

Introduction

The purpose of this handbook is to suggest ways of teaching and assessing the course, both in general and in respect of individual practicals. There is no need to elaborate on the aims and rationale of *Thinking German Translation*, which are explained in the coursebook. We simply reiterate that the objective is to enable students to produce good translations. The expository material and the practicals are all means to this end, not ends in themselves. Students should be repeatedly reminded that they do need to master the concepts and terminology, but never to parade them just to prove they have learned some long words. In doing a translation assignment, their sole aims should be these: (1) analyse the ST and identify its salient features, including its purpose; (2) bearing in mind the purpose of the TT, use this analysis to devise a strategy that will meet the translation brief; (3) apply the skills they have acquired to producing a TT fit for its purpose – and to explaining *why* it is fit for its purpose.

SEMINARS

How the course is taught will depend on local conditions – timetabling, available contact hours, computer provision in classrooms, whether the course is being taken by undergraduates or postgraduates, etc. The optimum use of time is to allocate three class hours a week to it. In this scheme, the first hour is devoted to detailed discussion of the issues and examples in a given chapter. Then, later in the week, the corresponding practical is allotted a two-hour seminar. But in most curricula this would be a utopian arrangement. The following notes assume that the course will be taught over two semesters, each containing 11 teaching weeks, and that there will be one two-hour seminar per week, with limited opportunity for computer use during the seminar itself, and with marked homework generally being done once a fortnight.

If fewer than 20 weeks are available, or two-hour classes are not feasible, the course may need to be pruned. If this is necessary, we suggest the following. Chapters 1–10 are essential. Of the others, Chapters 14–17 can most easily be omitted. For

undergraduates, a choice can be made of one or some of Chapters 11–13. For postgraduates, however, we would urge that all of Chapters 1–13 be covered, and as many as possible of the rest.

Each practical is based on a chapter. It is essential that the students prepare for it, even when they have not been given a written assignment to do at home and hand in for marking. This preparation involves reading the chapter carefully, making sure they understand the new concepts introduced, analysing the examples and drafting translations of those for which none is given. There are bound to be things in the chapter that they disagree with or are not clear about: all these should be raised and discussed in the first part of the seminar. The tutor will sometimes need to intervene to direct discussion towards an issue which the students have not raised, but which experience shows can be problematic. This initial stage of the seminar may take anything between 5 and 20 minutes, depending on the topic and student ability. (Practicals 14–16 are different: each of these ‘contrastive’ chapters in itself constitutes the material for a whole or part practical.)

If students have done a home exercise from the practical accompanying the chapter, the next part of the seminar is devoted to discussion of it. Going through the strategic issues, the problems encountered and the solutions found can easily occupy the rest of the seminar. Sometimes, this is unavoidable and desirable. Often, though, discussion has to be guillotined and directed by the tutor, who will steer it towards what marking has revealed to be the commonest difficulties. The most economical use of time for returning work requires the seminar to be timetabled for late in the week. Suppose the class is on a Thursday. Students hand their exercise in by a stipulated time late on Monday or on Tuesday, the tutor annotates it as necessary (and if necessary grades it) and makes the marked exercise – together with any handout – available for the students to collect late on Wednesday. This ensures that students have time to digest all the tutor’s annotations, and the handout, in preparation for class discussion on Thursday. If timetabling makes it impossible to return work before the seminar, then at least the handout should be available to students one or two days in advance (as long as it is after they have handed their work in).

If the recommended arrangement is put in place, the discussion is more focused and more useful than if the marked work is not handed back until the seminar itself. This part of the practical can be concluded more briskly, leaving adequate time for any in-class exercise that is scheduled for the final part.

Exercises done in class are usually better done in groups than individually. The size of the groups depends on the assignment and on how big the class is. Groups of three or four seem to work best. Students learn a lot from each other in terms of flexibility of approach. In particular, the less self-confident can learn from the more linguistically adventurous. The latter, in turn, often learn the value of reflection and rigour from their group-mates. Another advantage of group work is that long or tricky STs can be divided between the groups, so that the whole text can be covered in the seminar. A third advantage is that the reporting stage of the exercise takes up less class time than if students report individually on their own work. The reporting, and discussion of the reports, are vital. *Thinking* translation is the watchword, and a crucial aim in all class work is for students to formulate their thoughts on the exercise and discuss them with the whole class. When class work is done in groups, therefore, it is important that each group nominate a spokesperson at the outset. If, as generally happens, the group remains the same week by week, this office can rotate: in translation studies as in

anything else, articulating a view in front of the class concentrates the mind wonderfully.

A useful and enjoyable aspect of group work is the tutor's role. Once students have had a few minutes to read the text and started to discuss it with one another, the tutor can circulate from group to group, joining in the discussion, helping out with obscurities, asking leading questions and discreetly ensuring that attention is being paid to the important issues.

We even suggest working in groups or pairs for some of the exercises that are best done at home. How feasible this is depends on how much of the syllabus needs to be formally assessed: different institutions have different requirements. Recommendations on group versus individual work are given below, in the notes on each practical. The pedagogic advantages of group work are the same as for work done in class. An extra advantage for the tutor is that, for the more unusual exercises (e.g. Practicals 9 and 10), which take longer to mark than the orthodox translation assignments, the marking load is reduced.

