Sociological and ethnographic approaches to non-literary translation

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Prevajalska dejavnost ima kulturni pomen, prevajalci pa družbeno vlogo. Prevajalci delajo za različne institucije in prav te institucije določajo, kaj in kako se bo prevajalo, kako se bodo prevodi ocenjevali itd. V okviru sociološkega pristopa k raziskavam v prevodoslovju se ne osredotočamo na besedilo, temveč na prevajalce in na njihova dejanja, ki jih je mogoče opazovati, pa tudi na kontekst, v katerem prevajalci delujejo. Kot vse družbeno uravnavane dejavnosti tudi prevajanje usmerjajo in omejujejo norme, ki jih prevajalci v nekem okolju ponotranjijo. Prispevek obravnava ozadje sociološkega raziskovanja in predstavlja praktične ideje za raziskave statusa in vloge prevajalcev, njihovih delovnih pogojev in praks, prevajalskega trga in prevajalskih institucij. V povezavi s slednjimi je predstavljena tudi etnografski pristop k preučevanju prevajanja za Evropsko unijo (Koskinen 2008).

Ključne besede: sociological approach, ethnographic approach, translation research, socially regulated activity, translation norms, translation institutions, localism, habitus, case study, contextualisation

OVERVIEW

The paper begins by offering some background, explaining the roots of the sociological approach to translation research, going into some detail with regard to the concept of translation norms. It then makes some more practical recommendations regarding possible areas for sociological research and offers some guidelines regarding questionnaires. Finally, it concludes by looking in detail at a specific ethnographic study of EU translating. Although the focus is on sociological research, some other research possibilities (for example, into translation universals) are mentioned in passing.

THE TRANSLATION STUDIES BACKGROUND

Although it is more than three decades since the discipline became established, there is no standard research method in Translation Studies. This is presumably because the field is an increasingly interdisciplinary one that interacts not only with literary studies and linguistics (including psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics), but with other areas of study such as cognitive science, cultural studies, cultural anthropology and sociology. In the 1960s translation theory was heavily influenced by the linguistics of the time, which was dominated by a Chomskyian approach based on the ideal native speaker and language competence, or language divorced from actual use. Similarly, in translation theory, the focus was on the decontextualised original text, which had an almost "sacred" status (Arrojo 1997 in Prunč 2007), and the translation was largely seen as a copy divorced from any broader context. Within this process, the translator was largely invisible (cf. Venuti 1995) and the social context in which translation took place was not considered. There was thus little discussion by translation scholars of the cultural, cognitive and social constraints under which translators operate. An important focus of discussion at this time was the concept of equivalence, as well as more traditional questions of faithfulness (to the original) and naturalness or fluency. But as Translation Studies became established as a separate discipline, then the concepts it made use of were broadened and contextual factors were taken more into account. To some extent, this reflected changes taking place within linguistics itself, where a noticeable shift was taking place away from isolated, fabricated sentences towards the study of text or discourse as socially situated language use (cf. Beaugrande and Dressler 1981).

A new emphasis within translation theory on cultural rather than linguistic transfer became most visible in the 1980s, particularly among functional translation scholars writing in German. Within this new current, translation was conceived as an act of communication rather than transcoding, focused on messages rather

than words, thus shifting attention from formal aspects to functional and socio-cultural ones, with the text considered as an integral part of the world rather than an isolated phenomenon (Snell-Hornby 1988: 43). The dominant metaphor used was that of sending a message and the translator was seen as a mediator between the original writer and the target reader, owing loyalty to both. Translation theory thus began to take more account of many of the non-linguistic factors involved in the sociological process of translation (cf. Chesterman 1997: 33). Some of these concerns were already present in Nida's (1964) discussion of the overall communication situation of the translator, but they were widened by those such as Holz-Mänttäri (1984), who drew upon the sociological theory of action as a basis for studying translation as "purposeful intercultural interaction".

Within Translation Studies in Europe, probably the most influential challenge to the supremacy of the original text and the idea of linguistic transfer is the functional *Skopostheorie* developed primarily by Vermeer (Reiss and Vermeer 1984; Vermeer 1989). This looks at translation in terms of human behaviour or action – the particular variety of translational action based on a source text. Any action, in the sociological sense, has an aim or purpose and that of a translation can be termed its *skopos*. The aim of the translational action and the mode of realisation are negotiated with the commissioner; the source text is part of the commission. The translator is the expert responsible for the performance of the action (including translation strategy) and for its final result – the translated text as a particular variety of target text. Even when composed specifically with transcultural communication in mind, the source text is bound to the source culture, whereas the target text is "oriented towards the target culture and it is this which ultimately defines its adequacy" (Vermeer 1989: 175). The translator is thus involved in intercultural communication, not in transcoding a source text or transposing it into another language. The intentional, purposeful behaviour we are describing takes place in a particular situation, both modifying and being modified by it. In this respect, translation is like writing in general, which is both "context constrained and context creating" (Grabe and Kaplan 1996: 162).

