# HIPSTER TRANSLATIONS IN OUR ”GLOBAL VILLAGE”

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*Abstract: Nowadays, more and more people fiind it challenging to live without their laptops or phones. Society has shaped our interactions in such a way that its individuals have to be easy to be reached at any time, their personal contacts have to be available at any time. This age of instant information and instant interconnection of human beings has become known as the era of the ”global village.” In this era, our whole world has shrinked to the size of a virtual village, a shrinkage caused by information technology. The enhanced acceleration of information transfer and the capacity of people to get in touch with others, from different strata of society, to show their reactions to global events quickly make us more and more aware of the consequences of our (virtual) actions.*

*Keywords: translation, global village, hipsters, students*

The Internet, Facebook, Twitter, e-mail and other social networks have altered the way we as humanity relate to each other. Reaching out is at the tip of our fingers, looking for information has become more effortless than ever. In the 90s, this information accessability was dependent on PCs, nevertheless, as telecommunications have advanced, we acquired access anywhere at anytime. Gadgets such as mobile phones, tablets, or laptops have changed the *modus operandi* of communication, the way we interact with each other. The question reamains: will this further mold our civilization and culture?

Nowadays, more and more people fiind it challenging to live without their laptops or phones. Society has shaped our interactions in such a way that its individuals have to be easy to be reached at any time, their personal contacts have to be available at any time. This age of instant information and instant interconnection of human beings has become known as the era of the ”global village.”[1] In this era, our whole world has shrinked to the size of a virtual village, a shrinkage caused by information technology. The enhanced acceleration of information transfer and the capacity of people to get in touch with others, from different strata of society, to show their reactions to global events quickly make us more and more aware of the consequences of our (virtual) actions. ”As electrically contracted, the globe is no more than a village. Electric speed in bringing all social and political functions together in a sudden implosion has heightened human awareness of responsibility to an intense degree. It is this implosive factor that alters the position of the Negro, the teenager, and some other groups. They can no longer be contained, in the political sense of limited association. They are now involved in our lives, as we in theirs, thanks to the electric media.”[2]

[1] Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, Canada, 1962, p. 293.
[2] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media. The Extensions of Man*, Ginko Press, London, 2003, p. 8.



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In this unified ”*global village*,” our students are, unconsciously or consciously, translators of important data, at every moment of their lives, the process of translation focusing not as much on the words or phrases they try to render, as about their own personality and culture. During this complex, day-to day activity, multiculturality has a key role; the result of the translation process is relative as for its quality. There is no perfect translation, as ”it is apparent that equivalence in translation must be viewed as a similarity relationship (rather than an identity relationship), and research on similarity relationships by cognitive scientists illustrate the wide possibility of perceiving and constructing such relationships in translation. It is not possible to understand the nature of translation as an attempt to create a likeness to a source text without understanding the way that human beings process likeness in general, including the way that perception of similarity is culture bound and related to categories of perception. Cognitive scientists have also shown that perception of similarity is dependent on long-term and immediate experience.”[3]

Maria Tymoczko draws attention to the fact that, while we translate, we are looking for resemblances and synonymity, as much as for  and for divergences. We must pay close attention to the fact that there are essential differences between the cultures and languages to be translated.  Transferring meaning from one language to another will mean in fact, rendering information beyond linguistic, political or cultural limits. The Otherness our hipster students encounter during this process of conveying information in a target language will constitute an impactful face of different to be reckoned with.

Today, in our high schools, we are teaching a generation of *hipsters*, and we have to admit that the generation gap is becoming larger and larger as the days go by. Let us check where the whole phenomenon of *hipsters* comes from, and how we could translate lessons into their language, moreover, how we could possibly teach them to translate the world to their own language, that is: make it efficient, practical and worthy of studying. The *hipster* subculture comprises traditionally teenagers – originally only white – living in metropolitan neighbourhoods, later any urban neighbourhood. This individual subculture has been defined as a "mutating, trans-Atlantic melting pot of styles, tastes and behavior"[4] and it has been generally correlated with music (especially indie and alternative), fashion (especially underground, nonconventional), political views (especially progressive), foods (organic or vegetarian), in a nut shell: any lifestyle that proved to be more alternative and progressive than the average one. They would most of the times be described as middle class Bohemians or decadents who inhabit neighbourhoods where they cannot find their place any more or yet.

