



This is a contribution from

Cultus:

The Journal of Intercultural Mediation and Communication

2021: 14

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**Author as the Other Translator:
From cooperation to collaboration through competition
and compromise**

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Abstract

This contribution proposes a theoretical model of translation as collaboration for analysing and guiding a translator's decision-making. Collaboration is achieved via translator-author mutual identification as the final aim of translating, with a shared and further-developed version produced. From cooperation to collaboration, competition and compromise are identified as two developmental milestones, implying two counterbalancing dynamics that propel the evolution of translatorship and authorship and the progress of mutual identification. Through competition, a translator's voice is heard and then through compromise, the voice is listened to. Mutual identification as the final aim of translating constructs a translator's professional identity, and also makes an author the "other translator" the translator collaborates with, highlighting their shared credit and status. It is therefore argued that the added value of translating fundamentally lies in the enrichment of both translatorship and authorship. Two representative cases are analysed based on self-reflection to explore the interactive and dialectical process in a translator's decision-making towards translator-author collaboration, towards their mutual identification, as an ethical final aim of translating.

1. A Translating Model of Collaboration as Mutual Identification

In this digital age featuring a proliferation of machine translation and amateur translation, we are faced with increasing doubts about the future of professional human translators. A burning question to answer against this backdrop is about the *added* value of (professional human) translators. What

makes professional human translators valuable in this era of existential crisis? This leads us back to a core question concerning ethics in translating: what is it that makes translatorial selves professional (true, ideal or ethical) subjects who are more than mechanical machines and can be clearly distinguished from barely qualified or even unqualified practitioners?

Socially, translating as a decision-making process involves translators' interaction with other stakeholders, such as authors, readers, clients, etc. Of these significant participants, the source text (ST) author is undoubtedly the most significant other with whom a translator encounters and interacts. As commented by Pym (2012: 4), "[...] regardless of form, translation is exchanged for something one way or another". Through translating, the translator relates herself to other stakeholders, and these stakeholders to each other; or she relates her 'self' to the others, and the others to each other. Arguably, *translating is trans-relating*—a translator is an agent forming and formed in a matrix or community of exchange. It is through exchanging her produced version(s) with the stakeholders involved as "significant symbols" (Mead 1934: 223) that the translator's professional identity or self is socially and interactively constructed (Elliot 2020: 29-30). The portraits of a translator's professional identity or translatorship, shaped by and translated into the stances, positions or ethics of a translator in translating (or symbolic exchange), are fundamental in shaping and analysing the translating process and result. In this light, an investigation into the construction of a translator's professional identity warrants an examination of the translating process, especially the interactive procedures of identification involved in the process.

Jacques Lacan's "mirror stage theory", from a psychoanalytic perspective, sheds light on the nature of identity and identification. The concept of "mirror stage" is derived from Lacan's reflection on the performance of a child at the infant stage in front of a mirror. The "mirror stage" is defined by Lacan (2001: 1-2) as "an identification", "the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image" in contrast with the "I [...] precipitated in a primordial form before it is objectified in the dialectic of identification with the other, and before language restores to it, in the universal, its function as subject". Such an identificational relationship between a self and an other can best describe that between a translator and her author. A translator, situated in a micro contingent community composed of herself and an author as the other, would be in a chaotic "primordial form" (a state of uncertainty despite the possible existence of knowledge or translation experience accumulated in

her previous translatorial or professional identity construction) until the translator perceives an idealised virtual image projected by the linguistic symbols (ST) of the author. Translating actually takes place with identification with the author.

However, Lacan also warns that such an identification process might involve occasions of deviance along the way, because “the total form of the body by which the subject anticipates in a mirage the maturation of his power is given to him only as Gestalt [...] in contrast with the turbulent movements that the subject feels are animating him” (*ibid.* 18). The presence of an author’s linguistic symbols or signifiers on the other side of the mirror, as the other’s expectations distant and alien to the translatorial self or subject, initiates the project of translating and presumes the translator’s identification with the author. However, the alienation or the otherness of such symbols to the translatorial self—metaphorically the distance across the mirror—may also leave room for occasions where the translator challenges the (initial) mirrored self, propelled by the “irreducible” (*ibid.* 2), “turbulent” dispositions inside the “true” self of the translator. Such occasions may initiate a reverse process where the translator endeavours to facilitate a process where the authorship (author’s identity or status) is redefined or re-identified by the symbols produced by the translator on the other side of the translating mirror, a process of the authorship’s identification with the translator’s own identity or status (translatorship). After all, authors are judged by their new readers generally on the symbols created by their translators only, instead of their own original symbols (versions). One extreme example is the translation of poems: a foreign author’s identity as a poet is appreciated (normally) according to the poetics of the translations, or rather of the translator.

