

Translation Studies for The 21ST Century: Trends and Perspectives

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Este artigo analisa dois dos principais desafios que a área dos Estudos de Tradução, enquanto disciplina académica, terá de enfrentar no futuro. Em primeiro lugar, os Estudos de Tradução terão de encontrar um equilíbrio adequado entre a necessidade de promover a variedade e o risco de fragmentação a que estão sujeitos. Investigam-se aqui três aspectos do problema: o carácter cada vez mais indistinto do conceito de tradução, o número crescente de possíveis contextos relevantes e os conflitos entre o número cada vez maior de disciplinas que actuam como modelos. Um outro desafio prende-se com a tensão existente entre a abordagem "empírica" e a abordagem "pós-moderna" nesta área, e que este artigo tenta reduzir aos aspectos fundamentais e lógicos mais rudimentares, num esforço de clarificação do debate e de apoio à assunção de posições individuais.

This paper looks into two of the main challenges that Translation Studies as an academic discipline is facing for the future. First, Translation Studies will have to negotiate the need for variety and the risk of fragmentation. Three aspects of this problem are investigated: the increasing fuzziness of the translation concept, the increasing number of possible relevant contexts, and the conflicts between ever more model disciplines. A second challenge concerns the tension between 'empirical' and 'postmodern' approaches within the field, which the paper tries to reduce to its most rudimentary logical basics in an effort to clarify the debate and encourage self-positioning.

Translation studies is sometimes said to be one of the academic success stories of the last one or two decades, "perhaps *the* discipline of the 1990s", as one claim has it (quoted by Baker 1997:xiii). Such statements must be understood with a measure of caution insofar as they reflect the enthusiasm of the discipline's insiders, while also illustrating the pep-talk rhetoric one has come to associate with blurbs and prefaces. In reality, we are still waiting for the intrinsic importance of translation to be recognised institutionally, e.g. by a more systematic presence of Translation Studies in our universities. True, there has been a proliferation of vocational translation programmes worldwide these last few decades, but this process has been powered by practical necessity (we need more translators in a globalised world) and not by the intellectual thrust or the social impact of Translation Studies as a discipline. Sadly, numerous people who graduate from our universities as accredited specialists of language, literature or culture, still have only the most rudimentary notions about translation. Acknowledgement by the 'outside' world is not always forthcoming, but new initiatives and projects within the discipline are of course mushrooming everywhere, making it very hard to catch up and then to keep up with the fast pace of research. What was only a trickle of new publications until the mid-1980s or so has now become an unstoppable

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flood of exciting new material. Moreover, Translation Studies, a strongly interdisciplinary field if ever there was one, has sprawled out in all possible directions within the humanities. This state of affairs has created a need for various forms of initiation, guidance and reference, which scholars and publishers have been quick to meet. I listed some of these important study and reference materials in the Bibliography below. In this paper I shall take a forward-looking perspective and speculate about possible future developments for the discipline. What I propose to do is consider a number of deep-rooted tensions and pressures that exist in Translation Studies today and project them into the future, presenting them in the form of challenges that the discipline will have to take up one way or another. It seems to me that there are – at least! – three main challenges awaiting us:

1. we shall have to negotiate the tension between the growing fragmentation and specialisation within the field, on the one hand, and the need for collaboration and integration, on the other (what is at stake here is the institutional autonomy and conceptual coherence of the discipline);
2. we shall have to address the epistemological divide that is now running through the discipline, creating an unproductive stand-off between so-called 'empirical' and 'postmodern' approaches (what is at stake here is the discipline's academic status and validity as a research field);
3. we shall have to pay greater attention to the material conditions and constraints (space, time, medium, technology...) under which translation and communication generally take place (and what is at stake here is the relevance of Translation Studies for the increasingly media-dominated world of today and tomorrow).

We shall have space here to deal with the first two only of these three challenges, leaving the third one to be discussed by Yves Gambier (see his contribution to the present volume). The idea is to sketch a simple 'mental map' of Translation Studies as it presents itself to tomorrow's generations of students and researchers, and thereby to create a platform for debate.

1 Fragmentation and integration

The first challenge concerns the tension between the growing fragmentation and specialisation within the field, and the need for collaboration and integration.

