

HISTORICAL IDENTITY OF TRANSLATION: FROM DESCRIBABILITY TO TRANSLATABILITY OF TIME

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Abstract. The main problem of the historical understanding of translation lies in finding the appropriate metalanguages. Revisiting time in translation studies means finding complementarity between historical metalanguage for description of translational activity and semiotic metalanguage for understanding different sides of translatability. We have distinguished the achronic theoretical component in the unified discussion of translation history, the component concentrating on the analysis of the translator and the translation method. Next comes the synchronic receptive component, i.e., the analysis of the translator, translation and the target language culture thus concentrating on the status of translation in the given culture, the functions of translations, and the ways of rendering meaning to them. The third, evolutionary component is connected with the so-called minor diachrony, the analysis of the technical and psychological features of the translation process. The fourth, cultural history component is based on the so-called grand diachrony and focuses on the development of the translation practice with reference to the varying cycles in cultural history and the styles of specific periods.

Keywords: diachrony, synchrony, achrony, translation process, intersemiotic, inner speech, self-communication, identity

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1. Introduction

The main problem about the historical understanding of translation lies in finding the appropriate metalanguages. Revisiting time in translation studies means finding complementarity between a historical metalanguage for the description of translational activity and a semiotic metalanguage to understand the different sides of translatability.

Translation is the creation of a language of mediation between various cultures. The historic analysis of translation presupposes the readiness of the researcher to interpret the languages of the translators belonging to different ages, and also to

interpret their ability to create new languages of mediation (Osimo 2002, Torop 2009).

A broader view of translation and translating within the framework of the methodology of translation studies contributes to the inner dialogue within translation studies. At the same time it also contributes to the dialogue between translation studies and semiotics and to the dialogue between both disciplines and other disciplines. Besides the dialogue within the discipline and between disciplines, the elaboration of the methodology of studying translation and translating also points to the need for a dialogue between diachrony and synchrony. As theory is put to test by the study of translation history, so are new concepts in translation studies put to test by the history of this discipline. Methodological cohesion is being created both in time and space (Torop 2007).

2. The achronic theoretical component

We have distinguished the achronic theoretical component in the unified discussion of translation history, the component focused on the analysis of the translator and the translation method. The typological approach taking translational strategies into account proves to be useful. One mode of this kind of typological approach is represented by James Holmes' works, who distinguished between linguistic context, literary intertext and sociocultural situation, on the one hand, and two axes – of exotization-naturalization and historization-modernization – on the other. In addition, exotization and historization are connected to retentive processes, and naturalization and modernization to re-creative processes: "Each translator of poetry, then, consciously or unconsciously works continually in various dimensions, making choices on each of three planes, the linguistic, the literary, and the socio-cultural, and on the axis of exoticizing *versus* naturalizing and the axis of historicizing *versus* modernizing" (Holmes 1988:48). The interrelation of the three different contexts gives a possibility to describe the general status of translational activity in a given cultural period: "Among contemporary translators, for instance, there would seem to be a marked tendency towards modernization and naturalization of the linguistic context, paired with a similar but less clear tendency in the same direction in regard to the literary intertext, but an opposing tendency towards historicizing and exoticizing in the socio-cultural situation. The nineteenth century was much more inclined towards exoticizing and historicizing on all planes; the eighteenth, by and large, to modernizing and naturalizing even on the socio-cultural plane" (Holmes 1988:49). D. Delabastita, in whose works we can see the further development of this approach, examines the dynamics of the translation process on three levels – on those of the linguistic, the cultural and the textual codes. He compares the difference between the linguistic and cultural codes with the differences between the knowledge of language organized by dictionaries and the knowledge of the world organized by encyclopaedias (Delabastita 1993:22).

The typology of Delabastita is based on the combination of two parameters: codes (of three code levels) and operations (of five transformational categories). The latter ones may be interpreted as the techniques and the types of translation. The following components are considered as transformational categories: substitution as the possibility of finding a matching analogue; repetition emerging from homology and representing direct transfer; deletion as renunciation from some elements; addition as the explication of qualities; and permutation as compensation manifesting itself not at the textual but the metatextual level (Delabastita 1993:33–39) (Table 1).