Throughout the process of translating, a translator is metaphorically an infant exposed to a mirror for the first time. She is first astounded by this break from her previous experience, but later manipulates the mirage while simultaneously and constantly referring to it (like an infant would wave its hand while looking at it in the mirror), before a mutual identification is achieved between the infant and its mirrored mirage. Just imagine a case where a translator is constantly comparing (in mind or in practice) a literal representation of the ST and possible versions in her decision-making to produce a finished translation. It follows that in the ideal situation, once this identification process is formally completed, the translatorial self and its other(s) are mutually mirrored. In this sense, mutual identification is a dynamic and dialectical process of restructuring of both the self and other.

This entails a process that begins with an imbalance of power hierarchy induced by the pre-presence of the author's symbols or ST as expectations for the translator, even though a translation commission or contract is formally an agreement of cooperation. Propelled by the dynamics and procedures of mutual identification, this process will end when a balanced situation is reached. This is the *final aim* (meaning both completion and destination) of translating. There is nevertheless no way to concretise or specify affirmatively the completion of this aim, because from a Lacanian perspective, the mirage in the mirror is forever a mirage however simultaneously it accords with the figure on the other side of the mirror, *vice versa*. For example, from a historical perspective, a work may be re-translated many times, with no specific or particular state of end. However, what is affirmative is that towards this indescribable or "unnameable" end, mutual identification remains an ethical process that promises the completion of constructing a professional translatorial self.

Similarly, according to Badiou (2001: 67), composing of such a subject as a translator entails "immanent and continuing breaks", "under the imperative of events". Badiou advocates an ethic of truths, highlighting an ethical position of being faithful to an "event", defined as "something other than the situation, [...] a hazardous, unpredictable supplement, which vanishes as soon as it appears" (*ibid.*). Consequently, "truth", for Badiou is "not adequacy to reality or illumination" (Venuti 2011: 239), but fidelity to an event. Truth is what "the fidelity constructs, bit by bit, [...] what the fidelity gathers together and produces" (Badiou 2001: 68). A subject is induced by a process of truth through *encountering* an event as a supplement (an addition of something new for improvement and completion) to the existing situation where a void is situated.

For example, by being faithful to an amorous encounter as an event or a break from the previous situation, one enters into the composition of the subject of love induced by this truth-process. Or, by being faithful to an encounter with an author, understood as a break from the previous situation, such as before a translation commission or before completion, a potential practitioner grows to be a translatorial self or subject. Of course, translating as an event may also contain multiple micro-occasions or encounters or micro-events in the process. Just consider the toing and froing, the constant "breaks", in a translator's decision-making process. It is through these truth-processes (processes of being faithful to these events) that a translatorial subject is continuously composed, *bit by bit*, unlike the programmed production of a text by a machine-translator.

Events fill the voids in the previous situations of a subject, thus supplementing and enriching it constantly and continuously. Owing to the addition by events, an individual continuously exceeds herself in the composition of a subject, and the excess is what precisely makes that subject ideal or *immortal* (*ibid.* 43). In the case of translating, such excess is accomplished by a translator through being faithful to the events that may happen to her or as a result of the efforts a translator makes to survive the breaks. This is also precisely the value invented or added to the translatorial self, and the mirrored others, such as its author. To facilitate becoming “immortal”, Badiou proposes one simple maxim as an ethical principle for a truth-process: “Keep going!” (*ibid.* 91), meaning “Do all that you can to persevere in that which exceeds your perseverance. Persevere in the interruption. Seize in your being that which has seized and broken you” (*ibid.* 47). To construct a translatorial self, an ideal professional subject, an “immortal” that highlights the glory of human potentialities made possible by a human translator means transcending the stereotyped “subhumanity” of translatorship, the “belle infidèle” and so on. And to do this, a translator has to persevere in or survive breaks in truth-processes.

The self-reflection in this study presented here helps identify the break-inducing events to which translators are faithful for constructing professional translatorial identities. Partly inspired by Steiner’s (1975) four hermeneutic moves, four categories of breaks can be identified: cooperation, competition, compromise, and collaboration.

