



**DON BOSCO
THE TRANSLATOR**

A guide for today's translator?

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Introduction

Translators are language professionals

It might come as a shock to the reader to see a title such as “Don Bosco the Translator”. He was just about everything else, the reader might say, everything from farmhand to founder, from manual labourer to miracle worker – but a translator?? So clearly, the first thing we need to establish is just who or what the “translator” is.

Ask the common person what a translator is and they may say something along the following lines: the translator is someone who takes a source text in one language and converts it to a target text in another language, and since “text” can be more than writing (in its broadest understanding it may also be spoken, include other information channels like music, images...), then the translator might indeed be a Jack (or Jill) of all trades! Ah! “of all trades”, including the farmhand and the founder, the manual labourer and the miracle worker no doubt!

But let’s take a closer look at this. In his article (later published as a book) *Translation as a Profession*, Roger Chriss sums it up well: “Translators are language professionals. They are applied linguists, competent writers, diplomats, and educated amateurs.” (Chriss 2006). Of course, he makes a clear distinction, too, between the “translator” who deals with written text and the “interpreter” who deals with spoken text, but let’s leave that aside for the moment.

While not a *linguist* in today’s professional sense, Don Bosco had to be capable of discerning subtleties and nuances in the languages he used (especially Piedmontese and Italian, but not only), and was indeed very capable in this matter. He used language very cleverly and effectively, always subservient to the overriding principle of the salvation of souls, especially if they were young and poor. He also had to research terminology and colloquialisms, and handle new developments in his languages, particularly at a time when a unified Italy came into being (1860s) and, curiously enough, when both its king and prime minister did not speak Italian but Piedmontese and French.

As a *writer*, and this we have no doubts about at all, Don Bosco had to be accustomed to working long hours alone on subjects that he was best suited to deal with and in a language that few people around him knew very well. One particular work comes to mind, *The arithmetic and metric system made simple for primary classes, with comparisons between old Italian prices and measures, and the same in metric decimal* By Fr John Bosco. Seventh edition Turin, 1881, Salesian press and bookshop, Sanpierdarena Nice-Buenos-Ayres-Montevideo. The entire reference is given here – in translation, of course! Partly to show the rather universal application of the work beyond northern Italian shores, and partly to already introduce an issue we will take up later – should the translator adhere to the 19th century convention of very long titles, or just call this work *The Metric System Made Simple* or even *Metrics for Dummies*? Anyway, that question aside for now, to make this huge contribution to schools and the common folk of the time, Don Bosco not only had to work between Piedmontese and Italian, along with a good grasp of French (Napoleon was the one who introduced the decimal system), but had to thoroughly understand the measurement systems and technical terminology involved.

As a *diplomat*, and he was this in a number of senses, including the quite official one of his role in matters of State vis-a-vis the Holy See, Don Bosco had to be sensitive to the cultural and social differences which existed in his languages (and now we must include Latin) and be capable of addressing these issues when interpreting or negotiating.

And as an *educated amateur*, probably the description Don Bosco would most agree with thus far, even as an author Don Bosco had to know the basics of and many of the details about the subjects he had to deal with... and recognise the need to ask others when unsure of a term or phrase, or the appropriateness of style (including asking his mother).

Translator as author

If we had to pick one of the above descriptors (linguist, writer, diplomat, educated amateur) as most indicative of the translator, it might be the writer. Maybe make that “the author”, since the translator is really authoring a piece of writing, and attempting to produce a result that reads as if it had been written in the original language. Maybe the best comment a translator can receive is along the lines of “I didn’t compare your translation with the original text, but the highest praise I can give it is that it flowed so well that I totally forgot that it was a translation!” Don Bosco did receive many an accolade for the works he authored, though perhaps not in those precise words, because his work was rarely seen as “translation” as such. But once we begin looking at the extent of his involvement with language and languages, and his role as a cultural

mediator, we can have little doubt that it is at least possible to begin speaking of him as a translator.

That said, the purpose of this brief paper is not strictly an academic one, and certainly not a rigorous study of “Don Bosco the Translator”. It is an attempt to look at Don Bosco’s language activity (which included translation, as we will see) to see if there is something that today’s Salesian translator can learn from him. If anything, it is quite limited, in the sense that it draws largely from just a few texts by or about Don Bosco, the main one being his own *Memoirs of the Oratory*. This is also for practical purposes, since these *Memoirs* are the most accessible to readers. *The Biographical Memoirs* also contain many items of information about Don Bosco and his use of language, and occasional reference is made to these, but they are not as easily accessible to people, at least in English, given that there is still no official online version and the full set of 19 printed volumes in this language may not be found in every Salesian house. It is also limited insofar as it is not a thorough text on translation and translation methods, but simply aims to whet the appetite, so to speak.

This paper will dip in and out of occasions and circumstances in Don Bosco’s life that highlight many of the descriptors mentioned above, and may thereby strengthen our appreciation of an aspect of Don Bosco’s life that has been less studied (as far as one can tell, though there are one or two well-known studies which will be mentioned along the way). But similarly to Don Bosco, who wrote his own autobiography “to help people overcome problems”, “to make known how God himself has always been our guide”, and for “some entertainment”, this brief work is intended to encourage the Salesian translator, since we know that this kind of translator has to deal with problems, works for the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls, and, in Salesian style, likes to do so with a smile.

Don Bosco is used as a jumping off point, but we will introduce aspects of personal experience and academic understandings that have now made “translation studies” an academic discipline in its own right. Don Bosco is our encouragement, but encouragement and good will are insufficient in a globalised world where translation is more important than ever. We must be competent and up-to-date if our translation work is to meet today’s standards.

Don Bosco the Language Learner

Dialect and regional varieties

THE YEAR IS 1826 and the young John Bosco is 11 years old. He has met a kindly priest who asks him if he had studied any grammar, to which he had replied that he didn't know what that was! But then he started lessons, and some months later had the following to say (among many other things):

In mid-September I began a regular study of Italian grammar, and soon I was able to write fairly good compositions. At Christmas I went on to study Latin. By Easter I was attempting Italian-Latin and Latin-Italian translations (Bosco [tr. D. Lyons] 2010, 44. Note, for other references to this work we will simply say MO, page number).

The translator is at least bilingual, though not all bilinguals are translators. In 1826, although he would not have known what to call it, the 11-year-old Bosco was being introduced to a situation of diglossia. There is a distinction between *bilingualism* and *diglossia*. The latter is where two languages are in use with fairly strict compartmentalisation. In addition to the vernacular (Piedmontese, and in his case, the Monferrino variety), there were two more highly codified lects (perhaps three, since we should not rule out Latin) in use for official occasions (French) or for literature, formal education and certainly the Church (Italian and Latin). Today, one would have to say that Italians for the most part are in a situation of bilingualism if they also still happen to speak a dialect or regional variety where the two languages coexist and interact, though not in such a compartmentalised way. It is also possible that some areas, Piedmont included, may still be diglossic for certain groups, the very elderly especially.

Salesian Aldo Giraudo has provided a critical reading of a sermon the seminarian Bosco gave at the end of his first year in theology (MO, 84). This sermon was only recently rediscovered, having flown “under the radar” of scholarly eyes for a century and more. John Bosco was preaching in Piedmontese, but, as Giraudo says “mixing

Piedmontese with Italian – a common custom in popular preaching at the time” (Girauda 2018, 107).

In the situation in Piedmont in the young Bosco’s time, and even more so as the years went by, with Italy gradually moving to a “lingua franca” (but not French!), there is little doubt that the Italian he would begin to hear in increasingly regular use, and would then begin to use himself, would be influenced by the local dialect. Salesian Paolo Zolli comments:

More nuanced and still open, in my opinion, is the question of the presence in Don Bosco’s writings of elements of regional Italian, that is, of terms not strictly dialect but almost always, though not necessarily, reflecting a dialect model as regards form or meaning, which are present in the spoken and written Italian of the different areas (Zolli, 119).

Just as we need to distinguish between bilingualism and diglossia, so too do we need to distinguish between *dialects* in use in Italy and *regional Italian* varieties. In the Piedmontese countryside today, for example, one might hear *cum al’è?*, the dialect equivalent of the Standard Italian *come va?*. So there we have a clear distinction between dialect and Standard Italian, but someone in Turin may well “italianise” the Piedmontese expression and ask *com’è?*. It sounds (and is) Italian but with a slightly different meaning to Standard Italian, and someone who is not from Turin or thereabouts might follow up with a puzzled *com’è cosa?* (How is what?). In other words, *com’è* is a regional variety of Italian for asking how things are going. Or one might hear *va bin* (or even more so, *a va bin parei*), meaning “it’s okay”, except that the Piedmontese expression is rather more akin to a philosophical “I take what comes from life without complaining or worrying too much”. Or, to give one more example, one might hear, around Turin, the expression *facciamo che andare* instead of simply *andiamo*. Regional versus Standard Italian, but behind it lies the pure Piedmontese *fuma ch’anduma?* (Shall we go?). The local version of Standard Italian is usually influenced by the underlying local language, which can be very different from Italian with regard to phonology, morphology, syntax, and vocabulary. Anyone who knows Standard Italian well can usually understand Regional Italian quite well, while not managing to grasp the dialects. But it is easy to see how this situation might be a challenge for the translator.

Translation as part of language learning

It would have been no less a challenge for the young language learner Bosco. John Bosco might have had many natural talents, but nurture was also important. The

young Bosco had to learn Italian, Latin, French sufficiently to be able to translate and use them. So let's continue to explore his experience as a language learner:

[I]t was decided in the interest of family peace that for the time being I should go to school in the morning and for the rest of the day apply myself to manual labor. But how could I study? How could I manage the translations?

