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Translation in the Russian Language Classroom: Coming in from the Cold

BRIAN JAMES BAER, TATYANA BYSTROVA-MCINTYRE, IRINA DZERO

1. Introduction
For the past several decades, translation and interpreting have been largely excluded from the communicative language classroom—and not without reason. In traditional foreign language classrooms, “literal” or close translation was often used as a comprehension check or as part of a vocabulary or grammar drill, divorced from real-world context. This in turn encouraged students (and, on some rare occasions, foreign language teachers) to view language proficiency—and, by extension, translation competence—as a kind of linguistic matching game.

2. Translation in the communicative classroom
In Hans Vermeer’s (2000) terms, bilinguals were believed to merely “transpose” the words of one language into another (222), which essentially equated translators and interpreters with walking dictionaries. This idea of translation was only strengthened by the rapid rise over the past twenty-five years of machine translation tools, such as Google Translate, Babelfish, and Bing Translator, which, for some, obviate the need for proficiency in a foreign language altogether.

Correspondingly, when the behaviorist models that generated the now-infamous drill-and-kill activities were replaced by communicative and immersive approaches to language teaching, translation—viewed as undermining the principles of those approaches—was largely from the curriculum (Canale and Swain 1980). When language educators ignored translation, they deprived learners of the opportunity to develop more sophisticated ways to think about translation and cross-cultural communication—for where else but the foreign language classroom could one expect to address such issues? Recently, however, translation and interpreting have found their way back into the foreign language curriculum—but with a twist. As Byram (2000) notes in his entry on translation in the Routledge Encyclopedia of Language Teaching and Learning, there are now “more imaginative ways of integrating and adapting
professional aspects of translation and even interpretation [. . .] into language teaching” (637).

A number of Russian textbooks now feature translation- and interpreting-related activities. Unlike in the past, however these new tasks focus on communicating and negotiating meaning rather than specific grammatical structures and vocabulary. Moreover, they are often tied to real-world situations and in this way foster a more complex notion of translation as a form of cross-cultural mediation. For instance, the Golosa elementary and intermediate textbooks include interpreting tasks simulating real-world encounters. Another Russian textbook, Beginner’s Russian, offers translation assignments phrased in terms of translating ideas, not words; for example, one activity includes translating an advertising brochure for an American chain restaurant opening in Russia.

This integration of translation- and interpreting-related activities into the foreign language curriculum reflects the broad recommendations of the 2007 Modern Language Association (MLA) Report “Foreign Languages and Higher Education: New Structures for a Changed World.” This report recommended that foreign language departments reorient themselves away from the unrealistic goal of “repl[icit]ing the competence of an educated native speaker, a goal that postadolescent learners rarely reach,” and instead toward “the idea of translingual and transcultural competence, [which] places value on the ability to operate between languages.” Moreover, the report invokes a view of translation as a form of cultural mediation, distinguishing it from popular notions of translation as a simple kind of linguistic matching game. Indeed, transfer competence is a key feature of translator and interpreter expertise. In terms of World Readiness Standards, such activities align with the Comparisons standard, “developing insight into the nature of language and culture in order to interact with cultural competence.” Language comparisons foster learners’ awareness of connections and differences between the cultures studied and their own. More broadly, our view of translation as a cognitive tool aligns with Essential Learning Outcomes of the Liberal Education and America’s Promise program of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (aacu.org/leap), in particular the outcomes of improving inquiry, analysis, critical and creative thinking, knowledge of human cultures, and intercultural knowledge and competence.

This article will build on these early efforts by reviewing the rationale for integrating translation- and interpreting-related activities in the foreign language classroom, focusing on the latest research. We will then propose some general principles from the field of translation studies
to help instructors develop translation- and interpreting-related tasks that align with the fundamental principles of the communicative approach to language instruction; following this, we will provide a selection of sample tasks. We hope to stake out common ground between language teachers and translator trainers by reimagining the purpose of language proficiency at all levels in what Michael Cronin has called an “age of translation” (2013, 3).

