of translation competence (e.g. beginners vs. advanced students in translator training).

2.2.3. Task-related difficulties

Certain difficulties are caused by the translation task itself. The most difficult task would be one given without any brief (e.g. please, translate into English!). The specifications of the brief with regard to addressed audience, time and place of the intended target-text reception, medium of publication etc. reduce the variety of possible solutions to a translation problem. An "easy" (but usually not very realistic) brief provides an exact description of the target situation for which the translation is needed; a more difficult brief may require considerable text transformations or demand a camera-ready target text that would not need any more revision processes. A task that does not allow direct contact with the client would be more difficult than a task where any doubts can be clarified directly and without much delay.

2.2.4. Workplace-related difficulties

When I was a student of translation, we were not allowed to use any dictionary or other tool in the exams (e.g. parallel texts or the card index we had prepared in translation classes, cf. Nord 2008), whereas our students today may even have access to internet sources or whatever tool they may need. This does indeed make the task easier, but if they have to look up the most basic information, they will not be able to finish their translations in time. Thus, the degree of difficulty of the translation task is also determined by the number and quality of available dictionaries and other documentation, the length of time allowed for the translation process, access to computers and internet sources, availability of helpful colleagues or revisers etc.

Using the concept of translation difficulties, tasks can be graded
- by varying the degree of difficulty of the source text (for a particular group), e.g. by indicating that certain (too difficult passages) need not be translated or providing specific extra information;
- by varying the degree of difficulty of the translation brief, e.g. stating explicitly for whom or for what purpose the target text is needed, or even indicating the translation strategy that would be most appropriate for the task;
- by varying the degree of difficulty of the working conditions, e.g. providing parallel texts or indicating useful websites or other helpful sources of information.

3. General principles for the selection of translation tasks in translator training

The general principles for the selection of translation tasks in translator training should be authenticity, professionality, situationality, and feasibility.

Authenticity means that all teaching material should be authentic, including all the imperfections, mistakes and incoherences typical of "real-world" texts. The teacher should not revise, correct or even re-write the source text or make up a text for the translation classroom. Students should be confronted with professional reality as soon as possible. There are more appropriate ways of reducing the difficulty of a text for translation purposes than manipulation. Texts that are too long for a class may be shortened; however, the parts excluded from the translation task should not be deleted completely because they may be relevant for text coherence.

Professionality means that all text should be related to professional practice. In countries where newspaper texts are hardly ever translated in professional practice (e.g. Germany), it does not make much sense to use them as the main or even exclusive material in the translation classroom (as was the case in my own training, long ago). Students should be confronted with all genres and text types they may have to deal with in the profession. This also entails real or realistic translation briefs covering the whole range of translation types (documentary vs. instrumental translations) and translation forms (interlinear, literal, philological, exoticising, equifunctional, heterofunctional, homologous translations) that may be conventionally required for certain types of text (cf. Nord 1997: 47-52). Of course, for the discussion of a particular type of translation problems, certain text types or genres are more appropriate than others, and even a newspaper report may be useful to illustrate the importance of adapting cultural references to the knowledge presuppositions of the addressed audience. Translation forms which are regarded as "too difficult" for the translation classroom (line a homologous translation of a poem) may be dealt with by looking at existing translations and doing some translation criticism.

Situationality means that text should be presented in their original form, although perhaps in reduced size. In order to appreciate the "physiognomy" of a text, it is important to see its layout on the page, appreciate any nonverbal elements like photos, tables or graphs, even feel the weight of an old volume. This tells us more about a text than many abstract explanations

or bibliographical references. If this is not possible, there should at least be as much information as possible as to the situationality of the original text, particularly in those cases where the intended target-text situation is different from that of the source text. The Lasswell formula may be a good tool to check if the information on situationality is complete (cf. Nord 1991/2005).

Feasibility refers to the availability of auxiliary texts: existing previous translations, background texts, comparable texts, and parallel texts. In this context, it may be in order to point out that the terms "comparable text" and "parallel text" refer to concepts that are different from those used in corpus-based translation studies. The term "parallel text" for authentic, non-translated texts of the same genre as the one required for the target text, was coined by Hartmann (1980) and has been used for this concept in translation pedagogy ever since. Along the same lines, "comparable texts" are authentic texts of the target culture, which represent a genre similar to that of the source text. I do not feel the need to change this terminology because of the new use of the terms in corpus-based TS, which was introduced much later.

