AN OVERVIEW OF TRANSLATION (STUDIES) METHODOLOGY IN ROMANIA

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Abstract : This paper purports to account for the methodology required by translation and its discipline, namely Translation Studies (TS) in our country. For this purpose, we will have in view works published by translation theorists and practitioners from the communist period when the first considerations on translation (studies) started to enjoy book length treatment due to Leon Levițchi's Îndrumar pentru traducătorii din limba engleză în limba română/ Guidelines for Translators from English into Romanian (1975) or the proceedings of the First Colloquium on Literature and Translation (1981), to present day. Thus, as far as the post-communist period is concerned, we will discuss Translation (Studies) considerations on methodology as tackled by Andrei Bantaș and Elena Croitoru (1998), Ioana Adriana Bălăcescu (2008) or Rodica Dimitriu (2002, 2006) in their works. Our purpose is to distinguish original elements of the Romanian Translation Studies discourse on methodology during communism and post-communism and see whether the totalitarian regime and its instruments (ideology, censorship) had any say in the works published during the former period.

Keywords: Translation Studies discourse, translation methodology, communist and post-communist Romania, Romanian translation (studies), ideology.

Introduction

According to studies in translation history, reflections on translation have been made from the first significant writings in the world, i.e. ever since Herodotus and Cicero [1]. The same holds true for our country if we were to recall deacon Coresi's considerations on the importance of translation in the first work (he) rendered into Romanian, i.e. *Întrebare creștinească/ The Christian Inquiry* (1559); thus, in the preface he argued that translating the work was important so that "all people find out who Romanians are as Christians, as Saint Paul the apostle speaks… This is because five words in Romanian that can be understood by the people are better than ten thousand words in a foreign language that cannot" [*apud* 2]. Further on, debates on the legitimacy of translation rose in the 19th century when I. Heliade Rădulescu claimed that their purpose was "to tame habits, to eliminate prejudice, to teach man how to live in peace and serenity with others, to point out duties for everyone and to show man greatness (…) good translations enrich and ennoble the language by means of speech and embellishments of reputed foreign authors" [quoted in 3], as opposed to Kogălniceanu who, in his 'traductionitis' [*apud* 4] did not so much oppose translations, as rejected the useless ones from cheap novels.

However, as far as translation methodology is concerned, precepts on how translations should be carried out have started to come out since the middle of the 19th century, when Gheorghe Bariț, in the periodical written in Cyrillic alphabet he directed, *Foaie pentru inimă,*

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minte şi literatură/ Paper for the Heart, Mind and Literature rose against bad translations and gave guidelines on how good translations should be made [*apud* 5]. Moreover, as mentioned in our previous research on the Romanian discourse on translation in periodicals [6], there were also debates at the beginning of the 20th century between Romanian philologists such as Camil Petrescu who was in favour of free, literal translations, unlike Vianu that advocated a free style and supported adaptations (as in the case of Murnu's translation from Homer that led to the debate in the first place). With respect to method, the translator should be careful for his work to be more than a transposition between words from one language into another; (s)he should achieve the mirroring of one culture and civilisation into another, as Gabriel Țepelea claimed when discussing Ortega y Gasset's *The Misery and Splendour of Translation* [6, *ibidem*]. Considerations on the importance and quality of translations of the inter-war period are many, most of them published in the periodicals of the time; however, they have only started to receive book-length treatment since the communist years (due to Leon Levițchi's *Îndrumar pentru traducătorii din limba engleză în limba română/ Guidelines for Translators from English into Romanian*, 1975 Gelu Ionescu's *Orizontul traducerii/ The Horizon of Translation*, 1981 or Ioan Kohn's *Virtuțile compensatorii ale limbii române în traducere/ Compensatory Virtues of Romanian in Translation*, 1983). This probably owes to the establishment of the discipline of Translation Studies in the 1950s and the precepts of the Translator's Charter set at Dubrovnik in 1963. As far as the situation of Romania is concerned, the new regime witnessed the foundation of state publishing houses with coherent translation policies and world literature series (a concept also coined during the period), the formation of the most important translators and philologists from English (Andrei Bantaș, Leon Levițchi, Petre Solomon, Frida Papadache, etc.) and the set-up of reviews meant to deal with the reception of world literature (via translation), i.e. *România literară/ Literary Romania* and *Secolul XX/ The XXth Century* [7, *passim*]. Against this background, it was only natural for the Romanian discourse on translation to flourish during the communist years and for its methodology to refine.