Cooperation takes place when a translation is commissioned but has yet to start. The commission formally initiates a translator’s encounter with an author. A commission often comes with a contract as an agreement of cooperation, which assumes obligations on both sides. A translator is obliged to work and her commissioner to pay, which suggests a “cooperative” relationship. Equal as it sounds, the contract offered by the commissioner (normally as Party A, who sets goals) dictates explicitly or implicitly a hierarchical imbalance that is likely in practice to place the translator (normally as Party B, who finishes the goals set by Party A) in a relatively passive position. In this sense, technically, “cooperation” is never equal co-operation, and can thus be defined as “actions of someone who is being helpful by doing what is wanted for or asked for” (January 13, 2021, online Merriam-Webster Dictionary). Because of the contractual logic, and more importantly, because of the author’s pre-presence (see the discussion above), a translator is obliged by the event of cooperation to work *for* (instead of *with*) an author with “initial trust”, which underpins an inequality

and imbalance between authorship and translatorship. This is a break from a previous situation where the translator was still a potential practitioner. Metaphorically, the ethical stance to survive this break is the following equation: $\frac{A}{T}$. “A” is for authorship, the author’s identity and status, while “T” stands for translatorship, the translator’s identity and status (the same below). Authorship is above translatorship at this stage, in contrast with the previous situation where A and T were about to be connected by the event of translating (metaphorically, “T (translating) A”), whose relationship was horizontal, symbolising their equal independence or autonomy before their encounter and follow-up interaction.

Competition takes place as a break from the previous stage when “aggression” is committed by the translator through her very act of translating, intervening, appropriating or incorporating the ST, propelled by a disruptive *yang*, “masculine”, force, that intrudes into the author’s established domain and overturns the author’s dictatorship in the previous situation. The “masculine”/“feminine” analogy is used advisedly. In part, the terms are in keeping with Steiner’s analogy between translation and sexuality, but more importantly the terms are literal translations of *yang* and *yin*, the two counter-balancing Chinese philosophical concepts. The gendered terms also fit with the discussion on change from a Daoist perspective, discussed later in this section. Through the (micro) event of competition, the translator unavoidably “offends” the author and thus potentially threatens her own credibility in the author’s eyes. At the same time, though, naturally she makes her voice heard. Metaphorically, the ethical stance to survive this break is $\frac{T}{A}$, with translatorship over authorship, reversing the previous $\frac{A}{T}$.

Compromise serves as a break from Competition, through consolidating, restoring and compensating for the “authorship” damaged in the previous stage, propelled by an opposite feminine (*yin*) counter-disruptive force to repair and rebuild the author’s influence on the newly created target linguistic symbols. Through compromise, the translator makes necessary concessions turning hostile tension into friendly “Cooperation”, so that her work is implicitly or explicitly acknowledged depending on the author’s **active or inactive** response. Metaphorically, the ethical stance to survive this break is $\frac{A}{T}$, with authorship above translatorship, a break from previous $\frac{T}{A}$.

Competition and Compromise as two micro events in the entire event of translating ($\langle \frac{T}{A} \rangle$ and $\langle \frac{A}{T} \rangle$) are contradictory and complementary. They help construct the translatorial subject (as well as the mirrored authorship) bit by bit, through the breaks they are capable of creating which help supplement and enrich the previous situations, as the translating process proceeds. Competition ($\langle \frac{T}{A} \rangle$) is potentially a break which will (re-)occur if Compromise ($\langle \frac{A}{T} \rangle$) results in a new void; so will Compromise potentially (re-)occur if the break induced by Competition results in another new void. For example, Competition and Compromise will keep recurring alternately with each toing and froing in the translator's mind and with her constant reforming of ideas. This interaction can also be seen within the historical process of re-translation of a book, each version leaving a new void to be (continuously) filled, a process of continuous self-negating. As long as the status of the translator and her author remains unequal, and as long as the two parties are not mutually identified, there will always be a void in the situation of translating, and thus opposing dynamics between the two events. In this sense, mutual identification may be the final aim, or at least a truce to avoid the continuous conflict between Competition and Compromise. Technically, though, this is never possible, just like the insurmountable distance between a self and its mirage across the Lacanian mirror, however synchronised or resembling they might be. Such impossibility instead promises infinite possibilities for the (truth-)processes and the actualised ends (or Badiouian truths) such processes may produce. In this sense, consistent with my previous discussion, it is argued that mutual identification is an ideal, the final aim; but while the end may well be identified affirmatively it cannot be specifically described or concretised. It is from this point of the discussion that another "end" event needs to be identified as a break from all the previous events.

