A CORRELATIVE APPROACH TO TRANSLATION

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1. BACKGROUND OF TRANSLATION THINKING

In the last forty years, much translation theory has been dominated by themes such as text typology, languages for special purposes, text linguistics and a rigid functionalism. It has been assumed, following Bühler, and then Nida, Paul Hartmann, Reiß and others, that all texts can be divided approximately into three categories viz. expressive, informative and persuasive (directive, operative), and that each category calls for a different translation method, the expressive leaning towards the authors, their language and their culture; the informative towards the readers and the facts; and the persuasive towards the readers who have to act after being informed. Further, it has been claimed that all translations have clear purposes and that all the translator has to do is to satisfy the employer or the readership.

Now all this has a certain general truth, but in many particular cases, it oversimplifies a complicated task. Translation does not move long on the level of text, discourse and the eternal dualisms of author and reader, source language and target language, home culture and away culture etc. After some initial generalizations, it is more concerned with slight adjustments and modifications, undertranslations that shirk metaphors («emphasize» for «highlight») and overtranslations that lack impact and are too longwinded («dark, blurred and sinister» for «murky»). More often translation is on the level of detail, where texts are relevant but remote, and 95% of the time meaning is determined by collocation, linguistic cotext and context of situation («work hard», «cut it fine») rather than the wider text.

For this reason, I am suggesting a different approach to translation which does not exclude my previous «semantic/ communicative» approach, but which can be made along the scale at any rank of the text, and by rank I mean a stretch of text ranging from its entire span though chapter, section, paragraph, sentence, clause (the most common unit of translation), group, collocation, word, morpheme to punctuation mark, as well as parallel linguistic features which cannot be integrated within the scale, but are subject to the same correlative constraints, such as word-order (the most neglected feature in translation («You should live so long», Bernard Malamud— is this Yiddish interference, or is the emphasis on «long»?), - metaphor, irony, («a Hamas triumph») standard language, cultural («sausage») and institutional terms («British Council»), eponyms (Croesus), symbols (Café des

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deux Magots), alliteration («slippery slope»), onomatopoeia («slither»), rhyme, hyperbole, quotations (the language of which is normally more important than their settings, and therefore are not the translator's responsibility to convert to normal social usage— thus «To be or not to be» is sacred, but «as Shakespeare wrote» can always be converted to «in Shakespeare's words» or «according to Shakespeare»)... and many other translation topics.

2. CORRELATIONS

The more important the language of the original or source language text, the more closely it should be translated.

This is my first correlation, and I note first that this type of grammatical structure, which can be translated straight into all the languages that I know (German has two forms *je... desto* or *umso*; French has the two comparatives *plus... plus...* or *d'autant plus*), has no standard name. Quirk et al. (1994) calls it a «proportional clause»; Collins Cobuild English Grammar (1990) calls it «two contrasting comparatives». David Crystal (personally) has no ready term for it. I would define it as two parallel comparative clauses, both of which may be descriptive or evaluative, the second of which is consequent on the first. Correlations *(Wechselwirkungen)* are dynamic, incomplete and undogmatic. They all have converses which do not necessarily make sense («The younger I get, the wiser I become» does not follow from its converse), and which, like all grammatically correct sentences that are literally nonsense, can only make sense if understood figuratively. In principle they are recursive — a quadripartite correlation, which will be presented later, is more powerful than the typical bipartite correlation. Their dualism is conditional, in contrast to the conventional translation dualisms such as free/literal, words/sense, author/reader, source language/target language. (The basic dualism is softened by the medial forces which will be mentioned later.) Further, these increasing/decreasing correlations are free from absolutes such as the present obsessions of some translatologists with discourse, ideology, text, models, rhetoric, etc.

So if I now reconsider my first correlation, *The more important the language of the original, the more closely it should be translated*, I see it first as a conciliatory statement between the attitudes to translation of, on the one hand, Nabokov and Meschonnic, for whom most statements are «sacred» and personal, and, on the other, Nida, for whom language is sociolinguistic and communicative. «Important» and «close» are both relative terms (there are no absolutes in translation) and, together with «language», they have to be defined.

