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# LSP Teaching within a Plurilingual Perspective

## Abstract

In the light of the reappraisal of pedagogic translation, particularly since the turn of the century, my presentation first investigates the nature of pedagogic translation, drawing on models and methods elaborated in translation studies and educational linguistics. Then, it introduces the competence framework laid out in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2020). Thirdly, it illustrates how translation pedagogy is being gradually integrated in LSP teaching as part of the syllabus design of modern languages degree courses in Europe. To this end, I examine the convergent approaches and methods presented in three undergraduate coursebooks that draw inspiration from the plurilingual stance upheld by the CEFR. The first coursebook is *Mundos en palabras: Learning Advanced Spanish through Translation*, authored by Ángeles Carreres, María Noriega-Sánchez and Carme Calduch (2018). The second one is *Italian to English Translation with Sketch Engine*, authored by Dominic Stewart (2018). The third one is *Linking Wor(l)ds: A Coursebook on Cross-linguistic Mediation*, authored by Sara Laviosa (2020).

**Keywords:** plurilinguistic repertoire, cross-linguistic mediation, translation

# 1   Introduction: pedagogic translation

Pedagogic translation, i.e. the use of translation in language learning and teaching, has been reappraised within a broad plurilingual perspective on language use and education. The plurilingual perspective embraces the principles of the 'multilingual turn', which advocates "multilingualism as the new norm of applied linguistic and sociolinguistic analysis" (May, 2014, p. 1). This new orientation takes account of the complexities of languages in contact as they are used by plurilingual individuals engaging in intercultural communication in their everyday personal, social, academic and professional life. The multilingual turn adopts an ecological model of language. Language is viewed as a semiotic eco-system by means of which plurilinguals relate to the world and to each other by using a multitude of verbal, sensory, and kinaesthetic signs (van Lier, 2002). The multilingual turn advocates collaborative learning, which involves mutual exchange of knowledge, skills, and competences between teacher and students and among students themselves. This means that learners engage in meaningful activities as varied as projects, presentations and investigations. These activities engage students' interest and foster language growth through perception, interaction, planning, research, discussion and the co-construction of academic output of various kinds. This approach to learning draws on the principles of Sociocultural Theory developed by Lev S. Vygotsky in the 1970s. The multilingual turn has contributed significantly to the revival of translation and the role of the L1 in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) studies, Bilingual Education, Language Teaching Methodology, as well as language assessment and testing (cf., Laviosa & González-Davies, 2020). Against this background, language policy makers in Europe are rising to the challenges posed by our increasingly plurilingual and pluricultural societies by elaborating new competence frameworks in language education. One such framework is laid out in the latest version of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) with new descriptors (Council of Europe, 2020).

# 2   The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)

The CEFR (Council of Europe, 2020) endorses the principles underpinning the multilingual turn in educational linguistics and recognizes that the language learner's communicative competence is built on the interrelationship and interaction between languages and cultures. Plurilingual individuals draw flexibly on their interrelated, uneven, plurilinguistic repertoire to accomplish a variety of communicative tasks. One such task is cross-linguistic mediation between individuals with no common language. Cross-linguistic mediation activities involving language A (the language a learner knows best) and language B (the new language) are of four types:

a) relaying specific information in speech and in writing, i.e. explaining in language B the relevance of specific information in a particular section of an unabridged text written in language A;

b) explaining data displayed in graphs, diagrams, and charts in speech and in writing across language A and language B;

c) processing a text written in language A by summarizing it in language B orally or in writing;

d) translating a written text in speech and in writing from language A into language B.

Translating a written text in speech and translating a written text in writing are cross-linguistic mediating activities that involve integrated skills, that is a mixture of reception and production, plus, frequently, interaction. Translating a written text in speech is the process of giving a spoken translation of a notice, a letter, or an email. It is largely an informal activity, fairly common in daily personal and professional life. The key functional ability involves capturing the source text's nuances of meaning. When translating a written text in speech, advanced learners (C1 level of the CEFR) can provide fluent spoken translations of complex texts addressing a wide range of general and specialised topics, capturing most nuances.