The *skopos* approach thus focuses on the process of translating rather than its end result; it puts the translator in a wider social context and encompasses the relation with the client or commissioner, as well as that with the source-text producer and the target-text receiver. From a practical point of view, this allows translators to break away from what Wilss (1982, quoted in Nord 1997: 106) refers to as the "hypnotic compulsion" of the source text or facilitates what Vermeer (quoted in Snell-Hornby 2006: 54) calls the "dethroning" (*Entthronung*) of the source text, which becomes simply a means to a new text. The old "faithful vs. free" dilemma is thus no longer a question of absolutes, but depends entirely on the particular translation in hand and the new situation in which it exists.

Thus a gradual shift can be seen within Translation Studies: from the original text, the translation and the linguistic relations between them towards the actual process of translation and to the people involved in that process – the translator and the target audience – as well as the socio-cultural context(s) in which the process takes place. Within Translation Studies, we also talk about "turns" or paradigms which have shaped the discipline. The 1990s is strongly associated with the cultural turn (Bassnett and Lefevere 1990), which places ideas – or "memes", to use Chesterman's (1997) term – at the centre of attention: questions of ideology, cultural identity, values, power, ethics, the centre versus the periphery, the transfer of cultural elements (polysystems) and culture as a dynamic rather than static entity. This brings an increased focus on translators and the socio-cultural constraints they need to overcome, plus their role in the construction of a culture (for further discussion of the cultural turn, see Kocijančič Pokorn 2003: 187ff).

The same period also saw a new interest in what Toury (1995: 249) calls the "translation act" and in particular the cognitive aspects of this, or what goes on in the translator's head (sometimes conceived of as a "black box"). Think aloud protocols or TAPs were developed to try to gain access to decision making processes, cognitive processing and constraints on translation decisions (for more on such protocols, see Hirci in this volume). Prior to this, there was little empirical research into actual translation practice, although there was what might be called mentalistic speculation about the process involved (Lörscher 1991). But there was now a gradual acknowledgement that world knowledge, acquired through experience and socialisation and thus culture-specific, reflecting the translator's interactions with the social environment, forms part of the cognitive process. Thus Risku (2000, quoted in Prunč 2007) talks about the need to discuss both situated translation and situated cognition, including the social determinants that affect interacting subjects and institutions.

TRANSLATION NORMS

The other important development in the final decade of the last century was the appearance of Descriptive Translation Studies, associated in particular with the work of Gideon Toury. He is concerned primarily with translation as an activity in specific socio-cultural settings and with the identification of the norms that govern that behaviour and serve as the criteria by which actual instances are evaluated. Toury (1995: 53, my emphasis) stresses that translation activities have socio-cultural significance:

"'[T]ranslatorship' amounts first and foremost to being able to *play a social role*, i.e., to fulfil a function allotted by a community to the activity, its practitioners and/or their products – in a way

which is deemed appropriate in its own terms of reference. The acquisition of a set of *norms* for determining the suitability of that kind of behaviour, and for manoeuvring between all the factors which may constrain it, is therefore a prerequisite for becoming a translator within a cultural environment."

The concept of norms, which in turn draws attention to the social space in which translators act, has had a great influence on the subsequent development of Translation Studies. All translation activity is directed and constrained by norms, including institutional norms, and to play the (social) role of translator within any cultural environment one has to acquire the relevant set of norms. It is important to remember here that translation is not usually about communication between individuals but rather between institutions (in the broadest sense, including companies, non-governmental organisations, publishers, media bodies, newspapers and so on) and social groups (cf. Mossop 1990). Of course, the level of institutionalisation differs considerably, but this helps us get away from the largely misleading picture of communication between an individual writer and reader through the medium of a translator.

Norms come about when the general values or ideas of a group as to what is right and wrong, acceptable and unacceptable, are transformed into "performance instructions appropriate for and applicable to particular situations, specifying what is prescribed and forbidden, as well as what is tolerated and permitted" (Toury 1999: 14). When a translator is working within or for a particular institution there takes place a socialisation process involving feedback and its assimilation (internalisation), leading the translator to acquire what Toury (1995: 250) refers to as a "modified competence". This process of socialisation "always imply *sanctions* – actual or potential, negative as well as positive. Within the community, norms also serve as criteria according to which actual instances of behaviour are *evaluated*." (Toury 1995: 55) It is important to note here that they are not the same as individual translator idiosyncracies, nor are they rules and regulations or guidelines, which are written down: they are rather tacit agreements and conventions underlying translation that are continuously negotiated by the people and institutions involved.

Every part of the translation process is affected by norms, from the selection of what is translated to how it is translated and evaluated. They also help establish what a particular community will accept as a translation (Hermans 1999: 77-78). From a translation research point of view, they can also be seen as codes employed to decipher translator strategies and choices, and are thus linked both to production and reception. They are likely to have much more binding force within a subgroup, such as a specific body of professional translators working in a particular field between specific languages, than in a larger more heterogeneous group e.g. text producers in general (Toury 1999: 16).

