American Translators Association Conference

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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 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.

**Session: Language and Politics**

Undocumented immigrants or illegal immigrants?

How Do Political Preferences Influence Your Translations?

By Neil Gouw

![Political views per profession (US)](image)

- Translators - 52 Democrats for every 48 Republicans
- Interpreters - 73 Republicans for every 27 Republicans

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

**Translation and ethical questions**

If translators are given a choice, which term would they use? To what extent do you actively think about using one term over the other? What are your own thoughts about the terms?

- Undocumented Immigrants
- Illegal Immigrants
- Tax avoidance
- Climate change
- Global warming

**A critical approach to the English translation of a South Korean novel**

"Smith [the translator] amplifies Han [the author]'s spare, quiet style and embellishes it with adverbs, superlatives and other emphatic word choices that are nowhere in the original. This doesn’t just happen once or twice, but on virtually every other page. [...] Smith’s embellishments create more suspense and interest for the English reader, but for those who can read the original, it can be quite jarring."

-- Gloria Cao, "How the bestseller ‘The Vegetarian,’ translated from Han Kang’s original, caused an uproar in South Korea."

**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. 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."

-- Ivan Steemers, "A critical approach to the English translation of a South Korean novel."

**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 dilemma’s 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. Many thanks to the Office of Faculty Development for their financial support.