WHAT LIES BEYOND DESCRIPTIVE TRANSLATION STUDIES, OR: WHERE DO WE GO FROM WHERE WE ASSUMEDLY ARE?

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In the last few years, Spain has joined a handful of centers where serious work in Translation Studies is being done. I am therefore thankful for the opportunity I've been given to present a Concluding Statement of sorts to the *VI Encuentros Complutenses en torno a la Traducción*. Because this is what I've been meaning to do all along: go beyond the point most speakers would have reached in their presentations, and do so by way of a statement; the summary of a position which adds up to a call for more work in a particular direction, one which seems to have a lot in store. As always, my main aim is to stir some scholarly debate. I surely hope such a debate will ensue, if only when the Conference is over, and hence in a written form.

True enough, the essentials of my approach to translation and its study differ from what is normally found in the literature (even though, in the last decade or so, quite a number of colleagues have purported to adopt parts of it). However, it is my conviction –and not an all too naïve one, I should hope– that it is *because* of that perceived difference that I was asked to address this esteemed gathering, and that there is true willingness here to try to *understand* what my approach is all about and where exactly I am heading. What I would like to invite you all to do now is join me for a brief survey of that which may be lying beyond descriptive studies in translation, which is what more and more scholars have been doing lately.

It is clear that the possibility of surveying what lies *beyond* something, and doing so *together* (which is what the request that you join me should be taken to imply), presupposes an amount of agreement on that something itself. Unfortunately, no such consent can be taken for granted among the participants of any Conference where heterogeneity reigns. On the contrary. Many may not even be aware of the amount of sharing which is needed if one is to follow, just follow an unfamiliar line of reasoning. Required is a lot more than agreement on the mere desirability of having translations and translational practices approached descriptively. After all, this can be, and has been done within a number of different disciplines that annexed [aspects of] translation to their subject-matter, at one point or another; disciplines such as Linguistics, Text-Linguistics, Psycholinguistics, Discourse Analysis and Pragmatics. What I have in mind under Descriptive Translation Studies is rather a scholarly branch in and for itself, proceeding from clear assumptions and armed with a methodology and research techniques made as explicit as possible and –what is most important– drawing its legitimacy from *Translation Studies* itself. This is a distinction which has been given orthographic representation in the opposition between utilizing vs. not utilizing the capital letters D, T and S to open the words Descriptive, Translation and Studies, re-

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spectively, as well as the adoption of the abbreviation DTS for the coveted branch, a practice launched by James S Holmes in the early seventies.[1]

Let me start with a simplified version of some of the main assumptions of such a scholarly branch. The survey will sum up the opening chapters of my *Descriptive Translation Studies and beyond*,[2] to which the reader interested in a more elaborate presentation is referred. No agreement on the assumptions themselves would be required. This would surely be asking too much! The only thing which seems indispensable, if any real discussion is to ensue, is an open mind; willingness to suspend disagreement, if you wish; for the sake of argument and for its duration. Otherwise the claims concerning that which lies *beyond* Descriptive Translation Studies would make very little sense indeed. Worse still, the points I'll be making would probably be filtered through a totally different set of assumptions, which is apt to result in complete distortion.

1. SOME BASIC ASSUMPTIONS OF DTS

1.1. My starting point would be the claim that a truly descriptive account can only be given of an *empirical* phenomenon. It is therefore impossible to tackle descriptively either initial potentials or prescriptive pronouncements, both of which abound in our field. There is simply no non-speculative reply to the question of what a translation can, in principle, be, much less so –what it should be like, although the reasons for this absence are very different. Thus, in the replacement of a source-language text by a target-language text (or the gradual transition from one to the other), any number of factors may be involved, resulting in any number of different products. By contrast, what translation allegedly has to be amounts to little more than an opinion, which –far from having any real truth value– is always laden with ideology. Ideology is the ultimate frame of reference of *any* prescriptive intervention, even if the latter is disguised as something else; most notably, an account of «reality as it is» or a «theory». Needless to say, a guise such as this may be highly conducive to the promotion of an idea; as an effective cultural *stratagem*, that is. This effectiveness however is not enough to blot out the inherent non-empirical nature of any prescription. Unless this strategy has been successful in changing reality. In this case however it is not the prescriptive statements as such which would draw descriptive attention. Rather, it is the achieved mode of behavior along with the way it came into being, including the influence those statements may have had on it.