Translating a text in writing is more formal than spoken translation. It involves processing and articulating the source message in the target language. Translation is conceived as transfer of meaning from one natural language to another. The key functional abilities to accomplish this mediating activity are: a) comprehensibility of the target text; b) adherence to the relevant conventions in the target language; c) capturing the source text's nuances of meaning. When translating a written text in writing, advanced learners are able to translate abstract texts on social, academic, and professional subjects in their field, successfully conveying evaluative aspects and arguments. Summing up, the competence model for translating a written text in writing at C1 level of the CEFR can be outlined as follows. In order to become competent plurilingual individuals – this being the goal of language education – learners need to be able to mediate a variety of texts between the language they know best, i.e. the source language (or language A), and the new language, i.e the target language (or language B). When learners engage in written translation they should endeavour to achieve comprehensibility, fluency and accuracy. We can identify three areas of communicative competence, knowledge and skills that graduates in modern languages will have achieved by the time they complete their BA Hons. degree. These are:

a) plurilingual competence, i.e. the ability to call flexibly upon a single, interrelated, uneven, and developing plurilinguistic repertoire, which they combine with their general competences and various strategies in order to accomplish a wide array of communicative tasks;

b) the ability to transfer meaning from one natural language to another accurately, comprehensibly and fluently;

c) the ability to translate texts on social, academic, professional, and technical subjects;

d) knowledge of translation as transfer of meaning across languages and cultures.

The question that naturally comes to one's mind is this: how are scholar-teachers in higher education rising to the challenge of implementing the recommendations contained in the CEFR, particularly with regard to the use of translation in LSP teaching? I am going to address this question in the next section, where I examine a small but fairly representative sample of teaching methods that are currently adopted in LSP teaching, particularly in Europe.

## 3 Approaches and methods for LSP teaching

In order to analyse translation-oriented methodologies devised for LSP learning and teaching in two European countries, I am going to use the tripartite model elaborated by Jack C. Richards and Theodore S. Rodgers (2014) for the study of approaches and methods in language teaching. The model comprises three elements: approach, design, and procedure. Approach

consists of a set of principles drawn from language theory and language learning theory. Design links approach with specific teaching procedures and is concerned with a) the method's general and specific objectives, b) the syllabus model, c) the types of learning activities advocated by the method, d) the role of learners, e) the role of teachers, f) the role of instructional materials. Finally, procedure describes how approach and design can be realized in actual classroom techniques, practices and behaviours.

The first methodology I am going to present is adopted in the textbook Mundos en palabras: Learning advanced Spanish through translation, published in 2018, and authored by Ángeles Carreres and María Noriega-Sánchez (University of Cambridge, UK) and Carme Calduch (Queen Mary University of London). The intended target readership consists of advanced undergraduate students of Spanish (C1 level) with English as language A. The aim of the book is to develop cross-linguistic and cross-cultural awareness as well as foster the ability to translate a wide range of authentic texts from English to Spanish. The pedagogic approach adopted is task-based language learning and the activities are designed around two key tenets, i.e. translation is conceived as a form of mediated communication, and learning is regarded as collaboration among peers and between students and teacher. This stance is in line with the approach adopted by the CEFR, where mediation "focuses on the role of language in processes like creating the space and conditions for communicating and/or learning, collaborating to construct new meaning, encouraging others to construct or understand new meaning, and passing on new information in an appropriate form" (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 90).

In the introductory chapter, the authors outline the tenets that underpin the book and its goals. They explicitly refer to the fact that they are trying to reconcile two ways of conceiving translation in language learning, i.e. as a means (a tool to aid acquisition) and as an end (a skill in its own right). After the introduction, the coursebook is divided into 12 chapters. The first two introduce a number of key concepts, such as translation equivalence, translation strategy, and translation competence, among others. Chapter 3 deals with the use of lexicographical and terminological resources and tools that students need when undertaking translation tasks either in class or by distance learning. The remainder of the coursebook presents authentic translation activities that focus on text-types as varied as recipes, fiction, poetry, humour, theatre, advertising, and audiovisual texts. The last chapter is devoted to the translation of language varieties such as Spanglish. In the Companion Website (*Plataforma Digital*[1]) you will find the following five sections.

