
A bodily and co-creative approach to teaching literary translation

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Abstract & Keywords

English:

The contribution addresses the didactic implications of the embodied understanding of translating discussed in this issue. The authors describe a series of activities and tasks they proposed in the context of German-Italian literary translation courses held at the University of Bologna. They focus on the question how a bodily approach can be implemented in teaching literary translation – that is, how a corporeal dimension is to be integrated in the academic education of translators to such an extent that students can learn to use the body as a resource for their translating. In this way, they aim to promote a broader reflection on the educational/didactic implications of embodied cognition as well as of a phenomenological view on language.

Keywords: embodied learning, literary translation, translation teaching, phenomenology, bodily thinking

Instead of ‘How relevant is what I’m teaching to the profession?’ we might better ask ‘How effectively am I teaching students to think about translation?’ (Baer and Koby 2003: X)

With this contribution we want to address the didactic implications of the embodied understanding of translating that we are discussing in this issue.[1] Very concretely, we will describe a series of activities and tasks that we proposed in the context of German-Italian literary translation courses held at the University of Bologna. The aim was to stimulate and support a “more bodily thinking” (Gendlin 1992: 203) among the students during the translation process. Since our students translate from a language that is second or foreign for most of them, the body-sensitive engagement with the source text is always embedded in language acquisition processes. Therefore, the boundary between language learning and literary translation learning is fluid and difficult to draw. We claim, however, this also applies in principle to literary translation processes, because even professional translators always develop linguistically in the course of their translation work.

By describing our didactics, we focus on the question how a bodily approach can be implemented in teaching literary translation – that is, how a corporeal dimension is to be integrated in the academic education of translators to such an extent that students can learn to use the body as a resource for their translating. In this way, we also aim to promote a broader reflection on the educational/didactic implications of embodied cognition as well as of a phenomenological view on language. In recent years, research has become more and more interested in this topic, as evidenced by the emergence of teaching paradigms such as Embodied Learning (cf. Kosmas and Zaphiris 2018) and Embodied Education (cf. Shapiro and Stolz 2019).

The article is structured as follows: In section 1, we discuss on a general level the educational/ didactic implications of an embodied perspective to cognition. Section 2 offers a detailed description of our didactic approach based on selected examples. Overall, we refer to workshops proposed within translation seminars from German into Italian in the 2nd cycle degree programme in *Language, Society and Communication* in March 2017 and March 2019. Due to the pandemic, we had to cancel further workshops in the last two years, but we will resume and further develop the work as soon as possible. We close with a short conclusion on the current status in Section 3.[2]

1. Pedagogical/didactical implications of an embodied perspective on translating

Given the empirically supported theories on the mutual interactions of mind and body (see the contribution of Tschacher in this volume as well as the introduction), it seems appropriate to discuss the potential reach of the embodied perspective for teaching and learning (translation).

In this regard, we agree with the claim that embodiment poses great challenges to education, though precisely for this reason it “has much to offer educational practitioners, researchers, and/or policy-makers” (Shapiro and Stolz 2019: 33). As obvious as this may seem to us, reflection on the educational implications of an embodied perspective is still at a very early stage. Only a few years ago, Ionescu and Vasc (2014: 277) pointed out that “there are few educational interventions designed after the principles of embodied cognition so far”; so did Zepter (2013: 48-49) with regards to language teaching in standard classrooms, which she describes as often primarily incorporeal, especially in higher grades. For Zepter, such ‘body-scepticism’ can be partly explained by the fact that language didactics, due to its close attachment to certain paradigms in linguistic theory, still tends to operate with a mainly purely cognitive concept of language. Likewise Foglia and Wilson (2013: 320) highlight that in these kinds of (more traditional) frameworks, “central cognitive processing has been typically conceptualized in abstraction from bodily mechanisms of sensory processing and motor control”. On the other hand, an already longer development in foreign language and second language teaching shows that viable, theoretically grounded performative (bodily oriented) concepts have emerged and are attracting more and more widespread interest (see, among others, Bryant and Zepter 2022) .

Overall, however, it seems that the traditional cognitive paradigm still dominates and shapes (language) didactics to date; against this background, we consider it significant that a number of recent studies show that embodied cognition theory has been stimulating innovative approaches among educational researchers. Several ‘new’ terms designate this research field, among them *embodied learning*, *embodied education*, *embodied pedagogy*, *gesture-based learning*, and *embodied interaction* (where the latter explores the role of the body in the learners’ interaction with learning technologies). As pointed out by Kosmas and Zaphiris (2018: 371), some studies and papers also refer to *kinaesthetic learning*, clearly supported by the writing of Merleau-Ponty. From this point of view,

[t]he combination of different senses in order to gain new experiences and ideas of interaction and learning offered by the human body and senses, and kinesthetic perception and sensorimotor experiences, are tools to facilitate learning and teaching. (Kosmas and Zaphiris 2018: 971; for a discussion of the role of kinesthesia within the phenomenology of learning, see also Sheets Johnstone 2019)

Kosmas and Zaphiris (2018) furthermore provide an overview on recent empirical research exploring the integration of body in various learning contexts (43 papers published between 2013 and 2017). Remarkably, most of the studies were carried out in the domain of math education, followed by higher education topics, including language learning and second language acquisition (for a detailed description of the case studies and the research methods used, see *ibid.*). Similarly, Shapiro and Stolz (2019: 19) point out that most of the theoretical and empirical oriented literature on embodied cognition in “educational settings” refer to the fields of mathematics, technology, science and engineering.