The denomination in its contemporary use was first fashionable in the 1990s and developed into an overwhelming trend in the 2010s.[5] The word ’hipster’ was invented during the jazz age when ‚hip’ emerged as descriptive of all those who were fans of the jazz scene. It seems that the word’s linguistic roots have been lost during the years, as there are as many theories concerning it as linguists. ”Although the adjective's exact origins are disputed, some say it was a derivative of ‚hop’, a slang term for opium, while others believe it comes from the West African word *hipi*, meaning ‚to open one's eye’. Another argument suggests the term derives from the practice of lying on one's hip while smoking opium. The ultimate meaning of ‚hip’, attested as early as 1902, is ‚aware’ or

[3] Maria Tymoczko, *Trajectories of Research in Translation Studies*, on https://www.erudit.org/fr/revues/meta/2005-v50-n4-meta1024/012062ar/, accessed on 25.06. 2017.

[4] Haddow, Douglas (2008-07-29). "Hipster: The Dead End of Western Civilization". Adbusters, on http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hipster_%28contemporary_subculture%29, accessed on 28.05.17.

[5] Delaney, Brigid (November 6, 2010). "*Hipsters in firing line in 2010s culture war*", *Sydney Morning Herald*, on http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hipster_%28contemporary_subculture%29, accessed on 28.05.17.



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‚in the know'. Conversely, the antonym unhip connotes those who are unaware of their surroundings, also including those who are opposed to hipness."[6]

The culture of *hipsters* is omnipresent. It can be discovered in fashion, music and lifestyle. As a very positive phenomenon, it crosses borders of delimited preferences: there are no more borderlines of ethnicity, social status or sexual preferences. This is like a new revolution, exploding and influencing our young. It is pervasive in a funny way, as many people will judge *hipsters* and construct newer and newer discourses about them, hipsters themselves do not agrre with being identified as hipsters, the revolutionary phenomenon has become so popular that, though it used to be anti-pop culture, pop culture has swallowed it, and it has become trendy to be a *hipster*.

We might get the impression that our hipster students could lose of their ultra-coolness, as the *hipsterism* ripples out, at a huge distance from metropolises, however, what we must state is that the coolness hasn't lost its authenticity, moreover, it has become even heightened by inhabitants of smaller cities. As hipsterism was all about anti-trends, it is actually cooler to be a hipster in Tg. Mures than one in New York-"everyone knows about New York City"[7]. Many critics say that there is no originality in this whole phenomenon, no authentic initiative or substance to it. *Hipsters* are all posers, striking their poses, but lacking any kind of culture or vision for the future. Well, I have to disagree. These individuals take part in many movements and initiate numerous actions with a clear vision for the future, represented in their social network statuses: "Let's Do It, Romania!", "Youth in Action", "Critical Mass"; organize themselves, vote for the "right causes," just to point out a few movements they initiate in which their passion, awareness and enlightenment is evident in this new global trend.

If we wanted to devise a `hiptionary`, we would have to read John Leland's book, *Hip: The History* in which he examines what constituted a century of `hip` in a well researched and exciting way. He traces the movement "through bluegrass, the Jazz Age, early cartoons, writers of the Beat Generation and contemporarily, hip-hop combined with cyber culture, he shows the factors that gave these trends their energy and the reasons why many of these are relevant to this day in forming generations of hipsters for tomorrow."[8] The youth seeking to identify themselves as different from their parents can embrace and further mutate these new forms of expression and the status quo can scratch their heads in either bewilderment or consternation. "Technology doesn't necessarily create hip, but it accelerates its frequency and amplifies its wavelength."[9]

These days *hipsters* are so hip that they refuse to be called so and strongly believe that anyone who identifies with this category is `*hip-o-critical*`. With this `*hiperstification*` process, today hipsters come in all shapes and political persuasions. Age does not define them either. Not everyone who is hip is young (teenager), and not everyone who is young is hip. It has become a mentality a certain approach to life in all layers of society. Today we witness the dawn of a modern *hipsterdom* easily available at all corners of the world. What used to be representative of subculture has become mainstream, and its fighters can be met everywhere, from New York to Paris, from Bucharest to Budapest, from Cluj to Tg. Mures. It is no longer the tag of a discreet circle of people, understood only by members."Eventually the hip sensibility was adopted by bigger and bigger circles until it boomeranged back to the small towns, Leland says. "Now there's no lag time. Those syntheses and exchanges take place not in physical spaces but

[6] Thorne, Tony, 2014, Dictionary of Contemporary Slang, on http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hipster_%28contemporary_subculture%29, accessed on 28.05.17.
[7] http://www.npr.org/2011/11/16/142387490/the-hipsterfication-of-america.
[8] John Leland, *Hip: The History*, Harper Collins Publishers, New York, 2005, p.18.
[9] http://www.amazon.com/Hip-The-History-John-Leland/dp/0060528184#reader_0060528184, accessed on 28.04.17.