This much said, it shouldn't be taken to imply that there is no room in Translation Studies for issues of either «can be» or «should (or "should never") be». It only means that such issues have a different status and require a different kind of treatment. Thus, whereas any initial potential is *theoretical* by its very nature (see Section 2.4 below), normative pronouncements are either *applied extensions* of the discipline as a whole (e.g., in the context of translator training or translation criticism), or else they belong in the *object level*, being cultural phenomena in their own right. As such, they are external

[1]James S. Holmes: «The Name and Nature of Translation Studies» (1972[1]), in James S. Holmes: *Translated!: Papers on Literary Translation and Translation Studies*, Amsterdam, Rodopi, 1988, pp. 71.

[2]Gideon Toury: *Descriptive Translation Studies and beyond*, Amsterdam-Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 1995 (Benjamins Translation Library, 4).

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–and prior– to Translation Studies; very much like translational behavior and its products themselves. Like them, they may be taken up by a researcher; as data of a specific kind, that is. By contrast, they can never constitute the study itself, much less so its conclusions. For instance, prescriptive pronouncements may serve as evidence of how a social group conceives of translation, along with the norms derived from that concept and guiding translation work and/or its acceptance in that group. This in turn is a descriptive issue *par excellence*, which recourse to prescriptions may indeed assist in answering.

1.2. Empirical phenomena associated with translation are multifarious. They also present themselves on various levels. Each one of these levels, and the variety of phenomena pertaining to it, may legitimately be taken as a focus of a descriptive study.

If we limit ourselves to *retrospective* approaches, applied after the completion of the act of translation itself (which are by far the most common in our field), the phenomena that may be submitted to study in truly descriptive methods include, first and foremost,

– TEXTS ASSUMED TO BE TRANSLATIONS, for whatever reason; whether they are tackled as entities in themselves (i.e., holistic messages in single acts of communication) or as the organizations of lower-level entities they also are; ,

– the RELATIONSHIPS obtaining between an assumed translation and another text, in another language, which is taken to have served as its immediate source, as well as between parts and constituents of the two texts that can be paired together under a «no leftover» maxim;

– the STRATEGIES whereby the assumed translation, or a certain part of it, may be claimed to have been derived from the assumed source text and which are also at the root of the afore-mentioned relationships, and hence the TRANSLATION PROCESS as a whole; and, finally,

– the FUNCTION that the translation –the product itself or the act assumedly underlying it– was designed to serve, which may also be presented as the POSITION the target text was intended to have within the receiving culture. (The position a translation will actually have occupied may of course be very different, as acceptance is not a mere realization of an acceptability potential. The position it has may also change over time, two issues of immense significance which will however remain out of the scope of the present discussion).

In principle, all these entities may indeed be characterized as empirical, and hence be open to descriptive treatment, even though, admittedly, there are different levels of observability here; from apparent susceptibility to the eye to reconstructions which can only be established in the course of the study itself, and on the basis of the more observable entities. Once reconstructed, approaching an entity such as a relationship or a strategy, even an intended systemic position, as an empirical fact is fully justified, as long as its tentativeness is kept in mind. However, if this condition is not met, there would hardly be *any* observables to tackle in our field. After all, even texts and their constituents –allegedly directly available for study– are to a great extent a matter of conjecture.

1.3. An assumption that should underlie any study wishing to go beyond isolated, and rather superficial descriptions of assumed translations, let alone phenomena on levels lower than the text, is that there are *correlations*, probably even *interdependencies* between the types of entities a study can focus on and the levels they pertain to: the product, the process and their respective functions. This assumption is an inevitable

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outcome of any wish to tackle translation as a *teleological* activity, which is probably one of the few things we have all come to share, even though not necessarily in exactly the same way, or to the exact same extent. Under such an observation, functions are assigned logical priority over their carriers, such that the latter's appropriateness as carriers can only be determined with respect to the functions they were designed to fulfill.