In summary, Kosmas and Zaphiris’ as well as Shapiro and Stolz’s overview highlights that physical experience can enhance and positively influence student’s learning. Among the embodied cognition findings that stand out very clearly is the one concerning the role *gestures* play in conceptual understanding (see, for instance, Beilock and Goldin Meadow 2010; for a discussion of the educational implications, see Shapiro and Stolz 2019). Also worth mentioning is the work of Oppici, Frith and Rudd (2020), which emphasizes the close relationship between *movement and cognition* in the development of *creativity*. Relevant to didactics, the authors see in the embodied approach to creativity “new opportunities for designing learning environments that promote creativity” (*ibid.*: 5) and provide impulses for such a promotion. In the case of the various empirical studies related to language learning (see Kosmas and Zaphiris 2019; Kosmas 2021), the educational interventions primarily rest on the core findings concerning language comprehension and cognition being grounded in perceptual/sensory-motor experiences (among others Barsalou 1999, 2008, 2009; see also introduction of this volume).

Following these findings of embodied cognition as well, in our literary translation courses at the University of Bologna, we built on and adapted the approach of *TextBewegung* (TextMovement) (see Schindler and Zepter 2009; 2011; 2017). *TextBewegung* represents a concrete bodily-based teaching proposal designed for the education of language teachers, but also implemented in various educational settings in German language classes (*ibid.*). In the course of a *TextBewegung*-project, the participating students develop a wide range of activities which combine writing, speaking, movement and performance within an aesthetic-creative and playful setting. Thus, the approach enables the participants to be addressed in their cognitive and physical resources in a balanced way. Concepts of Creative Writing and literacy are thereby linked with dance-theatrical procedures from Pina Bausch’s dance theatre (cf. Schindler and Zepter 2017: 33-50). Once again, findings on embodiment in cognitive psychology underpin such a didactic model, which at the same time is strongly inspired by the phenomenological body concept. Thus, the body’s kinaesthetic experience plays a central role in this conception (cf. Schindler und Zepter 2017: 30), in a way which also can be related to the phenomenology of dance. As highlighted by Dávila (2012: 109), “[D]ancing involves being aware of one’s own action while sensing oneself in all one’s movements, which have a rhythm and a form”. From this point of view, “[T]he double reality of the body as a physical thing and as a subjective sensuous experience rises to the surface in dance” (Dávila 2012: 107). Following up on this perspective, we claim that kinaesthetic experience and consciously designed movement offer fertile ground for self-awareness processes that might have also educational implications.

Before we go into more detail about our specific adaption of *TextBewegung* in the teaching of literary translation in the next section, one additional point is to be noted: All the abovementioned studies show that teaching based on embodied learning stimulates the motivation of the students, who predominantly participate with pleasure and curiosity in the lessons. Our practical experiences at the University of Bologna suggest this as well.

In this regard, searching for the reasons why the embodied learning approach is still not very popular in higher education contexts and university teaching – despite the scientific and philosophical evidence that speaks in its favour – one could somewhat provocatively develop the claim that it is precisely because of its joyful and playful nature. We see an argument for this assumption in the fact that most research studies relate to education in schools (cf. Sapiro and Stolz 2019), and among them mainly at the primary school level. Teaching approaches in which adult students are asked to bring their whole bodies into play still seem to be an exception, or even a taboo. The aspect of *learning through play* – a concept that superficially seems to contradict ‘serious’, cognitively demanding learning processes – may reinforce this barrier.

Quite the opposite, we consider it not only as a positive side effect, but rather as a constitutive part of corresponding approaches to embodied learning that they foster the joyful and often playful atmosphere that arises in the classroom. Especially such atmospheres, we claim, can also provide fertile ground for promoting creative thinking processes – and in this way for serious, cognitive ‘advanced’ learning.

Here again, we rely theoretically on the phenomenological foundation, by recalling the German concept of *Spielraum*, which plays an important role in Merleau-Ponty’s work. Literally translated, *Spielraum* means ‘play space’, but it is usually translated as ‘leeway’. Merleau-Ponty places the body – the living and perceiving body – in a space that he defines as *Spielraum*, referring to a space that is real and potential at the same time (cf. Merleau-Ponty 1962: 286). From our perspective, the body-based teaching concept creates exactly such a space, which opens up differences and invites students to play with possibility. In this *Spiel-Raum*, there is, we propose, a lot of space for creative thinking. Moreover, when we pick up and further develop the work of Amoroso and De Fazio (2015: 251), the concept of *Spielraum* suggests overcoming the apparent dichotomy between play/joy and seriousness in the learning process and in the (higher education) classroom. On the contrary, one can be recognized as a requirement and result of the other. So even adults are allowed to play, and they might do it with their entire body.

Last but not least, the bodily-based didactic approach forces us to rethink and reshape the concrete physical spaces in which teaching takes place. If we want the whole body to be active in the classroom and involved in the learning process, this takes up space. That is, it requires spaces to move without obstacles (see Kosmas 2021: 142). In line with other studies, our explorations confirm that this kind of classroom setting is by no means obvious, especially in the academic environment.

Taking all the above into consideration, the positive impact of the embodied perspective on educational practices seems to us worth exploring. Thus, we share the opinion of Shapiro and Stolz (2019: 26) that “[g]iven the tremendous variety of issues to which an embodied perspective might be usefully applied, the natural question seems not to be whether embodied cognition might help to inform educational practices, but how.” In the next section, we present how we explored the embodied perspective in literary translation courses at the University of Bologna.

2. Exploring embodied teaching of literary translation at the University of Bologna

In this section, we introduce our approach of bodily-based teaching applied to the context of teaching literary translation at the University. We describe selected examples of the activities and tasks we proposed to the students,

looking at the way they were carried out, the reactions they provoked and the results they led to. Let us start with a short description of the overall setting.