3. Research on translation in the foreign language classroom

Research in second-language pedagogy, translator and interpreter training, and other areas offers a convincing rationale for integrating translation- and interpreting-related tasks in the foreign language classroom. Kirsten Malmkjaer (1998), for example, argues that real-life translation activities focused on linguistic units above the word level help instructors evoke reading, writing, listening, and speaking in a meaningful context. A task-based approach to the use of translation in a Russian language classroom benefits students in that it helps them move faster toward the idea that language is not about words but about meanings that exist in cultural contexts – a core principle of the communicative approach.

Recent research findings in second-language acquisition also support the return of translation and interpreting to the Russian classroom. At a panel devoted to translation in second-language development held at the 2013 MLA convention, Bradley M. Blair reported on an empirical study that suggested that exposure to translation appeared to accelerate the acquisition of reading proficiency.

Another empirical study conducted at Kent State University by Josiany Rocha in 2010 demonstrated that the use of translation in a writing classroom helped second-language learners “adjust to more native-like ways to convey information” (46) and thus “improve their ability to communicate more effectively” (53). Rocha argues that since translation involves comparing and contrasting the ways information is organized in different languages, “it can be a valuable tool in helping students become aware of the different perspectives” on information presentation in their first, or native, language (L1) and their second language (L2; 9). Thus, the use of translation in the second-language classroom helps address a problem outlined by Shutterheim (2002), who points out that even advanced L2 speakers “follow patterns of information organization of their first language” (195).

Further evidence of the benefits of exposure to professional translation and interpreting skills was provided by a research group in California. The group discovered that conducting translation- and
interpreting-related activities among heritage speakers helped foster an awareness of career opportunities and a self-image as a language professional. In this way, the students’ linguistic resources, which as an index of their immigrant status had been a source of shame and stigma, became the basis of a professional identity (Angelelli 2011). The group went on to devise a model curriculum for teaching translation and interpreting skills to this specific population (see Angelelli, Enright, and Valdés 2002).

Last but not least, in this learner-centered world, students’ opinions should count as well. Research shows that learners consider translation exercises helpful (Lavault 1985; Hervey, Higgins, and Haywood 2002). In his 2006 research study at the University of Cambridge, Angeles Carreres found that his student respondents unanimously found translation useful for their learning. In another study, Jean Conacher (1996) analyzed her students’ responses to a translation course and found that the students also viewed translation as a positive factor in learning a foreign language. She noted, “[T]hese students may never become translators, but they will never fail to appreciate the dedication, commitment, and expertise of the professional translators they may one day employ” (180).

4. Other rationales for including translation in the foreign language curriculum

There are other rationales for integrating translation- and interpreting-related activities into the foreign language curriculum beyond accelerating the development of language proficiency and a professional self-image. The research demanded of translation and interpreting offers excellent opportunities to (re)acquaint students with old tools such as dictionaries and new ones such as computer-assisted tools (CAT), machine translation (MT), and corpora, providing students with a more sophisticated and nuanced understanding of the uses – and, importantly, the limitations – of these tools.

4.1. Dictionaries and MT tools

Many proponents of the communicative method, especially those working in immersion programs (STARTALK), discourage their students from using dictionaries and MT tools, viewing them as interfering with the task-based approach, in which learners are required to use the language they know to solve a problem and not translate from English. Interestingly, dictionaries have been under attack for centuries. Already in 1899, Henry Sweet criticized dictionaries for heaping up “useless material” and thus confusing their users (145–46).
The reality is that students often turn to MT, online encyclopedias, thesauri, and other tools, and they do it unthinkingly and with little critical distance. The integration of translation- and interpreting-related activities into the foreign language classroom can provide an especially productive context for a discussion of these tools. Indeed, a survey conducted in 1999 among first-year MA students in translation at Kent State University revealed that most students had never been explicitly taught how dictionaries are made or how they should be used. Many students are therefore unaware that meanings are presented in most dictionaries according to decreasing frequency of usage, while other dictionaries contain entries arranged according to when the meaning first entered the language. Some questions for classroom discussion might include the following: How are dictionaries designed? Are they designed around a single concept or around words? What is the difference between a concept and a word? Then, instructors should invite students to consider or build a concept-oriented graph of an idea, with more than two languages employed, for greater impact (see fig. 1).