Existing translations (into the same or other target languages) may provide food for the discussion of translation strategies and their possible effects on the audience. Background or encyclopedic texts may b e used to explore the topic and its terminology. Comparable texts and parallel texts provide information on genre and style conventions, measurement and other behaviour conventions, collocations and typical vocabulary, useful standardized formulas in certain text types, and the like.

4. Compiling a text corpus for a course or programme in translator training

Bearing these general principles in mind, there are a number of different criteria that may be used for the selection of texts and material for a translation course or programme. It should be noted that it has proved as useful to hand out the text corpus with the corresponding briefs and additional material at the beginning of a course (or even some time before, in order to start teaching and learning right away from the first session). When compiling the corpus, the teaching aims have to be stated in terms of the translation problems the students should master after completing the course.

Learning progression becomes smoother if the number of variables from

one task to the next is reduced to a minimum. We can distinguish pragmatic, thematic, formal, and functional criteria for the compilation of a course corpus.

- Pragmatic criteria: Source texts by the same sender, directed at the same audience, conveyed by different media, or different briefs form the same text, etc. A corpus compiled according to pragmatic criteria shows which text features are determined by the sender, by the addressed audience, by the medium, and which translation strategies correlate with what kind of brief.
- Thematic criteria: Various texts on the same topic, on related topics, on different topics but in the same text type, etc. A corpus compiled according to thematic criteria facilitates the retrieval of thematic information, which may then be used for various tasks (perhaps with an emphasis on different aspects of the same topic.
- Formal criteria may refer to the form of the source text or of the target text: Texts in Word, HTML, websites, draft translation, high-quality translation, etc.
- Functional criteria: Various texts of the same type or genre, text of different genres for different purposes, etc.

Less variety in compilation criteria means less variables, which leads to more confidence in the students to re-use strategies or solutions they have become familiar with in the previous task. In an ideal learning progression, each new task should present some translation problems dealt with in previous tasks, in order to enhance the experience of accomplishment and the motivation to learn more, and some new ones.

5. Example: A translation course for beginners

The following examples are the first five lessons of a first-year translation course Spanish-German (Nord 2001) designed on the basis of a slow but steady learning progression. The learning aim is to convey a basic translation competence for practice-relevant (non-literary) texts. The book consists of 15 lessons and two exams for midterm and end-of-term competence acquisition control). The difficulty of the task is graded from 4 (easy) to 9 (difficult), each grade being composed of the respective degrees of text-related, translator-related, task-related and workplace-related difficulty.

Lesson 1: Revision of a language-school registration form (see Appendix, Lesson 1)

Overall degree of difficulty: 4 (see table 1)

The source text is a multilingual registration form in Spanish, English, French and German. The German students are asked to revise and, where necessary, correct the German version before the form is reprinted. Since it is the first translation task the students have to tackle in their lives, an attempt has been made to make it as easy (for them) as possible.

Text-related degree of difficulty (TEXT): 1

The source text is very easy. Since it is addressed to students who want to improve their language proficiency, it has simple, everyday vocabulary consisting mostly of nouns, simple syntax in small units (only two complete sentences).

Translator-related degree of difficulty (TRANS): 1

Although the students' knowledge of Spanish is not yet fully developed, they will find the text easy to understand because the topic is related to their own personal experience. Most of them may even belong to the addressed audience of the text because they plan to attend classes of a language school in Spain during the term break. The teacher is prepared to answer any questions regarding the text, but not regarding the revision (i.e. direct client contact).

Table 1. The difficulty of translation tasks

Sample text	Grading the difficulty of translation tasks				Total
	TEXT	TRANS	PRAG	WORK	
Registration form	1	1	1	1	4
Information leaflet	1	1	1	2	5
Advertisement	1	1	2	2	6
Historical text	2	2	1	2	7
Cartoon, task A	2	2	2	2	8
Cartoon, task B	2	2	3	2	9

Task-related degree of difficulty (PRAG): 1

The source text includes suggested German translations that have to be revised. In addition, the English and French translations may help to evaluate the translation strategies applied.

Workplace-related degree of difficulty (WORK): 1

Since the source text is a fairly standardized specimen of the genre "registration form," ample parallel material can be found either in the internet (where the students have to make sure that they choose non-translated original texts!) and even in the language school round the corner. These parallel texts can even be regarded as "model texts" because they represent the prototypical German registration form.