2.1 The setting

For the current exploration, we worked with academic students participating in a translation course focused on the translation of literary and essayistic texts from German into Italian. The course is part of the Master's degree programme *Language, Society and Communication* of the University of Bologna. The students, about 30 in number, have a good proficiency in German (in terms of the Common European Framework of Reference, the level ranges from B2 to C1). Some, but not all, of them have already taken translation courses as part of their Bachelor's degree, and some have moderate translation experience without reference to their studies. Previous translation experience almost always concerns specialized texts; any previous university translation courses are mainly of a theoretical nature. Many students know translation as an exercise functional to language learning and therefore tend to focus on the confrontation of linguistic structures. Our workshop, which we proposed for two consecutive years (March 2017, March 2019) in this teaching course, lasted eight academic hours, divided into two meetings. The data presented below stem from the March 2021 workshop, which we videotaped in its entirety for later qualitative analysis.[3]

The starting point of the translation exercise was a passage from the book *Deutschsein. Eine Aufklärungsschrift*, written by Zafer Şenocak (cf. Şenocak 2011), a Berlin-based author, who lives and writes both in German and Turkish and who addresses multilingual, multicultural and multinational issues in his literary and critical works (see the text in the Appendix).

As already pointed out in section 1, the activities and tasks we implemented are mainly designed based on the language teaching approach "TextBewegung" (TextMovement) developed by Schindler and Zepter (2009; 2011; 2017). It offered us a theoretical and methodological framework for multiple embodied and creative accesses to language and text, which we propose to adapt also for the field of teaching literary translation. The overall goal of such an adaptation is to enable students to gain new perspectives on literary texts and more generally on language, because translation processes – this is our claim – are fundamentally always also linguistic and intercultural learning processes. The activities and tasks, which we call "körpersensitive Übungen" (body sensitive exercises; cf. Zepter 2013; Schindler and Zepter 2017), focus on the psycho-sensory response to language, involving the whole body. By body we refer to the human being's *own living* body perceiving the environment (the "Leib" as understood by Merleau-Ponty) including the dimensions of sensory perception, movement and emotions.

Most of the activities described below follow a "three-step" structure (see Schindler and Zepter 2017: 10f.): *First*, text and movement products are created in creative phases using improvisation and creative play with language and movement as essential tools. *Second*, the text and movement products are then revised in individual and cooperative review phases based on mutual feedback of all participants. *Third*, the final products are performed and thereby appreciated by final feedback. In the adaptation of the translation courses, the third (performative) phase takes the form of short staging sequences within the process of learning translation.

Obviously, the three-step structure implies different social forms in the classroom. Thus, moments of individual work alternate with pair and group work. In this regard, once more, the contributions describing concrete teaching situations based on embodied learning (cf. section 1) highlight how integrating the physical body and movement into the learning process allows learners to be more active and engaged in collaborative learning activities. Moreover, although the collaborative moment may not seem essential in teaching literary translation, we share Malmkjær's (2020) view:

The *moment of translating* [italics in the original] is an individual act, but it is, as any individual act is, influenced by numerous encounters between the individual and the other, and by the individual's previous experience generally. In this, translating mirrors the exercise of creativity, because even if a group is working creatively together, each individual so-called creative spark is generated in the mind of an individual person, even though this may happen on the basis of collaborative work and discussion by the group. (Malmkjær 2020: 36-37)

Beyond the social form promoted through the various activities, we principally try to integrate movement *and* reflection, experience *and* description of experience – generally aiming for an integration of corporeal text/language experiences and cognitive reflection on those experiences. Thus, within the given setting, we systematically included moments of reflection in which the students could share their impressions and views with each other and with the lecturers. The latter also included a final observation and evaluation sheet to be answered at the end of the workshop.

Altogether, in terms of translator education, we are adopting a process-oriented, learner-centred approach to translation training (see Kiraly 2003; 2014). Our attempt is to provide within this framework an approach that explicitly includes corporeality in literary translation didactics. Thus, we combine translation work with body, language and intercultural work in order to promote sensitivity for the source and target language. That sensory awareness is likewise decisive for professional translation work is also shown in the contributions by Basso and Scott in this issue.

2.2 Description of activities

Exercise unit 1 – Warm-up: Awareness of the others/of the group

Generally, it makes sense to start with a warm-up phase, which also serves to make all participants lose their shyness. After all, working with the body in academic translation seminars is unfamiliar at first.

1. Exploring different ways of walking in space with music

While the music is playing, all students walk around the room trying to use the entire space but not bumping into each other. The teacher demonstrates and gives different instructions to vary the walk, e.g. short steps, long steps, a fast walk (with short or long steps), a slow-motion walk, a tiptoe walk, a squat walk, walking forwards or backwards, etc.

Students are encouraged to walk first on their own (picture 1a), then in pairs or in threes. In the first rounds, everybody is following the teacher's instructions. When walking in pairs or threes, the challenge is to stay side by side, even if you do not touch each other and, moreover, change direction and/or the walking pace. The idea is that one partner leads, the other follows, but both are mindful and continually strive to feel the other (picture 1b). In a later round, it is a matter of the couples or trios improvising themselves and varying their walking according to their own ideas (picture 1c).



Picture 1.a-c: Warm up – walking

It is normal that the warm-up exercises initially cause some embarrassment among the students, mainly due to the fact that in academic contexts they are not used to leaving their desks and therefore appearing and being seen with their whole bodies. Even the internal structure of the classrooms is not exactly conducive to this kind of activity. We therefore left the students completely free to choose whether or not to participate, and we noticed that even the most reluctant ones quickly overcame their embarrassment. Talking to them, it was emphasized by many that music helps a lot in this case.

2. Group exercise: body line, i.e. moving together as a group, listening to where the others are

A second task rounds off the warm-up phase, in which the entire group works together. The students form two rows; they stand parallel and relaxed facing each other, with eyes closed. In the single rows, the students stand very close, but without touching each other. At the start signal ('go'), both rows walk toward each other (with eyes closed), with students trying to keep a straight row. When the stop signal is given, students open their eyes and check if they are still standing next to each other in a straight line, parallel to the row facing (pictures 2a and 2b)



Picture 2.a, b: Warm up – walking in a straight row while eyes are closed

The basic task here is to feel one's own and the neighbouring bodies and to find a rhythm together with them. In the beginning, most students tended to walk at different speeds and were not sufficiently aware of neighbouring bodies (picture 3a). But after several attempts, the awareness increased and they came much closer to the goal of straight lines and parallel rows (picture 3b).



