Vigo, Galicia, Spain

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LINGUISTIC TRANSFERS IN THE MODERN WORLD: CONCRETE EXAMPLES AND ABSTRACT CONSIDERATIONS

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This article discusses the role of translation in the modern world and the implications this has for Translation Theory. In order to carry conviction the article is full of examples from the world of translation in the widest sense of the word, and according to which 'translation' embraces any linguistic transfer of a message from a source language into a target language. It is my tenet that more attention should be paid to the situational parameters in specific translational contexts. When these are disregarded, much theory does not apply. This is, in my view, the reason why there is a gap between professional translators and theorists, so that both parties regard the other with suspicion instead of working for fruitful interaction.

As a first step in this discussion, we shall have a look at the modes of interlingual transfer which come under the umbrella of 'translation' and can consequently be the object of 'Translation Studies'. The list will serve to give an idea of the breadth and width of 'Translation Studies', although each mode is introduced quite briefly, with just a few comments on some of its characteristics; the characteristics listed are, it must be stressed, based on translation between Indo-European languages.

Types of interlingual transfers

Summary includes only the main points ('the gist'), or a heavily abbreviated message. It is therefore not a traditional 'translation', but only a message transferred into the target culture and language. It cannot, however, be entirely disregarded, since it is, undoubtedly, the most widely used form of interlingual transfer between different cultures. It may be oral original to oral rendition, oral original to written rendition, and so on, and it may reduce the original by any percentage.

Spot rendition is a mixture of summary and passages which are translated or interpreted, usually 'closely'; this type of transfer is usually directed by the clients, in so far as senders or recipients ask translators or interpreters to interpret some passages in full and merely to summarise others.

Voice-over is a frequent mode of transfer in countries, both large and large and small, where synchronisation would be too costly (Poland, Russia). It is most obvious when a single actor speaks all the dialogues in films or television series, but there are gradations ranging from just one speaker, via versions with two speakers (at this stage, normally males) to versions which are matched to the gender of the original speakers (and which therefore overlap with 'synchronisation'). Voice-over is normally based on a written original which is translated into a written form and then rendered orally. In principle there is a complete correspondence.[i]

Subtitling is found in films and television in minor speech communities or for small audiences (Denmark, Israel; for cult audiences in Buenos Aires, Argentina). In subtitling, a text is superimposed on the film, normally on the bottom two lines. There is a reduction of the original; the degree of permissible reduction seems to vary from one society to another, even from one television station (or video company) to another.[ii] It is illustrated below.

Subtitling: the dialogue in the original is rendered in two lines at the bottom of the screen.

Surtitling can be considered a subgroup of subtitling. It is found at the theatre and opera, when performances in the original language are translated for local audiences by means of target language renditions displayed above the stage during the performance. In terms of reduction, there is none in opera since the text is displayed for the duration of the often prolonged singing, whereas, like subtitling, it has some reduction in theatre performances where delivery has the same pace as normal speech. It appears like this:

Fig. 2. Surtitling: the dialogue in the original is rendered in one or two lines above the stage.

Consecutive interpreting is oral to oral rendition. The main characteristic is that the sender in the source language utters a complete segment (ranging from a unit of meaning to a complete speech) before the target language version is delivered. This means that the interpreter always has an overview of a segment, not necessarily the whole speech or even a complete sentence, but at least one meaningful unit,[iii] before she starts interpreting. There are subcategories, dependent on length of segment rendered, subject matter and social situation. Since interpreting may involve note-taking, there may be a written component, but usually it is oral to oral. In principle there should be no reduction but in practice there is a shortening by 10-20 per cent.[iv]

Written translation is the mode with which we are probably most familiar: the written message is transferred from a written form in the source language to a written form in the target language, be it literary, legal, or business translation. In principle the translator may know the whole text before starting to work. There is no reduction, but in practice there is an increase of c. 8-30 per cent, once again depending on the languages and the competence of the translator and other agents involved.

Dubbing, or synchronisation, is a target language rendition of the source dialogue by (more or less) the same number of speakers in the two languages. This mode of transfer is found in major language societies such as the hispanic world, where, for example, foreign films and television serials have a large audience. It does not presuppose a literate audience, but is normally only a transfer from written form to written form which is realised as (actors') speeches to the audience. There is also often a slight increase (c. 5%), and, especially when the camera is off actors, the dubber may have considerable freedom in terms of explanation, addition or omission.[v]

In *simultaneous conference interpreting*, the mediator has no overview of the text. The senders' source language speeches are immediately realised in the target languages; this is essentially oral production to oral rendition without any written component.

