

# GENERAL GUIDELINES / METHODOLOGY

Here are some advice and strategies to help you translate...

## 1. *Become familiar with the text*

Read the passage; understand its message and tone. Quickly analyze it. Is it a first or third person narration? Who is the narrator? Is the excerpt a description, an essay...? What is the tone of the passage? What is its style? When was the text written?

### Getting acquainted with a text

**Date / period written?**

Knowing when the text was written and published helps in adapting the language and lexicon used by the translator. You cannot translate an 18th century text using language from the 20th century (luckily, we will be translating only recent texts in this class).

**Style / language level?**

Literary, high language register (educated, sophisticated...), colloquial (simple, everyday conversation...), ethnic / social group speech, slang...

**Tone of the text?**

Prosaic, poetic, philosophical, journalistic, didactic, romantic, modern, old fashioned...

**Author's style?**

The translator is a "chameleon". If the author has a convoluted style, you should adopt a convoluted style. Do not try to "improve" the original, just convey its characteristics in the language you are translating into. Resist any temptation to edit or modify the text i.e., acting as co-author. Do not make an adaptation but faithfully render the message, style, tone, and atmosphere of the passage.

**Changes?**

Altering sentence structure, word order or punctuation is only allowed if these run counter to the usage of the language into which you are translating. Collocation, idiomatic expressions, however, must be used to render a more authentic version of the passage in the target language (take liberties when it comes to grammatical categories and structures, syntax, etc.). Tenses should not be changed.

## 2. *Analysis of the text*

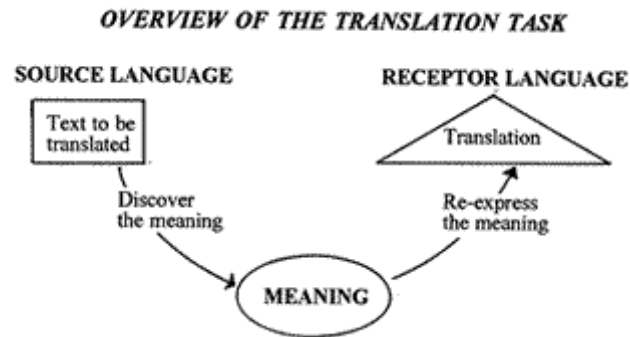
Read the passage again several times. Do not leave any stone unturned. Look for translation units (see Translation Units handout). What words do you not understand (use a dictionary here to determine the meaning of these). Make sure you are looking at words within the particular context of the passage. Watch out for punctuation, verbs and tenses, gender of words, etc.

## 3. *Transferring the meaning*

Go from the source to the translated equivalent. For this task, you should watch out for proper lexical register, false cognates ("faux amis"), abstract meanings, words in context, idioms and collocations. You should also make use of the various translation devices (*emprunt, transposition, modulation*, etc.) as needed for an accurate, idiomatic and authentic rendition. Keep an eye on proper word order, syntactic changes and necessary ellipses. You should not hesitate to spend time looking for the "right word" using a

thesaurus (both English and French thesauri will be useful), a bilingual dictionary and a monolingual dictionary.

The overall task of the translator is described as follows:



**How much leeway does the translator have?**

You should find a middle ground between being too close to the source text and too far from it. Do not be extreme!

If you are too close to the source text and its wording, your translation will really sound like a translation, which you want to avoid at all costs. Remaining too close to the original will manipulate the ideas and the spirit of the text, or falsify them.

If you are too far from the source text because you are trying to be too original, overly creative or idiomatic, the original message will be lost and deprived from its intended nuances resulting in an adaptation rather than a translation.

#### **4. Polishing up / finishing**

In the previous step, you will obtain a rough draft of your translation. Now, you need to review your text and make sure it reads smoothly and that it is harmonious. You must give the impression to your readers that they are not reading a translation and you should find the perfect balance between being too literal and too close to the original, and leaving the original text aside so as to be as idiomatic and authentic as possible. If you find several possible translation of a sentence or phrase, check the context to choose the most appropriate version.

#### **5. Final phase**

Proofread the translation and compare it to the source text (correct eventual errors). Also make sure your text is free of any spelling, grammatical errors and that verb inflections (in French especially) are correct.

Other common areas should also be checked: adjective / pronouns agreements, articles (more common in French), clauses, negation, accents, false / true cognates, spelling differences, punctuation, etc.