Collaboration is the name of this final aim or end event. This is achieved via the (constant) interaction between Competition and Compromise, with reciprocity producing a finished translation as a result of (re-)establishing and balancing translatorship and authorship through mutual identification. This is a "subject-point" (Badiou 2001: 44), like the points where art works help construct artistic subjects. Also, as Steiner (1975: 300) argues, such "enactment of reciprocity" at this point is "the crux of the *métier* and morals of translation". In other words, this is the "final aim" of translating—what translating itself is meant to be in the end—in line with the implication of the mirroring (identifying) process discussed

above. Behind this translator-author mutual identification is a “shared product” provided by “people with complementary skills” working *with* each other (Dolmaya and Sánchez Ramos 2019: 131), with a collective ownership and responsibility (Buckley and Trocky 2019: 441). Consequently, Collaboration, entails shared status with a restructured and balanced, and importantly, *enriched* translatorship and/or authorship.

The added value of translating lies in its enriching the identity of the translator, and of the author as her “mirage in the mirror”, as “a dynamic and multi-layered cultural construct” (Sela-Sheffy 2011: 2). Metaphorically, the ethical stance to survive this break is like “A/T (translating) T/A”, with authorship and translatorship mutually identified (symbolised by the slash, meaning “or”, or symbolising an oblique mirror that separates while connecting the two). Compared with the initial situation (symbolised by “T (translating) A”) where the two were about to be connected by the event of translating, this stage of completion or perfection highlights the author’s and the translator’s renewed independence or autonomy as (re-)constructed subjects that are *additionally* interdependent. This addition or enrichment symbolises how value is added by translating, by the hard work of a human translator to facilitate the truth-processes, for which she should be valued, and also of course fairly remunerated.

A formula is presented below as a summary of the dialectical evolution of identity (re-)construction:

$$T \text{ (translating) } A \rightarrow \frac{A}{T} \rightarrow \frac{T}{A} \leftrightarrow \frac{A}{T} \rightarrow A/T \text{ (translating) } T/A$$

or in general:

$$\text{Translating} \rightarrow \text{Cooperation} \rightarrow \text{Competition} \leftrightarrow \text{Compromise} \rightarrow \text{Collaboration}$$

The flow of change (symbolised by the arrows in the formulas above) can find theoretical support in *Dao De Jing*, a Chinese philosophical classic closely related to the masterpiece *I-Ching* or *Book of Changes*. Laozi (2020: 97), author of *Dao De Jing* and founder of Daoism, summarises the law of change as follows:

道生一，一生二，二生三，三生萬物，萬物負陰而抱陽，沖氣以為和。

[The Dao is the underlying principle behind the creation of the many and varied things of the world. The order of the process giving rise to things begins with the Dao producing a kind of generative force. This force gives rise to the two forces of the *yin* and *yang*. The

interaction of *yin* and *yang* leads to a state of dynamic balance, from which things issue forth.] (Chapter 42)

Laozi emphasises the importance of following this law of nature—towards balance or harmony between the two opposing forces involved in a being or subject. If translatorship is seen as a subject to be continuously constructed or analysed, then the law of nature dictates that Competition (*yang*) and Compromise (*yin*) representing two counterbalancing forces in translating would bring the initial ethical imbalance termed as Cooperation resulting from the pre-presence of authorship to a state of dynamic balance. Collaboration, featuring such a balance, is the ultimate ethics or end of translating.

Based on the framework proposed above, I will now explain translator-author collaboration (at a micro level) through a self-reflective study of two representative cases involving two types of author: an active and engaging author, and an inactive or silent author.

2. Nature and ethics of self-reflective study

As a researcher-translator, I consider self-reflective study a valuable form of research, a special type of ethnographic translation/translator study and translation archive study. The core method of ethnography is participant observation, consisting of participation and observation (Yu 2019b: 167). In a self-reflective study, I am an ethnographer who has participated in and observes in retrospection some past translating experiences, writing down my “confession” (Yu 2020) to the questions raised to myself. Also, I am the translator who has privileged access to the translation archives under examination. In such a study, disclosure of a researcher's identity before participation although normally considered necessary (Yu 2019b), is impossible. However, self-reflective case study is still valid, for it is based on real-world professional experiences.¹

