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Yvon Keromnes

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Where Linguistics meets Translation Theory – A mootable point¹

Introduction

Examining the vexing relation between linguistics and translation theory and reviewing the difficulties with which it is fraught, one invariably comes at some point upon two fairly entrenched positions, on the one hand what we shall call the ‘separatist’ camp, which considers the two disciplines as mutually exclusive, and on the other hand the ‘incorporating’ camp, which presents one discipline (usually linguistics) as totally subsuming the other². We defend the view that these extreme positions are partly based on misrepresentations, what Pinker (2007: 89) calls ‘straw men’, caricatures that one can easily defeat in a mock theoretical debate. Although we think that linguistics and translation theory can benefit from one another (and that in particular translation theory cannot do without linguistics), both disciplines also have concerns that are not germane to the other.

Our point is therefore to provide a clearer representation of the domain where the two disciplines intersect. In order to do this, we will first concern ourselves with ‘theoretical theory’ (what might be called more technically ‘meta-theory’³), fairly abstract notions and theoretical positions which, although they seem of little import for actual translation, nevertheless have to be considered, because they act as a sort of invisible backdrop in the debate. Then, we shall turn to empirical theories, arising from practice, and finally to

¹ For obvious reasons, discussions about translation often revolve around words, and this article is a case in point. But the use of the word ‘mootable’ in the title is bound to raise more than one eyebrow. Its discovery by the author of these lines was pure serendipity. We had not even suspected its existence until recently when the search for the history of some other word in the Oxford English Dictionary brought us to its vicinity. Now ‘moot’ is an obvious cognate of ‘meet’, but the collocation ‘moot point’ shows a meeting under a less than felicitous light: uncertain, undecided. ‘Mootable’, on the other hand, is a dynamic – and optimistic – version of the notion. It applies to a state of affair that is ‘amenable to discussion’. It is somehow interesting how a single word can sometimes lead you to a new line of thought.

² In the first camp, Pergnier (2004), who does not actually advocate separation, draws a dismal picture of the relation between the two disciplines, which he sees as “following parallel paths”, separated by an epistemological gap, translation having to do with *parole* while linguistics, apart from a few notable exceptions, is concerned with *langue*. An opposition that brings us back to the 60s and the heyday of structuralism. Ironically, in the second camp, it is by claiming to be following Saussure’s footsteps and by invalidating most of what has happened in linguistics since then – and that the first camp blissfully ignores – that Rastier (2011) tries to define his own approach to text linguistics as an autonomous discipline that would naturally encompass translation theory. [nb: in this article, whenever authors of works originally written in French or German are quoted in English, the quotes are our translation].

³ It must be noted that the vast majority of articles on translation theory belongs to the ‘meta-theoretical’ category, often with hardly an example discussed.

translation proper, empirical data, in the guise of a few issues raised by the translation of one short text by Freud into English and into French.

Meta-theory

Several aspects that may obscure our understanding of the relation between linguistics and translation theory are often left unsaid or simply taken for granted. For instance, if the disunity of translation theory is regularly discussed in its relation to linguistics⁴, the disunity of linguistics seldom is. So, we could start by asking what exactly is linguistics. Contrary to the ‘straw man’ representation favoured by some translation theorists, it only marginally corresponds to the way Saussure defined it, or rather, to the way Saussure is said to have defined it⁵. Students are told linguistics is ‘the scientific study of language’, but the term ‘scientific’ alone is a huge can of worms in the humanities and social sciences⁶. So, the ‘scientific’ status of linguistics may have some bearing on its relation to translation theory and to the status of the latter as a science⁷.

To put it simply, the question of the scientificity of linguistics revolves around two main lines of argument, one regarding formalism and the other empiricism. Some linguists will insist on the essential importance of formalism and attempt to make language look as much as possible like mathematics. Some will go as far as to claim that deep within, language is mathematics⁸. Other linguists will remark that a true understanding of the faculty of language can only come from the study of many natural languages, the more the better, among the 6 000 there may still be in the world – and the greater number of those that have already disappeared, and you certainly cannot pretend to be studying language scientifically if you only work with two or three actual languages.

⁴ See for instance Guillemin-Flescher (2003) and Boisseau (2009) for a historical perspective and a panorama. And for a more detailed overview, see Stolze (2011), who classifies translation theories in 5 main categories bearing an emphasis respectively on language systems, texts, translation as knowledge domain, the process of translating, or the translator, and 17 subcategories containing many more theoretical approaches.