In spite of this low degree of difficulty, the task offers a number of interesting, mainly pragmatic or convention-related translation problems. Here are a few examples:

▷ PTP "proper names": What to do with the name of the school *(Colegio de Estudios Hispanicos)* which also has a descriptive function. Thanks to the "internationality" of the components, it can be assumed to be fairly comprehensible even to applicants without a knowledge of Spanish.

▷ PTP "cultural reference": What is a *colegio* in Spain? How should *bachillerato* (Spanish secondary school leaving examination) be rendered for Germans?

▷ PTP "reference to legal system": How to translate *nacionalidad?* The German legal system makes a distinction between nationality and citizenship, whereas the Spanish term includes both concepts.

▷ PTP "audience orientation": How to translate *idiomas modernos* ("modern languages") for Germans who want to learn Spanish, not German?

▷ CTP "genre conventions": In which order are first name and last name usually given in a form? Think of the user (the school secretary) who may not be familiar with other cultures' naming conventions.

▷ CTP "conventions of abbreviations": How is *telephone number* abbreviated in German?

Working on this task, the students learn a lot about translating without having to translate much themselves.

Lesson 2: Revision of a multilingual information leaflet of a breakdown service (see Appendix, Lesson 2)

Overall degree of difficulty: 5 (see table 1)

The source text is an information leaflet in Spanish, English, French, German and Italian, consisting of three short paragraphs with information about the services of the breakdown service run by SEAT, the Spanish branch of the VW car company. Again, the German students are asked to revise and, where necessary, correct the German text because the German company Audi-VW has received reclamations about the poor quality of the brochure.

Text-related degree of difficulty (TEXT): 1

This second text is only slightly more difficult than the first. It also has simple, everyday vocabulary, and short, sometimes elliptic sentences.

Translator-related degree of difficulty (TRANS): 1

Again, the topic is related to students' personal experience (most of them drive, some even own a car). What may be a little more difficult is the reference to the Spanish road system. Therefore, the students are asked to familiarize themselves with Spanish geography before dealing with this task. The teacher is prepared to answer any questions regarding the text, but not regarding the revision (i.e. direct client contact).

Task-related degree of difficulty (PRAG): 1

The source text includes suggested German translations that have to be revised. In addition, the English, French and Italian translations may help to decide on translation strategies.

Workplace-related degree of difficulty (WORK): 2

This text is not as standardized as the first one. Therefore, there will not be any parallel or even model text like in lesson 1. On the other hand, German car producers and automobile clubs offer similar breakdown services, both in the internet and in print. Anyhow, with regard to tools and auxiliary material, this task is a little more difficult than the first.

A few examples of translation problems that have to be solved in this task:

- ▷ PTP "cultural references": How do the Spanish types of roads and highways correspond to German ones?
- ▷ PTP "audience orientation": What does *sin cobrarle la mano de obra* (in the English version: "without charging you for work") really mean?
- ▷ PTP "concepts and terms": What is a *coche-taller* (in the English version: "workshop-vehicle"? (A little picture in the brochure helps.)
- ▷ CTP "genre conventions": Would an imperative addressing the readers be appropriate in a German text of this genre?
- ▷ CTP "capital letters": Can capital letters be used for emphasis in a German text? What could be used instead?
- ▷ CTP "telephone numbers": How are the digits grouped in telephone numbers in German?

Since the three paragraphs of the text have almost the same length, the class may be divided in groups of 3 to 5 students to work on different paragraphs. The groups are asked to produce a final version each, which they present on a transparency or ppt to be discussed by the whole class.

Lesson 3: Advertisement for fresh sardines (see Appendix, Lesson 3)

Overall degree of difficulty: 6 (see table 1)

The third text is an advertisement for fresh Spanish sardines published in a lifestyle magazine. It has a fixed layout on one page, with a number of illustrations, which has to be preserved in the translation.

Text-related degree of difficulty (TEXT): 1

The text consist of one longer paragraph praising the quality of fresh Spanish sardines, and six very brief descriptions of how to prepare them, each printed below an illustrating picture. It has simple syntax and vocabulary in small units, with a large variety of expressions referring to delicious taste.

Translator-related degree of difficulty (TRANS): 1

The topic belongs to the students' general experience, apart from the references to Spanish geography, which, however, have been dealt with in Lesson 2.