Prima vista translation is similarly a situation in which the translator does not have an overview of the message. I suggest that, in real life, this type crops up most frequently in interpreting situations.

We often meet with a mixture of forms. In 19th-century China, missionaries would translate the Bible and religious tracts into poor Chinese and a Chinese would then write down the translation, creating the 'missionary speaks-Chinese writes' system; in a court of law, the liaison interpreter may interpret questions and answers consecutively, but will use prima vista translation with depositions or statements made earlier on and presented in the courtroom.

All of these forms have their own characteristics, their own constraints which are factors inherent in the mode, define the specific products and are typical of that particular mode. Some of these defining features are hinted at in the above comments on the modes of interlingual transfer.

Some modes date from time immemorial, whereas others, such as subtitling, surtitling, dubbing, and simultaneous conference interpreting, were all introduced in the twentieth century. It follows that there will be more modes of linguistic transfers in the future. There are probably already a few around which have escaped my notice.

The quantity of translation today

In today's world, the amount of translational produce is also continuing to increase prodigiously. At the beginning of this century, translation was a rare profession in any country and seldom discussed, even as far as translation of literature was concerned. Today, it is no longer only literature, political documents, contracts, but even transitory letters which are translated. It is a paradox that at the same time that we see English becoming the undisputed international lingua franca, all democratic national states and quite a few regions - such as Galicia and Catalonia in Spain - are firmly insisting on the legitimacy of their languages and thus also contributing to the translation load.[vi] At all events, democracy is thus one of the prime movers behind the promotion of translation in entailing an increase in the number and types of documents, messages and the like which are to be translated.

The directions of translation have increased. Compared to a mere fifty years ago, there are many more binary language pairs that crop up in translation work. This is due to globalisation, due to democratic nationalism, due to improved language proficiency and due to respect for other nations. Fifty years ago, we would have no direct translation from, say, Danish into Chinese. There is still very little, but the point is that now it is occasionally found: direct translation is often the order of the day.

Since the Second World War there has also been an enormous increase in multilingual environments, directionalities between languages involved in translation, and in plurilingual translation work: the United Nations has six official languages at its headquarters in New York, the European Union has eleven.[vii] Language work is politically important and it is highly visible.

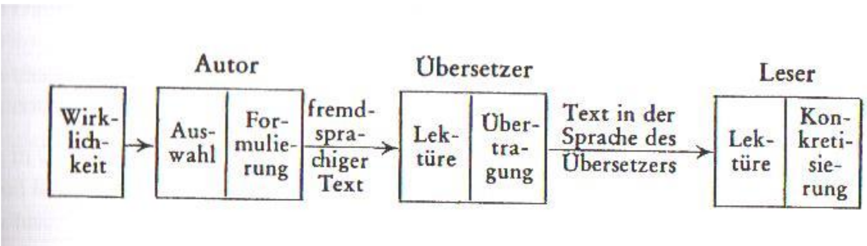
Translation Studies and the new situation

We must take into account the dynamic changes in the world of translational activity. More attention should be paid to the situational factors, by means of a careful analysis of the parameters operating in any given translational act. They affect the situation as well as the product. This is the point on which I shall focus in order to discuss the reasons why certain translation theories work better than others in special contexts.

A focus on the situational factors will, furthermore, make for a heightened awareness of translational activities. An increased consciousness of the complexities of the dynamic situations will help individual translators to better appreciate the problems in any translational context. Awareness of situational parameters will enable them sooner to take into account the most pertinent factors and consequently enable translators better to solve concrete problems adequately.

It is useful to keep in mind that to this day, most translation theory is based on musings about translation of literature for aesthetic purposes. It is also pertinent to remember that we consider translation a kind of communication. It is in place to mention that most theorists concerned with translation are also teachers, and that teachers need to hold forth models which students can strive to emulate.

