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Translation, transfer, interference, contact[1]

The terms "translation", "transfer", "interference" and "contact" can be understood in various ways in translation studies, and employed in scholarly papers with various meanings. In the interests of clarity, it is desirable to define a separate meaning for each. In attempting this delimitation in this paper I start from polysystem theory, the discipline that originated translation studies and which has produced an ample literature making use of the terms in question.

Let us begin with "translation", which is generally understood as occurring when a text is ported from one language to another. According to the *International Encylopedia of Linguistics*[2],

> The word "translation" refers globally to the transfer of a message from a S[ource] L[anguage] to a T[arget] L[anguage] or R[eceptor] L[anguage], whether the languages are in written or oral form. Such interlingual message transfer is often categorized, according to the language mode employed, as translation (written discourse) vs. interpretation (oral discourse).

Other authors, however, have had a broader concept of translation. Jakobson[3], for example, understands "translation" to cover three different activities that should be referred to by different terms:

(1) Intralingual translation, or *rewording*, is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language.

(2) Interlingual translation, or *translation* proper, is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language.

(3) Intersemiotic translation, or *transmutation*, is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems.

This definition of translation *sensu lato* not only broadens the meaning of the term with regard to the target system, but also, through the use

of the term "interpretation", includes output texts such as adaptations or imitations that are not intended to be "exact copies" of the original input.

Itamar Even-Zohar and Gideon Toury[4] refrain from proposing any particular definition of translation for fear of delimiting a closed corpus of translated works and excluding others that might come about in the same way; they suggest that it is for translation studies to determine the concept employed in each particular polysystem or culture:

> what is to be taken as 'translation' and what is not, is not given in advance, nor is it self-evident. It has to be discovered in the process of research and theory making.

It is nevertheless clear that Even-Zohar[5] treats translation as a specific kind of (intersystemic) transfer, together with adaptation, model transfer, etc. Though these different kinds of transfer each have their own particular characteristics, they share the same type of process: "reformulation of a source utterance by means of a target utterance" (Even-Zohar 1990, p. 74),[6] and should accordingly be studied together if a comprehensive understanding of transfer phenomena is to be achieved. In fact, there are intersystemic transfers—between different polysystems—, and intrasystemic transfers—between different systems or subsystems of a single polysystem. An example of this last is the transfer of the detective novel model from the system of adult literature to the system of children's or young people's literature. But the difference between inter- and intrasystemic transfer is essentially just this difference in sources and targets—the processes themselves are not of essentially different natures, and both kinds of transfer should be taken into account in studying "the laws of translation".[7]

As in the case of contacts[8], two systems can be related by transfer either bidirectionally or predominantly unidirectionally. In the latter case, texts and models are transferred predominantly from one system to the other, but not to any marked extent in the opposite direction. Within the polysystem of Castilian Spanish, for example, it is common to adapt classic adult literature for children[9] but not *vice versa*[10] (although adult versions of folk tales are less infrequent). An example of a more bidirectional transfer relationship is provided by contemporary literature in Galician and Basque, the period 1996/2000 having seen the translation of twelve Basque works into Galician and eighteen Galician works into Basque.[11] In any case, what is transferred can vary greatly, from a set formula such as the opening words of a story, to a model (a literary technique or structure or *genre*), to a text (e.g. a translation or

adaptation for children), to a collection of texts such as an anthology. Translation is a specific kind of transfer in which recognizable extant text sequences belonging to one linguistic code are ported into a different linguistic code.

The objects of other kinds of transfer are not extant text sequences, but linguistic elements and models that can be freely employed by the transferrer. An example is James Joyce's use in *Ulysses*[12] of the stream of consciousness: in borrowing this technique from Émile Dujardin[13], Joyce transplanted a particular narrative model to a quite different literary context. The distinction between transfer of models and transfer of texts is nevertheless not hard and sharp: intermediate phenomena, such as imitation and parody, occupy a continuum that makes the application of any classification of relative, orientational value rather than absolute value.

