

Towards a Comparative Study of Translations of Translations and Interpretations of Interpretations: Lost and Found in Translations and Interpretations

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Abstract:

The purpose of this research article is to draw researchers' attention towards comparative study of, and for, translation(s) of translation and interpretation(s) of interpretation. This idea comes from the experience of crossing the various types of borders, such as physical, political, social, economic, post-colonial, etc. In other words, what happen to words, expressions, texts, translations, interpretations, etc. when they cross borders from one context, place, or state to another in time and space? Responding to this issue in terms of translation, one might say that some elements of the original text might lose their meanings, and others might also state that new implications would be given or attached to the translated text because of cultural differences. Accordingly, some elements of an identity have been lost, and other new ones have been acquired in time and space. This can be also seen and felt in a reader or traveler before and after navigating. The topic of this article will developed by making use of the various intellectual reflections of Octavio Paz, José Ortega y Gasset, J. Hillis Miller, Matthew Gumpert, Itamar Even-Zohar and Gideon Toury, in general, and Tomás Albaladejo's notion of "Polyacroasis" and Said's trop of "Traveling Theory," in particular. The implications and applications of the last two tropes will be combined and developed to draw scholars' considerations towards a critical comparative approach to study the translation(s) of translation and interpretation(s) of interpretation, re-produced in time and space.

Keywords: translation(s), interpretation(s), travelling theory, polyacroasis, lost, found

Introduction:

Most of the world's great and well-known writers have depended on the roles re-played by 'translators' and 'interpreters,' in particular, and 'editors' and 'publishers,' in general. In view of (t)his thesis, I would like to start by citing Said's (2000) assessment of Shakespeare's greatness who states:

Each age [...] re-interprets Shakespeare, not because Shakespeare changes, but because despite the existence of numerous and reliable editions of Shakespeare, there is no such fixed and non-trivial object as Shakespeare independent of his editors, the actors who played his roles, the translators who put him in other languages, the hundreds of millions of readers who have read him or watched performances of his plays [...]. [I]t is too much to say that Shakespeare has no independent existence at all, and that he is completely reconstituted every time someone reads, acts, or writes about him [...]. Shakespeare leads an institutional or cultural life that among other things has guaranteed his eminence as a great poet. (P. 92)

As Said (2000) argues, the canonicity of any writer can be said to be the result of the interaction between two main forces: the individual merit of the writer and the translative-interpretive processes of each age. The figure of William Shakespeare as a great figure, for Said, seems to have no fixed identity and no inert existence, cut off from his origin; Shakespeare, I would say, is always in a process of 'becoming' in time and space due to the diversity of translations and interpretations. Shakespeare, as a person, does not change though his knowledge or personal identity is (de)constructed out of many elements. But his identity has later become indefinite as never ceased becoming manifest in new facets through the eyes of people who re-play new re-translations of re-translations of translations and re-interpretations of re-interpretations of interpretations.

In a similar memo, Paz (1992) claims that translation/interpretation is the primary means for understanding the world we live in. The world is seen by Paz as an ever accumulated mountain of texts:

Each slightly different from the one that came before it: translations of translations of translations. Each text is unique, yet at the same time it is the translation of another text. No text can be completely original because languages itself, in its very essence, is already a translation-first from the nonverbal world, and then, because each sign and each phrase is a translation of another sign, another phrase. (P. 154)

Translations and interpretations, in view of what is mentioned, are not marginal activities but crucial ones that help us to re-comprehend the text/world we read/live in. The more there are more translations and interpretations, the more we re-understand the world.