From such a perspective, which is cultural-semiotic in nature,[3] the following correlative pattern emerges as basic, thus inviting focused efforts to fill it with the contents appropriate to individual cases and groups thereof:

– The position a translation is intended to have in a particular culture (or a certain sector within it) is a strong governing factor of its make-up as a target-language text. After all, translators operate first and foremost in the interest of the culture in and for which they are translating, however that interest is conceived of. Consequently, whatever features of a source text are retained –or even regarded as requiring retention in the first place– is determined on the target side too, and according to its own concerns. Features are therefore preserved, and recast in target-language material, not because they are important in any inherent way, but first and foremost because they are *assigned importance*. At times, it is indeed inherently important features which are also assigned importance from the recipient vantage point. The point is that such a concurrence is far from mandatory, as long as what we are dealing with is a culture-internal concept of translation and its realizations. Thus, on occasion, central features of a source text may be considered secondary, if not altogether negligible, for the function its intended target-language replacement is called upon to fulfill, whereas priority is often given to features which, in the source text itself, are only marginal. By the same token, the introduction into a translation of features which have no accountable basis in the original, sometimes in central positions, is all but accidental: Both centralization and marginalization, suppression and addition represent the same governing principle; namely, the inherent target-orientedness of translational decisions. (And see my detailed account of the way Japanese *haiku* were first translated into English,[4] or my forthcoming elaboration on «How Come the Translation of an English Limerick Can Have Four Lines?»).[5]

– An immediate outcome of the formation and formulation of a translation under any maxim of invariance is the establishment of a set of (unidirectional!) translation relationships based on the features shared by the two texts, translation and original. Such relationships may also form part of the concept of translation itself pertinent to the culture in question and be given direct attention during the act itself; inasmuch as the retention of one or another aspect of a source text is regarded as necessary for a translation to fulfill the functions allotted to it in and by that culture. To be sure, some notion of «preferred relationship» (or «preferred invariant») seems to have been part of *all*

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[3]Gideon Toury: «Translation: A Cultural-Semiotic Perspective», in Thomas A. Sebeok et al. (eds.): *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Semiotics,* Berlin-New York, Mouton de Gruyter, 1986, pp. 1.111-1.124.

[4]Gideon Toury: *Descriptive Translations Studies...,* 1995, pp. 176-180.

[5] Gideon Toury: «How Come the Translation of an English Limerick Can Have Four Lines (Or Can It)?» in Gabrielle Becher and Heidrun Witte (eds.) *Proceedings of 1st International Congress on Translation and Interpreting: «Present Trends»,* Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, 1994 (in press).

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culture-internal concepts of translation, leaving open only the identity of the aspects regarded as actually deserving of retention in each particular case.

– Finally, the prospective function of a translation, via its required make-up and/or the relationships which would preferably tie it to its original, inevitably governs the strategies adopted during the production of the target-language text with the intention of realizing them, and hence the entire translation process under which those strategies are subsumed.

2. FROM REGULARITIES TO THEORETICAL LAWS

2.1. A key notion in descriptive studies of any kind is that of *regularities*. Thus, the establishment of recurrent patterns is the most basic activity in pre-explanatory phases of a study, the phases where the data is collected and analyzed and discoveries are made. Also, it is first and foremost the uncovered regularities that would require explanation rather than any of the individual phenomena as such.

If the objective is to produce significant results that would also be open to validation (or refutation), there is a point in trying to establish regularities of behavior in *well-defined corpora* rather than arbitrary lots. Under such an observation, a corpus is much more than a reservoir of «examples» (which writers on and teachers of translation have come to extol) or a source of (rather vague) «insights» into issues of more general interest, including theoretical issues. It is the result of a controlled intersection of a phenomenon pertaining to translation performance and/or its results, on the one hand, with an assortment of variables on the other, whose relevance to translation has been established through their proven impact on that same phenomenon.