Picture 3.a, b: Warm up – growing awareness towards walking together

Exercise unit 2: Exploring one own's experiences of a word and its meaning

This exercise unit plays with the theory of embodied cognition and its basic assumption that concepts associated with words are grounded in perceptions and physical experiences (among others Barsalou 1999, 2008, 2009). It seems to us particularly well suited as an introduction and preliminary exercise for text and translation work.

Students are asked to think of a word and describe it in the form of a short written text. Inviting them to describe it, we ask them to go beyond the denotative meaning(s) and to investigate what the word means to them personally (individually) and for the living experience of language throughout their own lives. The proposal is therefore to dive into one's own linguistic body memory and furthermore give voice to what Kristeva (1974) calls the semiotic dimension of language, in contrast to its symbolic function. The former is connected with the preconscious or unconscious and has to do with sound, senses, emotions, desiring, ambiguity; the latter concerns the relationship between referent and object. In each meeting, we start with one or a couple of the word descriptions, which are shared with the group by reading them aloud.[4]

What immediately stands out in this exercise is the high number of dialectal words chosen by the students, including several dialects of the Italian language, as they come from different regions of Italy. Not only the meaning, but also the dialectal sound of a word seemed to be relevant to many and associated with basal feelings/experiences of 'homeland' – which for us provided a compelling transition to the examination of the book *Deutschsein* (cf. Şenocak 2011) and the associated translation work.

Exercise unit 3: Awareness in relation to one's own external perception, self-perception (proprioception) and creating words or word meanings as freeze images

In the passage we worked on, the German term "Nachtruhe", referring to a culture-specific concept, plays a prominent role:

Zu Hause, in einer möblierten Dachwohnung am Ortsrand, war es warm und gemütlich. [...] Nachts war es ganz still. Ruhe war wichtig in diesem Land. *Nachtruhe*. Der Lärm Istanbuls war nicht mehr zu hören. Ich vermisste vor allem die Schiffssirenen. (Şenocak 2011: 9)

Our home, a furnished attic apartment on the edge of town, was warm and cosy. [...] At night silence reigned. Silence was important in Germany. *Especially at night: Nachtruhe*. The noise of Istanbul was gone. I missed ships' sirens most of all. (Translation by Ivancic)

In order to deepen the understanding of this culture-specificity, the intention was to combine (i) the more common approach of verbally discussing the term in the group with (ii) a bodily exploration of the idea “to have silence in the night/to be still at night” by working with freeze images.

1. Preparation – introducing body statues and practicing awareness

In groups of four, the first task is to practice body awareness by creating a body statue and copying it as accurately as possible, using the perspectives of doing and of observing (pictures 4a and 4b): In a group of four, the first person assumes a certain posture and 'freezes' in this position like a statue. A second person stands next to them and tries to assume exactly the same posture (inner perception). A third person looks at and compares the two statues and corrects the posture of the second person where their posture differs from that of the first (external perception). Subsequently, the third person also assumes the same posture and the fourth person compares the three statues. The exercise can be repeated, changing roles.[5]



Picture 4.a, b: body statues – exploring and comparing inner and external perception

2. Creating group statues: 'city by night'

Building on this experience, the next step is to work in groups (of seven) and create a group statue on a specific topic. That is, the task goal is to move and think *together* in order to find a freeze image – an arrangement of different body statues – which represents Bologna by night (picture 5a) and another one for Murnau by night (picture 5b). Going a step further, the groups could also enhance their pictures with self-made sounds (body percussion).



Picture 5.a, b: group statues – physical exploration of the possible differences between urban atmospheres at night

The exercise created a protected space to playfully *experience* the concept of “Nachtruhe” and related concepts. Thus, it gave the opportunity to build an embodied understanding by taking different perspectives, by actively comparing culture specific aspects and getting actively involved with possible sensuous, motoric and emotional dimensions.

Exercise unit 4: Observational awareness – exploring the specificity of attentional focus

The following group exercises are inspired by the child's game “Stille Post” (literary translated ‘silent mail’)[6] and aim to sensitize to how much the simple copying (imitation) of movement and of linguistic utterance is controlled by our attentional focus.

All students stand in a circle. The first person in line improvises a gesture and shows it to their neighbour, who observes, while all others have their eyes closed. This second person then copies the gesture and shows it to their next neighbour (third person in line), while all other students again have their eyes closed; and so on. At the end, the first and the last gesture are compared.

In the second pass, the same principle is used to pass on a short linguistic utterance. Here, the focus shifts to attention and concentration in the listening process. The first student whispers a short sentence into the ear of their neighbour. This neighbour whispers what they heard to their next neighbour and so on. At the end, the original sentence and the last sentence heard are compared.

In both tasks, initial movement or utterance and final copy were usually very different. Generally, this kind of observational awareness seemed rather difficult to transfer for the students, which shows, among other things, that our attention is very selective *and* individual. In this exercise, the students not only participated with a lot of fun; many of them also seriously wondered about the strong differences between initial movement/utterance and final copy. These observations directly triggered further reflections on our attention in the translation process.

Exercise unit 5: Feeling concepts through senses

Exercise unit 5 builds on exercise units 2 and 3 and approaches the issues once again from other body-oriented perspectives.

1. Individual work on the concept of ‘Nachtruhe’

In the first step, students are asked to paint/draw a picture to the concept of *Nachtruhe*.



Picture 6: Visualization of a concept— individual perspectives

In the next step, the pictures form the starting point for a linguistic-aesthetic (poetic) examination of the concept. Therefore, students are asked to write a haiku[7] in Italian on the concept of *Nachtruhe*.



Picture 7.a, b: Students write individual haikus on a concept

2. Group work – performative approach to a concept

The individual aesthetic confrontation provides the starting point for a further embodied approach to the concept of *Nachtruhe*, whereby work is now cooperative and performative. For this purpose, once again, groups (of four or five students) are formed. Each group chooses a haiku and translates it into German, keeping the haiku structure.

