Reconceptualizing Translation Theory

Integrating Non-Western Thought about Translation

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Abstract: *In Eurocentric tradition most statements about translation that date before the demise of positivism are relatively useless for current theorizing, because most encode the dominant perspectives of Western imperialism or respond to particular Western historical circumstances. Some of the limitations of Eurocentric thinking about translation are patently obvious. Most statements have been formulated with reference to sacred texts, for example, including religious scripture and canonical literary works. Similarly, Eurocentric theorizing has been marked by its concentration on the written word and by the vocabulary in many languages that links translation with the notion of conveying sacred relics intact from place to place.*

Translation studies must strive for more flexible perspectives, and the thinking of non-Western peoples is essential in achieving broader and more applicable theories about translation. This contribution explores the implications of several non-Western concepts of translation, as well as marginal Western ones that fall outside the dominant domain of Western theory. In addition the concept of translation is related to three adjacent concepts about intercultural interface, namely, transmission, representation and transculturation. These three concepts relate to particular, though not always separable, aspects of translation: communication of content, exhibition of content and performance. One way to enlarge thinking about translation is to move beyond Eurocentric tradition, opening translation studies to other cultures' views of transmission, representation and transculturation.

In Western[1] tradition most statements about translation that date before the demise

[1] There is, of course, a problem with the terms 'East' and 'West', both of which imply perspective and position. East or west of what? In Chinese tradition where China is the 'Middle Kingdom', India is 'the West': hardly the case for the imperial British. To the Romans, the nations of southwestern Asia were considered 'the East', a perspective still encoded in the phrase 'the Near East'. At the same time, there are European countries that have been colonized, notably the Celtic fringe, and hence have affinities with the Third World. Here I am using the term 'Western' roughly to refer to ideas and perspectives that initially originated in and became dominant in Europe, spreading from there to various other locations in the world, where in some cases, such as the United States, they have also become dominant. At this point in time, however, when Western ideas have permeated the world and there is widespread interpenetration of cultures everywhere, the terms 'East' and 'West' become increasingly problematic.

of positivism are relatively useless for current theorizing about translation, because most are limited by the dominant ideological perspective of their time – say, Western imperialism – or are primarily applicable to a particular Western historical circumstance – say, the position of a national language and literature within a larger cultural hegemony. These problems are before me whether I read the statements of Latin writers, including Cicero and Jerome, the Germans, including Martin Luther and Friedrich Schleiermacher, or the English, including Alexander Tytler and Matthew Arnold. Such early writers speak to their own condition, out of their own time and their own historical circumstances, but there is rarely any self-reflexivity or acknowledgment about limitations of their own perspective. The result is a narrow-minded declamation that is supposed to address translations of all times and everywhere, but that is sorely circumscribed by a cultural moment.

The restricted perspectives of Western pronouncements about translation before World War I are not always apparent because of the positivist, generalized and prescriptive discourses that frame them. Yet some of the boundaries of Western thinking about translation in these statements should be patently obvious: the fact that most views have been formulated with reference to sacred texts, including both religious scripture and canonical literary works, for example. Similarly, Western theorizing has been distorted by its concentration on the written word. Not least are difficulties caused by the vocabulary in some languages that links translation with conveying sacred relics, unchanged, from place to place: the word *translation* is paradigmatic of this problem (cf. Tymoczko 2003a). Western translation theorists are heirs to these limitations. It is only in the postpositivist period that Western theory begins to show an awareness of its circumscribed nature, and even then many theories of translation retain surprisingly positivist formulations or efface recognition of their own specific commitments and pretheoretical assumptions.

There is a need in translation studies for more flexible and deeper understandings of translation, and the thinking of non-Western peoples about this central human activity is essential in achieving broader and more durable theories about translation. Here I explore the implications of some non-Western concepts and practices of translation, as well as marginal Western ones that fall outside the domain of dominant Western theory. As a whole, I argue that in order to expand contemporary theories of translation, it is not sufficient merely to incorporate additional non-Western *data* pertaining to translation histories, episodes and artifacts. The implications of those data must be analysed and understood, and the results theorized. The consequence will be the refurbishing of basic assumptions and structures of translation theory itself.[2]

Let me begin by observing that all theory is based on presuppositions – called *axioms* or *postulates* in mathematics. In the case of translation theory, the current presuppositions are markedly Eurocentric. Indeed, they grow out of a rather small subset of European cultural contexts based on Greco-Roman textual traditions,

[2] Note that in good research there is always this sort of reciprocity between theory and data. Theory drives the collection and interpretation of data, but data in turn refine and refurbish theory. See Tymoczko (2002).

Christian values, nationalistic views about the relationship between language and cultural identity, and an upper-class emphasis on technical expertise and literacy. For more general and more universally applicable theories of translation, those presuppositions must be articulated and acknowledged; they must be reviewed and rethought.