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a) Clave / Answer key
b) Guía didáctica / Teachers' Notes
c) Actividades / Activities
d) Recursos / Resources
e) Comentarios / Feedback

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By way of example, I illustrate two cross-linguistic mediation tasks selected from chapter 2. The learning objectives are: *Aprender algunos conceptos teóricos básicos*; *Reflexionar sobre cómo abordar un texto a la hora de traducirlo según su finalidad*; *Identificar problemas de traducción*

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1    https://routledgetextbooks.com/textbooks/9780415695374/default.php

*y desarrollar estrategias para su resolución*; *Familiarizarte con las diferentes técnicas de traducción*; *Identificar los tipos de errors de traducción*; *Familiarizarte con la corrección de traducciones*. In particular, section 1.3 introduces the principles of the modern functionalist approach to translation theory and explains the concept of 'encargo de traducción'. This concept is then applied in Actividad 3. Students first read an English text on the topic of the human reproductive system, adapted from Wikipedia. Then, they are divided into two groups. Group 1 receives the following translation brief (Carreres et al., 2018, pp. 23, 29–31):

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Encargo 1

a) Finalidad: explicar a niños de 9-10 años el sistema de reproducción humano.
b) Destinatario: alumnos de educación primaria (10 años).
c) Lugar de publicación: un libro impreso con un CD-Rom interactivo para un curso escolar de ciencias naturales.

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Group 2 receives the following translation brief (Carreres et al., 2018, pp. 23, 29–31):

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Encargo 2

a) Finalidad: traducir el artículo de Wikipedia para la versión en español de la Enciclopedia Libre.
b) Destinatario: público adulto sin conocimientos especializados de biología.
c) Lugar de publicación: Internet.

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Another example is taken from section 5 in chapter 3 entitled "Los corpus lingüistícos". The authors first describe the main features and uses (language learning, acquisition of subject-specific terminology, professional translating) of the general corpora of the Real Academia Española. Then, they refer students to the activities contained in the companion website. The pedagogic objective is threefold, i.e. acquire practical knowledge of two corpora in particular, Corpus del Español Actual (CREA) and Corpus de Diacrónico del Español (CORDE), develop the ability to use them autonomously when needed, and reflect on their usefulness for language learning and translating. One of the exercises in the companion website focuses on collocation and asks students to search the polysemic verb *echar* in a subcorpus of CREA, that represents periodicals published in Colombia. After retrieving the first set of KWIC concordance lines, students look for the collocational patterns associated with three different meanings of the transitive verb *echar*, i.e. *deshacer algo* (defeat); *reprochar* (reproach); *culpar* (blame), and then copy in their worksheet the actual verbal context in which *echar* conveys each of the above meanings. After completing all the corpus-based activities provided in the companion website, students carry out the following reflection task recommended in the textbook (Carreres et al., 2018, p. 83):

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Actividad 13

Tras haberte familiarizado con las búsquedas en corpus con las actividades de la Plataforma Digital, anota tres casos en los que crees que los corpus te pueden ayudar en tus traducciones y en tu aprendizaje del español.

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The second methodology I am going to present is used in the textbook *Italian to English Translation with Sketch Engine: A Guide to the Translation of Tourist Texts* published in 2018 and authored by Dominic Stewart (University of Trento). The intended target readership is composed of students of English (C1 level) with Italian as language A. The activities consist of authentic translation tasks.

After an introductory chapter, the book is organized in fifteen teaching units, each containing:

- a short abridged text of about 250 words to be translated for an envisaged international, non-specialist target readership consisting of travellers requiring clear and accurate information on tourist sites in Italy;
- a proposed translation sentence by sentence, which is based on successful renderings submitted by students;
- a discussion on unsuitable equivalents or appropriate alternatives arising from renderings submitted by the students.

The translations were carried out with the aid of large, general target-language corpora together with online language resources. The target-language corpora are the British National Corpus (BNC), containing 100 million words of British English offering a broad range of text types (90% of written texts and 10% spoken), and the web-derived corpus ukWaC, containing 2 billion words retrieved from websites in the .uk Internet domain, and searched through the corpus software Sketch Engine. The additional online language resources are monolingual English dictionaries, learner's monolingual English dictionaries, monolingual Italian dictionaries, and bilingual Italian-English dictionaries.