Table 1. Delabastia’s typology of the translation process

Code Operation	S.ling.code → T.ling.code	S.cult.code → T.cult.code	S.text.code → T.text.code
Substitution	higher or lower degree of (approximate) linguistic equivalence	naturalization modernization topicalization nationalization	systemic, acceptable text (potentially conservative) adaptation
Repetition	total : non-translation, copy partial: calque, literal translation, word-for-word translation	exoticization historization (through the mere intervention of time-place distance)	non-systemic, non-acceptable text (potentially innovative)
Deletion	reductive translation abridged version under-translation expressive reduction	universalization dehistorization (through the removal of foreign cultural signs)	T. T. is a less typical specimen of a (target) text-type neutralization of stylistic or generic peculiarities
Addition	paraphrastic translation more explicit text overtranslation expressive amplification	exoticization historization (through the positive addition of foreign cultural signs)	T.T. is a more typical specimen of a (target) text-type introduction of stylistic or generic markers
Permutation	(metatextual) compensation	(metatextual) compensation	(metatextual) compensation

While a formulation of a translation method can usually be reduced to the dominant, i.e. element or level that the translator regards as the most important in the text to be translated, the model of the translation process enables us to arrive at a more systematic treatment of the translation method. In order to describe a translation method, the following elements should be taken into consideration:

- I. textual or medial presentation of translation: type of publication:
 - 1) elements of publication (foreword, afterword, commentary, glossary, illustrations, etc.)
 - 2) principles of compilation
- II. discursive presentation of translation:
 - 1) aim of translation:
 - a) function of translation
 - b) reader of translation

- 2) type of translation: explicit dominant of translation
- 3) translator's poetics:
 - a) translator's explicit poetics
 - b) translator's implicit poetics
- III. linguistic or semiotic presentation of translation: translation technique
 - 1) translational transformations:
 - a) cultural (keywords or key images of a culture)
 - a') transcription
 - a'') translation (neologism, substitution, indirect translation, contextual translation)
 - b) linguistic: replacement, substitution, addition, deletion
 - 2) limiting factors:
 - a) language and culture (grammar and culture, linguistic worldview, sociolinguistics, etiquette)
 - b) language and psychology (associations, expressive and affective devices, explicitness - implicitness)

The identification of the translation method is important for the comparative analysis of translations and their originals as well as for bringing the translator's individuality into the sphere of research and culture. Translation method and translation type are concepts that connect an individual translation process with a virtual process and enable individual translation methods to be typologized on the basis of a single integrated model. This is especially important for the historical understanding of translational activity.

3. The synchronic receptive component

Next comes the synchronic receptive component, i.e., the analysis of the translator, translation and the target language culture thus concentrating on the status of translation in the given culture, the functions of translations, and the ways of rendering meaning to them.

Introspection is wholly a matter of inference. One is immediately conscious of his Feelings, no doubt; but not that they are feelings of an ego. The self is only inferred. There is no time in the Present for any inference at all, least of all for inference concerning that very instant. Consequently the present object must be an external object, if there be any objective reference in it. The attitude of the Present is either conative or perceptive. Supposing it to be perceptive, the perception must be immediately known as external -- not indeed in the sense in which a hallucination is not external, but in the sense of being present regardless of the perceiver's will or wish. Now this kind of externality is conative externality. Consequently, the attitude of the present instant (according to the testimony of Common Sense, which is plainly adopted throughout) can only be a Conative attitude. The consciousness of the present is then that of a struggle over what shall be; and thus we emerge from the study with a confirmed belief that it is the Nascent State of the Actual (Peirce 5:462).

There is a static view of semiosis (and, consequently, of translation), and a dynamic view of semiosis, that considers the time factor. The former, deriving from Saussure's teaching, is based on the *signifiant-signifié* dichotomy: a theory that does not account either for individual bias in interpretation or for the flow of time. According to this view, translation is seen as a static 'equivalence'. The scholars who acknowledge the validity of Peirce's thought see signification as a trichotomy, i.e. sign-object-interpretant: the individual bias (interpretant) is taken into consideration, and translation is therefore considered as an evolution of meaning in time.