Material and method

For the purpose of our study, i.e. to account for the methodology in the Romanian discourse on translation (studies) during the (post)communist years, we used the 'material' published ever since the 70s, namely TS courses, workbooks, conference proceedings such as the ones mentioned above by Leon Levițchi (1975) Gelu Ionescu (1981) or Ioan Kohn (1983) for the communist period. We also included the proceedings of the First Colloquium on Literature and Translation (1981) and some of the studies and textbooks that enjoyed book-length treatment after 1989 such as Rodica Dimitriu's *Theories and Practice of Translation* (2002) or *The Cultural Turn in Translation Studies* (2006), Andrei Bantaș and Elena Croitoru's *Didactica traducerii/ Didactics of Translation* (1998) or Ioana Adriana Bălăcescu's *Traduction: didactique et créativité* (2008).

Our methods draw on research methodologies in TS ranging from basic principles such as the ones outlined by Jenny Williams and Andrew Chesterman in *The Map: A Beginner's Guide to*

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Doing Research in Translation Studies (2002) to the more recent and elaborate considerations of Gabriela Saldanha and Sharon O'Brien in *Research Methodologies in Translation Studies* (2014). We are also indebted to the discourse analysis in a TS related context, perhaps best rendered by Christina Schäffner in *The Role of Discourse Analysis for Translation and in Translator Training* (2002). Thus, Williams and Chesterman discuss classic TS areas such as research pertaining to text analysis and translation, translation quality assessment, genre translation, multimedia translation, translation and technology, translation history, translation ethics, terminology and glossaries, interpreting, the translation process, translator training and the translation profession. They also agree on the fact that theory and practice are intertwined and on relevant research questions to be asked and answered in empirical (be it naturalistic or experimental) or applied research. Methodology should, therefore account for all these aspects and its assessment would definitely need to consider explicitness, evidence, critical attitude, statistics, appropriate theory, criteria for data selection, and implications. [8] However, as Saldanha and O'Brien argue in the volume they co-authored, since *The Map* new methods have been applied in TS such as "keystroke logging, eye tracking, internet-mediated research, as well as an increased focus on sociological and ethnographic approaches to research and on research ethics" [9]; hence the focus on specific methodologies which describe in detail when and how to apply them with examples from TS research. The two scholars agree that due to its interdisciplinary character, TS combines developments from applied linguistics, literary criticism, social science, psychology and cultural studies and requires various methodologies that need combining to 'cross-fertilize' the field. Focusing more on empirical than conceptual research, the scholars analyse "the texts that are the product of translation, the translation process, the participants involved in that process and the context in which translations are produced and received" [9] with the inevitable overlap between these features of translation. They draw on Chesterman and the three types of models he distinguished, namely the comparative ones "which aim to discover language-pair translation rules, language-system contrasts, or translation product universals (also known as features of translation); process models, which represent change (from state A to state B) over a time interval (although the process is not necessarily linear) and allow us to understand decision-making in translation and cognitive factors influencing this process; and causal models, which aim to explain why translations are the way they are by reference to three dimensions of causation: the translator's cognition (translator's knowledge, attitude, identity, skills), the translation event (translator's brief, payment, deadlines) and the socio-cultural factors (ideology, censorship, cultural traditions, audience)" [9, *ibidem*]. Saldanha and O' Brien also refer to Marco's four (non-exhaustive) models of research in TS: textual-descriptivist, cognitive, culturalist and sociological, proposed in 2009, admitting that his model brings closer research methods and theoretical approaches; yet, they argue for more flexibility to encourage creativity and the combination of theories and methods.

Schäffner's work is the result of the seminars held at Aaston University in November 2000 at Aarhus School of Business, Denmark. The book is a collection of essays tackling the debate between Trosborg and other TS scholars (including Rodica Dimitriu for Romania). The

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author's approach is eclectic as she found inspiration in the theory of speech acts, text types and semantics, not to mention Halliday's studies on register, Reiss' Skopos theory or Christiane Nord's functionalism in TS. Her purpose was for students to deepen their understanding of TS-related phenomena which would also help them in their training as future translation professionals. The general conclusion reached by the specialists invited to the debate was towards the improvement of Skopos theory, the training of students that should be more sensitive with respect to translation issues and reflect on them more. The Romanian TS scholar Rodica Dimitriu also brings into play the problems encountered by translators in their job; thus, they mainly work under pressure in an extremely stressful environment and the need to cope with emotional stress [10].