For a branch of knowledge to be recognised as a 'discipline', two things seem to be called for. First, a discipline depends on social, institutional validation. This means that society acknowledges and empowers the field of study by giving it a place in its taxonomy of sciences, by allocating resources to it, by creating teaching, certification and research structures, and so on. In this respect, Translation Studies emerged from nowhere in the post-war period and it has by now gone a long way towards establishing itself, even though, as we have just indicated, quite some distance remains to be travelled.

Besides institutional validation, there is obviously a conceptual side to the idea of an academic discipline. Does its intellectual work possess sufficient autonomy, inner coherence, scope and relevance? The cultural scope and social relevance of translation and its study should be obvious (one hopes). But does Translation Studies also show enough autonomy and inner coherence? This is a moot point. If one hesitates to answer the question in the affirmative, this may well be because of three striking features of modern Translation Studies: first, today our concept of translation is much more open and fluid than ever before; second, we are all insisting more and more on the need to contextualise translation, but we may be thinking of different types of contexts; third, we are all borrowing ideas and methods from an ever widening circle of other disciplines and schools of thought.

These three shifts are certain to extend into the future. They are putting a great strain on the autonomy and coherence of the discipline, creating a deeply ironic paradox. Indeed, the more Translation Studies is coming into its own, the more its central object – translation – gets eroded and dispersed. The harder we look at translation, the softer our analytical focus appears to be getting and the more the specificity of our object seems to be dissolving. Translation Studies had to be invented, apparently, to show how blurred and how elusive a concept translation really is.

Prototypical versus More Protean Concepts of Translation

Things used to be simpler until (say) the 1980s. Translation scholars of earlier generations mainly concentrated on translation 'pure and simple'. Research dealt with what was considered to be translation 'proper'. Putting it in the terminology of cognitive science, it dealt with prototypical forms of translation rather than with the more eccentric or doubtful specimens of the category: it bestowed all its scholarly favours on the 'robins' and the 'sparrows' of translation and paid scant attention to the 'ostriches' or 'penguins' of the category.

Prototypes of translation should be thought of as showing cultural variation and historical change. What was a typical translation at a given point in cultural space

and time may well appear to be an uncharacteristic instance of the category to us today; perhaps it has even entered the perimeter of a different category. Be that as it may, within our Western culture, the current blueprint or prototype of translation could be described in terms of the following four components. Translation involves

1. the rewriting of a source text
2. across a linguistic borderline,
3. whereby a core of identical or equivalent features is preserved at some level (e.g. content, form, intention, effect...),
4. enabling the target text to function as a substitute for the source text.

Until not so long ago, translation scholars tended to routinely dismiss or simply ignore translations that failed to conform to this basic model.

Translation scholars today are definitely using a much more open and flexible concept of translation. Just glance at the programmes of recent Translation Studies conferences, or at the topics that people within the field are currently writing their articles and dissertations about. Less typical extensions, applications or manifestations of the translation concept, which would formerly have been sidelined without a further thought, are presently taking up a major part of our research effort. In order to illustrate this, we shall now revisit the four components of the prototype definition just given, showing in which ways much of today's research flatly contradicts or ignores it. Diagram 1 may be used to follow my argument.

When referring to translation **as the rewriting of a source text**, our definition seems to posit written communication as the prototype of all communication. But, increasingly, scholars are directing their attention to various kinds of translation which are partly or wholly oral: interpreting, screen translation, surtitling in the theatre or opera house, and so on. At the same time, ethnographically oriented scholars find greater recognition for their research into the forms and functions of translation in illiterate or semi-literate societies. At the other end of the scale of technological advance, translation is increasingly being practised in computer environments where new digital applications such as automatic speech-recognition and speech-synthesis are in the process of eroding the very distinction between oral and written...

The definition speaks of texts (source texts, target texts), but some researchers today would like us to construe translation as a phenomenon also occurring *below* the text level and *above* it. Thus, below the text level, they highlight the presence of non-translated elements within texts that we categorise as 'translations' (e.g. translations

containing untranslated stretches of source-text material], as well as the hidden presence of translated elements within texts that we regard as being 'original', 'untranslated' discourse (e.g. news reports containing covertly translated citations from foreign sources). The computer-assisted study of translated corpora might be quoted as an example of what is to be gained by transcending the level of individual texts. Being situated at opposite ends, both infra-textual and supra-textual forms of translation analysis encourage us to try to overcome our fixation on the more or less arbitrary units of discourse that we call 'texts' and to spend more time studying the mechanisms of 'discourse' within and across all manner of linguistic barriers.