By way of example, I now illustrate how students searched the BNC and ukWaC to solve translation problems arising at different levels of cross-linguistic analysis. After examining all the 15 lessons illustrated in the textbook, I grouped the main lexical and grammatical mismatches that students encountered when translating Italian tourist texts into English into four main categories:

I)   Noun phrases containing toponyms.
II)  Subject-specific terminology.
III) Polywords.
IV)  Language-specific collocations.

With regard to noun groups with place-names, students searched the equivalent superordinate words in the BNC and ukWaC (e.g. island, lake, lagoon, mount, pass, plateau, stream, valley), and were able to identify the correct grammatical structure and word order of the following noun phrases, thus producing cohesive, coherent, comprehensible, fluent, and accurate target language texts:

- l'altopiano di Brentonico → *the Brentonico Plateau*
- l'altopiano di Malga Fanta → *the Malga Fanta Plateau*
- l'isola di Barbana → *the island of Barbana / the Isle of Barbana / Barbana Island*
- il lago Pra de Stua → *Lake Pra de Stua*

- la laguna di Grado → *the lagoon of Grado / Grado's Lagoon*
- il monte Baldo → *Mount Baldo*
- il passo di Fittanze della Sega → *the pass of Fittanze della Sega*
- il passo di Xomo → *the Xomo Pass*
- il torrente Brasa → *the Brasa stream*
- il torrente Caglieron → *the Caglieron stream*
- la valle dell'Adige / la vallata dell'Adige → *the Adige Valley / Adige Valley*

The frequent use of terms belonging to specialized fields of knowledge such as history, military history, geography, history of art, religion, architecture, gastronomy, transport, and arts and crafts is a feature of the language of tourism. By searching the BNC students were able to identify accurate and fluent equivalents of the following historical terms and expressions:

- il primo conflitto mondiale → *the First World War / World War I*
- l'ultima Guerra → *the Second World War / World War II*
- il dopoguerra → *the end of World War II*

Similarly, with the aid of the BNC and monolingual dictionaries for advanced learners of English, students discovered several suitable equivalents for the geographical terms *salita* and *gobba*:

- siamo a 2/3 della salita detta della Polsa → *You are now two-thirds of the way up the ascent/climb/rise known as the Polsa/called Polsa*
- poco sotto la gobba del Cornetto, m 1543 → *below the hillock/hummock/hump/bump/mound/knoll Gobba del Cornetto, 1543 m*

Furthermore, a simple query search of the BNC and ukWaC revealed these renderings of the Italian name of the religious order founded by St. Francis of Assisi in 1209:

- *frati francescani minori → Franciscan friars / Franciscan Friars / Franciscan monks*

Polywords are short lexical phrases that allow no variability and are continuous (cf. Nattinger & De Carrico, 1992). By searching ukWaC, students identified the following equivalents in order of preference based on frequency of occurrence:

- secondo la tradizione, → *tradition has it that / according to tradition, / by tradition, / tradition holds that*
- conosciuta in tutto il mondo → *recognised worldwide / known worldwide / famous worldwide / recognized worldwide / worldwide known / worldwide famous / worldwide recognised / worldwide recognized*
- a ricordo di → *in memory of / as a memorial of*

As translators and language and translation teachers know very well, collocation does not always travel across languages and cultures, hence one cannot "assume that semantic equivalents across languages have analogous collocational networks" (Stewart, 2018, p. 11). Large general corpora in the target language can aid learners to investigate thoroughly this aspect

of language use. One example of language-specific collocations discussed in the textbook regards the adjective *panoramico* and the English equivalent *panoramic*. While *panoramico* collocates with the node word *scorcio,* often in the plural form, as in *scorci panoramici*, the literal translation *panoramic glimpses* occurs only twice in ukWaC and does not occur in the BNC. Instead, the collocation *panoramic view(s)* is recorded in monolingual dictionaries and is very frequent in both corpora. Therefore, students realized that a comprehensible, accurate and fluent translation of the original collocation *scorci panoramici* is *panoramic views*.

