American Translators Association Conference

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This association was founded in 1959 and is now the largest professional association of translators and interpreters in the United States with more than 11,000 members in 90 countries.

One of its primary missions is to promote the professional development of translators and interpreters. Annually, the ATA organizes a conference, a four-day international event offering language professionals more than 150 continuing education sessions, seminars, and workshops.

This poster presents a selection of the sessions that I attended, including a summary of some of the dilemma's and questions that translators and interpreters face.

More than 150 different sessions

More than 150 sessions, organized per topic categories and language are scheduled on a wide variety of subjects. Topic categories include: Education and Training, Financial Translation, Legal Translation and Interpretation, Science and Technology, Language Technology and Literary Translation.

Some examples of sessions:

- The Role of the Interpreter in Diplomacy
- The Language Industry in the Trump Administration
- Forms of Faithfulness in Literary Translation
- The Legal Case for Language access and Culturally Competent Health Care
- Translating for Canada
- Subtitling Cultural References
- Translating Your Way to Financial Independence

Session: Language and Politics

Undocumented immigrants or illegal immigrants?

How Do Political Preferences Influence Your Translations?

By Neil Graver

Political views per profession (US)

- Translators - R2 Democrats for every 14 Republicans
- Interpreters - 17 Democrats for every 20 Republicans

How do you avoid political bias when translating or interpreting? Although the examples were derived from a Dutch-American context, the parameters pertain to all translators teaching on politically sensitive issues.

Literary Translation

What does ‘faithfulness’ mean for the literary translator?

Inventiveness is risky for translators: we tend to restrain ourselves in the name of fidelity to the original. But to confront translational difficulty with inventiveness does not mean renouncing one’s devotion to the original. Inventiveness must arise from this devotion so that an ill-conceived sacralization of the original does not generate incomprehensibility, or even untranslatability…This inventiveness, the translator’s imagination, has another function: it breaks might be ‘like ice’ that would make sufficient, but not too much, sense. It couldn’t be obvious or banal, because the original is neither of those things, and also because that would prevent it from being beautiful.

I decided that for me, the comparison was largely about speed, which meant I needed to specify that, but also a sense of majesty, of terrifying beauty, so ‘ice’ became ‘iceberg’. And because English has the particularly beautiful, unusual word ‘calve’ to describe a berg breaking from an ice mass, I jumped at the chance to work that in, so it came out as: ‘The dawn light was calved from the night slow as an iceberg’.”

Translation is interpretation and interpretation is subjective…Is beauty the right criterion in this context for a “good” translation? Is the translator faithful (enough) to the original? How do we evaluate a translation if we don’t understand the original? What about the length of the proposed translation?

Session: Forms of Faithfulness in Literary Translation

What does ‘faithfulness’ mean for the literary translator?

Inventiveness is risky for translators: we tend to restrain ourselves in the name of fidelity to the original. But to confront translational difficulty with inventiveness does not mean renouncing one’s devotion to the original. Inventiveness must arise from this devotion so that an ill-conceived sacralization of the original does not generate incomprehensibility, or even untranslatability…This inventiveness, the translator’s imagination, has another function: it faces the problem of untranslatability not by taking on individual words or sentences but by evoking the context, imagining the author’s intellectual path, and following it step by step through the text.”

Translation

References: "Translation is Practice of Acceptance" by59547; Nov 20, 2016

Acknowledgments

At WMU, I have taught translation and translation-related classes for the past nine years. Attendance of this conference has given me the opportunity to gain a wealth of knowledge regarding the theory and practice of translation, including the dilemmas that translators and interpreters face. Thus, the sessions and interaction with professionals provided valuable topics for the classes that I teach. Furthermore, the knowledge gained at the ATA conference also intersects with my current research projects on the topic of Francophone African literature translated into English.

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