CASE STUDIES IN TRANSLATION: THE STUDY OF TRANSLATION CASES

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Abstract: Although the professional reality of translation always involves a concrete assignment a translator has to perform, there is, surprisingly, little evidence that this fact gets reflected in translation studies, which are primarily aimed at abstracting from individual cases and obtaining a generalised picture of the translation process. This paper, by contrast, seeks to give a programmatic survey of what case studies in translation could possibly offer to translatology. It is an attempt to point out the many advantages case studies have over abstract theorising. Indeed, their findings could provide traditional translation studies with a much more solid empirical basis than what current research has at its disposal. Moreover, a study of translation cases would yield more specific results, even if at the cost of greater generality.

Key words: case studies, types of cases, genres, overt and covert factors, translation methodology

THE ROLE OF CASE STUDIES IN TEACHING AND RESEARCH

In translation every assignment may be said to be a case. More specifically, each new assignment is a (new) case. In fact, each case, each new translation assignment, poses a variety of novel problems. In order to meet each new challenge, the translator needs a modicum of expertise, that is of expertise plus creativeness. This means that, in principle, any translation should be treated as a case in its own right, a new challenge, a new departure from all previous cases. Translation assignments may exhibit varying degrees of newness, and in some cases the newness may be slight, but it is always there, at least for a conscientious translator. There are, of course, similarities between former assignments and any new one at hand but – and this is common wisdom among practitioners – what is shared between the old and the new translation never suffices to solve all the problems of the new case.

Translation studies have tried, more or less successfully, to overcome this empirical fact, which is anything but welcome in studies aiming to arrive at

generalisations. Hard facts about particular translations appear to turn theory into a half-truth, if not a chimera. On the other hand, practitioners, experienced as well as inexperienced translators, look at "theory" with suspicion: While scholars are looking for recurrent problems to discover regularities, practitioners can see nothing but useless generalities in theoretical studies, which shy away from the thorny specifics of concrete cases of translation. This accounts for the clash between the doers of and the thinkers about translation. In a similar way, translator training also suffers from an unfortunate mismatch between well-intentioned systematisation and the uniqueness of real-life translation cases. There is, in fact, an underlying belief that "learning by doing" is the only way to prepare for a professional career. Karl Kraus' famous dictum "Übersetzen ist 'üb ersetzen' seems to loom large over all serious and responsible attempts to give prospective translators sound guidelines.

Hand in hand with the distrust towards scholarly endeavours to conduct translator training on a sound theoretical basis goes the often-heard opinion, apparently corroborated by the "facts of life", that a translation can be tackled by anyone with a fair knowledge of the source language, or even of the target language. Sometimes it is claimed (even by professionals) that academic efforts to elucidate the problems of translation will only befog the issues and distract the attention of the students, leading them in the wrong direction, towards issues of theoretical linguistics and away from the hard problems of the assignment at hand. And this state of affairs prevails in the face of the surprisingly low quality found in many translations, especially those done by "practitioners" who boast of knowing "the language". However, sometimes professionals opposed to theory may also fail to provide a satisfactory translation of a problematic text.

It has to be admitted then that, to a certain extent, translation studies shy away from case studies. If practitioners are prone not to see the wood for the trees, theorists tend to wander in the wood and forget about the trees. A case study may be said to be a study of individual trees. Just as in forestry a single deceased tree can supply extremely important information about the surrounding wood, so a poor translation may yield important insights into the problems experienced by other translators, past and present, and those that may be expected of future translators. Evidently, cases are intricately bound up with larger domains, representing but a limited aspect of the latter. Case studies, in addition to carrying out research into particular cases, may also serve as part of a general research strategy. They may come up with findings which are clearly limited to a particular case, but they are also indispensable pointers, which have significance beyond the given case. With regard to the latter, they perhaps represent the only method by which we can discover powerful generalisations. Thus they may constitute an integral part of any theory which deserves its name.

What then is a case study in translation from the point of view of translation research? If we are agreed that the task of the latter is not primarily to pro-

vide practical or professional assistance in translating a text, what else can it of-fer to the student of translation and, potentially the prospective translation? The answer seems to be that the main function of translation research, like that of other academic disciplines, is to allow an insight into what makes translations possible. It is meant to grasp and describe, if not to explain, what turns target texts into adequate renderings of source texts. What makes two or more transla-tions into acceptable variants of a source text? What can be deduced from a careful analysis of the ways and means applied in turning a source text into an equivalent target text?