Task-related degree of difficulty (PRAG): 2

The task is more difficult because it involves translating the text in such a way that it fits in the layout and achieves the same appellative function as the source text (= equifunctional translation).

Workplace-related degree of difficulty (WORK): 2

Since the text is intended to produce an original appeal, parallel texts are not available in the target culture. But comparable and background texts can be found in German lifestyle magazines and in the internet.

Some translation problems that have to be solved in this task:

▷ PTP "pragmatics of place": In Germany, sardines are not sold fresh but canned and in oil. This is how they are even defined in an encyclopedic dictionary. How can this idea of *sardine* be corrected in the first few lines of the text?

▷ PTP "pragmatics of time": The text refers to the season in which sardines are at their best. How to deal with this problem in the text?

▷ PTP "proper name": Below the text, the Spanish *Ministry of Agriculture and Fishery* "signs" as sender. How to deal with this proper name in the translation?

▷ CTP "genre conventions": What are the genre conventions of German advertizing slogans?

▷ CTP "genre conventions": What are the genre conventions of German recipes?

Lesson 4: Historical text about "turrón"

Overall degree of difficulty: 7 (see table 1)

The text deals with the Spanish Christmas specialty *turrón,* a kind of nougat, which has to be translated for a German women's magazine. They want to use it as material for their "Christmas Special" supplement, in which they present international specialties of the season.

Text-related difficulty (TEXT): 2

The text itself is much more demanding with regard to vocabulary and

syntax and contains a large number of references to Spanish history and culture. To make comprehension easier, two students are asked to prepare a few Powerpoint slides about the topic, which they present at the beginning of the class. In addition, the teacher brings a package of *turrón* to the class to give the students an idea of the taste and consistency.

Translator-related difficulty (TRANS): 2

The students have been familiarized with the topic before starting to work on the text, but they will still find the text difficult to understand.

Task-related difficulty (PRAG): 1

To compensate for these difficulties, the translation brief requires a documentary translation without any pragmatic or cultural adaptations. Since the editorial staff of the magazine will be in charge of the final formulation of the text, the translator does not have to worry about genre conventions or specific stylistic norms.

Workplace-related difficulty (WORK): 2

There is ample information material (background texts) on *turrón,* including recipes, in internet sources, but no parallel texts. A comparable text on *chocolate* is provided by the teacher.

A few translation problems that have to be solved in this task:
▷　PTP "zero equivalence": How should *turrón* be called in German?
▷　PTP "cultural reference": How to deal with the reference to the Arabs *(musulmanes)* living in Spain in the 13th century?
▷　PTP "quotation": How to deal with the Catalan song explaining the origin of the name *turrón,* which is quoted in the text? (The students usually do not read Catalan.)
▷　PTP "quotation": How to deal with the etymology of the word *turrón* quoted from the Dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy of Language?
▷　PTP "proper name": How to deal with the names of the varieties of *turrón* mentioned in the text?

Lesson 5: Cartoon with two different translation briefs (see Appendix, Lessons 4 and 5)

Overall degree of difficulty: 8 (Brief A) and 9 (Brief B) (see table 1)

This text is a picture story about two brothers, the little one called Miguelito and the older one Hugo, who discuss the question of who has to do the washing up before their mother comes home. The younger one finds all sorts of excuses why he cannot do this, which the older one comments, rather arrogantly, with subtle irony. The class is divided into two groups. One group is asked to produce a text for the pictures, which have to fit exactly in the balloons (Brief B), whereas the other group is asked to work in pairs, translating the text for a little sketch to be presented at their next school party (Brief A).

Brief A: Some students want to perform this picture story at their next school party. Please translate the text from the balloons in such a way that it can be used as a script for their performance. It should be appropriate to make the audience laugh and recognize their own family situation (or that of their friends).

Brief B: A national German weekly plans to publish the picture story in their weekend magazine. If it is a success, more stories by the Spanish author Romeu will be published in the magazine. The picture layout will not be changed. Please, make sure that the text fits into the balloons.

Text-related degree of difficulty (TEXT): 2

The text is divided into small units, each unit representing a segment of the dialogue between the two brothers, witha large balloon (Miguelito's excuses) and a smaller one (Hugo's reactions). In the last picture, Hugo sums up his arguments in a large balloon, while Miguelito looks rather depressed, without a word.