By extension to this logic and towards the end of the 1930s, the Spanish philosopher Ortega y Gasset, who had been forced by his country's civil war into exile in South America, wrote an instructive article (1970). In this work, Ortega y Gasset reflects on two issues: the paradox and utopian of translation. He argues when words of foreign origin come into a language, they do not always have the same meaning as in the language of origin. For example,

what a Spaniard calls ‘*bosque*’ is not quite the same as what a German refers to as ‘*Wald*.’ In the course of time, the meanings of similar words in different languages diverge. For instance, the English word ‘*realize*’ has largely lost its meaning, originally meant ‘to convert into reality.’ Currently, it means ‘to become aware of the true situation.’ In the same way, the word ‘*Model*’ is no longer something of brilliance, but rather a schema employed by others for their independent expression. The meaning of these words is different from ‘*réaliser*’ and ‘*modèle*’ in French, or ‘*realisieren*’ and ‘*Modell*’ in Germany. Besides, he thinks about the mental and emotional associations to these words, which are almost *different*. Translation, for Ortega y Gasset, is, finally, ‘un propósito imposible’ [impossible proposition]. When words cross borders, they rarely involve the original meaning due to the differences in the multiplicity; main significance is then lost for bearing across borders. Meanings have also to do with interpretation. Both translations and interpretation are interchangeably used.

I. The Denotations and Connotations of ‘Translation’ and ‘Interpretation’

Before comparing and contrasting the idea of re-translations of translations and re-interpretations of translations—each and all are re-deconstructed in multiplicity and difference in time and place—which have been noted in the cited quotes, developed later throughout Albaladejo’s notion of “Polyacrosis” and Said’s trop of “Traveling Theory,” I would like to shed the lights on the etymological similarities and differences between the notions of ‘interpretation’ and ‘translation.’ The verb ‘translate,’ in line with the *Online Etymology Dictionary*, means “to remove from one place to another” as well as “to turn from one language to another,” coming from L. *translatu*s “carried over,” from *trans-* and *latus* “borne, carried” and “to bear, carry.” To ‘interpret,’ according to the same dictionary, means to “expound the meaning of, render clear or explicit” and from Old French *interpreter* “explain; translate” (13c.) and directly from Latin *interpretari* “explain, expound, understand,” from *interpre*s “agent, translator,” from *inter-* “between.” Mailloux (1990) states what I have mentioned by saying that ‘interpretation,’ in accordance with the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is ‘translation’ that signifies “to expound the meaning of (something abstruse or mysterious); to render (words, writings, an author) clear or explicit; to elucidate; to explain” (p. 120). “*Translatio*,” for Stierle (1996), “is a word of the lingua franca of the Roman Empire, which was itself a large system of translation of cultures or [...] a melting pot of cultures” (p. 55). ‘*Translatio*,’ in Medieval Latin, ‘has its echoes in the Romance languages as well as in English,’ meaning a “translation and displacement as well” (p. 55-6). “*Translation, traslazione*,” in this sense, for instance, “describes the transfer of the relics of a saint from one place to another. *Traduction, traduzione*, on the other hand, are narrowing down their meaning to a specific activity of translating from one language into another” (p. 56).

Though the notion of interpretation is originally meant translation—to interpret is to translate →→→ to translate is to interpret—it is still different from each other. This issue has been discussed in many different articles. The first difference has been summarized in a blog titled “Translation vs. Interpretation” (2004). It is stated that the main difference “translation deals with written communication, while interpreting is all about the spoken word” (para. 2). It is added:

Translators work on written documents [...]. Interpreters, on the other hand, are involved in projects that require live translation [...]. Both translators and interpreters have a deep

linguistic and cultural knowledge of their working languages [...]. Good translators have excellent written skills [...], paying particular attention to the style of the source documents [...]. Unlike translators, interpreters do not provide a word-for-word translation; instead, they transpose spoken messages [...]. An interpreter is often more than an on-demand translator, however - they also act as a facilitator between speaker and listener. (Para. 2-4.)

In relation to the etymological differences between the two notions, Mailloux also says:

Interpretatio was formed on *interpres*: “an inter-mediary, agent, go-between” and “interpreter of foreign languages, a translator” [...]. [It] conveys the sense of a translation pointed in two directions simultaneously: toward a text to be interpreted and for an audience in need of the interpretation. That is, the interpreter mediates between the translated text and its new rendering and between the translated text and the audience desiring the translation. It is the heritage of these two etymological senses—a translation of a text and translation for. (P. 121)

The main difference between ‘a translation of’ and ‘translation for’ is subsequently like ‘translation’ and ‘interpretation’: the former consists of transferring ideas expressed in writing from one language to another from, and the latter consists of transferring ideas expressed orally, or by the use of gestures (as in the case of sign language), from one language to another. In a word, translation is a written communication whereas interpretation is an oral one. Another difference is interpretation, which is unlike translation that is generally concerned of literal translation, is concerned with the issue of explaining and expounding the meaning of something in relation to the reality of the world we are living in, like what philosophers, writers, critics, etc. do, developed later. That is to say, they are concerned with reflection on the world so as to bridge the gaps.

