TRAINING TRANSLATORS FOR A SUPERDIVERSE WORLD. TRANSLATORS' INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE AND TRANSLATION AS AFFECTIVE WORK

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This article discusses how translation as one form of intercultural language work, is complicated by what has recently been discussed under the title of superdiversity, that is, the increased linguistic, ethnic and cultural hybridity of our societies. Superdiversity forces us to acknowledge the affective nature of translation work, thus foregrounding the role of empathy. The author argues that many traditional Translation Studies approaches need to be refined to remain valid in contemporary superdiverse societies, and that translator training and translation research alike would benefit from a critical reassessment of their underlying culture concepts.

Key words: intercultures, translators' intercultural competence, superdiversity, affective work, empathy, translator training.

1. INTRODUCTION: TRANSLATION AS INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

An Internet search with the string "translation as intercultural" gives an endless list of hits. Translation is discussed as intercultural communication; intercultural communication tool; intercultural mediation; intercultural intermediation; intercultural exchange; intercultural transfer; intercultural practice; intercultural event; intercultural action; intercultural activity; and intercultural conflict. Indeed, it has become a truism in Translation Studies to say that translation is a form of intercultural communication (for details, see Katan 2009). It feels safe to argue that most translation scholars would agree with this notion, and that many practitioners would agree. But it is another question entirely whether we have a well-defined and uniform understanding of what is meant by this truism.

A recent EU project on intercultural competence in translator training conducted a situational survey among translation teachers and students in seven European countries (PICT 2012). The results depicted a rather varied field across the countries involved, but generally high levels of awareness of intercultural issues both among teachers and students. A vast majority of respondents, students and teachers alike, considered intercultural competence to be *crucially important* for translators. A closer look at the survey results, however, reveals a less optimal scene. The most important area was, in responses from most countries, considered to be "general knowledge of 'Culture' (e.g. institutions, politics, current affairs, religion, geography, the arts)". This emphasis on cultural knowledge is a traditional stronghold in many translator training institutions. Undoubtedly, it is indeed valuable knowledge for any aspiring translator, but one can question whether

this is the core of *inter*cultural competence, and whether a more fine-grained differentiation between *cultural* competence, *cross-cultural* competence and *intercultural* competence would actually be needed*. Intuitively and individually, many teachers have surely already found ways of teaching both cultural knowledge and intercultural competence in a critical and reflexive manner, but I argue that the distinctions and their implications are not very well-formed in translation pedagogy nor in translation theory.

In this article, both translation theory and translator training are reviewed critically from the point of view of intercultural competence. Recent global developments make this review and revision task even more pressing, as translation as one form of intercultural language work is increasingly often complicated by what has recently been discussed under the title of superdiversity, that is, the increased linguistic, ethnic and cultural hybridity of our societies (Blommaert 2010, 2013; Blommaert and Rampton 2011). To function competently in increasingly superdiverse contemporary contexts, translators need to be trained to approach their professional practice reflexively. They need to learn to repeatedly ask (Piller 2011: 13):

who makes culture relevant
to whom
in which context
for which purposes?

Superdiversity also highlights the affective nature of translation work. Communication is not only a matter of transmitting content, but also about issues such as inclusion, empowerment, belonging and identity. The more superdiverse and heterogeneous the recipients of translated texts become, the more translators need to let go of their assumptions of pre-existing cultural knowledge and develop their skills of empathy, compassion and flexible decision-making. The emphasis on empathy is all the more relevant because it runs contrary to two dominant trends in professional translation: the traditional expectations of impartiality, particularly for interpreters (Hokkanen, in press), and the increasing pressure towards machine-dominated translation, side-lining human actors capable of judicial decision-making and cultural adaptations (Kenny 2011).