Furthermore, each group has the task of presenting the haiku to the others, thus not only reading it out, but also shaping it physically, i.e. through language and movement (pictures 8a and 8b).



Picture 8.a, b: Students develop a performance for the haiku that incorporates voice and movement

The most significant aspect of this exercise unit is related to the particular structure of the poetic text that students were asked to produce. Consisting of a total of 17 syllables arranged in three lines of five, seven, and five syllables respectively, this text type clearly sets very precise limits already at the stage of composition in the source language, which in this case was Italian. Recalling the expression “extreme translations”, proposed by Nasi (2015) with regards to texts whose linguistic-textual characteristics require particular creativity and a great deal of courage in the translation process, the exercise unit introduces such a form of text encounter. The aim is to stimulate “the development of critical thinking, which is both rigorous and creative at the same time” (Nasi 2021: 8).

The students’ text products, some of which are presented below, suggest that corresponding exercises do indeed promote close attention to the text and encourage creativity in translating.

<i>Haikus in Italian</i>	<i>Haikus in German</i>
Freddo e buio Ricoperto di bianco Ed ecco, Nachtruhe.	Dunkel, Silberstrahlen Irgendwas schneebedeckt, scheint Willkommen Nachtruhe.
Luci accese Di fuori il silenzio Nera la notte.	Glühende Lichte Außerhalb nur die Stille Schwarz ist die Nacht.
Giocano i bimbi, I grandi tornano al Caldo camino.	Spielen die Kinder, Kommen die Eltern zurück Zum heißen Kamin.
Legna ardente, Istanbul è lontana, Dormi amore.	Brennendes Holzstück, Istanbul ist schon weit weg, Schlaf meine Liebe.
Neve e silenzio Sento freddo intorno a me Caldo nel cuore.	Langsam fällt der Schnee Kalt und still in diesem Land Warm in meinem Herz.
Lenta la neve	Langsam fällt der Schnee

Tutto diventa bianco Via la mente.	Mir wird das Gedächtnis weiß Alles verschwindet.
Fuori la neve Mi stringo nel tepore Guardando fuori.	Nur ein stilles Dorf in der Ruhe eingetaucht in der Nachtruhe.

Figure 1: Poem translations as final products of an embodied approach to text

Exercise unit 6: Sensing words and expressions phonetically and tonally

The previous tasks have focused on one concept. This unit expands the sense-based approach in the creative play with a larger set of expressions. Students work again in groups of three or four. In the group work, they have to:

1. Choose several words, phrases from the text to be translated (a text passage of *Deutschsein*) which they perceive as particularly beautiful or ugly when they vocalize them aloud;
2. Think together about what makes the expressions beautiful or ugly (sound, sound material, combination of sounds...);
3. Select one expression and based on the preliminary considerations write an acrostic for it;
4. Translate the selected expression into Italian and carry out again the tasks (b) and (c), comparing beauty and/or ugliness perceived in both languages and cultures.

The acrostic is a poetic verse form in which the initial sounds or initial letters of each line together form a separate word. The writing of the acrostic in combination with the emotional and tonal approach to an expression aims again at stimulating creativity in the translation process comparable to the work on the haiku in exercise unit 5. Figure 2 shows some examples of the students' products:

<i>Acrostic in German</i>	<i>Acrostic in Italian</i>
ZUNGE Zärtlichkeit Unbehagen Nuance Genuss Entzücken	
GEBORGENHEIT Geist Einsatz Berg Ordnung Ruhe Gleich Erde Nacht Heimat Elefant Immortalität Treu	
STILLE Sehnsucht Trauer Innig Langsam Laune Endlichkeit	SILENZIO Serenità Intelligenza Libertà Ennesimo Nebbia Zitto Illuminare Occultamento
	MURO Malumore Umanità Ritorno Obsolescenza
SPÜREN Sensibilität Person Überwältigend Ruhe Empfindlichkeit Nähe	PROVARE Percepire Rabbia Odio Vita Amore Rancore Emozione
ÜBERSETZEN Übermensch Baum	TRADURRE Testo Reso

Entscheidung	Adattando
Ruhe	Definizioni (non)
Sinn	Univoche
Erregung	Riflettendo
Traum	Rileggendo
Zauber	Esplorando
Emotion	Testo
Neigung	Riscrivere
Überlegen	Adattare
Bedeutung	Dubbio
Einsicht	Ultimare
Ratlos	Rielaborare
Suchen	Revisione
Ergebnis	Empatia
Text	
Zögern	
Endlos	
Nachschlagen	

Figure 2: Acrostics on phonetically, tonally sensing an expression

Exercise unit 7: Approaching the ‘sound’ of German/Italian – building a feeling for language, linking language, voice and emotion

The last exercise unit we exemplarily present deepens the examination of the oral composition of dialogues (to be translated) through a scenic play with the text. The unit starts again with a preparation phase to open up for the embodied approach to follow.

1. Preparation – exploring different vocal/emotional interpretations of a sentence

The entire group works with the sample sentence: “Der Zug ist pünktlich.”, ‘The train is on time.’ The first goal is to explore within the scope of the concrete oral realization which variation possibilities our voice basically offers and classify them along different binary parameters. For example, we can speak loudly or softly, slowly or quickly, rising or falling, halting or flowing, light (high) or dark (low). The parameters can be combined with each other or implemented in detail (compared to our standard voice). That is, we can orally realize an utterance comparatively loudly, slowly, falling, halting and darkly. The group reflects together on the effects of the different versions and discusses possible connotations of meaning associated with a version through language/cultural/social convention.

The second step turns to partner work and the comparison of different emotional interpretations. That is, here it is a matter of linking an expression with a particular emotion. One partner presents a sentence (or alternatively a word, a part of a sentence or a text) in different emotions, the other is supposed to identify the respective emotion. Sentences that are in their literal lexical meaning rather ‘neutral’ and in standard language, but not too complex, are particularly suitable. Positively tested is e.g.: “Der Zug ist pünktlich.”/“The train is on time”. It also makes it easier to start with relatively strong emotions, e.g.: *funny, angry, sad*.