![Figure 1. Example of concept-oriented representation of terms: one concept (with its definition); multiple terms in languages and locales (cell phone icon designed by Freepik).](image)

Related discussions might address how MT tools operate—What are their strengths and weaknesses? Can they be helpful to us? Activities based on MT tools and other modern developments in linguistics help bridge gaps between classroom and real world settings and build on the technology-savvy nature of today’s student population.
4.2. Corpus tools
Translation activities can also be designed to involve corpus analysis. Corpora are large collections of electronic texts that represent a larger textual population and have been assembled according to explicit design criteria (Zanettin 2002, 11). Bilingual parallel corpora are collections of original texts aligned with their translations. Using parallel corpora in pedagogical settings has a number of advantages. Lynne Bowker (2001) notes that corpora offer “a common evaluative framework” for students and trainers (361), helping students be more receptive to their trainers’ feedback by allowing students to “see for themselves that it [feedback] is based on corpus evidence and not merely on the subjective impressions or incomplete understanding” of their teachers (Bowker 2003, 180). In this way, corpora contribute to the development of students’ self-assessment and peer-assessment skills while reinforcing their sensitivity to language in context (Baer and Bystrova-McIntyre 2009; Bowker 2003; Uzar 2004).

Exercises with bilingual translational corpora also allow learners to achieve a higher level of autonomy, since students can experiment with tools on their own. With bilingual corpora, students can investigate concordances and KWICs (“key words in contexts” in original texts and translations); collocations (patterns of lexical co-occurrence and how they differ in Russian and English); frequencies of words, phrases, terms, or grammatical structures in different text-types; and much more. For instance, when composing official letters, students may investigate the use of greetings in English and Russian. For advanced students, comparing and contrasting patterns of information organization in bilingual translational corpora may help them become more sensitized to the idea that information and cohesive patterns differ between languages and cultures. For instance, students may investigate the use of punctuation in Russian and English and observe some surprising differences in punctuation patterns.

4.3. Digital humanities
In addition, work with multilingual corpora and translation activities in a language classroom are natural and effective ways of introducing digital humanities (DH) into the curriculum. Today, the ability to collect, maintain, and manipulate digital datasets for research is a survival skill. Other DH tools that can benefit the Russian language classroom include survey and basic statistical analysis tools (e.g., SurveyMonkey or GoogleForms), visualization tools (any software producing graphs, charts, etc.), and publishing tools (MS Publisher or any software with provided templates).
Being able to access a storehouse of declarative knowledge is not enough to succeed in the modern world. One must be able to research and find and evaluate possible solutions. Translation- and interpreting-related activities that require such research and decision-making can foster a number of transferable skills that will benefit students for life (see, for example, Fallows and Steven 2000). In the world where the knowledge we gain is promptly becoming obsolete, transferable skills become key to survival (Arbesman 2012).

4.4. Job prospects
It is an open secret that graduates of Slavic language programs often struggle finding or simply identifying their future careers. Not every student is interested in pursuing K–12 or college teaching or a research PhD. Expanding the real-world use of translation and interpreting in curriculum design may help connect students of Russian to possible career paths, addressing the problem of employment for Russian language graduates. Many students are not aware that, according to the Occupational Outlook Handbook (2014–15) published by the US Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics, “employment of interpreters and translators is projected to grow 46 percent from 2012 to 2022, much faster than the average for all occupations.” For something that is so ubiquitous, translation and interpreting have been out of favor in Russian language instruction for far too long.

The fear of including translation or interpreting in the discourse on language pedagogy tends to be “even more acute” in the context of translation into the learners’ L2s (Carreres 2006, 1). This is because in the United States, translation into L2 is often seen as undesirable. In its guide for buying translation services, the American Translators Association (ATA; 2011) states that “professional translators work into their native language.” Furthermore, “a translator who flouts this basic rule is likely to be ignorant of other important quality issues as well” (16).