2. CULTURES, INTERCULTURES AND SUPERDIVERSITY

Reflexivity is not only necessary for individual practicing translators. It needs to start with the discipline itself, and we need to ask who makes culture relevant to whom, in which context, and for which purposes *in Translation Studies*. The discipline has not fully begun to discuss the inherent binary nationalism in translation practice, translator training and research alike, as cultures tend to get conflated with nationalities. In many other fields in social sciences and humanities, a long tradition of critical discussions

* Similarly, David Katan's otherwise insightful overview of the role of intercultural competence in translator training (2009) seems to make no distinction between cultural competence, cross-cultural competence and intercultural competence.

on the effects of building research and practice on the assumption that the nation-state is a, or even the, natural unit of analysis exists under the rubric of "methdological nationalism" (see, e.g., Wimmer & Glick Schiller 2002). Whereas many other fields have engaged in debates on overcoming this nationalistic myopia and essentialist notions of culture in their disciplinary inheritance, similar discussions have been less common in Translation Studies. Some methodological nationalism may well be inevitable in a practice that is built on crossing a barrier between two languages and cultures — both core concepts firmly entangled in nationalist discourses — but its non-reflexive adoption leads to rigid categorisations that are less and less helpful and potentially even harmful in contemporary social situations.

It is evident that issues related to culture(s) run to the core of the discipline and its identity, and this may have functioned as a barrier to critical discussions. Indeed, it can be argued that a heightened understanding of the crucial role of cultural issues in real-life translation acts was the driving force behind the efforts to build an independent discipline of Translation Studies in the early 1980s. This move away from linguistic theories of translation is now often labelled as the cultural turn. To be more precise, it was largely a turn to the *target* culture, to the target culture's and target readers' translation needs and constraints, norms and systems (Toury 2012; Vermeer 1996).

As the pioneering translation scholars turned away from linguistic comparisons of the source text and the translation, they also turned their attention away from the source culture. This pendulum movement between source text/culture orientation and target text/culture orientation is a constant feature of theoretical discussions of translation, and one can easily discern an ancestral lineage of source orientation from 19th century romantic nationalists such as Friedrich Schleiermacher to the contemporary spokesman of foreignising, Lawrence Venuti (1995; Koskinen 2000). Debates over a suitable method of translation have tended to highlight the nature of translation as *cross-cultural* movement and the corresponding need for the translator to choose which way to bend. This has left the discipline with a dualistic legacy. In a well-known quotation, Schleiermacher summed it as follows:

> Either the translator leaves the author in peace, as much as possible, and moves the reader toward him. Or he leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author toward him (Friedrich Scheleirmacher 1813/1977: 74).

It is also well known that Schleiermacher favoured the former method, and considered the latter unsuited for serious literature. He also continued by also warning against attempts to search for a balance between the extremes, and stated that each person needs to choose where they belong, to avoid remaining forever in the unfriendly middle ground. Anthony Pym's (2011) rereading of Schleiermacher turns the idea up-side down as he argues that this unhappy middle ground is precisely were translators always already are, and where they also should be. This middle ground he renames *interculture*. According to him (2000: n.p.), "'inter-' is not to be confused with things that go from one culture to another ('cross-cultural' seems an adequate adjective for that), nor with heterogeneity within a social space ('multicultural' would suffice there)". Rather, intercul-

tures are formed in the intersections or overlaps between two (or more) cultures. This reorientation allows him to challenge both fidelity to the source culture and a loyalty to the target culture. He places translators in a specific locale that draws from several cultures but is not wholly determined by any (ibid.).

This in-between space has structures and dynamics that are similar to those of cultures themselves; it functions as a social space with its own membership rites, norms of behaviour, ideologies and ethics (Pym 2000). It is a culture, but not a homogenous and monolithic one, and definitely not a national one. This intercultural space is inhabited also by other middlemen: international businessmen, diplomats, smugglers, human trafficers, and spies. This motley crew consists of "Blendlinge", i.e., individuals with mixed origins, feared by Schleiermacher but celebrated by Pym (2011).