When uncovered, regularities should therefore be taken to represent the cluster of variables embodied by the corpus on whose basis they were established and that cluster only: A change of even one factor may well result in a major change of behavioral pattern. Hence the validity of the findings of a corpus-based study is not easily expandable, much less so automatically. My example would be a recent attempt[6] to interpret the observed behavior of an assortment of metaphors (variable 1) of one particular type (variable 2), occurring in a limited number of modern German (variable 3) novels (variable 4), under translation into Swedish (variable 5), as representative of the behavior of metaphors of that kind under translation in general, thus neutralizing those variables (3, 4 and 5) associated with the great *proximity* of the target and source languages and literary traditions. Methodologically speaking, this is a gross error: while the conclusions are not necessarily untrue, the leap itself from concrete findings to over-arching generalizations is totally unjustified –unless the grounds for the expansion have been properly prepared through a series of studies of a similar kind, controlled for precisely that cluster of variables.[7]

2.2. Only rarely will regularities of either 0 or 1 be encountered. «Never», and especially «always», will therefore emerge as *marginal* in almost any attempt to account for real-life behavior, even if limited to one translator dealing with an issue of a recurring type during the translation of just one text of a considerable length and/or complexity,

[6] Uwe Kjär: *«Der Schrank seufzt»: Metaphern im Bereich des Verbs und ihre Übersetzung*, Göteborg, Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, 1988.

[7] Cf. Gideon Toury: «Verb Metaphors Under Translation», *Target* (1989) 1:2, pp. 239-248.

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let alone a whole body of texts, be it as homogeneous as can be. Thus, even two occurrences of one metaphor embedded in very similar thematic, even verbal environments in two different locations within the same text, would not necessarily be found to have been replaced by one target-language entity, and the reasons for such a seeming inconsistency may be manifold. Failure to come up with any absolute findings (which both «never» and «always» imply) should therefore not deter the researcher: it is inherent to the kind of behavior we are dealing with, in both its individual and socio-cultural facets. (And see two recent discussions of corpus-based studies in translation, written from two different points of view and juxtaposed in one issue of *Target*).[8]

Very often, regularities would first manifest themselves in rather low percentages. The main reason is that, as long as variables have not been identified and rendered ready for control, it is very hard to establish any sampling rules for translational behavior or its results. Justifying such rules in terms of a Translation Studies is even harder. In actual fact, what a researcher starts out with is very often the *arbitrary lot* we have just mentioned (Section 2.1) rather than a properly established corpus; a group of texts, or a heap of lower-level phenomena, which are both *accidental*, from a translational point of view, and highly *heterogeneous*. The way to go from here is break one's initial lot into *subgroups* on the basis of those features which would have emerged as relevant. This procedure is bound to yield a substantial increase of homogeneity, reducing each subgroup's accidentality and gradually rendering it representative with respect to one or another variable; i.e., a proper *corpus*. If found to be too small, a resulting subgroup could then be re-expanded, this time on the basis of the defining variables themselves, i.e., in a relatively controlled manner. An attempt should now be made to formulate hypotheses correlating the variables, on the one hand, and the observed/reconstructed behavior, on the other. Either positively or negatively, that is, in terms of either encouraging a particular kind of behavior or blocking it. This is also the only feasible way to move beyond indifferent *descriptions* towards supplying some *explanations*.

Many of the variables which are in a position to determine the way real persons, acting as translators in real-life situations, may behave (and hence the textual-linguistic make-up of their products, the relationships that tie those products to their respective sources, and all the rest) are probably still unknown to us. Even though intuition and speculation, as well as the findings of studies pertaining to other disciplines dealing with language, linguistic behavior, communication, cultural (including linguistic) contacts, etc., have been, and will no doubt go on being very helpful here, our only hope of uncovering the full range of these variables, and especially establishing their *relevance to translational behavior*, lies in performing descriptive-explanatory work, doing our best to apply it to full-scale *translation events*, which is where function, process and product interact in the most direct way (see Section 1.3). This is something which can only be done within a discipline of Translation Studies, hence the pivotal position of DTS in it.

