

ディスカッションから学ぶ翻訳学。トランスレーション
スタディーズ入門 *Learning about translation through
discussion. An introduction to translation studies.*

by Kayoko Nohara. 2014, Tokyo, Sanseido. ISBN978-4-385-36544-2

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Contrary to conventional wisdom, translation theory, or translation studies as the discipline is called, is far removed from the simplistic view of translation as an application of comparative linguistics. It is rife with questions, with concepts, with theories, many of which come from linguistics, but also from cognitive psychology, from literary theory, from hermeneutics, to mention just a few major disciplines that find their way into the translation studies literature. Access to translation studies is therefore a daunting task for beginners, which might also explain partly the translation practitioners' and students' reservation about 'theory' in translation.

Nohara's book is original in the way it tackles this issue. Each topic is basically introduced through a fictional discussion, mostly reconstructed from extracts of recordings of classroom conversation that the author had with her students over the years. The professor starts with introductory statements and engages in exchanges with up

to five students, to make the transition from very basic questions to more subtle considerations and to concepts developed and used in the discipline.

Nohara is a Japanese translation scholar who majored in Japanese in Japan, and then in history in Oxford. She later earned a PhD in translation studies at Queen's college, Oxford university. She now teaches translation and international communication at the Tokyo Institute of Technology and at several other universities in the Tokyo area.

In a two-page foreword, the author states that the book, which can be used as a textbook or a reference, is intended as an introduction to translation studies in simple words for students interested in translation, for practicing translators and more generally, for people interested in intercultural communication, basically without any requirement of previous knowledge about translation. She points out that translating is not tantamount to replacing words from one linguistic code with words from another, and that it requires taking on board cultural differences and differences in values, that translating raises one's awareness of both human diversity and universal human similarities. In her postscript, she explains further that this book should contribute to the readers' ability to adapt flexibly and dynamically to international and intercultural situations. This is a recurring theme in Japanese books about translation and interpreting.

As explained in the introduction, the first three chapters embrace translation and its fundamental components holistically.

Chapter one ("What is translation?"), starts with the teacher asking students what brought them to the 'translation and theory practice' class. One student's answer is his/her interest in (children's) image books from foreign countries, another likes the cinema and

intends to become a subtitler, a third wants to become a translator and expects to learn more about culture while attending translation classes, and a fourth, an admirer of Japanese literature, distrusts English translation of Japanese literary works. The teacher asks why, and the student expresses concern about the possible loss of shades of meaning in translation and wonders about the detrimental effects of markedly different sentence structures in the two languages. This gives the teacher an opportunity to make a distinction between form and meaning and to ask students how they would define translation, and then to introduce culture as a factor in translation.

After this introductory part, two questions are put to the reader as assignments:

- If you have felt a sense of unease when reading a text and its translation, give examples and explain
- On this basis, discuss what you think is untranslatable.

After this awareness-raising part, the chapter moves on to a more traditional presentation of translation as a black box, of definitions of translation, of what translation studies is all about, of prescriptive vs. descriptive translation studies, of formal equivalence vs. dynamic equivalence, all in simple language.

Next, in a large 'box', readers are offered an example of why word-for-word translation is not necessarily appropriate. The author mentions a feeling of uneasiness when reading a Japanese version of a sentence from a novel in English, with all parts of the sentence, including personal pronouns, translated literally in Japanese. Interestingly, in the discussion, she says she is not in favor of full 'naturalization' (she expresses the idea without using the concept), because keeping some features of the original language has some merit for learners of English and for people who are interested in

English as such.

Finally, in a smaller box (the “column”), Nohara discusses linguistic context-dependence and points out that due to the nature of human relations in Japanese culture, Japanese is highly context-dependent.

A similar structure is found in other chapters.

Building on the introduction in chapter 1, chapter 2 addresses meaning shifts and the links between language and meaning, but culture is never set aside. Nohara mentions President Obama’s visit to Japan in 2009. When he visited the emperor, he bowed, and was criticized for it in the USA whereas in Japan, the gesture was received as demonstrating good manners and courtesy. In the “column” box, Nohara then introduces the concept of ‘heuristic’ as applied to culture and context-dependent translation.

Chapter 3 starts with a fictional classroom discussion about the presence of translation in daily life, extending the concept to intra-lingual translation, for instance using simplified Japanese for foreigners whose mastery of the language is incomplete, to inter-modality and inter-semiotic translation, again, in simple words.

The title of chapter 4 is ‘The translation of humor’, but this is only a starting point. Humor-related issues are taken up through cartoon strips, with two examples. This serves as a basis for a further discussion of equivalence, with a distinction between semantic and pragmatic equivalence, and the introduction of covert vs. overt translation, of semantic vs. communicative translation, and of translation units. This is where Nohara starts to introduce some technical translation studies-specific terms.

Chapter 5 deals with the translation of children’s picture books as an illustration of how translation attempts to bridge cultures, this time with a Japanese source text (*Egon, who wanted to become a big*

snake) and its English translation. Chapter 6 moves into literary translation proper through translation issues identified in a short Japanese novel, *The Dream of Petrus Memling*, and into a discussion of transparency and of the viewpoint adopted in the translation. In chapter 7, Nohara ventures into the translation of poetry, specifically the translation of Haiku, a very Japanese genre, and takes this opportunity to analyze the relation between an author's intention, his/her text, and the reader's interpretation of the author's intention.

In chapter 8, the analysis moves back to less literary waters, namely the translation of the press, more specifically the translation of political articles. Chapter 9 is about subtitling, chapter 10 about advertising slogans, with the introduction of the concepts of adaptation and creativity. Chapter 11 is about translating science, and chapter 12 about legal texts. Interpreting is not taken up in any chapter. The two texts from which extracts were analyzed in chapters 5, 6 and 10 are offered to readers after this last chapter.

At the end of the book, a chapter-by-chapter list of references for further reading is offered. The list includes rather technical books from translation studies and a few literary works. Most of them are in English, some are in Japanese, one is in German and one is in French. The book also includes a concept index of close to 80 concepts and a name index of about 40 scholars. Interestingly, in both indexes, all terms are in Japanese, and foreign words (adaptation, translation studies, shifts, jargon etc.) are written in Japanese characters only.

The book reflects Nohara's viewpoint as a translation studies scholar who is definitely on the intercultural, theoretical side rather than on the empirical side. The book is about ideas, not about the translation process in terms of what goes on in the translator's mind (the 'black box'), not about empirical research about translation

quality, revision etc. Neither is there much about translation studies as a discipline, with its scholars, institutions, learned societies, journals, conferences, debates and history. It is actually an introduction to thinking about translation, to 'translation theory' rather than an introduction to 'translation studies'. As such, and in view of the target readership, it probably does rather well the job of introducing 'softly' readers with no previous knowledge of such theory to some fundamental ideas that show there is much more to translation than seeking linguistic equivalents.

As to the original discussion format, it is difficult for this reviewer to assess its reception by Japanese readers. But it certainly makes it easier to transpose it into audiovisual format, with a lively discussion viewers could see and hear, which could be followed by more lecture-like explanations and comments by the teacher.

An original 'soft' introduction to translation theory indeed.