Results and Discussion

A genuine methodology on translating (from English into Romanian) is perhaps best outlined by Leon Levițchi's *Îndrumar pentru traducătorii din limba engleză în limba română/ Guidelines for Translators from English into Romanian* (1975). The author pleads for the importance of a methodology and translation theory as a subordinate product of applied linguistics which was still insufficiently developed at that time (despite the attempts made by E. Cary or J.C. Catford at the era). [11] As mentioned in our previous research, his "guidelines refer to denotation (and the use of monolingual and bilingual dictionaries), vocabulary (homonymy, polysemy, false friends, etc.), grammar (anaphora and cataphora, verbs, sequence of tenses), figures of speech (allegory, allusion, ambiguity, ellipsis, pun, etc.), stress, intonation, repetition, rhyme, modality, connotation, coherence and style. The importance of parallel texts is also acknowledged and his bibliography on translation contains both Western (Benjamin Walter, Catford, Cartledge, Savory) and Eastern criticism (Fedorov and Aristov)." [12] His claims are for the 'good paraphrase', a work that needs to achieve the value of the original, to be as convincing as the latter for the target text reader. Among the peripheral forms of translation, Levițchi acknowledges *metaphrase* which 'spoils' the target language but its usefulness for the explanation of forms or difficult sentences cannot be denied. It can be accepted only accompanied by a finished version ('the good paraphrase') for didactic purposes. The *summary* is only justified by the lack of time which would have been incurred by a complete translation and is mostly employed by interpreters and in subtitling. *Adaptation* or *imitation* is so different from translation that it becomes a simple *pretext* for creation and despite its originality, it is inadequate when considered as translation. Last but not least, *selective translation* is incomplete, yet correct (as opposed to the metaphrase) and useful in teaching [11, *passim*]. In the same linguistic stance, pleading for the compensatory value of the target language (TL) in translation and rising against the postulate of untranslatability, in *Virtuțile compensatorii ale limbii române în traducere/ Compensatory Virtues of Romanian in Translation* (1983), Kohn argues that as far as practice is concerned, the difficulties and limits of translation should be revealed, the probabilities of failure (recurrence and degree of untranslatability), determined and translatability scientifically proved. [13] A translation methodology would thus know how to appreciate the stylistic function fulfilled

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by syntactic structures in various texts; provide information on the author's option for a certain syntactic structure and effect which allow the translator to obtain a similar effect in the TL and the establishment, via the restrictions of selection, the lexical combination norms and the stylistic values of deviations from it. Moreover, the methods of modern linguistics offer the possibility of objectivizing and thoroughly researching the process of translation in all its stages. [*ibidem*]

With respect to methodology, in the proceedings of the *First Colloquium on Literature and Translation* (1981), Romanian philologists such as Leon Levițchi argue that translations need to be complete (as in the case of the critical Romanian editions of Shakespeare's works which came out at 'Univers' Publishing House during the communist years) and direct (and indirect ones via a third language are only accepted as auxiliary material). Moreover, prose should be rendered by prose and verse by verse, translators should not add or omit anything so as not to overstrain or understrain their readers, respectively. The ultimate aim would be for the translation to be read as the original, i.e. achieve the same effect as the source text and be as 'communicative' and 'connotative' as possible. Translators should only translate works they are suited for, that is have 'affinities' with the original work and its author [14].

At this stage it is also important to mention that the discourse on translation (studies) during the communist period was not influenced by the ideology of the time, except for a short remark in the pages of the *First Colloquium on Literature and Translation* (1981) which acknowledged the importance of the regime in the boost of good translations on the market as opposed to the previous period, i.e. the inter-war years. In fact, it was admitted that Ceaușescu himself was for the enrichment of the Romanian language and culture by translations from important authors [14]. Certainly, Kohn drew on Marxist linguistics and translation practice when pleading for the legitimacy of translation, rising against untranslatability and arguing for the compensatory values of the target language in translation.