I have not seen Pym discussing intercultures in terms of intercultural communication, but we could at least tentatively argue that the rites, norms, ideologies and ethics of this hypothetical intercultural space are products of intercultural negotiation, and that living in such a space requires and enhances intercultural competence, that is, the knowledge, skills and attitudes required and valued among those who work and live in such multicultural intersections. The notion of interculture thus offers a more functional basis for translators' intercultural competence than Schleiermacherian romantic dualism that presumes cross-cultural movement and avoids the middle ground. In contrast, the notion of interculture emphasises constant negotiation, flexibility and mutual acceptance, and it eschews ideas of fixed and monocultural identities and side-taking.

3. SUPERDIVERSITY AND INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

In Pym's categorisation, intercultures are different from multicultural societies, and the difference seems to mainly reside in how self-contained versus dialogic the culturally heterogeneous community is, as intercultures are seen to develop in intersections of constant movement between two or more cultures. This distinction may be increasingly difficult to maintain in real life. Social scientists and sociolinguists have drawn our attention to the increasingly complex cultural set-up in contemporary societies and the growing difficulties in categorising inhabitants in any fixed categories. Steven Vertovec (2006: xx) has labelled this new quality of societies as *superdiversity*, describing it in terms of an "increased number of new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants". He emphasises that new migrants are diverse across a wide range of variables including ethnicity, immigration status, rights and entitlements, labour market experiences, gender and age profiles, education levels, and language repertoires (Vertovec 2007). In superdiverse societies, one does not need to be a spy or an interpreter to lead an intercultural life; paperless refugees, second-generation immigrants and transnational families may feel the tensions of interculturality much more concretely and painfully in their everyday lives than professional translators and interpreters.

Superdiversity takes many forms. The interculturality experienced in major metropolies such as London or New York is very different from the life and work in Krakow

or Joensuu. Superdiversity in African and Asian societies is not similar to that in Western societies. It is also not only new: people with multiple cultural and linguistic origins have always cohabited with one another. But it seems to capture a dominant feature of our lives, and it is increasingly observable almost everywhere in our contemporary world.

The more we accept some degree of superdiversity as a valid and recognisable image of contemporary societies, the more it becomes evident that the either/or legacy in Translation Studies, with its dualistic discussions of domestication and foreignisation for example, is not a sufficient basis for translational action. Pym's notion of intercultures is much easier to accommodate with superdiversity, and it allows us to rethink some traditional axioms of translation and to realise and appreciate the cultural and linguistic diversity of the world. The interculture is in fact not a special case; it is more often the monoculture which is an exception. It follows that translators' intercultural competence needs to accommodate superdiversity, and that the nationalistic, cross-cultural and knowledge-based approach of traditional Translation Studies and translator training is increasingly insufficient in explaining and directing translation work.

Obviously, superdiversity poses similar challenges to intercultural communication as it does to Translation Studies and translator training. Indeed, the three phases of intercultural communication research identified by Ingrid Piller (2011: 76—95) seem to contain an element of moving away from monolithic national cultures that Translation Studies also needs to take. According to Piller, intercultural communication research 1.0 focused on large-scale comparisons of monolithic and measurable *national* cultural traits (Hofstede was a key reference). Phase 2.0 brought to the fore fieldwork studies in multinational *companies* (organisational cultures), and during the current phase 3.0, focus has shifted to *individuals*, to questions linked to communication, linguistic capital and the commodification of multilingual proficiency. Of course, there are many explanations for these shifts in focus, but looking at individuals and their idiosyncratic competencies rather than searching collective cultures is in line with the notion of superdiversity which implies individual differences rather than cultural homogeneity.

4. TRANSLATION AS AFFECTIVE WORK

I have argued above that traditional models in Translation Studies are insufficient on dealing with superdiversity. How, then, should we interpret the notion of translation as intercultural communication in the framework of superdiversity, positing both translators and their clients, authors and readers within an intercultural space or in-between such spaces? It seems evident that in order to accommodate the emergent new diversity, a new phase, similar to that identified in intercultural communication research, needs to take place in Translation Studies. In training, the focus needs to shift away from discussions of how source texts represent their cultural origin, and of how target texts need to be made to adapt into theirs. We need to learn to read more carefully *the individual text* we are dealing with, and to recognise and to value the unique network of cultural affiliations it develops, and to grasp the intended and equally unique affiliations

of the target text which we need to learn to draft creatively and emphatically into each context of use. Similarly, we need to learn to become attuned to the individual authors and equally individual users of translations (see Suojanen et al. 2015). All this requires a new set of methods, but even more so, it requires a new sensitivity to the affective nature of translation work.