By «language» I mean the writing on the page, the signifier, the sound, the rhythm, the grammar, the words, the punctuation, the word-order, the physical marks, as opposed to the signified, the thought, the content, the ideas, the ideology, the underlying concepts, the sub-text, the hidden agenda.

The «importance» of the source language text depends on the specific occasion of the translation, viz. the client's requirements, though, at the time of translating, there may be no client. However, the language of some texts is inherently impor-

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tant: good poems (which use every resource of language), short stories, novels, serious plays, laws, official regulations, standard terms, proverbs, treaties, government statements of policy etc. Where there is a cultural barrier between the readers of the source language text and the likely readers of the translation, which may consist of an object («snap», biscuit or wrapped meal), or a custom («topping out», *terminer le gros œuvre*), the translator may have to gloss, usually outside the translation in a foot note, a foreword or an afterword. Any important cultural disparity, whether in the formula for instructions or the setting out of a report, can be converted to the target culture's formula, though there is often a «metacultural» (i. e. beyond culture) and more logical formulation which is a better solution.

I define «close translation» as the nearest to a word for word translation that retains the denotation and the connotation, the meaning and the use of the original morphemes («post»), words, groups, etc. of the original. I relate closeness to accuracy and equivalence, which are operational terms whose degree of completeness varies with the context. In any event at any rank, the translation of a non-literary text is likely to be more accurate than that of a literary text (which is why only poets, literary critics and philosophers have declared «translation» to be impossible, though they have not restricted the claim to literary translation, being blithely ignorant or contemptuous of any other type of translation. The reason for the purely relative inadequacy of literary translation is that whilst non-literary translation is at bottom concerned only with denotation («trees», «chairs»), though it uses connotation (meta-phor, alliteration, etc.) as an occasional resource, and takes in verifiable values and qualities (nice, trite, disparage — slippery words that require referential criteria), literary translation, being an allegory and a comment on rather than a description of reality, uses denotation as an instance and is centred in connotations: associations (a rose), symbols (a sword), metaphors (elbow one's way), sound (alliteration and onomatopoeia), rhythm, some of which are obscured by cultural barriers for the target readers. «Denotative» language (a path, a window), though it is translated literarily, is, like realism and naturalism, the negation of fiction, i. e. imaginative literature. The literary translator has more numerous factors to account for than a non-literary translator. However, the translation of an artistic short story, since its unit of traslation is smaller, is likely to appear closer than that of a newspaper article, where the unit of translation is the group or the clause. Compare, and I take the extracts as representative:

Me acordé de agosto, de esas siestas largas y pasmadas en que nos echábamos a morir bajo el peso de la hora.

I remembered August, and those long benumbed siestas in which we lay down to die beneath the weight of the hour

with:

Distançant largement tous les autres idiomes, la langue de Shakespeare dévore des parts de marché *scolaire avec une belle assurance.*

Shaskespeare's language is leaving all others far behind and achieving a confident increase in its shares on the academic market.

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The literary translation is close, but hardly covers the sound effect of the original; the non-literary translation is idiomatic and accounts for the full sense of the journalist's piece.

The aesthetic factor plays a significant part in any literary correlation: the more beautiful the language of a literary text, the more beautiful should be the language of the translation, but this can only be at the cost of the sense if the text is not serious; the less important the sense, the more it can give way in favour of the sound (Hence sound not sense would be the essence of a translation of Swinburne).

The degrees of closeness of a translation, textually, lexically and grammatically, can be briefly summarized.

Lexically, the closest translation procedure is transference (loan word), i.e. transferring an SL word into the TL translation, e.g. for English or Spanish, *ravioli*, *fjord* or *glasnost*. The meaning of the word at the time of transfer remains the same, and continues to be so in the majority of cases; only in the cases of a minority of frequently used «abstract» (i.e. mental) adjectives and their related word-classes, the notorious «false friends» or *faux amis*, the meaning deflects to a related meaning (thus «actual» from «present»). The meanings of imported products, which initially require a classifier in translation *(cappelletti)* in order to be understood, are likely to remain stable, but common ones may acquire fiurative meanings (spaghetti, macaroni). The media technologies are now an important factor in accelerating such semantic changes.