Take note. The walk to and from school afforded me some time to study. When I got home I would take the hoe in one hand and my grammar in the other, and along the way I would study "when *qui quae quod* you'd render" until I reached the place of work. (MO, 45).

We note his insistence on the importance of translation in language learning, clearly the emphasis of the era, and worth commenting on shortly. But what about the "when *qui quae quod* you'd render", where we assume this is part of a little ditty that would obviously then include "gender" to rhyme with it? Since, by the time Don Bosco wrote his *Memoirs* he had been teaching language (Latin and Italian at least) to his boys and indeed his young Salesians, we might be seeing an echo of the good teacher here. Such good teaching continues today. Note the following (and better by far to listen to it on **YouTube** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RqzKeOgDEw0>):

qui, quae, quod – who, which;
quem, quam, quod – whom, which;
cu-i-us means whose;
cu-i means to whom or which;
quo, qua, quo – by, with, from whom or which;
Now the plural
qui, quae, quae – who, which;
quos, quas, quae – whom, which;
quorum, quarum, quorum – whose;
quibus means to whom or which;
quibus – by, with or from whom or which;

This is the clever little ditty by the late David Parsons (1937-2009), a Latin teacher *par excellence* from England who had a Bosco-like playful approach to the classics and would reach out to those who did not have the chance to study Latin and Greek in conventional ways. He was also a translator from Latin to English.

So, what about the grammar translation method that was clearly a predominant feature of language learning for Don Bosco? Is it still in vogue 200 years later? For a while, translation went out with many other features of language learning, the general view being that it left students trapped inside their heads, stranded in the endless vortex of converting each word to their native language, never being able to speak

or understand. The emphasis came to be and is still is on “communicative language learning”, but there is no need to throw the baby out with the bathwater. Here are a few reasons why it is worthwhile to spend some time teaching students translation.

It’s a useful life skill. In many cases, we have dropped translation for communication, believing that the latter is the more useful skill. But pause for a moment and think about how often translation is used in our day-to-day lives — especially among people who travel abroad. We have all had to translate a menu, a train or bus schedule. Or be a mediator between two parties who each speak different languages. Depending on how frequently people travel or the type of job they work at, these things could be part of their daily routine. For all these real-life situations, translation is necessary. And practising it gives students an extra competitive edge to succeed in a multilingual world.

Students believe in the power of translation. They see it as evidence of their mastery of the language — even though as teachers we understand that there’s a lot more that goes into learning a language.

Translation helps students understand their native language better. The process of converting one language to another gives students unique insight into their own language. They gain a valuable perspective on the intricate ways in which languages differ from one another.

There would be little doubt that those three reasons, and others besides, would have been clear enough to Don Bosco.

Machine translation and translation errors

But of course, translation has its limits: *Google translate*, we know, can produce hilarious results! Machine translation often fails to take into account differences in things like word order, idioms and figurative language. We can use Google translate in a reflective way, though, to see what is actually happening to language!

Do experienced translators use machine translators of the Google kind? They do. Depending on the language pairs involved, they might, however, use better machine translation than Google’s. **DeepL**, especially when partnered with **Linguee** to see items in context, and **WordReference** for individual words and phrases, produces far more acceptable results.

And even recent world history (if we think of crucial events such as the Second World War) demonstrates how disastrous faulty translation can be. Just two examples:

1. The monastery on Monte Cassino was actually destroyed by the Allies due to a misinterpretation by an Intelligence officer of an intercepted German radio

message: in part that message read “*Der Abt ist im Kloster*”. A poor knowledge of German led to the translation “The division/battalion is in the monastery”, thinking that *Abt* was short for *Abteilung* = division. But *Abteilung* is a feminine noun, so would be *die Abteilung*, not *der Abteilung*. Instead, the masculine *Der Abt* simply meant “the abbot is in the monastery”.

2. Let’s switch to Japanese. Consider the following dictionary entry (omitting only the Japanese characters for typographical reasons): *mokusatsu* ●*ir-suru*, v. take no notice of; treat (anything) with silent contempt; ignore [by keeping silence]; remain in a wise and masterly inactivity. *Kenkyusha’s New Japanese – English Dictionary*, p. 1129.

The story of how an ill-chosen translation of the Japanese word *mokusatsu* led to the United States’ decision to drop the world’s first atomic bomb on Hiroshima is well known to many linguists. In July of 1945 allied leaders meeting in Potsdam submitted a stiffly-worded declaration of surrender terms and waited anxiously for the Japanese reply. The terms had included a statement to the effect that any negative answer would invite “prompt and utter destruction.” Truman, Churchill, Stalin, and Chiang Kai-Shek stated that they hoped that Japan would agree to surrender unconditionally and prevent devastation of the Japanese homeland and that they patiently awaited Japan’s answer. Reporters in Tokyo questioned Japanese Premier Kantaro Suzuki about his government’s reaction to the Potsdam Declaration. Since no formal decision had been reached at the time, Suzuki, falling back on the politician’s old standby answer to reporters, replied that he was withholding comment. He used the Japanese word *mokusatsu*, derived from the word for ‘silence.’ As can be seen from the dictionary entry quoted at the beginning of this essay, however, the word has other meanings quite different from that intended by Suzuki. Japanese is a language with a lot of room for ambiguity, forcing the translator to assume or read between the lines, so Prime Minister Suzuki might not have been using the “politician’s old standby” – maybe he was simply using his mother tongue to good advantage. But, ambiguity impedes the translation process. Whatever the case, the rest is history as they say.

Inter- and Intra-lingual activity

Translation exercises were not the only thing the young Bosco did as part of his language learning, especially as he got older:

When I finished my homework I had a lot of spare time; I used to devote part of it to reading the Latin and Italian classics and the rest to making liquors and jams (MO, 61).

Mixing it up. Literally! He expands on this (the classics bit, not the liquors and jams):

In my fourth year of ginnasio I spent much time reading the Italian authors. During the rhetoric year I turned to the study of the Latin classics... I read them for pleasure and enjoyed them as if I had understood everything. Only much later did I realise that I had not. After my ordination when I took on teaching these masterpieces to others I quickly found how much concentration and preparation were necessary to penetrate their true meaning and beauty (MO, 72).

There is much more involved here than meets the eye. Don Bosco was well read, for sure, within the limitations of his circumstances, and how important it is for the translator to be well read. But there is something else at stake here, something that eventually made the Christian humanist of Don Bosco, or rather, the true evangeliser. Think for a moment of Erasmus – scholar, philosopher and priest, the “prince” of Christian humanism, who once wrote as expressed in Tyndale’s pithy English: *“I wold to god the gospels were translated in to the tongues of all men... I wold to god the plowman wold singe a text of the scripture at his plowberne, and that the wever at his lowme with this wold drive away the tediousness of tyme.”* Eventually, and especially once he became a priest and teacher, this was Don Bosco’s hope too! Translation is associated here with a social and evangelical ideal, but it also includes a good degree of cultural understanding that can only be gained by at least small “s” scholarship (being well read).

“Penetrating the true meaning and beauty” of a text is just as true for a text in one’s mother tongue as it is for a text in another tongue. It is an intralingual activity (within a language) as much as it is an interlingual (between languages) or intersemiotic one (between channels including more than text, e.g. visual, aural). These three terms were introduced by Roman Jakobson back in 1959 (Jakobson 1959, 233), and George Steiner placed a special emphasis on intralingual or “internal” translation (Steiner 1992, 29), what Jakobson also calls “rewording”. Effectively, Steiner said that we are all translators because of our knowledge and use of language, and that understanding the intralingual aspects of language already implicitly contains many of the factors involved in interlingual translation – which most people ordinarily understand translation to be. By penetrating the true meaning and beauty of a text, Don Bosco is giving us a hint to his use of his intralingual skills, which Steiner would then call the “hermeneutic motion”, or “the act of elicitation and appropriative transfer of meaning” (Steiner, 296). It was because Don Bosco had developed these skills within Piedmontese and Italian that he was then able to work across these languages and add others.

One subject close to my heart was Greek. In my secondary classics studies I had already mastered its basic elements. With the help of a dictionary I had worked my way through

the first translations after I had studied the grammar... I was lucky enough to meet a priest of the Society, named Bini, who had a profound knowledge of Greek. I learned a lot from him. In only four months he pushed me to translate almost the whole New Testament, the first two books of Homer and a selection of the odes of Pindar and Anacreon... For four years, each week he corrected a Greek composition or translation which I sent him and he returned it promptly with suitable comments. By this means I managed to be able to translate Greek almost as well as I could Latin.

At this time, too, I studied French and the principles of Hebrew. These three languages, Hebrew, Greek and French, always remained my favorites after Latin and Italian (MO, 93-94)

We also know that by the time he was in the seminary in Chieri, Don Bosco would write poetry for occasions, with verses in Latin, French, Italian and Piedmontese.

With the help of a dictionary

Leaving aside some of the historical details (scholars suggest that there was no Jesuit by the name of Bini), we gain some further insight here into Don Bosco's activity as he was learning languages. Let's focus on "with the help of a dictionary". Later we can explore the wider question of Salesian lexicography and terminological work, but for the moment, the student Bosco is drawing our attention to the place that the dictionary has in translation and, as we know from his later activity as educator and promoter of "good literature", in the teaching of language and the compilation of dictionaries. This latter was not something he did himself, but that he encouraged several of the boys who then became his early Salesians to do. In this latter case (the compilation of dictionaries) we are also reminded of the inverse relationship between translation and the dictionary, namely, that experience with translation then plays a role in the compilation of dictionaries, a factor that has continued to be important in the Salesian world as it contributes to cultures that have not had adequate dictionaries.