Meaning evolves in time through translation not only in interpersonal relationships: an interesting contribution to the evolution of meaning and translation in intrapersonal communication comes from Yury Lotman in his *Universe of Mind*. When someone wants to send oneself a verbal message, for example when she writes a list of things to buy, first of all she has to verbally code her thought and then produce a verbal text, then eventually she has to decode it into a thought and translate this thought into an action (of buying etc.). This is auto-communication. Lotman calls it 'I-I communication' (*kommunikatsiya ya-ya*), but we would rather call it 'I-Self communication', referring to the notion of Self as 'your consciousness of your own identity': when you 'talk' to yourself, you talk not to 'you' (which is the sender), but to 'your Self' (which is the receiver). The identitarian difference between 'you' and 'your Self' consists of time coordinates: it's a chronotopical difference. "When we speak of sending a message according to the 'I-I' system, we mean mostly not the cases in which the text has a mnemonic function. Here the second receiving 'I' from a functional point of view is comparable to a third person. The difference consists in the fact that in the 'I-He' system information travels in space, while in the 'I-I' system information travels in time" (Lotman 1990:164). There is a deep level of unconscious thought in which non-verbal language proceeds at a very high speed (when we think, we think much faster than when we speak). On this level, the ordinary problems of communication according to the six functions outlined by Jakobson, are in a very particular situation, and some of them do not hold any longer (Jakobson 1968:702).

Since addresser and addressee are the same person, the only variable in inner speech is time. The example of the knot on a handkerchief is valuable also to explain the working of semiosis in general, the concatenation of thoughts, between an earlier and a later self (Jakobson 1968:702).

Since in this particular case sender and receiver coincide, there is no question of contextualization of meaning (the context is shared by definition), there is no need to explicate the subject, neither in the grammatical nor in the semantic sense, there is no need to choose a medium, or to assure a contact. All energy can be concentrated on the translation of signs into other signs (Jakobson 1972:91).

4. Evolutionary component (minor diachrony)

The third, evolutionary component is connected with the so-called minor diachrony, the analysis of the technical and psychological features of the translation process.

Time flows; and, in time, from one state of belief (represented by the premisses of an argument) another (represented by its conclusion) is developed (Peirce 2:710).

In this process of decoding, the presence/absence of elements means that what is absent in the text must be present in the context. Such problem of presence involves referral to different times. Peirce attributes three different times to the three types of signs (symbol-future, index-present, icon-past). Jakobson holds that artifice [*priëm*] as a fourth dimension of signification is a bridge over times:

'Parallelism' as a characteristic feature of all artifice is the referral of a semiotic fact to an equivalent fact inside the same context [...] allows us to complement the system of times which Peirce includes in his semiotic triad [...]. The artifice retains the atemporal interconnection of the two parallels within their common context (Jakobson 1974:216).

Translation is transportation of a text from one context into another. And, on the other side, communication is the ability to decide what is necessary to express and what can be taken/given for granted since it is suggested by the context, with all the consequent problems of redundancy and loss.

In 'speech perception', the first stage of decoding, both of written and of oral text, an object is perceived, and in a first phase it is not clear what kind of object it is. Then the perceiver realizes – from the graphical or acoustic form – that it must be text in some language. Then, if it is a language that he partially knows, text decoding may start.

But what are the parts involved? Only the self: the self of time T1 and the self of time T2. It is a sort of simultaneous interpretation for the self T2. What are the languages involved? The language of the prototext is the natural language of the text to be decoded. But the language of the metatext must be the mental inner language of the individual: it must be much faster than natural language (so that the synthesis is ready before the line of the text goes on), and it must be understandable by the individual only in a ready-to-use form: intersemiotic translation.

Every translator is subject to two different patterns. The first one, i.e. involuntary mistranslation, involves one's own culture, education, perspectives, idiosyncrasies; but in the translation process there is also a voluntary implication connected to one's own translation policy, that is the translator's views on particular aspects concerning translation. The two patterns are, so to speak, at the opposite ends of Peirce's 'bottomless lake', the latter being on the surface, the former somewhere in the depth of the lake.