Before turning to such an articulation, however, an excursus is in order. It's worth asking whether a universal theory of translation is possible and, if so, whether constructing such a theory should be a goal of translation studies. This question is, of course, a subset of a larger question, namely, is it possible to construct any humanistic theory that will have universal applicability? It is quite feasible to construct theories of solar systems that are universally applicable, or theories of the cell. There can be theoretical knowledge that pertains to all six-sided geometrical objects. But can there be a theory of literature, say, or human cultural behaviours in general? Is it possible to have more than a local theory of translation? In fact, is 'normal' a concept that applies to human culture at all, or is it just a label, like a setting on a washing machine?

Here I weigh in with those who believe that much is to be learned by attempting to formulate general theories, even if such attempts are ultimately defeated or only partially realised. General theories are not necessarily achievable – a complete description of literature, for example, may be impossible – but the virtue of pushing theories of human culture toward broader and broader applicability is that, paradoxically, researchers actually end up learning more and more about the particular phenomena that are of greatest interest to them. It is only possible to define the self when we are clear about the boundary that divides the self from the other (cf. Luhmann 1984). Thus, the nature of literature in a specific culture and the positioning of that literature with reference to its own culture become clearer when such arrangements are compared to the situation of other literatures; the broader the comparison, the deeper the resulting understanding of specific local phenomena. I believe that broader and more general theories of translation will illuminate all specific phenomena related to translation everywhere, if only in virtue of the increased awareness of difference.

1. Rethinking current presuppositions about translation

Let us turn to some current presuppositions about translation that are taken as a matter of course by most Western translation scholars and that underly most Western translation theory. Why wouldn't they be taken as givens, in view of their widespread applicability *in Western countries*? Yet these are presuppositions that are in need of rethinking if translation theory is to be extended to non-Western situations, as is increasingly the case. Moreover, there are many situations within Western cultures that current translation theory cannot adequately account for or describe because of these prevailing assumptions. In what follows I draw on such marginal examples to illustrate some of the problems with current paradigms, which incorporation of non-Western experience, thought and perspectives may mitigate. What follows is a selection of basic assumptions upon which contemporary Western translation theory rests, assumptions that have not been well examined or fully interrogated.

1.1 Translators are necessary in interlingual and intercultural situations; they mediate between two linguistic and cultural groups

This is a basic assumption of the discipline of translation studies, yet all who study translation are subliminally aware that there are many situations in which this presupposition does not apply. Monolingualism has been taken as the norm, whereas it may turn out to be the case that plurilingualism is more typical worldwide. I think, for example, of my grandmother who grew up in the southeast corner of Slovakia at the turn of the twentieth century, left school at the age of twelve, but spoke, as a matter of course, two languages: Slovak and Hungarian. The same grandmother later learned to switch back and forth between Bohemian and Slovak; she came to understand Polish, and she learned to speak, read and write English as well. What is the role of translation in such plurilingual communities as those of my grandmother? Are there normally translators *per se* in such cultures? Or are the monolingual marginalized and relegated to restricted and impoverished domains of cultural participation and competence, monolinguals not being privy to participation in the world of, say, commerce? Are monolinguals afforded summary more than translation, observation more than participation? These are questions that translation studies has not adequately researched.

Numerous cases also illustrate the fact that translation can be an essential element of plurilingual cultures but not for the purpose of *mediation* or *communication* between linguistic groups. For example, there is a bilingual community of Hawaiian nationalists who insist on speaking Hawaiian in official U.S. government contexts, particularly legal ones, and who insist on having the services of government translators who can translate between Hawaiian and English. The speakers of Hawaiian do not ask for translation to facilitate communication, being usually less facile in Hawaiian than in English which is generally their first language. Rather, the Hawaiian speakers insist on translation as part of their attempt to block 'common-sense' communication in the United States, to thwart U.S. 'business-as-usual' and to promote recognition of the existence of a pre-Anglo culture in their islands.

Similarly, as I have argued in *Translation in a Postcolonial Context* (1999), postcolonial cultures illustrate the limitation of this presupposition that translation facilitates communication *between* groups. In fact translation in a postcolonial context can mediate across languages *within* a single group, functioning to connect a people with its past, for example, more than to connect one people with another. Translation can be made of a source community for the community itself, even when it involves translation between two languages, rather than translation from one state of a language to another.

This basic premise of translation studies is complex, as my counterexamples indicate. It involves presuppositions about the way that languages function in plurilingual layering, the purpose of translation as primarily communicative and the belief that translation operates to connect different groups. These assumptions may all reflect an Anglo-American model of linguistic (in)competence, equating nation with language

and national identity with linguistic provinciality.[3] Translation studies has, after all, been heavily theorized by English speakers, who are notoriously deficient in language acquisition, and who, thus, may be particularly biased in their theorizing of translation. More research may show that the assumption about monolingualism built into translation studies is ultimately atypical even of Europe, as well as the world as a whole.