We are reminded, in a contribution by Zolli, of a comment Don Bosco made as he concluded his circular letter "On Spreading Good Books":

Let me conclude: draw the conclusion to this letter yourselves by seeing that our young people get hold of moral and Christian principles especially by means of our productions, without despising other publishers' books. I must tell you, however, that I was cut to the quick when I got to know that, in some of our houses, the books we printed were at times not known or held in no regard. Do not love, nor lead others to love, that kind of knowledge which the Apostle says *inflat* (pumps up). And remind yourselves that, even though St Augustine was an eminent teacher of literature and an eloquent orator, after he became a bishop he preferred the incorrect use of language and the absence of stylish elegance rather than run the risk of not being understood by the people. And remind yourselves that, even though St Augustine was an eminent

teacher of literature and an eloquent orator, after he became a bishop, he preferred the incorrect use of language and the absence of stylish elegance rather than run the risk of not being understood by the people. (Don Bosco, 19 March 1885).

Zolli suggests that this brief passage offers us the principles which inspired Don Bosco regarding the use and teaching of the Italian language. The first principle was the subordination of human values to religious and moral values, and then the educational aim of reading and writing. The second was a quite technical one (but also subordinate to the first), the systematic and continuous effort to be simple, clear and precise in language in order to immediately convey the idea. He then applied this thinking to, among other things, school dictionaries. Zolli tells us that "Don Bosco carved out a not insignificant place for himself as the promoter of three widely circulated works, namely the Latin, Greek and Italian dictionaries by Durando, Pechenino and Cerruti respectively, the importance of which he was well aware. The drafting of these three dictionaries came about fundamentally from a moral necessity." (Zolli 1987, 113ff.).

It seems that we have already left Bosco the young language learner behind and arrived at the young man about to be ordained and ready to put his languages to the test.

Don Bosco and Dialect

Snippets of dialect

DON BOSCO MIGHT HAVE BEEN BUSY learning classical languages as a young man, and boning up on his French, but the reality was that his mother tongue was Piedmontese. Perhaps the best study of Don Bosco and his use of dialect is by Salesian Natale Cerrato, *Car ij mè fieuj, miei cari figlioli: Il dialetto piemontese nella vita e negli scritti di Don Bosco*. The preface to his work points out that whether he was speaking or writing in Italian, Don Bosco decorated it here and there with purely Piedmontese words or Piedmontese words that had been italianised, or Italian words but with Piedmontese meanings (Cerrato 1982, 8).

This reality is of special interest to the translator, obviously, especially if such a person has the task of translating some of Don Bosco's original works, over two hundred published items (not including the many editions of the *Letture Cattoliche*) and countless numbers of others, including his vast correspondence. But it raises a number of questions.

Since we have been drawing heavily from the *Memoirs of the Oratory*, it is at least a legitimate question to ask how, for example, translations of this work have dealt with the snippets of dialect to be found in the original text, which we can assume would have reflected the earlier comment about "purely Piedmontese words, or Piedmontese words that have been italianised, or Italian words but with Piedmontese meanings". Have these been retained in some way or other, or have they been "overwritten" or just plain ignored?

Perhaps what immediately comes to mind for the English reader is "'Tuder! Tuder!' he began to shout as he ran after him" (MO, 103). This is the most obvious and perhaps the only immediately identifiable Piedmontese term the English reader will see in this book – and a derogatory one at that! Cerrato quotes it as "'Toder, toder...'" (he is drawing from the *Memorie dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales dal 1815 al 1855*, Torino, SEI, 1946 with introduction and notes by E. Ceria). He then refers to the *Memorie*

Biografiche (an edition completed in 1948), which explains as follows: “a derogatory term corresponding to *tèrluch* or *mamaluch*, i.e. ‘foolish’, ‘sucker’, and was used in those days for the purposes of ridicule when speaking of a German” (Lemoyne et al, Vol 2 70-75). Cerrato generalises this notion, saying that the sacristan was using a term that denoted the foreigner and maybe even the enemy, and that this was in contrast to Don Bosco’s use of the term *amico* or friend, even before he had got to know the boy (Cerrato, 23).

Interestingly enough, the English translation of the *Memorie Biografiche*, the *Biographical Memoirs*, in the corresponding volume, leaves out the term altogether, merely saying of the sacristan that “He put aside the duster and, calling for the boy, ran after him.” (Lemoyne, 57). So the question asked earlier of the *Memoirs of the Oratory* may well be asked of the *Biographical Memoirs* – at least in this instance, where the Piedmontese term has been entirely omitted.

Returning for the moment to the *Memoirs of the Oratory*, there is more we can say about the English translation vis-a-vis aspects of dialect. There is at least one other Piedmontese derogatory term found in the original Italian text, in the passage where the young student of theology finds himself in an embarrassing situation: the preacher had not turned up to preach on the feast of St Roch (16 August) an important local feast in Cinzano. Student for the priesthood Bosco asked a number of priests who were present to step up instead, but none would. As the English translation of this event puts it: “Some even got annoyed by my repeated pleading and turned harshly on me: ‘You’re a fool you know! It’s no joke to preach off the cuff..’” The original Italian text has, for the final sentence: *Minchione che siete; il fare un discorso sopra S. Rocco all'improvviso non è bere un bicchiere di vino*. Drawing on a dictionary of the time (Michele Ponza, *Vocabolario piemontese-italiano*, vol II, Torino, Stampa Reale 1832, 227) Antonio da Silva Fereiro notes that the term *minchione* is an italianisation of the Piedmontese term *mincion*, meaning “fool” and that there is also a verb form *mincioné*, “to make fun of”. The English translation has at least picked up the sense of the term, but not mentioned it as such.

Then there is the question of measurements. Don Bosco had gone to considerable trouble to provide a textbook for use in schools on this matter, the *Metric System Made Simple*, and we subsequently find a number of measurements in the *Memoirs of the Oratory*. One is the passage where, as a boy in Chieri, he and his friends are invited to go swimming at the Fontana Rossa “about a mile from Chieri” (MO, 61). The original Italian text is *distante circa un miglio da Chieri*. Note: *miglio*, but not the “English mile”, which is about 1.6 kilometres. Don Bosco is using an old Piedmontese measure here; this *miglio* was approximately two and a half kilometres (Bosco, *Il sistema metrico decimale*, 68, in OE – *Opere Edite* 1V, 68). So one immediately wonders if the translator was simply unaware of the difference. If he was aware of the difference

it might have been better to at least indicate the longer distance, a mile and a half or a little over. There is another instance of an old Piedmontese measurement (the *giornata*) mentioned in the passage where Don Bosco needs to expand the Oratory to accommodate the growing numbers of boys and purchases “a section of land (.94 acre) from the Turin seminary” (MO, 154). The Italian original speaks of *una giornata di terreno (38 are), dal seminario di Torino*. We know from Don Bosco’s textbook on the metric system that an *ara* corresponds to 100 square metres (Bosco, *Il sistema metrico decimale*, 39, 51-52, in OE IV, 39,51-52).

There are other examples we could draw on from the *Memoirs of the Oratory*, but it is appropriate now to explore the larger question for the translator when dealing with texts that include snippets of dialect. How should they be treated? Or the even broader question regarding the degree to which translators make a text conform to the target culture. The debate about this today in the translation studies discipline is often put in terms of “foreignization” or “domestication”, but it was very nicely expressed by Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834, so just predating Don Bosco’s era) who explained the quandary by suggesting that it was better to bring “the reader to the writer” (in other words retain the “foreignness” of a text) than the other way round. It is clear from the handful of examples above from the English translation of the MO, that the translator did not not share that view – he preferred to bring the writer to the reader.

Translation – foreignization or domestication?

In some ways the issue just mentioned brings us back to the initial question, where we asked what a translator is. The answer given there now needs to be nuanced somewhat, since it is clearly more than just “converting” a source text into a target text. So, what is translation? More often than not it means an act whereby we render the meaning of a text into another language *in the way that the author intended* the text (the two examples of mistranslation provided earlier that affected World War II make it clear how important the author’s intentions are). But consider this for a moment. Should we preserve or should we normalise the individual style (idiolect) of the original author? Do we bring across content items belonging to the source language culture, or to a third language (e.g. the snippets of dialect employed by Don Bosco) that would probably need some explanation in the target language/culture? What about the typical format of the text as influenced by the conventions of the time, given the possibility that they may also influence the meaning of the text? What about the expectations of the putative readership, bearing in mind their estimated knowledge of the topic and the style of language they use, expressed in terms of the largest common factor, since one should not translate down (or up) to the readership? So, you can see

that there are many tensions at work in the act of translation, and they are not easily resolved.

One might wonder, for example, how important the typical format of a text according to the conventions of the time really is. Very often it will not be so important, but it is worth giving an example of how it might be. In our own times, the traditional Japanese comic the *manga* has become quite a universal feature, including for Salesians in the East Asia-Oceania Region, since the Japan Province has offered others in the region their cleverly and beautifully produced *manga* version of the life of Don Bosco for translation in other circumscriptions. Of course, in the original form, the *manga* comics were written top to bottom, right to left, the natural reading pattern for Japanese. In the act of translation we might be tempted to “flip” everything to left to right in order not to confuse foreign readers. But consider the implications – all characters left-handed (don’t forget we are now dealing with visual elements as well as text)?

