

INTRODUCTION

Translation studies have long been confined to the periphery of research in the humanities. Although a major intercultural activity of old, such disciplines as comparative linguistics or comparative literature have been carried out as if translation either had nothing to do with the subject matters with which they deal, or was a phenomenon of minor importance. The same holds true for theoretical linguistics, poetics and general communication theory. In recent years, however, this attitude has been changing, owing not so much to efforts made by translation students, but rather to the growing involvement of scholars from the disciplines mentioned above with translation as both process and product, with translational relationships, with questions of "equivalence under transformation," and the like. It seems that the latter realized that not only does it pay to make use of what has already been achieved within the sciences of man in order to understand what translation is all about, but—to no lesser extent—that investigating translation may contribute to the advancement of their own respective fields, that is, to a better understanding of linguistic, literary and cultural aspects of human activity.

With the growing (pre)occupation with translation and translation procedures, it has become increasingly evident that not only *verbal*, but also *textual* and *systemic* features and regularities can be detected and laid bare due to the decomposition procedure inevitably involved with any act of translation. This has encouraged text theorists to take more interest in using translation as a method for a more sustainable procedure for detection of textual laws, and the same holds true for system theorists, as well. Parallely, the investigation of translation has turned out to be extremely fruitful for a far better, and more adequate understanding of the processes and procedures involved in interference between cultural systems – languages, literatures, societies – as well as in phenomena such as code switching and code merging.

In short, one may say that the modern study of translation has started to become a laboratory for several of the sciences of man; it has become a field where hypotheses can be tested and checked better, practically speaking, than anywhere else. Yet in order to develop adequate methods to such an end, clearly no completed and ready-for-use translation theory is available. Traditional translation theory (or rather theories) have naturally limited themselves only to those questions that were of interest to the limited program translation studies were designed for. Never having been confronted with the variety of questions preoccupying students of poetics, the semiotics of culture and theoretical

linguistics, these theories could not possibly have evolved in the direction of such questions.

Thus, the growing interest for the study of translation is actually forcing translation theory itself to take new directions. Indeed, one may say that the old theories, have often been of little or no use in accounting for questions for which they had not been designed in the first place, and new theories take little notice of them. Obviously, this development is not a painless operation for many scholars established in the field, nor for scholars who—unaware of the complexities of the field—occasionally make naïve contributions. Having been allowed to warm their nest on such out-of-the-way trees in a remote corner in the forest of knowledge, very many of them now resent the growth of a denser forest around them. As a result, today there is by no means a unified field of translation studies, and the new developments are by no means quantitatively dominant world-wide. They are, however, not confined either to a certain school, place, university or country, but have managed to crystalize on an international level (though, happily enough, by no means with no mutual fertilization and cooperation). In various research centers, such as those at Amsterdam, Tel Aviv, Antwerp, Leuven (Louvain), Nitra (Czechoslovakia), Paris, London and several other places, work has been carried out with fruitful results in the framework of the new approaches. This work has been encouraged and reinforced, and in certain cases even initiated, by a series of small-scale international meetings, at which a conscious effort was made to achieve some sort of common ground, though by no means any common unified theory, let alone common dogmas or beliefs.

Three such meetings have taken place so far, each one of which attracting, in addition to a relatively fixed group of active translation students from the above-mentioned centers, new scholars expressing their interest not only in the overall discipline of translation studies, but also in becoming acquainted with the new theoretical and methodological frameworks, and even in trying their hand in them. The first conference was organized by the Department of Literary Studies at the Catholic University of Leuven (Belgium), 1976, with subsequent proceedings, which are already regarded by many a scholar as a milestone in the development of the modern study of translation.¹ The second one was organized by the M. Bernstein Chair of Translation Theory in cooperation with the Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics at Tel Aviv University, 1978, with the present proceedings; and the third was organized by the Germanic Department at the University of Antwerp (U.I.A.), 1980, whose proceedings are under preparation.