1.2 Translation involves (written) texts

This second premise of dominant translation theory has marginalized interpretation as a central activity to be theorized in translation studies. A sign of the bias towards seeing translation as a literacy practice is that even studies of interpretation are slanted in favour of conference interpretation, an activity that begins with a fixed written text. The focus on written texts as the subject of translation has been decried within translation studies by those promoting the study of interpretation (see Cronin 2002 and sources cited). But it is a much more serious deficiency, for most human cultures through time have been oral, and this continues to be the case in much, if not most, of the non-Western world; it follows that most translation through time and space has been oral. Orality is the central condition of human biology and culture, and translation must be theorized so as to acknowledge these conditions.[4] In expanding translation theory to incorporate non-Western experience, the premise that translation primarily involves written or fixed texts must be adjusted, for the majority of human beings in the world still live in cultures where literacy plays a very restricted role.

1.3 The primary text types with which translators work have been defined and categorized

Many Westerners believe that they know, use, and have categorized the central human text types: epic, drama and lyric poetry, for example; or novel, academic lecture and business letter. In fact, text types can vary dramatically from culture to culture, and defining a culture's repertory of primary forms and text types is enormously complex. There is even evidence within the Western tradition that those primary forms characteristic of Greek culture (e.g. epic, lyric, drama) are not universal, but the result of cultural diffusion from the Greco-Roman tradition.[5] Needless to say, the question of text types is further complicated by other aspects of cultural embeddedness of discourse: speech acts (e.g. irony), signals pertaining to relevance and so forth (cf. Hatim 1997: ch. 16). Translation theory has hardly touched these complexities of text type, yet they are essential to understand if current thinking about translation is to be revisioned. The question of text types intersects with the need to understand orality, for oral cultures often have very different text types and different semiotic

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[3] This is a model that relates to the specific histories of a number of key English-speaking nations, including England (and later the United Kingdom), the United States and Australia.

[4] Preliminary exploration of the question is found in Tymoczko (1990).

[5] For the argument, see Tymoczko (1997), discussed below.

structurings of texts from those of literate cultures. Far from being well-conceptualized in existing translation theory, questions pertaining to text type must be explored further if translation theory is to expand beyond current models.

1.4 The process of translation is a sort of 'black box': an individual translator decodes a given message to be translated and recodes the same message in a second language

Although this classic representation of the process of translation has been criticized by many scholars as being too simple, nonetheless the model continues to operate implicitly in many, even most, formulations of translation theory. The concept of decoding/encoding has become a matter of scholarly debate,[6] but the overall picture of a single translator engaged in a mysterious inner process (conditioned, of course, by social context) continues to hold sway. The translation process thus conceived is very individualistic and bound to Western individualism as well as dominant Western translation practice, but the model has assumed normative status in a great deal of translation studies research. This view of translation practice does not reflect the full range worldwide and may not even be the dominant mode crossculturally. It should be contrasted, for example, with the practice of translation in China, which can be traced for two thousand years: a practice that has typically involved more than one person working on a translation, even groups of people working together assigned to highly differentiated roles.[7] Such non-Western practices of translation challenge basic Western thinking and research about the translation process.

1.5 Translators are generally educated in their art and they have professional standing; often they learn their craft in a formal way, connected with schooling or training that instructs the translator in language competence, standards of textuality, norms of transposition and so forth

This presupposition is widely deployed despite its logical and practical problems, in part because the professional status of translators is so deeply rooted in Western culture.[8] The difficulties with this assumption have been most obvious to those scholars who are interested in community translation (still perhaps the most common type of translation in Western countries, as elsewhere), where translators are rarely trained or

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[6] A classic statement of this model is found in Nida (1964: 145-55); see (Katan 1999: 123-44) on the debate about decoder/encoder models, as well as other current models of the translations process.

[7] Team translation has also played a prominent role in the West, but it continues to be inadequately theoretized. Consider, for example, the translation of the King James Bible or current translation protocols of the American Bible Society.

[8] Consider the doctrinal and linguistic expertise required by Biblical translators or the official standing enjoyed by the latimers, the king's translators in the British Isles in the medieval period. On the logical problems associated with attempting to theorize translators as professionals, see Tymoczko (1998).

schooled, indeed where they are amateur almost by definition. But the extension of this model to non-Western situations brings obvious absurdities: with so large a percentage of the world still living in cultures that retain primary or secondary orality and holding schooling at a very high premium, it is obvious that professionalized translation as found in the West will not occur in oral cultures and that translator training and apprenticeship will take radically different forms from those of the West.

1.6 Currently translation is entering a completely new phase and assuming radically new forms because of cultural movements and diasporas associated with globalization and because of the hybridity of the ensuing cultural configurations