The word model can, however, also be used in the sense of a stylised overview of something, and Ji_í Levý's model of translation is quite a good point of departure for a discussion. It looks as follows:



(Levý 1969: 33)

In Levý's model a sender ('Autor') in the source culture creates a message which is translated and ultimately reaches a recipient ('Leser') in the target culture. In this model we thus see a chain of communication comprising an identifiable sender and an identifiable recipient of an identifiable message.

In a study of Danish translations of the tales published by the German brothers Grimm in 1812-1815 I found a number of examples which challenge facile assumptions about translation being uni-dimensional and uncomplicated communication. Let me quote three of them briefly.

In the first one, a well-known Danish translator of children's books translated 'Hansel and Gretel' from what appeared to be the same German source text in two radically different ways. They were radically different that he must have taken great care to make them so; the reason was that he had ceded copyright to the first publisher and had to redo everything for the second publisher who commissioned him.

In the second case, a translator made three translations of 'The Bremen town musicians' for the same publisher over a span of more than ten years. No source text was cited for the first translation, the second seemed to be German and the third was given out to be French. The curious fact was that the translations bore more similarity to one another than to the source texts. In this case the Danish versions clearly owe more to the translator's activity than to anything connected with a source text.

In the third case, yet another translator translated 'Snow White and Rose Red' twice, with an interval of only two years: the translational products were radically different, both deviated in relation to the original, and one of them even omitted a page or two of the original. In this case one 'version' was translated from Dutch and the other from Italian. Both purported originals had been retold or had been through numerous relay translations in other languages, thus accounting satisfactorily for the strange outcome.

So we can trace three radically different patterns as follows:

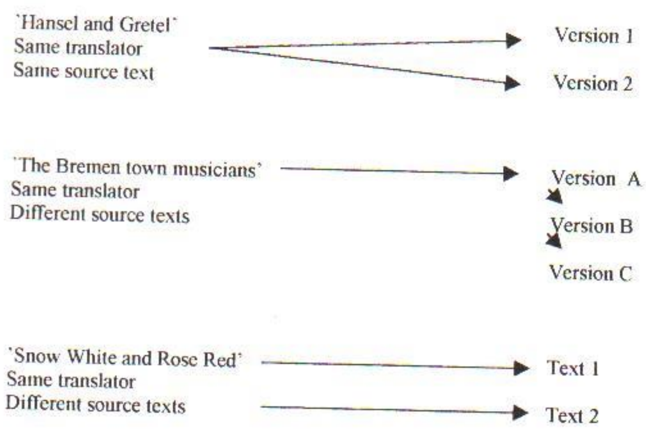


Fig. 4. Three radically different paths for German original tales into Dutch.

I agree entirely with Gideon Toury (e.g. 1995: 29) that it is a given target society that specifies what constitutes a translation. It is not translation scholars but the recipients who decide what constitutes a translation. In Danish society, the recipients are the curators of the Danish literary heritage, the librarians in charge of the national bibliography. These Danish librarians called all the versions discussed above 'translations'. When translation scholars meet such cases in the real world, they argue that these do not count as translations at all, or at least that they can be disregarded in serious discussion. This is a problem, notably so with theory largely based on translation of literature. For this reason, most of the examples discussed below will not be literary ones, and most of them I have observed myself.

Constraints on messages

Especially in today's world, the existence of situational constraints is quite obvious. Many messages that are 'interlingually transferred' are indeed greatly constrained, although we hardly realise this. Let us view the process from a scholarly perspective. We shall approach it from the point of view of national conventions, of users, and of societal contexts in which the efforts of translators are part of a major whole.

In my country, Denmark, subtitling is used extensively. Approximately eighty per cent of the entertainment in television and cinemas is of English or American provenance, and the population is largely functionally bilingual in terms of comprehension of Danish and English.

Subtitling has some 'universal' constraints which apply to all subtitling throughout the world: for technical reasons, there can be only 34 characters per line, and, logically, most subtitling appears at the bottom of the frame. However, there are also some Danish features, Danish subtitling conventions: it is acceptable to omit up to c. 20% of the contents; the speeches should be aligned to the left; there must be no more than two lines in all, and one-liners are to be exposed for 3, two lines for 4-6 seconds.

These Danish features do not apply to other countries. In Belgium, the reduction is much higher (c. 50%) and in the 1970s I ecountered four-liners in Belgium: 2 Flemish and 2 French lines which tended to blot out the films completely. In Slovenia, subtitlers are supposed to render the whole content and not to take into account viewers' reading speed.

