

Editorial



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A New Turn in Translation Studies?

Though a fairly young discipline, Translation Studies has undergone a very rapid development since its inception in 1972 in James Holmes's "The Name and Nature of Translation Studies." It has been concerned with offering a mapping of the field and with synchronizing its theoretical approaches with a practice that is hundreds of years old. In its rather short existence, the discipline has diversified and expanded to include the findings of disciplines as diverse as pragmatics, cultural studies, postcolonial studies, feminism, globalization, psycholinguistics, cognitive linguistics, corpus linguistics and even neuroscience. By way of consequence, a variety of approaches and a large gamut of tools have been employed.

The growth and expansion of the field is easily noticeable if one takes a cursory look at the three editions of the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* edited by Mona Baker and Gabriela Saldanha, two of the best-known and most influential theoreticians in the field. The first edition of the *Encyclopedia*, published in 1998, the result of six years of work, totaling over 650 pages (edited by Mona Baker, assisted by Kirsten Malmkjaer) optimistically announced the emergence of Translation Studies as "the discipline of the 1990s" (xvi). It set out "to chart a territory that has hitherto not been charted, to capture the core concerns of a discipline in a state of flux," (xvi) opening up rather than straight-jacketing the scope of the discipline it intended to delineate (xvi). After offering a profile of translators and interpreters from the perspective of their role and status, but not only, Baker touched on

various working contexts and expatiated on incentives for translation. Her conclusion, in 1997, was that “we still know very little about the history of our own profession . . . and that we are obliged to look at the historical facts before we can even begin to develop theoretical accounts for this complex phenomenon” (xx). Consequently, the first edition offered, apart from authoritative explanations of various terms and practices, a rich description of the history of translation in various geographical spaces. More than half of the *Encyclopedia* is devoted to these translation traditions, fact which testifies to the importance that Baker ascribed to the investigation of translation history and to the interpretation of historical facts.

This investigation of traditions continued in the second edition (published in 2009 and amassing, again, over 600 pages) with a single addition, however, that of Southeast Asian traditions, despite the editors’ intention to include more. This edition takes issue with the Eurocentric orientation in Translation Studies, arguing for the inclusion of the rich and considerably different experiences of translation studies from non-western spaces. The scope and central preoccupations of the discipline are reconsidered at a time when great strides had been taken and the discipline had become a well-established discipline, abounding in resources of all kinds. “Engagement with non-western perspectives” (xxi) becomes the key concern in this edition which registers new and developing themes in the discipline, such as Censorship, Cultural Translation, Ethics, Globalization, Minority, Mobility, etc.

The third edition, published in 2020 and edited with Gabriela Saldanha, just like the second one, counted over 860 pages. Worth mentioning is the fact that this third edition radically departs from the previous ones in that it discontinues the translation traditions as they are no longer of topical interest to the 21st-century reader. Thus, the various editions did not simply build upon the previous ones; they sometimes departed from them, leaving out information that was no longer considered relevant. The editors realized that in 2016, when they started preparing for this third edition, they were facing a “drastically different discipline,” that “had expanded to the point

of ‘splintering’ into what some might call subdisciplines, each focusing on a specific mode of translation . . . a research method as in the case of corpus-based studies and descriptive translation studies, or a theoretical perspective” (xxiv). Given the fact that the history of translation had been amply documented in the past decade, the editors chose to allot ample space to “contemporary theories, concepts, models and methods” (xxv), wondering if a new turn in Translation Studies had set in. However, they think it is “too early and too ambitious to speak of new turns” (xxvi), though the “technological turn” that they avoid mentioning but keep hinting at, calls for a reconsideration of the field.

This technological turn is foregrounded and analyzed by Minako O’Hagan in a number of articles and books. Thus, in her article entitled “The Impact of New Technologies on Translation Studies. A Technological Turn?” included in Carmen Millán and Francesca Bartrina’s *Routledge Handbook of Translation Studies* (2013), O’Hagan discusses the important advances in the field of translation technologies, pointing, however, at the divide between the field of Translation Studies and that of Translation Technologies and the “relative lack of influence of technology per se on translation studies” (512).

O’Hagan expatiates on the paradox lying at the heart of a discipline that has been expanding its frontiers, refusing, however, to integrate in its theoretical purview technologies that have had a wide-ranging influence on translation practice. Progress has been made, however, given the fact that the perception of many tech-averse translators who used to view machine translation as a danger, has now changed as translators exhibit a growing degree of technological integration in their workplaces. Being well-aware of the market demands resulting from globalization for different technology artifacts, practicing translators have started abandoning their reluctance related to computer-based tools. O’Hagan rightly concludes that, given these varied technological possibilities that she has presented in detail, the field of translation studies indeed “is facing a rethink in terms of research methodologies, theoretical framework and research design, as well as mapping of the

discipline itself to allow a space for the increasingly prominent impact of new technologies” (514). This research is bound to increase, according to O’Hagan, if we are to better understand the massive changes that translators face.

However, while technologies radically transform human translation, it is not clear what direction things will take in the future. This generates a sense of uncertainty among translators, a kind of “automation anxiety,” as Lucas Nunes Vieira has called it. Consequently, he contends that [w]hile discourses on human parity and the fall of barriers are optimistic about innovation, these discourses also risk promoting the notion that MT systems and human translators are mutually exclusive, which can in turn foster scaremongering about translators’ future.”