For the student of translation, it is case studies that can link translation practice to translation theory. Conversely, translation studies may rely on trans-lation cases as illustrations of theoretical issues by concrete examples. Thus translation case studies form an essential body of evidence, enabling theory to have a firm grip on translational reality. By studying previous cases theory may throw light on other cases, at least to the extent that these cases can be inter-preted as ongoing processes (of translation) exhibiting recurrences. As a result, theory aspires to manage novel cases.

CASE STUDIES AND TRANSLATION MANAGEMENT

Managing translation means applying general knowledge of translation, culled from several empirical cases, to particular translation tasks. If management (as in business administration, cf. Robert McNamara, quoted by Ibrahim Warde in *Le Monde diplomatique*, May 2000:6[1]), is about creative coping with change, more specifically, dealing with the social, political, economic and technological aspects of change in business, then, by analogy, translation management focuses on linguistic, semantic and pragmatic change, indeed, change with regard to every dimension of the text at hand, as well as in discourse, of which the source text (ST), and the target text (TT) in their turn are a part, respectively.

Translation management tries to make sure that source language (SL) mes-sages can spread rationally and effectively through the target language (TL) community, or, as is often necessary, through the particular group or subgroup of addressees for whom the translation is meant. Just as in economics manage-ment by the translator is not just a mechanical act of transforming something, the ST, into a new entity, the TT. It is the creative science of maintaining con-trol over a number of crucial areas involved in successfully effecting a change. But unlike in business, where management is directed primarily at people,[2] in translation it is first and foremost discourse, in the SL as well as in the TL, which is the object of management.[3] The various translation tools which transla-tors use as resources and facilitators in their work are all discourse-related, ex-

cept for the computer hardware that is used to get the translation process materially done.

Case studies as examples of translation management or, more aptly, as illustrative empirical material to shed light on the relation between theory and practice, may be selected from translations carried out in real place and time, either in the past or in the present. They can, however, also be *constructed* in a teaching or in a research context. Based on real-life or imagined discourse across language barriers, they deal with language mediation or, more concretely, ST-induced TT production for a third party (Neubert 1985:18).

Although the expression *case studies* is always used to refer to the processing of texts – indeed, whole texts – it is not necessarily one text, from beginning to end, that can be the object of a case study. This fact raises the methodological question of what is, or should be, the unit around which or in terms of which case studies may be organised. The prototypical case study deals with one particular text but as the analysis proceeds, it may have to take smaller segments of the text in fact, individual words and phrases, as starting points for comparative study. It should, however, not come as a surprise that such deviations from the holistic principle of global text cases actually import the textual approach through the back door, since any sub-textual phenomenon can eventually be placed into the context of the rest of the text from where it is chosen, the ST, or where it is suggested it would fit in, the TT. In other words, within single texts, i.e., on the subtext level, units and equivalents are, and in fact must be, outgrowths of higher levels of discourse, preferably one particular text, or perhaps also larger text types.

THREE TYPES OF CASE STUDIES

With this proviso in mind, we can now attempt a typology of text-bound "cases" that may be studied either in a top-down or a bottom-up fashion. The first type (Type 1) refers to cases from genre translation, i.e., the *cases of translating texts of a particular register or "text sort"* (Germ. *Textsorte*). Thus we can conduct a case study of translating an advertisement, an instruction manual, a patent, an international treaty, a technical report, an annual (company) report, an abstract, a scholarly paper, a popular science article, a news story, an editorial, a political speech, a review, etc., to give just an unordered list of real and fictive assignments. That this is fundamentally an open list is evident from the fact that so far all examples were from what is sometimes called "pragmatic" translation in contrast to the cases of so-called literary translation, such as of a poem, a play, a novel, a short-story, etc. Genre, it appears, actually divides up into a host of sub-genres.