Still, the two notions share the implications and applications of notion of crossing or ‘metaphor.’ This word, according to *Online Etymology Dictionary*, “comes from Middle French, *metaphore*, from Latin, *metaphora*, and from Greek, *metaphor*, ‘a transfer,’ [...] ‘a carrying over,’ from *metapherein* ‘transfer, carry over,’ from *meta-* ‘over, across’ and *pherein* ‘to carry, bear.’” That is to say, notions of translation and interpretation entail the idea of crossing from one place to another. Ricoeur (1977) maintains that the dynamic of metaphor rests “on the perception of resemblance” (p. 24), and the use of metaphor involves “the apprehension of an identity within the difference between two terms” (p. 6). Concerning this, Stierle says: In every dialogue there is an interplay between distance and closeness, difference and resemblance, which reminds us of the structure of metaphor. In metaphor two poles have to work together in order to bridge a semantic gap. This is why Ricoeur speaks of “*métaphore vive*.” (P. 66).

The word translation as a ‘living metaphor’ is also explored by (1996) accordingly:

[T]he word means, etymologically, “carried from one place to another,” transported across the borders between one language and another, one country and another, one culture and another. This, of course, echoes the etymology of “metaphor.” A translation is a species of extended metaphorical equivalent in another language of an “original” text [...]. A

work is [...] “translated,” that is, displaced, transported, carried across, even when it is read in its original language by someone who belongs to another country and another culture or to another discipline. (P. 207)

In view of this, the notion of translation involves the denotation and connotation of the trop metaphor that assures the idea of ‘border crossing,’ ‘displacement,’ and ‘transportation’ of words, ideas, people, etc. Regarding this, Rushdie (1987) states:

The very word *metaphor*, with its roots in the Greek words for *bearing across*, describes a sort of migration, the migration of ideas into images. Migrants—borne-across humans—are metaphorical beings in their very essence; and migration, seen as a metaphor, is everywhere around us. We all across frontiers; in that sense, we are all migrant people. (P. 278-79)

Accordingly, each identity, whether it is a word, message, idea, or people, is, has been or will be shaken; some of the elements have been lost and other new characteristics have been appropriated. Not like before anymore. Looking at the original and the copy, or before and after crossing, or else before and after appropriation or resistance, one might see change in, and within, an identity; change is unavoidable and inevitable.

II. Towards Translations of Translations and Interpretations of Interpretations

The metaphorical implications and applications of the interrelated notions of ‘translation’ and ‘interpretation’ along with the reflections of various intellectuals, all mentioned above, the researcher have to look for and develop a comparative approach so as to see things before and after crossing the literal and lateral, or metaphorical and physical, or else political and psychological ‘borders.’ This is because ‘interpretation’ or ‘translation,’ for Gumpert (2001), “is not just a metaphor, however, but [also] a method” (p. 123). In a word, researchers are in need of a methodological approach so as to understand, see or analyze ‘self’ in/and ‘other,’ or ‘other’ in/and ‘self. Seeing and acting otherwise is also developed by Itamar Even-Zohar and Gideon Toury (1981). They maintain, “transfer theory is badly needed not in order to eliminate or swallow translation theory, but in order to furnish it with better possibilities to tackle its particular subject matter” (p. x). Regarding, they entail that ‘transfer theory’ is needed so as to equip ‘translation theory’ that stimulates intercultural relations. They add:

Having once adopted a functional(istic) approach, [...], modern translation theory cannot escape transcending “borders” [...]. [T]ransfer/interference theory will no longer be developed detached from translation theory. To deal with cultural interference without investigating the role of translation [...] is clearly as irresponsible as studying translational procedures without taking into account the way they are correlated with and dependent upon interference processes [...]. Just as translation theory did not seem to be valid without (historical) comparative study, so comparative studies of any kind (be they called “comparative literature” or “comparative linguistics”) seem invalid without translation theory. (P. x-xi)

To develop our call for a new comparative methodological approach for the translations of translations and interpretations of interpretations, it is preferable to explore Said's trop of "Traveling Theory" and Tomás Albaladejo's notion of "Polyacrosis."