It is because of the underlying similarity of transfer processes that Even-Zohar (1990, p. 75) suggests that "there is no reason to confine translational relations only to actualized texts." However, although joint examination of translation and other transfer processes can certainly be useful for some purposes, it is not so clear that this is the case when what is of interest is not how texts have been produced (i.e. the process of translation or transfer), but the role they play in society or in a particular literary polysystem. For this latter purpose it is necessary to discover what each particular culture understands by "translation", what concept of translation is employed in each polysystem. In spite of similarities among the processes by which they are produced, a translation is not identified by most readers as being the same thing as an adaptation for children, an imitation, or the application of a narrative model taken from elsewhere. In contemporary Spanish culture, at least, these are different concepts, that work in different ways, constitute different systems, and are accordingly subject to different rules or conventions (which in turn affect the corresponding processes of translation or transfer). For example, whereas a translation is generally associated with the author of the original text rather than with the translator, a free adaptation or version[14] is often associated principally, or even exclusively, with the adapter; a case in point is Cruz López's 2001 adaptation of Kipling's *The Jungle Book* as published by Cumio[15], which not only appears in the ISBN catalogue without any reference to Kipling, but itself contains no reference to him. The production rules of translations and adaptations also differ: translators must follow the original rather closely if their output is to be accepted as a translation (at least if the language of origin is widely understood in the target culture),[16] while the adapters

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of adult texts for children must comply with constraints proper to children's literature. To sum up, I believe "translation" should be used narrowly (though exactly how it is used will be culture-dependent), and "transfer" as a generic term.

That said, it is pertinent to examine more closely certain variants or possible aspects of translation, and certain kinds of literary output that involve both translation and other kinds of transfer. In the contemporary Hispanic world, whole texts, or parts thereof, that have been transferred from one language to another in keeping with the definition of the *International Encylopedia of Linguistics*, are generally treated as translations regardless of partial modifications; the basic criteria are that there existed an original created in a different language for a different system, and that this original was ported to the target system by an intermediary, the translator. Thus most translations are accompanied by the original title, the name of the original author, and the name of the translator[17] (which is why pseudo-translations also claim to derive from a foreign original). Since the reader is often unable to judge faithfulness to the original, a text may be treated as a translation even though it differ significantly from the original, e.g. in ideological or structural respects. In other cases, such as many translations of adult literature for children, a text is recognized and accepted as involving both translation and adaptation—an example is the 1986 version of Dickens' *Little Dorrit* by Mª Victoria Rodoreda and Jaime Juez[18], which combines narrative and comic. Partial adaptation is also relatively easy to recognize where two or more literatures coexist in a single territory (each with its market, agents and institutions, etc.), since this situation facilitates access to the original or to a different translation. And even when the extent of recognized differences from the original prevents a text from being regarded as a translation, it may nevertheless, by virtue of its known origins in a different polysystem, be classified as forming part of a system of literature that is of foreign origin or influence (for brevity, "foreign literature"): such is the case of many adaptations and imitations, although this kind of product may be treated as "home-grown" if attributed to the adapter. But all this does not prevent translation, as the porting of a recognizable text sequence from one linguistic code to another, from being distinguished from other forms of transfer that may occur within or between polysystems.

Contacts and interferences between cultures are jointly defined by Even-Zohar[19] as follows:

> Contacts can be defined as a relation(ship) between cultures, whereby a certain culture A (a source culture) may become a source of direct

or indirect transfer for another culture B (a target culture). Once this possibility is realized, interference can be said to have occurred.

Although this formula satisfactorily defines contact, it leaves much to be done by way of clarifying the relationships between interference on the one hand and translation or transfer on the other. Indeed, it appears to treat interference as an automatic consequence of transfer. Nevertheless, on the next page Even-Zohar corrects himself:

> it is only when [imported] resources are domesticated by a culture to be locally produced that we are allowed to speak of interference. […] once the source is no longer needed for the making of the item-of-repertoire in question, it is justified to regard the case as interference. Once interference has taken place, the question of source/origin is no longer relevant.

