

**PRESENTER:**

In this clip, Professor of Translation Studies, Jeremy Munday and professional translators Jamie Bulloch and Jutta Schettler, talk about the creative aspects of being a translator.

**JEREMY MUNDAY:**

Creativity's a key issue in translation and it's linked, I think, with the constraints under which the translator works. There is creativity in all sorts of translation, even in technical translation, localisation of a web page for example. There could be creativity in having to work within a very limited space on the screen or on the page, which requires the translator to perhaps reduce the text, decide what to omit, how to rephrase, restructure.

Subtitling is a particularly difficult practice, because of the number of constraints under which the subtitler works. The translator, the subtitler, has to work with the restrictions of the text, of the two lines on a screen at a time, 38... approximately 38 characters per line, but works with the image and can... the difficulty there is to strike a balance, to reduce the linguistic form and to produce a coherent piece of written text on the screen, but to use the visual image in order to take some of the meaning or to transfer, to transmit some of the meaning.

**JAMIE BULLOCH:**

Translators can be very creative, and they have to be very creative. It's all part of being confident, and I think one of the joys of translating a novel is when you get small little bits of text that you really have to totally reinvent for them to work. Another novel I translated a couple of years ago, by an author called Katharina Hagen, and in it her protagonist mentions that as a child, she had books of lists, of lists of words that she found pretty, of lists of words that she found ugly, of lists of words that she found... pretended they were one thing but in fact were another.

And of course, on a page like that what you can't do is translate pretty words directly from German into English or ugly words, so I just found... I made up the five or six most ugly words that I knew in English, not rude words, I hasten to add, but words that sounded ugly, or beautiful words. So that's probably the extreme side of creativity, but I think almost in every sentence you're being creative, because you are having to create a sentence in English. Particularly when you're doing a literary translation, you are having to choose words which in one context may be completely different translation from that same word in another context. So you're being creative really all the time, even though it's a nuts-and-bolts experience, but to a large extent you're actually having to be creative and when you come to the final polishing of a text, that's also when you're being even more creative. You know, when you've gone from, let's say, your first draft literal translation, then tried to make it read as a nice piece of English, that's when you're, I think, being very creative too.

**JUTTA SCHESSLER:**

There is a lot of creativity in translation, I think, and I think creative input begins where linguistic skill ends. There are jobs you only need linguistic skill for, even in translation, but in creative translation, you try to produce added value. You try to trans... you have the creative space to transpose the concepts you're trying to convey in whatever creative method you can use.

You need to have some kind of idea of what will work and what won't work, with puns and quotes. Quotes you're already on dangerous ground. You would not necessarily choose the one that is in the source text, because that might not be appropriate. You can be a bit daring and a bit creative. Why not replace, as Shakespeare said with... as Goethe said, for a German-speaking audience, and find the right and appropriate quote for whatever you're going to express, which in the case of Goethe, you will find.

There is a distinction between commercial translation and literary translation. Again, it depends which end of the spectrum you are in commercial translation. I would say legal translators and technical translators have very little in common with literary translation. For creative translation, that is different because some of the mechanism, the methods are the same. You face the same problem of every line posing a question, every sentence demanding a decision. How you make those decisions is influenced by slightly different factors, I think, because basically, in creative

translation in a commercial context, purpose is your main motivation. It's pure and simple Skopos theory. The purpose is everything.

In literary translation, you don't have that purpose, and you're also trying to add something else. You are adding aesthetic value; how well you can reproduce a pun, how well that travels to a different language, so you will have the same basic problem, but you are not, in literary translation, focused on your readership in that particular case.

You have no control over your readership and your mission, if you will, is different. So I would say the distinction between trans-creation and literary translation is one of art versus artisan.