The ATA’s stance echoes the position of the prominent translation scholar Peter Newmark (1988): “The only way you can translate naturally, accurately and with maximum effectiveness is into your native language (3). If we take the ATA and Newmark at their word, Russian teachers in the United States should not even bother asking their students to translate into their L2. In Russia, and in many other parts of the world, however the ATA guidelines and Newmark’s prescriptivism are rarely applied. On the contrary, translators are expected to work bidirectionally. In fact, this is true for most of today’s world. As Mary Snell-Hornby (2000) states, translation into English as a non-mother tongue “is a fact of modern life” (37; see
also Pokorn 2000). And, realistically speaking, it is not possible to find a sufficient number of native English speakers to translate the ever-growing body of Russian content that requires translation and interpretation.

Moreover, the rapid growth of the language industry has resulted not only in an increased demand for translation and interpreting services but also in the diversification of available jobs. Language majors can now find work as software localizers, computational linguists, project managers, in-house terminologists, and revisors and editors of both human- and machine-generated translations. In fact, studies show that, at least for some text-types, editing machine-translation output may be faster than translating from scratch. For example, in the study by Carl, Dragsted, Elming, Hardt, and Jakobsen (2011), translation speeds for MT plus post-editing were found to be, on average, faster than human translation. Strong editing skills help translation graduates find translation-related work in technical writing or editing, editing their own translations, and dealing with poorly written texts in general (Mossop 2001, iv), thus making students more marketable and versatile in their job search.

5. Designing effective translation-related tasks: general guidelines

Three basic concepts from the field of translation studies can provide guidance for instructors interested in developing translation- and interpreting-related tasks that align with the general principles of the communicative approach (CA), specifically, the focus in CA on language in context. Those concepts are (1) translation as a decision-making process; (2) Skopos theory; and (3) text-types or speech genres.

One way to align translation activities with the communicative approach is to encourage an understanding of translation not as a linguistic matching game but, to quote the Czech scholar Jiří Levý, as a complex decision-making process (see Levý’s seminal 1967 essay entitled “Translation as a Decision Making Process”). In this process, there is rarely, if ever, a single “right” answer but many possibilities for consideration. As Levý insists, the decisions made in one sentence will have implications for subsequent translation decisions made in the remainder of the text. In a simple Russian declarative sentence, for example, such as Студентка положила очки на стол ‘A/The student (has) put the/her glasses on the table,’ there are a number of interpretive decisions to be made, especially when we do not know its surrounding context. To reiterate Levý’s thought, decision-making here involves the use of articles; whether to identify the student’s gender and, if so, how; whether to use possessive pronouns, which are used with far greater frequency in English than in Russian; and
what verb tense to use, as the English verbal system is more complex and explicit than the Russian.

The concept of skopos, Greek for ‘purpose’ or ‘goal,’ as developed in translation studies by scholars such as Katarina Reiss and Hans Vermeer (1984; translated into English by Christiane Nord in 2014), provides guidance for translators in this decision-making process. Skopos theory emphasizes that every translation—like every real-world use of language—is situated: it is produced for specific readers with a specific purpose in mind. Often referred to as functionalist, Skopos theory authorizes translators to produce texts that meet the communicative needs of the target audience, which is especially helpful to novice translators who tend to cling to the syntax of the source text, producing unnatural texts riddled with “translationese.” Moreover, the Skopos approach encourages students to assess the extent to which the target text readers share the background knowledge of the source text readers, and if they do not share background knowledge, how to adjust for that through additions (explicitation) and omissions (removing unnecessary explanations). This underscores the need to include a translation brief with every translation-related assignment. The brief, typically generated by the client, indicates why the translation is being done (purpose), for whom it is being done (addressee), and where it will be published (venue).

