Julie McDonough Dolmaya, PhD

WILLIAM TYNDALE'S FATE

We've just finished playing the first Reacting to the Past game I developed for an undergraduate Theory of Translation class here at Glendon. As I've mentioned in previous posts, this game was set in England from 1528-1536, and it focused on William Tyndale and his English translation of the bible at a time when unauthorized translations were being burned by Church authorities and anyone caught with these banned translations risked being convicted of heresy. The game allowed us to explore issues like translation and censorship, the influence of powerful institutions on the translations produced in a given society, and the history and politics of translating sacred texts.

In Week 1, we had a great debate about whether translation of the bible should be forbidden by the Church, with most of the class representing the views of various scholars at Oxford in 1528. Although several players were betrayed to the authorities (Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, Thomas More, Bishop Cuthbert Tunstall and Bishop John Longland) by a spy who was taking notes at the meeting of the Oxford scholars, everyone managed to evade arrest.
In Weeks 2 and 3, we had another debate–this time from the point of view of various bishops, cardinals and other clergymen in 1530–about whether the Catholic Church should authorize an English translation of the bible to help combat the unauthorized (and very Lutheran) translations circulating in England at the time. Students also debated whether William Tyndale's translation was heretical. Three characters–Hugh Latimer, Bishop John Clerk, and even Thomas Cromwell–were accused (and convicted) of heresy during the debates. The students playing these roles all recanted and managed to avoid being accused of heresy a second time, which would have led to their characters being executed. After the debates, we voted on the issues at hand. The results: An English translation of the bible was not authorized and William Tyndale's translation was declared heretical. No surprises here, given that the vast majority of the students in the class had victory objectives that included ensuring the vote turned out this way.

Finally, in Week 4, which was set in 1535, after William Tyndale had been arrested in Antwerp, students took on roles ranging from English merchants to bishops, archbishops and other clergymen and tried to convince one another that Tyndale should either be left to his fate in the Low Countries or extradited to England (so that he could either be put on trial for heresy in England, or set free). The vote this time was much closer: although many students voted to leave

Tyndale in the Low Countries, a few extra votes were cast for extraditing Tyndale to England in order to save his life. Unfortunately, as I mentioned to the class after the vote was calculated, this decision did not rest entirely in their hands: ultimately, it depended on the slim chance (represented by the roll of a die) that King Charles would agree to release Tyndale, so our effort to save Tyndale's life failed. Our game therefore had the same result as history: William Tyndale was executed in the Low Countries in October 1536.

In December or January, after the course is over, I'll be conducting a survey with the students who were enrolled in the course so that I can prepare an article about the Reacting to the Past format and its pedagogical value in translation classes. For now, though, I'm happy that early feedback from my students has generally been positive.

As for my own experience, I was definitely happy with the way the game worked. Although I will make some minor changes to the format the next time I teach this course, I was happy to see the students thinking critically about translation-related issues. Because students were expected to talk for just a few minutes each, the attention of other students in the class didn't waver as easily as it typically does during a 15-20-minute student presentation. Moreover, students took notes while their peers were presenting their arguments, because they knew they would have to question and critique these arguments later. And, although some did so more successfully than others, nearly all students ensured their remarks fit within the historical context in which the game was set, which helped make the debates feel more authentic.

The main problem with the game was that I had originally designed it for 13 students, and I now have 22 in the class. This meant the debates took longer than I had initially planned, since all students were expected to speak for at least a few minutes each week. We didn't get a chance to cover all the discussion questions I had prepared, although I tried to make up for this by using Tyndale as a case study whenever we covered material from *Introducing Translation Studies* prior to the game. For instance, when we studied Polysystem theory, we discussed whether translation occupied a central or a peripheral role in England in the late 1520s and 30s, based on the controversy Tyndale's translation generated at the time.

The other problem was that because the game covered an 8-year period, most students had to play two (or even three) characters over the course of the four weeks. Having to send new character descriptions and victory objectives to 22 students each week was time-consuming for me, and it did result in a little confusion for the students, as the first written assignment was based on the viewpoint of the characters in weeks 2-3, while the second assignment was based

on the role students played in week 4. I'll have to clarify the descriptions of the assignments next time.

Game 2, which is set in 2007 and focuses on the development of CAN/CGSB-131.10 2008, the Canadian Standard for translation, starts in two weeks. At the end of this term, I'll write a post about how well this game worked and offer some thoughts about which one seemed most relevant to the students.

William Tyndale's fate
http://mcdonough-dolmaya.ca/2012/10/10/william-tyndales-fate/

Posted By Julie McDonough Dolmaya on October 10, 2012