

## **Practical exercise: The task of the translator (observation exercises)**

**Materials:** Notebook, pen

Introduction to exercise: The task of the translator (observation exercises) is constituted out of simple sequential exercises, structured in phases, which will allow students of any level to interface with reality. The student is expected to take on the task of the translator (W. Benjamin) and to translate reality in the process.

### **Exercise I**

Exercise synopsis: In phase I, the student selects an area in outside space, that s/he feels right for the exercise. Within the area selected the student looks for a place to occupy for the next 30 min - sitting still.

As soon as s/he sits down, the student takes out a notebook and pen. The student writes down everything s/he “sees” without stopping.

In phase II, the student finds a way to interact with reality and to promote change/action.

In phase III, the student writes down any thoughts or questions that s/he might have had while performing both phases.

Duration: Phase I, 30 min - sitting still. Phase II, 15 min. Phase III, 15 min.

### **Exercise II**

Exercise synopsis: In phase I, the student selects an area in outside space, that s/he feels right for the exercise. The student selects a stranger out of that area. The student observes them for a while. The student takes out a notebook and pen and starts describing the stranger. The student can follow the stranger but s/he can't interact with the stranger. Consulting their description, the student writes down a brief narrative with the stranger as protagonist.

In phase II, the student addresses the stranger and collects data about the stranger. Using the data collected, the student writes down a brief narrative with the stranger as protagonist.

In phase III, the student writes down a brief narrative containing elements from phases I and II.

Duration: Phase I, 30 min. Phase II, 30 min. Phase III, 15 min.

Objectives and briefing: In the task of the translator (observation exercises) the student will be guided by sequential exercises structured by phases.

The exercises take place outdoors and the student is asked to select the area where s/he will perform the exercises.

The progression, structured by phases, provides the student with strict guidelines (describing a modus operandi) on how to address the reality that surrounds him/her. The student is expected to experience different constraints and levels of freedom while performing the exercises.

Phase I of exercise I takes a great deal of concentration, it will be almost impossible to write down everything s/he “sees”. The exercise is designed to help the student begin to see what is actually in front of him/her, and not about what the student thinks they see. It takes so much concentration to do the exercise that the student is expected to feel tired after completing it.

In phase II of exercise I the student should find their own way or strategy of interfering with the surrounding reality, with the aim of promoting change/action. The student should be able to predict and control different levels of impact.

In phase III of exercise I the student should reflect on the earlier phases of the exercise, posing questions, writing down thoughts that have occurred and analyzing his/her response to the exercise.

In exercise II the student is expected to select and later to interact with a stranger that s/he encounters in the area where the exercise is performed. In phase I the student is expected to write down a brief narrative with the data they have collected without interacting with the stranger. In phase II the student is expected to write down a brief narrative with the data they have collected by interacting with the stranger. In phase III, the student is asked to write down a hybrid narrative containing elements from both phases.

The student is expected to verbalize his/her procedure and options, and also expected to reflect and comment on the concept of truth and any ethical issues that might arise from the exercise.

The student is expected to associate the task of the translator to the task of the filmmaker.

The task of the translator (observation exercises) helps the student to create and to understand his/her own personal methodology and strategy of approaching reality, while taking into account the notion of translation and its echoes in creating narratives – nonfiction/fiction. The student should be able to reflect and to explain his/her aesthetic, political and ethical choices.

The student should be able to associate these experiences to former experiences and to share them in class.

The student is expected to share his/her experience at the end of the exercise and to compare it with the exercises of the other students. The student will be asked to fill out a questionnaire and to participate, on a critical level, in the class discussion - the higher the level of the student, the higher the level of discussion and reflection will be expected of them in class.

Questionnaire for open discussion:

*(To be filled out after the exercise. The student is expected to answer according to his/her level. The student is expected to associate these experiences with former experiences. The student can provide a separate answer to each question or s/he can choose to address several questions in the same answer.)*

**1. Selected area / location**

- 1.1 Please address your criteria in selecting the “right” area to perform the exercises.
- 1.2 Did you select a different area for each exercise?
- 1.3 Did you follow the same criteria for each exercise?
- 1.4 Please describe the impact of your choice on the development and success of the exercises.

**2. Exercise I**

2.1 In phase I:

- 2.1.1 Please address to what extent you were able to write everything you observed down on paper.
- 2.1.2 Please mention something that you remember having seen or noticed but that you did not write down in your notebook. Please describe the reasons for this absence.

2.2 In phase II:

- 2.2.1 Please describe the strategy/trigger chosen to interact with reality in order to promote chance/action.
- 2.2.2 Please address the criteria of your choice.
- 2.2.3 Did the effect correspond to your expectations?
- 2.2.4 Please rate the level of control that you had in assessing your impact upon reality.
- 2.2.5 Can you apply the same strategy/trigger chosen in a different selected area?
- 2.2.6 Have you applied the strategy/trigger chosen in former experiences?

2.3 In phase III:

- 2.3.1 Please describe and analyze your thoughts or questions.
- 2.3.2 Do you have answers for your questions?
- 2.3.2 Did your thoughts and questions differ in each phase?
- 2.3.3 If your previous answer was affirmative. Can you identify the reason for that difference?

### **3. Exercise II**

#### **3.1 In phase I:**

3.1.1 What made you select that stranger instead of another stranger?

3.1.2 Please read your description. Do you notice any particularity in your description? What did you prioritize? What was left behind?

3.1.3 Please reflect on the language used to describe the stranger.

3.1.4 Did the selection of the stranger have anything in common with any of your former experiences?

3.1.5 Please read your brief narrative. Please describe and analyze your approach in achieving it.

#### **3.2 In phase II:**

3.2.1 What was your strategy in addressing the stranger?

3.2.2 Did you explain the exercise to the stranger before you started to collect the data? What was the reason for your behavior?

3.2.3 What was your aim or direction in collecting data?

3.2.4 Please read your brief narrative. Please describe and analyze your approach in achieving it.

3.2.5 Please identify differences and similarities with the narrative that you have written in phase I.

3.2.6 Did your approach to the stranger have anything in common with any of your former experiences?

#### **3.2 In phase III:**

3.2.1 Please read your brief narrative. Please describe and analyze your approach in achieving it.

3.2.2 Please describe and analyze ideas of non-fiction and fiction, in relation to the exercise.

3. Please read what you have written in your notebook and check for patterns: use of language, sight direction, sight framing, involuntary selection and prioritization of content. Please describe and analyze.

4. Please reflect and explain your aesthetic, ethical and political choices.