To make students understand the web of decision-making that goes on in translation, it is important that translation activities be based on complete texts rather than isolated phrases and sentences. For novice learners, these texts can be linguistically simple, such as business cards, but the focus on a complete text will foster in learners the understanding that the meaning of any single word or phrase must be checked against the context. A focus on textual features will sensitize students to extra-linguistic or cultural features, such as the Russian practice of presenting names with last name first, followed by first name and patronymic. Promoted in translation studies as text-types (Neubert and Shreve 1992; Reiss 1971) and by Mikhail Bakhtin as “speech genres” (1986), this approach also encourages students to expand their resources beyond dictionaries to include parallel texts, that is, texts written in the target language for target language readers. Similar to authentic materials in L2 acquisition, parallel texts foster an awareness of textual features such as cohesion and coherence, argument structure, and discourse organization, which characterize various text-types and may be quite different across languages and cultures. Therefore, translation- and interpreting-related activities with a text-type approach can foster genre sensitivity not only in learners’ L2 but in their L1 as well.
6. Sample tasks
The ten sample tasks below integrate the principles outlined above with basic principles of communicative language learning. We begin each task with a goal, using an outcome-oriented approach to curriculum design. The tasks are primarily open-ended, which allows for their use, with slight adaptation, by learners of different levels, as described in the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines (2012; Distinguished, Superior, Advanced, Intermediate, and Novice). Many tasks are suitable for mixed classrooms, where heritage and non-heritage learners work together. Our goal is not to provide a set-in-stone scenario but to equip foreign language teachers with theories, tools, and inspiration. Most tasks require learners’ familiarity with the translation brief. Our suggestion is to adapt any existing translation brief rubric to the needs of each particular classroom and use it consistently with assignments involving translation and interpretation. Figure 2 provides an example of such an adapted brief.

![Figure 2. Sample translation brief](image)

Below is a template that describes the various parts of the lesson plans presented in this section:
**TITLE:** Broad topic
**GOAL:** What learners will be able to do upon completion of this task
**LEVEL:** Generally, flexible; provided for convenience of use
**MATERIALS:** Self-explanatory
**PRE-TASK:** Preparation; background knowledge activation, subtasks,
planning, framing, predicting outcomes

**TASK:** Task procedure and possible developments/deviations

**POST-TASK:** Follow-up, learner reports, self-reflection, spiraling up to next task

**TRANSLATION/INTERPRETATION CONCEPTS:** Link to translation/interpreting studies (for instructor’s information)

**WORLD READINESS STANDARDS:** Indicators of which of the 5 Cs are best addressed in the task

**SAMPLE TASK 1:** Слова в контексте: Learning to use dictionaries and MT tools

**GOAL:** Learners will be able to better understand differences between dictionary entries and words in context

**LEVEL:** Any

**MATERIALS:** Online or paper dictionaries; access to the internet

**PRE-TASK:** Have students type anything they know in Russian and English into an MT tool (e.g., GoogleTranslate) and see what happens if they add more words

**TASK:** Instructor guides students in their experimenting with MT (e.g., in GoogleTranslate, type in the Russian замок). What translation does the MT tool suggest in its main window (castle)? What other translations does the MT tool provide in the displayed entry and why (most frequent—‘castle’ and ‘lock’)? What happens if we add different contexts—have the students’ and your own imagination run free. Is the MT tool understanding the difference between замок as castle and замок as lock? (In our experience, as of September 2015, it rarely does; the context has to be very suggestive of one or the other.)

Variations: Remember to weave in the stress variation. How do we find out the correct stress for each meaning? Does a dictionary help us? Can we get the MT tools or online dictionaries to model for us the correct pronunciation for each of the meanings in the experiment? In the end, have the students assess the limitations of MT tools and dictionaries and, on their own, design some guidance for using them. Employ group work, and then have groups teach each other best practices for using MT tools and dictionaries. In the end, as the Roman philosopher Seneca put it, “while we teach, we learn”.