There is a strong emotional element involved in language choice and language use, and languages are directly linked to issues of identity and belonging. I therefore argue that while translation is often seen and evaluated in terms of efficiency, adequacy and consistency, it is, fundamentally, affective work that requires intercultural sensitivity, reflexiveness and empathy. Recent rapid developments in translation technology may have contributed to obscuring this quality, as the new technological tools build on repetition and routinisation, eschewing any necessity of rewriting and restyling texts in the translation process. Indeed, it may well be that computers may eventually take over those translation tasks where the stakes on misunderstanding and emotional dissonance are low, but in the near future artificial intelligence is not likely to develop the sensitivity and empathy required for successful multilingual communication in superdiverse contexts. In these contexts, issues such as style, stance and tone of voice can be more important than accuracy in delivering content.

All this has repercussions to translator training. Cultural knowledge can be taught an assessed, the complexities of intercultural encounters can be described and discussed, and the students can be provided with enhanced skills of overcoming intercultural boundaries, but without intercultural sensitivity and a will to operate as an intercultural agent, these teachable and assessable competences are of little practical use. The more superdiverse our societies become, the less support ready-made rules and taught patterns of behaviour provide, as each encounter requires a recalibration of the cultural code. A core element to be included in the training of interculturally competent translators is in fact *empathy*, that is, an ability to identify, understand and relate to the emotions of others (for more on empathy see, eg., Coplan & Goldie eds. 2011). This ability allows translators to make informed and moral choices in communicative situations even when they contain unknown or unexpected elements. Empathy is and will be the crucial difference between human and machine translators, and the need for empathetic translation will keep humans involved in multilingual communication in the foreseeable future. Translation as a mechanistic transfer of meaning may become fully automated, but translation as affective work will remain the task of human translators.

5. TRAINING FOR EMPATHY IN SUPERDIVERSE SOCIETIES

The students not only need to be able to understand superdiversity. They also live in it. In the training context, the notion of intercultures should alert us to a realisation that in our classrooms we do not have a unified mass of students, but individuals with their personal pathways and family backgrounds.

For different kinds of students the training task is also different. Some students still come from a fairly monocultural background, and they need to be helped to acquire

cultural knowledge and to internalise professional intercultural competence which is alien to them. Some of our students have a bi- or multicultural background, i.e., their various cultural affiliations are compartmentalised and kept apart. They need to be helped to harness these cultural resources into professional practice and to develop an understanding of intercultural interplay as well as to recognise the gaps in their cultural knowledge. Finally, some students are already intercultural, and come from a superdiverse background. For them, the training needs to focus on reflexivity and on enhancing their understanding of their own identity and how to develop their personal history into a professional competence. Although these three kinds of students obviously possess very different skills and resources at the outset, and they consequently need to be trained differently, the optimal situation still is to have them in the same classroom, where they can learn from one another.

As discussed above, the hidden curriculum in translator training tends to overemphasise national cultures and may easily lapse into a dualistic world view and stereotyping. As global mobility increases, and societies become more and more superdiverse, the risks of inadequately preparing the students to function in their professional role become greater. To remedy, increased transparency is urgently needed in classroom discussions of how the following affect translating, and how translating and interpreting are implicated in them:

- cultural belongings and identity
- internalised culture
- institutionalised cultures and translation cultures
- nationalism, (language) politics and power
- inclusion and exclusion.

Intercultural competence is traditionally seen to consist of knowledge, skills, attitudes and critical cultural awareness (Byram 1997). All of the elements in the above list can be taught theoretically, as knowledge components. As a pragmatic field, translator training also has a long-standing emphasis on skills. However, the list also reveals a strong emphasis on attitudes and values, patterns of thinking and self-reflexivity, indicating that a competence based on knowledge and skills alone is not enough. Most fundamentally, superdiversity calls for empathy, conviviality, compassion and flexibility. Compared to knowledge and skills, these are much harder to teach, and even harder to assess.