After 1989 TS courses such as Bantaș and Croitoru's 1998 one, *Didactica traducerii/ Didactics of Translation* overview the international approaches in the field tackling issues such as the translator and his/her relation with the writer, (translation and) interpretation, the concept of equivalence in translation, the translatability of a text, language variations, register, English teaching and translation, translation competency, history of translations in Romania, simultaneous and consecutive interpreting and hypotheses on the translation of poetry. The authors reach commonsensical conclusions such as the fact that with respect to a general methodology, translation needs to consider the linguistic, semantic and pragmatic context, not to mention the relevant situational or cultural ones; moreover, translation is not the simple rendering of a source language text in a target language one for the surface structure sense of the two to be approximate, this is an old fashioned and narrow conception only emphasizing syntax. There is no absolute translatability or untranslatability, neither loss, nor gain; in case the former occurs, it should be compensated. The translator's activity is deemed to be carried out in three stages: the analysis (the act of interpretation), transformation and the shaping of the translated text (the final product). A translator's methodology should aim at following the rhetorical purpose and functions of the text to translate to operate changes at the structural level and the establishment of

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equivalence in discourse and register are a means to set the limits of translatability. Regarding register, situation is equally important, as the special the latter, the more restricted the range of options for the former. The two authors also give concrete methodological suggestions for the training of (Romanian) translators, in general and interpreters, in particular: improving specialized linguistic competence, becoming aware that there are possible solutions for most methodological and syntactic difficulties, acknowledging synonymy and making the best choice according to context, clarity and preciseness of expression, knowledge of the field and practice, psychological training (as in the case of actors for interpreters) and self-control [15].

Courses intended for (future) translators and interpreters from French such as Ioana Adriana Bălăcescu's *Traduction: didactique et créativité* (2008) argue that, above all, a translation cannot be faithful and creativity comes through practice. The author is drawing on analytical and intuitive approaches for TS methodology: according to the former, the sense of the text to translate is within it and increasingly subtle methods of analysis only need developing to find it; the latter is tributary to hermeneutics whose creed is that the sense of a text 'springs' from it in a fusion of horizons based on the translator's experience. Moreover, The TS scholar stresses the importance of needs analysis for creativity which is close to faithfulness in translation and the fact that any methodology should consider it in the case of the translator. Discussing corpora consisting of testimonies of translator poets and recordings of translating methodologies, Bălăcescu opts for retrospective methods of analysis and introspective ones, respectively, to show how the translator, in his/her struggle for fidelity, is creative and feels like betraying the source text [16].

Other courses such as Rodica Dimitriu's intended for translators from English include exercises in addition to theoretical overviews. For instance, after reading about the polysystem theory, students can be asked to make a list of 5-6 original literary works and then translations they consider as canonic in their literature and give reasons for their choices; of 3 original literary works/ translations that have not been canonized yet and the students regard as innovative and give reasons for which they think the respective works occupy a central position in their cultural and literary polysystems. Students could also come up with a historical period in their culture when translations occupied a primary position and say whether there were any literary genres imported through translations and what was/ were the 'larger' and 'older' culture(s) from which translations were undertaken. Last but not least, as theoretical methodology put in practice, students could argue in favour or against Itamar Even-Zohar's or Gideon Toury's claims; according to the former, "if translations hold a primary position in a culture, then translators feel less constrained to use target culture literary models and introduce innovation by exploring source text relations; if translations hold a secondary place, translators will attempt to conform to the norms and models of the target culture" [17] so students could be asked to "compare several source texts to their translations and decide whether they confirm or contradict Even-Zohar's terms" [*ibidem*]. According to the latter, "pseudo-translations are legitimate objects of study", therefore students should be able to (dis)agree with the statement and say what "would make an author claim that his/ her work is a translation rather than 'an original'? [*ibidem*], whether they

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know of any pseudo-translation in their culture/ other cultures that became popular among readers and give reasons for the popularity in question [*passim*].

Conclusion

Our study on Translation Studies methodologies in Romania is not exhaustive; however, it affords us to reach the conclusion that, from the communist period to present day, Romanian TS methodology is not very original, drawing on the international literature of the field for its claims. Thus, if the communist ideology is barely present in the studies published in volume during the period (the 1981 proceedings of the First Colloquium on Literature and Translation) or tributary to Marxist thought (Kohn's *Virtuțile compensatorii ale limbii române în traducere/ Compensatory Virtues of Romanian in Translation*, 1983), post-communist TS literature, in general and courses for the students' use, in particular give commonsensical precepts on the art of translation and interpreting (Bantaș and Croitoru, 1998), analyse corpora and set up the translator's needs analysis based on creativity (Bălăcescu, 2008) or include practical exercises to help students learn and apply theoretical concepts of important TS scholars at different times (such as the activities designed to help students master the Polysystem Theory in Dimitriu's 2006 course).

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