TRANSLATION UNIVERSALS

In passing, we can also mention here an additional field of research inspired to a large extent by Toury's work and that is the search for probabilistic laws as to what translators are likely to do under different conditions and thus what the resultant translations will tend to be like. The way Toury (1995: 224-5) expresses it is that "the requirement to communicate in translated utterances may impose behavioural patterns of its own". The methodological starting point for descriptive-explanatory research which might lead to the identification of empirical laws of translational behaviour is always a body of translated texts. The popularity of this approach has been boosted by empirical corpus-based studies (see paper by Vintar and Fišer in this volume). Although Toury (1995:256) prefers the term "laws" because they are not inevitable and are conditional (e.g. if X, then the greater / the lesser the likelihood that Y), the more widely used term is *universals.* Baker (1993: 243) defines translation universals as "features which typically occur in translated texts rather than original utterances and which are not the result of interference from specific linguistic systems". In other words, universals are both general characteristics of translator behaviour and generic features of translations as such, rather than non-translated texts.

Two laws proposed by Toury (1995), which have had a major influence on subsequent debate are:
- the law of *interference*: "phenomena pertaining to the make-up of the source text tend to be transferred to the target text" (ibid.: 275); and
- the law of growing *standardisation* - translators tend to naturalise and normalise, and translations are characterised by "flatness" of language (ibid.: 268-270);

Other possible universals, which may of course be interconnected or overlap, are listed below:
- the *explicitation* hypothesis: translations will generally be more explicit than source texts because of the tendency of translators to simplify or spell things out (Blum-Kulka 1986)
- reduction of *repetition* (Baker 1993);
- *simplification***:** less lexical variety, lower lexical density, a heavy use of high-frequency items (Baker 1993: 180; Laviosa-Braithwaite 1996);
- *untypical lexical patterning* i.e. which is different from that found in non-translated TL texts (Mauranen 2000);
- *under representation of "unique items"* i.e. language forms and functions which lack clear linguistic counterparts in the source language (Tirkkonen-Condit 2004:178);
- *failure to lexicalise*, to use one word in the TL if there was a phrase in the SL (Schlesinger 1992);

- *lengthening:* translations tend to be longer than originals (Vinay and Darbelnet 1958) and some of the likely reasons lie in the above (cf. discussions in Chesterman 2004 and Sollamo 2008).

Some scholars, such as Pym (2007), suggest that a disposition towards "risk aversion" may also be one of the possible laws of translation behaviour. My own research (Limon 2004) has shown that the most common strategy, at least among Slovene non-literary translators could be characterised as being based on "prudence" and "capitulation" rather than "risk-taking" and "persistence" (cf. Campbell 1998). The socio-cultural role of translators as mediators of messages means that translators tend to want to be orderly, to write clearly if the *skopos* allows (their role is metaphorically "shedding light" on a text that is inaccessible to the target reader). This may help explain the tendency towards simplification and explicitation mentioned above: it is part of the translator's social role to make the reader's life easier. On the other hand, it is quite possible that the reason may lie in strategies promoted by translator training. It is hard to say, because the effects of universals on trainers, translators and readers have not yet been studied. We shall return to this issue when we talk about possible topics of sociological research, below.

A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH TO TRANSLATION

By the end of the last century, the need for a more systematic sociological approach to translation was increasingly being emphasised: the need to come up with "more comprehensive and more flexible explanations of the translational behaviour of individuals *within a societal context*" (Toury 1999: 28-29, my emphasis). A number of translation scholars (e.g. Simeoni 1998 and Wolf 1999) began to borrow concepts from the French sociologist and philosopher Pierre Bourdieu, and to apply these to translation studies (for further discussion on Bourdieu, see Pokorn in this volume). The sociological approach to translation studies looks at questions such as: the translation market, the role of the publishing industry, the social status and roles of translators, the translator's interaction with human and other resources, and translation as a social practice. In other words, it focuses on *people* and their actions in a material and social milieu. However, it can also embrace what lies behind this action: for instance, the social and political interests linked to translation practice (cf. Hermans 1997). This is particularly relevant in relation to one research area we shall discuss in more detail below, i.e. EU translating. Issues of power and ideology were discussed in more general terms during the cultural turn in the 1990s (e.g. Lefevere 1992), but as Agorni (2007) points out, such issues are unclear if not linked to the actual people involved in translation activities. Sociological research needs to take account of the complexity of

the environment in which translation takes place, being shaped by it and helping to shape it.