All these aspects are subject to aging, and in the course of time our views of these elements change, thus determining the aging of translations. Every translator chooses – consciously or unconsciously – his own preferred misunderstanding, i.e.

variance - invariance combination, and this determines different versions and their aging. But often for the time being the present version of a translator looks like the most 'appropriate' and 'natural' to him; it is sometimes difficult for him to recognize that a given sentence or footnote implies a general strategic vision of the relationship between the prototext and the receiving culture. (This is why some translators maintain that there is no need for any theory: they do not realize that they actually use one.) So it sometimes happens that translators perceive their own strategy only when confronted to the feedback produced by the input of their metatext into the semiosphere. They realize that their originally intended interpretation has been re-interpreted by their readers in ways that they had not foreseen. In other words, they experience the mistranslation of their own (*svoj*) when they see the others' reaction to their mis-discourse.

Feelings play a fundamental role in the fixing of memories. Not only 'positive' affects (love, affection) but also 'negative' feelings (envy, hate, jealousy) affect the acquisition of memories.

Certainly, when you talk of an actual event leaving at a subsequent time absolutely no consequences whatever, I confess that I can attach no meaning at all to your words, and I believe that for you yourself it is simply a formula into which by some form of logic you have transformed a proposition that had a real meaning while overlooking the circumstance that the transformation has left no real meaning in it, unless one calls it a meaning that you continue vaguely to associate the memory-feeling with this empty form of words (Peirce 8:195).

Learning is conditioned by the emotions implied in the process. For this reason we have an affective relationship with words, and notions too.

The affective relationship we have with notions and words is stored in our interpretants. When we think of something or we perceive something (sign), our affective memories (interpretants) refer us to something else (object). While in Saussure's view this reference (*signifiant-signifié*) is arbitrary, in Peirce's view such a reference is subjectively necessary. Affects are definitely personal; for others a perception may refer to other things, but for me it necessarily refers to what that perception means to me, to what it feels to me. Meanings are associated to feelings.

This is ideology, on a subjective basis. If on a group basis ideology is shared by people belonging to the same culture, to the same social group, to the same place, on a subjective basis ideology is the 'sum' of feelings, emotions, affects that make up one's inner, and outer, story.

Generalization occurs by way of a sort of perception-word-perception-word... chain (i.e. analysis-synthesis-analysis-synthesis...) through which new perceptions induce the formulation of new words to describe them, which induces the systematization of perception so that it will be possible, given a finite number of words, to express infinite perceptions, since two identical perceptions do not exist. Word becomes a means for the formation of concepts (Vygotsky 1965:59).

Here's why two readings, even if accomplished in different times by the same person on the same text, are never identical. The meaning of a word is a consequence of the generalization of a concept, of the synthesis of many perceptive

experiences: it is an act of thought. Thoughts, words, and meanings are tightly interwoven, and it is probably more interesting to study them as a single system rather than try to isolate components and obstinately demark their limitations (Vygotsky 1965:120). There cannot be any elaboration of concepts without (at least inner) language and there can be no language without an intense thought activity. But the fruit of such intellectual activity is never fully mature, never truly results as conclusive. Just owing to this back-and-forth play between analysis and synthesis, between perception and generalization – interpretants becoming signs of further Peircean triads –, meaning is an ever-evolving process. The meanings of words are dynamic formations changing with the individual's development and with the various ways in which his thought functions. The relation between thought and word is not a constant but a process, during which changes can be considered “as development in the functional sense” (Vygotsky 1965:130).

5. Cultural history component (grand diachrony)

The fourth, cultural history component is based on the so-called grand diachrony and focuses on the development of the translation practice with reference to the varying cycles in cultural history and the styles of specific periods. The problem of the translatability of time begins at the linguistic level in terms of grammatical time, however, the historical cultural component covers a more general range of problems of translatability. First of all, a more general approach is required for the differentiation of historical and cultural time.