Fr Aldo Giraud, one of the foremost scholars regarding Don Bosco and his texts, raises another question that is not unrelated to what has just been said. Commenting on the *Memoirs of the Oratory*, he speaks about religious views found in the MO, views “which more or less openly clash with our theology of reference (for example an expression crucial for translators of recent decades: *Dio misericordioso ci colpì con una grave sciagura* [“when the merciful Lord hit us with a sad bereavement”, as the English translator of the MO puts it]) or for pedagogical terms like *educare*, *curare*, *istruire*, *assistere* and *amorevolezza*, whose meanings have undergone significant semantic shifts as a result of socio-cultural changes and the evolution of pedagogical ideas.” (Giraud, 24, and as translated on the fly by this writer). He draws the obvious conclusion that interpretation of the text (the translator is an interpreter in this sense) needs a degree of preparation, an accurate historical framework and the acquisition of a vocabulary and encyclopaedia (perhaps he means encyclopaedic knowledge) suitable for a full understanding of the author’s intentions (Giraud, 24).

In his introduction to his work, Cerrato, writing some forty years ago, says that there is talk of a “grand tradition” which has formed around the official documents of the Salesian Society, and a “minor tradition” that emerges from the small matters of daily life at Valdocco in Don Bosco’s time. He then explicitly relegates Don Bosco’s use of dialect in his published and unpublished writings to this “minor tradition” (Cerrato, 11). In the light of the above discussion, and in particular of what is known as the “cultural turn” in translation (the recognition that language cannot be separated from culture, and therefore certain cultural elements should be visible in the translation), maybe we should be slow to accept Cerrato’s position. Did Don Bosco think his mother tongue was “minor”? “Give up your high-sounding language and stick to dialect where possible and when you use Italian, speak the language of the people, the people, the

people” he was told by the parish priest of Alfiano, Giuseppe Peleto (MO, 85) and Don Bosco tells us that it “served as a guiding principle for the rest of my life”.

At the very least, today’s translator would do well to be informed of the two polar positions presented by people such as Eugene Nida (1914–2011), of biblical translation fame, who argued that the translator must find “the closest natural equivalent” in the target language to the source language, deeming that it is best to produce a translation that sounds natural to the target audience, and Lawrence Venuti, who argues for prioritising the source language and culture (cf. recommended reading).

Then we have the Holy Father, Pope Francis’ own recommendation addressing the Salesians in a letter sent to the GC28 Assembly:

Let us be inspired by this anecdote about Don Bosco, who when asked what language he liked to speak in, answered: “The one my mother taught me: it is the one with which I can communicate more easily.” Following this certainty, the Salesian is called to speak in the mother tongue of each of the cultures in which he finds himself. The unity and communion of your family is able to absorb and accept all these differences, which can enrich the whole body in a synergy of communication and interaction where everyone can offer the best of themselves for the good of the whole body. In this way Salesianity, far from being lost in uniformity without nuance, will be expressed in a more beautiful and attractive way... it will be able to express itself “in dialect” (cf. 2 Mac 7:26-27)

Don Bosco and Words

The lexicologist

THE WORD “LEXICOGRAPHY” would have made sense to Don Bosco, something he would immediately have associated with dictionaries. He would not have met the word “terminology” as much and would certainly not have known anything about a science of terminology. We will take that distinction up shortly. The *Biographical Memoirs* has the following anecdote:

Silvio Pellico asked Don Bosco if he consulted a dictionary. He replied that he had a sufficient knowledge of Italian and little time to be looking up words.

“Dear Don Bosco,” Silvio Pellico replied, “don’t be too sure of yourself. Look them up! I cannot write a single page without consulting my dictionary. If I didn’t do that, I would make frequent mistakes. For the full, exact meaning of a word, as also for its spelling, there is nothing better than a dictionary, and it is a must.

At times, we think we know the meaning of a word, but we are wrong. We can often fall into gallicisms, Latinisms, or even dialect. Follow my advice! Always keep a dictionary handy. You’ll see I am right in making so bold as to give you this advice.”

From then on Don Bosco not only took Pellico’s advice, but never forgot to take a dictionary along on his trips. This same advice he passed on to his clerics and priests. “Do you use a dictionary? Do you keep it handy?” he would ask... (BM 3, 222).

Translation and lexicography are two disciplines that should be talking to one another. Monolingual as well as bilingual dictionaries are obviously indispensable working tools for translators. And yet, there is widespread dissatisfaction with such dictionaries expressed in the literature on translation. The corpus approach made possible by today’s “big data” also implies that lexicography, like translation, deals with words in context (The KWIC concordance or Key Word In Context), or more specifically the meaning of lexical items in texts.

The classic example of students of French rendering *simple soldat* by “simple soldier” (instead of private) is a good illustration of the problem. Students have

to be made aware of the kind of bonding words can have. While they do not need to know all the degrees of bonding that may exist, they must be taught to distinguish between compounds (e.g. *simple soldat* above), idioms (e.g. to keep one's eyes peeled) and collocations (e.g. *poser une question*), for these three categories are often treated very differently in general dictionaries. Compounds are often presented as **headwords** in unilingual English dictionaries; compounds and idioms are sometimes grouped into separate subdivisions in entries for simple lexical items in bilingual dictionaries. Finally, collocations, when they are presented, are normally mixed in with free combinations in the examples section.

Mention has already been made of important lexicographical work done by the early Salesians with Don Bosco's direct encouragement. This kind of work continues to this day, and has been a special contribution to missionary work in places like South America and the Indian subcontinent. Of very recent times we have heard of the work of the recently deceased Fr Luigi Bolla ((Yáankuam' as he was known to the Achuar peoples of the Amazon) who wrote a dictionary for the Achuar tribe and also translated the New Testament in the Achuar tongue. A much less pretentious effort, but a contribution nevertheless, is the recent work of EAO (East Asia-Oceania) translators who have produced a *Salesian Dictionary*, a bilingual dictionary that reflects terminological work done over a lengthy period.

The terminologist

Which brings us to "terminology" (the discipline). What strange kind of animal is this? Terminology is different from, though obviously closely connected with lexicology. Perhaps the easiest way to describe it, since people are accustomed to dictionaries, is to first establish what a dictionary (lexicographical) entry looks like. *Synonyms* (different words for similar or identical meaning, e.g. baby, infant) are not always made explicit and are scattered throughout the dictionary. *Polysemes* (same pronunciation or spelling but different or related meanings, e.g. foot = body part, measure of length, power part, to walk) are often listed under the same entry. *Homonyms* (the same pronunciation or spelling, or both, as another word but with a different and unrelated meaning e.g. desert = abandon, desert = arid region) are presented as two headwords and grouped together.

In terminology, synonyms are always grouped together, i.e. they are included as part of the same entry (being alternative representations of the same concept, e.g. automotive catalyst, catalytic converter). Polysemes, homonyms of the same subject field are presented in separate entries because they represent different concepts with different definitions, e.g. automotive emission (the process and the gas).

Just as Giraudo has alerted us to different theologies of reference that may lie behind terms used by Don Bosco and be still in use today (but with different meanings), so too, Arthur Lenti's exploration of the "concepts" involved in Don Bosco's explanation of the purpose of the Salesian Society, e.g. the appendix on the use of "Poor, Poorer [the] Poorest" (Lenti, Vol 4, 208-210) is terminological rather than lexicological work, and such work is so important today. Translators need to study terminology to learn how terminological resources (i.e. term banks, glossaries, encyclopedic dictionaries, etc.) can be employed to make more consistent and coherent translations. One of the difficulties the translator faces, though, is the wide range of online terminological resources available. There is a need for "documentary competence" to be able to identify the correct choices to be made!

There is another major difference (or can be – it does not always apply) between lexicological and terminological work. The former tends to be descriptive and the latter prescriptive. So, a Salesian "lexicon" would list what is actually written, said, whereas a Salesian term base would identify what should be the standard terms in use. In a globalised community such as the Salesian Family, this may be more important than people might think at first glance. Major Corporations employ terminologists to ensure that their "product" maintains a degree of consistency across cultures (and to avoid terrible consequences). There are several examples of companies without good terminologists getting tangled up with bad translations of products due to the word "mist". We had "Irish Mist" (an alcoholic drink), "Mist Stick" (a curling iron from Clairol) and "Silver Mist" (Rolls Royce vehicle) all an almighty flop in Germany, where "mist" means dung/manure. Fancy a glass of Irish dung anyone? But there's worse – The Swedish furniture giant IKEA somehow agreed upon the name "FARTFULL" for one of its new desks. Enough said...

The *Salesian Dictionary* mentioned earlier is really a work of terminology rather than lexicology, or at least an "encyclopaedic dictionary". Consider the following (lengthy) entry for the headword **assistenza** as it explores the concept involved:

Assistenza (assistance) *Noun*. A style of presence to young people which meets all their real needs; a form of total human development. Total charitable activity on behalf of young people. Codified in Salesian terminology since Don Bosco. Key element of presence as part of the Preventive System of Don Bosco. The term is really the forerunner of "preventive system", a term Don Bosco did not use as such before 1877, when he needed to give a theoretical basis to his activity. So its true content is extensive in the light of that.

"Assistance", from the Latin *ad-sistere*, implies "being there" physically, therefore a presence, but not any kind of presence. It is an active presence, part of the Salesian style also known as "animation". The classic expression of Don Bosco "Here in your midst I feel completely at home" expresses well the concept of Salesian presence-assistance.

