



# Machine Translation and/in Language Education

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# Overview

Part 1: From Disruption to Deliberate Design: Machine Translation as Challenge for Post-Secondary Language and Humanities Education

Part 2: “Lost in Translation: World Literature in the Age of Machine Translation and Artificial Intelligence

# Part 1: From Disruption to Deliberate Design

## **The Pocket Calculator as Precedent**

**Late 1970s:** Affordable pocket calculators emerge.

**Educators ask:** If students can calculate instantly, why teach arithmetic?

**Initial response::** Ban calculators. Protect foundational skills.

**What changed:** Math education shifted toward reasoning, modeling, and problem-solving.

### **Lesson:**

The calculator did not eliminate mathematics.

It forced a redefinition of what is essential.

**Language education is now in that moment.**

# Part 1: From Disruption to Deliberate Design

## **Google Translate as Disruptive Innovation**

**Disruptive innovation (Christensen):** Simpler. Cheaper. More accessible. Changes behavior at scale.

**Old model:** Years of language study

**New model:** Free, ubiquitous, “good enough”

**Consequence:** Not just a teaching challenge but a legitimacy and funding challenge.

# Part 1: From Disruption to Deliberate Design

## **The Pedagogical Impasse**

### **Field response:**

Prohibition.

Google Translate = academic dishonesty.

### **Reality:**

Students use it anyway.

Often ineffectively.

### **Result:**

Students hide. Teachers police. Institutions stay silent.

### **A dysfunctional ecology.**

# Part 1: From Disruption to Deliberate Design

## **A Call for Redesign**

Do not surrender to technology. >> Redesign for it.

### **Four competencies:**

Task analysis

Input modification

Output analysis

Learning opportunity recognition

MT does not replace proficiency: It adds critical, metalinguistic awareness.

**Goal: Disciplined, critical integration, not technological enthusiasm.**

## Part 2: Lost in Translation

- Course Title: “Lost in Translation: World Literature in the Age of Machine Translation and Artificial Intelligence”
- Literature Department
- All discussions and readings in English
- Prerequisite: “Basic reading competence” in at least one LOTE
- Enrollment: 18 undergraduate students
- Diverse linguistic background

## Part 2: Lost in Translation

Goal Areas/"Big Issues"	Can-Do Statements	Instruction/Assignment
Translation as a Craft and Art	Students can articulate a critical appreciation of translation as a process, a vocation, and an artform.	Reading and discussion texts on the theory of translation; work on a translation portfolio
Features of Literary Discourse	Students can express a nuanced understanding of the characteristics of literary discourse as opposed to expository texts.	Work on a translation portfolio; reflective essays; work-in-progress presentations
Language & Literacy Development	Students can independently use translation tasks and reflections on translation to enhance their language and literacy competencies in a language other than English.	Work on a translation portfolio; reflective essays; work-in-progress presentations
Machine Translation	Students can analyze the affordances and limitations of machine translation technologies vis a vis expository and literary texts.	Readings and discussions of texts; comparative analyses of human and machine translations

# Part 3: Lost in Translation

## STRUCTURE OF THE COURSE

*First half of the semester:*

-Canonical classical texts in translation studies

*Second half of the semester:*

-Contemporary debates on translation

-Topics: identity, cultural appropriation, the growing professional acknowledgement of literary translators, localization, impact technology on the translation process

# Snapshot #1: Brecht/Lenya/Simone

Brecht/Weill: “Die Dreigroschenoper”/ “The Threepenny Opera” (1927)

Lotte Lenya: “Seeräuberin Jenny”

*(from 1931 film by S.G. Pabst – translation through subtitles superimposed from Marc Blitzstein’s mid-1950s translation)*

Nina Simone: “Pirate Jenny”

*(from a 1992 concert in Montreal – performed in modified translation based on Marc Blitzstein’s mid-1950s translation)*



# Snapshot #2: Luther, Beethoven, and the Question of “Ideological Fingerprints”

Martin Luther: “Sendebrief vom Dolmetschen” / “Open Letter on Translating” (1530)

Ludwig van Beethoven: “10<sup>th</sup> Symphony”  
(1827, unfinished)

Beethoven X / The AI Project: “10<sup>th</sup> Symphony”  
(2022, completed)



# Snapshot #3: Gorman/Rijneveld/Hamilton

-Amanda Gorman: "The Hill We Climb" (2022)

-Marieke Lucas Rijneveld (1991-)

-Lin-Manuel Miranda: "Hamilton" (2015)

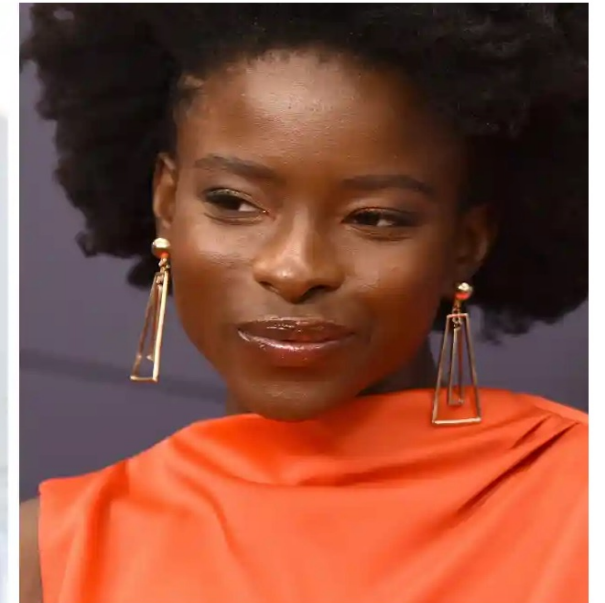
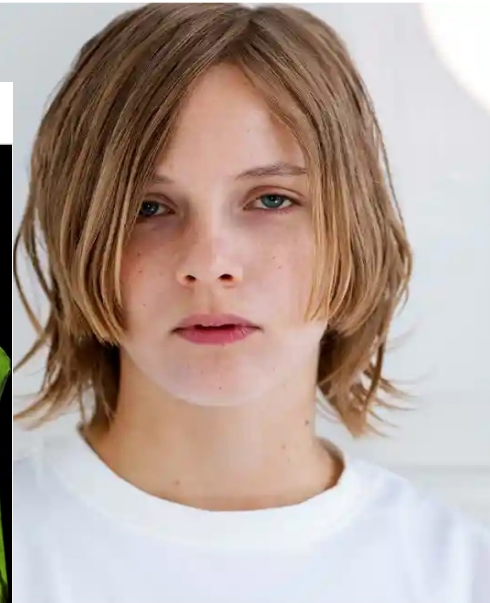
## 'Shocked by the uproar': Amanda Gorman's white translator quits

**International Booker winner Marieke Lucas Rijneveld will not translate inaugural poet's work into Dutch after anger that a Black writer was not hired**

**The New York Times**



From left, Redchild, Daniel Dodd-Ellis, Charles Simmons and Benet Monteiro in "Hamilton" in Hamburg, Germany. Johan Persson



# Translation Portfolio

Translation tasks: news report, prose fiction, poetry/song, advertisement

Accompanied by critical reflection essays

# Conclusions and Outlook



# Thank you! Merci! Danke!

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