**POST-TASK:** Learners create similar examples on their own. Learners try to make MT tools behave/translate in different ways by varying the context
TRANSLATION/INTERPRETATION CONCEPTS: Focus on meaning, not on words; importance of context

WORLD READINESS STANDARDS: Cultures, Comparisons

SAMPLE TASK 2: Localize a map of the United States
GOAL: Learners will be able to recognize cognates and connect their background knowledge of geography
LEVEL: Novice
MATERIALS: Contour map of the United States; Russian-language map of the United States (with states indicated). Include a creation date, in American format, on the contour map (e.g., 09/12/15 for September 12, 2015)
PRE-TASK: Briefly discuss localization (why localization—from “local,” the audience, the target of our activity). Activate vocabulary (e.g., география, карта, штат, город, столица, дата). Set outcomes: a map localized into American English. Provide examples of British/American/Russian maps. Reiterate the importance of the assignment instructions (brief)
TASK: Students work in pairs labeling the states on the map of the United States with English equivalents
VARIATIONS: Instead of the United States map, use any other graph appropriate for localization: a map of the Red Square or Times Square, a graph indicating departments in a shopping mall, etc.
POST-TASK: Count successful states; supply any missing states. Twist: Who localized the date?
TRANSLATION/INTERPRETATION CONCEPTS: Localization, cognates
WORLD READINESS STANDARDS: Cultures, Connections, Comparisons

SAMPLE TASK 3: Translation versus Transcreation
GOAL: Learners will be able to formulate some principles of marketing translation and feel more comfortable with departing from the grammar and vocabulary of the original text
LEVEL: Any
MATERIALS: Ads of famous companies (McDonald’s, Nike, Adidas, Apple) in English and Russian
PRE-TASK: Find examples of advertising campaigns in other languages. If need be, learners may use dictionaries to identify the verbatim. Students formulate their own instructions/brief for the provided marketing translations/transcreations. Discuss the following quote: “I don’t know the rules of grammar . . . If you’re trying to persuade people to do something, or buy something, it seems to me you should use their
language, the language they use every day, the language in which they think. We try to write in the vernacular” (David Ogilvy)

**TASK:** Students work in pairs/groups identifying the messages conveyed in the original ad and its target counterpart. Students brainstorm the list of principles they identified

**POST-TASK:** Students create an ad for a Russian chain restaurant after researching its website in Russian (e.g., [Теремок](teremok.ru)). If level permits, students spiral up to the task of localizing the restaurant's homepage into English, imagining that the restaurant is to open a branch in your area

**TRANSLATION/INTERPRETATION CONCEPTS:** Transcreation, localization, purpose/audience orientation of a linguistic material

**WORLD READINESS STANDARDS:** Communication (Interpretive, Presentational), Cultures, Comparisons

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**SAMPLE TASK 4:** Genres in cultures: Recipes

**GOAL:** Learners will become more sensitive to genre differences between Russian and American cultures while being exposed to vocabulary and structures of authentic Russian recipes

**LEVEL:** Any

**MATERIALS:** Russian recipes (preferably from authentic recipe books or family archives; look for an authentic dish, such as Пасха)

**PRE-TASK:** Activate students’ background knowledge about cooking and the dish(es) you are planning to employ using pictures, food preparation videos, modeling, etc. What do we expect from recipes?

**TASK:** Set the task as localizing the given recipe for a general American audience. Have the students run the authentic recipe through an MT tool or, for advanced levels, translate the recipe into English while commenting on the process. What are the students noticing? Differences in terminology? Are they comfortable with the results they are getting?