II. A. Said's 'Travelling Theory'

Said (1983) raises the question of not only what happens to theories when they cross borders from one to another and from one state to another in time and space, but also on how this circulation enrich the intellectual activity. He says:

Like people and schools of criticism, ideas and theories travel—from person to person, from situation to situation, from one period to another. Cultural and intellectual life are usually nourished and often sustained by this circulation of ideas, and whether it takes the form of acknowledged or unconscious influence, creative borrowing, or wholesale appropriation, the movement of ideas and theories from one place to another is both a fact of life and a usefully enabling condition of intellectual activity. (P. 226)

Besides, he argues that theories travel through four phases before reaching their destinations and being put into practice. He describes cumulative processes of transfer, assimilation, resistance and alteration:

Such movement into a new environment is never unimpeded. It necessarily involves processes of representation an institutionalization different from those at the point of origin. This complicates any account of the transplantation, transference, circulation, and commerce of theories and ideas [...]. First, there is a point of origin, or what seems like one, a set of initial circumstances in which the idea came to birth or entered discourse. Second, there is a distance traversed, a passage through the pressure of various contexts as the idea moves from an earlier point to another time and place where it will come into a new prominence. Third, there is a set of conditions—call them conditions of acceptance, resistances—which then confronts the transplanted theory or idea, making possible its introduction or toleration, however alien it might appear to be. Fourth, the now fully (or partly) accommodated idea is to some extent transformed by its new uses, its new position in a new time and place. (P. 226-27)

In other words, the traveling word, utterance, idea, theory or people undergo four stages: origin, distance traversed, set of conditions (acceptance or resistance), and accommodated or incorporated, new use and position in time and space. The reason behind the alteration of theories, as undergoing change when they cross various types of border or from one socio-historical climate to another, is that the difference between the inaugural conditions of a given theory and the circumstances of its later crossings takes the form of either accommodation/incorporation or resistance, thoroughly leading to a transformation of the theory itself. That is, when theory travels, moves or circulates, it, then, loses, gains, strengthens or becomes different from its origin.

In view of this, Said applies his vision on the travelling theory of 'reification,' theorized by Georg Lukács, a Hungarian Marxist philosopher and literary theorist. Lukács' theory, as we shall see has undergone four stages: origin, distance traversed, set of conditions (acceptance or resistance), and accommodated or incorporated, new use and position in time and space. Said proves his vision throughout the mentioned article which is reconsidered in another one (1994).

In both articles, Said argues that Lukács' theory of 'reification,' appeared in *History and Class Consciousness* (1923), has been variably appropriated and re-contextualized in time and space by other four intellectuals: Goldmann, Williams, Adorno and Fanon. In the former article (1983), Said sees Lukács' theory as travelling in terms of linearity in the area of Europe, showing how and in which sense the Lukacsian Marxism from Hungary in the post WWI period had been transformed and changed in, and to, Paris by Lucien Goldmann and in, and to, England by Raymond Williams. In the reconsidered article (1994), Said sees the same theory in terms of both confinement to Germany by Adorno and non-linearity in, and to, a French colony of Martinique of Fanon as an instance of "transgressive theory" (253), intellectually referring to the transference and transgression of Lukács' ideas by Adorno and Fanon. Finally, Said shows how and in which sense Lukács' thought, travelled to Goldmann, Williams, Adorno, and Fanon, variably measured, conveyed, strengthened, and weakened. This, of course, has led Said to demonstrate how and in which sense the appropriation as much as interpretation of crossing theories might lead to antithetical visions. Whether seen as projection or protection, the original word, theory or text has been variably re-structured; its identity has been transformed in time and space.

