THE TRANSLATOR'S VOICE(S)

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Abstract: The paper analyses the hypothesis of the existence of a transparent and audible translator's voice in the translated text. The translator's voice, which is one of the voices that can be detected in translated narrative discourse, is clearly identified in paratexts, which are particularly rich in contemporary retranslations of children's literature. It can also be perceived, to a lesser or greater extent, in the translated text, through various intrusions, distortions, tone and register shifts, all of which are an index of the translator's style, text orientation and translation norms.

Keywords: children's literature, retranslation, text orientation, translator's voice, norms.

Introduction

In this paper, we investigate the concept of the translator's voice, defined as the discursive presence of the translator in the text (Hermans, 1996), taking as a case study the translation of children's literature. It is a particularly rich corpus, as books for children are constantly retranslated in different historical, social and economic contexts. Our aim is to see to what extent the translator's presence can be identified in the translated text as a distinct narrative voice and whether it is more audible in retranslations. Children's books are a real challenge for the translator, as, in the case of texts such as tales, the translator reshapes the different original narrative voices and narrative perspective, putting his/her stylistic imprint on it.

Recent research in Translation Studies has suggested that the translator's voice is more clearly heard in subsequent retranslations than in first translations. Retranslation appears to be directly related to the translator's presence, as 20th century retranslators seem to be more audible than previous translators (Monti 2011, 21). Retranslated books for children are an interesting case from this point of view as they address different audiences and respond to different linguistic and translation norms. In retranslations, textual and narrative structures are redesigned, recreated and modernized according to the translators' and/or the publishers' profile.

In the first part of our paper, we discuss the concepts of *voice* and *retranslation*. Then, we outline the general peculiarities of children's literature. By the comparison of the source text with the target text, it can be shown that the various changes, distortions and interferences lead to the emergence of the translator's voice in the text.

1. The translator's voice in translated narrative

The concept of *voice* is generally used in narratology to define the narrator's presence in the text. But, as Theo Hermans and Giuliana Schiavi showed in 1996, the various existing models of narrative communication do not distinguish between original narratives and translated ones, thus overlooking the translator's presence in narrative discourse. Translated

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narratives obviously differ from original ones, and therefore the translator's presence must be postulated in the translated text, as a counterpart of the author or of the narrator.

The translator's imprint on his/her text has been defined in Translation Studies as the translator's *voice* (Hermans 1996, Schiavi 1996, O'Sullivan 2003), *profile* (Assis Rosa 2008), *point of view* or *style* (Baker 2000, Bosseaux 2007, Munday 2008).

For Giuliana Schiavi (1996), new entities enter a translated text and the translator's voice can be partly considered as standing for the author's and partly autonomous. Theo Hermans (1996, 27) argues that "translated narrative discourse always implies more than one voice in the text, more than one discursive presence". Such a voice can be clearly manifest or merely "insinuated" into the text. Theo Hermans enumerates and analyses a series of cases where this presence manifests itself, even in the absence of a comparison with the source text. The first, namely the "text's orientation towards an Implied Reader" (1996, 28), is particularly important for the translation of children's books, especially in the case of texts which address more than one audience. (e.g. Perrault's tales).

Whereas Theo Hermans is mainly concerned with explicit instances of the translator's discursive presence, Jeremy Munday (2007) and Charlotte Bosseaux (2007) relate the translator's voice to the complex issue of style. Shifts in linguistic style are seen by Jeremy Munday as more interesting marks of the translator's voice than the manifest traces of the translator's presence such as those explained by Theo Hermans, because they are more subtle. In his discussion of the translator's discursive presence, voice and style, Jeremy Munday metaphorically associates style with the "linguistic fingerprint of an individual translator" (2007, 7), seeking to find what justifies the variation between "translators working in related geographical, historical and social settings".

Charlotte Bosseaux (2007), who is primarily concerned with point of view in translation, defines the translator's style as "the manner of expression or the characteristic use of language that is typical of a translator" (2007, 23).

The translator's voice has specific peculiarities in children's literature; these are explained by Emer O'Sullivan (2003) in connection with the asymmetrical communication structure specific to children's books – an adult writes for children, often addressing children and adults simultaneously. Studies of retranslations and re-editions of such texts in different cultures have underlined the importance of text orientation towards a certain type of addressee, as tales can be differently directed in translation (Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère 2011).

When analysing children's literature in translation, aspects like the sophistication of narrative structures, as well as the ambivalent audience allow the identification of the translator' voice in the translated text.