There is, of course, no necessity for research to pursue only one line: turns or approaches to translation theory can overlap and it is difficult, for instance, to separate the "cultural" from the "social". This is because "culture creates social structures and is shaped by existing ones" (Neidhardt 1986: 15, quoted in Wolf 2007: 5) and, as Venuti (1995: 18, my emphasis) puts it, the "viability of a translation is established by its relationship to the *cultural* and *social* conditions under which it is produced and read". Indeed it is common to talk about "sociocultural" approaches in Translation Studies (see e.g. Pym et al 2006). Moreover, one field of research may naturally lead into others. So, for example, a debate on degree of agency of individual translators naturally led to the question of translation ethics (cf. Pym 2001).[3]

The basic sociological starting point, then, is that a translation is as it is not only because of language differences and texts features, but because of translator decisions, client instructions, the brief, the deadline, working conditions, current norms, commercial factors and so on.[4] Any translation is embedded in a social context and translators are part of a social system, working for or within institutions, which determine what is translated and, often, how it is translated: as Hermans (1997: 10) puts it, translating is a "socially regulated activity".

One important concept when it comes to sociological research into translation is *localism* (Tymoczko 1999: 31-32). This refers to the development of localised research into specific cultural phenomena, involving in this case the detailed reconstruction of linguistic, cultural, historical and social contexts of translation activity (Tymoczko's book relates to Irish translation and the struggle for Irish independence – there may be some interesting parallels with Slovenia's own struggle and the role of the language and translation in defining Slovenia as a nation). Localism firmly grounds or locates translation in its environment, offering detailed pictures of specific aspects and thus providing insights into the broader situation. The main danger in what might be called a case study approach is (over-) generalisation, but although case studies only ever offer a partial picture – as in ethnography, it is always contingent (we shall say more about the ethnographic approach when discussing Koskinen 2008, below) – they do point to general patterns of translation behaviour. According to Agorni (2007: 131), localism "proliferates meaning", rather than reducing it to "coherent, but often artificial patterns". Moreover, this approach enables the researcher to follow

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[3] For research ideas relating to the question of ethics, see Williams and Chesterman 2002: 18-20.

[4] As a simple example, it is not difficult to explain on a language level the large sign *Welcome in Slovenia*, seen at the main airport and elsewhere. But a more interesting question, that relates to the kinds of factors just mentioned, is *why* such translations are produced and (expensively) disseminated.

Toury's (1995: 63) recommendation to contextualise "every phenomenon, every item, every text, every act, on the way to allotting the different norms themselves their appropriate position and valence".

It should be pretty clear by now that no translator works in a socio-cultural vacuum. Even outside a clear institutional setting, translators are under the influence of their previous education, training and experience, as well as broader ideas about what is good or bad translation, how we should translate, where the translator's loyalty should lie and so on (all such ideas differ over time and from one society or context to another). This is where Bourdieu's concept of *habitus,* referring to professional dispositions and attitudes within a given field or practice, comes in useful. Simeoni (1998: 32) borrows the term to refer to the translatorial mind or mindset, which is "the elaborate result of a personalized social and cultural history". The translator's habitus mediates between the personal and the social; it also interacts with practice. It is complementary to the concept of norms, which "without a habitus to instantiate them make no more sense than a habitus without norms" (Simeoni ibid.: 33).

POSSIBLE RESEARCH TOPICS

We shall now move on to the more practical question of what studying the sociology of translation might involve. In their beginner's guide to translation research, Williams and Chesterman (2002: 23-25) recommend workplace studies, focusing on the working lives and working conditions of professional translators. Unlike discourse based studies, the focus here is on actions rather than language. Such research relies primarily on observation, but can also involve interviews and questionnaires. One possible research area is translators' working procedures, including matters like:

- how translators use their time and how much time is really required for specific tasks;
- their contacts with other translators, language revisers, clients, subject experts;
- how and when they revise their translations;
- what use they make of reference materials, parallel texts, glossaries, etc.;
- what technical resources and aids they utilise;
- what quality control procedures are in place;
- how they are integrated into team work;
- whether they are part of a project management process.

Some further ideas can be found in Mossop 2000.

Other possible questions that focus more directly on translators themselves are:

- whether different kinds of translators work differently (e.g. literary vs. technical);
- how differently the same translator works according to the translation task;
- the influence of one type of translating on another: e.g. when strategies from legal translating are transferred to other types of text;
- what kind of translation brief (if any) is usually given and how it affects the translator's work;
- the differences between individual and team/project translating;
- whether the translator is translating into or out of his/her first language;
- differences between "bilingual" translators (e.g. Slovene/Italian) and others;
- how they keep in touch with technical developments;
- if and how they keep abreast with developments in translation theory;
- whether professional translators actually follow the principles that they were taught (e.g. do they always read the whole text first before translating?);
- what translators think about what they were taught;
- whether different educational or training models have had an influence on translator practice (e.g. those educated by the Department of Translation compared to previous generations);[5]
- how translator attitudes and strategies change over time, with experience;
- differences between older, established translators and younger translators or novices;
- the human aspects of relations with others: the interpersonal skills required;
- personalities of translators and interpreters;
- what translators think about their work and role;
- what other people think about translators (e.g. articles, interviews or reviews in the press relating to translation; e.g. views of commissioners or readers).

