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Screen/Media Translation: A Key to the World of Knowledge?

I happen to know several engineers who trust that scholarship is different from everyday knowledge because, unlike everyday wisdom, scholarly insights lead into safety and truth. This is at least their view on scholarship. Whatever my respect may be for engineering and other great performances, I would tend to stress the opposite. Not only in matters of translation, but also in areas such as language, literature, etc., researchers tend to share much more doubts and questions than the man in the street. - Is this due to the Chinese wall between positive and so-called human sciences? As far as I know, Albert Einstein and the idea of relativity do not really belong to the humanities: scholarship as such is at stake, it reveals as well what is *not well known* as it does make clear what we actually know, - at least *hic et nunc*, - and for the time being.

Another preliminary issue is *the name* of our discourse on (media) translation. Years ago, during those years when Translation Studies started becoming aware of itself and its tasks, quite a few colleagues have written discussions about methodology; several among them called the (scholarly) study of translation phenomena *translation criticism*. I would rather avoid applying the idea of criticism to any kind of research activity because, as say literary criticism, it maintains the idea of "bad", "better", "good" or "excellent": as long as there is no clear scholarly basis for the establishment of the *quality* idea, we better avoid the use of the language of the man-in-the-street. The more since the *criticism* idea is also narrowly linked with the assumption that our focus is mainly on the text (only?) and on the translator/writer/author. As we have shown in our article *On Describing Translations* (Lambert & Van Gorp 1985), where translated literature was the central question, for obvious historical reasons (Lambert 2006: "Is Translation Studies too Literary?"), there is so much more in heaven and on earth than translators and translations in the translation phenomenon. The truth is that not all representatives of our young discipline want to open up their investigation that far (and this is one of the main reasons why the new discipline is in trouble in its relationships with neighbor disciplines).

In relation with research and criticism, Media translation (and/or Screen translation, which according to Yves Gambier is not at all the same thing) deserve to be treated like translation tout court, just like (court/community) interpreting. And it is - again - quite embarrassing that there are still so many neglected/abandoned areas in the dynamic world of translation in the age of globalization: it may be relevant to consider the history of Translation Studies as a success story, it has been very relevant to blame many disciplines for ignoring the translation component as an ignored area on their *territory*, but on their own territory, translation stories are also *struck with blindness*. It is because of an *obvious onesidedness* that translation scholars fail themselves to position translation within the full world of knowledge: again, there is so much more than translated literature in heaven and on earth...

When Latin-American centers focus on media/translation, our needs and shortcomings are the more striking, since both media and translation reshape very central geographical and intellectual zones of our contemporary globe.

One of the reasons why translation is more than ever an embarrassing issue for University in general, as such, than, say, for "the languages (and literatures)" only is the fact that in the age of globalization, not any option in terms of languages to be used (the languages of communication) is aproblematic, - and it is due to the underdevelopment of functional views that both translation scholars and their colleagues from many *neighbor disciplines* ignore the invisible role played by translation (e.g. as part of most texts, in particular in media communication): translation is always involved in one way or the other, be it "under the waterline", i.e. in a hidden and/or unofficial way. The translation issue is a central component of this implicitness in matters of communication. The various academic websites clearly illustrate how reductionistic the worldview of almost all universities remains. And the media landscape is another sensitive (or critical) area for all universities: in most research centers and countries around the world, the language issue is not on the agenda of communication departments, it is abandoned to linguists and linguistics. But linguists and linguistics have their own agenda, and their concern in terms of the internationalization of languages and communications, in the best of cases, is reduced to the lingua franca, sometimes also to the perfect language: the languages of the media, in particular media translation and/or screen translation, and other components of the actual languages and discourses of our contemporary world of communication, are rather systematically ignored (a few linguists like David Crystal can suddenly explore enormous almost virgin areas of linguistics (he is called the father of the "Internet Linguistics"; his encyclopedic works are in all good libraries), e.g. the languages and discourses of the media. A question of organization, of competencies as well as a problem of (academic) world views? The audience taking part in this symposium may reply that such an erratic approach applies to almost any translation phenomenon. The truth is that academic internationalization/globalization are heavily indebted to the media. UNIVERSE-CITIES have good reasons for reconsidering both their research frameworks and their world views, e.g. in the distinction made between languages and the media.