Usage: It might also be known as a combined word: presence-assistance. From the concept of assistance we have the Italian *assistente* and English “assistant”. “Assistance” and therefore “assistant” have a very specific Salesian meaning as described above, so are not to be confused with the more common meaning of “assistance” or “assistant”. See also *Sistema preventivo*.

Don Bosco's Concept of Language

Immediacy of communication

THOSE WHO DEAL WITH LANGUAGE for translation purposes have different approaches to their task, which might come as a surprise to the non-translator, thinking that well, translation is translation: you look at the words and sentences and... just translate! Cicero, for example, who translated a number of Attic (Greek) orators, said of his task: "And I did not translate them as an interpreter but as an orator, keeping the same ideas and the forms or as one might say, the 'figures' of thought, but in language which conforms to our usage" (Cicero 46 BCE). St Jerome, who provided a Latin translation of the Greek and Hebrew scriptures (this became the Vulgate) once famously said: "I render, not word for word, but sense for sense." This continued to be the approach, pretty much, until the twentieth century. One's views on language will ultimately influence the way one translates.

What did Don Bosco have to say that revealed his views on language? He tells us that he had "a certain facility in expounding the word of God" and that on one specific occasion, but obviously he always did this at the beginning, "wrote out my address carefully, trying to make it popular and at the same time polished" (MO, 94). Remember that we have earlier indicated that his sermons would have a mixture of Piedmontese and Italian in them, so he was effectively engaged in activities common to the translator even while preparing his homilies. By "popular", Don Bosco meant a language with which he could communicate with immediacy.

Skopos theory

The *Biographical Memoirs* offer another comment he made:

"My goal in preaching and writing," he said, "was always and solely that of making myself understood by using a simple style and vocabulary." He strove for simplicity both in speaking and in writing. To ensure the achievement of that goal, he made it

a practice to ask uneducated people to read his manuscripts and then tell him what they had read. For example, one day Don Bosco read aloud to his mother a sermon in honor of St. Peter in which he called St. Peter “clavigero” [key bearer]. Mamma Margaret interrupted him. “Clavigero? What does that mean?” Don Bosco immediately discarded that word (BM 4, 452).

Actually, what Mamma Margaret said (according to the Italian edition of the MB) was *Dove è questo paese?* (what town is that?), but leaving that aside, we can focus on “using a simple style and vocabulary”. His focus is on the language, but also on the *skopos* (purpose, goal). We are using that word *skopos* deliberately, because it has become an important aspect to consider in today’s theories of translation. You see, there is a lot that has happened in translation studies in our time that have taken translation away from a mere focus on individual ST-TT (Source text, Target text) equivalence, incorporating additional elements of context, participants, culture (the “cultural turn”). Today there is more focus on the very agents of translation, who can be more than just the translator.

The *skopos* approach might well have been what Don Bosco was doing. Effectively, the end justifies the means in this approach. But the “goal” or “purpose” of a text is not so easy to define. Informative texts convey information. Expressive texts communicate thoughts in a creative way. Operative texts persuade – fairly clearly what Don Bosco was choosing to do. But the fact is that these types of texts and the contexts involved have direct consequences for the kind of semantic, syntactic and stylistic features employed and for the way texts are structured, both in their original form and in the translation.

Don Bosco often gave others the task of translating things. On one occasion he wrote to John Turco, a past pupil of the Oratory, telling him: “Here is a book for you to translate from French... in a popular classic style. Short, clear sentences like you usually write.” (Ceria, 497). Sounds very much like an Ernest Hemingway approach to language: short sentences, few subordinate clauses... !

The polyglot

Like most people, Don Bosco was fascinated by the notion of the polyglot, which he was not. Sure, he spoke Piedmontese and Italian, and had limited French for spoken purposes, some academic knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, but little more than that, except perhaps enough Latin to speak it in dire circumstances. In the second edition of his *Storia d'Italia* (History of Italy), a school textbook, Don Bosco introduced eight new chapters. One of these, Chapter 43, presents linguistic genius Cardinal Giuseppe Mezzofanti (1774-1840) “who could speak more than 300 languages and dialects”. That sounds pretty much impossible, of course, but we know that Don Bosco was often

a bit rubbery with figures! However, today's Italian version of Wikipedia tells us that Mezzofanti spoke 38 languages well, including Hebrew, Arabic, Persian, Armenian, Turkish, Greek (ancient and contemporary), Swedish, English, Russian... and a further 40 less well. This is still an extraordinary feat and largely unrivalled in human history. Lord Byron called him "a monster of languages, the Briareus of parts of speech, a walking polyglot".

At the purely anecdotal level, the *Biographical Memoirs* tell us of an occasion when Don Bosco was in Rome during Holy Week, staying with the De Maistre family:

It was also during these days that Count Rudolph De Maistre, in order to show his esteem for Don Bosco, gave a formal dinner and invited the ambassadors of various European courts accredited to the Holy See. Among such people the greatest distinction goes to the one who can speak the greatest number of languages. Count De Maistre did the honors, greeting various guests in French, German, and Spanish. Meanwhile, Don Bosco listened silently, while all around him a lively conversation went on in various languages. Count De Maistre then addressed Don Bosco, who was sitting in front of him, and asked in Piedmontese whether that morning he had heard the papal choir and what he thought of their singing, particularly the shrill tones of a certain soprano and the moans of a bass. Easily and audibly, Don Bosco replied in the same tongue, interspersing his remarks with proverbs, witty asides, and jokes. This went on for some time, as he deliberately chose some of the strangest sounding words. The guests listened wide-eyed with attention. None of them could understand a thing. Finally, someone asked the count what language they were speaking.

"Sanskrit!" he replied solemnly.

At first they were all taken in, but when they found out what it really was, they had a good laugh and cheered the language that had made its debut in diplomatic circles! (BM V, 593).

Translators don't have to be polyglots. There is a kind of romantic view of the polyglot. In effect, all one has to do is to witness a conversation in a language one does not understand and it confirms the esoteric power of words. In that light, someone who speaks several languages cannot avoid being regarded as a prodigious magician. The reality is often quite different. We need to understand the levels of competence in language.

Language competence

In the translation industry, the terms used regarding competence are *A-language* (the translator's language of habitual use, normally native tongue), *B-language* (the translator's other language at near-native level which can be used as source or target language) and *C-language* (a language the translator can only use as a source language, but cannot reproduce well in conversation). To make it clear:

English might be someone's A-language, Italian their B-language, and several others (Portuguese, Spanish, French, German, Fijian...) their C-languages. In Don Bosco's case Piedmontese was his A-language, Italian his B-language and French might be regarded as a B-language also, but in more complicated spoken situations it would be a C-language. For the most part Latin would have been a C-language for him, along with Greek and Hebrew, though he could press Latin into service for spoken purposes when that was the only means of communication available. We know of at least one instance: 1859 when war broke out between France and Austria on Piedmontese soil. Clearly there were both French and Austrian casualties. The Austrian wounded were housed at the *Convitto* where Don Bosco would visit and converse with them in Latin. "They were a motley crowd of Hungarians, Poles, and Tyrolese, but most of them knew enough Latin to communicate with Don Bosco." (MB 6, 127).

Don Bosco and Language Policy

From dialect to dominant language

FOR THE FIRST TWENTY YEARS, the language spoken at the Oratory in Valdocco, Turin, was Piedmontese. In 1860, Don Bosco began making efforts to introduce Italian into the Oratory. *The Biographical Memoirs* tells us that on 13 February 1860, a small group of artisans (trade students) approached him during the after-dinner recreation, asking him if Italian could be the main language. He readily agreed, since there was already a babel of dialects going on, so on 22 February he suggested this as a Lenten penance. We are told “that the very next day Piedmontese was no longer heard, though the artisans soon returned to it since most of them feared to be ridiculed for their blunders and felt additionally that conversing in Italian smacked of snobbery” (MB 6, 277). Much later, in November 1876, he was still trying, using the same approach, a *fioretto* or little penance, although by this time Italian was largely spoken at the Oratory: “I suggest this one: Don’t say a single word in the Piedmontese dialect. You may think that this is a seemingly useless suggestion, but it will help you greatly in learning to speak proper Italian. So, away with dialect, and not a word of Piedmontese! Talk, play, work, eat, drink and sleep — but all in Italian. (*General laughter*) And if anyone starts to snore tonight, then let him snore in Italian. (*More laughter*). (MB 12, 407).

Don Bosco was entering the field of language policy, even if just at the very local level, and not involving translation as such. But this would change. By the time his Salesians had begun to spread to France, Spain, Argentina and beyond, and even before, as invitations to many places came in from the Holy See or bishops, he had begun to think of or even determine elements of language policy that would inevitably involve translation. Let’s consider a sample or two.

The year is 1876, a year after the first missionary expedition, and Don Bosco is speaking at the Oratory:

I foresee that soon we shall have language courses here at the Oratory for the missions. We could proceed this way: all those desiring to work in the foreign missions would add to their curriculum the study of the Spanish, French or English languages and customs in that order during their first, second or third year of secondary schooling. These languages could also be taught as electives in philosophy and theology. Thus, I hope, we might achieve our goal with little trouble. (MB 12, 5).

Again in 1876 we are told:

For quite some time Don Bosco had cherished the thought of establishing missions in India and Australia. Undismayed by the difficulties of the English language, he felt that his sons could manage it through practice rather than theory. For a few months they were to master a vocabulary of common words; then they were to practise conversation in gradual steps; finally they were to perfect their pronunciation under a teacher. Substantially, it was the Berlitz method which later became so popular. (MB 12, 4).