Just as relevant as the specification of the subgenre (ranging, for instance, from a classified advertisement to a one-page spread pictorial ad in a glossy magazine) is the context of situation, constraining each case study further. Any particular translation, of whichever subgenre, is an integral part of a communicative process. It is an event that needs specific managerial attention if it is to address its intended audience. In fact, contextualisation is a key procedure in any case study. Included in this communicative framing are the intentionality and the acceptability standards that have to be taken into account with respect to a particular translation assignment (Neubert & Shreve 1992:70–84).

Though such considerations are part and parcel of translation studies literature, it has to be admitted that, on closer scrutiny, there are surprisingly very few case studies in the proper sense of this term. This has probably to do with the well-known reluctance of many translation scholars to judge finished translations. This sort of research is deemed less respectable since it deals with the *product,* instead of the more favoured topic of the translation *process*. However, there is, an even more deep-rooted cause for this neglect. It lies in the prejudice, though never openly admitted, that the empirical reality of past and present translations is but a watered-down and subjective, even ephemeral replica of the translation process. It is the latter, i.e., the process, that should be studied so that generalisations can be reached, uncluttered by one-off applications. There is no denying, however, that the (admittedly) few attempts at genuine case studies show that this overemphasis on the process vs. the pruduct is not necessarily useful. For instance, Robert de Beaugrande's "practical demonstration", a study of Leishman's and his own translation of Rilke's famous poem *Der Panther* (Beaugrande 1980:29–41) or H. Gerzymisch-Arbogast's detailed analysis of the much-reviled German translation of Lawrence Norfolk's *Lemprière's Dictionary* (Gerzymisch-Arbogast 1994:100–153) both demonstrate the usefulness of concrete case studies in translation. But perhaps these successful case studies are not at all digressions within larger studies which are meant to grind theoretical axes. They were intended as applications of ambitious theoretical models, demonstrating the semiotic and logical networks underlying the translated texts. Whatever preconceived ideas the two authors used, however, as vehicles to carry out their interpretation ("Transportmittel" Gerzymisch-Arbogast, 35), the two case studies, even if one does not accept them in every detail, throw a refreshingly new and globally revealing light on their real-life objects of ST/TT mediation. What makes them so significant is the consistency with which they devote themselves to holistic issues of translating, viz. translating of whole texts. Their informativity is a wholesome departure from the point-by-point and, lastly, fragmented insights supplied by the majority of translatological approaches, even if one has to invest energy into studying the often unwieldy analytical apparatus used in the detailed analyses.

Much more common is a *second* type, which I would like to call "limited case studies" or *case studies focussing on particular aspects of ST and TT*. A case in point is our own detailed study of the various standards of textuality as they have been or should be observed in various texts (Neubert & Shreve 1992:69–123). With overt product-related emphasis, we conducted limited case studies, which singled out textual properties of genres (text types). We also presented cases of prototypical features of texts (op. cit.: 124–135). But these examples, along with the majority of illustrative materials from existing translations, do not fully deserve the name of case studies. They are honest attempts to place the passages, phrases and words into the wider context of the overall text. Of course, there is no doubt that the insights provided by these limited case studies are much richer and more profound than abstract dissertations on general problems of translation and equivalence, which, unfortunately, are all too common in translation studies literature.

There is a *third* type. It also studies cases, or rather their individual components. They are definitely *cases situated below the text level*. Actually, we have a sliding scale here, which links up with the *second* type. Type 3 mainly comprises sentence-in-context studies, which gradually taper off into word or terminological comparisons. Though referring somewhat vaguely and inconsistently to what preceded and/or is followed by the sentence these works study syntactic and lexical or collocational material as "cases in point". There is, however, no doubt that an analysis of "what is linguistically the case" below the level of the overall text can yield extremely useful insights into the contrastive parameters governing, for instance, the syntactic structures of TL translations in contrast to SL originals. Examples of this kind of research are supplied by the highly detailed work of Monika Doherty who has conclusively shown that one can locate clearly defined systemic particularities differentiating the transfer of SL structures into TL structures on subtext, mostly sentence level (cf. Doherty 2000). Basing her analyses on solid linguistic studies of monolingual descriptions, she carries out a contrastive comparison of the SL and TL repertoires which provide structural equivalents at the level of sentence elements.