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It would be both presumptuous and false to describe the present volume as an expression of all the new developments, or of these developments only. A fruitful discussion, a struggle for new ideas, experiments with new theories and

¹ *Literature and Translation: New Perspectives in Literary Studies*. James S. Holmes, José Lambert and Raymond van den Broeck, eds. (Leuven:ACCO), 1978.

methodologies can never be carried out either in a vacuum or only among the converts. This collection, which is based largely on the proceedings of the Tel Aviv 1978 symposium, is even larger in scope and more variegated than the symposium itself. A few scholars who did not take part in the symposium were invited by the editors to contribute articles on specific points which were not touched upon, or were touched upon only lightly during the symposium.² This measure was taken deliberately, in order to round out the picture, so that the volume may represent more fully “the state of the art” at the end of the 1970s, with an eye to its future developments.

Thus, this collection reflects a variety of ideas in the various fields of translation studies. Yet it seems that for at least a major part of the articles published here one could, with all due caution, formulate a number of either commonly accepted or commonly legitimized principles.

First, it seems that all agree that the ultimate goal of translation theory is to detect the laws governing (the processes and procedures involved with) translation. There is, naturally, nothing exceptional about this goal, but in view of what is being done today in a large amount of translation studies on the one hand, and of literary studies on the other, it does not at all seem to be as self-evident as it probably should have been. Accepting this principle for translation theory does not involve simply adhering to some abstract ideology; it has immediate implications for practical work, that is, on whatever one is likely to do not only in theoretical thinking, but also in planning and organizing actual research and in devising the proper methods for its realization. For, while traditional translation students—drawing on traditional translation studies—base their work on a (relatively) clear notion of what a translated text, or item, is, which is a function of a predefinition of an adequate translating process, this is not necessarily the case with modern translation theories. The acceptance of the common ideas about what should be considered a translation—even in the mellowed formulation of what *might* be considered one (under a specified set of conditions)—may well serve as a convenient point of departure for other types of translation theory and research as well, but it need not be the final point of arrival. When law-directed, it is the most adequate detectable laws which eventually determine for a theory not only how certain occurrences can be described and explained, but also what the borders of such occurrences are in the first place. These need not overlap either the ones accepted as convenient points of departure, nor need they be compatible with current cultural ideas. Old translation taxonomies, widely prevailing in everyday life and quite helpful for practical purposes (such as the distinction between “translation” and “adaptation”) may lead translation theory to a deadlock, if it aspires to explain translation regularities (laws). The meaning of this assumption is that the very

² The papers by Wolfram Wilss (Saarbrücken, West Germany), Peter Cassirer (Gothenburg, Sweden) and Michael Bruchis (Tel Aviv) have been published elsewhere. Vladimir Ivir and R.R.K. Hartmann’s contributions have been especially solicited for this volume. Katharina Reiss, who was invited to take part in the Tel Aviv 1978 symposium, could not come for health reasons, but sent in her manuscript for this collection.

nature of the *object* may change for a theory under the needs of developing it adequately. In other words, what is to be taken as “translation” and what is not, is not given in advance, nor is it self-evident. It has to be discovered in the process of research and theory making, which is consequently not a simple inductive activity whereby certain generalizations can be made on accumulated given data. For, which data should be accumulated is also a matter for discovery, even when one normally starts with what one can, that is, with some common sense, or conventional ideas.

Beside what one could call the basic laws of decomposition, and the bulk of laws preoccupied with objective linguistic structures (e.g., the opposition between temporal and aspectual verb systems), in this collection there seems to be greater interest for a third bulk of laws, the so-called intersubjective factors operating in culture. These are often called, for the sake of brevity, *norms*. The preoccupation with this kind of law clearly emerged from a growing conviction that objective linguistic structures, as much as they may explain much of what takes place, or rather *may* take place, in translation, explain only the very basic—and not always working—portion of translational realities. Moreover, with the notion of norms, one has shifted one’s focus of interest from questions connected with *translatability* (i.e., the possibility of reconstructing as large as possible a nucleus of predefined features of an SL item in TL, which is, as it were, a kind of “opening conditions” for translation) to questions connected with *actual translation* situations, conceived of as part and parcel of cultural history. Thus, norm is not an isolated, but a contextually connected concept, within a series which includes, among other things, *function*, *system* (and *polysystem*), *decision mechanism*.

