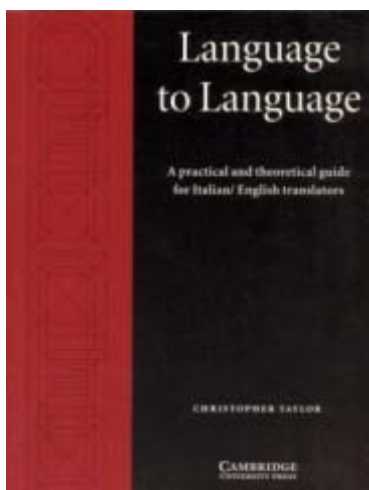**Book Review**

Christopher Taylor's Language to Language

Reviewed by Ali Darwish

Language to Language

Christopher Taylor

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In recent years, there has been a commercial push to mass-produce generic language-dubbed course books about translation methods. Replace the language pair and voila! You have a new book! While such books may have value in the framework they present, the dubbing approach reminds one of the "*teach yourself a language in five days*" books that were popular in the sixties and seventies, and casts some doubt about the credibility of the authors' second-hand knowledge of specific languages. The current book under review is a far cry from such a generic approach to translation studies.

In this elegantly designed book, Christopher Taylor presents a practical guide to translation for Italian/English translators derived from his own experience as a translator and intimate knowledge of both English and Italian. As the author tells us, the book is the fruit of his many happy years teaching at the University of Trieste's Advanced School of Modern Languages for Translators and Interpreters.

The book consists of two major parts. **Part One - Theoretical Background** provides the theoretical framework for the discussion in part two. It consists of three chapters, which the author describes as being of partially theoretical nature. The aim of part one, according to the author, is to sensitize students of translation, and anyone interested in this fascinating field of human activity, to the varied nature of text by presenting an analysis of its various components and

discussing some of the modes of thinking that surround text and translation studies.

Chapter one, Linguistics and Translation, discusses the relevance of linguistics to translation. It centers on the notion that translation is undeniably a linguistic phenomenon, at least in part, and looks at a number of theoretical concepts with a special focus on lexical and grammatical issues. This chapter also introduces translation strategies and adopts Joseph Malone's model of translation. Malone (1988) developed a model that for some strange reason has not been given the attention it deserves in the literature on translation studies and it is indeed refreshing to see Malone's work recognized in this book. I have used Malone's model in my theory classes for more than 10 years, with a range of language groups including Arabic, Greek, Turkish, Italian, Spanish, Chinese, Khmer, Japanese and Korean. I have found it both practical and effective in handling a variety of divergent languages with universal applicability. Commenting on his chosen approach, Taylor explains:

> [the chapter] "will deal almost exclusively with contemporary language and the various ideas and theories that link up modern synchronic linguistics with translation studies. The value of this approach is summed up by Malone, whose terminology will be adopted in this section" (47).

Malone's approach is described in this chapter in terms of English and Italian translation, using examples from both languages to explain Malone's nine strategies (should be more aptly described as operations or techniques) that the translator can apply at a structural, lexico-grammatical level: equation and substitution, divergence and convergence, amplification and reduction, diffusion and condensation, and reordering.

The chapter also discusses terminology in translation within a Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) framework, exploring the differences between terms and words. This is an important section for receptor languages that use non-Latin scripts as well as West-European languages. Picht and Draskau (1985:3) define LSP as a formalized and codified variety of language used for special purposes to communicate information of a specialist nature. Terminology falls within this context of LSP.

While implicitly acknowledging the crucial role of translators in terminology work, in this chapter Taylor examines the importance of terminology to translators as users of dictionaries, glossaries and term banks. "Translators, usually not specialists and often with no technical background, look to the data collections (dictionaries, glossaries, data-banks, etc.) to help them find target language equivalents of terms" (36).

While this book is not solely about terminology and lexicography, to the extent that terminology work is an essential component of the daily tasks of translators, especially where the technological and cultural gaps are wider between languages and nations, this chapter falls short of addressing these needs.

However, since the book is for English/Italian translation, this chapter provides a good introduction to the basic concepts. All the same, Taylor submits that, "standardisation procedures [in terminology] are still being refined and are still far from complete. [...] it is now acknowledged that supplementary information regarding usage is often required in dictionary material […] (37).

Chapter two, Translating Meaning in Context, deals with semantics, Halliday's context of situation model, pragmatics, and cultural constraints, while *Chapter three, Language Varieties: Text Types and Genre*, deals with differences between the spoken and written forms of language, sociological varieties and text types. In this chapter, Taylor discusses literary, technical, legal, commercial, journalistic and advertising texts. He also discusses genre and register.

Part two – practice: the process of translating and "the rolling translation" maps out the text types explored in part one onto Italian/English translation examples divided into three chapters: *Chapter one, Literary, Journalistic and Film Texts*, *Chapter two, Technical and Scientific Texts*, and *Chapter three, Legal Commercial and Promotional Texts*. Selected translation passages are submitted to rigorous lexico-grammatical, textual, cultural, and semantico-pragmatic analyses, showing the various difficulties and problems encountered in translating these passages.

The book is rich with examples, solutions and pointers. But one major criticism that can be leveled at the book is that, like most other books on translation, it fails to show how the model adopted as the framework for the book, namely Malone's model of translation, is applied to the translations analyzed in part two. In part two, the author presents a different methodology based on Krings' (1987) findings that regard decision making processes, assessing the relative importance of morpho-syntactic, lexico-semantic, and pragmatic considerations, and the role of intuition. Taylor confirms:

"The kind of analysis pursued …is based to some extent on similar ideas, but attempts to follow the silent thinking strategies of translators as they work through a first reading, a pre-translation examination and a stage by stage transposing (or rolling) of the text, from L1 to L2…"

While the author agrees with Krings (1987) that "many processes automated in highly proficient professional translators still take place on a conscious level in learners" (Krings, 1987:161) and with Nida (1996) that "Translators who are certain of the meaning of a passage in the source language find that a correct translation in the target language develops almost without thinking" (159), he admits that this is not the norm among learners. Nonetheless, explicitization of these processes would have been better served, from a didactic viewpoint, had Malone's model been applied in Part Two to show learners, untrained translators or even experienced translators, how these professionals have applied their strategies within the model outlined in the theoretical section. This would have helped to bring to the realm of consciousness the strategies that are employed

subconsciously. Instead, the analyses take a descriptive approach that has no obvious connection to the nine categories of the model adopted in part one.

"Translators acquire their translation skills instinctively through interaction with at least two languages and perform translations intuitively based on their understanding of how such two languages interact with one another. Unfortunately, as with every other human activity, instinct and intuition do not always work. That is why we need a framework of decision making that enables us as professional translators to understand why we make certain decisions and choices and what impact such decisions and choices could have on the final translation product" (Darwish, forthcoming: 18).

The book under review has gone a good distance towards achieving this goal. However, the link between the theoretical component and practice remains weak. Nonetheless, the book stands out as a practical guide rich with contrastive analysis of English and Italian examples. It is a great book for teachers and students of translation, especially Italian/English. 🐝

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