Realising that "mere" grammatical juxtapositions often fail to work in discourse contexts, she is prepared to include cross-sentential relations in order to take into account the overriding constraints demanding structural choices other than those expected on a strictly sentence-by-sentence level. Thus, in her analysis of "discourse linking by clefts" she gives very clear-cut evidence of how, for instance, "structural focus" may be overwritten by "contextual focus". She cannot, however, hide her underlying conviction that, context notwithstanding, there exists for her, in essence, a "language specific focus interpretation" (op. cit.:49), which may be fleshed out with some variation in texts, but only on the grounds of language-specific, i.e., systemic differences. Thus, for example,

"Discourse linking is so perfect in the English version that we can only wonder why the German original does not use a cleft" (ibid.).

Studying her example in depth, however, does leave certain doubts as to the validity of her claim. In a very incisive passage Monika Doherty vents her distrust of the alternative approaches concentrating "either on the word or *on the text* (emphasis mine)":

> Yet there is the structural unit of the sentence, which consists of words and constitutes the text, and it is this unit, the linguistic structure between two full stops, which is the primary unit combining words into larger, relatively autonomous cognitive structures. It is the sentence which transforms concepts into thoughts, which can then link up with other thoughts forming a thematic unit of the sentence. The fact that thoughts mostly participate in strings of thought does not entitle us to ignore the individual units. On the contrary, an element inside a sentence is first relativised to its context within the sentence, and only afterwards related to the sentence-external context. (Doherty 2000:43)

As it stands, I believe this is a perfectly legitimate claim. Rushing into textual matters before or without fully taking into account what may be learned on the SL sentence level about how to recover the complex linguistic information needed for grammatical, lexical, and stylistic reconstruction in the TL would certainly be premature. In fact, even the most sophisticated textual analysis can profit from insights into sub-textual, or indeed intra-sentential distinctions. Even without the well-informed linguistic background, which Doherty has at her disposal, other authors, drawing primarily on their experience, have come up with relevant and valid advice as to how grammatical structures within the ST sentence may be profitably replaced by TL equivalents (see, for instance, Vinay & Darbelnet 1958; Friederich 1969, 1989; Gallagher 1986, 1989; Kraus 1987; Lindquist 1989). The sheer uniqueness of translating a particular text makes it imperative to have repertoires of sub-textual procedures at one's fingertips, which translators come equipped with when they take a closer look at what their individual assignment has in store for them. Then it is time, high time indeed, to get a comprehensive look at their whole text at hand.

THE CASE OF GENRES

Thus it is not an either-or thing, translating sentences or text, but both techniques are intricately bound up with each other. As a matter of fact, principles of economy would favour an approach tackling translation problems on or below sentence level, and then checking the adequacy of the translation at the text

level. More often than not we have to do with what could be called default equivalences, i.e., sub-textual correspondences that hold up in all textual contexts, so that no system-extraneous considerations and hence emendations become necessary. Nevertheless, translators are always well advised to keep their options open for a textual check. Confining one's attention to the sentence or part of its structure may produce a perfectly good translation. However, when preceding or subsequent parts of the text are considered, the overall adequacy of a sub-textual choice may be called into question. Moreover, as contrastive studies of parallel corpora of SL and TL texts sharing the same register of "functional style" or "register" suggest, different discourse styles may call for TL reformulations that are not, linguistically speaking, "better", but represent habitual or favoured syntactic usage (Neubert 1995).

Thus, case studies of the *second* type, i.e., sentence-level analyses based on whole texts, often belonging to a specific register, turn out to be very relevant. For instance, it is an empirical fact that the structure of research papers written by German scientists is different from that found in papers written by their British or American counterparts. On the surface it looks as if the divergences remain entirely on the level of the sentence and below, but on closer scrutiny we find subtle differences running through the whole paper. While English-speaking authors tend to choose a name, an animate noun or, at least, a concrete noun as the subject of the sentence, authors writing in German tend to use abstract subjects or impersonal constructions, preferably preceded by prepositional constructions functioning as sentence-initial adverbial modifiers. Consequently, translators may be inclined to follow these preferences, though there is, in fact, no direct linguistic need to carry out such changes in their translations.

Conducting case studies of science translations, taking their starting point in comparisons of original English and German texts, such as scientific papers, the focus is on just those translations that are not afraid of rephrasing ST habits by TT alternatives. Innovative translations of this kind overwrite the linguistically quite possible direct grammatical renderings, replacing them by versions which TL authors would probably have chosen if they had written the paper in the first place. Translators writing in their stead take risks in the interest of maintaining the norms of the target language and to secure the readability of the target text.

