# *AGEING TRANSLATIONS AND RETRANSLATION HYPOTHESIS*

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***Abstract:*** *Obsolete translations have been the focus of many studies ever since early times, but their research has never flourished as much as it has in the last twenty or thirty years in the context of Retranslation Hypothesis thanks to the great interest taken by many researchers in this new field of research in translation studies. This article aims at outlining some general approaches to Retranslation Hypothesis, starting from a series of questions on the need of retranslations, the reasons that trigger the retranslation of the same literary text into a target language, and the causes that lead to the ageing of a translation. The answers to these questions are based on previous scientific research in the literature of this field and on empirical research as well. I have used the conclusions of a previous case study I have made on J. D. Salinger's "The Catcher in the Rye" to illustrate specific examples of ageing translations and to suggest possible alternatives for retranslation into Romanian as a way of improving the comprehensive process of understanding, translating and rendering a source text into a target language, emphasising thus the benefits of Retranslation Hypothesis.*

***Keywords:*** *ageing translation, Retranslation Hypothesis, cultural studies.*

## Introduction

The idea behind this research article is the attempt to identify the main reasons that trigger the retranslation process of the same (literary) text into a target language based on the discovery of similar cases worldwide. The research also aims to analyse the main problem of ageing translation and the extent to which the influences of the historical, social, cultural, political and temporal contexts changed/affected the translations in question.

The fundamental questions behind the analysis of this retranslation process must therefore include the following: Which is the main reason underlying the emergence of a new translation of a literary text already translated into a target language after a certain period of time? Which are the benefits and limitations of such a retranslation? How often is this practice met in the Romanian and international literary context? To what extent does retranslation help better understand the source text? Which are the chances that this phenomenon becomes a recommended practice in the field of translation? Is retranslation a process that should become a standard and a rule in the desire to harmonise a literary text with the contemporary readers' requirements and needs? and so forth.

In an attempt to find answers to some of these questions I have chosen J. D. Salinger's The *Catcher in the Rye* given the famous controversy created around it and the difficulty of the language used by the writer (especially the oral feature of the language) and given that it benefited from two different translations into Romanian: the first one by Catinca Ralea and Lucian Bratu, *De Veghe în Lanul de Secară*, published in 1964, and the second one by Cristian Ionescu, with the same title, in 2005. The 40-year gap between the two translations is not a long period of time, but this is one more reason to study the retranslation process in this particular case. Similar cases of

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retranslation happened, for example, with the French versions of this novel. Other cases include, for instance, a study focusing on the Persian retranslations of *Pride and Prejudice* (Dastjerdi, Mohammadi, 2013: 174) or the Slovenian case study of Jerome K. Jerome's *Three Men in a Boat* retranslation (with a 35-year gap between the translations) Križnar, G. N., 2009: 101), which shows the interest taken by researchers in this field.

**Background**

The concept of retranslation or "Retranslation Hypothesis" refers to any translation following the first translation of a work (Breman A., 1990: 1) and this repetition gives rise to many versions of a text from a source language into a target language. Although "the phenomenon of retranslation" (Chesterman, 2000:15; Brownlie, 2006: 145) is quite common, theoretical discussions based on it are quite rare (Susam-Sarajeva, 2003: 2), and in our country it has not been studied enough yet, which also represents one of the main reasons for focusing on this research field, with the humble intention of expanding the current state of research and opening new research directions in this field.
Retranslation hypothesis shows that the subsequent translations of a text are closer to the source text (Chesterman, 2004: 8). Goethe was one of the first critics who discussed the issue of retranslations and emphasised their role in achieving a perfect identity with the original (Deane, 2011: 7). Studying the phenomenon of retranslation was resumed only in the 1990s by the French journal *Palimpsestes* and through Antoine Berman's theoretical approaches which emphasise the "clumsiness" of the first translation and the need of a second one that can lead to the "great translation" (Deane, *ibidem*: 8), to achieving perfection.

