times. Inasmuch as the book does not necessarily follow a chronological order, the reader many times feels somewhat ‘lost’ in time and space. Also, in spite of being necessary and helpful, the too many explanations that have been added in most chapters “either in the text or in endnotes, to clarify allusions to specific historical events or cultural features that might not be familiar to every reader” (Introduction, p.3), break the fluency of the reading.

Nevertheless, as stated by the editors Jean Delisle and Judith Woodsworth in the Introduction, the book is an excellent guide to the field of translation history, also because it contains a “Further Readings” section at the end of each chapter so as to help readers find more information on that particular topic. In addition, a complete bibliography at the end of the book and an index of proper names are also provided, thus facilitating its use.

Translators through History not only provides a broad overview of the work carried out by translators through the ages, but also contains important information of linguistic and professional value for those that are engaged in translation and/or translation studies. Furthermore, it discusses issues that are always updated such as how power can use translators and how translators are related to power (Chapter 5), and raises questions such as translators as prospectors, explorers of foreign values (Chapter 7). Therefore, it could, in my opinion, be adopted by Translation Courses of undergraduate level. It would certainly enrich the courses and the students would have a lot to gain through the reading of its pages.

Eliana M. Limongi
UFSC

———


Imagine the misery of an English native speaker discussing an essay with her/his teacher of Arabic as a foreign language and listening to the following: your ideas are excellent... you have a lot to say
but your language is not flourish-
ed enough, try to be less straight
forward and to embellish your
arguments with a touch of literary
metaphor...that would certainly
improve your writing and make
your meanings clearer. In another
foreign language classroom still
another poor English native
speaker student is in profound
distress as she/he discusses a
writing assignment with a Greek
as a foreign language teacher. The
Master makes the point to the
desolated student that the writing
is fine but that the argumentation
desires more circularity, with
more side ideas and examples to
better illustrate the main point.

While the above is anecdotal
and certainly very difficult to ac-
tually take place due to a series of
linguistic and non-linguistic facts
which are not to be discussed in
this short review, the truth of the
matter is that The Politics of
Writing brings out an important
issue about writing. This issue
partially addressed before mainly
in studies which related different
lines of argumentation to differ-
ences in culture and type of educa-
tion is described by the authors
under the term context of culture.
This concept embodies the whole
set of beliefs, values and privileg-
ing patterns that writers bring to
the act of writing itself as a polit-
ical communicative event where
power is invariably always at
stake. In this sense, it expands the
concept of context of situation
coined by Halliday and Hasan
(1985:chapter 1) since in any part-
cular context of situation, the con-
text of culture provides the range
of possibilities that are at struggle,
competing for dominance.

This issue whose discussion
far expands the type of genre we
usually call academic writing or
the personal dramas of foreign
students trying to tame their own
histories to succeed in different
privileging writing patterns, is
described by the authors in 258
pages of a very informal and read-
er-friendly prose. The question of
their own writing — the book is
co-authored by two different writ-
ers with different back-grounds
and experiences in the teaching of
writing — is also detailed discus-
sed. In this sense, The Politics of
Writing also carries a lot of self-
reflexivity and intertextuality, top-
ics which are certainly very cur-
rent in present day linguistic studies.

In their challenge of Anglo-
American notions of correctness
in writing and in their argument for a more democratic pedagogy in both the distribution of the right to write and the respect for the reader's personal history and cultural identity, the authors — lecturers at Lancaster University — draw on Fairclough's diagram as presented in *Language and Power* (1989). Their aim is to illustrate that the most important aspects of social context are the relations of power that exist in it, and the interests, values and beliefs that maintain these relations of power and to make the point that relations of power are open to contestation and change.

*The Politics of Writing* certainly is an interesting book to be read by all those who are professionally involved in the production and consumption of texts. And, although it is very much Eurocentred — it concentrates exclusively on the inequalities of writing in British English by British native speakers — it is certainly a book which provides insights for non-native English speakers and writers who have conformed to the linearity of Standard English in detriment of their own. By challenging and contesting current approaches about writing as a mechanical process — where outlines, for instance, play a relevant role — and by associating the writing process with cognition, culture and power, *The Politics of Writing* exposes the parochial attitude towards writing which most British Universities display and impose.

It is in this sense that the work of Clark and Ivanic appeal to translators. It is almost impossible not to establish a connection between the linguistic imperialism imposed by traditional approaches to writing and the practice of translation. Even though not a book particularly designed for translators, *The Politics of Writing* provides food for thought for one of the most crucial problems translation theory is facing today: the question of transparent discourse. In a post-modern global society based on grossly unequal cultural exchanges mainly conveyed by written language, it is indeed important that translators be aware of their potential for either the maintenance or resistance to writing practices which, often times, conceal the darkest of the political intentions.

Maria Cristina Schleder de Borba
UFSC