From this discussion it becomes evident that studies concentrating on "sentence-in-discourse" analysis may become genuine case studies, of the *second* type, as defined above, if translated texts produced by highly competent translators are analysed in real life contexts, which include the context of situation, the background of the translation commissioner and above all the aim and locus of the translation as well as projected audiences. I have attempted to conduct this kind of research on the basis of translation assignments carried out by one of the most experienced American technical translators, who has been involved in

rendering German science articles into English for scholarly journals and research documentation in the US for more than a dozen years. In a way the discussion I had with this highly competent translator, who also teaches advanced courses in a prestigious American university, resembled translation protocols of an impressionistic kind. It turned out that she had carried out most of her "transformations" as a result of her immersion in the current American "science style", which she almost naturally considered the best TL textual model. The generalisations I had come up with (cf. Neubert 1995) came as a bit of a surprise to her, since she had reached her transformations almost "unconsciously". On the whole, however, she fully agreed with my interpretation of her approach.

Reviewing the literature on the *assessment* of translations as against the much more fashionable topic of the *process* of translation, I found that most studies on assessment tend to be of the *second* type, with very few of the authors getting down to the nitty-gritty details of a fully-fledged analysis of the *first* type. One reason for this may be a lack of interest in what professional translators do and how they go about their everyday routine chores. There do exist indeed many instructive surveys neatly cataloguing the range of assignment types modern translators have to cope with (cf. Schmitt 1990, 1993[4]). These studies, which often rely on carefully conducted questioning of the various job holders, free-lance or employed, may, to a certain extent, be viewed as fragmented genuine case studies. Many translator-training institutions, intent on ensuring hands-on up-to-dateness of their programmes, are very keen to know the results of such surveys because they want to adjust their curricula to perceived trends. Prospective translators are indeed best advised to get some information on current and future trends in their profession. Teachers are continually adapting their choice of texts, their methodology and their tools to fit the changing types of assignments. What is happening is, in a way, an attempt to arrange translation classes into a case-oriented sequence of assignments, simulating what is supposed to be going on out there in the translators' world.

A crucial aspect of the work of practising translators' is the pervasive role played by PCs and on-line information sources. Electronic tools, including networking, have become indispensable in almost any real-life job, and it is indeed the translator's workstation that determines the quality and speed of translation. Thus students in the classroom are expected to learn how to take advantage of the latest developments in PC-aided translation. What has now become the dominating buzzword of successful translation management, *localisation*, is in fact nothing but translating so that the TL text can function as the *localised case* of the SL text.

This cumulative application of the dominant cases of a modern translator's work, welcome as it is, should not be taken to be fully identical with what I meant by the *first* of the three types of case studies described. On the one hand, it is surprising that these laudable innovations in the field of translation teaching

have made very little impact on the academic field of translatology. Their very hands-on nature makes these approaches somewhat suspicious of the lofty generalisations about the translation process, dominating translation studies literature and most conferences. On the other hand, it must be pointed out that most of the empirical surveys, helpful as they may be as pointers to the changing routes through the modern territory of the profession, fail to reflect any in-depth analysis of the linguistic, textual and pragmatic parameters involved in any particular case. They have not yet made deep impact on the field of practical translation.

Surveys of the whole field must necessarily leave out the complex facts and relationships that have to be taken into account when the profile of a translation case, representing a significant general type, is to be characterised in detail. Here we are again dealing with the so far unresolved problem of how and why a special case is not just one out of many, but represents, to some extent, a prototype, which allows description and, hopefully, also explanation or at least rationalisation, of equal value with any of the more traditional process-oriented studies dominating the academic scene. A book such as Hans Hönig's *Konstruktives Übersetzen* (Hönig 1995), reviewing many practical issues in translation with plenty of examples, necessarily comes up with an overarching synopsis of this variegated field, which should be of interest to teacher and student as well as translator and commissioner. Though he does not specifically deal with case studies, the discerning reader may easily distinguish particular cases for additional study.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF CASE STUDIES
TO TRANSLATION METHODOLOGY