In an earlier essay, Even-Zohar distinguishes between direct and indirect literary interference, which respectively do not and do involve intermediaries (1990, p. 57). The only kind of mentioned intermediary is the translation, and it would indeed seem to exhaust the possibilities, together with interlinguistic adaptations and other kinds of "foreign literature". This is so because a text in the target language is to be counted as a product of the target literature or perceived as something "foreign" (although changed and appropriated). Therefore, new elements and models in a polysystem (interferences) are perceived in a different way when they are introduced directly from another literature (direct interference) and when they are introduced through their own "foreign literature" (indirect interference).

These two kinds of intereference are explained in 1990 in an article called "Laws of Literary Interference". When Even-Zohar reviews this article in order to apply the laws to every kind of cultural inter-ferences, the concept of contact is brought here. According to his definition of interference and contact, contact may be direct or indirect, but not the interference. This one does not need any source to be produced, and so uses no intermediary. In particular cases, however, it is by no means always clear whether contact that has brought up an interference is direct or indirect. Certainly, when two cultures occupy the same territory and share many agents, institutions and markets, then contact in most spheres must surely be direct; and if it leads to interferences, these too will be mostly direct, even though there may also exist products, such as translations, that may mediate indirect interference. But what about situations such as that of former European colonies, considered as cultures that are now distinct from that of the

former metropolis? In Canada, for example, are all the works of British and French authors to be counted as indispensable mediators of indirect contact? Are British and French immigrants who write in their native tongues intermediaries, or British and French publishing houses with branches in Canada? Should a British literary model introduced into French Canadian literature without prior translation be considered the result of indirect interference? The most meaningful distinction, and the one most easily made, would appear to be between interferences that are established via "foreign literature" (indirect interferences) and those that are not (direct interferences); whether the intermediates of indirect interferences were indispensable or not, i.e., whether the intercultural contact was direct or indirect, is a secondary question.

Toury[20], who uses the term "convergence" for what Even-Zohar calls "interference", writes of an interim stage in which elements and models that have been introduced into a polysystem are still recognized as foreign to it: more specifically, at the linguistic level "deviant forms and structures are recognized as characteristic of translated utterances." This formulation emphasizes the importance of acknowledgement of foreignness (by the average member of a polysystem, rather than just a few scholars), and thus of awareness of hybridization and the combination of traditions. It is unsurprising that Toury describes this interim stage as particularly common in weak polysystems, i.e. polysystems that both suffer an especially large number of interferences and need them to broaden their repertoires. Peripheral polysystems in particular are likely to exhibit interim interferences, since they tend to have low self-esteem and are the least reluctant to admire prestigious foreign models, introduce them into their own repertoire, and hybridize.

Summing up, direct interference, such as may result from direct contact between an expanding majority culture and a minority culture that occupies part of its territory, involves no translation or other form of "foreign literature" (a model may be transferred, and this transfer come to qualify as interference, without any need for translation). On the other side, indirect interference, whether the result of direct or indirect intercultural contact, does involve translation or the production of something similarly identifiable as foreign, such as an adaptation. Such intermediate entities domesticate the source text by adapting it to the target culture and/or, possibly, by making any novelties less shocking than they might have been in an autochthonous text.[21]

Just as not all interferences involve translation, not all translations lead to interference. The assertion by authors such as Toury[22] that all translations do involve interference, because there is always something in the source text that is transferred to the target system, simply

displays a terminological difference from the nomenclature I am here supporting, "interference" being used for what is here called "transfer". Toury himself (1985, p. 8) acknowledges that not all transferred elements or models become productive in the target system, but may instead "remain isolated, non-influential occurrences." That a translation, adaptation or other piece of "foreign literature" (such as unrecognized translations) does not in itself constitute the result of interference is of course obvious, since the hallmark of interference is local production in the target system without the need of the original source, while "foreign literature" by definition requires a foreign source text for its production. But "foreign literature" does always transfer elements or models from the source system to the target system; it is when these elements or models are employed for the production of texts within the target system without direct use of the original source text—and only then—that interference may be said to have occurred (Even-Zohar 2001). Thus the immediate source of a product of interference (strictly, of the first generation of products) is the translation or other piece of "foreign literature" that served as the vehicle for the introduction of the elements or models that constitute the interference; but not all translations do in fact thus serve as sources.