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[8] Mona Baker: «Corpora in Translation Studies: An Overview and Some Suggestions for Future Research», *Target* (1995), 7:2, pp. 223-243.

Luc van Doorslaer: «Quantitative and Qualitative Aspects of Corpus Selection in Translation Studies», *Target* (1995) 7:2, pp. 245-260.

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2.3. Quite a number of variables have been known to us all along, if only intuitively. A few additional factors that may have their impact on translational behavior and its products have been uncovered through well-targeted studies, observational and experimental alike. Not surprisingly, some of the variables pertain to the translator as an individual and the «little black box» where the process actually takes place, while others derive from the society and culture in and for which that individual operates. Consider the following assortment:

– mastery by the translator of the source and target languages, textual traditions and cultural circumstances;

– his or her relative mastery of the source and target systems, on all these levels and in all these respects;

– the direction translation takes, in terms of that relative mastery (i.e., from an individually weaker to an individually stronger system, or vice versa);

– previous experience in translating, in general, or with respect to a particular kind of assignment (i.e., the performance of routine vs. non-routine tasks);

– the kind of environmental feedback one had to the way the task had previously been performed and the influence such feedback may have had on one's subsequent behavior as a translator;

– the existence of proper translation aids (such as monolingual and bilingual dictionaries, contrastive grammars or cultural accounts) in the target culture at large as well as their availability/accessibility in the situation at hand;

– working conditions (including use of computer vs. typewriter, pen or pencil, presence/ absence of time pressure, fatigue, environmental noise, etc.);

– the medium the act is performed in (e.g., oral vs. written translation), or sometimes from vs. into (such as the translation of an oral message into the written medium or vice versa), and/or the text-types involved in the act, from both ends;

– the relative status of the target and source languages, textual traditions and/or cultures involved in the act (as established from the vantage point of the recipient culture) and the direction translation takes in those terms;

– the position in the target culture of translation (as a kind of text-generating activity), translations (as products) and/or translators (as members of a professional group);

– the concept (or alternative concepts) of translation as present in that culture, including the privileged target-source relationships, the relative positions of such alternative concepts in that culture and the norms each one of them has given rise to, with respect to both product, process and invariant.

This list is of course partial, very partial: it would be extremely naïve to assume that the whole gamut of parameters which may prove conducive to differential behavior (and results) in translation situations has already been uncovered. More important still, the list does not reflect any attempt to weigh the different variables against each other in terms of their impact on the act and its results. For instance, would a non-routine task be enough to throw an experienced translator off balance? And would it be more forceful in doing so than, say, heightened time-pressure, a sudden need to use a pen in the computer age, or lack of suitable reference books? The truth is there is very little we know about the relative weight of any pair of variables, even those which have already been singled out, let alone groups of variables interacting in one and the same

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translation event (which is of course the thing to expect). One area which is still greatly speculative has to do with how cognitive and societal factors interact, in the gradual emergence of individuals as translators and their translational behavior, on the one hand, and in the evolution of a culture and its translational sectors, on the other.

What all this should do is serve as a strong incentive to go on performing descriptive-explanatory studies while trying not only to *uncover* more and more factors that may constrain translation, but also to *control* these factors as much as possible in an attempt to formulate ever better, more defensible hypotheses about the relationships between them and different modes of translational behavior.

2.4. Let us leave the relatively safe territory of DTS now and try to embed our previous discussion in a broader disciplinary context on the way to that which lies *beyond* Descriptive Translation Studies.

Translation Studies in its non-applied facets is called for to tackle three types of issues which differ in scope and level:

a) all that translation CAN, in principle, involve;

b) what it DOES involve, under specifiable sets of circumstances, along with the REASONS for that involvement, and

c) what it is LIKELY to involve, under one or another array of specified conditions.