⁵ Although it should not be discarded too quickly, it seems that Saussure’s influential *Cours de linguistique générale* does not quite do justice to what Saussure really thought; see Arrivé (2007) for a measured account of the question.

⁶ It is also central to the debate around Freud in translation, as we shall see.

⁷ Two well-known proposals in that direction that come to mind originate from linguists, Nida (1964) and Wills (1982).

⁸ Of course, Plato, with his “Let none ignorant of geometry enter here”, has a lot to answer for, and to this day, many theories in various disciplines look up to mathematics as the standard for ‘proper science’ against which every other discipline is to be measured. Among the supporters of the ‘language-as-mathematics’ belief are for instance Harris (1968) and Chomsky, with his claim of a “formal nature of language”. If its nature were formal, one should think that there would be adequate (i.e. not overly simplifying) and comprehensive formal representations of language by now. But as Fauconnier and Turner (2002: 122) write, “despite decades of focused effort, it has proven to be impossible to reduce semantics and other important forms of thought to symbolic logic.”

These interrogations about scientificity are genuine and difficult questions. If one can have serious misgivings about formalism and logic, associated to a promise of automatic translation that has been receding for ever, scientific models and methods are nevertheless a requirement. So are replicability of observations, testability of hypotheses and general theoretical accountability. The use of quantitative data might go some way in ensuring that⁹. It implies empirical research, which does not mean giving up theory, but only a priori reasoning.

Another question is: how broad should one's empirical basis be? The heuristic value of a broad basis is undeniable. The greater the number of languages studied, the more one comes upon phenomena unsuspected until then¹⁰; therefore, linguistics should be usage-based, and this implies corpora of actual utterances (instead of made-up examples), but also a need for intuition to tell you when there is something wrong with your theorizing¹¹. And there lies a strong constraint; if you are theorizing about translation, your intuition will not help you with more than a few languages. So, these difficult issues have to be tackled, but the fact is that they seldom are¹².

And finally, adding to this theoretical insulation that prevents objective comparisons between theoretical options is the growing specialisation of knowledge. So many aspects of language are being studied these days, in so many different theoretical frames, that one can hardly be expected, as a linguist, to be conversant with all of them. Which begs the question, when we consider whether and where linguistics meets translation theory, of the kind of linguistics we are talking about.

The converse situation – the disunity of translation theory – is even more obvious, but some, like Ballard (2006: 8), want to see it as a sign of vitality, wondering “whether the diversity of approaches does not simply reflect the complexity and importance of translation.”

One point where linguistics assuredly meets translation theory, and where it affects translation itself is what we may call its ‘ideology¹³’ as defined by Boudon (1986: 11),

⁹ Calling for an “empirical revolution”, Geeraerts (2006a) presents the use of quantitative data as a methodological necessity. We agree that its increased use is a beneficial development in linguistics.

¹⁰ And the less probable the idea of (non-trivial) language universals becomes (see Evans & Levinson: 2009).

¹¹ Jackendoff (2012: 213) convincingly argues that “it’s logically and psychologically impossible to achieve the ideal of purely explicit rational thought. What we experience as rational thinking is necessarily supported by a foundation of intuitive judgment. We need intuition to tell us whether we’re being rational!”

¹² As Geeraerts (2006b: 2) writes, “Theories in linguistics tend to be fairly insular affairs: each theoretical framework tends to constitute a conceptual and sociological entity in its own right, with only a limited number of bridges, market places or even battlegrounds shared with other approaches.”

¹³ We do not use the notion in any derogatory sense, nor as necessarily reflecting the interests of a particular political or socioeconomic entity.

unquestioned aprioristic beliefs that anyone's thought processes involves. A translator needs a workable model of translation, but as often as not, that model will remain unconscious. Such a model involves in particular beliefs about what a language is, and what its relations to outside reality and to thought processes are. In linguistics, these basic assumptions have to be spelt out. And they may vary tremendously. Again, to take two extremes, Chomsky seems convinced that language is first and foremost a formal system, innate and largely independent of meaning, and in which the differences between natural languages hardly matter¹⁴. His is a universalist position. On the other hand, Levinson (2003) seems prepared to go to inordinate lengths to prove that your thoughts are – to some extent – determined by the language you speak which, according to him, is not innate, but linked to your culture. And that makes him a linguistic relativist and determinist. And they can't be both right (They could both be wrong, though¹⁵).