The second closest translation procedure is naturalization, which entails changes in the form of a word to adapt to TL morphology; thus in the commonest languages, there are many thousands of grecolatin words, relating to ideas and technology, which have their characteristic national suffixes; normally, it would be perverse to translate these by any but their root-forms (*ambition* remains the same in many languages); there are still too many teachers with a paranoid hatred of literalism (servility) who tell their students to avoid all cognates in translation. The fact is that these teachers have no interest in translation, want their pupils to speak their newly acquired languages more copiously and fluently, and often hate translation as a block to thinking in the foreign language.

The third closest translation procedure is literal translation, which I would define here as occurring happily when the most common meanings of the SL and TL stretches of language coincide referentially and pragmatically in use as words (*bueno*, good), groups (*el primer capítulo*, the first chapter), collocations (*echar la buenaventura,* tell one's fortune), and clauses (*se colocó delante de mí*, he put himself before me).

In the prevailing translatological climate, literal translation is under a cloud. Vermeer has pompously proclaimed the dethronement of the original and Lefevere has dismissed the concept of a faithful translation, showing how full of ideology translations have been in the past. However, the fact is that it is only since 1959 that anyone i.e. Nida has dared to refer to translation as a science, with all its connotations of exactness, experiment and verification, and though translation is evidently an impure science, since it also has the characteristics of an art. the features of equivalence, correspondence and fidelity are inevitably associated with it. Basic primitive translation is literal — *Doy el libro a un amigo de mi hermano,*

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I'm giving the book to a friend of my brother's — (note this has all the implications of utterance). The fact remains, (if I may revert to a correlation), the longer a passage in the original, (and/or) the more nuanced, the more cultural its language, the less a literal translation is appropriate.

As I see it, though this is a sweeping unprovable assertion, owing to the general influence of science, all translation in industrialized countries is becoming more accurate, more loyal to the original, provided the original is worth being loyal to. The kind of stylish free literary translation that was fashionable in anglophone countries say fifty years ago would no longer be acceptable now. Even time-honoured titles like *The Marrige of Figaro (Figaro's Wedding)* and *Remembrance of Things Past (In search of lost time)* are being more accurately translated; Heinrich Mann's *Der Untertan (The Underling)* could no longer be *Man of Straw* or *The Patrioteer.* Nor could *Los Fusilamientos* be *The Third of May. Les parents terribles* (Cocteau) becomes *Les Parents terribles* in the English translation. The truth is different in fact and fiction —the latter is richer in sound and rhythm, and extends to the world of the imagination— but the words in translation are often the «same». The technical and the literary translator are usually two different individuals with substantially different backgrounds and qualifications but hopefully a common sensitivity to language and a common ability to write well, and culture is normally a greater barrier in literary than in non-literary translation, but nevertheless both professions are committed to the same overarching purposes, accuracy, concision and usually an agreeable style.

The third translation procedure, viz. through-translation (loan translation, *calque*) e.g. *Übermensch* translated as «Overman» is innovative but marginal.

The next is split between synonymy for lexis and transposition for grammar. Given that languages vary so greatly in the quantity of their vocabularies — at one end, English is three times as large as German, whilst at the other end, languages with little contact with others have the smallest vocabularies— the use of synonyms at most levels of the grammatical rank scale, the syntactical collocation (*escatimar la comida*, eke out the food) as well as the word, is inevitable, in particular where judgement is involved, where language is not simply used to name objects, processes and activities.

In a sentence such as:

No sé cómo supo de mi necesidad de casarme con su hermana y de cómo yo había abrazado aquella necesidad con todas las fuerzas que me quedaban.	I don't know how he got to know of my need to marry his sister and of how I had embraced that need with all the strength I had left.

Bienvenido, Bob by Juan Carlos Onetti, in Penguin Parallel Text Spanish Short Stories 1, edited by Jean Franco, Penguin Books 1966.

there are at least two words of judgement, *necesidad* and *fuerzas*, and a profusion of synonyms for each: need, necessity, requirement, lack, want, strength, power, force, might, energy, vigour. I am not questioning the right-ness of the quoted translation, but the very fact that the words of judgement (strengthen, need) are

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Germanic shows that Latin synonyms will be at hand. Translation becomes more synonymic where words of judgement rather than of observation («marry his sister») are used, since affective words are more closely influenced by climates of opinion.