The partners alternate and test the emotional interpretations of expressions in German and in Italian. Finally, the whole group comes together again and reflects on the exercise.

2. Orally enact a dialogue that is to be translated, first in different vocal interpretations

Building on the preparation phase, students work once more in groups of two and focus on a short dialogue from the text to be translated (a conversation between father and son in *Deutschsein*, p. 10). Task goal is to perform the dialogue in different vocal and emotional versions.

Vater: „Es gibt ein freies und ein unfreies, gefangenes Deutschland. Diese Grenze ist eine Mauer, die man nicht passieren darf.“

Sohn: „In welches Deutschland fahren wir? In das freie oder in das unfreie?“

Vater: „In das freie natürlich. Da fahren jetzt viele Menschen aus der Türkei hin. Deshalb ist der Zug so überfüllt.“

Sohn: „Wenn so viele Menschen von der Türkei nach Deutschland fahren, dann muss Deutschland ja viel schöner sein als die Türkei?“

Vater: „Vielleicht nicht schöner, aber anders. Deutschland wird dir gefallen. Es gibt dort keine armen Kinder.“

Father: “There is a free Germany and an unfree, imprisoned Germany. This border is a wall that you are not allowed to cross.”

Son: “Which Germany are we going to? To the free one or the unfree one?”

Father: “To the free one, of course. Many people from Turkey are going there now. That’s why the train is so crowded.”

Son: “If so many people are going from Turkey to Germany, then Germany must be much nicer than Turkey?”

Father: “Maybe not nicer, but different. You will like Germany. There are no poor children there.”

Afterwards, one version is selected and performed in plenary. The entire group reflects on the comparison of the different versions presented in terms of impact and fit in relation to the meaning of the dialogue.

In the next step, the partners come together again and develop an Italian translation of the dialogue. Again, different vocal and emotional versions are tried out and included in the process of finding solutions for the translation work. In the last phase, the translation drafts are presented to another group of two and further revised based on their respective feedback. Subsequently, each pair develops a final version and presents it in plenary.

In the final reflection, the whole group reflects on the different versions and discusses their respective fit (or also the differences) with regard to the original German dialogue(s).

To be highlighted: We did not set up this study as a pre/post-design, yet the students' translation drafts that were created during the workshops can be compared on a qualitative level with drafts that were made in advance. Initial analyses show that the preliminary drafts were revised both on the syntactic and on the conceptual level. For example, the term *Geborgenheit*, which is a key concept in the text, was mostly translated as *sicurezza* in the preliminary drafts, according to common dictionary translations. However, this does not correspond to the culturally specific meaning, the scope of which was better recognised with regard to the source text in the course of the workshop. More detailed qualitative analyses are in any case desirable for the future.

3. Conclusions

With this contribution, we presented a bodily-based proposal for teaching literary translation in higher education. Overall, we argue to include exercises in the academic practice that explore the ways in which our body shapes the mental and creates conditions for embodied agents to act in the translating process. To summarize, we claim:

We relate to “empirical work showing how embodied activities constitutively shape many aspects of cognitive life” (Farina 2021: 84) and to a phenomenological view on language and translation.

Embodiment cognition findings highlight the significance of the practical manipulative experience grounding abstract symbols in the internalization of embodied mental models.

In relation to the 4E cognition model (see Tschacher in this volume), our exercise units specifically address the embodied and the enactive dimensions. The starting point is the consideration that cognition and body influence and condition each other reciprocally.

The first experiences with the presented units have shown that corresponding practices are not very costly and it is fairly simple to integrate them in a “normal” course of seminar.

The impact of this approach can be rather far-reaching: The corporeal experience can provide the base for the recognizing, the cognitive grasping and for the development of what Kirsten Malmkjær (2020: 70) calls “aesthetic attention” to the text.

Not to be underestimated in its relevance, the proposed activities can also create fertile ground for the experience of the aesthetic pleasure that the translation process can imply. That is, recalling the ethic dimension of translation, we claim that an embodied learning environment allows learners to feel what Paul Ricœur (2006: 10) referred to as “linguistic hospitality” (*hospitalité langagière*), i.e. the “pleasure of dwelling in the other’s language” as well as the “the pleasure of receiving the foreign word at home”.

Moreover, our experience suggests that through an embodied approach to language and translation, this kind of pleasure goes beyond the distinction between first and foreign language and it becomes pleasure of dwelling in language itself. Thus, we likewise share Scott’s view:

Being at home in a language is certainly one way of being at home in a relation within the world. One’s mouth serves that language and is at its ease in that language. But I want it the other way round: language, rather languages, serve the mouth. In order to feel at home in our mouths we must be more comprehensively familiar with, and make fuller use of, our vocal resources. These vocal resources are as much elicited by written signs, designs and dispositions, as they are by ‘natural’ languages. And so the multilingualism I argue for, as the proper vehicle of translation, includes the languages of textual presentation as much as the national languages. This liberation of the mouth across its full vocal range therefore entails a corresponding liberation of the ear (hearing the possibility of sound in signs hitherto treated as silent) and of the eye (seeing acoustic signals in the array of graphic and typographic material put in front of it). Dwelling in one’s linguistic faculties, and in the audio-sensory faculties projected by, or embodied in, written/printed signs, is thus more important in the translator’s venture than dwelling in a mother tongue and a second language. (Scott 2012: 8)

We are well aware that at first sight, the described approach to teaching literary translation may seem difficult to reconcile with an increasingly digitalized approach to language and translation. However, we are convinced that the two perspectives are in no way in conflict, quite the contrary: The bodily-based approach to translation helps to develop the ‘feeling for language’ – *Sprachgefühl* in German – which is also crucial in dealing with machine-translated texts and in the process of text editing (on the rediscovering and discussion of the notion of *Sprachgefühl* in the German linguistics and translatology, see also Langlotz et al. 2014).