This is a hypothesis that has generated some of the most interesting and entertaining speculative writing on translation in the last fifteen years, but it is clearly a view that can only be sustained by those who know very little history, even very little modern history. The written history of the West alone documents vast population migrations from the earliest times: for example, the simultaneous migration of thousands of Celts who moved from what is now Switzerland to the Iberian Peninsula, passing through Provence under the watchful eyes of the Roman legions in the second century BCE. The Roman Empire itself was an immense realm covering much of Africa, Asia and Europe, where there was constant intermingling of languages and cultures, where cultural and linguistic translation was continuous and where population movements – with resulting linguistic and cultural dislocation and interface – were often a matter of public policy. The Chinese empire likewise brought together many peoples, languages and cultures. The Silk Road connected the great Chinese empire with Western realms and served as a conduit in both directions for every manner of human idea and every form of technology, and it supported population migrations as well. The resulting linguistic and cultural translation has been documented in China since antiquity. Even the history of Ireland, a small and seemingly isolated realm, can be shown to involve almost continual interlingual and intercultural contact and hybridity as far back as human beings have inhabited the island.[9] Similarly the cultural effects associated with the Viking diaspora into the British Isles and other parts of Europe are palpable in surviving documents, linguistic borrowings and other historical evidence. In the modern era, the types of hybridities associated with diasporas that cultural studies scholars tout as being new can be traced in most immigrant cultures, notably those of North and South America, where the phenomena have a documented history dating to the European discovery of the Americas in the fifteenth century. Diasporas, population movements, cultural and linguistic contact, cultural mixing, hybridity and translation have been part of human history since the dawn of our species and its diffusion out of Africa. This hypothesis must be rehabilitated before it can be useful and non-Western data will aid the reformulation.

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[9] On these issues see Tymoczko (2003b), as well as other essays in Cronin and Ó Cuilleanáin (2003). See also Tymoczko and Ireland (2003a, 2003b).

1.7 Translations can be identified as such: translation theory has defined the objects of its study

A persistent enterprise in Western translation theory for more than a century has been the attempt to define *translation*: there have been efforts to specify definitions; to distinguish translations from imitations, adaptations and versions; to categorize types of translations; to look for commonalities linking types of translations; to establish hierarchies among translation types and establish prototypes of translation; and so forth.[10] The interest in and the insistence on defining translation are not in fact trivial or irrelevant. A major aspect of the scientific method – and, therefore, of all scholarly research – is the definition of the objects of study of a discipline; such definitions are part of the theoretical framework of a research methodology. Conceptual elements must be delineated, which involves identification of both the 'units' of investigation and the means to classify those units. Such definitions actually constitute and construct the objects of study and the field of inquiry (cf. Foucault 1972: 40-49).

The difficulty with efforts to define translation is that it is so easy to find exceptions to the various definitions proposed. For example, just within medieval European literature, scholars must acknowledge and encompass in their definitions of translation not only the very literal word-to-word translations of saints' lives from Latin to vernacular languages, but the nine-page version of the *Odyssey* in Irish entitled *Merugud Ulix meic Leirtis*, as well as the Old French romance version of the *Aeneid* entitled *Roman d'Eneas* (in which Aeneas is more notable as lover than as founder of Rome). Similarly many translations associated with oral literature defy conventional definitions of translation, and translations produced under the constraints of postcolonial contestations show unexpected differences as well. But it is also easy to find everyday, contemporary counterexamples, for example, the (legally mandated) translations of advertisements on bilingual packaging that in fact do not duplicate each other's messages in alternate languages, but constitute additional and supplementary texts intended to promote the product among an implied readership of bilingual consumers.[11]

A peril in fixating on a specific definition of translation in translation theory is that rigid definitions may actually lead to closure on the question of what translations are, resulting in the narrowing of research and the exclusion or marginalization of cultural products that are different from those dominant in Western or globalized culture at present.[12] Faced with such problems of delimiting the objects of study in translation research, scholars made two major breakthroughs in the 1970s.

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[10] Some research even predicates the work of 'professional translators' as the subject of investigation – suggesting that 'real' translations emanate from professional translators who are increasingly pictured as working at a desk with a computer – professionals trained in rules about how to make transpositions between specific language pairs, furnished with CAT resources, and so forth.

[11] See the example offered by Itamar Even-Zohar in Gähs, Korlén and Malmberg (1978: 348-49).

[12] I see marginalization of the Other as a danger in current efforts to define translation as a prototype concept, attempts that will ultimately stifle research in translation studies.

lexical fields and specific histories. Here are a few examples: in India the common words for translation are *rupantar*, 'change in form', and *anuvad*, 'speaking after, following', both of which derive from Sanskrit; Sujit Mukherjee (1994: 80) indicates that neither of these terms implies fidelity to the original and that the concept of faithful rendering came to India with Christianity.[14] By contrast, the current Arabic word for translation is *tarjama*, originally meaning 'biography', connected perhaps with the early focus of Syriac Christian translators on the Bible, patristic texts and lives of saints in the third to fifth centuries of the common era. The Syriac translators eventually turned to more material subjects as well, becoming major conduits of Greek science and philosophy to other cultures; this learned movement underlies the later great translation tradition into Arabic initiated and patronized by the Abbasid caliphate.[15] Still another non-Western approach to translation is indicated by a native American word meaning 'to tell a story across', connecting translation with narration or testimony.[16]

A fourth way of looking at translation is suggested by the most common Chinese phrase for translation, *fan yi*, which means 'turning over', formed using the characters for *fan*, which means 'turning a leaf of a book' but also 'somersault, flip', and *yi*, which means 'interpretation' and is a homonym of the word meaning 'exchange'. This concept of *fan yi* is linked to the image of embroidery: thus, if the source text is the front side of an embroidered work, the target text can be thought of as the back side of the same piece. Like the reverse of an embroidery – which typically in Chinese handwork has hanging threads, loose ends and even variations in patterning from the front – a translation in this conceptualization is viewed as different from the original and is not expected to be equivalent in all respects. At the same time, of course, the 'working side' of an embroidery teaches much about its construction. Both images – embroidery and turning a page – suggest that in China text and translation are related as the front and back of the object, or perhaps as the positive and negative of the same picture.[17]

