**Translation Transformation**

**Abstract**: In this activity intended for the EFL (writing) classroom, students in small groups choose a 2–3 minute segment of a film, television show, or anime/cartoon in their L1 to translate into English. Once they have come to a consensus on the translation, they choose a new direction in which to continue the scene, collaboratively writing their new parts. Then, using video cameras available on their mobile phones and a program such as iMovie, the students film and edit the scene(s). These are then uploaded to the class blog/website and presented in class. Each group now has the opportunity to view and comment on each other’s choices both in translation and the new creative direction they took. Class discussion topics include how the experience of the scene is different in the L1 vs. L2 and how that led to other creative options; different possibilities the groups did not pursue; and how language itself changes the rhetorical considerations of audience, purpose, and message.

Purpose:

1. To investigate the difficulties/options available when translating a scene from the L1—how translation forces you into different directions semantically, which in turn creates an awareness of how meaning is formed at the word/phrase level;
2. To follow those directions, creating and extending them, which allows students to practice/improve their writing, speaking, and critical/creative thinking;
3. To workshop and share their projects with their peers, which fosters the ability to present one’s work, think critically of your and others’ work, and respond to feedback.

Specific objectives:

1. To improve awareness of the effect of translation on the sense of a text;
2. To extend vocabulary both at the word, phrase, and discourse level;
3. To understand more about how language and context affect rhetorical elements such as intended/unintended audiences, purpose, and message of a text;
4. To become more skillful creative writers and thinkers;
5. To get experience sharing one’s work with peers and to offer and receive feedback.

Skills, competences, and/or literacies:

1. ACTFL Communication 1.2/Connections 3.2/Comparisons 4.1 (understand and interpret written and spoken language/distinctive viewpoints through the FL/nature of language): a deeper understanding of how meaning is created through choices at the word, sentence, and discourse level. Creating one’s own texts in writing.
2. ACTFL Communication 1.1 (collaboration): this is a group project and is evaluated as such, even by the group members themselves.
3. ACTFL Communication 1.3 (presentation/speaking): groups present their work to the class and field questions about their choices.
4. ACTFL Connections 3.1 (knowledge of other disciplines): students learn more deeply about rhetoric, and also about the creative processes of writing scenes and recording video. Electronic technologies/multimodal literacy: students use internet technologies and applications such as iMovie to select, translate, and continue texts.

Context: University-level EFL classroom (advanced students).

Technologies: internet (for source material and class website), mobile device (playing clip, filming scene), program such as iMovie (editing), large display in class.

Preparation: the instructor should make sure all students bring mobile devices to class. S/he should also make sure all students have access to video editing software such as iMovie. The class should have a blog/website whether specific to the project or not. Classroom should have a larger display for viewing the student work at the end of the project.

Implementation:

1. Students form small groups based on genre interest (movies, television show, anime/cartoons). (5­–10 mins)
2. Groups brainstorm and choose a specific show/program in their L1 to work on, focusing on a 2–3 minute scene (youtube). It is recommended that the scene include the same number of characters as people in the group (or one fewer; this person can be “behind the scenes” as a cameraman in later steps). It is also helpful if these shows are relatively well-known and have English subtitles available for viewing at the end of the project. (10–15 mins)
3. Working together, the group members translate the scene from L1 to English. They can use resources to help with this task but not the subtitles themselves. The members must come to a consensus on their translation. (approx. 30 mins—depends on how much language is involved)
4. Groups decide and write in English an “alternative ending” or continuation of the scene based on their creative interpretations. (could be done as homework/over a weekend; at least 45 mins)
5. Groups prepare for what they will need in order to film their scenes: roles (who will act, who will film), wardrobe, locations, music. (10–15 mins)
6. Using a mobile video camera (on iPhone or similar device), groups film their scenes. (outside of class, such as over a weekend)
7. Using iMovie or a similar program, groups edit their scenes together, adding music or atmospheric sound as needed. (60 mins)
8. Once satisfied/before the due date, groups upload their final versions to the class blog/website. Students view each other’s work and prepare comments for class discussion. (homework)
9. Possible classroom follow up discussions could follow various directions: one at a time, groups present their clips and then the class comments on the group’s choices regarding translation and interpretation (subtitles could be used here as a reference point); discussion of how rhetorical elements such as audience, purpose, message, and context have shifted in the student versions. (Full class period)

Assessment: Students will use a rubric/evaluation form to evaluate each other’s contributions to the group. Instructors should use these either as a set percentage of the final grade (20%, for example), or as a starting point for determining each student’s project grade. The areas to be evaluated include:

1. Completion of tasks/quality of work
2. Cooperation with other group members
3. Feedback/collaboration
4. Willingness to work with other members of the group
5. Timeliness

Variations:

More of a rhetorical analysis angle: students could have different guidelines for how they continue their scenes. For example, before choosing a direction, they could analyze the rhetorical elements already present (audience, purpose, message, context). Once students identify these, they decide to alter them. For instance, if the audience is preteen Japanese girls, they could write their new endings or extensions for an audience of American college students (etc.). This would focus the activity more toward rhetorical awareness and possibly extend the competences (intercultural).

Another variation entails a genre blend: if the clip they started with is from a sitcom, they could write their new endings or extensions under the conventions of a different genre (melodrama, anime, etc). First, of course, they would need to analyze what those genre conventions are, in order to guide their writing. This would focus the activity and discussion more toward genre awareness.