As far as translation is concerned, if you stand closer to a universalist position, translation poses no problem, it seems to amount to something akin to a change of fonts in your word processor. And if you feel, in your soul, a relativist, then *in fine*, translation is impossible.

To sum it up, in these two theoretical archipelagoes we have just sketched, according to where you are situated, what your favourite brand of linguistics is and what catches your interest as a researcher, the relation between linguistics and translation theory may look extremely different.

From our own vantage point, as a cautious optimist and a cognitivist, in theory, there is nothing that cannot be translated: despite the huge variety of experiences humans can have in life, it seems a reasonable hypothesis that we all function in ways similar enough that we can understand one another¹⁶. But how much time and energy, and how many words is one ready to use in order to make sure that this understanding takes place? Translatability is a matter of balance between cognitive and performing effort on the one hand and the (expected) benefit of mutual understanding on the other.

Translating Freud

The translation of Freud's works is of particular interest from a theoretical point of view because it seems to generate its own theories. Several people involved in translation have

¹⁴ Pinker (1994: 232) writes that "According to Chomsky, a visiting Martian scientist would surely conclude that aside from their mutually unintelligible vocabularies, Earthlings speak a single language". For a critical review of that presentation of language, see Tomasello (1995).

¹⁵ For a review of Levinson (2003), see Keromnes (2007).

¹⁶ And for that matter, ethology also teaches us that – up to a point – we can understand (and misunderstand) some non-human animals. But that is communication, and not just linguistics.

written about Freud's language and about translating Freud. The main debate here, which does not quite mirror the debate between universalists and relativists, boils down to an opposition between linguistic competence and disciplinary competence. It is encapsulated by the exchange that took place in 1967 in the French newspaper *Le Monde*¹⁷ between, on the one side, M. Robert, a philologist and translator, and on the other side, J. Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, psycho-analysts. They argued more particularly about the French translation of the German word *Trieb*, (*instinct* or *pulsion* in French), but their main purpose was to determine who had the proper authority or legitimacy to translate Freud. Robert stated clearly that in order to translate Freud, you have to be a philologist. And Laplanche and Pontalis, just as clearly and more forcefully, stated that in order to translate Freud, you have to be a psycho-analyst.

On the philologists' side, Goldschmidt published in 1988 a book entitled '*Quand Freud voit la mer*' (*when Freud sees the sea*). In that book, he offers a theory about the influence of the German language on Freud's thoughts¹⁸. Goldschmidt is a writer and a translator, and perfectly bilingual; born in northern Germany, he came to live in France as a child, later studied German and became a qualified teacher of the language¹⁹. So, who better than he could tell us what translating from the German into French, and translating Freud into French is about? In his book, he starts by giving us the general characteristics of the German language most relevant to a translation into French: the three genders, the fact that you can turn any infinitive into a common noun with a neutral gender, the transparency of the morphology, the fact that the Germans call '*Augenarzt*', (*eye doctor*) what the French call '*oculiste*', a word that is anything but transparent. Goldschmidt insists that the German language is extremely simple, that a 7 year old can read Freud, and that it is extremely concrete, not abstract, contrary to what one so often hears. Goldschmidt's book provides an insider's philological analysis of Freud's language and thoughts, but it is not linguistic in a technical sense, despite the influence of Jacques Lacan, himself strongly influenced by Saussure. It is a poetical work. Goldschmidt (id.: 13) writes that language, the human faculty, is like the sea, and that the sea is like the human soul²⁰. The whole thesis of the book rests on the observation that the German word *Seele* (soul) contains the word *See* (the sea). Goldschmidt's leitmotiv throughout this book is that Freud in fact invented nothing:

¹⁷ The exchange was reprinted in the translators' journal *Meta* in 1982.

¹⁸ Which could seem to make him a determinist, but the fact is that he does not establish a causal link between the two.

¹⁹ Agrégé d'allemand, Goldschmidt is in particular the translator of Peter Handke's works into French.

²⁰ So, logically, language is like the soul. Which reminds us that Lacan famously said that "the unconscious is structured like a language" (Nowadays a highly implausible hypothesis).

the whole of psycho-analysis is already there, in the German language. And so, a translation of Freud should evince the general qualities of the German language, concreteness and simplicity.

