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ITALIAN TO ENGLISH TRANSLATION WITH SKETCH ENGINE: A GUIDE TO THE TRANSLATION OF TOURIST TEXTS

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Introduction

Italian to English Translation with Sketch Engine: a guide to the translation of tourist texts offers the translation and discussion of fifteen Italian tourist texts into English, placing particular emphasis on the use of online language resources, above all electronic corpora through the corpus software Sketch Engine and online learner's dictionaries. The focus on Sketch Engine and the more earnest attention to basic translation principles are the most important developments of this book by comparison with the author's previous work *Translating Tourist Texts from Italian to English as a Foreign Language* (Liguori, 2012). The intended beneficiaries are translation students at Italian universities whose mother tongue is not English. The exercises offered are useful for English B2+ students, though the ideal starting level is C1.

I make no apology for the fact that the majority of the texts are concerned with the mountains, something which ties in not only with a personal obsession of mine, but also with the fact that – perhaps not coincidentally – the venue of most of my translation teaching is the University of Trento.

1. Methodology

Although all the texts to translate are new, the basic structure of this book has much in common with that of the book *Translating Tourist Texts* referred to above. The texts to translate, each consisting of around 250 words, are all of more or less the same level of difficulty, but it is recommended that you follow the units in numerical order since many of the annotations provided refer back to discussions of previous texts. You will find:

- the source text sentence (Sentence 1.1 corresponds to Text 1, Sentence 1; Sentence 4.3 corresponds to Text 4, Sentence 3 etc.)
- a 'Proposed Translation' of the sentence in question: this is based on successful renderings submitted by my C1-level students
- a 'Version for Discussion': here the translation is again based on versions produced by C1-level students, but with points for discussion and/or errors highlighted in bold type. Note that if something is highlighted in bold *this does not necessarily mean that it is a mistake*; it may simply be usage that requires comment. The words and expressions written in normal type should be regarded as good alternatives to the 'Proposed Translation'.

N.B. Throughout the book all words and expressions under discussion – whether Italian or English – are in italics, whereas corpus queries and dictionary examples are placed in single inverted commas.

2. Translation principles

When you use this book you should always bear in mind the following principles, to which frequent reference will be made in the translation units:

Principle 1. You need training in order to become a successful translator, just as you need training to become a successful interpreter. Advanced competence in your foreign language(s) is not sufficient.

Principle 2. The envisaged target readership of the translations included in this book is international, embracing both native and non-native speakers of English in need of information about places to visit in Italy. For this reason you should prioritise clarity and simplicity. A good idea is to let your translation 'settle' for a while before you read it again and check that it would actually make linguistic and encyclopaedic sense for a non-Italian with no previous knowledge of the topic.

Principle 3. The envisaged target readership is non-specialist. Tourist texts are by nature eclectic, often including passages of a more sector-specific nature, for example concerning architecture, geography,

military history etc. However, since your translation does not target architects, historians etc., but simply travellers requiring information on places to visit, you may not need to reproduce the exact technical details of the source text.

Principle 4. Avoid committing yourself to information you are not sure of.

Principle 5. You are not translating Dante, so do not feel you have to shadow the source text or extract from it every possible shade of meaning.

Principle 6. Use your head before consulting your resources. You may be able to approach the sentence in a way that does not require any checks in dictionaries or corpora, a method which has the added virtue of saving precious time, whether in an exam or in a professional translation situation.

Principle 7. Remember that collocation – the way words combine – is a thorn in the flesh of anyone who needs to (i) speak or write a foreign language, or (ii) translate into a foreign language. If you study hard enough you will eventually learn the main grammar and lexis of a language which is not your own, but you will never be able to master collocation – because it is potentially infinite – with the ability of a native speaker. For this reason translators in particular should be wary of using word combinations that they have not come across before: it is best either to reformulate the sentence or to make careful checks in your language resources. Above all, do not assume that semantic equivalents across languages have analogous collocational networks.