The two following commissioned translation projects are considered valuable experiences from which derives my epiphany about the

¹ Still, to ensure that this research is carried out following best ethical practice, I have gained formal consent from the relevant stakeholders (including my commissioner and the active author whose discursive feedback is used as supporting data) and formal ethical approval and publication recommendation from the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) of the university with which I am affiliated.

significance of collaboration in translating. In one project, the active or engaging author was not only an animal protection activist, but also had proactively participated in my translating her autobiography. She offered feedback on my draft and even supplied me with alternative versions (or interpretations) for my consideration. Her active involvement in translating made it tempting to view her literally as “the other translator” I collaborated with to seek a mutually-recognised translation. This inspired me retrospectively to view this side of (collaborative) translating as translator-author mutual identification.

In the second project, the silent or inactive author was invisible throughout the process, as in most “normal” projects I had participated in before. Interestingly, I felt this second author, who had written about her own TV show, shared a translatorial identity with me. I found it tempting to view this book, composed of the programme’s interview transcripts and so on, as a discursive re-presentation or intersemiotic “translation” of the original audio-visual product. In a way, as the book’s author, she was like a translator retelling her previously-aired TV shows. As the translator of this book, I was like a translator retelling her retellings. This, too, inspired me retrospectively to view her as a collaborative translator, a partner, with whom mutual identification was tacitly achieved during this translation project.

In both cases, as a commissioned translator, I had a clear sense that authorship was closely connected to, yet prevailed over, translatorship. However, in finalising the translations, I began to develop a strong “love”, similar to what Spivak (1992/2012: 313) advocates as “an ethical end”, for the authors, and viewed the STs and my translations as one. The “initial trust” in the authors developed into a “mutual trust” between the authors and the translator. To me, these two experiences were extremely important, for I sensed something was urging me to deepen my reflection on the ethics of translating, and on the value of human translators in an age of “existential crisis” within the translating profession. Introspectively, out of a sense of strengthened dignity and enjoyment, I was more conscious of my existence or significance as a translator. I owed such an enriched, consolidated and developed translatorial identity to my collaborative (direct and indirect) encounters with the two authors. I should also add the pivotal role of my commissioner, who had helped make the encounters possible and facilitated the two projects. The entire picture of the decision-making process has been reduced in the following sections to the key moments, or the milestones of competition and compromise, that signposted the process. In both

encounters I will unveil how translatorial or professional identities were constructed through mutual identification, and how a translator's voices were accordingly not only heard but also listened to.

3. Encountering the active author

The active or “engaging” author, Zhang, wrote her autobiography² on her experience as an animal protection activist and on her knowledge of animal protection in China. In encountering Zhang, I first provided a translation draft (T^{Td}); then received a version with the author's feedback (T^{Ta}) via my commissioner. In response to the T^{Ta}, I sent back a revised version (T^{Tr}); and finally received the approved final version (T^{Tf}) from my commissioner.

The following examples highlight the challenges of and the solutions to the stages of competition and compromise, to facilitate the truth-processes. Efforts were made to first appropriate the ST as a version prior to, yet parallel with, the TT. This was to encourage the author to acknowledge and identify with the translator, to let the translator's voice heard; and then to re-build the ST/TT towards a shared yet further-developed version by encouraging the translator to acknowledge and identify with the author, to make the translator's voice listened to, before a balance or mutual identification was achieved.

Example 1

ST_z: ...人貓共同“看到了一絲希望之光，看到了更遠、更美好的未來之光”（湯瑪斯·卡萊爾，蘇格蘭哲學家與作家）。

[Literal Translation: ...man and cat together “see a gleam of hope and light of a further and better future” (as said by Thomas Carlyle, a Scottish philosopher and writer)]

In my translating, I found myself challenged by the ambiguity of the quotation source, for I discovered that although this quotation in Chinese was available on a number of Chinese websites, no “original” English quotation could be found. So, I ventured to make an “aggression” by changing the direct quotation in the source text into an indirect quotation

² Zhang, Dan. 2020. *Animal Protection: A Lifelong Dream*. Translated by Wenhao Yao. Beijing: New World Press.

by adding the words “as adapted from”, highlighting my position and my voice. Seeking to help make my voice listened to, I also compromised by translating the original Chinese literally, as a way of retaining (part of) the authenticity pre-established by the author in the ST. I also added an annotation to my draft explaining the reason for my decision-making:

TTd/TTf: ...man and cat together “see a gleam of hope and light of a further and better future” (as adapted from Thomas Carlyle, a Scottish philosopher and writer).