The most outspoken presentation of this shift seems to have been formulated in this volume by Gideon Toury, in his article subtitled “Toward a Target-Text Oriented Approach to Literary Translation.” It is, however, just as clearly expressed in various other papers, such as those by Lambert, Yahalom, Shavit, Perry, Somekh, Golomb and others, most of which are case studies, carried out (more or less) within the theoretical framework and in the methodological and methodical tools summarized by Toury, and which were already advocated by several contributions to the 1976 Leuven colloquium (cf. n. 1).

This is not to say that “translatability” theories and studies are from now on to be regarded illegitimate, nor even that they are completely out of the scope of the present volume. We take it that, in principle, every approach is legitimate and may be useful—on the condition that it fully realizes the aims pertinent to it and proceeds towards their achievement not merely within its own possibilities, but also with due attention to its limitations. Now, even with translation students who are more inclined to go on working with the ideas and notions of translatability, such as contrastive linguists and applied theory people, the shift of focus from “translatability” as opening conditions to “translation” and “translation procedures” has not been without consequences. As a matter of fact, one of the main achievements of the 1978 Tel Aviv symposium, as we see it, is that a possibility of developing a fruitful dialogue between these two

approaches became evident, with the prospect of future cooperation.

We dare say that most contrastive linguists participating in this collection are already quite far from taking those positions traditionally believed to be unavoidable for them. The growing attention paid in contrastive linguistics to pragmatics, with the consequent position assigned to it as a higher-order constraint on all kinds of verbal communication, has led to a stronger awareness of the larger contexts within which language operates. This has brought the work of translation students of the semiotic-functional tradition much closer to that of the contrastive analysts. Work done by such scholars as Dagut, Blum-Kulka (with her leaning on speech act theory), Reiss, Hartmann (focusing on text types and contrastive textology), and especially van den Broeck and Wienold (the latter a text-processing student and a semiotician of literature) are by no means contradictory, but rather complementary to the other approaches represented in this volume. It can even be claimed that more developed contrastive analyses of those and of similar types are a necessary basis for any progress along the semiotic-functional lines, because this new approach has not abandoned older notions which originated in the "translatability" line of theory and research, such as "adequacy." It only transformed them from "real" entities into hypothetical constructs. Thus, all the translatability students are not expected to become translation students, nor is it desirable. On the other hand, it is absolutely desirable that contrastive analysis, in its position as translatability studies, will go on developing into more and more text- and system-oriented (or even actual act-of-communication-oriented) frameworks.

Another guiding principle which seems to have been accepted by all is that for any theoretical model, and consequently for any research work, one looks not for some hypotheses which may explain this or that phenomena, but for an aggregate of hypotheses, that is for the ensemble of factors that govern the object. Hence, it is the interrelations which obtain between the various factors that become the major question, rather than this or that separate factor. Therefore, in the particular case of translation, it is the discovery of the hierarchy of factors (constraints, parameters) which operate in translation processes, procedures and products which constitutes a major task for translation theory. It would not be sufficient, then, in the long run (not to be confused with the unavoidable small steps of actual and partial research) to discover that differing verb structures in respective languages play a role in decision mechanisms involved with translation. One would also have to give an answer to the question whether such a constraint is governed by some other, perhaps more highly stratified factor and whether, under specific circumstances it is more powerful/less powerful than some other correlated factor. The matter of relations between more vs. less powerful constraints is definitely a new question in translation theory, but a very promising one. It is, of course, easy to realize the direct connection between this question of relations and the notion of norm, and, as a result, one is in a position to verify and even strengthen the central position assumed by this notion in modern translation studies.