These are all very different ways of thinking about translation from those currently dominant in translation studies. As I have argued in more detail elsewhere,[18] in order to accommodate such a range of ideas about translation, translation must be viewed as a cluster concept, the most famous example of which is the concept *game*, discussed in detail by Ludwig Wittgenstein (1953 section 65 ff.). Unlike many types of categories, cluster concepts cannot be characterized by a set of necessary and sufficient conditions that identify all instances of the category but only instances of that category: in this case, all translations but only translations. Instead, cluster categories are linked together by what Wittgenstein calls "family resemblances": such categories are "related to one another in many different ways [...] [by] a complicated network of

[14] I am also indebted here to Harish Trivedi, personal communication.

[15] For more on these translation movements, see Montgomery (2000, chs. 2-3).

[16] Barbara Godard, 'Writing Between Cultures', unpublished paper presented at the University of Warwick, July 1997.

[17] I am indebted here to personal communications with Martha Cheung and Liu Xiaoqing.

[18] Tymoczko (1998). See also my CETRA lectures, forthcoming from St. Jerome Publishing.

similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of details" (ibid.).[19] Cluster categories differ from many types of category because of their pragmatic quality: membership in the cluster is not a matter of simple logic, as Wittgenstein indicates, but a function of practice and usage, and it is defined by cultural recognition. Thus, to understand such a concept takes us deep into the realms that Bourdieu (1977) has discussed regarding the interrelationship between cultural practice and cultural knowledge. Given the important role of *practice* in translation studies, it is perhaps not so surprising that translation would turn out to be such a cluster concept. A cluster-concept definition of translation is congruent with the insights of both Toury and Lefevere, and it can accommodate the non-Western conceptualizations of translation discussed above, all of which have ground-breaking implications for reconceptualizing the theory of translation.

1.8 The parameters of the relationship between source text and translation have been delineated, even though debate still remains on the particulars

The difficulties with this assumption follow from the incomplete and culturally bound definitions of translation used by many translation studies scholars. Moreover, as I have argued elsewhere (Tymoczko 2003a), the words most commonly used for translation in European languages – particularly the words deriving from Latin, including *translation* itself – have in many ways distorted Western understandings about the relationship between a text and its translation. The word *translation*, for example, suggests a carrying across, indicating that the relationship between text and translation should be a strong form of equivalence, a type of identity relationship rather than a similarity relationship which entails difference. Speakers of English and Romance languages have been prominent in theorizing translation, and it may be the linguistic implications of the words for translation in those languages that are partly responsible for the tendency of Western translation theory to become embroiled in fruitless arguments about the nature of translation equivalence. The understanding of this primary relationship is yet another area that must open up if Western translation theory is to be enlarged, with the field ultimately moving to an *a posteriori* definition of equivalence. The contemplation of just the small sampling of non-Western words for translation that I have provided suggests some of the richness of conceptualization that may result.

2. What is needed to unseat these presuppositions?

What must be done in order to move beyond these assumptions, to accommodate non-Western perspectives on the nature and practice of translation, and to enlarge translation theory as a consequence? Although in the short term it may be difficult to change ideas on these points held by people who currently teach and research

[19] The result is that a cluster category is a 'fuzzy category', so to speak.

pragmatic aspects of translation, theoreticians of translation must begin to shift these assumptions within translation theory itself, whence change will eventually 'trickle down' to other branches of the field.[20] The following are some brief suggestions for how to begin, indicating the sorts of concrete research projects that might be undertaken so as to deepen the theory of translation.

2.1 Exploration of the nature of plurilingual and pluricultural life

To understand adequately how and where translation functions in plurilingual societies throughout the world, much more information is needed in translation studies about linguistic behaviour and linguistic mediation in such cultures. Existing studies by anthropologists, ethnographers, sociologists and linguists on these questions must be identified and put to use within translation studies. Additional empirical investigations will probably need to be undertaken in order to garner information that specifically pertains to translation practices, processes and products in plurilingual cultures. Work in translation studies must be set on a firm empirical basis regarding the range of actual conditions and behaviours related to translation in plurilingual societies.

2.2 Integration of knowledge about oral cultures into translation studies

Investigating the nature of oral cultures has been a continuous thread in my own scholarly interests, but I still feel that I have only begun to understand the characteristics of orality and the differences between oral cultures and literate ones. In primary oral cultures many things are different: how people learn and produce texts, how memory is conserved, how tradition and variation are viewed, and so forth. Even more basic things also vary: the meaning of 'a word', 'the same' and 'original', to give only a few important examples.[21] The implications for translation practice in the absence of fixed texts – both in terms of source text and target text – as well as the specifics of cultural uptake in traditional oral societies should be investigated by translation scholars. Translation theorists would also do well to learn the characteristics of secondary oral cultures, as well as primary ones.