Work on level *a*) is basically speculative. Reference can of course be made to instances of actual behavior too, as a kind of *heuristics*; a means of enriching existing intuitions or hitting upon new ideas to speculate upon. The point is that such reference is not necessary for the establishment of a list of initial possibilities, which is what this level amounts to. It is not always too helpful either, if that list is to be not only *exhaustive*, but reflect some internal *logic* as well. As long as translation is approached as a game with complete information, that is; «a game in which every succeeding move is influenced by the knowledge of previous decisions and by the situation which resulted from them».[9]

Consider the following account, relating to the translation of a metaphor again. Here, speculation was based on some basic features of metaphor as a linguistic category (e.g., constituents, semantic relations obtaining between them [metaphorically as such] and the functions fulfilled by the unit as a whole) coupled with the principle of replacement:

I. *replace* vs. *not-replace* (i.e., omit)
  1. if replace, then by *a metaphor* vs. *non-metaphor*
    A. if replace by a metaphor, then by *a living* vs. *dead* metaphor
      i. if replace by a living metaphor, then by *the same* vs. *a different* metaphor
        a. if replace by the same metaphor, then by...(etc., etc.)
        b. if replace by a different metaphor, then by... (etc., etc.)
      ii. if replace by a dead metaphor, then by...(etc., etc.)
    B. if replace by a non-metaphor, then by...(etc., etc.)

Thus, it may well be the case that a particular mode of behavior which is initially possible in a translation situation would not be encountered in a particular corpus, be it ever so large and/or variegated. Existence is simply no test of potentiality. Moreover,

[9] Jiři Levý: «Translation as a Decision Process», in *To Honor Roman Jakobson*, II, The Hague, Mouton, 1967, p. 1.172.

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the absence itself (in real-life situations) of an initially possible option should give rise to a series of (descriptive-explanatory) *questions* rather than be taken as a final reply: questions which tie together behavior and circumstances.

The establishment of initial potentials is of course a truly *theoretical* activity which yields fully theoretical accounts. However, in terms of a theory of *translation*, the result is most elementary indeed: a mere system of co-ordinates, offering a neutral framework where any kind of behavior and its results could find their place. Symptomatic is the fact that the account I have just cited for the behavior of a metaphor under translation included no translation-specific notions, except for the general –and rather vague– notion of interlingual replacement. In fact, there is no claiming that an algorithmic account like this (which could easily be given the form of a proper flow chart) has any psychological validity; that is, that it reflects the internal process of give-and-take occurring in one's mind during an act of translation, or even that its various nodes represent points where actual yes-no decisions are being made. Obviously, such a hypothesis can be put to the test, but this test necessitates precisely (process-oriented) *descriptive* work, taking as its object instances of actual translation behavior. Moreover, it stands to reason that the hypothesis would be refuted for certain circumstances and validated for others, lending major significance to the *reasons* for that which translation turns out to involve, under any set of specifiable conditions. Level *b*) thus represents the overall program of a descriptive-explanatory branch.

Yet, the significance of studies carried out within DTS lies not only in the possibility of supplying exhaustive descriptions and viable explanations of regularities of translational behavior. No less important are their implications for other branches of the discipline, first and foremost a *theoretical* framework striving to shake off its elementarity. Thus, when the initial potentials have been modified by diversified factual knowledge accumulated in descriptive studies, and when the relations between the various variables and the corresponding modes of behavior have also been established, only then will ample grounds have been furnished for making certain *predictions* too, if only retroactive ones, applicable to a corpus expanded along the lines of one or another defining factor (as described in Section 2.2). This is something level *a*) is absolutely incapable of supplying, given its complete indifference to any factor which may affect decision-making in real-life situations; circumstances where the game of translation is *not* being played with complete information. In this vein, level *c*) represents translation theory again, only in a form far more elaborate than the first-level list of initial possibilities, be it ever so ordered, in terms of its own internal logic. The elaborate theory established in this way can then be taken as a framework for further studies, which will inevitably be a lot more refined too, breeding an even more intricate theory; and so on and so forth, in a typically helical progression.

In the long run, the cumulative findings of descriptive studies of translation events should make it possible to formulate a series of *laws*, stating the intricate relations between all variables which would have been found relevant to translational behavior, its products and their acceptability in the recipient culture. It is the formulation of such laws that lies beyond Descriptive Translation Studies. In fact, the establishment of a closely knit series thereof may well be taken to constitute the ultimate goal of Translation Studies in its theoretical facet.