The most recent articles in the literature in this field show a growing interest globally, with obvious echoes in the UK, Hungary, Spain, Slovenia, Turkey, Finland, China, etc., with many events and international conferences organised to develop this fairly new field of scientific research and also because "English is increasingly the lingua franca and the constant preoccupation to learn it has become an important issue in today's economic environment" (Chirilă, Dumitrescu, 2010: 112).

One of the most important issues when it comes to translation studies is the concept of "faithfulness" of a translation/retranslation of a source text. It is true that there have been many approaches and theories on the concept of "ideal translation," but practice shows that such requirements as the ones put forward by Savory Theodore (1968: 54) in *The Art of Translation* (see quotation below) are possible only at theoretical level since in practice such an ideal would be impossible to achieve:

a. A translation must give the words of the original.
b. A translation must give the ideas of the original.
c. A translation should read like an original work.
d. A translation should read like a translation.
e. A translation should reflect the style of the original.
f. A translation should possess the style of the translation.
g. A translation should read as a contemporary of the original.
h. A translation should read as a contemporary of the translation.
I. A translation may add to or omit from the original.
j. A translation may never add to or omit from the original.
k. A translation of verse should be in prose.
l. A translation of verse should be in verse.



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The field of retranslation has known a "boom" in the recent years and I believe one of the reasons is the influence of the economic development and the material perspective given to the numerous retranslations of various types of texts, from the literary ones to the technical ones, for example. This idea can be closely connected to the different strategies of (re)translation and thus Yanjie Li (2013: 1911) quotes Charles S. Kraszewski's *Four Translation Strategies Determined by the Particular Needs of the Receptor* (1998) regarding the different types and reasons of translation and adds one more to the ones already identified, describing thus the following four strategies with regard to retranslation:

> a. Corrective translation. It refers to the retranslation of a work already existing in a bad or faulty translation in order to provide the target language receptor with a more faithful reproduction of the original. According to the above-mentioned, it is easy to know that the goal of corrective translation is to make a better translation of a work that has already existed in the target language in an imperfect form.
> b. Critical translation. It refers to the retranslation of a literary work already extant in a translation free of errors and "acceptable" in order to shed new interpretational light on the original work. By definition, it is obvious to see that the goal of critical translation is to retranslate a work already extant in an acceptable form in the target language, in order to present the reader with a valid interpretation of the original work that the earlier translations do not possess.
> c. Proselytizing translation. It refers to the retranslation of a work already existing in an acceptable form in the target language, with the intent of emphasizing its special meaning for a particular, well-defined group of receptors via an interpretation of the text according to the customs, ideas, or world-views of said group. It is worth mentioning that the goal of proselytizing translation is to retranslate a work already extant in an acceptable form in the target language in order to actualize its message for a particular group of readers.
> d. Neoconceptual translation. This strategy, put forward by the author, refers to the retranslation of a work already existing in an acceptable form in the target language, with the intent of eliminating gender discrimination or certain violent inclination reflected in the language of translation. By definition, the goal of neoconceptual translation is to purify the language of translation so as to avoid the language pollution in translation.

According to this classification the case study I have chosen, the analysis and comparison of the first translation and the retranslation of J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* into Romanian, as it is further explained below, can be seen as the result of the first two types of translation, corrective and critical, mainly due to the cultural context and linguistic barriers during the communist period when the first Romanian translation appeared and then the "re-adaptation" of the original to the new modern times by means of the retranslation. Nevertheless, it is difficult to say that either of the two Romanian translations is closer to the concept of "ideal translation," but each can bring its contribution to generating new retranslations.

**Methods**

The main methods I have used in this article are the content analysis method of the reference sources and of the texts chosen to exemplify the case study, the comparative approach through qualitative research, the interdisciplinary approach – mainly



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concentrating on historical, social and cultural aspects, and the observation method starting from empirical research in the field.