Annotation provided together with TTd: 暫時無法查證到這句話的英文出處

[Literal translation: I'm unable to trace the English source of this quotation for the moment.]

Comment: As it turned out, this voice was not only listened to by the author (no feedback or TTA in this case) and by my commissioner as the editor (accepted as the final version). Through collaboration, a balance was reached.

Example 2

ST: 我給他起了個中文名——史德維。我把三個字德意思逐一解釋給他聽，他非常喜歡。

[Literal Translation: I gave him a Chinese name - Shi Dewei. I explained the meaning of the three characters one by one to him. He liked it very much.]

Comment: As the literal translation following the ST shows, this version is difficult for a non-Chinese reader. Challenged by this, I ventured to reorganise the sentence, mainly by adding a part explaining the meaning of the three characters in the Chinese name. Compromise was made by transliterating the Chinese name, so that my efforts in altering the ST version would more likely to be accepted:

TTd/TTf: I gave him a Chinese name—Shi Dewei. Hearing my explanation of the meaning of each character of his new Chinese name (“Shi” meaning “history”, “De” meaning “morality”, and “Wei” meaning “to protect and sustain”), he was very happy.

Comment: This voice was listened to, and my creative version was accepted as the final one, which implies that mutual identification was achieved.

Example 3

ST_z: 張家喵星人俱樂部的成員目前已經多達二位數。

[Literal translation: The population of Zhang's Cat Club Members is now a "double-digit" number.]

Comment: In the first draft I attempted to appropriate and concretise the expression "double-digit" while preserving its originally intended meaning:

T_{Td}: The cat club in my family now has over 10 members.

Comment: The author challenged me, explaining clearly the meaning in the context and her true intention, and by urging me to remain faithful to her "double-digit" term:

TT_a (with the author's annotation): 不是十幾隻而是幾十隻，我不想把真實數字寫出來嚇著讀者，故請譯為"double-digit"。

[Literal Translation: Not over ten, but tens of them. I don't want the number to intimidate the readers. Therefore, please translate it into "double-digit"]

Comment: This led to another round of competition and compromise. As a result, I accepted her proposal to revise the draft but rejected her proposed revision. Her proposal to retain the literal meaning or form of the original ST was also a symbol of her attempt to restore her authorship that had been challenged. On the one hand, the expression chosen for the revised version and accepted for the final version was a sign of competing with the author's proposed version (the awkward sounding "double-digit" in this context). On the other, it symbolised my goodwill to facilitate a compromise. "Dozens of" was meant to refer to an ambiguous quantity, clearly over 20, but less than 100. This version, by preserving the vagueness of the original "double-digit", rendered her true intention: to keep a low profile about her adopting so many stray cats:

TTr/TTf: The cat club in my family now has dozens of members.

Comment: The collaborative efforts thus made the new (translated) version a further-developed version, “truer” to the author’s intended meaning than the literal translation of the original ST (or the original “version”) and the first draft. The translator’s voice was listened to and additional value was created in this process.

Example 4

STz: 每只貓都是一隻“特別的貓”。——桃莉絲·萊辛

[Literal translation: Every cat is a “special cat”. —Dorris Lessing]

Comment: As in Example 1, I provided a verified version for the quotation in my first draft, despite its partial deviance from the form of the source version:

TTd: Particularly cats. —Dorris Lessing

Comment: The author replied with another attempt to restore her original version by questioning the authenticity of my first version. This could also be seen as her attempt to compensate me with an explanation for her challenging move and offering a literal translation of her Chinese text (version):

TTa (with the author’s annotation): 這是原文嗎？若不是，則大約應譯為：Every cat is a “special cat”.

[Literal Translation: Is this the original? If not, I guess the translation should be “Every cat is a ‘special cat’”.]

Comment: After a further round of reflection, I competed with the author rejecting her proposed original version and argued to retain the version in my first draft. A compromise was reached when I formally explained my reasoning underlining my cautious attitude towards the project. I also reassured her with further translation-related knowledge as proof of my professionalism:

TTr/TTf: Particularly cats. —Dorris Lessing

Annotation (in TTr) then provided in response to TTa: 我特地把這個人的書搜過了（見原文的下批註，只有這一處符合。中文的翻譯的回譯無法與原文對等，作者所有的引言我都找過了出處。但是這些中文譯文本就是會有紋飾，下同，見詳細批註。

[Literal Translation: I have specially checked through her book (please see the annotation below about this book). Only this line shares the meaning with the quotation in Chinese. The back translation of the Chinese version cannot be equal to the original. I have tried to trace the sources of all the quotations in this book. The Chinese versions of the original quotations are normally modified in translating. This is also true for the rest of the translated quotations, all with annotations provided for your reference.]