In this connection, there is a permanent dilemma as to the extent to which one

is entitled to enlarge a field in order to be able to detect the most adequate laws. It seems sometimes that the higher one goes, the more one finds that there is no end, as it were, to regulating principles. There is obviously a danger — obvious in principle yet not always easy to realize in practice — to transcend the borders of a field to such an extent that whatever factors will be detected, they will be remote, and, from the point of view of the subject matter, weak.

In this respect, the most radical attitude expressed in this volume is no doubt Itamar Even-Zohar's programmatic article. Fully aware of the above-mentioned danger, his attitude is that we cannot afford to stop our work at low-level constraints, simply because on the one hand their number will get out of control and they will intersect and overlap too much (not to speak of their inclination to quickly develop into ossified nomenclatures); and on the other, they cannot account for too many riddles. High-level constraints, on the other hand (i.e., factors operating on the level of culture, or of any of its subsystems), may provide those laws we have not otherwise been able to detect. Naturally, under condition that we accept the idea of culture not as a set of "values to be preserved," but as the most powerful human mechanism which organizes communication, and is institutionalized through partial aggregates such as language, literature, etiquette and so on. It seems that at this point Even-Zohar is ready to go much farther than most of his colleagues in translation studies. In his opinion, *transfer theory* is badly needed not in order to eliminate or swallow translation theory, but in order to furnish it with better possibilities to tackle its particular subject matter. It is a natural outcome of analyzing translation in the context of cultural aggregates which are historically dynamic. Take, for instance, the case of micro-translational vs. macro-translational features. These are manifested in the relation between the position a translated literature assumes in the system of culture (and vis-à-vis other sorts of "literature" established by the cultural conventions) and specific translational procedures. The latter can definitely be said to be governed by the first. While this obviously seems to be incomprehensible to traditional translation theory and transcending, as it were, the legitimate borders of the discipline, the culturally oriented translation theory takes it as a natural consequence of its methodology. For, when such a dependency can be hypothesized (between systemic positions and translational behavior), translational features are not only better explainable, but the whole context of translation itself is put in a different perspective. This, in its turn, allows for dealing with a host of new questions, which hitherto have been "the daily worries" of historical poetics, interference studies and the like. For, precisely as the position assumed by translated literature may help in explaining translational behaviors, so can translational behaviors help in reconstructing systemic relations for a given time. Thus, the intimate link between translational operations and the structure of specific cultural (literary, linguistic) (poly)systems becomes more apparent.

Having once adopted a functional(istic) approach, whereby the object is theory dependent, modern translation theory cannot escape transcending "borders." Just as the linguistic "borders" have been transcended, so must the

literary ones be transcended. For there are occurrences of a translational nature which call for a semiotics of culture, and, in the context of the latter, it is at least Even-Zohar's expressed belief that transfer/interference theory will no longer be developed detached from translation theory. To deal with cultural interference without investigating the role of translation (and making use of the knowledge already achieved in translation theory) is clearly as irresponsible as studying translational procedures without taking into account the way they are correlated with and dependent upon interference processes. This point seems to have been repeated, underlined and sustained in both the Leuven and the Tel Aviv symposia. Just as translation theory did not seem to be valid without (historical) comparative study, so comparative studies of any kind (be they called "comparative literature" or "comparative linguistics") seem invalid without translation theory. This attitude, so crucial to this brand of modern translation theory, has not only been accepted, but much work has been conducted in recent years (since 1976) to develop it. Although this development has not yet gained ground in regular university curricula, the link between translation theory and the study of intercultural relations (be it labeled transfer or interference theory) is strongly sustained, as are the possible hypotheses available on this particular subject. Once this has been settled, both translation theory and intercultural studies cannot remain the same as before, but have to move forward. The present volume is a step toward that end; further steps are already being taken in that direction.

The Editors