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Book Review

Translation in Language Teaching: An Argument for Reassessment, by Guy Cook, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010, 177 pp., \$51.88 (US), ISBN 978-0-19-442475-2

From the dawn of the “Reform Movement” in language teaching at the end of the 19th century, the use of translation has been considered a taboo in the field of language pedagogy; so argues Guy Cook, emphasizing that this blind spot for translation has been propped up by extrinsic factors rather than academic and intrinsic ones. Probing the pedagogical, educational, and practical assumptions behind the rejection of translation and the academic and political ambience of today’s globalization and multilingualism, he challenges the presuppositions about the sterility of translation by deploying arguments about how translation is pedagogically effective and educationally desirable both to the students and to the teachers.

This book is partitioned into three sections: ‘History’, ‘Translation’, and ‘Argument’. These three main sections are preceded by an introductory section and followed by a conclusion section. The introductory section spells out the necessity for an interdisciplinary intercourse between the two fields of translation and language teaching. This is followed by three chapters which are grouped under the heading of ‘History’, explaining how commercial and political reasons have propped up the exclusive monolingual language teaching and masqueraded this approach as scientific and academic one for a long period of time.

Part two of the book, *What is translation?*, attempts to reformulate a novel definition of translation. The third section presents a critical assessment of the educational, pedagogical and practical arguments in favor of or against Translation in Language Teaching (TILT). Finally, the book closes with a conclusion which summarizes the core ideas that have been developed throughout the book.

To show the significance of Guy Cook’s book, let us highlight some of the assets of his work. Firstly, Cook’s book, up to the present time, is the first volume which has boldly called for the rehabilitation of translation in language teaching at the book level. Secondly, Cook’s unabashed examination of the erroneous assumptions of the use of translation and his convincing, well-documented arguments regarding the necessity for revitalizing translation in language teaching can mark the beginning of a new era in which language teaching forges unbreakable and interdisciplinary bonds with translation.

Thirdly, despite the weighty theoretical framework of this book and its being devoid of empirical and practical approaches except in Chapter 7, as the author himself acknowledges, “...it is not the purpose of this book to provide a practical instruction manual on how to use translation in language teaching...” (p. xviii), this book is quite easy to follow since its overall structure is well-organized. Each chapter is prefaced with a short summary of the preceding chapter, which spells out its key ideas. Following this summary, the author delineates exactly what is going to be covered in the chapter, and at the end of each section, a preview is presented of the forthcoming chapter which sparks the reader’s interest to move on to the next one. Fourthly, what exactly makes this book a correct starting point for entering into a new era is its avoidance of any

dramatic and radical measures which bogged down its predecessors, like the Direct Method proponents' paranoia toward 'absolutism'. In this vein, Cook's argument provides revelatory insights: "... what is needed is not another lurch of fashion from one extreme to another, but a symbiosis in which students can benefit from varying and complementary strategies" (p. 156).

Although the contribution of this book to the field of language teaching is of undeniable significance, its value may be attenuated by some generalizations about the use of translation. Firstly, the definition of translation as an apparatus capable of defending linguistic diversity and combating linguistic imperialism is not going to be an efficient one if the direction of translation is going to be from more dominant languages to less dominant ones. That is, the direction of translation should be delineated exactly, as the hegemonic influence of the English language has already impinged on translation, too. So to resist the hegemony of the English language, the translation scholars themselves adopt "resistant translation strategy" (House, 2009, p. 23) that is, "pushing towards increased translations into (not from) English to increase awareness of other cultures and languages" (ibid). Secondly, to criticize the purportedly scientific monolingual teaching, Cook takes *equivalence* as the staple concept of translation, which itself has faced an avalanche of criticism over its existence.

Minor quibbles aside, to us, this book should be a required reading for all students of language teaching, curriculum and materials designers, and all of those concerned with the issue of language teaching.

Reference

House, J. (2009). *Translation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hossein Navidinia and Marzieh Izadi

Department of English Language, University of Birjand, Iran

Email: navidinia@birjand.ac.ir