Another related research area is professional associations of translators (Slovene and international), looking at issues such as: membership, certification procedures, the employment status of members, the code of ethics, the benefits of membership, professional development programmes, publications, the influence on policy at national and international level, and so on.

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[5] For research ideas relating to translator training, see Williams and Chesterman 2002: 25-27.

At the institutional level, potential research issues will cover similar ground to that already mentioned but will be formulated slightly differently:

- translation procedures and policies of institutions, agencies, companies;
- how the institutional context shapes translation processes;
- the dynamics of institutional language work;
- team work and project management;
- translation briefs;
- quality control systems;
- editing;
- the role of language revisers;
- support systems;
- glossaries and assistance with terminology;
- employment practices regarding translators;
- the use by institutions of in-house translators, freelance translators, translation companies and agencies.

Institution-based research may also focus on best practice. This involves looking at the work of translators (or those involved in localisation or multilingual documentation projects) and attempting to identify factors that contribute to translation quality. One problem here is that there is no standard way of measuring quality and it is a relatively neglected area in Translation Studies. However, the EN-15038 European Quality Standard for Translation Services is increasingly becoming seen as a possible industry standard for the provision of translation services is concerned (although the emphasis here is on translation as a service, rather than the product).

QUESTIONNAIRES

In 2005 I carried out a small research project into the educational profile, social and legal status, training and work experience, and views on translation of non-literary translators in Slovenia. The questionnaire that I used (in the original Slovene) is given as an example in Appendix I. This research identified institutional pressure on translators to conform to prevailing norms, or to pursue what Venuti (1998) calls an "ethics of sameness", and to adopt a low-mediation approach.

Another example of a questionnaire, compiled by David Katan of the University of Salento in Italy (cf. Katan 2009), is given in Appendix II. This represented a Europe-wide attempt, administered online, to establish the views of translators, interpreters and students of translation/interpreting with regard to their profession, training and social status. This and the previous example illustrate how

questionnaires may be used to gain access to a range of data: not only objective facts, but also subjective data such as views or opinions, attitudes, values, ambitions, interests – even feelings. Questionnaires and interviews can also be used to gain access to information relating not only to past and present but also the future (i.e. plans). A questionnaire, which may be administered online, is a very quick and economical way of acquiring data. Of course, the size of the population sample covered needs to be sufficiently large to be representative.

There are also certain problems that need to be borne in mind. In particular, producing a questionnaire that all respondents can understand and answer means that there can be no ambiguity, that instructions must be clear and that questions must be pitched at the right level (i.e. not to complex or difficult, but at the same time not insult the intelligence of those taking part). For this reason, it is a good idea to pilot your questionnaire with a few "guinea pigs" before you use it more widely: something that may seem completely clear to you (because, after all, you wrote it), may not be so to someone else. It is also important not to expect too much of busy respondents who may not have much time to spare or may simply lack the motivation: for this reason, open questions (beginning with question words such as Why? What? How?), although they can bring unexpected insights, should be used sparingly as they may well remain unanswered or even deter potential respondents all together. Another thing to bear in mind is the tendency for respondents to give the answers that (they think) are expected of them, or to answer in line with prevailing values and norms. For this reason we should avoid leading questions where there is an obvious "right" answer: for example, "Would you agree that translating is a very demanding profession?" Yes/No. And it is particularly important to make clear to respondents in the introduction to the questionnaire that their anonymity will be protected and to clarify the use to which the results of the survey will be put.

We have already mentioned open questions, which are easy to write and offer the respondent a lot of freedom in answering, but which demand most time and effort from those taking part. Other potential disadvantages of this type of questions are that the data they bring is more unpredictable, variable and harder to analyse and categorise, and also that there is more risk of trivial responses (especially if a serious response would take too much time). The alternative is to use closed questions, which do not demand too much of the respondent, being quick and easy to answer, and so a much greater number of questions can be posed. Moreover, the results of closed questions are predictable, meaning that processing of responses is much easier. Closed questions can vary from a simple "Yes/No/ Don't know" response, to multiple choice questions from which the respondent chooses one option or more; other types may involve putting options in order of importance, assigning a value to them (e.g. from 1 to 5 or from "very important"

to "unimportant") or selecting from a table. Of course, as in the two sample questionnaires, different types of questions can be mixed with, for instance, a closed question being followed by a multiple choice or open question trying to establish why a particular answer was given. Multiple choice questions can also be made more flexible by offering respondents an opportunity to add another reason not covered by the given options and/or to give an explanation for a particular response. The secret to composing a good questionnaire is to be clear from the beginning what you want to achieve, and how you are going to analyse and present the resultant data.[6]

AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF EU TRANSLATING

As an illuminating example of an extensive piece of research into a group of translators in a specific working environment, we shall discuss Koskinen's (2008) study of Finnish translators at the European Commission. Theoretically, Koskinen borrows from a range of disciplines, such as sociology, organisation theory, cultural studies and anthropology. Her study examines three separate but inter-related levels:

1. the institutional framework: - rules and regulations,
                                  - norms and values,
                                  - shared conceptions and understandings;
2. the translators working in the institutional setting;
3. the translated texts and source texts.