When in China in 1994, I watched television subtitling. Some subtitles were identical to a type we used to have in Europe in the 1960s: an endless strip of paper crawling along the bottom of the picture. There were a few other programmes with the normal fixed subtitling. One night there was a programme about the differences between Beijing and Shanghai, and lavish care had clearly been taken on it. In this programme, subtitles and information were given both at the bottom and along the sides of the frame in a splendid linguistic firework display.

Things, however, change quickly: in 1997, some Chinese news programmes had a totally new type of subtitling: the text would be hidden in a scroll on the left hand corner; this scroll would rapidly snap open, and immediately be replaced by another scroll with the next subtitle. This is not the place to discuss whether such practise is adequate subtitling or not, since the point is that this type of subtitling exists.

In other words: We must be wary of generalising from the evidence we have found in one place. It may not hold good everywhere, and even in the same place, procedures may rapidly change.

In considering the modes of translation, we should always take into account the situational factors involved, in particular, in 'successful translation'. Permit me again to turn to my Chinese experiences, in this case liaison interpreting, to illustrate this from a user's angle.

In Beijing, a student accompanied me everywhere. She would explain things and sometimes help me communicate with Chinese. Everybody was satisfied: she had a chance to practise English, Chinese people could contact me, and I had company and the assurance that I was not being cheated.

The next point on the agenda was a meeting in Shanghai. At the meeting, I was greeted by a man who said, "I'm the interpreter!" and, in Danish: "I have a son!" Greatly satisfied, he then set out to participate in the banquet of snails, snakes and other delicacies and never bothered to tell me what the others present were discussing in Chinese. Since I was supposed to participate in the discussion, this conduct was not satisfactory. Yet it is difficult to blame the 'interpreter', for in all likelihood, the clients had simply not briefed him at all. He had been told that there would be a Dane present, so he immediately acquired a Danish phrase-book. Very few people in China speak English, and how should he know that in Denmark most people do? Secondly, he had not been told why I was present.

I then went to Guangzhou. My host was a teacher of English whose active English was reasonably good. Her institution was interested in establishing relations with foreign institutions, and I was soon involved in some heavy and detailed negotiation. She was not taking any notes, so, in my experience, she should have been able to handle messages of up to two minutes' length before she passed them on. When, after two minutes, I indicated that my speech should be passed on, she said that I could continue. I could continue for up to ten minutes and the dialogue revealed that the messages were transferred beautifully. She was a splendid success.

As noted above, the focus in these three last examples was on the user side and on success in rendition. When travelling, I am often the client or the sender in command of the communication. In countries where few people speak foreign languages, many mediators are inexperienced stand-in interpreters who tend become exhausted. As a user one has to tread warily, shortening and repeating speeches, and in general be on the look-out for mistakes and distortion. In these cases we are not speaking about messages alone, but also about a social interplay, a situational parameter: 'time', physical wear and tear.

Messages in translational situations

It is obvious that, although both were 'successful' mediators and performed satisfactorily, the student in Beijing and the English teacher in Guangzhou rendered my messages in different ways. Accordingly, it is pertinent to analyse what is meant by a 'message'. In order to define this we must also examine the situational factors from various angles.

In the case of a cheap romance, the publisher will be satisfied if the price of translation is low and the readers buy the book. In a translation of a Nobel prize winning author, the agent, the publisher, and critics will be checking translations, at least in so far as they expect the translations to make sense in the target language. In the translation of a European Union invitation for a meeting of specialists, the experts expect to see the same text with the same typographical lay-out in the three working languages (English, French and German), like the one shown below.

COMMISSION
OF THE EUROPEAN
COMMUNITIES

Brussels, [illegible] September 1991

Directorate-General
for internal market and industrial affairs
III.D.4

Note to the attention of the Working Group
of Experts "Medical Devices"

Ref.: Meeting of the Working Group on [illegible] October 1991

I have the pleasure to invite you to the next meeting of the Working Group of Experts "Medical Devices" which will be held in Brussels on [illegible] October 1991. You will find enclosed a draft agenda with further details.