3. Recommended language resources

The resources recommended in this book, all online, are:
- bilingual dictionaries
- monolingual dictionaries, both learner's dictionaries and native speaker's dictionaries
- corpora, that is, collections of texts in electronic format available online. The corpus software prioritised in this book is Sketch Engine

3.1 Bilingual Italian-English dictionaries

The bilingual dictionary often constitutes your first stepping-stone towards a solution, but you should not rely upon the bilingual alone unless the Italian-English correspondence is obviously one-to-one. For example, if you make a bilingual dictionary search for the Italian *laguna* in Sentence 2.1, you can be reasonably sure that *lagoon* is correct because no other equivalents are provided, but if you seek the word *estremità* from the same sentence you will find various equivalents (*end, extremity, tip, point, top, border, fringe, hem*) for which further investigations in other resources are essential. A number of valid bilingual dictionaries are available online, including:

- *il Sansoni Inglese* (http://dizionari.corriere.it/dizionario_inglese/);
- *il Grande Dizionario di Inglese Hoepli* (http://dizionari.repubblica.it/);
- *WordReference* (http://www.wordreference.com/it/);
- *The Bilingual English Dictionary Concise* (http://tbd.pearsonitalia.it).

3.2 Monolingual English dictionaries

For the purposes of this book monolingual dictionaries can be divided into two main categories.

1) *native-speaker's monolingual English dictionaries*

   Native-speaker's dictionaries are very rich in lexis, including vocabulary which is sector-specific, literary and/or dated, but they may offer rather concise definitions and fairly limited examples of how the lexical item in question is actually used.

   - *Oxford Dictionaries Online: English* (https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/);
   - *WordReference* (http://www.wordreference.com/definition);
   - *Free Dictionary* (http://www.thefreedictionary.com/).

2) *monolingual learner's dictionaries*

   These are designed for learners of English, and are characterised by user-friendly definitions and plentiful, representative examples. They prioritise modern, reasonably frequent usage, and therefore do not normally contain archaisms, literary/poetic expressions or

technical lexis. Sometimes advanced-level students suspect that there is something simplistic or rudimentary about learner's dictionaries, and that therefore they are not suitable for advanced-level study, but generally speaking this is a false assumption. It is clear that if you are translating a poem of Wordsworth you are more likely to find rare or dated vocabulary in a native-speaker's monolingual dictionary, but when you translate tourist texts into English the learner's dictionary is your most precious resource, because it furnishes so much information about the way words and expressions are used in modern English.

- *The Oxford Learner's Dictionary* (http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/?cc=it);
- *The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (http://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary);
- *The Macmillan Dictionary* (http://www.macmillandictionary.com/);

3.3 Monolingual Italian dictionaries

You should not underestimate the importance of looking up words in your own language. See for example Sentence 11.1 at *sluice*.

- *Dizionario italiano Sabatini-Coletti* (http://dizionari.corriere.it/dizionario_italiano/);
- il *Grande Dizionario di Inglese Hoepli* (http://dizionari.repubblica.it/);
- *WordReference* (http://www.wordreference.com/it/).

3.4 Corpora

These are collections of texts in electronic format analysed with the use of corpus management software. The software adopted in this book is SKETCH ENGINE, produced by Lexical Computing Ltd, which extracts information from corpora in a host of different languages. The two corpora of English that will be regularly consulted during the course of this work are the British National Corpus and ukWac:

- The British National Corpus (BNC) contains approximately 100 million words of British English from the late twentieth century.

It is a general-purpose corpus offering a broad range of text types.
It contains 90% written texts and 10% spoken.
– ukWac is a web-derived corpus assembled in 2007 containing 2
billion words from websites in the .uk Internet domain. It too is a
general-purpose corpus with a broad range of text types.

The main difference between the two corpora is that ukWac is considerably bigger than the BNC, so its exact content was harder to monitor in the compilation stage. The ukWac corpus may for example contain some texts written by non-native speakers of English, though the corpus is so large that any irregular non-native usage is likely to be swallowed up within the larger picture. At the same time, because of its size, ukWac can be particularly useful when searching for those low-frequency words or sequences which have only a handful of occurrences (or none at all) in the smaller BNC.

Within the framework of translation into a foreign language, corpora are particularly useful when dictionary searches are not sufficient, whether (i) to investigate a lexical item's habitual co-occurrences, or (ii) to establish the acceptability and frequency of word combinations which are not classified as idioms, and which may therefore not be included in dictionaries, for example corpora can help you to choose between *in past years, in years past, in the past years* and *in the years past* in order to render *negli anni passati*.

Sketch Engine furnishes a highly effective, rapid, user-friendly way of interrogating these corpora, and many examples of the opportunities it offers will be given within the translation units in this book. In any case the Sketch Engine website furnishes step-by-step strategies to assist you in all your queries: https://the.sketchengine.co.uk. A monthly trial period is available free of charge, after which there is a modest annual fee for a single-user licence.