Yet here, we also see that bilinguals are not always the totally reliable witnesses we believe them to be. To support his argument about the sea, Goldschmidt (id.: 15) differentiates between two synonyms, *die See* and *das Meer*. *Die See*, he writes, is the classical element, *das Meer* is more remote, a geographical notion. In German, you say “*wir fahren an die See*” (*we’re going to the sea*). But that statement would probably surprise many specialists of the German language, let alone native speakers. And in fact, if you google “*wir fahren ans Meer*”, you get tens of thousands of hits, including a book and a song bearing that title, significantly more than what you get for “*wir fahren an die See*”²¹.

On the psychoanalysts’ side, Altounian published in 2003 a book dramatically entitled ‘*L’écriture de Freud: Traversée traumatique et traduction*’ (*Freud’s writing: traumatic crossing and translation*). Her views are diametrically opposed to Goldschmidt’s, she insists on the uniqueness of Freud’s language, (id.: 26) “which is to be translated from one language into another”²² (i.e. into a unique kind of French). Her book is directed both at those who only speak French and at German native speaker, equally at a disadvantage according to her, as they are both unable to see the uniqueness of Freud’s language; the former when they fail to realize that the otherness of someone else’s thinking exists primarily in his or her language²³, and the latter when they are fooled into thinking that Freud wrote harmoniously²⁴. Altounian belongs to the team of psycho-analysts who, first under the supervision of A. Bourguignon, then of J. Laplanche, and with the help of specialists of German studies, set out to translate all of Freud’s works for the PUF²⁵. In 1989, they published a whole book devoted to the question of translating Freud (complete with a 200 page terminological glossary). What is most extraordinary about their method is that their theory preceded the actual translating, and the main characteristic of the advocated method is extreme literality. But the project had first been presented in an article (Cotet & Rauzy: 1983). Like Goldschmidt and Altounian, the authors of this article mention among other things linguistic problems regarding the lexicon and the syntax, they

²¹ Tested on Jan. 20, 2014: 79 200 hits for “*wir fahren ans Meer*” vs 57 400 hits for “*wir fahren an die See*”.

²² “la langue de Freud, celle qu’il s’agit précisément de transférer d’une langue dans une autre [...]”.

²³ “[Cet ouvrage] s’en prend plutôt à l’infatuation propre à tout monolinguisme qui oublie que l’altérité d’une pensée – et quelle altérité que celle de la méthode analytique ! – se manifeste au premier chef dans sa langue.” (id.: 16).

²⁴ “là où un germanophone peut, confiant dans la parole d’un Maître émise en sa propre langue, se laisser porter par le sentiment d’une apparente harmonie d’expression;” (id.: 27).

²⁵ Presses Universitaires de France.

also mention linguists such as Coseriu, Mounin or Chomsky, but it is not quite clear how linguistic notions are implemented, nor why any particular linguistic theory should be preferred to another. The method described, inspired by W. Wills and characterized by a strict division of labour, comprises three steps to translate the texts, sentence after sentence: a) reading the sentence, b) choosing the lexicon, discussing possible interpretations, and c) rounding off the sentence. The first step is the one in which “the specialist of German studies in the group, who in other circumstances listens to the psycho-analyst and convinces himself of the truth of the ideas, is heard to speak the truth of the language.” (id.: 1284). But the description of the method is then followed by this candid admission (id.: 1285):

“To be honest, the three-step process presented here is mostly theoretical, and Ladmiral is right to stress that translation is not a science, but a technique, possibly an art, ultimately a game even. The three steps overlap one another, syntax, lexicon and style interpenetrate one another; sometimes you have to look back, retroactions take place. Why not admit it? One often proceeds by trial and error, empirically, until the most satisfactory text eventually takes form on its own, as it were. There are moments of grace, when the translator, a slave set free, experiences joys close to those of creation. Then, he writes ‘under the author’s dictation, like a pianist reliving the composer’s piece he is interpreting.’”

So much for theory, then.

In practice

We are now turning to translation proper, examined in a corpus consisting of one relatively short text by Freud (about 3000 words) and translations of this text both in English and in French. Freud’s essay ‘*Der Dichter und das Phantasieren*’ (1908) is actually the text of a conference given in December 1907 before a distinguished audience, one may describe it as a sort of popular science talk. This talk is about imagination and literary creation, a subject which remained of particular interest for Freud throughout his life. In this text, he establishes a link between the imagination of the child and that of the writer. According to Naccache (2009), who calls Freud a “Christopher Columbus of the neurosciences”, the importance of imagination and the creation of fiction in our daily lives may be one of Freud’s most enduring discoveries.