Due to the discussion envisaged on in-vitro diagnostic medical devices, the Commission exceptionally intends to reimburse travel expenses for two experts per Member State.

**Note à l'attention du Groupe de travail
d'Experts "Dispositifs médicaux"**

Objet: Réunion du Groupe de travail des [illegible] octobre 1991.

Nous avons l'honneur de vous inviter à participer à la prochaine réunion du groupe de travail d'experts "Dispositifs médicaux" qui se tiendra à Bruxelles les [illegible] octobre prochain. Vous trouverez, ci-joint, un projet d'agenda contenant tous les détails de cette réunion.

Vu les discussions sur les dispositifs médicaux destinés au diagnostic in-vitro, la Commission prendra exceptionnellement à sa charge les frais de voyage pour deux experts par Etat membre.

**Vermerk an die Mitglieder der Expertengruppe
"Medizintechnische Produkte"**

Betr.: Sitzung der Expertengruppe am [illegible] Oktober 1991.

Hiermit lade ich Sie zur nächsten Sitzung der Expertengruppe "Medizintechnische Produkte" am [illegible] Oktober 1991 in Brüssel ein. Der Entwurf einer Tagesordnung mit weiteren Einzelheiten ist beigefügt.

Angesichts der vorgesehenen Diskussion über in-vitro Diagnostica Produkte kann die Kommission ausnahmsweise die Reisekosten für zwei Experten pro Mitgliedstaat übernehmen.

g. 5. An invitation in three languages for a specialist meeting at the European Commission in Brussels, Belgium.

However, even in these three familiar cases, the situational factors are not the same in terms of the constraints and the consequent degrees of freedom in translation. Nevertheless, the concept of 'text' is reasonably unambiguous since we are, surely, agreed that we are dealing with 'translation' of specific messages and texts. So we shall turn to a totally different situation.

In 1997, I conducted a class on 'Translation in society'. It included attendance at court proceedings which called for liaison interpreting between Danish, Hindi and Pashto. These two foreign languages were unknown to my students and to me. The set-up in the courtroom was as follows:

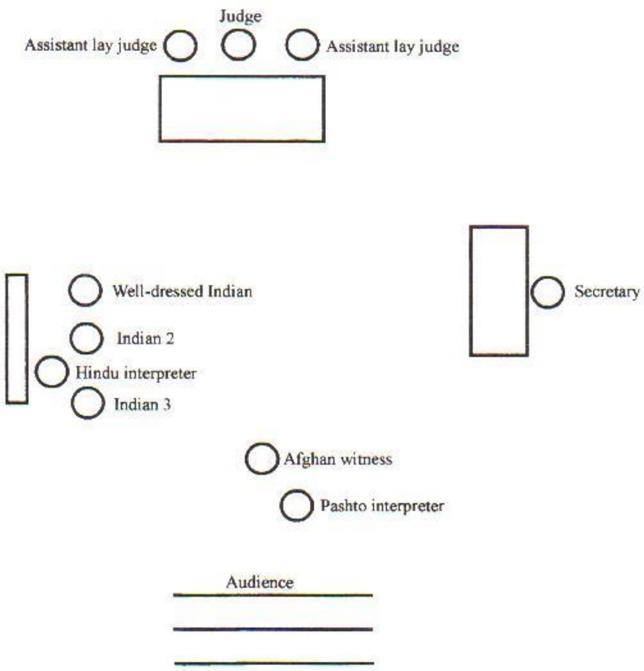


Fig. 6. Set-up in the courtroom discussed in the article.

The two counsels questioned the two Hindus, who stated that they had come to Copenhagen on a plane with the intention of going on to London. They had, indeed, been on the same plane, but they did not know one another. It also appeared from the counsels' comments that the men had precious little money. Then the well-dressed Hindu was questioned. He did not know the two other gentlemen, but had also travelled on the same plane. He had accidentally found two tickets, bearing the names of the two others and he had put them in his pocket in order to give them back to their rightful owners, but since he did not know them, he had been incapable of doing this.

This was communicated by the interpreter into Danish and into Hindi, respectively. The interpreter would switch between consecutive rendition of speeches, and whispered simultaneous interpreting when he was reading aloud depositions ('on sight' interpreting) made by the two defendants to the police on previous occasions. The Afghan man was bewildered, but it soon became obvious that he was supposed to describe how he had fled from his village to save his life.