Moreover, Translation Studies has recently demonstrated that the 'source text' is definitely not always the only 'source' or model for the translation. Consider, for example, the case of pseudo-translations, where there is no source text at all. Or consider the reality of translational intertextuality, with translators having recourse to intermediary versions, different source-text editions, the critical tradition, etc. Such forms of translational intertextuality can take a positive orientation (the translator reverently or obediently copies or borrows elements, strategies, phrases...) or a negative one (disapproval is expressed by avoidance strategies or even by an overt polemic with earlier authors, editors and translators). Much attention has also been given to the major impact of target-culture domestic values, norms and constraints, which operate at every stage of the translating process, playing as decisive a role in the shaping of the translation as the specific features of the source text. Last but not least, poststructuralist thinking too has been instrumental in the dethroning of the source text, namely by highlighting the semantic incompleteness and instability of the original. Indeed, we now tend to see translations as taking an active part in the never-ending process of defining/ /redefining the original text's semantic and communicative potentialities. Many of us seem to have jettisoned the idea that the source text embodies a single, stable and transhistorical intention or meaning which can be recovered in its sameness by the translator (or by the translation scholar, for that matter).

Translation takes us **across a linguistic borderline**, or so the conventional definition has it. But Translation Studies today is happily engaging with phenomena which belie this seemingly fundamental condition: the non-translation of words, passages, even entire texts; untranslated subtitling for hearing-impaired viewers; intralingual translation (i.e. between language varieties); intersemiotic or cross-medium translation; sign-language interpreting; etc.

Moreover, translation research inspired by sociolinguistics and postcolonial studies has also undermined the definition's implicit suggestion that languages are sovereign and mutually distinct systems and that texts are always composed in one language only. Witness the attention recently given to the linguistic hybridity characterising the so-called new englishes (untranslated discourse combining different languages and cultural voices and thus being a site of linguistic difference, contact and interpenetration) or to the translation of multilingual texts (individual texts combining different languages and language varieties).

As to the related notions of source/target **substitution** and **equivalence** (with substitution happening *on the basis* of assumed equivalence), contemporary translation theory has tended to dissolve the binary source-target link into a complex web of multiple potential textual relations. Most of us have called off the search for the Holy Grail of 'perfect' or 'ideal' translation equivalence and are ready to envisage many different kinds and degrees of source-target linking. This pluralism empowers translation scholars to take an active interest in phenomena which would formerly have been denounced as forms of 'adaptation' (or worse) and thereby placed beyond the pale of the discipline. Such phenomena include translations which pursue a strongly different Skopos and which may be labeled variously as 'adaptations', 'offshoots', 'imitations', 'rewritings', and the like.

Similarly, translation scholars have lifted the ban on the study of various modernist and postmodern experiments in literary translation, which parade their non-equivalence and overtly display their textual intervention. To illustrate this last point, one may think of the huge – even disproportionate, when you come to think of it – amounts of attention lavished on the 'phonological' translations by the American poets Celia and Louis Zukofsky of the Latin poet Catullus: these experimental translations take sound correspondences between Latin words and English words as the basis of their renderings. Leaving the literary domain, we might also quote topical research themes such as software and website localisation, terminology and technical writing, international business communication and marketing strategies, and so on.

It is crucial to add here that postcolonial studies has caused an upsurge of interest in non-Western translational practices. Among other things, this trend reveals a healthy commitment to theoretical openness: it shows translation theory's willingness to accommodate translation models other than those which our own experiences and traditions have made us familiar with. To bring about a fruitful dialogue between Western and non-Western ways of thinking about translation is

undoubtedly another major challenge for translation scholars of the future, indeed one which should be added to the list of three above.

Clearly, the trend to open up our definitions of translation has gone hand in hand with the growing empirical orientation of the discipline. Many students of translation in the last thirty years or so have wisely turned away from abstract or 'ideal' theoretical definitions of source-target equivalence, to address the reality of translation and thus to come to grips with all its inevitable diversity. Not surprisingly, this more empirical orientation has also entailed a closer consideration of the translations' multiple contexts.