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metaphorical ones — in cyberspace, in the marketplace, in the media. So stuff that looks like hip is everywhere"[10]

Today we are constantly committed to the discovery, exploration and invention/re-invention of the `Other`. We witness "a multitude of differences. We are the ones who offer virtual encounters, we use and abuse of interfacing and interactivity. Once we get beyond the mirror of alienation (beyond the mirror stage that was the joy of our childhood), structural differences multiply ad infinitum – in fashion, in morality, in culture."[11] Raw otherness, difficult otherness – the otherness of nationality, race, mental sanity, of economic status – haveceased to exist. Otherness, similar to everything else, has fallen into the category of consumerism, the laws of a universal market, which, if boken down, is the law of demand and supply. Alterity has become a rarity, an exotic commodity, thus it is worth extremely much on a social and psychological hierarchy of values. No wonder, our students (and we too) struggle so much to simulate the uniqueness of the Other, of the different. "A veritable obsession with ecology extends from Indian reservations to house-hold pets (otherness degree zero!) – not to mention the other of "the other scene", or the other of the unconscious (our last symbolic capital, and one we had better look after, because reserves are not limitless). Our sources of otherness are indeed running out; we have exhausted the Other as raw material. (According to Claude Gilbert, we are so desperate that we go digging through the rubble of earthquakes and catastrophes.)"[12]

In the past, anything that belonged to the Other was rejected, hated. In the meantime, we grew to be attracted in a way to the exotic in the Other, to the unknown that it represented. Slowly, Western societies started to be obsessed with the notion and phenomenon of alterity, the individual's highest goal has become to be different, to be the Other. "Consequently the other is all of a sudden no longer there to be exterminated, hated, rejected or seduced, but instead to be understood, liberated, coddled, recognized. In addition to the Rights of Man, we now also need the Rights of the Other. In a way we already have these, in the shape of a universal Right to be Different. For the orgy is also an orgy of political and psychological comprehension of the other – even to the point of resurrecting the other in places where the other is no longer to be found. Where the Other was, there has the Same come to be."[13] Today's society has a nightmare of being mediocre. People would do almost anything in order to avoid the impression of mediocrity. For us, life has become too short to live it in mediocrity. Hipsters feel this urge to differ, conveying the message of difference through old-fashioned glasses, intelligent quotes from difficult literature and unique clothing, all advertized on the Internet, captions to portraits usually translated into at least two languages in our culture. If the original caption/ hashtag was in Hungarian, for example, it will also appear in Romanian and/or in english. The hipster would rather die than live in constant mediocrity, and pities all those who do not dare to seize the opportunity to differ. This yearning for something else, something Other than the usual manifests itself as a drama in students' life, a psychologcal struggle. „And where there is no longer anything, there the Other must come to be. We are no longer living the drama of otherness. We are living the psychodrama of otherness, just as we are living the psychodrama of "sociality", the psycho-drama of sexuality, the psychodrama of the body – and the melodrama of all the above, courtesy of analytic metadiscourses. Otherness has become socio-dramatic, semio-dramatic, melodramatic."[14]

[10] http://www.npr.org/2011/11/16/142387490/the-hipsterfication-of-america, accessed on 28.04.17.
[11] http://www.ubishops.ca/baudrillardstudies/vol3_1/baudrillard2.htm, accessed on 29.04.17.
[12] idem
[13] ibidem
[14] http://www.ubishops.ca/baudrillardstudies/vol3_1/baudrillard2.htm, accessed on 29.04.15.