Summing up, students worked individually and collaboratively, engaging in group discussions guided by the teacher. They were able to solve a variety of problems arising from lexical and grammatical discrepancies between the source and the target language. In doing so, they became aware of the stylistic norms of the target language in the specific field of tourism, and, in most cases, they were capable of producing intelligible, accurate and fluent translations.

The third methodology I am going to illustrate is implemented in the textbook *Linking Wor(l)ds: A Coursebook on Cross-linguistic Mediation* (Laviosa, 2020). Conceived within a multilingual perspective on language learning and teaching, this coursebook fully recognizes the value of pedagogic translation and other cross-linguistic mediation activities in fostering plurilingualism. The book focuses on written translation, and is aimed at undergraduate students of English with an excellent command of Italian at European Level C2 or above. More specifically, the book is written for learners of English from upper-intermediate level (European Level B2) up to advanced level of language proficiency (European Level C1). By the end of the course, students will become familiar with a number of linguistic concepts that will enable them to analyse the morphemic structure of words, lexical and sense relations, word classes, as well as the structure of phrases, clauses, and sentences. They will also become aware of the relevance of these key notions for examining the similarities and differences between English and Italian, and developing the integrated receptive and productive skills necessary for translating a variety of written texts, in accord with the new descriptors of the CEFR. *Linking Wor(l)ds* includes mediating tasks between English and Italian as both source and target languages. When translating into English the language abilities required are those described at European Level C1. When translating into Italian the abilities required are those described at European Level C2.

The book is divided into 12 chapters, each corresponding to a teaching unit requiring about two to four hours of seminar time. Each teaching unit is composed of a) an introduction presenting the learning objectives; b) an explanation of linguistic concepts; c) illustrative examples from a wide range of texts such as newspaper articles, poetry, narrative, political speeches, advertising, academic, scientific, technical and business writing; d) monolingual and bilingual language activities that can be carried out individually, in pairs, or in small groups for practice, revision and consolidation; e) a discussion of the translation problems that may arise when there are differences across English and Italian at various levels of linguistic analysis; f) translation tasks for which students will be able to apply some of the translation procedures commonly used by professional translators to address problems of non-equivalence at the level of lexis or syntax; g) a summary of the main points to remember.

The definition and explanation of key terminology is provided within each teaching unit as soon as a new term is introduced. In addition, a Glossary gives an index of terms and the

corresponding definitions. The Key is intended for self-study; it includes suggested translations and provides answers to the language activities. Additional Mediation Tasks are provided at the end of the book for extra practice on other forms of cross-linguistic mediation beside translation, namely relaying specific information, explaining data, and processing text in speech and in writing. *Linking Wor(l)ds* is accompanied by a Digital Workbook, *English Lexis, Grammar and Translation*, authored by Richard D.G. Braithwaite (2020). Divided into 12 units, the Digital Workbook offers activities with examples of real-life language use taken from a wide variety of sources such as newspapers, magazines, tourist brochures and billboards, advertising, BBC comedy, songs, poetry, novels, academic writing, and web sites. I will now illustrate the method's procedures with sample chapters in the textbook and in the Digital Workbook.

Chapter 3 of *Linking Wor(l)ds* is devoted to homonymy, polysemy, wordplay, and metaphor. With regard to wordplay, students learn to identify and analyse homonymic, polysemantic and idiom-based puns. They also become familiar with the translation procedures commonly adopted by translators to overcome semantic mismatches across the source and the target language when translating wordplay. Here is an extract from chapter 3 of *Linking Wor(l)ds*. It presents and explains the translation procedures suggested by Dirk Delabastita (1996, p. 134).

### 3.5   Translation problems

Different languages have different degrees of polysemy for equivalent words and there may be differences with regard to homonyms too. It follows that wordplay cannot always be rendered in the target language with an equivalent pun. Here are some translation procedures commonly adopted by professional translators to overcome semantic mismatches when translating wordplay.