Consider, for example, a translation on the periphery of a polysystem, a little-read work that excites no desire to emulate it; though it may have imported from its source text some element that is novel for the target polysystem—all translations bring something new—it will not be adopted as a model and will accordingly mediate no interference between the source and target polysystems. By contrast, translations that attain a central position because of their well-publicized introduction of innovations that attract the interest of relevant circles will inspire the use of these innovations in other target system texts. A case in point is the children's adventure story (exemplified by some of Enid Blyton's series), many of which were translated into Castilian with great success and popularity in the 1960s[23]: this *genre* was promptly reproduced by Spanish authors such as Carmen de Rafael Marés ("Carmen Kurtz"), Montserrat del Amo or Mariano Hispano using the translations as models[24], and these Spanish stories can themselves now serve as models for works that confirm the occurrence of interference.

As the mediators of indirect transfer, translations partake of both source and target polysystems (and certify the existence of contact between the two). They function within their target culture (where they are also generally produced), but require for their existence a source text that belongs to a source culture—indeed, even pseudo-translations, which have no definite source text, are generally inspired by models

belonging to a foreign culture. Because of the overtness of its foreign source, a translation cannot constitute evidence of interference, and neither can it by itself guarantee that it will give rise to interference, i.e. that any of its elements or models will take root in the target system; but it can nevertheless, through the translation strategy it employs, strongly influence whether such interference occurs. Broadly, innovation and interference are favoured by translations that keep close to the original ("translation adequacy"), and are disfavoured by translations that are more conventional ("acceptable") *vis-à-vis* the target system.

In conclusion:

• Transfer is the porting of elements, models or text sequences from one literature to another (or to another sector of the same literature);

• Translation is a specific type of transfer, the porting of text sequences from one language to another;

• Interference between one literature and another can be said to have occurred when elements or models transferred from one to the other begin to be used in the latter without reference to their origin in the former, and the transplanted elements or models so used may be termed interferences;

• Contacts between two literatures are simply the relationships that make the transfer of elements, models or text sequences possible.

I believe that adherence to these definitions in future studies would help avoid a considerable amount of the sort of confusion that has often surrounded the use of these terms hitherto. The proposed definitions naturally do not by themselves rule out the existence of borderline cases in which the most appropriate term is not obvious; but the very existence of such cases is a sign of the need for further research to clarify their situation.

Notes

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[2] William Bright (ed.), *International Encyclopedia of Linguistics*, New York 1992, p 281.

[3] Roman Jakobson, "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation", in

K. Pomorska and S. Rudy (eds.), *Language in Literature*, Cambridge (Massachusetts) 1987, p 429.

[4] Itamar Even-Zohar and Gideon Toury, "Translation Theory Today. A Call for Transfer Theory", in *Poetics Today* 1981:2(4), p viii.

[5] Itamar Even-Zohar, *Polysystem Studies*, in *Poetics Today* 1990:11(1), p 74.

[6] Even-Zohar actually uses this expression to describe an accepted characteristic of the process of translation, but he does so only to point out that many products of reformulation are not conventionally regarded as translations, but as adaptations, imitations, etc.

[7] Because of this, they cannot be used to distinguish different polysystems as suggested by: José Lambert, "Les relations littéraires internationales comme problème de réception", in *Oeuvres et Critiques* 1986:11(2), p 177.

[8] Itamar Even-Zohar, "Universals of Literary Contacts", in F. Coppieters and D. Goyvaerts (eds.), *Functional Studies in Languages and Literature*, Ghent 1978, p 6/7.