**POST-TASK:** In a template (Word, Publisher, etc.), students create a recipe book page for the given recipe keeping the target audience in mind. Then, have the students choose a short American recipe and try to render it into Russian, keeping in mind the discovered preferences of the general Russian audience

**TRANSLATION/INTERPRETATION CONCEPTS:** Genre-sensitivity, localization, target audience

**WORLD READINESS STANDARDS:** Communication (Interpretive, Presentational), Cultures, Comparisons
SAMPLE TASK 5: Purpose and target audience: University website 
GOAL: Learners will be able to identify culturally important issues in Russian university education by analyzing the design of an authentic university website and pondering (as appropriate to their Russian language level) localization of one such website 
LEVEL: Any 
MATERIALS: Any Russian university website 
PRE-TASK: Activate students’ background knowledge: What can we expect? What is the target audience of this website in Russia? What would the target audience be for the localized version of this website in English? 
TASK: Provide students with a screenshot of an American university’s website. Have them find Russian equivalents for sections they see. Is there a mission statement? What do the Russian (if any) and English mission statements focus on? How easy is it to find information? What can it imply, culturally? Is there a provision for American students to study at the Russian university? 
POST-TASK: Students offer their own English version of the Russian website with the goal of attracting American students to study at that university for their study-abroad. Consider adding reasons for studying Russian (in English or in both English and Russian, depending on your students’ level) 
TRANSLATION/INTERPRETATION CONCEPTS: Localization, cultural sensitivity, skopos/purpose, target audience 
WORLD READINESS STANDARDS: Communication (Interpretive, Presentational), Cultures, Comparisons

SAMPLE TASK 6: Roommate for a conference hotel/university dormitory/ etc. 
GOAL: Learners will be able to put together a culturally appropriate ad for a potential roommate at an international conference in a prominent Russian city 
LEVEL: Any 
MATERIALS: Roommate seeking ads in Russian and English 
PRE-TASK: View roommate-seeking ads in Russian and American cultures. Discuss similarities and differences. Brainstorm cultural norms. Activate vocabulary and structures as appropriate to the level of students 
TASK: Students create their ads in Russian 
POST-TASK: Students test reactions to their ads on native speakers of Russian (Was it appropriate? Would they choose them as roommates? Why
or why not?)

**TRANSLATION/INTERPRETATION CONCEPTS:**
Cultural sensitivity, genre sensitivity, target audience

**WORLD READINESS STANDARDS:**
Communication (Interpersonal, Presentational), Cultures, Comparisons

**SAMPLE TASK 7:** Any genre, any level

**GOAL:** Learners better understand the skills of a translation editor

**LEVEL:** Any level, mixed classroom (heritage and true beginners)

**MATERIALS:** A short text (100–300 words) of any genre. Russian into English and/or English into Russian

**PRE-TASK:** Review linguistic backgrounds of your students. Can they identify their strengths and weaknesses in Russian? Activate students’ background knowledge on the subject. Introduce the translation brief. If you have worked with MT tools in class before, try to predict difficulties MT tools may have with the text you chose

**TASK:** Students run the text through an MT tool and then edit it (alone or in groups)

**POST-TASK:** Students run their edited versions through an MT tool and analyze differences in the original and the back-translation

**TRANSLATION/INTERPRETATION CONCEPTS:**
MT, translation brief, editing

**WORLD READINESS STANDARDS:** Communication (Interpersonal [if editing in groups], Interpretive, Presentational), Cultures, Connections (potentially), Comparisons

**SAMPLE TASK 8:** Genre sensitivity: Any genre, any level

**GOAL:** Learners collaboratively acquire deepened textual sensitivity to a genre

**LEVEL:** Any level, mixed classroom (heritage and true beginners)

**MATERIALS:** A short text (100–300 words) of any genre. Russian into English and/or English into Russian

**PRE-TASK:** Review linguistic backgrounds of your students. Can they identify their strengths and weaknesses in Russian? Discuss the typical life cycle of a translation project in a small company: translation-editing-proofreading. Introduce the translation brief. Have the students predict their successes and potential difficulties and (self-)select their roles in the process. Activate students’ background knowledge on the topic selected

**TASK:** Students translate texts on their own. Then, true Russian language
learners are paired up with heritage learners to create a collaborative version of the translation

**POST-TASK:** Students translate another text collaboratively or change directionality

**TRANSLATION/INTERPRETATION CONCEPTS:** The process of translation typical for the language industry: translation-editing-proofreading