At the end of the questioning of each defendant and of the witness, the judge summarised the statements.

In this case, we have several messages.

There are four chronological narratives which progress in an orderly fashion. Each witness or defendant knows his own story and can describe it in retrospect from the point of view of hindsight. From earlier depositions, parts of these stories are also retrospect to the two counsels and to the judge. Each story is, however, also new to some people in the courtroom, including the interpreters, my students and me, and become coherent as they are being told.

Furthermore, there are two situational texts, both given by the specific setting: namely one directly addressed to the three Indians: "We are checking whether you are involved in illegal activities." The second message was embedded in the system and less obvious, but it is something like: "We are the Danish legal system and we abide by the laws of this country." These meta-messages were never explicit.

Gradually, from the judge's summing-up and counsels' questions, we saw the contours of three more messages: one was that our man from Afghanistan was a legal refugee who had used an accepted escape route; another message was that the two Hindu men had paid to be smuggled into Europe, in all likelihood to England, and were divested of any possibility of acting on their own without money and tickets; and the third was that the well-dressed Hindu man was either a handler or a top man in a gang smuggling illegal immigrants into England. These texts were all sums of all the other texts, and, in the context of this text, the coherent narratives are only fragments. These messages, however, become explicit at the end of the proceedings and lead to the expulsion of the Indians from Denmark. These messages, of course, were obvious from the beginning to the judge and the counsels, to the three Hindus, and, I believe, to their interpreter. It *became* obvious to my students and me. It is doubtful whether the Afghan man and his interpreter comprehended this at all, for they hardly understood their own role.

In our analysis of the proceedings, we realised that, in the eyes of the defendants, there must have been a cultural sub-text to which the Danes had been oblivious: The judge, the counsels, the secretaries, even the Pashto interpreter, were all women. To the Indian men, it must have seemed that there was a massive wall of Amazons who collectively made the pronouncement: "We Danish women have found out that you have come here illegally - and for that we Danish women intend to kick you out in accordance with our Danish laws".

From this depressing episode we shall move to the corridors of power, to the meeting for which we have already seen the letter of invitation, and which took place in a conference room of the European Commission in Bruxelles. The illustration is from the period when there were nine, not as today eleven, official languages at meetings. Each interpreter is expected to handle three languages. Here is a scheme of the manning of the booths:

SCIC-B Service Commun Interprétation-Conférences

Titre: EXPERTS - DISPOSITIFS MEDICAUX

Code: 0103PT59 Documents disponibles au CCAB 5/30 [redacted] Octobre 1991 14:30

Institution: Commission

Régime: SIM F D E I ES NL DA / F D E I ES NL DA Lieu: AB-2A

Français	Deutsch	English	Italiano	Español	Nederlands	Português	Ελληνικα	Dansk
Md D[redacted] D E	Mr S[redacted] F E NL DA	*Md F*[redacted] F ES	Md C[redacted] F D E ES	Ml N[redacted] F E	Mr [redacted] F D E I			Mr [redacted] F D E
Ml S[redacted] E ES NL	Ml L[redacted] F E I	*Md E*[redacted] F D	Ml Z[redacted] F D E	*Md R*[redacted] F E	*Mr* [redacted] F D E			Mr P[redacted] D E NL
Mr M[redacted] E I DA	*Md H*[redacted] F ES	*Md* [redacted] F I	Mr P[redacted] F D E ES	*Mr A*[redacted] F E	*Mr* [redacted] F D E ES			Mr C[redacted] F D E
R:	R:	R: NL DA	R: NL DA	R: D I NL DA	R: DA			R: I ES

Fig. 7. The set-up in the interpreters booth at the meeting in Brussels (the names of interpreters reduced).[8]

It is noted that the Greek and Portuguese booths are not manned. We focus on the Spanish booth.[viii]

The 'R' at the bottom line indicates that the Spanish booth is not taking German, Italian, Dutch and Danish directly but in 'relay'. This means that the interpreters listen to the French interpreter who is the only person they can understand and who can take Dutch directly. The French rendition is therefore the source text for the Spanish version of speeches delivered by the Dutch delegation.