Translation: Texts versus Contexts

However generously or strictly defined, you can look at translation with different types of lenses. You can zoom in on the thing 'itself', on translation 'as such', and so try to pin down the supposedly 'intrinsic' or 'essential' features which differentiate it from other verbal texts, acts, or processes. Alternatively, you can fit a conceptual lens that has a wider angle and that will let you see how translations function in their context, i.e. how they relate to the various circumstances in which they were produced, distributed and/or received. The special appeal of this second, contextualising approach is, of course, that the correlations between text and context may lead us to hypothetical causal explanations for *why* things are the way they are.

Inevitably, the contextualising approach opens up a huge expanse of research options. Indeed, just about anything may be considered as a possible 'cause' or 'effect' of translation, as a contributing factor, or as a contiguous reality that sheds an interesting light on the translations or translators you are studying. Thus, when one considers the conventional double communicative chain of translation:

Sender 1 – Text 1 – Receiver 1 = Translator = Sender 2 – Text 2 – Receiver 2,

it goes without saying that the list of relevant contexts may encompass both the 'source' side of the chain (e.g. the intentions of the original's author, his/her position in the source culture, his/her use of the source language, and so on) and the 'target' side (e.g. the ideology of the translator, the critical reception of the translation or its commercial success, and so forth). In an increasing number of cases, attention given to the multiple contexts of translation helps us see that 'source' contexts and 'target' contexts may be interlocked to the point of becoming indistinguishable. For example, when one studies translation between Spanish and English in Puerto Rico, where could one confidently draw a line between source culture and target culture?

Looking at the range of possibly relevant contexts from a different angle, we may distinguish between those which are of an objective, a subjective, and an intersubjective nature. Objective contextual factors one may want to consider include the cognitive make-up of the human mind, the translator's access to texts, available knowledge and technology, and so on. Circumstances having a subjective (or idiosyncratic or unique) nature include the translator's private life, his/her personal ambitions and obsessions, accidents in the transmission of texts, and the like. And then there is of course the entire gamut of social or intersubjective realities stretching between the objective and the subjective: conventions and norms, genre constraints, institutions, ethics, ideology, ideas about language, teaching practices, etc.

Whichever way one looks at it, the range of possibly relevant contexts for translation is truly mind-boggling. We should perhaps add that the search for correlations and explanations doesn't oblige one to accept the hierarchy implicitly conveyed by the 'translation/context' model. Indeed, when using the model of 'translation' and 'context', as we have done so far, we seem to be taking for granted the primacy of translation and translations. The various contexts come into the picture only insofar as we need supporting evidence and material for explanatory hypotheses. But you may equally well turn this hierarchy upside down, taking some 'context' of translation as your primary focus and giving only a supporting status to the study of the translations. Thus, it would not be outlandish to believe (for example) that the central object of Translation Studies is the dynamics of culture, rather than translated texts. Such interests and priorities can be negotiated in different ways, of course. How we balance them – and which type of contexts we regard as relevant to translation, to begin with – will largely depend on the theory that we are working with. The theory that frames one's research always directs one's observations and guides one's interpretations. But here is the rub: there are so many different theories around.

A Widening Circle of Model Disciplines

The plethora of theories and methodologies in Translation Studies arises from the fact that its practitioners come from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds and continue applying the principles and procedures of their original specialism. The following list brings together what I take to be the most important model disciplines for Translation Studies, adding for each one which perspective or concern they have contributed to the field. To take the first one in the list, anthropology has made us realise that knowledge of different cultures always passes through a process of 'cultural' translation as well as requiring 'linguistic' forms of translation. As Western

academics, we can only understand a social reality (e.g. kinship systems) observed in a non-Western culture by matching it against our own experience and knowledge. Far from being mere 'technical' problems, the linguistic difficulties of translating their terminology into ours is therefore profoundly linked with problems of understanding and identity. In the same way, new themes and concerns and new concepts and methods have been imported from a vast array of disciplines:

- Anthropology, Ethnography: how understanding of unknown cultures is a process that involves 'cultural' forms as well as 'linguistic' forms of translation;
- Bible studies, Religion: how the Bible and other sacred texts can be made (and have been made) to function in a diversity of contexts (without loss of their divine message);
- Cognitive Science, including Psycholinguistics: what goes on inside the translator's mind and how learning strategies might be optimised;
- Computer Linguistics, including Automatic Language Processing and Machine Translation: how to make translation cheaper, faster and/or more reliable through the use of computers;
- Cultural Studies: how translation and discourse about translation are instrumental in serving certain ideological agendas, but can also be used for counter-hegemonic purposes;
- Epistemology and Philosophy of Science: how translation theory can chart its own history, assess its methodological status and position itself in the field of knowledge;
- Gender Studies, Women Studies, Queer Studies: how translation practices have tended to be gendered; how translation and discourse about translation show a gender-based bias that needs to be challenged;
- Hermeneutics: how translations embody an interpretation of their original (translation as interpretation) and how translation is a powerful metaphor for every act of interpretation (interpretation as translation);
- Mathematical Game Theory: how translation can be formalised or modelled in terms of decision processes;
- Philosophy: how philosophy's striving for absolute truth (metaphysics e.g.) might be reconciled with the necessity of using a specific linguistic medium; how to link the philosophical project with the im/possibility of translation;

- Postcolonial Studies: how language differences are created, negotiated and resolved in non-symmetrical intercultural encounters and how marginalised cultures may resort to emancipatory translational action;
- Semiotics: how general theories of text transfer and semiotic conversion might be constructed to correlate translation with other sign-processing operations;
- Sociology: how the translator interacts with other participants in the communication process; which norms and other social constraints will influence his/her attitudes and behaviour;
- Systems Theory: how theories of systems and polysystems can help us gain a more sophisticated understanding of the patterning of translators' behaviour in culture...

The list of relevant fields also contains linguistics and literary studies, of course, which have unquestionably been the two dominant model disciplines in the recent past. To a significant extent, it would indeed seem possible to write the story of Translation Studies in terms of its multiple interactions with linguistics and literary studies, each with its own complex history and endless ramifications. For linguistics, consider the impact of structuralism, ethnolinguistics, generative grammar, functional linguistics, text linguistics and discourse analysis, pragmatics, relevance theory, psycholinguistics, cognitive linguistics, corpus linguistics, etc. For literary studies, consider comparative literature, literary history, literary theory, Russian formalism, the Prague school, structuralism, poststructuralism, reader-oriented theories, gender-based theories, postcolonial studies, and so on.

The summaries we have just given for the various model disciplines are ludicrously inadequate, but our inventory may nevertheless manage to convey a sense of the enormous dependence of Translation Studies on other disciplines and schools of thought. Just about every single discipline that deals with problems of language, text, meaning, communication, or culture can apparently offer relevant viewpoints, concepts, hypotheses, etc., and most of them have effectively influenced the development of the discipline.

The theoretical plurality of Translation Studies does not need to be a problem, of course. Difference and conflict can stimulate dialogue and generate new insights; different ideas may be cross-fertilised; and so on. To be sure, a 'discipline' (branch of knowledge) that sets too much store by 'discipline' (order, regulation, absence of anarchic plurality) dooms itself to stagnation. The plurality of translation theory might

therefore be an asset, enabling it to develop as or into an interdiscipline. It is in an expansive spirit of such optimism that certain scholars have even suggested that Translation Studies is now set to take a leading role within neighbouring disciplines such as comparative literature or cultural studies. In the best-case scenario, our inter-discipline might become a super-discipline or a hyper-paradigm, straddling the more traditional disciplines and finally perhaps even absorbing them.

But then, cynics may reply that 'interdiscipline' is little more than a euphemism for 'non-discipline' and that the extreme diversity of approaches is really more of an obstacle than an asset. Mutual ignorance and misunderstandings are rife, leading to non-communication between individuals and groups, or to communication being at cross-purposes. It causes well-intentioned scholars to start dabbling, often blundering, in methodologies for which they were never properly trained. The rivers that run through the landscape of Translation Studies are just too many and too deep. This view is possibly a bit too gloomy. The reality of translation is multifarious and hugely complex, so it might be unrealistic to expect the study of translation to be anything other than rich in thematic and methodological diversity. It is probably all right for us to pursue our own respective specialisms in a climate of pragmatic eclecticism – that is, insofar as we manage to keep an open mind, avoid dogmatism, and try to take on board what our colleagues have achieved before us. Indeed, it is not unreasonable to expect that every research effort should not only start with but also proceed from a *status quaestionis*, a review of the state of the art.