When the *Salesian Bulletin* was started (1877), it was not long before the decision was made to publish it in French (1879) and Spanish (1881). In 1885, at a General Chapter, Don Bosco issued the following edict:

The Bulletin is not to be a local pamphlet for every different locality – France, Spain, Italy, etc. – but should instead be the general medium of communication used by all these areas; namely, to advertise not only a particular area of the Salesian Congregation, but the whole of the Congregation. Information should be gathered so that all different regions may find some interest in them, but all the various foreign language editions should be identical. To this end, all the different foreign language issues should be published in the Mother House, so that all of them may be inspired by the same spirit. (MB 17, 616).

Writing his own will and testament somewhere around 1885-6, Don Bosco included the following line: “Wherever possible, burn any letters written in French, but should any of them ever be printed, please see to it that they are first checked and corrected by someone who is well acquainted with the French language...” (MB 17, 241).

Language policy and translation

There are hints in the above of policy decisions that implied the need for translation, but this only touches the surface. What is the connection between language policy and translation? It is manifold, especially if we consider the matter from the perspective of the translator today.

We cannot assume that translation between two languages is always on the basis of these two languages being equal – that is rarely the case, except for linguists who at least theoretically regard all languages as equal! Would that they were. In the

Salesian world, for example, Italian (not Piedmontese) soon became the “official” language, not simply by decree, but by dint of being regarded as the language of the charism. That, in a sense, made all other languages, including Piedmontese, “minor” languages. We are using the term “language” here somewhat generically rather than technically, so including dialect, patois, pidgin... Spanish, Portuguese, English, all “major” languages in their own right, well beyond their own national confines, were effectively “minor” languages in the Salesian universe. That is far less the case today, of course, but elements of it still linger.

In our own day, English has become a hegemonic language, the language of globalisation, and has had a kind of gravitational pull on other languages as a result. Some Italian researchers have noticed that, in the past 50 years, Italian syntax has shifted towards patterns that mimic English models, for instance in the use of possessives instead of reflexives to indicate body parts and the frequency with which adjectives are placed before nouns, but perhaps the most noticeable feature for the non-linguist is the number of unadapted borrowings from English. Some of these are for specialist reasons, but many are not – English terms are used either out of snobbery or the “[L]aziness of translators who, in the technical-scientific field, are often not professionals but experts in a particular discipline who improvise as translators, with the result of a massive import of anglicisms... and, at best... little creativity in the resulting Italian translation.”(Scarpa, 228).

The comment above regarding the “laziness of translators” alerts us to something that could very well apply more generally. Scarpa is talking about specialist subjects and professionals who are experts in a field but not professional translators – that probably applies to most Salesian translators, and not just those translating into Italian but also those translating out of Italian into other languages. Salesian translators are experts in the charism, because they know it and live it, and often have to improvise as translators without being professional translators. Maybe that is how we ended up with a word like “economer” in English. Even “Rector Major” for that matter (and, God forbid, “Responsible Major”, whatever kind of creature that may be!).

Language policy affects translation policy. There are six languages that the Salesian news agency ANS and the website sdb.org consider to be the “official” languages: Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, English, French, Polish. These are not listed here in any specific order other than to acknowledge Italian as the accepted prime language of the Congregation and often, but not always, the original source text. Normally, any decision to make a language “official” would be accompanied by relevant translator resources: There are or should be (since these often do not exist) glossaries, style guides and other conventions or “house rules”. Individual translators usually have their own glossaries and house rules, but there may not be many common ones. We know that the EAO Region certainly has a published glossary/dictionary for the

Italian-English pair, and other internal pairs or triples (e.g. Chinese-Italian-English) in some provinces, though we do not know the extent to which they are used. An English style guide exists online (sdb.org, SDL, BoscoLink), though we do not know if it is followed. There will be reference documents (hundreds of them in a document-heavy Congregation such as the Salesians of Don Bosco), and these need to be consulted in every instance where source documents use them or refer to them explicitly or implicitly.

There are many other flow-ons for translators from decisions made about official languages. The quality of translation, for instance. It might be helpful here to refer to the EU as one of the world's largest translator organisations, to see how they tackle the matter. In the first instance they have clear guidelines for quality of product: a quality translation will exhibit the following properties:

- “complete” (no omissions or additions)
- “accurate and consistent rendering of the source text”
- correct references to any already published documents
- internal terminological consistency and consistency with reference materials
- clarity, relevant register and observance of text-type conventions
- no language errors and correct formatting
- compliance with instructions

Note that the word “faithful” is not used these days. “Fit for purpose” is the more likely descriptor, which includes readability, naturalness, clarity, and accuracy. The EU also recognises that in-house translation is far better than external, out-sourced translation (cheaper but better quality as well). Salesians would also recognise this to be true.

There is also the question of quality of workflow at pre-translation, translation and post-translation stages:

- Pre-translation means things like a properly edited sourced file, terminology resources, proper assignment processes.
- At the translation stage it means sufficient support for the translator – terminology assistance perhaps, opportunities for consultation certainly.
- The post-translation stage suggests the need for review.

Don Bosco's Approach to Institutional Translation

Factors in institutional translation

THE YEAR 1845 had been a tumultuous year for Don Bosco. He had had to leave The Refuge as the location for the fledgling oratory, and his “unruly mob”, in the estimation of some, met on weekends in a variety of places but had to keep moving since people found them too noisy or just too inconvenient. But effectively, what would eventually become the institution we now know as the Society of St Francis de Sales, received its first very clear statement of intent as Don Bosco separated from one institution and moved towards another – in a response given to the Marchioness Barolo:

I've thought it over already, My Lady Marchioness. My life is consecrated to the good of young people. I thank you for the offers you're making me, but I can't turn back from the path which Divine Providence has traced out for me." (MO, 128).

So, let's assume that anything Don Bosco wrote around this time and from then on contained at least a hint of his approach to language from an institutional point of view. Naturally, this became increasingly evident as the “Work of the Oratories” gradually became “the Society of St Francis de Sales”, and none more so than when he was struggling with various Vatican Congregations to gain formal recognition of the institution's Constitutions. For example, the Rule approved by the Holy See in 1874 was translated into Italian (from Latin) with a degree of freedom. Certain parts were left out (e.g. regarding the novitiate, the budget to be presented to the Holy See). But he presented the Salesians with this translation as a faithful rendition of the approved text, therefore with the assumed “guarantee” that came with anything coming from the Pope. As Lenti tells us: “these are the ‘modified’ constitutions he gave to his Salesians in the ‘official’ Latin and Italian editions of 1874 and 1875 – not the text

approved by the Roman Congregation and filed in the Vatican and Salesian Archives, but a text emended throughout and modified at strategic points in accordance with concessions he had obtained directly from Pius IX *vivae vocis oraculo*." (Lenti, Vol 4, 211-214).

In terms of what we understand by "institutional translation" today, the example just quoted barely fits the case (it is more a case of *skopos* and the end justifies the means!), except for one aspect: in institutional translation, it is often the case that the institution is the author of both the source text and its translation. Despite the interventions of the Holy See, Don Bosco saw himself as the author of the text (the Constitutions) and felt free to translate it, applying guidelines he had received *viva voce* from Pius IX rather than written observations from the relevant Vatican Congregation.

Today's Salesian translators, however, very much need to appreciate many other factors of institutional translation that would not have bothered Don Bosco. So let's take a look at some of these factors, while recognising that they apply more specifically to key documentation, and not to all translations within the institution.

Loss of individual voice: the institutional translator should not leave any trace of his or her personal voice in the translation. In this situation, the translator is like a member of a choir that sings in perfect harmony. This is because the translated document, like the original, belongs to the institution.

Stylistic consistency: There can be a number of reasons for this. One is that sometimes a larger item is broken down into parts that are assigned to different translators. It is not an ideal situation, and may then require one person to somehow "harmonise" the lot! That, too, is not ideal. A better approach is to have a "house style" spelt out for the languages involved.

The institution's working methods: This might vary according to circumstance. A General Chapter, for example, has its own working methods, and a translator might find themselves working on a draft that is still being negotiated by the Chapter assembly. This requires working on the assignment twice or more often still, first with the draft and then with the final version, plus the multiple corrections and minor updates that may materialise along the way. Nobody likes to work like that, but, again, sometimes it's the only way to meet deadlines.

Learning to write like everyone else: Very often, translating in an institution involves some degree of recycled text from a similar original. The ability to write just like everybody else is one of the most valued strengths of an institutional translator, but it can be challenging, especially if one were to feel that an earlier version is poorly translated. It becomes a great exercise in humility.

Adhering to agreed terminology: Assuming that a list of agreed terminology already exists, as it should. Today, most international institutions have their own terminology database.

Adhering to precedent: This is important for both consistency and integrity. It means, among other things, assuming that if something is quoted, then it exists in a text that needs to be found and used, avoiding the temptation to simply translate the quote on-the-fly. Sometimes there are hidden quotations (not acknowledged as quotes) and it requires some skill to recognise these, and the time to then track them down and use them. There can be some leeway in the matter of precedent, however. It does not always have to be followed, depending on the importance of the document. But if it is a “legacy” document one is dealing with, then it needs to be quoted verbatim.

Institutional translation often goes against the grain, meaning that some of the issues already mentioned in this paper, e.g. bringing the writer to the reader, the expectations of the putative readership, are overridden by institutional needs. Institutional translation is not necessarily idiomatic. Did the original use three adjectives (as many an Italian text will)? Then use three adjectives, even though English prefers one.