We examined two English translations of this text, the first by J. Strachey (1950), it is part of the Standard Edition, and the second by D. McLintock (2003), part of the new Freud translations commissioned by Penguin under the supervision of A. Phillips. And we looked at four translations into French, the first by M. Bonaparte²⁶ (1933), who was very influential in some of her lexical choices of translation. For instance, she coined the phrase ‘*l’inquiétante étrangeté*’ for ‘*das Unheimliche*’ (*the uncanny*), which is now a set phrase in French. The second is by B. Feron (1985), for the same publisher, Gallimard, under the supervision of J.-B. Pontalis, and the third translation by F. Cambon (2001), also for Gallimard, in a bilingual edition. And finally, we have the latest translation by Altounian *et al.*²⁷ (2007) for PUF.

Let us look at the very beginning of the text for a first impression:

Tb. 1

Der Dichter und das Phantasieren

Uns Laien hat es immer mächtig gereizt zu wissen, woher diese merkwürdige Persönlichkeit, der Dichter, seine Stoffe nimmt, – etwa im Sinne der Frage, die jener Kardinal an den Ariosto richtete, – und wie er es zustande bringt, uns mit ihnen so zu ergreifen, Erregungen in uns hervorzurufen, deren wir uns vielleicht nicht einmal für fähig gehalten hätten.

Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming

We laymen have always been intensely curious to know – like the Cardinal who put a similar question to Ariosto – from what sources that strange being, the creative writer, draws his material, and how he manages to make such an impression on us with it and to arouse in us emotions of which, perhaps, we had not even thought ourselves capable. (Strachey)

The Creative Writer and Daydreaming

We laymen have always been greatly intrigued to know where the creative writer, that strange personality, finds his subjects – which is much the same question as a certain cardinal once put to Ariosto – and how he contrives to enthrall us with them, to arouse in us emotions of which we might not even have thought ourselves capable. (McLintock)

La création littéraire et le rêve éveillé

Nous autres, profanes, avons toujours vivement désiré savoir d’où cette personnalité à part, le créateur littéraire (poète, romancier ou dramaturge), tire ses thèmes – ceci à peu près dans le sens de la question qu’un certain cardinal adressait à l’Arioste, – et comment il réussit, grâce à eux, à nous émouvoir si fortement, à provoquer en nous des émotions dont quelquefois même nous ne nous serions pas crus capables. (Bonaparte & Marty)

²⁶ In collaboration with E. Marty.

²⁷ There has been as many as 6 people working together on one given text for Freud’s Complete Works in French.

Le créateur littéraire et la fantaisie

Nous autres profanes, nous avons toujours été très curieux de savoir où cette singulière personnalité, le créateur littéraire, va prendre sa matière – dans l’esprit, par exemple, de la fameuse question qu’adressa le cardinal à l’Arioste, – et comment il parvient, par elle, à tellement nous saisir, à provoquer en nous des émotions dont nous ne nous serions peut-être même pas crus capables. (Feron)

Le créateur littéraire et l’activité imaginative

Cela nous a toujours puissamment démangés, nous autres profanes, de savoir où cette singulière personnalité, le créateur littéraire, va prendre sa matière – dans l’esprit, par exemple, de la fameuse question qu’adressa le cardinal à l’Arioste, – et comment il parvient, par elle, à tellement nous saisir, à provoquer en nous des émotions dont nous ne nous serions peut-être même pas crus capables. (Cambon²⁸)

Le Poète et l’activité de fantaisie

Nous autres profanes avons toujours été puissamment stimulés par la curiosité de savoir d’où le poète, cette singulière personnalité, tire ses thèmes – au sens, par exemple, de la question qu’adressa à l’Arioste le fameux cardinal – et comment il parvient, grâce à eux, à tellement nous saisir, à susciter en nous des états d’excitation dont nous ne nous serions peut-être même pas crus capables. (Altounian *et al.*)