These last observations have brought us to the second main challenge for Translation Studies, which situates itself in the domain of epistemology and methodology. It is indeed in such terms that we have to describe what may well be the deepest split within Translation Studies today and in the foreseeable future: between the adherents of post-modernism and those who follow a more empirical line. On this point, as I see it, there is very little prospect for ecumenical collaboration or integration, for finding much shared ground.

Empiricism versus Postmodernism

Let us turn to that second challenge: how to deal with the epistemological divide that is currently running through the discipline, creating a stand-off between so-called empirical and so-called postmodern approaches? This conflict of methods is not specific to Translation Studies, of course; it is raging all over the humanities. For an

interesting manifestation of it within Translation Studies, witness the recent exchange of views in *Target* following a position paper by Andrew Chesterman and Rosemary Arrojo.

How this conflict is ultimately going to be resolved, nobody can tell. We all know that the success of a school of thought depends not only on its intrinsic intellectual or ethical merits, but also on external, sociological factors such as power, prestige, notions of political correctness, and so on, not forgetting very mundane realities such as marketing strategies of academic publishers, tenure and promotion policies, the internationalisation and commercialisation of academia, the gravitational force of Anglo-American universities, and so on. We shall have to wait and see, or, better still, get involved and make our case for what we believe in.

I lack the time and philosophical expertise to unpack the debate in all its historical and philosophical complexity. But then, my intention here is precisely to reduce the debate to its most rudimentary logical basics, assuming that the pedagogical merits of such an operation are worth the risk of oversimplification. I have managed to achieve my aim at least in one respect: my argument will be spelled out in what follows in such a way that it lends itself to being summarised in the form of a table: see diagram 2.

What might appear at a first glance to be the bone of contention between the empirical and the postmodern orientations is the notion of objectivity or descriptive neutrality. Is it possible to acquire knowledge about the world – e.g. about translations and their functions in culture – that is neutral, observer-independent and value-free? Most people today would answer that question with a clear ‘no’. Cultural reality presents a hugely complex picture and the researcher cannot help being part of it as a speaker of language, as a social agent, as an ethical subject. However hard you work on your methodology to try and prevent the *object-level* of cultural reality (that which you are studying) from getting tangled up with the *meta-level* (where your observatory is located), you can never be fully successful in this. Our scholarly discourse *about* culture is always also, to some extent, a discourse *of* that culture.

Researchers who refuse to acknowledge this subject/object entanglement seldom escape criticism for the naiveté of their epistemological optimism. They will be called names such as ‘empiricist’ or ‘positivist’. Such criticisms have been targeted, quite rightly, at some of the earlier work done in descriptively oriented Translation Studies of the 1960s and 1970s. But those were the days when Translation Studies was still in its institutional infancy and very much hampered in its growth by an excess of normative, impressionistic and anecdotal thinking. The claim of scientificity in those days had a polemical edge and a specific strategic purpose: it was a lever to help Translation Studies emancipate itself and get established as an academic discipline. Remember

also that the scientific optimism of French structuralism was still very much in the air. Most 'empiricisms' today are of a less ambitious and more cautious kind. Most empirical scholars would wholeheartedly agree with postmodernists on the basic premise that descriptive neutrality is just not feasible. So there is a common platform here and the crucial question becomes: where do we go from here? It is only at this point that the paths of empiricism and postmodernism begin to diverge. In descriptions of today's empirical research, the words 'objectivity' or 'neutrality' may perhaps be used to collocate with words such as 'effort', 'ideal', 'maximally' or 'attempt', but no longer with a word such as 'claim'. To suggest anything other would be mistaken and intellectually unfair.

Empirical Work

Empirical research is defined by a paradox: it humbly accepts that a full and neutral understanding of the endlessly complex universe is never going to be possible; at the same time, it refuses to yield to scepticism, relativism or agnosticism, and is driven by the ambition to build models of the world that should at least be as observer-independent and correct *as is humanly possible*. In this sense, empirical research could be said to have a distinct utopian quality about it: its aims and ambitions are modelled on the dream of objective knowledge, which it knows to be unattainable. But the model is a powerful one. The belief that reality is never completely random drives the search for regularities and causal correlations (for ante-cedents, pressures, enabling conditions, influences, contributory factors...). Hence the attempts to reconstruct conventions, norms, laws, cognitive mechanisms, and the like, which enable us to account for the patterning that may be observed in reality. The knowledge of such regularities may also be used to build hypothetical predictions about what is likely to happen in the future when a certain line of action is (or is not) followed by the translator or when certain conditions are (not) fulfilled. Much energy is spent on the elaboration of descriptive methodologies and on the definition of concepts. Empirical research thus has a self-critical dimension built into it. In most cases, the methodologies are borrowed from other empirically oriented disciplines. Their role is to help reduce the observer-dependence of the results and thus to make the leap from object-level to meta-level as successful as possible. The results of the analysis are offered to the research community to elicit scrutiny and critical dialogue. To make that possible, transparency and explicitness are indispensable virtues of the scholar's research report.