**WORLD READINESS STANDARDS:** Communication (Interpretive, Presentational), Cultures, Connections (depending on the genre selected), Comparisons

**SAMPLE TASK 9:** Genres within and between cultures

**GOAL:** Learners collaboratively acquire deepened textual sensitivity to genres within American culture and between Russian and American cultures

**LEVEL:** Any level, mixed classroom (heritage and true beginners)

**MATERIALS:** Three short texts or excerpts (100–200 words) of any genres but on a similar topic (e.g., university life, environment, etc.). Russian into English and/or English into Russian

**PRE-TASK:** Introduce genres. How are their features different in the original language? Set a generalized translation brief (e.g., focusing on potential target audiences). Activate students’ background knowledge. Make predictions on the MT’s success with different genres

**TASK:** Students run the three texts through an MT tool and assess the MT’s success, while also comparing their predictions to the results

**POST-TASK:** Students edit one of the three texts based on the in-class critique of the MT outcomes

**TRANSLATION/INTERPRETATION CONCEPTS:** MT, editing, post-editing, genre sensitivity

**WORLD READINESS STANDARDS:** Communication (Interpretive, Presentational), Cultures, Connections, Comparisons

**SAMPLE TASK 10:** Having fun with cultural differences

**GOAL:** Learners deepen their appreciation of cultural differences between Russian and American audiences through machine- translating and then post-editing culturally sensitive jokes (анекдоты) or song lyrics

**LEVEL:** Any level

**MATERIALS:** Jokes, song lyrics, or other genres that demonstrate cultural variations between Russian and American cultures. See sample screenshots in Figures 3a and 3b
Figure 3a. MT and genre/cultural challenges (retrieved September 2015 from translate.google.com)

Figure 3b. MT and cultural challenges (original retrieved from http://songspro.ru/8/Zanuda-otvajnyy-feat-Guf/tekst-pesni-gorod-ubiytsa; translation retrieved September 2015 from translate.google.com)

**PRE-TASK:** Introduce the genre of the source texts. What culture-related challenges can be predicted? How do the histories of Russian and American civilizations influence the cultural references evident in the texts?

**TASK:** Students read the texts or, if their level requires, use online resources to get the verbatim. Students criticize the verbatim and brainstorm potential solutions to the culture-related issues

**POST-TASK:**
Students produce a final draft of one of the source texts

**TRANSLATION/INTERPRETATION CONCEPTS:** Culture sensitivity and cultural differences, MT, post-editing, target audience, focus on the effect versus information

**WORLD READINESS STANDARDS:** Communication (Interpretive, Presentational), Cultures, Comparisons.

In addition to the interpreting and translation assignments evoking real-world situations, revamped Russian language curricula could include twenty-first-century tasks, such as the following: creating and using domain-specific corpora and conducting parallel text research, using CAT tools, editing texts translated by machines and humans, comparing source texts with their translations in order to evaluate translator choices, serving as cultural mediators, and more. Translation and interpreting
assignments are capable of opening various topics for class discussions, which contributes to the development of such transferrable skills as critical thinking and self-reflection. But this would be a subject for another article and, perhaps, a different target audience.

7. Conclusion
By reintroducing translation and interpreting into foreign language curricula, we acknowledge the ubiquity of translation in our culture. Businesses, large and small, are proud to maintain multilingual websites. Rapidly developing MT and online translation tools haunt us at every step of our way on the internet (“Translate this page?”). Our smartphones are equipped with translation and speech-to-text interpreting apps. In Michael Cronin’s words, we no longer live in the age of information or “the knowledge society”—we live in the age of translation (2013, 3). By integrating translation- and interpreting-related activities into a communicative classroom, we help our students navigate this world in a responsible and ethical way. Moreover, by reintroducing translation and interpreting in the foreign language teaching in the ways suggested above, we can foster in language learners a positive self-image so they see themselves not as failed native speakers but as successful cultural mediators.

References

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Essential Learning Outcomes of the Liberal Education and America’s Promise program of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (aacu.org/leap).