[9] Examples include the following adaptations: Miguel de Cervantes, *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha*, Alfonso G. Valcárcel (ill.), Tomás Borras (adap.), Madrid 1959; Miguel de Cervantes, *La Gitanilla. El amante liberal*, María L. Morales (adap.), 2nd ed. Barcelona 1914; Javier Fernández (adap.), El Cid, Izquierdo (ill.), Barcelona 1961; María I. Molina (adap.), *Vida del Lazarillo de Tormes*, Julio Montañés (ill.), [Madrid] 1974.

[10] An exception is "La princesa de los muñecos: Novela corta filmada", adapted for adults in: Antoniorrobles, *El archipiélago de la muñequería (novela en colores)*, Madrid 1924.

[11] Data from: UNESCO, Index Translationum, <http://databases. unesco.org/xtrans/xtra-form.shtml> [Visit: 20 Apr. 2010].

[12] James Joyce, *Ulysses*, París 1922.

[13] Émile Dujardin, *Les lauriers sont coupés*, París 1887.

[14] Here I use the terms "adaptation" and "version" in the sense of: Blanca-Ana Roig and Mónica Domínguez, "Glosario", in B.A. Roig (coord.), *Hans Christian Andersen, Jules Verne e* El Quijote *na literatura infantil e xuvenil do marco ibérico*, Vigo 2005.

[15] Rudyard Kipling, *O libro da selva*, Carlos Busquets (ill.), Cruz López (adap.), Vigo 2001.

[16] In this situation, any liberties the translator may take may be discovered by those who understand the source language (André Lefevere, "Translation: Its Genealogy in the West", in S. Bassnett and A. Lefevere (eds.), *Translation, History and Culture,* London/New York 1990, p 17).

[17] However, much 20th century children's literature in Castilian and Catalan is exceptional in this respect. Works originally written and published in Catalan were published in Castilian without recognition of translation, and vice versa, with a view to the establishment of these works and their authors as belonging to both Catalan literature and Castilian literature.

[18] Charles Dickens, *La pequeña Dorrit*, Mª Victoria Rodoreda (adap.), Jaime Juez (ill.), Barcelona 1986.

[19] Itamar Even-Zohar, "Laws of Cultural Interference" [on line], in Itamar EVEN-ZOHAR's Site 2001, <http://www.tau.ac.il/~itamarez/papers/culture-interference.htm> [Visit: 1 Mar. 2004].

[20] Gideon Toury, "Aspects of Translating into Minority Languages from the Point of View of Translation Studies", *Multilingua* 1985:4(1), p 8.

[21] Gideon Toury, "Culture Planning and Translation" [on line], in Gideon TOURY's Site 1999, <http://www.tau.ac.il/~toury/pub.html> [Visit: 1 Mar. 2004].

[22] Gideon Toury, "Translation as a Means of Planning and the Planning of Translation: A Theoretical Framework and an Exemplary Case", in S. Paker, *Translations: (Re)Shaping of Literature and Culture*, Istambul 2002, p 161. Also in: <http://www.tau.ac.il/~toury/works/plan-tr.htm> [Visit: 1 Mar. 2004].

[23] Marisa Fernández, *Traducción y literatura juvenil: narrativa anglosajona contemporánea en España*, León 1996, p 129/137.

[24] See, for example: Carmen Kurtz, *Óscar, cosmonauta*, Carlos Mª Álvarez (ill.), Barcelona 1962. Carmen Kurtz, *Óscar y el yeti*, Odile (ill.), Madrid 1964. Carmen Kurtz, *Óscar y corazón de púrpura*, Odile (ill.), Madrid 1965. Montserrat del Amo, *Aparecen los Blok*, Rita Culla (ill.), Barcelona 1971. Montserrat del Amo, *Los Blok se embarcan*, Rita Culla (ill.), Barcelona 1975. Montserrat del Amo, *Excavaciones Blok*, Rita Culla (ill.), Barcelona 1979. Mariano Hispano, *El tesoro del viejo Jonathan*, Barcelona 1973. Mariano Hispano, *El misterio del león abisinio*. Barcelona 1974a. Mariano Hispano, *El submarino perdido*. Barcelona 1974b.