From a methodological point of view case studies are more than just illustrations. They elaborate empirically what theoretical approaches cannot possibly achieve. Their status in translation studies serves to throw into relief what is often enough explained as *general* truth about translation but not as *concrete* facts. Without an elaboration of cases, the state of the art remains a torso, a very intriguing one, for that matter, but an empirical projection without a fully-fledged object. It is the cases that can fit together the most profound and the most detailed insights about the components of the object studied and can produce a coherent whole. They give an empirical basis to the many pertinent generalisations scholars have made about translation, lending a unique focus to their insights into the broad translational spectrum. Leading a prospective translator through the decisive moves of a particular translation assignment is tantamount to a demonstration of what makes a translation tick. It is more than a cumulative effect which is being achieved. It is the thing itself which appears in full view, not stripped of its daunted complexity, but highly structured, as a case

standing for the whole professional gamut. It may be likened to the *qualia* of translation studies, the quality or the property that translators can actually perceive and experience.

What case studies alone put into effect is the global realisation of an interrelated set or sequence of translation problems. Pertaining to a textually independent stretch of discourse, defined by the translation assignment in its social context, it leaves the student no other choice but to cope with it *in toto* and *in concreto*. Not a single important issue facing the translator can be evaded. Comparisons or analogies with other texts and translations may and will in fact often be adduced. They will serve to show, for instance, how a difficult translation problem may be solved by reference to another text. Such links are primarily meant to enhance the understanding and the practical management of the problem(s) at hand. In other words, the assignment underlying a particular case study must be fully and completely mastered and not just talked about with regard to previous experiences or possibly future problems. It is the *principle of immediacy,* i.e., of immediate action, leaving no room for shifting something aside, that distinguishes case studies from other merely illustrative lessons.

There is another principle worth noting, which is actually an outgrowth of the principle of immediacy. It is the unique opportunity to present translational problems *in one go*, i.e., in a text from beginning to end. This *principle of holism* allows as well as necessitates the demonstration of the pros and cons of translational choices in the context of the whole assignment. The *total text* is the non plus ultra. Particular means serve particular ends. What may look impossible with respect to the systemic potential of the TL as a correspondence to a seemingly "untranslatable" text segment, often enough turns out to be the favourite choice if the whole TT is taken into account. The text is evidently not only a filter singling out textual meanings and putting words and sentences into the pertinent focus of an assignment. It is also a facilitator creating holistic effects beyond the well-trodden means of the SL and the TL. This refers to the ST as well as to the TT, because the interdependence of the newly-connected features of the latter enables entirely new ways of expressing something. Case studies highlight untapped resources putting older terms into new light. It is only within the framework of the TT that the various elements of a ST can be somehow reconstructed. Equally, equivalence, if reached at all, is clearly a property of the TT which stands in an equivalence relation to the ST in a particular context "which is the case".

There is, however, a downside to the redeeming effect of relying on the whole text. Another, perhaps not always welcome ingredient of the holistic principle is that case studies cannot leave out anything, that is, anything essential. Translation assignments have to be performed in toto. Translation students picking out text specimens to illustrate selected translation problems must necessarily also concern themselves with all the less interesting or sometimes

awkward parts of the ST and the difficulties these may cause the translator. Most of those problem areas often run counter to the needs of a particular scholarly intention to be realised in a book, paper or talk. In exchange, protocols and descriptions of case studies follow their own logic imposed by the specifics of the pertaining assignments. What may appear irrelevant in the context of a generalised translation study agenda is often a *sine qua non* for a case at hand.[6] Evidently, what case studies contribute to translation studies in general is a hands-on uniqueness which cannot be achieved by any other methodological device. Their empirical value is not just extraordinary. It is, in fact, through case studies that translatology may enhance its empirical content considerably.

From this state of affairs, viz. translations deriving their very mode of existence from individual cases, it should have become evident that successful translation is *case-bound*. The *principle of translatability* can only be proved by case studies. This shows that textual compensation, often quoted as enabling translatability, is another way of saying that *communicative equivalence* lies in specific cases of translation and nowhere else; certainly not in the bilingual dictionary (Neubert 1991). It appears that through this empirical backing the very general concept of translatability gets the support that predominantly abstract or eclectic studies fail to give.