Altogether, it must be highlighted once again: literary translation always also means linguistic and cultural learning. This is true for professional translators and even more so for students in training. Therefore –we claim – academic translation seminars should always create space to engage with the literary language and create awareness of linguistic divergences as well as stimulate reflection on the different perspectives on linguistic expressions in different cultures. Our approach is to stimulate this reflection holistically, i.e. integrating cognition and body.

In our examples, we focus on the didactic implications of an embodied understanding of literary translation. Obviously, overall, more empirical research has to be done in order to get robust insights. We expect that qualitative research in particular, which empirically reconstructs the translation processes in a body-sensitive classroom and also reveals developmental trajectories, will prove to be insightful.

We close with the following exploratory remark: The presented kind of work can be difficult at first, mainly due to the lack of familiarity of both students and teachers with the involvement of the body, understood as well as *Leib*, in academic lessons. Our experience shows that it takes some time to get involved in working with the body, i.e. to get *into the body*. But at the same time, we have seen that as soon as this first barrier is overcome, students participate with great enthusiasm and curiosity. The latter seems mainly due to the desire to experiment with other ways of approaching the text and the language in general, as the students repeatedly stressed in our final discussions. The crucial point, though, seems to be to tightly link up the bodywork with reflection. Hence, between and after the various tasks, it is important to come together, to talk about the individual experiences made during the practice and to reflect on the insights in respect of the translation and the process of translating.

Appendix

Zafer Şenocak: *Deutschsein. Eine Aufklärungsschrift*, Hamburg: edition Körber-Stiftung, 2011, p. 9-14.

Die Sprache öffnen

Wann bietet eine Fremdsprache Geborgenheit?

»Ins Offene, dorthin, wo Sprache auch zur Begegnung führen kann.«

Paul Celan, Brief an Brigitte und Gottfried

Bermann Fischer, 22. November 1958

Wenn ich an meine Kindheit in Deutschland denke, überkommt mich ein Gefühl der Geborgenheit. In meinem achten Lebensjahr zogen wir von Istanbul in einen kleinen oberbayerischen Ort. Als wir dort ankamen, lag der Schnee knietief, und der Ort erschien mir wie ausgestorben. Die Luft roch ganz anders als in Istanbul. Sie war frisch, brannte in der Nase, so als hätte man ihr ein Gewürz beigemischt. Der Schnee blieb noch lange liegen in diesem Jahr. Zu Hause, in einer möblierten Dachwohnung am Ortsrand, war es warm und gemütlich. Vom Fenster aus sah man die Berge mit ihren bewaldeten Hängen. Vor dem Haus erstreckten sich schneebedeckte Felder. Nachts war es ganz still. Ruhe war wichtig in diesem Land. Nachtruhe. Der Lärm Istanbuls war nicht mehr zu hören. Ich vermisste vor allem die Schiffssirenen. Aus Istanbul hatte ich wenig mitgebracht. Ich erinnere mich an den Schultatlas, auf dem ich auf der dreitägigen Reise im Zug mit dem Finger jene Strecke nachfuhr, die uns dem Ziel München nahe brachte. Auf dem Atlas war eine Grenze eingezeichnet, die mitten durch Deutschland führte und deren Zweck ich nicht verstand.

»Es gibt ein freies und ein unfreies, gefangenes Deutschland«, erklärte mir mein Vater. »Diese Grenze ist eine Mauer, die man nicht passieren darf.«

In welches Deutschland fuhren wir? In das freie oder in das unfreie?

»In das freie natürlich«, beruhigte mich mein Vater. »Da fahren jetzt viele Menschen aus der Türkei hin. Deshalb ist der Zug so überfüllt.«

»Wenn so viele Menschen von der Türkei nach Deutschland fahren, dann muss Deutschland ja viel schöner sein als die Türkei?«

»Vielleicht nicht schöner, aber anders. Deutschland wird dir gefallen. Es gibt dort keine armen Kinder.«

Ein Land, in dem es keine armen Kinder gab, das war gut. Das war sicher ein Grund dafür, warum so viele Menschen nach Deutschland fuhren.

»Nachtruhe!«

Unsere Wirtin, eine hochbetagte, aber rüstige Dame, die allein lebte, weil ihr Mann verstorben war, hatte dieses Wort ausgesprochen. Ich legte mir ein Heft an, in dem ich die fremden Wörter auflistete, die ich zu hören begann. Ich nannte das Heft: mein deutsches Heft. Ein kleines Heft, etwas mehr als handtellergrößer. In der Mitte der Seiten war ein roter Strich von oben nach unten gezogen. So konnte ich jedes Wort, das ich ins Heft eintrug, auch ins Türkische übersetzen. Aber manche Wörter ließen sich nicht übersetzen. Nachtruhe zum Beispiel. Meine Mutter erklärte mir, bei der Nachtruhe gehe es nicht darum, dass die Nacht ruhig sei, sondern dass man in der Nacht nicht laut sein dürfe. »Geceye benzemek, gece gürültü yapmamak«, notierte ich auf der türkischen Hälfte meines Heftes. Der Nacht ähnlich werden. So ruhig wie die Nacht sein. Ein deutsches Wort brauchte mehrere türkische, um verstanden zu werden. Ich hatte schon nach wenigen Tagen einige Dutzend Wörter in mein Heft geschrieben. Aber ich sprach noch kein Wort Deutsch. Es können in Büchern und Heften viele Wörter stehen, aber gesprochen werden sie schließlich auf der Zunge. Sprechen geht nicht, ohne Wörter zu schmecken.