PUN → PUN: the source text pun is translated with a target language pun, which may be more or less different from the original wordplay in form or meaning;

PUN → NON-PUN: the pun is rendered by a non-punning phrase, which may relay the full meaning of the pun or part of it;

PUN → RELATED RHETORICAL DEVICE: the pun is replaced by a related rhetorical device, such as repetition, idiom, simile, alliteration, rhyme, irony, paradox, personification, oxymoron, metaphor, which aims to recapture the effect of the source text pun;

PUN → ZERO: the portion of text containing the pun is simply omitted;

PUN ST → PUN TT: the translator reproduces the source text pun in its original formulation, i.e. he/she borrows it without any adaptation in the target language;

NON-PUN → PUN: the translator introduces a pun in textual positions where the original text has no wordplay, by way of compensation to make up for source text puns elsewhere, or for any other reason;

ZERO → PUN: totally new textual material is added, which contains wordplay and which has no apparent precedent or justification in the source text except as a compensatory device;

EDITORIAL TECHNIQUES: explanatory footnotes, endnotes, or comments provided in the translator's preface of a book.

The following activities involve the analysis of puns and their translation into English. They are in chapter 4 of the Digital Workbook.

**4.3** Wordplay in promotional texts: Identify and analyse the puns used in the following texts.



**Effetto Puglia**

GUIDA CINETURISTICA
A UNA REGIONE
TUTTA DA GIRARE

From the front cover of the tourist guide *Effetto Puglia: Guida cineturistica a una regione tutta da girare* © Copyright 2008, Editori Laterza

Affida i tuoi investimenti
a chi ti sa guidare.

From a promotional leaflet by
GruppoAssicurativoPostevita
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La protezione che ti assicura
il sorriso.

From a promotional leaflet by
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Here are the answers to exercise 4.3. They can be found in the Key chapter of the Digital Workbook.

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**4.3** Wordplay in promotional texts

Effetto Puglia: Guida cineturistica a una regione tutta da <u>girare</u>.

A polysemantic pun has been created with the verb <u>girare</u>, which means "to tour" and "to film".

Affida i tuoi investimenti a chi ti sa <u>guidare</u>.

A polysemantic pun has been created with the verb <u>guidare</u>, which means "to guide" and "to drive".

La protezione che ti <u>assicura</u> il sorriso.
A polysemantic pun has been created with the verb <u>assicurare</u>, which means "to guarantee" and "to ensure".

**4.4** Translating wordplay

Translate into English the texts analysed in exercise 4.3 and explain the procedures adopted to deal with wordplay.

Effetto Puglia: Guida cineturistica a una regione tutta da girare.
2. Affida i tuoi investimenti a chi ti sa guidare.
3. La protezione che ti assicura il sorriso.

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Here are the answers to exercise 4.4. They can be found in the Key chapter of the Digital Workbook. They include the source text, the suggested translation(s) and a comment on the translation procedures adopted.

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**4.4** Translating wordplay

1. Effetto Puglia: Guida cineturistica a una regione tutta da girare.
***A travel guide to film locations around Apulia***.
PUN → NON-PUN
***A tourist guide to movie locations around Apulia***.
PUN → NON-PUN
***Apulia: A film tourism guide.***
PUN → NON-PUN

2. Affida i tuoi investimenti a chi ti sa guidare.
***Entrust your investments to those who can guide you.***
PUN → NON-PUN

3. La protezione che ti assicura il sorriso.
***The insurance cover that will put a smile on your face.***
PUN → RELATED RHETORICAL DEVICE: idiom
***Protect your smile.***
PUN → ZERO

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As a concluding remark, I can say that the language teaching approaches and methods adopted by Stewart, Carreres et al., and Laviosa are in line with the theoretical principles of language use and second language acquisition that underpin the multilingual turn in educational linguistics and are endorsed by the CEFR. Also, they make a valid contribution to fulfilling the long-term prediction made by Guy Cook at the end of his seminal work on pedagogic translation:

> If the benefits of TILT [Translation in Language Teaching] were to be recognized in theory as well as practice by those in positions of power and influence as well as by rank-and-file teachers, it would have positive repercussions, and would initiate activity and innovation in many areas beyond classroom practice itself. New materials would need to be written, new tests designed, and new elements introduced into teacher education. (Cook, 2010, p. 156)

Looking ahead and further afield, the systematic study of the nature, place and role of pedagogic translation in LSP teaching will be enhanced by including the investigation of language assessment and testing, and initiating interdisciplinary research that engage educational linguists, language educators, and translation scholar-teachers in a wide range of educational settings in the four corners of the world.

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