The sentences are rather short, but the vocabulary refers to oral language represented in written form, which is relatively difficult to process. On the other hand, the students are probably more familiar with the genre than the teacher!

Translator-related degree of difficulty (TRANS): 2

Apart from being familiar with the genre, the students (at least those who have little brothers or sisters) can be assumed to know the topic, even in the age of electric dishwashers. However, they may not be as familiar with the references to the Spanish culture, which the teacher is prepared to explain if necessary.

Task-related degree of difficulty (PRAG): 2 (task A) and 3 (task B)

Both tasks require instrumental translations, Brief B an equifunctional one and Brief A a heterofunctional one.

Brief A gives the translator considerable freedom to adapt the cultural references (including the names of the protagonists) in order to allow the audience to identify with the situation. There is no space limitation, but the transformations must be chosen carefully, considering the audience's expectations and experience.

Brief B is heavily constrained by space limitations. Considering the linguistic differences between Spanish and German, for example, it is obvious that a source-text oriented translation would need much more space than available in the balloons (e.g. personal pronouns implied in the Spanish verb endings have to be explitated in German).

Workplace-related degree of difficulty (WORK): 2

For both tasks, comparable texts are available. The teacher is prepared to answer any questions concerning the specific references to Spanish culture.

The experience with these two tasks has shown that the translations produced according to brief A are usually much more "functional" and lively than those produced under the constraints of brief B.

The results of the grading process are represented in the above Table 1.

6. Conclusions

The tasks presented to the learners in the course of a translator training programme should be organized according to a slow but steady learning progression. This means: Each task should demand the solution of a few translation problems the students are already familiar with from previous teaching units and a few new ones.

The degree of difficulty of a translation task can be measured by four parameters:

(1) the absolute degree of difficulty of the source text with regard to vocabulary, sentence structure, coherence, deficiencies, quality of reproduction, quantity and quality of nonverbal text elements (text-related degree of difficulty);

(2) the knowledge resources, skills and abilities of the translating person regarding their (receptive and productive) proficiency in the source and target languages and cultures, their general, cultural and domain knowledge (including terminology) and their translation competence according to the stage of training they are in (translator-related degree of difficulty);

(3) the complexity of the translation brief with regard to the quantity and quality of translation problems that have to be solved in order to produce a functional target text which fulfills the requirements of the brief, and to degree of perfection expected of the target text (draft translation, summary translation, camera-ready translation, etc.) (task-related degree of difficulty);

(4) the technical conditions and equipment of the translator's workplace, availability of dictionaries, auxiliary texts, electronic tools like translation memories, databases, etc. (workplace-related degree of difficulty), and time-pressure (tight deadlines).

These four parameters can also be used to reduce or increase the overall degree of difficulty of the task. If a translation task is to be feasible for a particular student or group of students, this means that the source text should be selected bearing the students' level of competence in mind (because a text which is too difficult is not likely to motivate the students but rather causes frustration and a feeling of failure); that every translation task should be accompanied by a translation brief (because it is easier to reach a well-defined goal than to poke about in the fog of what the teacher may have thought

would be the target-text function); that translation aids and tools (parallel texts, dictionaries, glossaries, encyclopaedic material, internet search machines, etc.). should be available and accessible during the translation process; and that the time limit and the required quality standard of the target text should be geared to the degree of difficulty of the translation task.

On the whole, selecting texts for translation classes is not a matter of adhering to rigid principles, nor is it a matter of mere intuition. It is a fundamental requirement in translation teaching that only authentic texts should be used as material, i.e. real texts-in-situation, and that they should be practice-relevant. This means that in a culture like Germany, where newspaper articles are hardly ever translated because the big newspapers have their own correspondents all over the world, newspaper texts play a secondary role in translation classes, if any, although they may be quite useful when dealing with translation problems like culture-bound realities (realia) or citations. All source texts have to be presented to the students in such a way that as much information as possible is provided on the situation in which the original is or was used in order to make the task more realistic.

References

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Author's e–mail address
cn@christiane-nord.de

About the author
Christiane Nord is Professor Emerita of the University of Applied Sciences Magdeburg-Stendal, in Magdeburg, Germany where she was Full Professor from 1996 to 2005. She holds a Ph.D. in Romance Philology (Romance Languages and Literature) and a Habilitation for Applied Translation Studies and Translation Pedagogy. She has been involved in Translator Training and research in Translation Studies at various German and Austrian universities since 1967. She has more than 180 publications in German, English and Spanish on skopos-oriented translation theory, methodology, and teaching, among them Text Analysis in Translation (1991, revised edition 2005, Arabic translation 2009), and Translating as a Purposeful Activity (1997, Chinese translation 2005, Korean translation 2006).