Dieses Deutschland war für mich zunächst einmal kein Land, sondern eine fremde Sprache, die sich lustig anhörte. Wenn die Wörter noch nicht schmecken, kann man sich von Blicken ernähren. Ich fand schnell Zugang zu den Blicken der Menschen. Ich konnte tief in sie hineintauchen, ohne aufzufallen. In der Türkei hätte ich mich nicht getraut, fremde Menschen so genau zu beobachten. Aber hier gab es eine andere Art von Distanz. Die Menschen waren nicht nur fremd, sie waren Fremde. Anders als die Menschen in Istanbul. Hier waren sie viel größer, und die Männer trugen Hüte mit Federn. Sie sahen in etwa so aus, wie ich mir Jäger vorstellte. Ihre Blicke waren nicht abweisend. Sie waren gleichgültig. Sie wandten sich nicht ab, schützten sich nicht, blickten nicht zurück, so dass ich mich nicht bedroht fühlte.

Ich beschloss, keine Angst zu haben in diesem neuen Land. Im Gegenteil: Ich spürte eine Nähe zu etwas, das mir fremd, fern, aber nicht verschlossen zu sein schien.

Diese Kindheit in Deutschland war behütet, voller Entdeckungen, Herausforderungen und überraschender Momente.

Es war das Jahr 1970. Nach fünfmonatigem Aufenthalt im bayerischen Voralpenland, genauer gesagt, in Murnau am Staffelsee, zogen meine Eltern nach München weiter. Doch Murnau, dieser Ort, der auf meinem Atlas nicht verzeichnet war, hatte sich mir eingeprägt: die Nachtruhe, die sich später in eine Idylle verwandelte, in das besondere Licht, das an Föhnbergen über dem Staffelsee liegt, das schon Maler wie Gabriele Münter und Wassily Kandinsky inspiriert hatte, und eine Landschaft, die sich mir einprägte.

Selbstverständlich wollten mich meine Eltern schon in Murnau in die Schule schicken. Wir waren ja mitten im Schuljahr dort angekommen. In der Türkei besuchte ich gerade die vierte Klasse. Doch ich weigerte mich, die Schule in Murnau zu besuchen. Der Grund war die Begegnung mit einigen Jungen, die im kniehohen Schnee auf den Feldern vor unserem Haus herumtollten, in kurzen Lederhosen. Ihre Beine waren rot, die Haut schimmerte sonderbar. Das schien ihnen aber nichts auszumachen. Diese Jungs flößten mir Respekt ein. Ich fühlte mich nicht so weit, ihnen entgegenzutreten zu können.

Meine Eltern waren nachsichtig. Als Ersatz für den Schulbesuch bekam ich eine deutsche Fibel geschenkt. Meine Mutter übte mit mir jetzt die Aussprache der Wörter. Ich kann mich nicht daran erinnern, dass meine Eltern später jemals wieder Deutsch mit mir gesprochen haben. In München angekommen, wurde ich in die Schule gebracht und ein halbes Jahr lang an jedem Schultag nachmittags für anderthalb Stunden zu Frau Saal, einer pensionierten Volksschullehrerin mit strengen Gesichtszügen, die sich jedoch lockerten, wenn sie mit mir die deutsche Sprache übte. Bei Frau Saal schmeckten die Wörter nach Kaffee und Kuchen, genauer gesagt, nach Apfelkuchen, der fast immer auf dem Tisch stand und von dem ich kosten durfte, wenn ich fleißig gewesen war.

Ihre Wohnung war auffallend dunkel. Es war wieder Winter geworden, und ich besuchte sie meistens spätnachmittags. Ich erinnere mich nicht, dass sie jemals das Licht eingeschaltet hätte, wenn wir uns über die Bücher beugten.

Als ich sie Jahre später einmal besuchte, um nach ihr zu sehen und mich für die Lehrstunden zu bedanken, konnte ich es nicht lassen und fragte sie danach, warum wir beim Lernen immer so im Halbdunkel gesessen hatten. Vielleicht täuschte mich ja auch meine Erinnerung. Sie lachte laut auf und antwortete ohne zu zögern: »Wenn man eine neue Sprache lernt, muss man die Wörter möglichst lange und genau beobachten. Du aber bist mir zu schnell von einem Wort zum andern gesprungen. Die Dunkelheit hat dich langsamer und aufmerksamer gemacht, und wir sind ja auch gut vorangekommen, wie man sieht.«

Sie deutete auf meinen ersten Gedichtband, den ich ihr gerade überreicht hatte.

Ich verdanke also mein Gefühl für die deutsche Sprache dem Halbdunkel und dem Geschmack von Kaffee und Kuchen, vorzugsweise Apfelkuchen. Wahrscheinlich verdanke ich dem Halbdunkel auch die Brille, die ich schon sehr früh tragen musste. Für die Sprache, die mir so gut schmeckte, hätte ich damals alles hergegeben. Sogar das Büffeln der komplizierten Grammatik, die mir wie ein Labyrinth vorkam, nahm ich widerstandslos hin. Mit Fleiß lässt sich jede

Fremdsprache bis zu einem gewissen Grad erlernen. Wer aber in den Genuss einer fremden Sprache kommen möchte, braucht Hingabe. Ich bin Frau Saal heute dankbar, dass sie mir nicht nur die Sprache beigebracht hat, sondern auch die Hingabe abforderte, ja sie in mir auslöste, ohne die ich heute kein deutschsprachiger Schriftsteller sein könnte. [...]

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Notes

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[2] We thank the anonymous reviewer whose comments were very helpful for us in further developing the article.

[3] The cameras were positioned in two different places in the classroom and captured most of the students' movements.

[4] For a more detailed description of the activity see Ivancic 2016: 82-101.

[5] In the context of anonymization, we generally refer to students as 'they/them', which of course can be both male and female students.

[6] In British English, this game is referred to as "Chinese whispers", while in American English, it is called "Telephone".

[7] A poem form that is complex in conception but very short in form is the haiku (originally from Japan). The pattern contains exactly three lines, the first line consists of a total of five syllables (in the original Japanese pattern not syllables, but moras), the second of seven syllables (moras), and the third again of five syllables (moras).

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