In all booths, interpreters work in turns. So, sometimes the French interpreter who takes the relay from Dutch is not in the booth when the Dutch delegation takes the floor. In that case, Dutch speeches must go by an alternative route to be rendered in Spanish: one of the German interpreters understands Dutch, but his rendition is then taken in relay into English and French and can be taken into Spanish from either of these booths.

It will be appreciated that there is a change in the channel of communication when one interpreter is replaced by three others. This implies a totally new set of potentials in interpreting strategies, in terms of excellent solutions or distortions. For, although we do have types of error which are the same among Indo-European languages, many types of solutions and errors in translation and interpreting are tied to specific language pairs (this would apply to 'false friends' between closely related languages). In sum, the quality of the product of interpreting is changed.

The moot point is whether the change in interpreters matters with the delegates. Similarly, we may ask ourselves whether a change of interpreters in the courtroom would have made for another outcome. Likewise, the identity of the translator of a Nobel prize winner is not particularly important as long as she is competent.

I posit that, quite often, the situational factors have more bearing on the outcome than the individual language professional has. The examples adduced illustrate that, in the major societal perspective, translation is one factor which contributes to a successful establishment of a meta-text, which, in the eyes of the recipients, conveys the meaning adequately. In the best cases, the senders agree.

At the beginning of this article, I pointed out that the number of direct translations has increased. Consequently, we might imagine that relay is a thing of the past. However, I also mentioned that the number of translations has increased prodigiously. Relay is very frequent: Most manuals for Japanese products come to Spanish in relay from English, unless they are translated in South America, in which case the English versions may well be relay translations of Spanish. In South East Asia, subtitling in relay is used extensively because it is cheap. In other words: financial considerations are also situational factors.

Situational parameters and Translation Theory

There are modes of transfer which have not been discussed, but, nevertheless, it will be obvious why we must explore more comprehensively the parameters that have a bearing on end products of translation. By becoming aware of these parameters, students and translators alike become better professionals.

We may, however, use our awareness of the importance of the situational factors to relate specific types of contexts of translation to specific attitudes and theories of translation. I shall devote the last pages of the present article to this.

I do not think '*equivalence*' has much to do with translation work in the real world. In practical translation, every translator, scholar, sender and recipient is circumscribed. All may have some influence, some say, some knowledge of the situational factors, but they are not omnipotent. No translator can be sure of not being corrected by an editor or a client who does not bother about the original.[ix] In order to attain equivalence, no matter whether it is functional, formal or whatever, we implicitly argue that as students, translators and teachers, we are cognizant of all factors affecting the sender, affecting the mediator, and which may affect the recipient. We are, as it were, omnipotent in relation to the message and omniscient in relation to the source and target languages and cultures.

On the other hand, 'equivalence' is a fine point of departure for classroom teaching because in classroom situations we need a text which can be discussed in precise syntactical and lexical terms. In contrastive linguistic and cultural studies, the concept also serves well (although, unlike concrete translations which usually deal with one language pair, 'culture' is defined in relation to many other 'cultures'). In other words, 'equivalence' is useful for teaching provided it is made clear that it disregards the social aspect and is ultimately limited to the linguistic level and linguistic realisations of a text in other languages.

In the extremist forms bent on the overthrow of authority, including the dethronement of the source text, *deconstruction* is not useful for actual translation work. However, a more cautious approach which makes it clear that the source text may not be the only authoritative influence on the target text makes a deconstructive approach more attractive. I refer to, for instance, consecutive and liaison interpreting situations in which the interpreter realises that information given previously by the sender or the addressee and which is subsequently omitted by the mediator or forgotten by the sender or the addressee becomes relevant and must be reintroduced, or, conversely, that in order to facilitate communication, it is necessary to change or leave out segments of the 'original message'. If we consider such deviations from the original legitimate - and in real life we have to - deconstruction furnishes us with a theoretical basis for discussing deliberate omissions or explanatory paraphrasing in texts, including literary ones.

In speaking of deliberate decisions, we are, however, also close to the '*Skopostheorie*' and its adjunct, 'functionalism'. The major strengths of the 'Skopostheorie' are that it draws attention away from the literary translation and makes for increased consciousness of the target audience. This approach can be given specific definitions in classroom settings, but it seems to me that it overestimates the influence of the translator's decisions on many messages.