Comment: As in the last example, two major rounds of interaction took place, before a balance or mutual identification was achieved.

4. Encountering the inactive author

The inactive or “silent” author, Dong, had based her book³ on a popular TV programme she hosted. It is a collection of stories read by the programme guests together with the host/author’s introductions to the guests, their reading materials and her interviews with the guests. For the inactive author, as in almost all conventional commissioned translation scenarios, I provided a translation draft (TTd) and later received an approved final version (TTf) from the commissioner.

Highlighted in the examples below are the challenges and the solutions concerning, as with Zhang, the stages of competition and compromise before a balance or mutual identification was achieved. As no author’s feedback was involved in this project, I will focus on the interaction that took place in my own mental world, on my own “confession”.

However, it should be noted that although only two examples have been selected here, scenarios such as these generally end with mutual identification, and a collaborative result. The reason is simple. Arguably, every translating manoeuvre is naturally an intruding move by which the

³ Source text from: Dong, Qing. 2017. *Readers 1*. Beijing: People's Literature Publishing House.

translator or TT competes with the author or ST through the new version in a different language. Naturally, a compromise is inevitable as (at least part of) the meaning signified by the source signifiers will normally be preserved in the translated version, as a counter-balancing dynamic to make the translated identify with the original.

Example 5

ST_b: 我今天要朗讀一個很特別的章節，是作家劉瑜的《願你慢慢長大》的一個片段。

[Literal Translation: I want to read a very special chapter, a part from *Take Your Time to Grow Up*, by Liu Yu.]

Comment: As in my encounter with the active author, in encountering the inactive author, I was challenged by situations where I had to evaluate the validity of the source version. What was special about the extract above was that it was originally what an interviewee had said in the programme, a “re-narration” of the original speech, which made it rather an inaccurate version to refer to than a truth to follow. I decided to compete with the source version by only translating what was in line with the original programme, instead of the ST signifiers. Yet I confess: after this intrusive move, I felt insecure and incomplete, as if what I had dismissed was a part of myself. It concerned me that such a slight alteration might not be enough to make my voice listened to (by the imagined author or my commissioner—or rather by a part of myself that was obliging me to identify with the author). As a result, I offered an annotation as part of my translation to compensate for the unavailable part of authorship, assuming or imagining that a tacit agreement on the reconstructed version had been reached, a version that had been mutually recognised:

TTd/TTf: I want to read *Take Your Time to Grow Up*, by Liu Yu.

Annotation provided together with TTd: 《願你慢慢長大》這本書是2018年出的。2017年錄節目的時候只有2014年出版的《成長請帶上這封信》。另外：這句內容和原視頻不符合（“是劉瑜的《願你慢慢長大》”）。

[Literal Translation: The book entitled *Take Your Time to Grow Up* was published in 2018. When the program was made in 2017, what was available was only the book entitled *Please Take the Letter as You Grow Up* (2014) by Liu Yu, of which *Take Your Time to Grow Up* was the title

of a chapter. Besides, in the subtitles of the original program video, this line should be “(I will read today) *Take Your Time to Grow Up*, by Liu Yu”]

Comment: The ST read rather ambiguously, as if *Take Your Time to Grow up* was a book from which a chapter had been selected for reading. In reality, this is not the case, nor was the original TV programme subtitle cited correctly. My decision to challenge the ST and provide an annotation to explain this alteration was accepted in the final version. My voice was listened to.

Example 6

ST_b: “要不能到了你們老史家來?”奶奶又歎氣。“我不姓屎!我姓方!”我喊起來。“方”是奶奶的姓。

[Literal Translation: “Otherwise, how could I marry into the Shi family of yours?” “No! I’m not a Shi! My surname is Fang!” I shouted. Fang was my grandma’s surname.]