The same logic could be also applied on the thought of Said, which has been re-constructed and developed in time and place. In relation to its development, it is well-known that Said's thought has been recontextualized and transplanted by post-colonial scholars, cultural theorists, critical theory readers, etc.. In relation to the reconstruction of Said's thought, I would say, he has been inspired not only by the reflections of Lukács, Adorno, Gramsci, Vico, Fanon, Foucault, Williams, but also being and navigating 'out of place' as well as by the thought of Bakhtin. In view of this, I would argue that Said has some affinities with Bakhtin. Accordingly, it could be claimed that Said's trope of Said's 'Travelling Theory' echoes Bakhtin's thought. Bakhtin (1986) states:

This is why the unique speech experience of each individual is shaped and developed in continuous and constant interaction with others' individual utterances. This experience can be characterized to some degree as the process of assimilation—more or less creative—of others' words (and not the words of a language). Our speech, that is, all our utterances (including creative works), is filled with others' words, varying degrees of otherness or varying degrees of "our-ownness," varying degrees of awareness and detachment. These words of others carry with them their own expression, their own evaluative tone, which we assimilate, rework, and re-accentuate. Thus, the expressiveness of individual words [...] is an echo of another's individual expression. (P. 89)

I am sure that Said had read Bakhtin though he barely mentioned. Regardless, the crossing, transference, translation, interpretation, transgression, transplantation, or recontextualization of any word, thought, idea, theory does not refer to full the deconstruction of an identity, as trivially projected and protected in Derrida's thought in the sense of 'neither-nor,' or 'either-or,' but to its 'relativity' as project by the Stranger in Plato's work (1996): "The kinds intermix with one another [...]. As a result, Being in turn indisputably is not in thousands upon thousands of cases, and the others too, taken one by one and all together, in many cases are and in many are not" (p. 70-1). That is, 'identity,' as Socrates states in another work of Plato (1973), is "'so' and 'not so'" (p. 63); it thoroughly combines elements from here and there or this and that. That is, when theory is translated, it losses, gains, strengthens or becomes different from its

origin. Finally, the development and reconstruction of Said's thought has been as much as would be variably seen in time and space throughout navigations and crossings.

II. B. Albaladejo's 'Polyacroasis'

Professor Albaladejo has introduced his concept of '*polyacroasis*,' 'multiple interpretations and auditions' with the intention of not only to evaluate the different readings and writings of various writers and critics, but also to bring about a credible analysis and a critical interpretation. Albaladejo (2001) shows how he has formulated his notion of '*poliacroasis*,' translated into English as '*polyacroasis*,' written in Greek as *polyakróasis*, 'a partir del griego, de *polýs*, *pollé*, *polý*, 'mucho' o 'numeroso' y *akróasis*, 'audición' y 'interpretación' to mean 'multiple interpretations' and 'plural auditions' (18). By extension to this logic, it could be stated, as I fully know, that Albaladejo has been inspired by Bakhtin's thought; one of his articles is titled "Polifonía y poliacroasis en la oratoria política: Propuestas para una retórica bajtiniana" (1997). In one of his famous sayings, Bakhtin states, "My love for variations and for a diversity of terms for a single phenomenon. The multiplicity of focuses brings distant things closer [...]" (1986, p. 155). In addition to this inspiration, Bakhtin also writes:

The world of culture and literature is as boundless as the universe. We are speaking not about its geographical breadth (this is limited), but about its semantic depths, which are as bottomless as the depths of matter. The infinite diversity of interpretations, images, figurative semantic combinations, materials and their interpretations [...]. We have narrowed it terribly by selecting and by modernizing what has been selected. We impoverish the past and do not enrich ourselves. We are suffocating in the captivity of narrow and homogeneous interpretations. (P. 140)

That is, what is explored by Bakhtin is developed by Albaladejo in terms of his notion of '*polyacroasis*.' This quote, accordingly, reflects on the depth of Albaladejo's praxis that seeks to exceed 'boundaries' and 'borders.' He, like Bakhtin and Said, is aware of the fact that 'we are suffocating in the captivity of narrow and homogenous interpretations' that 'impoverish the past and do not enrich ourselves.' In other words, he is aware of the plurality of voices and the fact that the status of our own lives depends on the necessary presence of and respect to the 'other.'