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3. THE NATURE OF TRANSLATIONAL LAWS

3.1. Each law of translational behavior, when uncovered and properly formulated, will have an unmistakably *conditional form* of the type:

> if X, then the greater/the lesser the likelihood that Y,

where *Y* is an *observed behavior*, or a certain part/aspect thereof, and/or their result, and *X* is taken to be a *conditioning factor*. For instance,

> if cultures differ in their tolerance of traces of another language in utterances of their own, it is likely that translations into the more tolerant among them would manifest greater factual density of interference.

Here, the conditioning factor is «tolerance» and the observed behavior –«density», both in relation to interference on the linguistic level («Tolerance» itself can of course be approached as an observed behavior in itself and be further related; to its own conditioning factors, that is).

The resulting theory –a set of laws of this type striving at maximum coherence– should acquire a *probabilistic* form, which would put it in line with recent developments in other sciences of man (For probabilistic interpretations in the adjacent discipline of linguistics see especially Halliday).[10] In this process of refinement it will become necessary to do more than just accumulate variables and state the relations between pairs of them (which would have led to formulations of the type

> if X_1, and/or X_2, and/or ... X_n, then the greater the likelihood that Y, whereas if Z_1, Z_2, and/or ... Z_n, then the lesser the likelihood that Y,

that is, formulations which –in spite of their growing complexity– are still basically *linear*). Rather, the ultimate goal is to give the laws a multiconditional format such as

> if X_1 and Z_1, then the likelihood that Y is greater than if X_1 and Z_2, and even greater than if X_1 and Z_3;

namely, by weighing the individual factors and their impact on translation against each other, as well as establishing their interconnections; i.e., precisely that which was presented as mandatory in Section 2.3, when we were still moving within DTS itself. And indeed, the establishment of a probabilistic theory of translation is totally unthinkable without large-scale, variegated and controlled descriptive-explanatory studies which should moreover transcend the limits of any individual culture and the norms found to characterize it while never losing sight of the more generalizable features. Incidentally, such a network of interconnected hypotheses would make it possible not only to formulate justifiable predictions (Section 2.4), but to explain the occasional *failure* of a prediction as well, by entailing the option of going on to search for factors that have presumably remained uncovered, or revising the positions of and relations between

[10] M. A. K. Halliday: «Towards Probabilistic Interpretations», in Eija Ventola (ed.): *Functional and Systemic Linguistics: Approaches and Uses*,Berlin-New York, Mouton de Gruyter, 1991, pp 39-61.

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those (or some of those) which have already become known; in other words, by continuing to perform the helical movement between DTS and translation theory [levels *b*) and *c*), respectively].

A progression of this kind is of course infinite: On the one hand, there will always be something further to account for, so that future descriptive studies will become more and more focused, more and more targeted; on the other hand, the theory of translation can always be further refined. And most fortunately so. After all, one would hate to foresee the end of one's own discipline... Translation Studies can thus be viewed as inherently optimistic; a discipline ever seeking to refine the descriptions and explanations performed within it while improving its explanatory capacity and the probability of its predictions; in the long run, with a view to *future* behavior as well (to the extent that it could be controlled for all relevant variables).

3.2. As emphasized, the envisaged laws constitute purely *theoretical* entities. In themselves, there is nothing normative about them. Unless, of course, somebody wishes to transform a law into an instruction for future behavior; derive «ought» from «is» (or even «tends to be»), as philosophers of science put it (e.g. Searle).[11] In this case, however, it is clear that one would no longer be indulging in either descriptive-explanatory work or theory design. At the same time, the activity one would be pursuing would certainly lie beyond DTS as well. After all, it is the results of descriptive studies and/or their implications for translation theory that would be made use of.