The different levels are held together by what the author calls an ethnographic approach that offers a loose methodological framework. Koskinen (ibid.: 6) explains that "the ethnographic stance entails a commitment to an open-ended research process; ethnography aims at understanding a social phenomenon by making sense of it through engaged observation and in-depth explanation". Ethnography involves a "holistic study of a culture or community" (ibid.: 37), asking questions like "What does it mean to be a member of this group?" "How are these texts produced?" "What kinds of cultural artefacts are these texts?" There is no "correct" way to carry out such a study: it can be based on multiple methods and diverse types of date; it is also open-ended and flexible, i.e. not necessarily based on testing a specific prior hypothesis. Whilst corpus studies offer *quantitative* data on linguistic aspects of translation, ethnographic work can offer *qualitative* data on the social aspects of this pursuit (although it is worth noting that the two may be combined by using the data obtained through ethnographic studies to explain the results of corpus studies). Ethnographic research requires engagement with

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[6] A brief guide on how to write and analyse a questionnaire is offered by Williams (2003). More detailed guidelines can be found in Brace (2004), Dornyei (2009) and Fowler (1995).

the object of study (fieldwork) and a willingness on the part of the researcher to learn from those inhabiting the cultural domain in question. The researcher plays a central role, so the approach is a personal one that involves a moral responsibility towards those being researched. Of course, institutions are complex (the EU particularly so) and no individual study can cover everything – all sociological and ethnographic studies are partial.

Researching an institution may involve looking at three aspects or "pillars": *regulative* (rules and sanctions), *normative* (norms and values, specifying what is preferred and how that should be achieved) and *cognitive-cultural* (the conceptions and understandings of the group). Any research project has to find a balance between these three: the emphasis in Koskinen's is on the third aspect, but she does cover the other two by looking at the regulations governing translators' work and by "attempting to extract value statements and normative guidelines from the official discourse" (ibid.: 19). Koskinen observes that the closest paradigm within translation studies to this kind of research is Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS), with its view of translation as a norm-governed activity and its interest in the systemic constraints involved. She points out that the DTS framework has proved fruitful when it comes to historical case studies and corpus studies, but claims that Toury also envisioned ethnographic work of the type she is carrying out, based on his statement that "historical contextualization is a must not only for *diachronic* study, which nobody would contest, but also for *synchronic* studies" (Toury 1995: 64, emphasis in the original).

There is insufficient space here to go into the detail of Koskinen's study, but as it considers both texts and people in their institutional habitat it is methodologically very eclectic, in line with the already stated ethnographic principles. In addition to discussion of the institutional framework, it also includes: observation and description of the physical environment in which the translation unit functions; exploration of the translators' own views of their role and work, through a questionnaire and focus group discussions; and a sociologically-oriented text analysis of a sample document, focusing on the kinds of translation shifts involved. The chapter on identities is a particularly interesting one, covering topics as diverse as relations between EU officials and translators, socialisation in the organisation and the profession, educational background, attitudes to readers and readability, the influence of living as a "transnational expatriate" and even the role of laughter. The questionnaire used (Koskinen ibid.: 157-162) gives a good idea of the range of data collected in such a study. It is divided into four parts and contains open or multiple choice questions on: 1. background (age, where they live, where is home, their sense of identity); 2. family (partner, children, identities, languages used at home); 3. work (the work environment, the job, contact with others, who revises their translations, who gives feedback, tools used, attitudes to work,

motivation, aims, the role of the DGT); 4. relations (social contacts, contact with Finland and Finns). It is striking that many of the questions are quite personal and the researcher is also willing to ask about feelings.

CONCLUSION

Within Translation Studies in the 1980s, translation came increasingly to be seen as involving the communication of messages and the focus of attention shifted from formal aspects to functional and sociocultural ones. Nida's (1964) earlier discussion of the overall communication situation of the translator was widened by scholars such as Holz-Mänttäri (1984), who drew upon the sociological theory of action as a basis for studying translation as "purposeful intercultural interaction". At the same time, *Skopostheorie* began to discuss translation in terms of human behaviour or action – the particular variety of translational action based on a source text – and to examine the wider social context in which the translator operated. This gradual shift within Translation Studies towards the actual process of translation and to the people involved in that process was reinforced by the appearance of Descriptive Translation Studies, associated in particular with the work of Gideon Toury. He is particularly concerned with the social role of the translator, the norms which shape that role and the way in which these norms are acquired. From a translation research point of view, the identification of norms can help us understand translator strategies and choices. Toury's work has also helped inspire the search for probabilistic laws as to what translators are likely to do under different conditions and thus what the resultant translations will tend to be like. These are now widely referred to as "translation universals": general characteristics of translator behaviour and generic features of translations as such that are not the result of interlinguistic interference. The methodological starting point for descriptive-explanatory research seeking to identify such universals is a corpus of translated texts; this chapter has suggested some possible topics for such research.