A beginning toward this goal is to valorise research on interpretation, with a commitment in interpreting studies to shifting attention away from conference interpretation towards interpretation in situations that do not involve fixed texts. The inclusion of research about interpretation in every issue of Mona Baker's journal *The Translator* is an example of what is needed in journals as well as collections of essays. I would also second Michael Cronin's (2002) call for a cultural turn in translation

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[20] What I believe will follow when theorists become persuasive about the implications of the nature of translation practices worldwide is the abandonment of prescriptive approaches to translation, not just in translation theory but ultimately in translation pedagogy as well. This will be the logical consequence of the broadening of translation theory: that practice will be taught as time, place and circumstance specific.

[21] A classic study of orality is Lord (1964).

studies which will begin to differentiate, contextualize and historicize research on interpretation.[22]

2.3 Openness to a greater diversity of text types

Obviously diversity of text type intersects with the differences between oral and literate cultures. As we have seen, many cultures have different primary forms and text types from those typical of Western cultures: this rich diversity must be more adequately integrated into the theory of translation. In the process it is important to reflect the fact that texts with similar surface structure may perform very different functions and may hold very different positions in the textual repertories of diverse cultures. The converse is, of course, also true: text types with divergent surface structures may nonetheless perform similar functions and hold similar positions crosscculturally.

Two cases serve as examples. As I have argued elsewhere (Tymoczko 1997), the fact that Celtic literatures seem to have no native dramatic forms corresponding to mainstream European drama may be misleading. The Celtic texts that have been generally analysed by scholars as exquisite examples of European lyric poetry – emotional poems in the first person attributed to known historical persons or legendary characters – should probably be seen instead as examples of a performance genre. Spoken (i.e., performed) by members of the native orders of professional poets – reputed for being prophets, seers and visionaries – such poems are a counterpart to the dramatic literature which is found in other medieval cultures and which scholars see as 'missing' from early Irish and Welsh literature.

A second example of these issues pertaining to text type is found in the storytelling traditions of some native peoples of North America. Both in tribal council and in private settings, certain tribes of Native Americans use stories about ostensibly unrelated topics as a means of achieving consensus and reaching a decision about an issue under discussion or debate.[23] In other words, narrative is the rhetorical form of discourse and debate. Similarly, allusions to narratives can operate in powerful ways that are different from those dominant in Western tradition, thus arguably constituting a distinct text type. Keith Basso (1990: 138-73) gives an example of Apache elders reflectively trading place names (which alluded to and, hence, encapsulated narratives serving as exempla) as a means of reflecting on, assessing and coming to agreement on the meaning of the behaviour of a younger member of the tribe.

As can be seen, reassessment of the question of text types in translation studies has a variety of facets. Those interested in the theory of translation must become expert in the wide variety of text types used in human cultures throughout the world, in the assessment of both surface structures and deep structures of texts, and in the understanding of such features as embeddedness, as discussed earlier. These are preliminaries to expanding translation theory and theorizing non-Western translation data.

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[22] See also Hatim (1997: 200-212) who stresses the importance of research on and training in community interpretation in translation studies.

[23] This practice continues even among some assimilated tribes, such as the Mashpees of Massachusetts.

2.4 Attention to processes of translation in other cultures

What types of translation processes are found throughout the world? Translation scholars should inventory the repertory of actual translation practices worldwide, investigating as well the boundary between transmission (or transfer) of cultural materials and translation *per se* in various societies. The black-box model of the individual translator working alone must be superseded by more accurate data on the range and frequency of different types of translation processes, including those that are emerging as a result of the development of modern technology, information devices, and the like. But inventory is not sufficient: the different types of processes must be analysed for their implications and then theoretized within an expanded view of translation.

2.5 Recognition of all types of translators: beyond professionalism

If a broader view of process becomes part of translation theory, it follows that there will be a broader view of translators – not only of their identities, but their training, their capabilities, and so forth. The idea of the translator as a professional is a pretheoretical construct, based on Eurocentric practice and translation history. As the discipline becomes more inclusive of non-Western data, Western cultural imperatives about who translators are and how they should behave will also shift in the formulation of theory.

2.6 Knowledge of the history of cultural movements and cultural interface

Clearly the best way to achieve change in translation theory and practice and to improve understandings about translation is to gather more historical data about cultural diasporas and migrations, patterns of cultural interface and hybridity, and histories of translation movements as the phenomena have occurred throughout the history of the world. More information and more particular information about the operations of immigrant societies can also be gathered by translation scholars, with a view to understanding what cultural elements remain intact, how blendings occur, and how these effects impact on translation itself in such situations.