Comment: This is a conversation between a grandma and her grandson, an excerpt from a long story read firstly by a guest in the programme and then included in the book. In the Chinese ST, the interaction between “史” (a surname pronounced as “shi”) and “屎” (a homophone of “史”, but meaning “shit”) contributed not only to the humorous effect but also to the conversation. I confess that I thought the source version (the literal translation of the Chinese source text in English) was incompetent and ineffective in maintaining the humorous effect or conversational coherence. I then decided to rewrite this part, instead of choosing to add notes in brackets to explain the meaning of the second “Shi”:

TT_d/TT_f: “Otherwise, how could I marry into the Shi family of yours?” “No, it sounds like ‘shit.’ My family name is Fang!” I shouted. Fang was my grandma’s family name.

Comment: As this altered version also preserved the exact implication of the ST, it highlighted both competition and compromise. A balance (also a win-win result) was immediately achieved; a further-developed version had been produced, and my voice had indeed been listened to through this creative effort.

5. Concluding remarks

To conclude, the proposed model and the self-reflective study of the two cases affirm the (added) value of human translators. It is argued that the ethics of translating entail translator-author collaboration as the final aim, with mutual identification achieved. Translating thus not only makes a translator a translator, but also makes the author become “the other translator”, a translator who collaborates to provide a shared version that evolves from the author’s original text version. This ethics obliges the human translator to play a proactive role in the process of decision-making, instead of mechanically copying that original text. The very value that a human translator adds in translating lies in the constantly restructured power hierarchy towards a balanced end. The final reestablished version and the (re-)established and enriched identities of both the translator and author are made possible by virtue of the translator’s devotion and creativity.

The model has implications for both theory and practice. Theoretically, this model helps categorise the dynamic stages in the intricate decision-making process, identifying an ethical end as a benchmark for generating more critical analysis, and two counter-balancing dynamics for developing more in-depth explanation. From an identificational perspective, it also helps differentiate a machine translator, which identifies statically with the author, from a human translator, who is capable of working hard towards mutual identification with the author. Besides, barely qualified or unqualified human translators are those who fail to be (fully) faithful to the (micro-)events defined by the model. They will embrace little or no addition induced by these events and thus add little or no value in practice. As a result of such an interaction or exchange, they will be unlikely to be constructed as “immortals”.

Practically, the model urges professional translators to view their authors as the other translator with whom they collaborate for a shared and further-developed version, to actively seek occasions to facilitate the progress or truth-processes towards a collaborative end. For example, a translator may ask the author to clarify ambiguous details and ask for feedback, where possible; or to take the initiative to make the author an active partner in translating. If the author is physically absent or just inactive throughout the translating process, a translator can still have an active interaction with the author’s textual presence (ST signifiers), towards a collaborative end.

Besides its endorsement for a translator's creativity in translating, this model informs the stakeholders involved in decision-making including the translator herself that there is no reason to consider a translation innately inferior to an original. An original text is but a version to be further developed—to be continuously unveiled by the very event of (re-)translating. In light of the model, evaluation or judgement of a translator's performance should be based on an in-depth investigation into the interactive process (whether at a micro or macro level) rather than simply into a finished product. What is ethical is a translator's commitment to persevering in "that which exceeds your perseverance". Simply put, evidence of wanting to be good, as Chesterman (2001) advocates, may matter more than mere linguistic resemblance. As suggested by Badiou (2001: 91) this requires discernment (of void in the situation), courage (to embrace the breaks) and moderation (of opposing extremes).

More self-reflective studies in the future may help consolidate the generality of the proposed model. An author is arguably the closest collaborator a translator can have in translating or decision-making, to construct a translatorial identity. For future research, interaction with other significant agents (so long as they also exert significant impact on translators' decision-making in specific cases), such as readers should be pursued. In other scenarios, such as self-translation where authors are literally the translators, or fansubbing where consumers or readers are simultaneously the producers, these self-translators or fansubbers themselves can also be analysed from a similar (identificational) perspective, so as to better understand translating as a social event and human translators as social beings.

Finally, the four-stage model can also be applied to investigate a broader picture—beyond individual experiences, inside a translation institution or industry. For example, the interaction between professional and non-professional subtitlers could be investigated thus—identifying and examining the evidence of the existing truth-process events and the counterbalancing dynamics involved in the subtitling industry, so as to critically analyse the existing collaboration or even predict forthcoming collaboration in this digital age.

Acknowledgements

I thank Prof. Katan for his very insightful and enlightening feedback and advice, the anonymous referees for their constructive suggestions for

improving this study, my friend and mentor Editor Ms. Shasha Li for her strong support for my professional and academic career, and Ms. Dan Zhang for her generous support for this research project.

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