The main aim was to emphasise the need and the usefulness of the retranslation of J. D. Salinger *The Catcher in the Rye* into Romanian by focusing on the contrastive analysis of the two translations and especially on the gains and losses revealed by this research. This retranslation method can be thus seen as a way of allowing the researcher/translator to identify problems which would have otherwise gone unnoticed and to underline new meanings.

The main strategy I have used was the practical act of comparing the two Romanian versions, focusing on the importance of Salinger's writing style and use of language, on discussing mainly the cases of misunderstandings and mistranslations, of problems of equivalence, of losses and gains, of linguistic untranslatability, of the translators' visibility or invisibility in the target text (TT), on accuracy in translation, adaptability, fidelity and faithfulness or infidelity.

**Case study**

The translation theory was defined by Lawrence Venuti "as a set of changing relationships between the relative autonomy of the translated text, or the translator's actions, and two other concepts: equivalence and function" (2000: 5). These two concepts are extremely important for the analysis of both Romanian translations. The definition of the concepts of equivalence and function supports the issue of the social and cultural context in which both the source language (SL) text and the two target language (TL) texts appeared. These two notions are also closely related to the notion of faithfulness or fidelity which usually refer to the relationships between the texts themselves and thus "loyalty stresses the translator's responsibilities towards people, i.e. not only with regard to the authors of the ST" (Schäffner, Wiesemann, 2001: 19). This is a very strong reason in favour of the importance of translation or retranslation of a literary text.

After a first reading of the Romanian versions, the general impression is that the translators have an "intermediary position." First of all, I would like to mention that the first two Romanian translators saw and appreciated the importance of the italics and oral speech stress used in the original text and decided to render them in their version as well. The italics were used by Salinger as a mark of oral speech, in order to emphasise the rhythm of oral speech and to show that Holden's speech is indeed vocal. In Romanian the italics usually render the same words as in English or their adaptations, with some exceptions, of course, but not major ones. There were also many situations in which some SL italicised words were not rendered by the first Romanian translation or in which the stress was placed on different words, but the overall conclusion is that the oral speech stress was rendered into the first version and this is a gain in translation. On the other hand, C. Ionescu chose not to use italics, and this may be considered a great loss, as they play a very important role in the novel.

There have also been many situations in which the first version accumulated many losses in translation because of the inappropriate use of certain regional or dialectal terms (words such as "a trînti," "a trage bărbi," etc.) which lead to the often argued problem of ageing translation. Such cases were not recorded in the second version (mostly due to obvious reasons related to the modernity of language use) and this becomes a gain. An important aspect of the gain vs. loss opposition in the comparison of the two Romanian translations is represented by the extensive use of euphemisms to



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avoid the explicit use of taboo words by the first version. C. Ionescu's version is more audacious and uses the same taboo words of the SL without trying to cover up their bad or negative meaning, at least most of the times, but there are also exceptions.

The problem of the values that the translator has to convey is more delicate since two different cultures are involved, in this specific case two opposing cultures, at least from the political and social point of view at the time of the novel's publication. In terms of the first and second versions this issue becomes all the more complicated since the two translations occurred at different times in history when the society of the TL was changed both politically and socially, and thus the values within the original novel and their perception have changed dramatically.

Any translation tends towards perfection, and of course, the Romanian ones are not an exception to this tendency. A translation means both decoding and interpreting; and it also means knowing the culture of the SL. Jiang Tianmin argues that "[t]ranslation is simultaneous decontextualization and recontextualization, hence is productive rather than reproductive" (2006). This idea leads to and supports the concept of infidelity in translation. Jiang Tianmin also believes that "infidelity is built in translation because it inevitably describes domestic scenes that are loaded not only linguistically and culturally, but also socially and politically." Infidelity occurs in translation because the "translator cannot avoid being faithful to his/her own circumstances and perspective, [and] she/he cannot be really faithful to the text he/she translates" (Tianmin, *ibidem*:). Infidelity can thus also explain why "[t]he source text does not reach the target society unscathed, but refracted" (Tianmin, *ibidem*:).