After synonymy, translation has to resort to paraphrase, including the reculturalization or neutralization of cultural items (*Cortes*, Spanish House of Commons, Parliament) to attain equivalence.

3. GRAMMATICAL CLOSENESS

Degrees of grammatical closeness in translation depend on the type of transposition. In many cases, the same structure is replicated:

en el fondo más hondo de su conciencia	in the deepest depths of his conscience

but one plural for singular *fondo*.

Secondly, there are standard transposition conversions, which can be found in Vázquez-Ayora, who unlike Vinay and Darbelnet, indicates variations:

Me contenté con preguntarle el nombre	I merely asked his name
No hice sino defenderme	I only defended myself

Thirdly, there are canes where one language has a grammatical structure which has no equivalent in another, such as the English gerund or the phrasal verb, and paraphrase is therefore required:

buscaba en todas partes	he was looking around for

4. TEXTUAL CLOSENESS

Textual closeness is the sum of lexical and grammatical closeness, plus the cohesion that demonstrates that all parts of a text are correspondingly linked, and the coherence that marks an appropriate choice of text format, style and register.

5. SECOND CORRELATION

My second major correlation is: The less important the language of the source text, or that of any grammatical unit of that text at any rank, the less closely it need be translated; and therefore if a stretch of the text is not important and weakly written, it may be replaced by normal social usage. Thus in the sentence: *Si algo puede dar un golpe más fuerte que los de Gorbachov, sólo es el chaos total*, i. e. «If anything can give a stronger blow than those of Gorbachev, only chaos can do so». If this were a specially quoted statement, the literal translation, i. e. what the writer wrote, would be important. But if the text were routine political journalism,

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there is no harm in attempting to strengthen it with: «Only total chaos can shake the Soviet Union as much as Gorbachev has done». Here the missing case partner (the Soviet Union) is supplied, «shake» is stronger than «blow», and «chaos» is foregrounded. The «freer» translation is intended to be more effective, and to conform to normal social usage (NSU). This is the «taste area» of translation, always assuming that the text has little authority (The more authoritative the text, the less licence there should be for the translator's taste, but there is a proportion of the translator's personal taste in every type of translation).

6. THIRD CORRELATION

Thirdly, the less important the nuances of meaning of the original, the more important is its message, the more justified is an undertranslation, and the more effective the use of general words and idioms. (A quadruple correlation, with two premisses and two consequences, which is more powerful than a twofold correlation). The message, which stresses the speech act (illocution), the purpose of making the reader respond/act, is contrasted with meaning, which is purely descriptive. This process of simplification and clarification, of sharpening and contrasting, is routine in translating informational texts, such as: «The present system raises the spectres of *overbanking* and bank crisis against substantial new corporations» *(El presente sistema opone a importantes corporaciones nuevas las amenazas que son el exceso de bancos y la crisis bancaria).* Such a process fails in translating seriously innovative language, if an original syntax is blandly sanitized, simple language is replaced by punchy but conventional idioms *(ca, c'est du français)*, unorthodox by correct punctuation and original metaphor is replaced by standard metaphors or literal language.

7. FOURTH CORRELATION

The fourth correlation I want to make here is that in a routine information text, such as a technical report, or a news article, or in a persuasive text such as tourist or publicity material, the worse written and/or structured the text, the better it has to be rewritten and/or restructured. And again, the more «anonymous» such a text (a mayor's introduction to her town cannot be treated with the same freedom as an unknown hack's), the more radically it can be revised. This is the normal responsibility of the translator, who cannot hide behind anonymity or invisibility, who must turn out work that is well written and of a professional standard.