Translation pedagogy needs to be developed into directions that enhance students' abilities for continuous *intercultural learning*. That is, they need to develop their "ability to gain, adjust and apply cultural and linguistic knowledge in real-time communication" (Messelink & ten Thije 2012: 81). To do so, the students need to be able to both tap on their existing cultural knowledge but also to have sensitivity and flexibility to adjust and to adapt to new and unexpected situations, and creativity to find new solutions to unforeseen communicative situations. This is a challenge for course design, but new thinking may sometimes be easier for the students than for the teachers. Many of the students

already live in a superdiverse world, whereas many of their teachers are still mentally bound by the dualistic world view and the reified notions of national cultures they have internalised in training and at work.

6. CONCLUSIONS

In this article it was argued that factual cultural knowledge, a traditional stronghold of translator training, is not equal to intercultural competence, and that this difference needs to be clearly acknowledged. This necessity is all the more relevant as our contemporary world is becoming increasingly superdiverse, and this superdiversity unsettles ideas of monolithic nation-based linguacultures many translator training programmes have traditionally been based on.

Superdiversity alerts us to rethinking translation as one form of intercultural language work. Since superdiversity unsettles any preconceived ideas of cultural belongings, the role of reflexivity grows. In each new translation situation, the translator needs to work to understand the participants' positions and to consciously develop her abilities for empathy. Successful professional performance requires that she also reflects her own position, and how that position affects her decisions, and the decisions of the other partners.

All this has repercussions for training. First, it needs to foster students' reflexive approach to their own attitudes and internalised cultures and to hierarchies of communication as well as different participants' needs, abilities and motivations. Second, training needs to hone students' skills of social positioning and empathy, and to increase their ethical thinking and critical cultural awareness. In training, too, the students and teachers alike need to constantly ask who makes culture relevant, to whom, in which context, and for which purposes. Sometimes, this questioning may well lead to a rethinking of the very foundation this paper started with: in some cases, many other aspects may be much more salient for a translating or interpreting task than the assumed cultural differences and the ensuing perception of translation as primarily intercultural work*. Letting go of the sometimes lazy explanations of cultural difference may make us more able to see issues such as commodified and non-commodified linguistic competences, social inequality and injustice (Piller 2011: 173). This, in turn, will increase our understanding of the processes translators and interpreters participate in by means of their work.

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* As Messelink and ten Thije (2012: 81) point out, *lingua franca* uses of English are a well-known example of the complexities onvolved in connecting languages with particular cultures.

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ОБУЧЕНИЕ ПЕРЕВОДЧИКОВ ДЛЯ РАБОТЫ В УСЛОВИЯХ КУЛЬТУРНОГО МНОГООБРАЗИЯ МИРА. МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНАЯ КОМПЕТЕНЦИЯ ПЕРЕВОДЧИКОВ И ПЕРЕВОД КАК ЭМОТИВНЫЙ ВИД ДЕЯТЕЛЬНОСТИ

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Статья рассматривает перевод как одну из форм межкультурной языковой деятельности в свете обсуждаемого в последнее время феномена культурного многообразия мира, то есть возросшей лингвистической, этнической и культурной мозаичности (гибридности) нашего общества. Культурное многообразие мира заставляет нас признать эмотивную природу переводческой деятельности, таким образом, подчеркивая роль эмпатии. Автор утверждает, что многие традиционные концепции переводоведения требуют пересмотра для того, чтобы оставаться актуальными в рамках культурного многообразия мира. Таким образом, критическая переоценка основополагающих культурных концепций внесет вклад как в методику преподавания перевода, так и в исследования в области переводоведения.

Ключевые слова: межкультурная коммуникация, межкультурная компетенция переводчика, культурное многообразие, эмотивность, эмпатия, обучение переводу.