Case studies in translation are complex procedures involving, as should have become clear by now, much more than linguistic considerations relating to SL and TL, though, of course, the devices available in the two language systems play a major part. A translation assignment, however, is also constrained by a number of other determinants, most of them of a non-linguistic nature. They may all be lumped together as *pragmatic factors*. Pragmatic is here taken to mean, in its original semiotic sense, the social relations associated with linguistic signs in texts. More simply, pragmatic factors are what relates people, speaking the SL or the TL, to discourses, more specifically to texts (to be) translated. The literature on translation has produced many so-called models of the translation process, which include references to intentions, needs and interests with regard to a proposed or commissioned translation, and also, on the receiving end, to patterns of expectations shared by the audience of the translation. Part and parcel of this pragmatic network are the parameters of place and time in which translations are carried out.

COVERT VS. OVERT FACTORS OF CASE STUDIES

Whereas these pragmatic factors may be called *overt,* there are other *covert* aspects, often of equal importance. They are parameters having to do with the labour involved in doing translations. They may be said to constitute the *economics of translation*. After all, translations, to a much greater extent than original

texts, are *commodified discourse*. They are commissioned by SL or TL speakers who for whatever reason want to have a TL reproduction of a SL text[7]. Ranging on a scale of various degrees of fine-tuning and availability of space, editing, deadlines, and last but not least, prices, translations exhibit enormous differences with regard to quality. The finished product on the market or the in-house product does not normally carry a label designating its particular market history. Yet case studies of the economic conditions underlying translation assignments will have to point out just those covert factors and follow up the eventual traits of the commissioned TTs, which a lay critic of the translation would not have the faintest idea about. As surveys of the contemporary translation scene have made it abundantly clear, these economic considerations are playing an ever more important role for the professional translator. An "unbiased" look at a translation, with fixed linguistic criteria determining the critic's view, would come up with utterly unrealistic assessments.

Normally, translations do not carry price tags, indicating covert factors, such as economic considerations determining the amount of labour which a translator has invested, in fact, was supposed to invest. Literary translations used to be preceded by translators' notes explaining the ways and means how particular problems were tackled. Unfortunately this useful method has mostly been given up, leaving readers in the dark about how to make sense of unexpected or unfamiliar passages. Translations have been more and more turned into "normal" TL discourse, with their creators becoming invisible transfer agents. This development holds true, just as well, with regard to overt factors. With the main emphasis being shifted to content, TTs are used and judged by their TL face value. This applies to practically all genres and registers from highly specialised technical texts to literary art forms. It is, therefore, precisely by singling out cases of translation that both the specialist as well as the general public should be sensitised to the glory and plight of the translator's craft (Ortega y Gasset 1937, 1947).

Case studies not only contribute to translatology and translator training. They also help to create a more realistic picture of an extraordinarily expanded area of modern communication. I would not go as far as the school of critics best represented by Lawrence Venuti, who are openly attacking translators who try to provide translations that are indistinguishable from untranslated TL discourse. Doing away with the alien specification of the original, and domesticating the TL completely would be, in Venuti's and his followers' view, like "raping" the ST or "imperialist aggression" into the foreign culture, which produced and hosted the original (Venuti 1992).

TYPOLOGY OF CASE STUDIES

From what has been said so far, case studies appear to be the epitome of singularity, of uniqueness contrasting with the generalisations of more traditional, but also more recent translation studies. They focus on what several or many translation cases have in common and what can be abstracted from them by way of universal rules or even laws (Toury 1995), which may be applied, if not to all, so at least to recurrent types of translations. But special translation cases are in fact more than just special. Their specificity betrays more than a unique case. What on the surface appears to be unique is often much more than that. It may be a *case in point* or an *index case*. What we have then is a seemingly isolated assignment that should be tagged as indicative of more than an individual case. It can, for instance, be symbolic of an emerging trend.

The history of translation abounds in changing traditions about how to translate (Delisle & Woodworth 1995). Chesterman (1997), in particular, has traced what he calls the evolution of translation *memes* representing the different perspectives from which translators have approached their tasks from ancient times down to the present day. The way he has done this still resembles more traditional conceptualisations. But it would be equally or perhaps more convincing to top the succeeding stages of his historical sketch by localising concrete *index cases* standing for those translations that have opened up new vistas, abandoning time-honoured methods of dealing with an original. Luther's Bible translation would be such an *index case.* Luther himself in his *Sendbrief vom Dolmetschen* (1530) defended his method of *localising* his translation against his catholic critics by justifying his method by taking up case after case in his biblical text. His textual approach set him off convincingly against his literally-minded detractors. (Neubert 1987).