Note: the above comments on institutional translation are largely drawn from the American Translators Association online chronicle and are well worth reading in full.

Don Bosco's Direct Contact With Other Languages

To learn it – use it

IN ONE OF HIS EARLY WRITINGS AS A PRIEST Don Bosco writes: "I have read everything written in our languages that I could, and in some foreign languages, and pulled out of them sentiments and expressions of a more Italian kind simple enough for youngsters to understand." (Don Bosco in his preface to the *Storia ecclesiastica* [Church History] 1845).

There is a belief that languages cannot actually be taught and that fluency is dependent on listening, speaking, reading and writing a language. It is attitude, not aptitude that determines success. We have some solid hints from Don Bosco himself that he believed this too. Absolutely fundamental for him was that someone acquires learning (including language learning, then) within a positive emotional environment that does not judge one's ability, but rather fosters communication. This was an important aspect of his Preventive System.

Salesian work began to spread, first within Piedmont but then very soon into France, so it meant that Don Bosco came into direct contact with French on a regular basis. Fr Pietro Braido draws our attention to one of these occasions, which exemplifies the "attitude vs aptitude" approach of Don Bosco:

Regarding the language he spoke we have the testimony of Fr Francis Cerruti from the Informative Process for the Canonisation. Cerruti was then the Rector at Alassio: "I always recall him telling me about his first conference at Nice when the first Oratory was opened in the city, the *patronage de St-Pierre*. 'I began in French then I slipped into Italian, but' he said jokingly, 'I was smart enough to continue mixing both Italian and French.' And to think', he added, 'that I had my French dictionary in my bag.'" (Braido, 141)

What is evident from the above is that Don Bosco was not afraid of the judgement his listeners might pass on him for his attempts to speak their language. What did they think, in fact? On another occasion, we have the comments of a columnist in the *Semain de Nice-Revue Catholique* that he had “*une eloquence apostolique!*” Heart spoke to heart. The *Biographical Memoirs* reinforces this in reference to a meeting with Canon Guiol early in March 1877: “Since Don Bosco’s knowledge of French was inadequate for the matter at hand and Father Guiol did not understand a single word of Italian, an interpreter had to be called in, but this did not prevent both hearts from being in perfect accord with each other.” (MB 13, 75-76). A little later, when Don Bosco was a guest at the De La Salle Brothers’ school in Marseilles, the comment was that “Although his French was more ingenious than correct, he gradually won their hearts.” (MB 13, 77). Two years later, visiting the Salesian houses by then established in France, Don Bosco gave a conference in Marseilles. A Salesian (Fr Bologna, also known in France as Père Bologne) remarked: “He spoke French as though he knew it”!

Find a translator!

So we now know that Don Bosco also saw the need for another form of direct contact with language – through a translator. In the instance quoted above this was a case of the interpreter rather than the translator. And he would often ask for this assistance as well for written texts that he knew needed to be properly understood by others. Such as the case for his presentation of the Preventive System at the opening of the *Patronage de St-Pierre*, again in Nice, a document that was and still is a fundamental source text for Salesians. He requested that it be properly translated, using the resources of a local French lawyer (Michel) and a certain Baron Héraud. Braidò offers lengthy comment on the outcome, since not only these two Frenchmen were involved in the translation, but other aspects of the opening ceremony, too, were eventually translated by others. Obviously, Don Bosco prepared his text in Italian, first of all. We learn a lot from Braidò’s analysis about the quality of translation Don Bosco was dealing with (the italicised phrases are not part of the original, and of course the original is translated here on-the-fly):

Of the entire text, including the three “sections”... there are two French translations, both referring to ms D, the last Italian manuscript before printing: the first, unpublished (doc. E), ignores the subsequent minor interventions by Don Bosco, which instead are kept in mind by the second (doc. G), printed in the bilingual edition. It was not possible to ascertain who the translators were and when and where the translations were carried out. Ms E (unpublished) highlights the presence of a single translator for the three distinct “sections”. It is undoubtedly an Italian, showing a diligent, scholastic knowledge of French. The version sticks to the text, is faithful and generally slavish, paratactic [the placing together of sentences, clauses, or phrases without a conjunctive

word]. Overall it appears clearly inferior to the translation of the printed text (doc. G), as regards sections B and C (speech and pages on the preventive system), but superior to the translation of the chronicle, which contains some glaring errors.

Instead, the first printed French text (doc. G, identical to document I, except for the most numerous compositional errors) reveals three different translators. The poorest, certainly an Italian, deals with the news items, which is *linguistically drab, clumsy, sometimes incorrect* (*différents couleurs, ari civilisatrice, étroits limites ...*). The translation of the speech seems relatively better, in any case the work of an Italian. It is less incorrect than the parallel one which has remained handwritten. However, to a French person it would appear *clumsy, less pleasing, sometimes unacceptable*.

The version of the pages on the preventive system is quite different: *secure, fluent, grammatically, syntactically and stylistically correct*. This is probably a Frenchman or someone who is confident in French. Not that they always seems familiar with daily Salesian reality and therefore, having assumed a concept, they sometimes rework it freely, amplifying and almost explaining it, also by virtue of *a more than likely personal pedagogical culture*.

Some interpretative license can also be noted. Don Bosco saw the text and the corrections he introduced appear irrelevant. This translation inevitably prevailed over the other... (Braido. Cf. the entire section on *Il Sistema Preventivo nella Educazione della Gioventù* (1877).)

Essential knowledge for the translator

Given the italicised phrases regarding the quality of the various translations involved, how might we sum up the kinds of essential knowledge a translator should have? Perhaps something along the following lines:

Knowledge of the source language: Language has many implicit meanings, and only someone with a solid knowledge of the language they are translating will be able to pick these up. Otherwise the translation will appear *"clumsy, linguistically drab, sometimes in error..."*

Knowledge of the target language: Essential if one is to represent the content and tone of a text well. Such knowledge is more like to produce a text that is *"secure, fluent, grammatically, syntactically and stylistically correct."*

Knowledge of cross-language connections: For example, in Don Bosco's case, Italian and French have many etymological and linguistic correlations. A translator may have known both languages, but still not have been alert to many of these connections. In which case, the translation might be described as *"sticking to the text, faithful, slavish, paratactic"* (this latter simply because the translator is not fully aware of how conjunctive expressions work in the source language).

Knowledge (understanding) of cultural contexts: A language is a set of words and grammatical rules, but also an extensive system of connotations and cultural

references. We are told that one translator did not always seem “*familiar with daily Salesian reality*”.

Knowledge of the subject: Lack of familiarity with daily Salesian reality implies a lack of knowledge about the subject, plus the fact that one of the translators might have had a “*personal pedagogical culture*” that intruded on the subject at hand, in this case the Preventive System, which is understandable, by the way, since up till then, when asked about his “system”, Don Bosco himself had not always found it easy to spell it out.

Knowledge of the mechanisms for transmitting meaning: As we already know, word-for-word is not the only and often not the best way to translate. Sometimes there is a need for literal translation, at other times a need for a formal equivalent, or some dynamic or functional equivalent that will replicate the meaning of the text as faithfully as possible. In other words, “*some interpretative licence*”.

The interpreter

Thus far we have been talking about “translation” with a single mention of “interpretation” (when Don Bosco needed such help to speak with Canon Guiol). What is the difference?

There are at least five main differences:

- **FORMAT:** interpretation handles spoken language in real-time, while translation is text-based.
- **DELIVERY:** Interpretation takes place on the spot. The process can occur in person, over the phone, or via video. Translation, on the other hand, can happen long after the source text is created. This gives translators ample time to utilise technologies and reference materials to generate accurate, high-quality translations.
- **ACCURACY:** Interpretation requires a somewhat lower level of accuracy to translation. Interpreters aim for perfection, but it is challenging to achieve in a live setting – some of the original speech may be left out of the target language, for example. Again, time is on the translator’s side when reviewing and editing written text for accuracy.
- **DIRECTION:** Interpreters must be fluent in both the source and target language, as they are required to translate in both directions instantaneously without the aid

of reference materials. Professional translators typically work in one direction: into their own mother tongue.

- **INTANGIBLES:** Making metaphors, analogies, and idioms resonate with the target audience is a challenge that both interpreters and translators face. On top of this, interpreters must capture tone, inflections, voice quality, and other unique elements of the spoken word and then convey these verbal cues to the audience.

All of which makes the task of the interpreter a very demanding one, and it can possibly be said that a good translator does not necessarily make a good interpreter. The interpreter almost needs to be able to divide the brain into two: one part to listen with and, almost contemporaneously, the other part to speak with! No one should work in an interpreting mode for very long periods. An hour at a stretch is perhaps enough for one to need a break and recompose oneself.

Don Bosco In Translation

Early biographies

SINCE THIS PAPER FOCUSES very much on “Don Bosco the Translator” and what that could mean, it is only appropriate that it conclude with a brief look at Don Bosco in translation. Of course, by now he has been translated into many languages throughout the Salesian world, so what follows must necessarily be quite limited, and restricted chiefly to early biographies in English, but it may help reinforce some of the comments already made. Almost all of the content here regarding these early biographies is drawn from Arthur Lenti’s article in the very first issue of the *Journal of Salesian Studies*, Vol 1, No. 1, Spring 1990: “The earliest biographies of Don Bosco and their English translations”. But not the eventual reflections on the translator’s role.

The biographies of Don Bosco we refer to here all belong to the 19th century. There could be an entirely different set of items belonging predominantly to the mid- and late-twentieth century (one thinks immediately of Teresio Bosco’s *Don Bosco: una biografia nuova*, 1 ed. Torino: 1979), but these are not under consideration here.