The BNC can also be accessed at the Brigham Young University website – http://corpus.byu.edu – together with several other large corpora.

If as you progress through this book you have difficulty recalling how to make the various Sketch Engine queries, you can refer back

to the following units/sentences where you will find detailed descriptions of the queries made:

Queries and options	Unit/sentence
Alphabetical sorting right/left	1.6 at *out-and-out structures*
Collocations	1.2 at *high-level*
Comparing frequency	6.1 at *plateaux*, 6.6 at *in the whole Europe*
Context	10.2 at *built*
Difference between simple query and phrase query	1.1 at *at the feet of*
Simple query	2.2 at *Franciscan monks*
Word form query	8.2 at *Evidences suggest*
Word sketch	1.8 at *haunted water flew*, 3.1 at *impracticable*

Text 1: Le Terme di Saturnia

1.1. Le Terme di Saturnia sono oggi un centro termale incantevole situato ai piedi del borgo medievale di Saturnia e circondato da un parco secolare tipico della terra maremmana. **1.2.** Si tratta di una struttura di altissimo livello, sapientemente organizzata, in grado di soddisfare una clientela molto esigente. **1.3.** Immersi nelle quattro piscine termali (da cui si alza un vapore suggestivo e rilassante) potrete godere del panorama circostante sulla natura maremmana. **1.4.** L'offerta è completata dal centro benessere e un campo da golf 18 buche par 72. **1.5.** Le Terme e le sue acque sulfuree che sgorgano dal sottosuolo con una portata di 800 litri al secondo e una temperatura costante di 37° Centigradi, erano conosciute già ai tempi degli Etruschi i quali avevano individuato nella sorgente virtù "miracolose". **1.6.** Successivamente, a partire dal 280 a.C., furono i Romani a trarre beneficio dalle Terme di Saturnia. Furono i primi a creare veri e propri edifici per lo sfruttamento terapeutico della sorgente; sono tutt'oggi visibili numerosi reperti a testimonianza dell'operato dei Romani. **1.7.** Nel Medioevo la particolarità di questo luogo, dovuta al vapore acqueo, al calore sprigionato e all'odore di zolfo, propiziarono molte leggende. Si narrava che il diavolo uscisse da qui quando lasciava gli inferi. **1.8.** Il territorio veniva descritto come un luogo in cui sgorgavano acque stregate, che andavano a depositarsi in pozze fumanti e bollenti, diffondendo nell'aria un acuto odore satanico.

Terme di Saturnia: https://www.tuttomaremma.com/termedisaturnia.htm

> ### Sentence 1.1
> Le Terme di Saturnia sono oggi un centro termale incantevole situato ai piedi del borgo medievale di Saturnia e circondato da un parco secolare tipico della terra maremmana.

Proposed Translation

Today the thermal baths of Saturnia are a delightful spa lying at the foot of the medieval village of Saturnia. They are surrounded by a centuries-old park typical of the Maremma countryside.

VERSION FOR DISCUSSION

Nowadays the Baths of Saturnia are a charming **thermal centre** located **at the feet of Saturnia's medieval village** and surrounded by an ancient park typical of the Maremma area.

nowadays – this is correct, but I have highlighted it to underline that in both the versions furnished here the temporal expression is introduced immediately, unlike *oggi* in the source text, which appears after the main verb.

thermal centre – there are hardly any occurrences of the literal translation *thermal centre* in the two corpora British National Corpus and ukWac (see the Introduction to this book for more details). The combination *spa centre* occurs more frequently, and *health spa* is a common collocation, with 16 occurrences in the BNC and 604 in the ukWac, though simply *spa* (try checking *centro termale* in *Reverso Context*) is fine.

at the feet of – if you make a simple query for this sequence in the British National Corpus or ukWac and 'Sort' (left-hand column) to the right, you will find almost exclusively references to people, usually important people and/or people in powerful positions (*at the feet of Jesus, at the feet of the invader, at the feet of the emperor*). The phrase *at the foot of*, on the other hand, is commonly followed by *hill(s)*, *mountain(s)* and *cliff(s)*, though *bed*, *page* and *stairs* are also frequent R1 collocates (= collocates one position to the right of the search word/expression).