But in contrast to Chesterman's straightforward evolutionary trends, a closer analysis of translational trends over the ages would alert us to much more variegated and contrastive scenarios, with *index cases* not necessarily separating epochs but running at cross purposes within parallel periods. In actual fact, the distribution of specific views, epitomised by certain *index cases*, is not entirely restricted to qualitative distinctions but hinges upon quantitative assessments. New approaches need not do away with old procedures: it is the dominant *norms that change*. And we should not forget, as we get closer to the present, and with its huge expansion of the need for translations, that there is a vast number of *sub-norms*. Today one could say that *everything goes*, provided there is a need (and a price paid) for it.

A more realistic view is, therefore, the *incidence* of *index cases* and *norms* for a *genre* or *discourse type*. This leads us to a final paradox which riddles the role of case studies in the context of generalist thinking on translation. If there is a framework assigning cases a place within a typology of discourses, it be-

comes, all of a sudden, feasible to describe and perhaps also to explain translation in terms of interlocking cases. This amounts to approaching theory inductively, *pace* not by way of selected examples, but through fully-fledged case histories, each of them delivering their concrete informative loads, processual as well as declarative, to achieve a rich empirical tableau. The research-intensive work going into each individual case study will eventually yield a rich theoretical crop, calling the lofty theorisers' bluff.

It could very well be that the present uncertainties besetting many translation scholars as to what holds their often divergent views of their discipline together and, further, what guidelines their translator training programmes should follow are caused by the glaring lack of a genuine empirical basis. Case studies, conducted and organised by way of a systematic *tour d'horizon* across the full spectrum of translational reality, past, present and projected into the future, will, I believe, offer a way out of the botched-up relationship between theory and practice, between the scholars analysing translation and the practitioners doing the job.

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Notes

[1] "Management is ... the most creative of all the arts, for its medium is human talent. What ... is management's most fundamental task? It is to deal with change. Management is the gate through which social, political, economic and technological change, indeed, change in every dimension, is rationally and effectively spread through society."

Cf. also the definition of case study in Cross 1995:54: "The scientific application of management and administrative techniques to study individual business cases and problems and develop practical solutions."

[2] [Management is] "Defined in its briefest form as 'the art and science of getting things done through other people' " (Cross op. cit.: 217).

[3] As a matter of fact, linguistic and discourse considerations dominating translation management are but the decisive tools which are used to reach people, SL senders and TL addressees. It is, however, typical of the translators' craft that they are normally invisible or hidden. They can rarely deal with their readers. Commissioned by all kinds of text providers, personal and institutional, they are forced to construct their management model almost entirely with the help of verbal cues. Deriving their textual endeavours from the real live scenery of SL speakers and writers they project them to the envisioned reality of their TL audience. What they are out to do then is, in analogy to management in business, to get things done for people through language or rather texts. They are "performers without a stage" (cf. Wechsler 1998).

[4] Cf. also the recurrent surveys in *Lebende Sprachen* and *BDÜ-Mitteilungsblatt für Dolmetscher und Übersetzer.*

[5] What can be postulated as standard parameters of *translatio* may be summarised as *doubling/mediating, rephrasing at a distance, displaced situationality, bilingual and multilingual intertextuality, derived creativity, expanded pragmatic directedness* (Neubert 1997:5–22).

[6] This is, incidentally, one of the reasons why translation scholars are wary of case studies. They detract the generalist from making statements about types of translation problems holding for many more than one text.

[7] For the sake of convenience, we subsume under the definition also those translations which are not genuine reproductions of SL texts but owe their existence in some derived way to a former ST. In marketing, for instance, TL advertisements may deviate significantly from their SL "originals". In fact, they may look as quite different texts marketing the same product. They are not really translations but produced by TL advertisers along lines commissioned by the firm in the SL or in the TL country. Yet we include them as typical examples of "covert translation". They show the economics of translation in its most direct sense.