2.7 and 2.8. Expansion of the object of study: redefining translation and the relationship between text and translation

Implicitly I have already suggested a number of things that should be done in translation studies to enlarge and redefine the object of study (and its corollary, to reconfigure concepts about ways that a text and its translation are related), including examining the meanings of words for *translation* in non-Western contexts and looking at specific historical traditions associated with those variant conceptions of translation. In theorizing the data it is essential to view translation as a cluster concept, moving beyond attempts to define translation as a logical concept or a prototype concept, which have

resulted in so many Eurocentric pronouncements about the field. Clearly, in order to understand the scope of the cluster concept called *translation* in English, translation studies scholars must be assiduous in seeking out more of the world's words for *translation*, as well as in investigating in detail the connotations, implications, translation practices and actual histories of translation associated with those terms. Only by engaging in such an investigative enterprise can translation scholars fully understand the objects of research in translation studies – encompassed in the large and complicated cluster concept of translation – and the types of family resemblances that bind these objects conceptually, thus expanding translation theory in the process.

In broadening the definition of translation and breaking the hold of Eurocentric stereotypes of translation, it may also be helpful to consider forms and modes of cultural interface that are related to translation but distinct from it. Such forms include, for example, postcolonial literature and related hybridized forms of cultural production; work on these forms in translation studies has already been productive for the field.[24] Three additional modes of cultural interface to explore are illustrated by the English words *transference*, *representation* and *transculturation*.

In *transference* or *transmission*,[25] material is moved from one cultural context to another, but the mode of transfer is not specified. It can range from physical transfer to symbolic transfer (such as happens in a bank transfer) or transfer that involves a radical shift in medium (such as a television transmission). Thus, transference can result in cultural products that are either very close (even identical) to the source substance or very different from the source material. In cultural transfer, then, there is no presupposition about either the process or product of the cultural transposition. By contrast, *translation* in a single culture at a single point in time is usually governed by a cultural prototype encompassing both product and process, notwithstanding the fact that such prototypes have varied widely through history, from close linguistic transfer to free adaptation, from fluency to radical abridgment, and so forth, as we have seen above. Thinking about transference or transmission can remind translation studies scholars of how varied cultural mediation can be in process and product, helping to move their thinking beyond their own particular cultural presuppositions and prototypes.

Still another strand of translation is indicated by the word *representation*. To understand some of the parameters involved in representation – parameters that illustrate the power and potential for manipulation in representation – it is useful to consider the extensive definition of *representation* in the *Oxford English Dictionary*: a representation is

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[24] See, for example, Bassnett and Trivedi (1999); Simon and St-Pierre (2000); as well as the survey of publications in Tymoczko (2000).

[25] In the *Oxford English Dictionary* *transference* is defined as "the act or process of transferring; the conveyance from one place, person, or thing to another; transfer". *Transmission* is essentially treated as a synonym, defined as "the act of transmitting or fact of being transmitted; conveyance from one person or place to another; transference". I use the two words interchangeably in what follows.

> an image, likeness, or reproduction in some manner of a thing; [. . .] the action or fact of exhibiting in some visible image or form; [. . .] the fact of expressing or denoting by means of a figure or symbol; symbolic action or exhibition; [. . .] a statement or account, esp. one intended to convey a particular view or impression of a matter in order to influence opinion or action; [. . .] a formal and serious statement of facts, reasons, or arguments, made with a view to effecting some change, preventing some action; hence, a remonstrance, protest, expostulation; [. . .] the operation of the mind in forming a clear image or concept; [. . .] the fact of standing for, or in place of, some other thing or person, esp. with a right or authority to act on their account; substitution of one thing or person for another.

Thus, representation is a very complex concept with a number of facets. Representation constructs an image, but implies as well the exhibition of that image. It involves clarity of knowledge and symbolic substitution. It has a serious import connected with social goals, including social change. Representation, therefore, presupposes both a perspective on what is represented and a purpose in the activity itself. In fact, since the decline of positivism, there has been a new awareness of the constructivist aspect of representation, of the fact that representation is not an 'objective' process. As a form of definition that involves substitution in the symbolic realm, representation creates images that have an ideological aspect. It is the power inherent in representation, the potential for speaking with authority on behalf of another, and the ability to make statements that have legal or political standing, as well as the inescapability of a perspective and purpose, that have led to the crisis of representation in the social sciences, most particularly in anthropology and ethnography, where the potential for manipulation and ethnocentrism in representations has been discussed and debated (see, for example, Clifford and Marcus 1986). Obviously translation is a major intercultural form of representation, and, as such, translations must be scrutinized for the various factors associated with representation, even when translation occurs internally to a plurilingual society.

Finally, translation can be seen in light of the process of *transculturation*, which can be defined as "the transmission of cultural characteristics from one cultural group to another".[26] The term has come into English from Spanish, where it was first used to speak about the interchange of cultural characteristics between Europeans and the indigenous populations in Latin America, and to describe the creolization and hybridization of most Latin American cultures. Transculturation goes far beyond the transfer of verbal materials and includes such things as the transfer of ideas about religion and government; the spread of artistic forms including music and the visual arts; and transfers having to do with material culture including clothing, food, housing, transportation, and so forth, not to mention more recent cultural domains such as the

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[26] This definition is given in passing in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1974:12.65) in a discussion of the history of Mexico. In the unabridged *Oxford English Dictionary* the word is simply defined as 'acculturation'.

modern media. Thus, the popularity of Chinese food, reggae and U.S. films around the world are all examples of transculturation. Transculturation has elements in common with intersemiotic translation, for it is not exclusively or even primarily a linguistic process. With respect to texts, transculturation is often a matter of transposing elements that constitute overcodings, such as the poetics, formal literary elements and genres of literary systems, as well as discourses, worldviews, and so forth. Obviously transculturation is an essential aspect of cultural interchange in cultures where more than one language and culture are in interface; indeed transculturation is operative in any postcolonial nation.