2. Retranslation

Retranslating is a response to the permanent need for updating translated texts for new linguistic and cultural requirements. It is a phenomenon which characterizes most literary systems. *Retranslation* – a new translation of a book already translated in the same target language (Chevrel, 2010, 11) – has been approached in various ways by Translation Studies scholars. The best-known theoretical model is the *Retranslation Hypothesis* (Berman 1984, 1990, Chesterman 1998, 2000). According to this hypothesis, the first translations are target-

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oriented, whereas retranslations are generally closer to the source text. For Antoine Berman (1984, 281), retranslations are necessary as translations "age" and need linguistic updating; moreover, they bring a significant improvement if compared to previous translations.

Several subsequent studies have shown that time is rarely the only factor at stake in retranslation. For Anthony Pym (1998), (re)translating phenomena can only be explained by multiple cause models. According to him, a distinction should be made between active and passive retranslations. Whereas active retranslations share the same cultural context, the passive ones are separated by wide expanses of time or space and have no influence on each other. If the comparison between passive retranslations gives necessary information about historical changes in the target culture, that of active retranslations locates causes to the translator, being therefore "better positioned to yield insights into the nature and workings of translation itself" (Pym 1998, 83).

The necessity of a multiple causation model has been underlined in more recent studies based on empirical data from various cultures and literary genres; such studies bring interesting quantitative and qualitative results which show the dynamics of retranslation and the importance of the translator's visibility in the case of European literature. Isabelle Desmidt (2009) highlights how retranslations are not always source-oriented. In the case of children's literature, literary, pedagogical and economical norms are often more important than an allegiance to the original. Outi Paloposki and Kaisa Koskinen (2010, 30) also argue that "ageing" does not always explain retranslation (2010, 30) and suggest that more emphasis should be placed on translators and editors in the analysis of retranslation and revision as forms of text reprocessing. Yves Gambier discusses, in his turn, the numerous causes which prompt retranslating, in addition to or regardless of "ageing". These include context and ideological constraints, editorial policy and the translator's subjectivity (Gambier, in Monti and Schnyder 2011).

Children's books in translation constitute a corpus which brings evidence in favour of a multi-causal model for retranslation. Considered diachronically and synchronically, it is obvious that not all children's books are retranslated because texts need updating or improvement in terms of accuracy or closeness to the original. Translating styles, specific target cultural contexts and editorial issues count among the important factors that prompt retranslation. There are both passive retranslations, separated by wide expanses of time, and active ones, that coexist and share the same culture or generation.

3. Translating and Retranslating Children's Literature

Children's literature represents a special case of literary translation in Translation Studies as it has been emphasized by scholars like Georges Mounin, Antoine Berman or Katharina Reiss. It has given rise to a growing number of studies in the past decades: Reinbert Tabbert shows in his survey of the various approaches to the translation of children's literature that text-specific items, age-specific addressees, changing norms and the function of the translation count among the main analyzed aspects (2002: 303). Adaptation is considered by Katharina Reiss as the best solution for this type of translation (2002: 130) as texts must be translated according to the reader's age. Abridgement, omission, simplification, register shift are therefore accepted as long as they respond to the main function of such texts, namely respect for the young reader (2002: 131). Riitta Oittinen (2000) also argues that adaptation is

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acceptable and even justified when translating children's literature, as it helps young readers understand the message; she suggests at the same time that more emphasis should be set on the translator, who should be more visible, as texts "do not function without human beings":

> The translator's centered approach to the study of translation differs sharply from older, more traditional approaches that are focused on abstract structures of equivalence, "matches", or "fidelities" between texts (in words). Thus, I do not agree with views that see translation as a mechanistic act – pertaining to texts as such, to the author's intentions and issue of language. In this way, the translator's action is relegated to obscurity, if not invisibility (2000: 3).

The translator's visibility supposes an orientation of the translator towards the reader:

> My intention is to demonstrate how the whole situation of translation takes precedence over any efforts to discover and reproduce the original author's intentions as a given. Rather than the authority of the author, I focus special attention on the intentions of the readers of a book in translation, both the translator and the target-language readers (2000: 3).

In the author's opinion, children's books are dialogical texts; their translation is a negotiable, non-authoritative communication between adults and children; as we will see, emphasis on this special type of communication is a strategic device in translated tales.

Several important aspects that shed light on the peculiarities of children's books translation and are particularly useful for the study of the translator's voice in a translated tale are treated in the 2003 special issue of *Meta* coordinated by Riita Oittinen. Text orientation is responsible for the various translating strategies adopted in children's literature translation. In her study of the translation of proper names in *Alice in Wonderland*, a double-address text, Christiane Nord (2003) states that "it would be interesting to see whether a particular strategy correlates with addressee-orientation. […] we have to look at the form of publication to find out whether a translation is directed at children or adults ». For Emer O'Sullivan (2003), the main difficulty in translating children's literature arises out of the peculiarities of the asymmetrical communication situation: an adult writes for children, often addressing children and adults simultaneously. Translators redesign textual and narrative structures for different audiences. The translator's voice on the narrative level is thus a crucial aspect that the analysis of the translated tale should account for, especially when complicated narrative structures are at stake.