A sociological or ethnographic approach to translation offers an extremely wide range of research opportunities. It is appealing because it focuses on people and what they do rather than on what they produce. It demands personal involvement on the part of the researcher in a way that other kinds of research generally do not. It calls for flexibility and an eclectic stance, applying whatever research strategies are likely to bear fruit in the given sociocultural context. The principle of localism means that a particular situation is explored in great detail, with the hope that the resulting insights may have a more general relevance, but the researcher always needs to bear in mind the risks of over-generalisation. Case studies can be diachronic or synchronic: i.e. historical or focusing on a current context.

The main research tools are observation, interviews and questionnaires. The key to successful research of this type is identifying an appropriate institutional situation that is accessible to the researcher and careful planning of how the research, including any possible on-site observation, is to be conducted. Another crucial factor is the production of a questionnaire or interview questions that offer the researcher fresh insights into the situation and sufficient data for research. This kind of research places particular personal demands on the researcher, but offers satisfaction in the knowledge that new ground is being covered and an original contribution, however small, being made to our understanding of translators and their work.

Appendix I

VPRAŠALNIK ZA PREVAJALCE

Od 5. do 7. maja letos bo mednarodna konferenca z naslovom Translating and Interpreting as a Social Practice *na univerzi v Grazu, na kateri bom imel referat kot verjetno edini predstavnik iz Slovenije. Govoril bom o družbenem profilu prevajalcev v Sloveniji, zato bi rad zbral čim več relevantnih podatkov od čim večjega števila prevajalcev. Prosim, da si vzamete nekaj minut časa in odgovorite na naslednja vprašanja.*

Podčrtajte eno ali več možnosti oziroma napišite odgovor.

1. Leto rojstva: _____

2. Spol: M   Ž

3. Materni jezik: _____

4. Ste odrasli v dvojezičnem okolju: NE   DA   (s katerima dvema jezikoma) _____

5. Najvišja dosežena stopnja izobrazbe:
   - univerzitetna diploma iz:
   - podiplomska specializacija iz:
   - magisterij/doktorat iz:

6. Ste študirali v inozemstvu: NE   DA   (navedite kje) _____
   _____

7. Koliko let že delate kot prevajalec/prevajalka? _____

8. Prejšnji poklic: _____

9. Status: _____
   - zaposlen(a) v javnem sektorju
   - zaposlen(a) v gospodarstvu
   - svobodni umetnik
   - s.p.
   - brez statusa

10. Če niste (samo)zaposleni kot prevajalec(ka) in prevajate samo v »prostem času«, kakšen poklic opravljate: _____

11. Ste kdaj delali v inozemstvu: NE   DA   (navedite kje) _____

12. Kolikšen delež (%) vaših prevodov predstavljajo prevodi v slovenščino: ____

13. Iz katerih jezikov redno prevajate (večkrat na leto):
    - angleščine
    - francoščine
    - nemščine
    - italijanščine
    - španščine
    - ruščine
    - hrvaškega/srbskega jezika
    - drugo (prosim navedite): _____

14. Kateri je vaš prvi in kateri drugi tuji jezik iz katerega prevajate: _____
    _____

15. Se je to v zadnjih nekaj letih spremenilo (pojasnite) _____
    _____

16. V katere jezike redno prevajate (večkrat na leto):
    - angleščino
    - francoščino
    - nemščino
    - italijanščino
    - španščino
    - ruščino
    - hrvaški/srbski jezik
    - drugo (prosim navedite): _____

17. Kakšna besedila redno prevajate:
    - splošno poslovna
    - finančna
    - promocijska / marketing
    - iz javne uprave
    - pravna
    - znanstvena: humanistična, družboslovna, naravoslovna, drugo
      (podčrtajte ali navedite)
    - medicinska

- tehnična
- turistična
- novinarska
- literarna
- drugo (navedite) ⸻

18. Članstvo (podčrtajte): DZTPS Društvo književnih prevajalcev EST drugo (navedite) ⸻

19. Ste v zadnjih dveh letih obiskali kakšen seminar ali tečaj za prevajalce: DA   NE

20. Menite, da se je splošni položaj prevajalcev v zadnjih nekaj letih izboljšal ali poslabšal (podčrtajte)?21. Moj delodajalec/stranke cenijo moje delo:
- vedno
- pogosto
- včasih
- nikoli

22. Menite, da se je realna cena prevodov v zadnjih nekaj letih:
- zvišala
- znižala
- ostala približno enaka

23. Menite, da je sedanji pravni status prevajalcev zadovoljiv: DA   NE

24. Se vam zdi članstvo Slovenije v EU pozitiven ali negativen dejavnik za prevajalce (podčrtajte)?

25. Se vam zdi ustanovitev oddelka za prevajalstvo na Filozofski fakulteti pozitiven ali negativen korak (podčrtajte)?

26. Menite, da bo »poplava« diplomantov prevajalstva slabo vplivala na možnost zaposlovanja prevajalcev ali pridobivanja novih naročil (DA   NE) / znižala ceno prevodov (DA   NE)?