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In our case, *hipster* students are a subculture of people who are already dominant. They are those people who do not want to be grouped or classified, the artist student, the starving but pub-fan graduate highschool student, the neo-bohemian, the vegan, the animal rights activist, the bicyclist, the skater- they are going to become the future blue – collar generation, however, they are post-racial, identifying the past as ideal and the present as repulsive, they align themselves with rebel subcultures and with dominant classes, grabbing whatever is likable from the two, making their own unique identity which exoticises otherness instead of despising it.

Diversity can mean a process of coordinated shift of focus. However, what could present itself as a chaotic element in this orderly transaction of points of view? What is the thing that we cannot transmit to others? These are relevant questions as divergence and variety do not often have a place in the human rules of interaction., founded on a common understanding of how one should behave when in contact with other specimens of mankind. The correct use of *difference* proves to be a utopia- it is proven by racist attitudes themselves, but also movements of an anti-racist humanitarian and tolerant nature as by drawing our attention upon differences and constantly underlying their values, they stimulate and popularize them. ”Humanitarian ecumenism, the ecumenism of differences, is in a *cul-de-sac:* the *cul-de-sac* of the concept of the universal itself. The most recent illustration of this, in France, was the brouhaha over the wearing of headscarves for religious reasons by North African schoolgirls. All the rational arguments mustered in this connection turned out to be nothing but hypocritical attempts to get rid of the simple fact that no solution is to be found in any moral or political theory of difference. It is difference itself that is a reversible illusion. We are the ones who brought difference to the four corners of the earth: that it should now be returned to us in unrecognizable, Islamic, fundamentalist and irreducible forms is no bad thing.”[15]

Our magnanimous and philantropic ’understanding’ and tolerating difference is matched by our serious attempts at hiding the antipathy we feel towards it, ending in a fiasco of condescendence. From my point of view, experiences of otherness softened and sweetened by slogans like ”I respect the fact that you are different from me” mean in fact that inhabitants of third world countries or gay people or hipsters or those living in extreme poverty own one thing and that one thing is the only thing left to them: their Otherness, marked by clothing, habits, traditions, music and culture in a wider sense. Nothing could be more distasteful in its condescendence than this attitude of ’understanding’, which exemplifies the most profound form of incomprehension– one that has become hilarious as it is haughty and contemptuous of the differentness of other people.

”Other cultures, meanwhile, have never laid claim to universality. Nor did they ever claim to be different – until difference was forcibly injected into them as part of a sort of cultural opium war. They live on the basis of their own singularity, their own exceptionality, on the irreducibility of their own rites and values. They find no comfort in the lethal illusion that all differences can be reconciled – an illusion that for them spells only annihilation. To master the universal symbols of otherness and difference is to master the world. Those who conceptualize difference are anthropologically superior – naturally, because it is they who invented anthropology. And they have all the rights, because rights, too, are their invention. Those who do not conceptualize difference, who do not play the game of difference, must be exterminated. The Indians of America, when the Spanish landed, are a case in point. They understood nothing about difference; they inhabited radical otherness. (The Spaniards were not different in their eyes: they were simply gods, and that was that.) This is the reason for the fury with which the Spaniards set about destroying

[15] Jean Baudrillard, The Transparency of Evil: Essays On Extreme Phenomena (c 1990). Translated by James Benedict. New York: Verso, 1993:124-138., at http://www.ubishops.ca/baudrillardstudies/vol3_1/baudrillard2.htm, 29.04.17.



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these peoples, a fury for which there was no religious justification, nor economic justification, nor any other kind of justification, except for the fact that the Indians were guilty of an absolute crime: their failure to understand difference. When they found themselves obliged to become part of an otherness no longer radical, but negotiable under the aegis of the universal concept, they preferred mass self-immolation-whence the fervour with which they, for their part, allowed themselves to die: a counterpart to the Spaniards' mad urge to kill. The Indians' strange collusion in their own extermination represented their only way of keeping the secret of otherness."[16] It is by no means clear that the other exists for everyone. Does the other exist for the Savage or the Primitive? Some relationships are asymmetrical: the one may be the other for the other without this implying that the other is the other for the one. I may be other for him although he is not the other for me. At the English class, we are trying to contribute to the taming of this otherness, domesticating idioms and phrasal verbs through the process of assisted translation exercises, and contributing to their globalization carefully. These idiomatic phenomena cause students to be reluctant when it comes to actually using them, however, the moment they manage to grasp the actual meaning of these phrases, they will willingly use them.

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