

Armstrong, Nigel (2005) *Translation, Linguistics, Culture: A French-English Handbook*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters. Pp. 218 (Hbk) \$ 109.95 ISBN 1-85359-806-2/(pbk) \$44.95 ISBN 1-85359-805-4

While the declared aims of this volume are modest, its publication is a welcome addition to the literature on translation. The author achieves admirably the aims which he sets out in the opening pages of providing background for students studying translation as part of a first degree or taught postgraduate course in French-English translation.

The book gives a pleasing overview of the major problems encountered when working on translation between French and English. It contains a wealth of examples covering text types ranging from the literary to the semi-technical, for the most part expertly translated and highly apposite.

While the book can lay no great claim to originality in its component parts, it draws well on recent scholarship and its overall presentation is both more linguistically rigorous and systematic than most other introductory textbooks on approaches to translation currently available.

While entitled 'the linguistic bases of translation' Chapter 1 gives a sound presentation of the relationship between linguistic and cultural knowledge and the necessity of both for adequate translation, using the classic approaches of structural linguistics (Saussure) and linguistic relativity (Sapir-Whorf).

In Chapter 2 the author tackles some of the non-linguistic aspects of decoding a text in order to translate it. Starting perhaps somewhat curiously but not uninterestingly given the work of Venuti, on 'foreignising' translations, before moving on more conventionally to text types and examples of how culture is infused in language. The chapter ends with a pleasingly exemplified discussion of translation loss and compensation.

Chapters 3 to 5 constitute the linguistic core of the book, dealing with translation issues and word level (morphology), words in combination (lexical semantics) and syntax. Chapter 6 deals with translation techniques and procedures using the fundamental notions of modulation and transposition introduced by Vinay and Darbelnet. It is perhaps regrettable that a fair number of pages are heavily dependent on Astington (1983) whose categorisation is certainly refined and clarified but whose examples dominate.

Chapter 7 may be something of a missed opportunity to apply other aspects of semantics and possibly pragmatics to matters such as humour, metaphor and metonymy and perhaps to apply some of the more recent

findings of discourse and conversational analysis in dealing with issues such as anaphora and cohesion. On the other hand, this chapter is necessary to tie up one or two other ends which remain both defiantly loose but well worth including, such as punctuation and multiple equivalence. It is indicative of the author's practical approach which is further underlined by the translation commentary that ends the chapter. There follows a conclusion which is a short summary of what the author has sought to do.

While I can see some students baulking at the systematic use of linguistic concepts (although Armstrong's *apologia* is convincing to the converted like myself) and what might appear to be the relative technicality of some of the terminology used, the book is undoubtedly a welcome and useful addition to the growing armoury of text books on translation techniques and I would be happy to use it as the core text on a French-English translation unit. That the work is devoted to a single language pair may prove to be a deterrent to some concerned with other translation dyads and to colleagues requiring a wider range of exemplification. My hope in this regard, however, is that specialists in other languages take inspiration and write companion volumes for their students and colleagues. For *JoSTrans* readers who are translators working between French and English, its interest is dependent on this non-target group's desire to reflect on the linguistic and cultural underpinning their practice.

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