In ethical terms, empirical research is informed by a minimalist position. Once it is under way, the research effort should try to follow its own logical course and avoid

being deflected by ethical or social (or other external) considerations. For example, no moral scruple or political conviction, however noble, should allow you to get away with a false syllogism or with manipulating the data. Once it gets going, the empirical research follows one ethical imperative only, namely that of intellectual honesty. But this is emphatically not to say that empirical research necessarily suffers from the 'ivory tower' or the 'armchair' syndrome, or that it shows the indifference, complacency, or 'scientistic', 'formalistic' or 'technocrat' attitudes sometimes ascribed to it. On the contrary, many empirical researchers do cherish a social utopia of some sort and carry their work out within an ethical perspective. This happens most effectively through the choice of which 'area' or 'problem' they want to investigate. Thus, studying the spread of Shakespeare (translated, untranslated) in England's former colonies would seem to pay a greater ethical or social dividend to most of us today than studying (say) Chaucer's syntax in his translation of Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae*. The empirical scholar's ethical commitment finds its achievement when the work is done, in the simple act of handing over the results of the research to society. Knowledge is a key to reform. Remedies for society's ills are more likely to be effective if the medical science behind the diagnosis and the therapy is correct to start with.

Postmodern Approaches

On the whole, postmodern approaches seem to be taking up more and more of the available working space within the humanities, sometimes to the point of forcing empirically oriented scholars into a defensive position. Consider the success these days of approaches informed by gender studies, postcolonial studies, deconstruction, and cultural studies. Incidentally, we should remember that it is not so much the object as the type of approach that defines the difference between empirical and postmodern intellectual traditions. Therefore, far be it from me to suggest that the areas investigated by postcolonial studies or gender studies (for example) would be impervious to empirical forms of research as defined above. I am here referring to 'postcolonial studies' and 'gender studies' as these paradigms are currently understood and practised by the majority of their adherents. And these seem to follow a line for which 'postmodern' may serve as a convenient shorthand.

Epistemologically, postmodern thinking settles for the impossibility of observer-independent and value-free knowledge. It adopts a sceptical and relativist attitude and thus develops a highly self-reflexive stance far beyond the epistemological and methodological self-probings of the empirical scholar. Empirically inspired attempts to describe regularities and to hypothesise causal explanations are reviewed unfavourably; as opposed to them, the postmodern scholar will emphasise the

contingency and irreducible historicity of cultural events. S/he will typically highlight the loose ends that refuse to fit into the general patterns and hypotheses: singularity, individual agency, creativity, the 'remainder', effects of unconscious and therefore uncontrollable pressures (e.g. psychoanalytical or ideological ones).

Systematic methodologies are shunned and the merging or reversing of subject/object positions is encouraged. Thus, along with philosophers and authors, the practising translators become the scholar's closest associates. If one's attempt to separate the researcher from the research object is bound to fail, why not accept that failure and make creative use of it by cultivating and celebrating the mixing up of different roles and positions? This rapprochement between translator and translation scholar goes far beyond giving the two equal 'importance', however that notion is defined. Postmodernism goes as far as to radically question the very distinction between the two positions. In this context, the use of personal and playfully creative discourses that flout the conventions of academic writing becomes a hallmark of critical authenticity. In epistemological terms, the stubborn postmodern refusal to abandon its scepticism shows a streak of earthy realism. In ethical terms, however, the postmodern approaches definitely claim the higher ground. There is an ethically inspired impetus behind their resistance to the empirical search for patterns and general principles and to the danger of authoritarian reduction and exclusion that it poses. Efforts are made to awaken the translators' consciousness and to give them greater visibility, more power and a wider-ranging creative autonomy. There is strong and explicit political commitment towards oppressed cultural minorities or other marginalised groups.