A technical observation: in SKETCH ENGINE the simple query 'at the foot of' finds both *at the foot of* and *at the feet of*, whereas the simple query 'at the feet of' retrieves only *at the feet of*. This is always the case with singular and plural forms: the simple query 'ox' finds both *ox* and *oxen*, whereas 'oxen' captures only *oxen*. Remember that if you wish to retrieve only the singular form *at the foot of* or *ox*, then you should make the phrase query 'at the foot of' or 'ox' because the phrase query option retrieves (only) exactly what you enter.

Saturnia's medieval village – perhaps surprisingly, this sequence is not interchangeable with 'the medieval village of Saturnia' (present in the Proposed Translation above), because 'Saturnia's medieval village' implies that Saturnia is a town, part of which is its medieval village. This seems unlikely, because at the time of writing Saturnia has less than 300 inhabitants, but since in any case it is better to avoid committing yourself to information you may not be sure of (according to Principle n. 4 in the Introduction), my advice is to stick to the more neutral 'the medieval village of Saturnia'.

Sentence 1.2

Si tratta di una struttura di altissimo livello, sapientemente organizzata, in grado di soddisfare una clientela molto esigente.

PROPOSED TRANSLATION

This first-rate, efficiently organised establishment is able to satisfy the most demanding clientele.

VERSION FOR DISCUSSION

It's a **high-level** facility, **carefully organised** in order to meet the needs of the most discerning guests.

It's – English tourist literature tends to be more direct and user-friendly than Italian tourist literature, so contracted forms, by nature informal, are usually appropriate.

high-level – searches in our resources suggest that neither *high-level* nor the unhyphenated *high level* collocates with *facilities, amenities, establishments* etc. Dictionaries give you an idea of the collocates of *high-level*, but for more detailed collocational information make the Word Sketch 'high-level' (click on 'Word Sketch' in the left-hand column and type in 'high-level') in the BNC (331 occurrences) or in ukWac (nearly 6,000 occurrences). The 'modifies' column contains an array of nouns (e.g., *language, delegation, waste, talks, objectives*), none of which is connected with

the idea of facilities. Remember Principle n. 7 in the Introduction, which states that you should not presume that collocations travel across languages.

carefully organised – this is acceptable though perhaps superfluous, since careful/efficient organisation can be taken for granted in a top-quality facility.

Sentence 1.3

Immersi nelle quattro piscine termali (da cui si alza un vapore suggestivo e rilassante) potrete godere del panorama circostante sulla natura maremmana.

PROPOSED TRANSLATION

You can enjoy the natural beauty of Maremma while you bask in the four thermal pools amidst an evocative, relaxing steam.

VERSION FOR DISCUSSION

While immersed in the four thermal pools **from which rises** a soothing and **charming steam**, you will be able to enjoy the view of the natural wonders of **the Maremma**.

from which rises – this is correct but note the inversion of the subject (*steam*) and verb (*rises*) following an expression of place headed by a preposition: compare for example *next to the church stands the bell-tower*. Since inversion in these cases is optional, the normal SV order is also possible: *from which a soothing steam rises*. Note that the Italian source text contains brackets, but my advice is to avoid these in English tourist texts unless they contain just one or two words, for example the translation of a place name.

charming steam – in tourist language *suggestivo* is generally translated with something like *wonderful*, *evocative* or *charming*, but here you need to consider whether these adjectives can combine with *steam*.

Not surprisingly there are no L1 co-occurrences (co-occurrences one word to the left) of these adjectives with *steam* in our corpora (apart from irrelevant ones such as *wonderful steam engine*), but in view of the legend described later in the text *evocative steam* seems possible, while *charming steam* sounds completely wrong because the meaning of *charming* generally corresponds to that of *attractive*, e.g., *a charming medieval town*.

the Maremma – this toponym is preceded by the definite article in Italian (*il Maremma*): compare similar cases such as *la Valpolicella, il Gargano* and *il Veneto*. However, the use of *the* in these cases is potentially confusing for non-Italian readers and should therefore be avoided: Principle n. 2 in the Introduction recommends prioritising clarity and simplicity. Note that in Sentence 1.1 above the combinations *the Maremma countryside* and *the Maremma area* were both approved, but in those instances the article connects with *countryside* and *area*, not with *Maremma*.

Sentence 1.4

L'offerta è completata dal centro benessere e un campo da golf 18 buche par 72.

PROPOSED TRANSLATION

In addition to the spa, an 18 holes par 72 golf course is available to guests.