Hence, let us remember that not any university worldwide runs a language policy that is in harmony with internationalization/globalization in our contemporary age, and also in the past. One of the spectacular components of this language conflict might be analyzed in the international top publications of any university, which have often been translated, revised or rewritten by other people than the author(s). Hence multilingualism, translation, the lingua franca are also an ambiguous component of budgets, budget planning, management. When also adding websites, we happen to be - finally - in the middle of our discussions on media.

Why exactly there is such a heavy incompatibility between the international world and the core business of universities, i.e. communication, will not be discussed *hic et nunc*.

It has often been stressed that translation and - even more - interpreting belong to century-old habits and skills that have developed into a professional status: Babel seems to be rooted in cultures that had their origins near the Garden of Eden. Since Babel, since the age of the canonized Greek and Roman culture, and through various continents and power regimes, learned people from all over our planet have provided us with sophisticated ideas about translation and about interpreting. But after so many centuries and so many generations of civilization, it is hard to contradict the sentence: "There is no general theory of translation" (Toury 1980). And this sentence is probably the most fundamental basis - the challenge - for academic research on translation. It simply means that our knowledge on translation is (extremely) limited. Let us avoid applying this paradox (i.e. our limited knowledge of

translation, after quite a few centuries of civilization) - to translation/interpreting in general, - and let us focus on the so-called media translation. "Nomen est omen": how could we be well informed on "media (translation)" since it is not clear at all how to distinguish between printed media (since the beginning of prints) and electronic ones (the Internet has invaded the globe since about two decades)? Much more is at stake than just definitions: within the new discipline, it has taken some time before oral translation (interpreting) was accepted as part of Translation Studies, and before interpreting has stopped being reduced to conference interpreting. As has become obvious since Walter Ong's *Orality and Literacy* (Ong 1982), the written world has kept asphyxiated - at least in terms of research - several other worlds of Learning during a few centuries. And in recent decades and in recent years, lots of new combinations/distinctions between writing and speaking or audiovisual communications have been multiplying around the world. Since the end of the 1980's, the sudden impact of the Internet and other forms of electronic media communication has left scholarship - say - almost speechless, partly because the academic world of knowledge keeps canonizing the world of print. And since the boom of electronics, besides the new combinations - and overlaps - between technologies, between text types and genres, the worldwide intercultural dissemination of new communications and new media reshuffles not only the people's communication habits, it also reshuffles our conceptual frameworks for scholarship. For the world of knowledge, it is not clear when and where *The Rise of the Network Society* (Castells 2004) has started, nor to what extent printed publications and printed media or traditional audiovisual media (cinema, television, individual camera work) belong to (what kind of) networking. - One of the first heavy consequences is, from the point of view of Translation Studies, that "translation" (and language, discourse) has very different features from the moment we distinguish between (printed/audiovisual) media translation and screen translation. Because the channels, speakers/authors, audiences, genres, discourses are so different, - not to forget the institutional rules established/imposed by various communities. By the way, it has - again - become manifest in recent weeks that media is much more than a set of new techniques and new technologies, media are one of the most influential players of our contemporary society, they interfere with national societies and they help redefining them all the time.

And it is probably not by mere coincidence that one of the innovations in research on translation happens also to be the perspective of the institutionalization, which enriches and refines that other revolution in Translation Studies, i.e. the reformulation of translation research in the - again, sociological - concept of norms. Both translation and media seem to be central in the new dynamics of societies. And both happen to be problematic categories from the perspective of universities. The world of knowledge is a beautiful and appealing concept in the academic definitions of the future, but there is no doubt about the delays and shortcomings of academic worlds. Maybe because of the institutional and organizational component.