The German text is extremely readable, a 7 year old would indeed understand most words, but it is written in a formal style, and self-consciously so. This can be seen, for instance, in the demonstrative pronoun ‘*jener*’ (l. 2) or the relative pronoun ‘*deren*’ (l. 3), which connote a formal style. The syntax is not what a 7 year-old would produce, but it is not confusing. On the whole, as a reader of the entire text will find, this essay is very literary²⁹, and at the same time it is very lively. Freud creates a sort of complicity, starting with ‘*uns*’, (*us*, the speaker and his audience together, ironically labelled as ‘laypersons’ considering the creative writer), he exclaims, asks rhetorical questions. His essay is both informative and entertaining. If we now look at what becomes of this beginning in the translations, our attention is probably caught by some of the lexical choices. In fact, most discussions about Freud in translation seem to revolve around individual words, and it seems that Freud himself tends to focus on specific words, from which he draws conclusions about what language in general tells us. This equivalence between language and vocabulary (in reality, some vocabulary items) is made repeatedly by Freud, e.g. when he writes³⁰:

²⁸ First impressions can be misleading. A consistency test run with the lexical analysis software WordSmith between the four French translations reveals a surprisingly high consistency of 94.9 % between the texts by Feron and Cambon (against 62.6 % for Bonaparte & Marty / Cambon, and 71.7 % for Cambon / Altounian *et al.*). Apart from a few cosmetic changes, Feron’s and Cambon’s translations are very close to being one and the same text.

²⁹ For instance, Freud quotes a famous Austrian playwright and alludes to a passage from the Bible.

³⁰ In Strachey’s translation.

“Language has preserved this relationship between children's play and poetic creation. It gives the name of ‘*Spiel*’ [‘play’] to those forms of imaginative writing which require to be linked to tangible objects and which are capable of representation. It speaks of a ‘*Lustspiel*’ or ‘*Trauerspiel*’ [‘comedy’ or ‘tragedy’: literally, ‘pleasure play’ or ‘mourning play’] and describes those who carry out the representation as ‘*Schauspieler*’ [‘players’: literally ‘showplayers’]”.

One translation difficulty is the ambiguity (on which Freud plays) between the language faculty and the German language, in which the root ‘play’ is found in the words for ‘comedy’, ‘tragedy’ and ‘actor’. Where Freud writes ‘*die Sprache*’, Strachey and McLintock stick to ‘*language*’ and ‘*the language*’, Feron and Cambon also have ‘*le langage*’, but Bonaparte & Marty write ‘*la langue allemande*’, and Altounian *et al.*, not quite so literal for once, feel obliged to write ‘*la langue [allemande]*’, both solutions which, while stating the obvious, make the ambiguity disappear, and with it the idea that language in general, not just German, can be revealing (in this case about non-linguistic behaviour). The square brackets in the latest French translation only makes for awkwardness. As for the words ‘*Lustspiel*’, ‘*Trauerspiel*’ and ‘*Schauspieler*’, almost all translators follow Strachey and give them first in German, but where Strachey translates them and then renders them literally in brackets, Bonaparte & Marty, Feron and Cambon simply translate them. Altounian *et al.* only give the German words in the text, and provide the same information as Strachey in footnotes. Only McLintock dispenses entirely with the German words:

“Moreover, the language itself captures the relation between children’s games and literary creation by applying the word *play* to those of the writer’s inventions that need to be linked to tangible objects – that can be performed or acted – and the word *player* to the person who performs or acts in them.”

Interestingly, this translation illustrates what seems to be the crossed trajectories of Freud’s translations into English and into French. If one only considers the target texts, the first French translations offered extremely readable texts³¹, while Strachey, with the Standard

³¹ Leaving aside quibbles about words like ‘*pulsion*’, which have long been adopted by the French language.

Edition, produced a forbidding text, coining words such as ‘*cathexis*’ (which occurs in our corpus) or ‘*parapraxis*’ that turn some of Freud’s vocabulary into a terminology and make it clear that his writings are for the specialist only. And now, while Bourguignon *et al.*, trying their best to emulate Strachey, have extended the terminology to the extreme, new translations of Freud appear in English, supervised by A. Phillips, who has recruited confirmed literary translators for this task, and expressed the view (2007: 36) that “each of the books should be translated by a different person, and that there should be no consensus about technical terms.”

The translation of the title, of course, is of particular importance, as it symbolically stands for the whole text and is meant to encapsulate it, as it were. So we should say a few words about it. We see a little grammatical variation in English and in French, and a lot of lexical variation in the French translations. First, there is the word ‘*Dichter*’; the Wahrig³² defines it as 1) *Schöpfer von Sprachkunstwerken* (creator of works of art) and 2) (figuratively) *tiefsinniger, fantasievoller Mensch, der die Welt beseelt sieht* (thoughtful and imaginative person, who sees the world as spiritual). The prototypical ‘*Dichter*’ for a German speaker is undoubtedly Goethe, who wrote poems, plays and novels. So what is needed is a general word of which ‘poet’, ‘playwright’ and ‘novelist’ would be specialized subcategorizations. And ‘creative writer’, just like ‘*créateur littéraire*’³³ fit the bill perfectly.