It is perhaps good to realise, though, that this dream of a just, ethically based society – something like a post-capitalist, post-patriarchal, truly post-colonial society – is essentially no less idealistic and unattainable than the empirical striving for observer-independent knowledge. Thus, whereas it attaches itself to different objects and objectives, a strong utopian drive is at least one characteristic that the two have in common. We might add to this that postmodern intellectuals usually remain rather vague about the exact nature of their social vision, about that vision's rationale, and about the exact policies needed to make it happen.

To conclude

Nobody can really predict the future of Translation Studies. But hopefully, I have managed to show where some of the main roads that lie ahead seem to be leading us, and at which points we shall have to pause, reflect, perhaps quarrel among ourselves, and decide where we want to go. This is not such a trivial point as it may seem. Many travellers have gone astray because they got their bearings wrong from the beginning.

Diagram 1: A More Protean Concept of Translation

components of the traditional translation prototype	and its tacit assumptions	topics of current TS research showing willingness to go far beyond the prototype of 'normal' translation
the rewriting of a ST...	<i>translation is written</i>	- interpreting (various types and contexts) - screen translation (film, television) - surtitling (theatre, opera) - translation in illiterate or semi-literate societies - computer translation (involving automatic speech recognition and speech synthesis)
	<i>translation happens between two texts</i>	- infra-textual: non-translated elements within 'translations' and translated elements within 'non-translations' - supra-textual: corpus-based research
	<i>each TT derives exclusively from its ST</i> <i>the ST is a semantically stable entity</i>	- pseudo-translation - translational intertextuality (second-hand translation, plagiarism, eclectic use of different ST editions and critical commentaries...) - impact of target-culture norms and constraints - the inherent incompleteness and semantic instability of STs
... across a linguistic borderline...		- non-translation (words, passages, entire texts) - (untranslated) subtitling for hearing-impaired viewers - intralingual translation (across language varieties) - intersemiotic (cross-medium) translation - sign-language interpreting
	<i>languages are totally distinct systems and STs are written in one language only</i>	- language mixing in multicultural societies (pidgin, creole, new englishes...) - linguistic hybridity as a feature of individual STs
... whereby a core of identical or equivalent features is preserved at some level (e.g. content, form, intention, effect)...		- TTs which pursue a different Skopos - adaptations, offshoots, rewritings - modernist and postmodern experiments in literary translation - software and website localisation
... enabling the TT to function as a substitute for the ST		- terminology and technical writing - international business communication and marketing strategies

Diagram 2: Methodological Positions

	common platform: awareness of the impossibility of constructing knowledge of cultural reality that is observer-independent and value-free	
	YES	NO
Search for hypothetical conceptual models of reality that are as observer-independent <u>as possible</u> ?	epistemological utopianism - search for causality (causes, antecedents, enabling conditions, influences, contributory factors...) and regularity (conventions, norms, laws, cognitive mechanisms...) - possibility of building hypotheses regarding future developments	- radical scepticism, relativism, self-reflexive stance - emphasis on contingency, on the irreducible historicity of cultural events, on singularity, on individual agency, on the 'remainder' - emphasis on uncon-scious, uncontrollable pressures (e.g. psychoanalytical or ideological ones)
	- development of methodological tools to help distinguish object-position and meta-position - privileged partners: other empirically oriented research disciplines - general policy of discursive transparency and critical dialogue	- avoidance of a systematic methodology; merging or reversing of subject/object positions - privileged partners: practising translators, philosophers - development of personal and playfully creative discourses
Search for hypothetical conceptual models of reality that are as value-free <u>as possible</u> ?	YES - <i>during the research effort</i>: conscious attempt to avoid interference between the research agenda and other (political, ethical, personal ...) agendas - <i>before the research effort</i>: by selecting the 'cases', 'problems' and 'corpora' to be investigated - in terms of the <i>outcome</i> of the research effort: by attempting to offer translators and society reliable analyses as a sound basis for future action	ethical utopianism - ethically inspired resistance to the danger of authoritarian reduction and exclusion inherent in any search for patterns and general principles - effort to raise the consciousness of present and future translators and to empower them - political commitment towards oppressed minorities or marginalised groups
	NO	
	YES and NO	NO

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