The translator is not the only actor in the complex process of children's literature translation: the publisher has a major role, as Cecilia Alvstad emphasizes in her analysis of translated and non-translated children's books in Argentina, because he is "one of the most important mediators between the source text and the recipient of the translation" (2003). The publisher's profile is one of the factors that intervene and direct text-orientation in a tale and the translator's narrative presence. Translating tales may bring about a creative modernizing of the text, as Sandra L. Beckett demonstrates in her analysis of the different English versions of *Little Red-Riding Hood*: a tale can be translated through *retelling* it into an "imaged

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language", which is particularly significant for contemporary contexts, when the addressees are the children of the "video-sphere" (Perrot, 2011: 11).

Children's literature seems to count among the type of texts most often *re*translated. Starting from Antoine Berman's and Anthony Pym's pioneering studies, *retranslation*, in the sense of a new translation of a book already translated in the same target language (Yves Chevrel, 2010: 11) is a phenomenon to which Translation Studies scholars have shown a growing interest lately, several approaches and theoretical models being suggested.

Retranslations reflect changing linguistic and translational norms from one epoch to another, as Miryam Du-Nour shows in her study on children's literature (1995). The voice of the translator in tales is the echo of the norms that underlie the literary and more generally cultural context as well as the translating strategies specific to a certain period.

For Anthony Pym (1998), retranslations are either active or passive and they must be clearly distinguished from re-editing: "Whereas re-edition would tend to reinforce the validity of the previous translation, retranslation strongly challenges that validity, introducing a marked negativity into the relationship at the same time as it affirms the desire to bring a particular text closer". He shows that explanation of (re)translating phenomena leads to a multiple cause-model, as "for every translation that we might want to explain in terms of causation there are at least four possible causes at work, any one of which might be dominant" (1998: 158).

Antoine Berman's Retranslation Hypothesis is discussed by Outi Paloposki and Kaisa Koskinen who argue that ageing is rarely the only factor at stake, underlying the importance of the individual commissioners and actors: translators and editors. Moreover, as far as the faithfulness to the original is concerned, they sustain, bringing evidence from various case studies that: "the strong version of the retranslation hypothesis, implying that later translations are closer to the original or better than an earlier translation (and/or substituting earlier translation), is not sufficient alone to cover the field of retranslations" (2010: 33).

The multiple causation model is developed in a recent study by Yves Gambier (2011), who shows in his turn that retranslations do not necessarily relate to previous versions of the original and that there are numerous other causes which prompt retranslating, in addition to or regardless of ageing. Context and ideological constraints, editorial policy, the translator's subjectivity are particularly relevant for the literary genre that we are interested in, namely tales.

4. The Translator's Voice in the Retranslated Text for Children

Retranslating is quantitatively and qualitatively present in most literary systems. It is one of the conclusions drawn by Enrico Monti and Peter Schnyder on the basis of a series of corpus studies on European literature (2011). Retranslations appear to have more "visibility" on behalf of the paratextual elements and 20th century retranslators seem to be more audible than previous translators (Enrico Monti, 2011: 21).

Children's literature is particularly interesting from this respect. Tales can be differently directed in retranslations: Martine Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère insists on the idea of re-orientating texts towards children with respect to two of *Cinderella's* translations into English (2011). Contextual constraints seem to justify a similar tendency in recent retranslations of Charles Perrault's tales into Romanian.

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On the basis of a series of corpus studies which we have recently undergone in the field of children's literature translated from French into Romanian, we can argue that the retranslation of children's literature brings significant changes on both the textual and narrative levels. A translator-centered approach is, in our opinion, the most suitable frame within which such changes might be understood.

A significant number of translators mark their presence overtly, either by the explicit choice of a translatorial style, or by various "discordances" that are manifest throughout the text. Cultural embedding of the text distinguishes older and newer translations: if localization is more often used in old translations, recent retranslations present interferences or recreations of a universe that might be more familiar to the young reader.

Text-orientation towards a particular type of reader remains a major index of the translator's voice in children's books. Whereas ambivalent audience is preserved in some of the older translations, recent retranslations favor a clearly child-orientated text, with two distinct tendencies: educating the young reader and building a dialogical relationship. The translating voice is stronger in retranslations oriented towards the young reader and emerges through various strategies like shifts or distortions in tone or register, additions, explicitations, adaptations or omissions of problematic episodes or adult-intended comments. Re-orientation towards children also affects the paratextual level: a significant number of translators make use of explanatory notes, prefaces and original postfaces allow the translator overtly explain his/ her strategy[1].

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