The suggestion that «ought» should indeed be derived from «is» in the field of translation has in fact been put forward,[12] even though in a modified version; i.e., with the proviso that only modes of behavior found to associate with *professionalism* be taken into consideration. Unfortunately, this variable is not all that clear. For one thing, the notion of «professionalism» itself is graded by its very nature. Rather than being either professional or not, translators are therefore located at various points in between the two extremes. And where would the dividing line be drawn? Then again, in social reality, professionalism is often an *appearance* more than a hard fact; a public *image* rather than the projection of any accountable mode of behavior. I am more than convinced that members of any cultural group could easily produce lists of individuals who have gained recognition as professional translators while performing the act in a variety of different ways, and hence, for all practical purposes, irrespective of how they actually translate, or what their texts look like, or how those texts relate to their sources. At least some of them may even be found to have produced texts which do not fully concur with the concept of translation pertinent to the culture they have been working in. To complicate matters still, it is not all that rare to find in a society three types of contending norms, each obtaining its own adherents and position in the culture: the one which dominates the center, and hence directs translational behavior in the so-called «mainstream», alongside the remnants of previous sets of norms and the rudiments of new ones, occupying different positions in the periphery.

By the same token, one may wish to adopt, even promote as instructions for future behavior apparent *violations* of laws. One doing so should not be surprised, however,

[11] John R. Searle: «How to Derive "Ought" from "Is"», *Philosophical Review* (1964) 73, pp. 43-58.

[12] Andrew Chesterman: «From "Is" to "Ought": Laws, Norms and Strategies in Translation Studies», *Target* (1993) 5:1, pp. 1-20.

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should one's attempt fail. The only chance of success is if the law in question has been ill-formulated in the first place; for instance, if the conditions associated with a particular mode of behavior have not been sufficiently (or correctly) specified, often mistaking a mere culture-internal norm for a law. A violation of a norm is certainly possible. It may well have positive implications too, even in the teaching context.[13] Theoretical laws, in contrast, are simply not violable.

4. BY WAY OF A CONCLUSION

One thing this Statement was never intended to do is plead for the performance of descriptive studies, or the establishment of a branch of DTS, for the sole sake of getting at that which lies beyond them. Certainly not on a personal level, the level where individuals make up their minds as to whether to study descriptively at all, and if so –what to apply their methodological arsenal to. The main motive for doing research, in translation as in almost anything else, has always been *intellectual curiosity* pure and simple. Research will hopefully go on being conducted from much the same motive, and there is certainly a lot to be said in favor of a *division of labor* between practitioners locating themselves at different points on the «map» of the discipline: persons interested in theory, descriptive-explanatory work and various applications, respectively. If there was a plea implied in my presentation at all, it was directed towards those who will have decided to place themselves beyond descriptive studies anyway. It is a plea to *them* to take into account the findings of descriptive-explanatory studies, even if they do not wish to perform them themselves.

Thus, I would ask those who indulge in theory design to stop formulating mere lists of possibilities, on the one hand, be their internal logic impeccable as it may, and refrain from adopting wishful thinking instead; e.g., by assigning empirical validity to ideology-laden statements. I would also ask trainers of translators, especially those responsible for syllabus construction, to stop ignoring the findings concerning that which translation tends to be, under whatever conditions. Even the findings they personally –as privileged members of their own culture, that is– do not approve of. Closing one's eyes would certainly not make any mode of behavior disappear. In fact, any attempt to fight against it would require not only mere acknowledgment of its existence, but recognition as well of the conditions under which it is more or less likely to pop up. After all, if war is to be waged at all, it should be directed towards *causes* rather than mere *symptoms*. Nor do I believe that the same wars should be, or indeed could be, fought in each and every culture, irrespective of its own constellation.

Should my plea be accepted, we are bound to see the elaboration of translation theory soaring and the training of translators getting closer to real life; which I, for one, regard as very positive developments in our field, something to aspire to rather than shun.

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[13] Gideon Toury: «The Translator as a Nonconformist-to-be, or: How to Train Translators so as to Violate Translational Norms», in Sven-Olaf Poulsen and Wolfram Wilss (eds.): *Angewandte Übersetzungswissenschaft: Internationales Übersetzungswissenschaftliches Kolloquium an der Wirtschaftsuniversität Århus/Dänemark, 19.-21. Juni 1980*. Århus, 1980, pp. 180-194.

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