I believe that this idea of infidelity in translation is also closely connected to the earlier discussed problem of the translator's visibility or invisibility in the TT. Cristina Schäffner and Uwe Wiesemann talk about visibility change as part of the translation strategies (namely pragmatic translation strategies) and this visibility concerns the author's or translator's presence through translator's notes, footnotes or comments in brackets (*op. cit.*: 30). A good example in point is the use of "explanatory circumlocutions" or footnotes used by the translators of the first Romanian version of Salinger's novel and which represent the lack of transparency in this version. The question of whether to use such explanatory sequences in a translation or not is a highly debatable one.

Vicky Hartnack argues that "it takes a while before we perceive how the culture of the other emerges in the text through the use of genre and rhetorical devices, and that this difference and distinctiveness should be preserved and transmitted. We cannot straitjacket the texts of others to fit in with our notions of suitability in the target language" (2005: 65). But there is another important question which refers to whether or not there should be "an on-going dialogue between the source-text producer and the translator, content and context may always be adapted, however slightly, to better suit the translator's idea of how readily the target reader/listener will perceive such cultural distinctions" (Hartnack, *ibidem*). This idea leads to the already discussed problem of using "foreign notes" in a translation and to the translator's difficult dilemma of choosing between using or not using such text-breaking explanations in the TT. Vicky Hartnack also argues that important critics in translation studies, such as Venuti and Hatim defend the use of "foreign notes" in translations of other languages and that "they are highly critical of 'domesticating' the original by absorbing and appropriating it" (Hartnack, *ibidem*). The concept of "foreignising" the translation means that there is much attention on the language of translation itself even though many critics also bring



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counter arguments that "foreignisation" "puts readers off" because they expect to familiar expressions in the literary text they are reading (Hartnack, *ibidem*).

In the case of Salinger's first translation into Romanian the use of footnotes was quite often; when there was not a Romanian word to perfectly render certain English notions, mostly in cases of linguistic untraslatability, and in order to avoid ambiguity or misunderstanding. The second Romanian version did not use footnotes at all. This can be regarded as either a loss or a gain, depending on which critical theory one adopts. I believe that the presence of too many such footnotes and explanations can interfere and affect the natural flow of the reading process and that the translator's presence becomes too obvious and somehow disturbing for the reader who has to be able to immerse into an atmosphere at least similar (if not identical) to the one of the original. On the other hand, the moderate use of such explanatory notes can help the reader realise the foreign origin of the text and become more aware of the cultural differences, as well as other types of differences.

The translators have used their right of changing the position of certain words in the text, but this without altering the original meaning. They have generally respected the limits imposed by the writer, but there were also cases of losses in translation especially in the use of euphemisms for Salinger's controversial and taboo words and expressions. Thus, we can say that there are some gains on the level of accuracy and clarity, but of course, also some inevitable losses, which are obvious especially while reading and comparing both versions.

The translator does not have to make the translation in a foreign language more difficult to understand than the original. A translation is always "a cross-cultural process between cultures" (Meylaerts qtd. in Duarte, Rosa *et alii*, 2006: 85) and that is why it is so difficult to render all the nuances of the ST into the TT and that is also why the translation of any literary text is always bound to the social, cultural and political contexts of both the SL and the TL. The reading and comprehension of a literary translation cannot happen outside these contexts and I also believe that the very unavoidable losses in any good translation, necessarily compensated by gains, do nothing else but add to the flavour of the TT and make it a unique creation in its own way. In my opinion, there is no need for the translation to compete with the ST, it only has to recreate the same effect on the readers, to complement the original and make readers understand the original text in case they do not speak the SL or better understand the text even if they do speak the SL. I also believe that many times numerous hidden meanings, allusions and connotations are revealed or become more obvious when comparing a ST with its translation in any TL, as there was the case of Salinger's comparisons with the Romanian versions.