Many years ago, I have often argued in favor of panoramic and organized scholarly approaches to translation. In a few particular discussions the very idea of mapping and world views/maps tends to leave the "non-Western" continents with a feeling of isolation, as if internationalization and globalization could ever be - just - *all in the mind*. But it cannot be denied that internationalization and globalization (and mediatization) have borrowed a substantial part of their dynamics from North-America and from Western Europe, if not from the "Western world". Already from the beginning, languages, in particular the lingua franca, have a link with 1° internationalization, 2° globalization and 3° mediatization. A few new text types / genres (?) appear to belong to the new "texts" since the 20th

Century: subtitling, dubbing and - partly - voice over, - whereas in the more recent years a further proliferation of international text types/genres is systematically associated with international communication and with new text types: email, the Internet, sms, Ipad, etc. etc. Beyond the technical features, channels and functions, the "new media" invade the more traditional ones, as can easily be illustrated by the printed media (like newspapers) or by the book production and the book market.

From the moment the market concept needs to be used, it also becomes obvious that the globalization phenomena are fluctuating and very differentiated, including in their verbal component. The distribution of dubbing/subtitling on the world level may be an important indicator (Gambier...) of the geographical, cultural and linguistic complexity of the new media landscapes. Though translation scholars have not yet reached the level of worldwide cooperation and synthetic insights, they are able to indicate some general trends, e.g. the redefinition of the so-called "countries of dubbing" and the "countries of subtitling". Due to the Internet, some other distinctions may be little by little in view, such as "the countries where English has "the monopoly of the lingua franca": while replacing the previous "lingua franca" (where and when exactly has hardly been investigated nor followed up). But the media landscape itself happens to be a remarkable illustration of the internationalization phenomenon in general to the extent that globetrotters - rather than scholars - notice easily what it means exactly: producing television programs (and advertizing) like the USA or rather like France, Germany of Latin America? The various national cultural traditions are in trouble; not as much as the distribution of oil or nuclear energy, however. All translations in all countries, and many "non translated texts (non-translation) are by definition always illustrations of particular - more or less local or national tendencies -, and most translation scholars still tend to refer almost exclusively to "national" mapping principles. But in almost all verbal communications and in the standardization - in "the making" - of the new languages, some very clear international substrates have become obvious, and hardly any linguists (or translation scholars) tend to be aware of it: the differences between oral and written discourse, or rather between various colloquial kinds of discourse (and slang) show up in everyday speech, next to "le franglais" and its variants, while media discourse is one of the privileged markets of more and more international idioms. In 1989 it was already obvious to our research(ers) that subtitling functions as one of the substrates of the new standardized languages; which reduces this particular feature to those countries where subtitling is widespread, i.e. in the "smaller" and more international countries and channels (as in Flanders, probably also in Holland). The new standardization of languages worldwide depends less than before on schools, and more and more on media, including SMS and the Internet. In countries like Spain (where a strong political power has disappeared), the language differentiation tends to be linked with the dubbing policy of television programs (and the dubbing industries). The media landscape may be(come) more and more the key to the language differentiation in countries with a colonial past as Latin-America (and the homelands).

One of the interesting components of the dynamics of languages is the interaction between various approaches to the internationalization. It is only nowadays that, for the first time, one of the research projects of the EU focuses on the position occupied by subtitling in the didactics of foreign languages: due to subtitling, it seems that bilingualism is developing better and faster in the (more) subtitling oriented countries, while on the other hand young television audiences are much less exposed to the..."lingua franca" in the countries where dubbing is dominant. Such differentiation trends illustrate the mobility of languages and communication and, probably, the flexibility of translations of all kinds as a *liaison* function between other approaches to international communication, as in the case of the

lingua franca. Universities belong to the key areas where such prominent trends become visible. But though universities claim to be the centers where research is at home, they hardly concentrate on the new dynamics of languages (and translations).

In our everyday view on translations, we may tend to also apply questions from the traditional languages and texts, i.e. from the written world. But media make use of the secondary function of *orality* (Ong 1982), language and written discourse are less clean and pure than before the media culture. Hence there are good chances that most individual translations will later need to be reinterrogated about their complex marks of internationalization. Maybe we are not yet prepared for reading them.

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