Appendix

Sample lessons

Lesson 1

HOJA DE INSCRIPCION
(Registration form, Bulletin d'Inscription, Einschreibungsformular)

CURSOS INTERNACIONALES DE VERANO
DE LENGUA Y CULTURA ESPAÑOLAS

Apellidos, Nombre _____
(Surname and Christian names, noms et prénoms, Vor- und Nachname)

Nacionalidad _____
(Nationality, Nationalité, Nationalität)

Fecha de nacimiento _____
(Date of Birth, Date naissance, Geburtsdatum)

Profesión _____
(Occupation, Profession, Beschäftigung)

Dirección _____
(Address, Adresse, Heimatanschrift)

Pasaporte n.° _____ Teléfono _____
(Passport n°., Passeport n°., Reisepass Nr.)(Tel. n.°)

¿Cómo ha conocido al CEH? _____
(How did you hear of CEH? Comment avez-vous connu le CEH? Wie erfuhren Sie vom CEH?)
¿Ha asistido alguna vez a los Cursos CEH? _____
(Have you attended previous CEH courses? Avez-vous déjà suivi les Cours CEH? Haben Sie
schon einmal an einem CEH Kurs teilgenommen?)
¿Qué idiomas habla? _____
(What languages do you speak? Quelles langues parlez-vous? Welche Sprachen sprechen Sie?)

IMPORTANTE

Enviar esta Hoja de Inscripción junto con dos fotografías y dos cupones de respuesta internacional

(2 photographs and 2 International reply coupons, 2 photos et 2 coupons de réponse internationale, 2 Fotos und 2 Antwortscheine)

Send this form to: COLEGIO DE ESTUDIOS HISPANICOS
        Calle Bordadores, n.° 1, bajo
        37003 SALAMANCA, España
        Teléf. (923) 21 148 37
        Telex: 26800 BOX 249
Director: A. HERNANDEZ

Lesson 2

Servicio de Asistencia en Carretera Seat. La mayor flota de Coches-Taller en las carreteras de España.

Carreteras nacionales, comarcales, interiores o costeras. No importa donde vaya, los coches-taller Seat estarán allí. Todos los días. Aunque sea domingo o festivo. Y le asistirán sin cobrarle la mano de obra. Tanto si su coche es Seat, como si no.

Disfrute de las vacaciones sin problemas. Los coches-taller Seat están en todas las carreteras de España.

First and Second class highways, small interior roads or near the coast, wherever you go, the SEAT workshop-vehicles will be there. Every day. Even on Sunday or holiday. They will assist you without charging you for work. Even if you car is not a SEAT. Enjoy your leave without problems! SEAT workshop-vehicles are present on every highway in Spain!

Routes nationales, départementales, communales ou côtières. Oú vous alliez, les voitures de dépannage SEAT y seront aussi. Tous les jours que ce soit dimanche ou jours fériés. Et elles vous dépanneront que votre voiture soit une SEAT ou non.

Profitez de vos vacances sans problèmes. Les voitures de dépannage SEAT roulent sur toutes les routes d'Espagne.

Es ist einerlei ob Sie nun Autobahn, Landstrasse, kleine Strassen im Landesinnern oder an der Kueste gebrauchen, die SEAT Werkstattwagen werden ueberall anwesend sein. Auch sonntags und feiertags. Sie werden Sie betreuen ohne dafuer Arbeitslohn zu berechnen. Sei es nun ein SEAT-Wagen oder ein anderer. Geniessen Sie Ihren Urlaub ohne Probleme!

SEAT Werkstattwagen gibt es auf allen Strassen in Spanien.

Strade nazionali, regionali, interne o costiere. Non importa dove Lei andrà, le macchine-officina SEAT saranno lí. Ogni giorno. Benché sia domenica o giorno festivo. E la assisteranno senza esigerle la mano d'opera. Tanto se la Sua macchina è SEAT, quanto se non lo è.

Si diletti delle Sue vacanze senza problema. Le macchine-officina SEAT sono in ogni strada di Spagna.