**Conclusions**

The importance of the topic is closely linked to identifying the linguistic gains and losses as a result of the comparative analysis of these retranslations and of the benefits mainly brought to the readers, literary critics and editors. The importance of studying this subject is emphasised by the further need to identify an analysis model of the literary texts and to assess their quality. The results of such and similar analyses aim at developing and harmonising this research field in our country, and an important role in achieving this is the knowledge transfer and dissemination of results.

The potential beneficiaries are especially students, teachers, researchers, translators, experts in the field, publishers and editors interested in the (re)publication of



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retranslations of already known literary texts. Encouraging the phenomenon of retranslation of literary texts is important not only to help update the original text, but also to increase their popularity and even their sales.

In this article I have tried to focus on presenting the two Romanian versions of Salinger's novel and their comparison in order to find the main reasons for the publication of a retranslation, as well as its impact on Romanian readership. I have tried to achieve this aim by focusing on the case study of comparing and analysing in detail the differences and similarities, and the gains and the losses that have occurred in both Romanian versions. I have as well tried to make the connections with the social and cultural contexts in which the texts under review were produced, as well as the influence and the constraints of the historical and cultural background of these contexts on the Romanian versions in order to identify the need for the second Romanian translation. This has been mainly achieved by the careful and analytic comparison of some identical passages from the ST with its translations.

Furthermore, I have tried to point out major differences in the translation of Salinger's use of colloquial and taboo language in the Romanian versions, coming to the conclusion that the first Romanian version was the farthest from the ST because of its abundant use of euphemisms and euphemistic formulations throughout the book, and the second version was in between the two by using more daring equivalents that the first one, but not all the time as "bold" as, for example, in the French version.

An important conclusion is that the law of compensation always functions in a translation, as in the case of the discussed versions of Salinger's novel. The law of compensation is a technique used in translation to make up for the losses present in the TT and it works by (re)creating other effects, similar to the ones specific to the ST, but in the TT when possible and using the TL resources.

A very important conclusion I have reached is that translations and retranslations are necessary and should happen more often since they play an enormous role in a country's literary system. Another important aspect concerning the importance of translations in general, and of Salinger's second Romanian version in particular, is that much of the target audience has access to a literary text only through its translation in the TL. To this I can also add the idea that even native speakers can get more meanings from a ST and its translation than by simply reading the ST in original.

All the analyses and comparisons helped in drawing the general conclusion that second Romanian translation was indeed needed and long-awaited by the Romanian readership; to some extent better than the first version, it managed to achieve its aim of offering a newer, freer, more audacious and more modern version of Salinger's story, especially addressed to contemporary times, readers and demanding requirements of a modern translation. C. Ionescu's translation has also accomplished its aim by the fact that it addresses young people and it uses 80-90% of their typical language, with very few exceptions (most likely limited by the social and cultural constraints of our modern society).

If we were to take two randomly chosen passages, without knowing to which of the two Romanian versions they belong, we could realise from the typical language used by each to whom each translation belongs. Thus, I can say that the first translation is more appropriate for the parents of the young people to whom C. Ionescu's version is addressed, but this is an obvious appreciation given the 40-year gap between the two Romanian versions and generations.

In conclusion, I believe that a translation does not necessarily have to be better than another one; all it has to do is to achieve its goal and reach its target audience



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successfully. It is also important to mention that certain mistakes, as well as some gains, are sometimes more visible by comparing two or more translations of the same ST, which represents one of the main reasons for this type of analytical approach.

All these findings strengthen the need for further study and research in the field of Retranslation Hypothesis, which has gained so much popularity lately due to its benefits — both in terms of economic prosperity and scientific results — a field which must be harmonised and updated internationally.

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