The very first to appear, and to eventually be translated into English, was Dr Charles D’Espiney’s *Dom Bosco*, in French. It was the very first “serious” biographical essay to appear in book form. D’Espiney had been a close and dear friend of Don Bosco’s in France, so knew him well. We need to note the purpose for which it was written – to drum up support for Don Bosco and his fledgling work in France, which purpose was achieved. There were, however, a number of criticisms of the book, not least from Don Bosco himself, since it caused him some embarrassment (insistence on the miraculous, certain events that were blown out of proportion and were of doubtful veracity). But we are interested in the English translation by a certain Miss McMahan published by Benzinger Brothers in 1884, its English title being *Don Bosco: A Sketch of His Life and Miracles*.

Lenti provides an outline of the contents, which keep very much to the French original: an historical section to begin with, “a brief but good presentation of the

Salesian historical method" included, a note on cures obtained through the intercession of Mary Help of Christians, chapters on the Cooperators and Mary Help of Christians, and the rest devoted to the miraculous and the extraordinary. Commenting on the quality of the translation itself, Lenti indicates that "The French origin of the text is apparent, but chiefly only through the retention of some French usages... Some of D'Espiney's peculiar inaccuracies are retained" but overall, "Miss McMahan turns out a good translation, a smooth and readable text, one that does justice to the bright style of the original author." (Lenti, "Earliest Biographies", 22).

An adaptation of D'Espiney's book was published in English a year later, in 1885. This was by a Mrs F. Raymond Barker, and the book was entitled *Don Bosco and His Work*. Her presentation of Don Bosco is described as "almost entirely anecdotal", drawn largely from D'Espiney's second part and received a short notice in the *Dublin Review* to the effect that it was a "handy account with dates and statistics, of the life of the well-known Turin priest, Don Giovanni Bosco." Drawing on an unpublished paper by Fr Martin McPake, Lenti quotes the latter as saying that in this account, "Don Bosco seems all too easily to dream his way through difficulties and move from miracle to miracle. [...] She effectively conceals the man and his perplexities, and his agonizing efforts to steer a wise course through the mine-fields of the political and religious problems of his day."

By far the most important biography of Don Bosco to appear in the 19th century was the work of Fr John Bonetti, very closely connected with Don Bosco and the developing Salesian work. Initially this came out in a series in the Italian *Bollettino Salesiano* (and drew heavily on what was ultimately published as the *Memoirs of the Oratory* by Don Bosco himself, but which he had forbidden to be published during his lifetime). After Bonetti's own death, these articles were brought together and published under the title of the *Cinque lustri* (The five five-year periods). It reached the English-speaking public in 1908 under the title *Don Bosco's Early Apostolate*. Lenti speaks of Bonetti's "easy and charming style" in the original, which was "not always reflected in the English version" (Lenti, "Earliest Biographies", 26).

Another work which appeared in French in the 1880s was Albert Du Boÿs' *Dom Bosco*. It has not been translated into English, but was translated into Italian, and the galley proofs were submitted to Don Bosco for his revision and correction. There are two items of information provided by Lenti that interest us here: the nature of Don Bosco's corrections, and Du Boÿs' use of sources.

With regard to the former:

The eighty-nine clearly authentic notes fall into three categories: additions of names; additions to the text ranging from 5 words to 12 lines; and corrections of adjectives, numbers, places and circumstances. Some notes involve details that only Don Bosco

could have supplied, as when his relationship with Anthony, and his early involvement with local children are described. At one point, where Du Boys had written “holy priest” Don Bosco emended it to read, “poor priest”. In Part I, Chapter 6, “Don Bosco’s Loving Care of Apprentices at the Oratory,” Du Boys had written that, when they returned for the noonday meal, they queued up “while Mamma Margaret ladled out the soup from the large pot.” The addition reads, “and Don Bosco himself.” Where the author describes recreational and musical activities at the Oratory, a marginal addition explains: “Don Bosco himself made it a point of learning how to play various musical instruments in order to instruct the youngsters personally in the rudiments of this art.” (Lenti, “Earliest Biographies”, 28).

And with regard to the latter:

Mr Du Boys was not satisfied with merely reporting oral traditions or transcribing the information gathered through conversations and interviews. He also made use of reliable written sources. (Lenti, “Earliest Biographies”, 28).

There is one other text, again in French: J.-M. Villefranche, *Vie de Dom Bosco*. Paris: Bloud et Barral (Imprimeries Salesiennes), 1888. An English translation (by Lady [Sir Richard] Martin) was published shortly afterwards and no later than 1890, entitled *Life of Don Bosco, Founder of the Salesian Society*, Burns & Oates, Ltd. The Salesian Bulletin (according to Fr McPake – he does not indicate the year and number – was full of praise: “The gifted translator has done her work so well, that the spirit of the original version loses nothing in the English text.”

Genre and translation

In all of the above, Lenti is particularly focused on biography as such, rather than the quality of the translations of these early biographies, though we can see that some general comments have been made in this regard. But even this is of particular interest to the Salesian translator, from two perspectives. One is the nature of the genre (biography, or at least non-fiction) and how that influences the translator’s task, and the other is the possibility that the translator’s work can be viewed through the prism of biography – his or her own biography! In other words, there may well be biographical resonances corresponding to events in a translator’s own life or to values they hold dear (or those they oppose), that may cause them consciously or unconsciously to adopt a specific translation procedure or adjust their translation strategy.

Just to step away from “biography” for the moment and to move to another genre, “poetry”, we have an interesting and very contemporary example of how genre and the translation task interact. The person who “stole the show” at the inauguration of United States President Joe Biden in January 2021 may not have been the President!

It may well have been young Amanda Gorman's recital of her poem "The Hill We Climb". An also relatively young and recognised Dutch poet, Marieke Lucas Rijneveld, was subsequently asked to translate Gorman's poem into Dutch. There was an outcry, and eventually Rijneveld withdrew from the opportunity offered her. Why? Given the racial debate, Black Lives Matter issues of the day, it could be put down to the belief by others that a white woman could not truly capture a black woman's poetry, so not a "genre" issue at all, rather one of ethnicity. There is also the fact that Gorman was a "performer" of what is known as "slam poetry", where flow and rhythm are intrinsic to the performance... so how can one translate that? This is a genre issue. Well, besides withdrawing, Rijneveld answered with a slam poem of her own, "Everything inhabitable", kind of demonstrating that all other things being equal (which they aren't) she had the goods. We don't need to go further into this. It is just to demonstrate that genre can affect how translation works.

Genre is not an easy word to define, but we could probably agree that genres will be distinguished by their recognisable textual conventions. Biography belongs more generally to the genre of non-fiction, and this immediately suggests a number of issues. Non-fiction is factual, and in the case of a biography of someone from a country other than the translator's, there are likely to be many culturally specific facts that need analysing before trying to translate them. Hence the kinds of difficulties hinted at above regarding some of the biographies of Don Bosco: French usages left untranslated, inaccuracies. Fiction has no need for fact checking, so the bulk of the translator's work is to find elegant and accurate ways to translate words, phrases and concepts into the target language. Non-fiction requires much more research on the translator's part. But, once the facts are analysed and understood, it is good to remember – a translation is still just one interpretation among many of a given text!

It might also happen that the biography deeply moves the translator (as might be the case for some with Don Bosco), and this can influence the translation. The translator needs to step back from emotional involvement in the task, not always easy, since there may be "biographical resonances corresponding to events in a translator's own life or to values they hold dear (or those they oppose)." Memory, too, figures in the act of translation. Say one were translating a more contemporary biography of Don Bosco (perhaps the one by Teresio Bosco). His is a memory of the person and events about that person, but also a memory of earlier biographies of the same person, and this latter plays a part in translation as well. Or the translator may even have a memory of Teresio Bosco, and/or his culture. There are times when we might need to honour those memories and other times when we need to dismiss them.

Conclusion

The question is: have we established that Don Bosco is at least among the group of people we can call “applied linguists, competent writers, diplomats, and educated amateurs”? If he is, then we can ask the question that follows from this: is he potentially a guide for today’s translator? This paper suggests that the tentative answer to both questions is in the affirmative.

Today’s translator often goes unnoticed (despite the efforts of a Venuti who argues so strongly for the translator’s visibility). Don Bosco has rarely been considered as a translator – a good sign then. A translator’s job is far from simply interchanging words that are “equivalent” in different languages: they also bridge the gap between cultures. Due to his interest in saving the souls of the young wherever they were, and despite his own cultural limitations, there is little doubt that Don Bosco played a role in bridging cultures. Had he not had experience in translating Latin, Greek, Italian as a young student, or writing a text on the metric system for people who only knew ancient Piedmontese units of measure; had he not taken Silvio Pellico’s advice regarding dictionaries, and encouraged some bright young students of his to take an interest in lexicology and the production of dictionaries; had he not made an effort to change the language(s) spoken at the Oratory and ensure his boys spoke the new “lingua franca” of a united Italy, and also taken very practical steps to see that his missionaries were prepared for the new languages and cultures they would meet; had he not himself bravely ventured forth into a language he had the basics of but not the conversational competence that might have been expected of him in Nice, Marseilles, Paris, where in fact he wooed the multitudes nonetheless – where would the Salesian Congregation be today? We rest our case!

Can Don Bosco be something of a guide for today’s translator? The answer needs to be yes – or at least, “indirectly so”.

JBF

Easter 2021

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