The so-called *manipulation school* seems to face two problems. One is that it is primarily dealing with the literary field which is receding in bulk and importance in today's world, and, secondly, that it appears to be based on translation in societies where the practice is not held in high esteem. These points need further and more detailed exploration.

Descriptive Translation Studies (Toury) and *empirical studies* (e.g. Krings) have other emphases. To me they seem to be promising new approaches, but they are still in their infancy. The present article, for instance, has been employing a descriptive approach.

It is necessary to be aware that we cannot embrace everything in translation. No one person can, and no one person should be asked to believe this is possible. If we accept that situational factors have much greater bearing on translational activities and translational products than we normally allow for, they can be mapped by means of a descriptive approach.

Concluding remarks

In sum then, I have pointed out that in terms of modes, quantity and even quality, the number of languages involved and the political attitudes towards it, there have been enormous changes in the role of translation in the latter half of the twentieth century at both national and international levels.

I have touched upon the importance and differences of some text types and their national characteristics. I have discussed a number of situations in order to show why we must reconsider traditional translation theory, but not necessarily completely discard it. I have argued that even with the traditional translation of literature, there are more parameters that exert influence on the product of translation than traditional theory allows for; I have posited that the new modes of linguistic transfer serve to illustrate that there is a large number of parameters which have a bearing on a given translation. In order for a linguistic transfer to be successful, it has to meet a number of situational requirements.

With certain modifications, most theoretical models and approaches are not invalid, but they are of limited application and it will be useful to define the areas of applicability in more detail for the common good of the translational community.

For the nonce, the best option is to learn to be specific in describing every case of translation, then to use this awareness for application and for generalisation. In the case of students and neophytes, empirical investigations may be useful for personal insights and general awareness of mechanisms. Quality will have to fall back on 'equivalence', seasoned with considerable awareness of the societal implications of translation work. Although the parameters may be difficult for translators to access, they can be analysed and discussed. So, theoretical considerations will have to approach concrete translation in the knowledge that both are balancing acts which I would term 'juggling with parameters'.

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Notes

i. Summary, spot rendition, voice-over and surtitling (a very recent phenomenon) are rarely discussed in Translation Studies. Usually both poor and successful strategies in these forms are found in other types of interlingual transfers.

ii. There are by now many studies in English of subtitling, e.g. Gottlieb (1997) and Ivarsson (1991). Gottlieb finds loss in only 16% of the verbal segments in a very good Danish subtitler's version of 'Frankenstein junior'(Gottlieb 1997:77). I have noticed much higher percentages of semantic omission in subtitling as used by small Danish television stations.

iii. Not to be confused with a 'unit of meaning'. In interpreting contexts, meaningful units can often be surprisingly abnormal, provided senders are experienced, know exactly what they want to communicate, and put this to full use.

iv. For an updated introduction to interpreting, see Gile (1995). Liaison interpreting is the subject of Gentile et al (1996). The question of reduction in consecutive interpreting should be approached cautiously. My data are based on renditions in Dollerup & Celeen (1996a), but attention is often drawn to such features as false starts, incomplete sentences and the like in 'originals' (e.g. Herbert: 67-69)

v. Zabalbeascoa (1994) presents a brief overview of the problems. Barbe (1996) discusses concrete additions and omissions in German dubbing of English originals.

vi.It will be appreciated that this is my view, discussed in more detail in e.g. Dollerup 1996c and 1997. There is, however, also another view in which the diffusion of English is held to be colonialism and domination of the mind. For this see e.g. Phillipson (e.g. 1998). I believe that the situation was changed overnight with the downfall of the Soviet Union, although there are regional differences.

vii. The official languages of the UN are: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, Spanish. In 1998, the official languages of the European Union are: Danish, Dutch (Belgium and the Netherlands), English (England and Ireland), Finnish, French (Belgium and France), German (Austria and Germany), Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, and Swedish. It is, however, usually only in Parliament that all languages are used. Most work is done in the three working languages (English, French, German), in two (usually English and French), or in French (the working language for most of the permanent staff).

viii. The information from meetings in Brussels (illustrations 5 and 7) is from my stays at the Commission as an expert for the teaching of Danish stagiaires for three months and later as a researcher for one week where the proceedings were taped (Dollerup 1996a for details).

ix. For examples, see Bush (1997) and Klaudy (1996).

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