It is important that students have adequate reference works with them in practicals. We ask them to bring four: a c.2,000-page monolingual dictionary such as the Duden *Deutsches Universalwörterbuch (DUW)*, a bilingual dictionary of similar size; an English dictionary (the 2004 edition of the Collins is excellent, and contains useful encyclopaedic material); and an English thesaurus. We assume that all written work is done using these four works as a minimum; for work done outside the classroom, students should be encouraged to use longer (recent) and technical dictionaries, and internet facilities such as Google, ixquick (www://ixquick.com) and Eurodicautom (<http://europa.eu.int/eurodicautom>) or its successor (as we went to press, users were being informed that 'because of the migration to the new interinstitutional database IATE, Eurodicautom will no longer be updated'). However, we have helped out with terminology and background information in the practicals where we considered that the 'classroom resources' recommended would not suffice. In our analyses in the handouts, we sometimes, for the sake of concision, identify the specific sense of a complex word like 'so' by reference to the numbered sub-entries in the 2003 edition of *DUW*.

HANDOUTS

Most of the assignments in the practicals are more complex and time-consuming, for students and tutor alike, than traditional language or translation exercises. For many practicals, we have found it very helpful to distribute specimen answers as class handouts. These are emphatically not the 'right answers': the coursebook makes it very clear that there is no such thing! The primary function of the handouts is to be examples of how to tackle the tasks set. In particular, they show what kinds of issue to address in forming a strategy, in deciding translation solutions and in formulating decisions of detail. As such, they are very effective – but there are plenty of points to disagree with in them, as there are in the coursebook itself. Their other function is indeed to provide a piece of work by an outsider, for the whole class to discuss and criticize – this is easier to organize and less invidious than using individual students' work. Some of the most helpful moments in a seminar are when something in the tutor's handout is (rationally) demolished.

A number of such specimens are included in this handbook. (Not all are simply

specimen answers, however. Sometimes, for pedagogic reasons, we do go into a number of significant decisions of detail that go beyond the strict remit of the assignment – the handouts are often a bit more than simply models.) Also included are a number of published TTs for analysis and discussion in class. Assurance is hereby given that *all the copyright holders have granted permission for these handouts to be photocopied gratis and distributed to students, as long as they are not sold for profit.*

ASSESSMENT AND EXAMINING

Most institutions now practise some form of continuous assessment. However, many of the practical assignments in this course are not really suitable for continuous assessment. This is because they are *sui generis* and sometimes quirkily demanding, being designed only to raise awareness of one particular translation issue. The student's attention needs to be focused on exploration, reflection and experiment, not on worrying about how to ensure a good grade. In other words, if continuous assessment is a requirement, we strongly suggest that only a few of these exercises be used for it – one or at most two of the straightforward translation assignments is enough. Better still is to take an ST from outside the coursebook for translation and commentary. This has three advantages. It ensures that, when working on coursebook materials for the practicals, students focus single-mindedly on *learning*. In addition, as long as a new ST is chosen each year, it reduces the risk of plagiarism in the second and subsequent years in which the course is taught. Finally, all or most of a seminar can be set aside for the return and discussion of the assignment without interfering with syllabus work (assuming that more than 20 weeks are available over the year).

If an end-of-course examination is required, certain constraints applying to this particular subject need to be borne in mind. Assuming a three-hour examination, if students are to formulate a strategy and write notes on their main decisions of detail, they simply do not have enough time to translate as much German as in the traditional 'unseen' translation paper. We have settled on the format of a one-question paper in which students are asked to translate 100–120 words of ST in three hours; the TT is preceded by a strategic analysis and followed by decisions of detail. The general rule is: the shorter the better – if the ST is well chosen, 100 words are enough to test students' ability in most of the areas covered by the course. If conditions permit, attractive alternatives are a five- or six-hour exam, with a longer ST (and a lunch break in the middle), or a 24-hour 'take-away' exam, including appropriate use of internet resources.

In setting an exam, we always specify a brief, and give as much contextual information as is needed for the major translation problems to be clear. *We assume that students will have with them the reference books they have used for practicals.* Any references or meanings not found in these are explained either in the contextual information or in a footnote. Sometimes, a good way of supplying essential contextual information is to print the immediate context along with the ST (making it absolutely clear in the instructions which part of the text is to be translated). Given that students will be consulting four bulky reference books in the exam, it is important that they have enough room. Ideally, each student should sit at a small table (or two traditional exam desks pushed together), or share a large table with a student sitting diagonally opposite. These arrangements need to be sorted out well before the day.

This kind of test is new to many students, and they can find it difficult to pace

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themselves. It is therefore a good idea to give them a practice exam if there is a spare week in the second half of the semester. This also provides a useful revision class.

To reflect the priority we give to quality of TT, we weight the marks given for strategic decisions and decisions of detail as follows: strategic decisions are weighted $\times 1$; the TT is weighted $\times 6$; decisions of detail are weighted $\times 2$. This means that a student who does a brilliant first-class TT but writes no notes may just scrape a 2.ii: they are warned not to skimp the notes! We apply these weightings in both continuous assessment and exams.