Albaladejo (1998) connects '*polyacroasis*' to the importance of *audience* as in Aristotle and *difference* as in Quintilian. Then, he goes on to identify three elements that construct his notion:

The multiplicity of hearers and the differences among their particular receptions of rhetorical discourses constitute the foundations of *polyacroasis*. The similarities between hearers, which permit the constitution of groups of hearers differentiated among themselves, are necessarily linked to the differences derived from multiplicity. Therefore, multiplicity, difference and similarity in the reception and interpretation of rhetorical discourse are elements that combine in *polyacroasis*. (P. 156)

So, any analysis of any interpretation of interpretation or translation of translation of any 'communicative situation' is mainly based on comparing and contrasting the three constituents: multiplicity, difference and similarity of readers, listeners or writers. This issue is also subject

to, as Said entails, undergoing four stages: origin, distance traversed, set of conditions (acceptance or resistance), and accommodated or incorporated, new use and position in time and space. By combining the thought of all of the mentioned thinkers, one may assure that any interpretation or translation must undergo, at least, the four stages mentioned by Said as much as the three constituents employed by Albaladejo, discursively projecting (dis)similarities through the multiple interpretations, translations, auditions, receptions, etc. Finally, Albaladejo's notion of 'polyacrosis' introduces, elaborates, and propagates translations as much as interpretations beyond the well-established theories or well-established facts in an attempt to create new possibilities for seeing and acting otherwise so as to bring something new into being. As a result of multiple translations and interpretations, one might say that we are lost and found.

III. Conclusion: Lost and Found in Translation and Interpretation

"Can I pose the question *Who* am I? without asking *what* I am," Ricoeur asks (1999, p. 53)? The answer, I would say, is of course we cannot do either. The interrelations of the former to the latter are unavoidable. This helps us to initiate a new comparative methodological approach to compare and contrast the translated/interpreted words, ideas or texts, thoroughly by taking into consideration of not only Said's trop of 'Traveling Theory' that show how theories undergo four stages (origin, distance traversed, set of conditions (acceptance or resistance), and accommodated or incorporated, new use and position in time and space), but also of Albaladejo's projection of these constituents for polyacrosis (multiplicity, difference and similarity in analyzing the multiple interpretations or translations). In view of this, comparing and contrasting the multiple translations of translations of translations as much as interpretations of interpretations of interpretation, re-produced in time and space, will help us to understand that meanings and significations which have been lost and found in time and space. Understanding this helps us to appreciate the seen and unseen interweaving of 'self' in/and 'other,' or 'other' in/and 'self,' or else your word in mine. Rethinking the multiple translations and interoperations in terms of comparison and contrast opens one's own perspective to a better understanding of linguistic, literary or cultural aspects of human activity. So, the metaphor of translation as a method not only refers to border-crossing, displacement, or transplantation, but also opens a space for a new language. This idiom explains the conjunctures of past and present to narrow the gaps between cultures or difference. By projecting a questioning and pedagogical method in terms of comparative study approach for translations of translation and interpretations of interpretation, researchers will be able to compare, contrast, explore, evaluate, interrelate, and dialogue the ever-changing as much as the divergences and convergences of insights and reflections among the multiple interpreters, writers, critics, etc.. Thus, the reflection of Ortega y Gasset on the literal translation as 'un propósito imposible' can be 'un propósito *possible*' [a possible project] by comparing and contrasting the juxtaposition of 'here' and 'there,' 'self' and 'other.' Recognizing 'self' in 'other' or 'other' in 'self' is not enough because one must make a dialogue between his experienced poetics with his practiced politics. That is, it not enough to say hybridity, but also it is important to act in line with this angling. By this metaphorical angling, owing to being lost and found in translation and interpretations enhances the intercultural communications as much as seeing and acting otherwise.

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