Historical time manifests itself in the interrelation of the authorial time and the time assigned to the events described in the work. The authorial time considered as the time of the writing of the text, in translational activity means the activation of a kind of temporal distance; this leads to the archaization or modernization of the text under translation. When translating from Shakespeare's oeuvre in the 21st century, one choice for the translator consists in setting a temporal distance between his and Shakespeare's age. At the same time, another ‘natural’ possible choice may arise as evident. It considers the relation of Shakespeare's language to the language of his age. This relation must be defined as a point of departure for the translator. If Shakespeare proves to be an archaist in relation to the usage of his time, then this linguistic feature should be mirrored in his works in translation, too; if Shakespeare uses a contemporary poetic language, then the translator may also choose the modern language of his time. In case if there is a distance between the authorial time and the time of the event, it is especially essential to interpret this mentioned peculiarity of the use of an archaic or contemporary language. If in the work of art the described events belong to various epochs, it is necessary to search for devices ensuring the preservation of the different temporal layers and it represents a complex task. One possible way to do so is to find a culturally marked contrast as Tobin suggested it in his research: “Modern Hebrew: Biblical Hebrew is like: Modern English: Shakespearean English”(Tobin 1992:310).

The concept of historical time is connected to a whole set of time problems. It may occur that the historical time of the original text (its time of publication) coincides with or is very close to that of the target text. Another case, contrasted to this one, may be that the two historical times are very far from one another, and this sets severe problems to be solved in the translation. We have to treat as a special case within this latter category when the interpretation of the text to be translated undergoes significant changes (e.g. from the point of view of the evaluation of the language in the light of language evolution; or in realms of ideological re-readings etc.)—, all these phenomena can be called the components of the diachrony of the original text. On the other hand, we have to take into account the diachrony of translation as the coexistence of different translations of one and the same source text. This coexistence of all the various translations serves as the basis for the historical ontology of translation.

Translations may be temporally classified according to the criterion if they represent a neutral successive linear line of variants (linearity), or one of these variants is assigned culturally as dominant, i.e. it turns into a canonic version in the status of being a centre around which the other translations emerge (concentricity). To interpret the history of translation properly, the researcher should rely on both traditions.

When speaking about cultural time, the problem of the presence or absence of certain stylistic devices must not be ignored. Cultures have different rhythm of development and a lot of cultural phenomena are missing from 'minor' cultures. As an example, we can mention the great difference in the problems set for Estonian and Russian translators of works from the period of French Classicism. In Russian culture Classicism has its own tradition including its stylistic repertoire, whereas for Estonian literature it is not an inherent cultural paradigm, and that means that the translator has to overcome the lack of the poetic language of Classicism.

As far as cultural time is concerned, in this respect we can again think of the coincidence of the source text and the target text. This state of affairs has quite rare occurrences in the history of translation, but when it emerges, the translator may rely on his own cultural tradition and a competent reader. The most usual case is when the cultural time of the two (source and target) texts stand aloof from one another. Then it will be the translation of not simply a text but that of a whole tradition, a new one for the target culture. The new language of the non-existent tradition may be created by choosing approximate equivalents at different levels. Then the purpose of the translation unravels itself not in the mirroring of the peculiarities of the work of art, alien in the translator's own cultural surroundings, but in finding solutions to the problems of his/her own culture (cf. the free poetic translations made by Zhukovsky and Russian Romanticism). The cultural time of the original can be totally absent from the translation. Very often this can be seen in the culture of small nations in whose history of culture there are quite a few blank points (e.g. they lack certain cultural periods). The absence of translations may be compensated by various kinds of informational metatexts.

Altogether the historical identity of translation cannot be restricted either to the historical existence of translations, or to the history of translation. The history of translation is only one way to see translation in time. Of course history of translation significantly influences translation studies, but at the same time it also depends on the latter. For this reason, the category of *time* as related to the notion of translation is of vital importance. Temporal plurality is a special feature of translation as cultural text, since on the basis of one original text a lot of translation variants can be made. Besides that the process of translation itself can be interpreted in the flow of time. The investigations made into the psychological aspects of this process are equally important for the history of translation and translation studies in general. In the understanding of the essence of the translation psychology an important place can be given to semiotics.

The temporal contact with the original text to be translated (the clarification of the degree of the translatability of time) must be regarded as an inseparable component of the process of translation. Consequently, the moving from the description of time to the ascertainment of the translatability serves as a basis for the logic hidden in every translation process. The examination of the temporality of translation contributes to a better understanding of the specificity of translational activity. The historical identity of translation is a notion which may function as a bridge connecting the history and the general theory of translation.

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