27. Menite, da je bolje študirati prevajalstvo na dodiplomski ali podiplomski ravni (podčrtajte)?

28. Bi vas zanimal magisterij ali doktorat iz prevajanja?   DA   NE

29. Katere skrbi ali pomisleke imate v zvezi s prevajalskim poklicem/delom (navedite nekaj največjih)? _____

_____

30. Po vašem mnenju, katera je najbolj pozitivna stvar, ki se je v prevajalstvu zgodila v zadnjih nekaj letih (navedite)? _____

_____

31. Druge pripombe: _____

_____

Hvala za sodelovanje!

Appendix II

QUESTIONS FROM KATAN'S (2009) SURVEY ON THE TRANSLATION/INTERPRETING PROFESSION

1. Where do you work? _____

2. What is your mother tongue? _____

3. Assuming you use your mother tongue, what other language do you use most? _____

4. If you don't use your mother tongue, or use other language combinations, please specify here. _____

5. Have you completed training in …
   languages   arts (non language)   sciences
   translation interpreting   e-translation tools   specialized language
   and to what level:
   Degree   Master   PhD   Course

6. Please state your role(s) in order of importance:
   translation/interpreting
   student   researcher   lecturer   freelance   agency
   permanent   OTHER

7. Please state your main area(s) of work (or if student: interest):
   Main area
   Also
   At times

8. How many years have you been studying as a student/or working professionally in the field?

9. A specialist course in T/I will include the following areas of study.
   contrastive grammar   linguistics   corpus linguistics   T-I ethics
   T-I practice   T-I strategies   T-I theory   T-I electronic tools
   intercultural theory-practices   political-public institutions/civilization
   the T-I profession   subject specific knowledge   contemporary affairs

Rate each area in terms of importance. PLEASE distribute the courses over ALL columns
Essential: 10 credits   Important: 8 credits   Useful: 6 credits
Not essential: 4 credits   Optional: 2 credits.

10. How responsible ideally do you think a translator should be for …
    a) contextualising the target text for the reader?
    b) the final 'look' of the translation (e.g. DTP)?
       Always   Most of the time   At times   It depends
       Hardly ever   Never

11. And (even if this is not your job) How responsible in practice do you think a translator should be for …
    a) contextualising the target text for the reader?
    b) the final 'look' of the translation (e.g. DTP)?
       Always   Most of the time   At times   It depends
       Hardly ever   Never

12. Ideally a translator/interpreter should be "invisible"
    Definitely agree   Mainly agree   It depends   Mainly no
    Definitely not

13. In your opinion what (if anything) do you associate with the term "cultural interpreter/mediator"?
    the end client (reader/listener)   the translator   the interpreter
    the commissioner   the language provider   a specialised consultant
    the term means little in this context

14. A translator/interpreter can be compared with a …
    MAX 3 choices for 'ideally' and MAX 3 choices for 'in reality'
    linguist   copier   scribe   engineer   artisan   educator
    missionary   broker   wordsmith   agent of social change
    mediator   technician

15. If the job is considered to be a "good linguistic transfer of the original", to what extent is the translator or interpreter concerned with reader or listener reaction?
    Always   Very much   It depends   Not usually   Never

16. In your opinion or experience where is the main focus/loyalty when you interpret/translate?
    the original text/speech   the reader/listener   the commissioner (specifications etc.)
    it depends, meaning yourself, i.e. your own T/I choices, which may oscillate between all the above at any given moment

17. How satisfied are you with your present job/studies in comparison with your initial expectations regarding the field of translating/interpreting
    Extremely   Pretty   Fairly   Not very   Not at all

18. In your opinion/experience, is there a career structure in T/I?
    No   Yes (please specify)

19. *Would you count T/I a "profession"?*
    Yes   No
    In either case, why?

20. Professional autonomy is the degree of control of your own work, and also the degree of control over the work of others. How high do you rate the degree of control a T/I has over their own output? Respond separately for the translator and the interpreter
    high (e.g. managerial)   middling (e.g. technical)   low (e.g. secretarial)

21. What level of social status, regard and esteem does the job have?
    Respond separately for the translator and the interpreter
    high   middling   low

22. "A profession tends to dominate and rebuff competition from ancillary trades and occupations, as well as subordinating and controlling lesser but related trades".
    How true is this in your experience/opinion in T/I?
    Respond separately for the translator and the interpreter
    Very true   Mainly true   True in part   Not really   Not at all

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