Irrespective of what turn things may take in the future, it is obvious that the use of technology in Translation Studies is here to stay. Therefore, topics such as the use of technology in the process of translation, video-game localization, cross-cultural adaptation, the intricacies of drama translation, the adaptation of plays for broadcasting, or Translation Studies pedagogy in relation to visually impaired students are just several of the prominent topics that feature in the articles included in this volume. These articles belong, to a large extent, to teaching staff as well as current or former students of the MA programme in Translation Studies functioning at Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu for almost three decades. Worth mentioning in this context is that this programme was set up in the 1990s when the academicization of translator and interpreter training started gaining ground all over the world. As the entry in the first edition of the *Routledge Encyclopedia* aptly points out, “a dramatic rise in the number of university-level institutions” (xvi) offering degrees in translation and/or interpreting took place in the 1990s, so that “[f]rom 49 in 1960 then 108 in 1980, the global number has risen to at least 250 in 1994” (283).

The first articles in this volume sets the scene, examining the role played by translators in facilitating cross-cultural interaction. Kinji Ito looks into the rich history of translation with an emphasis on the way in which philosophical theories and socio-political

dynamics have influenced the field of Translation Studies. Ito delves into the essentialist / non-essentialist binary, also touching on more recent trends, such as deconstruction, post-colonial and gender studies, which have reshaped the field. The reexamination of the biases and power dynamics inherent in translation, the perpetuation or the changing of colonial structures and narratives are only two examples of the influence of these trends. Ito calls for a reexamination of the complex nature of this practice in order to gain valuable insights for the future of the profession.

Arina Greavu uses the lens of Conceptual Metaphor Theory in order to investigate the economic terminology of English and Romanian, with a focus on the way in which the two languages use lexical elements from the semantic category of liquids in economic contexts. More specifically, she examines the dictionary distribution of terms and phrases that fall into the category of the LIQUID metaphor from the field of economy in the two languages, with the goal of drawing statistical conclusions about the metaphor's role in influencing the subject's language choices. The findings are illustrated with examples from economic publications with a focus on cases where English and Romanian do not share conceptual metaphors, which could be problematic for Business English learners and professionals working in the two languages. Greavu's conclusion is that this conceptual metaphor is more widely employed in Romanian than dictionary counts indicate.

Emilian Tirban investigates the usefulness and efficiency of machine-assisted translation of key literary works from a hermeneutical standpoint. He examines the output of automatic translation tools such as Google Translate and compares it to human translation. The article also touches on issues such as localization, cultural and grammatical coherence in the analysis of Homer's *Illiad* based on google translation. This machine-assisted output is investigated in relation to human translations and is found profoundly inadequate.

Cross-cultural adaptation in relation to video-game localization – an issue of topical interest nowadays – is the focus of Catrina-Claudia Mihu's article. She comes up with a comparative

analysis of the English and Chinese voice-lines of various characters featuring in *Genshin Impact* and points to the cultural aspects influencing the translation process. These cultural nuances together with linguistic adaptation are shown to deeply influence character perception around the world. MiHu illustrates the complexity of cross-cultural adaptation and explains why certain linguistic choices may work or not in video-game translation.

Cultural transfer is also foregrounded in Alexandra Mitrea's article, in relation to poetry. Mitrea discusses the many levels of Seamus Heaney's poetry, highlighting the abundance of cultural references woven throughout the poems. The textual aspects that subtly intermingle with extratextual elements make the work of the translator a very challenging one. Consequently, the similarity of impact that Jean Boase-Beier has constantly emphasized becomes all the more difficult to accomplish by the translator given the compact and condensed form of poetry.

Denisa Morariu focuses on the intricacies of drama translation and illustrates them in her case study on Samuel Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape*. Starting from the idea that the end product has to be performed in front of an audience, Morariu gives ample space to issues such as performability, speakability, gestural and aural qualities of the text, which should result in a text that sounds natural and can be easily comprehended. However, a number of adjustments are necessary in the process of making the translated text performable in a different medium. In the present case study that focuses on the adaptation of a play for broadcasting, Morariu points to how visual elements can be turned into aural ones. Nonetheless, stage directions pose very serious challenges which can be met by additions, omissions or rephrasing.

Lorena-Maria Oprița analyzes the potential stumbling blocks in the translation of humour with regard to *Bewitched*, a very popular sitcom series in USA in the 1960s. Oprița explores the challenges that movie translators face, going mainly into linguistic aspects which are quite difficult to render given the constraints of audio-visual translation. The difficulties are compounded by the fact that humour is quite often culture-dependent, and, given the

rapid pace of audio-visual translation, the translator may not find the space to suggest the cultural aspects that humour may originate in, and which may be absent in the target language.

Translation Studies pedagogy in relation to visually impaired students is the topic of Alexandra Moldovan's article. She sheds light on the difficulties that visually impaired students in Translation and Interpretation degree programmes grapple with at Romanian universities. Moldovan analyzes these challenges from a double perspective: that of acquiring digital, as well as professional skills. She refers to similar concerns expressed and developed by scholars at the University of Mainz in Germany and the University of Trieste in Italy. In this way, the article provides fundamental recommendations for integrating teaching techniques for Romanian visually impaired students.

The volume ends with an invitation to read one of the most authoritative books in the field of drama translation – Massimiliano Morini's *Theatre Translation: Theory and Practice* (2022), a comprehensive account of all significant contributions to the relatively recent field of Theatrical Translation Studies.

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