One of the distinguishing aspects of transculturation, in contrast to either representation or transmission, is that it entails the performance of specific forms or aspects of another culture. It is not sufficient that Chinese food be displayed nor defined nor described for transculturation to occur: the food must be eaten and enjoyed as well. At the same time, paradoxically, transculturation does not always involve representation; one can easily imagine a person receiving and incorporating into her life a cultural form with little or no sense that it originated in another cultural setting. That is, a cultural form can become completely naturalized in the receptor culture or transculturation can proceed in such a way as to obscure the point of origin of a specific cultural element.[27] This aspect of easy interchange through transculturation is very common in places that bring together more than one cultural group; many things may be perceived as perfectly natural in a hybridized culture without people having a strong sense of their cultural point of origin.

One way of differentiating translations is to say that some are oriented towards cultural transfer, some towards representation, and some towards transculturation of source material. With respect to transculturation, some translations actually perform the characteristics of their sources, importing genres, reproducing functions of the source material (say, humour or word play) dynamically, and so forth. Other translations do not have such performative aspects: they assimilate generic markers to receptor standards, translate literally and thus obscure word play or humour or shift the moral or political emphases of the source to sentiments consonant with the receptor culture. Investigation of transfer, representation and transculturation can therefore serve to illuminate translations with respect to several major axes, enabling both descriptive and theoretical analysis.

By teasing apart the foregoing types of cultural interface in specific cultures, the various dimensions and norms of translation in these cultures will become clearer, and translation as a general phenomenon will be illuminated as well. In translation studies this is one path to redefining the objects of study and to understanding in greater delicacy the way a source relates to its translation in many cultural contexts. It seems very likely that these three strands of cultural interface are balanced differently in cultures that see translation as related to biography, to turning over an embroidery,

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[27] The eating of pizza might be seen as an example of such transculturation through much of the world: pizza is often not perceived as specifically Italian at all, nor does it generally stand as a representation of anything Italian to the consumer of the pizza. In certain circumstances it might even be thought of as American or English in origin.

or to carrying across. Case studies investigating the relationship of these three components of cultural mediation – transfer, representation and transculturation – to each other and to translation in both Western and non-Western cultures will have important implications for reconceptualizing translation theory.

3. Conclusion

What are the ideological implications of the project outlined above? Who are to be the agents of such research programmes and of the expansion of translation theory? Will the broadening of translation theory become an occasion for a new Orientalism? Will it become a means of adding to the imperial archive?[28] Or will Western thought become more flexible and inclusive on translation, leading to other sorts of shifts in thinking about language, culture and the interface between peoples? These are important questions that require some thought.

As with any intellectual theory, translation theory has the potential to be used for good or ill, for oppression or liberation. Like translation itself, translation theory can be a two-edged sword. What is clear at present is that translation studies does not stand in a neutral space. Contemporary Western translation theory is increasingly being embraced and used by those who research, teach and practise translation in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Eurocentric translation theory has been promulgated by teachers of translation (often educated in North America or Europe), by visiting scholars and by Bible translators in non-Western parts of the world. Translation theory has followed the flow and diffusion of English as a dominant international language serving to spread knowledge of all types to all corners of the globe. Western conceptualizations of translation are permeating non-Western countries and becoming lenses for perceiving and understanding local conditions. This is a form of intellectual hegemony that needs to be reconsidered and, I would suggest, resisted. The dissemination of Western translation theory will inevitably continue to have a hegemonic character unless it is interrogated on the basis of differences that exist between dominant Western assumptions and other local knowledges and experiences, differences between Western histories of translation and other local histories.

If the task of developing translation theory remains primarily a project of Western scholars, the hegemonic potential of translation studies will increase substantially. By contrast, that peril will be mitigated if the project brings together people from many parts of the world, people who best know and understand and can advocate for their own local conceptions and traditions of translation. Such voices can promote the self-representation of non-Western perspectives in translation studies. What is to be hoped is that non-Western translation scholars take the lead in marshalling data and counterexamples that challenge contemporary translation theory formulated primarily in the West and that, moreover, the same scholars articulate the implications of and theorize those data. Such work would resist the extension of Eurocentric theories of

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[28] On the concept of the imperial archive, see Cronin (2000) and sources cited.

translation that are inadequate to describe or account for much non-Western data. It would also become a means of resistance against Western constructions of the actual objects of study in translation studies. Modelled on the internationalism of translation itself, a refurbished theory might also promote modes of translation and pedagogical practices that would move beyond dominant Western constructions of and norms for translation.

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