8. FIFTH CORRELATION

The more educated the TL readership, the stronger the argument for transferring a third language expression (or any abstruse expression not specifically related to the source language or culture) to the translation. Here the converse correlation, as

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often, holds true: The less educated the TL readership, the stronger the argument for explaining a third language expression (and omitting or reproducing it, depending on its interest to this readership) either inside or outside the translation. Thus in the sentence: *Aurea mediocritas aurait pu être le slogan de la conférence mondiale sur les droits de l'homme qui s'est tenue en juin* (*Le Monde*, Aug. 93). «Aurea mediocritas might have been the slogan (watch-word, rallying cry, leitmotif?) of the June world conference on human rights», a close translation, would be suitable for a correspondingly educated readership); «Aurea mediocritas (the golden mean)...» for an average educated readership; whilst «The golden mean...» might be enough for the others.

Again, as a corollary: The more formal the text, the less additional information can be supplied within the translation and the stronger the case for annotation.

Since all translations are to some degree explanations or interpretations unless they are straight literal translations like: *Demostró tener nervios de acero,* «He showed he had nerves of steel», one interprets if one translates *El paisaje era muy hermoso,* as «The countryside was very beautiful»; rather than «very lovely», and one explains if one translates *Entramos en Talpa cantando el Alabado*, as «We entered Talpa singing the Alabado, the morning song of praise».

9. SIXTH CORRELATION

The closer the translation, the smaller its element of ideology, and conversely, the freer the translation, the larger the element of ideology therein (e. g. *Les avions allemands*, «the Hun planes», invented example). Here I define ideology as the relevant prevailing or countervailing set of ideas of the translator's time or her/his own set of beliefs, and I note the fashionable conspiracy-theoretical ethnomethodological fallacy that all communication/translation is ideology (compare «All art is (political) propaganda» half a century ago) which has its grain of truth. As I believe that «humanities» translation influenced by «technical and specialized» (i. e. life and physical science) translation and human rights declarations is becoming closer, I think that translation will become less ideological (without ever disappearing), not least because so many dogmas and ideologies are collapsing (the «end» of ideology).

10. SEVENTH CORRELATION

The last major correlation I want to make looks towards the future, and sees the present as a transitional stage where translation is not simply duality or a seesaw between the various factors related to the two languages. On the contrary, it should encompass the medial forces that incline neither way: these are, indisputably, the material facts and the ideas which the two texts cover; the logic which is unrelated to context or culture that ensures that a text makes sense; the continuously increasing determination of universal human, animal and environmental rights, which

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leave their imprint on languages and are disseminated through translation, in particular through the reduction of sexist language, the elimination of words of prejudice, the decline of anthropomorphism and the rejection of opprobrious animal metaphors; the aesthetic principles of writing, which ensure that within a framework of relevance, a translation is as economical, clear and agreeable as possible, whilst bad writing comes out as bad writing in any language, if it is faithfully translated; lastly, the move towards a pure universal language which covers every facet of feeling and fact, and in the process appropriates the acquisitions and excludes the redundancies of existing languages (the paradigm being *Finnegan's Wake*). Therefore, the more a translation respects these medial forces, which are universal not subjective (although their interpretation implicates some subjective element), the more powerful it will be.

11. CONCLUSION

Clearly the number of feasible correlations to be devised for translation is recursive. They can be made at the most general level: the more innovative the language of a text, the more the translation is likely to read like a translation; the more complex a text, the more options to choose from in the translation, and the more creative the translator has to be. The more descriptive a text, the less accurate the translation and the more directive/persuasive a text, the more successful it should be. The less cultural the text, the clearer the translation. And on a particular level: The more serious a film, the more appropriate is sub-titling rather than dubbing. The less serious a text, the less need to follow its parentheses/exclamation marks/dashes in the translation.

Thus the advantage of correlations over propositions about translation is that a proposition (thesis?) is esssentilally a dogmatic statement which has to be conti nually modified by a comment word or clause such as «normally», «typically», «usually», «generally speaking», «more often than not». A correlation is per se flexible and relative and never reaches an absolute or an imperative, whether it is positive or negative. Further, its theoretical essence leads directly to methodological practice; in teaching, each correlation is incomplete without several translation examples. For this reason, correlations, like the whole discipline of translation theory, translation studies, translatology or whatever one wants to call it, since they underline the practice of translation, whilst not being indispensable, are hopefully useful, and I think students of translation should be exposed to them.

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