VERSION FOR DISCUSSION

The **offer** includes a wellness centre and **a 18-holes par 72 golf course**.

offer – monolingual dictionaries tells us that an offer entails a reduction of the normal price of a service, usually for a short period. This is not stated or implied in the text, so it is better to choose something else such as *package*.

a 18-holes par 72 golf course – firstly remember to use *an* rather than *a*, because 18 begins with a vowel (similarly, learners of Italian can fall into the trap of saying '(chiamare) il 0543…', forgetting that *zero* should be preceded by *lo* and not *il*). Secondly, if you opt for the hyphenated adjectival structure *18-hole* then you would normally omit the 's', along the lines of *15-year old girl* or *three-lane motorway*. The simple query 'par 72' in the BNC and ukWac captures several occurrences of the sequence required here.

Sentence 1.5

Le Terme e le sue acque sulfuree che sgorgano dal sottosuolo con una portata di 800 litri al secondo e una temperatura costante di 37° Centigradi, erano conosciute già ai tempi degli Etruschi i quali avevano individuato nella sorgente virtù "miracolose".

PROPOSED TRANSLATION

The spring with its sulphurous waters, which gush out of the subsoil at a rate of 800 litres per second at a constant temperature of 37°C, was already known by the Etruscans who believed that it had miraculous powers.

VERSION FOR DISCUSSION

The baths flow from the ground at a rate of 800 litres a second with a permanent temperature of 37 degrees centigrade. **They have been known since the time of the Etruscans**, who considered the water to have miraculous properties.

the baths flow – the baths must refer to the bathing facilities rather than to the water itself, and facilities cannot flow! Note that in this version the Italian sentence has been split into two (see also 1.1 above).

They have been known since the time of the Etruscans – this implies that the Etruscans were the first to discover the spring,

something which is not stated in the text. Once again be careful of inserting information you are not certain of (Principle n. 4 in the Introduction).

> ### Sentence 1.6
>
> Successivamente, a partire dal 280 a.C., furono i Romani a trarre beneficio dalle Terme di Saturnia. Furono i primi a creare veri e propri edifici per lo sfruttamento terapeutico della sorgente; sono tutt'oggi visibili numerosi reperti a testimonianza dell'operato dei Romani.

PROPOSED TRANSLATION

Subsequently, from 280 B.C., it was the Romans who built the first proper facilities for the therapeutic use of the hot springs. You can still see Roman remains in the area.

VERSION FOR DISCUSSION

Later, from 280 B.C. onwards, the Romans were the ones who **took advantage from** the hot springs. They were the first to build **out-and-out structures** to exploit the therapeutical properties of the springs. Many finds testifying to the **productions** of the Romans are still visible today.

took advantage from – use either *took advantage of* or *benefited from*.

out-and-out structures – some bilingual dictionaries supply this compound adjective as an equivalent of *vero e proprio*. Examples of *out and out / out-and-out* (both the hyphenated and unhyphenated forms are common) supplied in monolingual dictionaries include combinations with *liar, lie, rogue* and *racist,* though if you make a simple British National Corpus query for this term and sort alphabetically to the right you will also find a more neutral use, particularly in connection with sport (*out-and-out striker, out-and-out fast bowler*). However, the generally unfavourable collocations of this adjective, plus the fact that nei-

ther dictionaries nor corpora provide evidence that it combines with buildings, should persuade you to choose another term.

productions – *production* is defined by the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* as 'the process of growing or making food, goods or materials, especially large quantities', which does not precisely match the meaning we require here. In any case *production* is uncountable except with reference to films, plays and broadcasts: the same dictionary provides the example 'a new production of King Lear'.

Sentence 1.7

Nel Medioevo la particolarità di questo luogo, dovuta al vapore acqueo, al calore sprigionato e all'odore di zolfo, propiziarono molte leggende. Si narrava che il diavolo uscisse da qui quando lasciava gli inferi.

PROPOSED TRANSLATION

During the Middle Ages the distinctive features of this place – the steam, the heat and the smell of sulphur – gave rise to a number of legends. One of these was that the devil came out of here when he left the underworld.

VERSION FOR DISCUSSION

In the medieval period many legends were inspired by the evocative characteristics of Saturnia – the steam produced, the heat generated and the smell of sulphur. According to one of these legends the devil used to **pass through this place** when ascending from hell.

pass through this place – this verb might work here in a phrase such as *pass through an opening* in order to exit from the underworld, but *pass through a place, town* etc. is normally used for short stopovers when you are on a journey – the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* tells us that it means "to go through a town etc., stopping there for a short time but not staying".