The translation of ‘*das Phantasieren*’ is a standard problem, mentioned for instance by Goldschmidt. The fact is that in German, you can turn any infinitive into a neutral noun which, even if you have just coined it, sounds perfectly normal. Not remotely like ‘*le penser*’ or ‘*le traduire*’ (the activity of thinking, of translating) that you find in Bourguignon *et al.*’s glossary. So, one could argue in favour of a choice that also sounds normal. ‘*Phantasieren*’ simply means to exercise your ‘*Fantasie*’³⁴. “*Du hast keine Fantasie*”, one says in colloquial German: “you have no imagination”. Although the words ‘*fantasy*’, ‘*Fantasie*’ and ‘*fantaisie*’ obviously have the same origin, the German version, which we already met in the Wahrig’s definition of ‘*Dichter*’, is also clearly a case of “*falscher Freund*”, or false friend in French. In their dictionary³⁵, the brothers Grimm define ‘*Fantasie*’ as a) *die schöpferische, besonders dichterische einbildungskraft (auch personifiziert)* (creative imagination, especially of a ‘*Dichter*’) and b) *etwas durch die*

³² Standard German dictionary.

³³ A nice cross-over between the English and French solutions.

³⁴ Borrowed from the French ‘*fantaisie*’, it was alternatively spelt with an ‘f’ from the start, but the ‘ph’ spelling, which was dominant in the 19th century, is now the less common form.

³⁵ Accessible online at < <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/>>.

einbildungskraft in uns hervorgebrachtes, ein uns beschäftigendes gedankenbild, besonders eine leere und falsche vorstellung, ein trugbild im gegensatz zur wirklichkeit (something evoked in us by our imagination, a mental image occupying our mind, especially an empty or false representation, an illusion, as opposed to reality). In French, it has had approximately the same meanings, but the Robert historique³⁶ states that by the 17th century, it had already acquired its central modern meaning of “something pleasant, but not particularly useful”. Which fairly excludes ‘*fantaisie*’ as a lexical choice for the title.

In the text, Freud draws a parallel between the child’s imaginings when he plays, the adult’s daydream, and the author’s creative imagination. In doing so, he plays on both meanings of ‘*Fantasie*’ as defined by the brothers Grimm, what is created by one’s imagination and what one daydreams rather than facing reality. So, ‘*daydreaming*’ is actually a good choice for ‘*Phantasieren*’ in English; the word ‘*Tagtraum*’ (daydream) occurs 15 times in the text, and in close association with the words ‘*Phantasie*’ and ‘*Luftschlösser*’ (castles in the air), along with the noun ‘*Tagträumer*’ (daydreamer) and the verb ‘*tagträume*’n (to daydream), in contrast to ‘*nächtliche Träume*’ (night dreams). And Freud’s point, in this text, somewhat in opposition to Coleridge’s dichotomy between ‘imagination’ and ‘fancy’, is precisely to equate daydreaming with the creative activity of the novelist. He writes³⁷: “So much for fantasies – now for the writer! Are we really justified in attempting to compare him with the ‘dreamer in broad daylight’ and his creations with ‘daydreams’?”. And a few lines down, having described how the hero of a novel invariably triumphs over adversity, he concludes that “we have no difficulty in recognizing His Majesty the Ego, the hero of every daydream and every novel.”

Conclusion

This very brief look at parallel corpora suggests how different texts may pose different kinds of problems in translation, making different aspects of linguistics more or less relevant to the appreciation of the choices made. In this case, comparative linguistics, but to a larger extent lexicology, sometimes in a historical perspective, and terminology. We hope to have shown some issues, both theoretical and practical, central to the delineation of a space in which linguistics and translation theory may meet. Translation theory is a specialist’s discipline, but one that crucially needs interdisciplinary resources. Its future

³⁶ Dictionnaire historique de la langue française.

³⁷ This time in McLintock’s translation.

may depend on its capacity to converse constructively with the various disciplines that overlap with its domain. And linguistics is one such discipline.

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