

LSP and Minor Languages: Some Proposals for a Translation Attitude Culture

Abstract

Translators working in a major-minor language pair¹ consider that the major language has a higher language status than the minor language (in our case Greek). There are different reasons for this language attitude: Political, economic and cultural forces determine the status of a language; Greek as a minor language depends much on the translation activity; Translation relationships depend on whether a language is target-language intensive (English, German), or source-language intensive (Greek) (see Cronin 2003: 145-146).

The higher language/translation status of English or German LSP is also due to the instrumental orientation, which when translating into a minor language implies that translation products interest the target-language public more for socioeconomic reasons. On the other hand, as Greek surveys show (Siskou 2006, Ioannidou 2006), translation from Greek into other minor or else major languages, has increased. Greek as a source and target language amounts to 59.09% and 95.45% respectively (Ioannidou 2006: 3-4).

Following the methodology of the functionalist approach and concentrating on the minor-major language pair, we propose to develop a translation attitude culture in regard to minor languages, in particular Greek. The status of Greek as a minor national language will be strengthened if, apart from the creation of more numerous and more reliable reference books, internet tools, and parallel texts, the constitution of fora for translators and translation scholars and a state-coordinated language planning institution will be constituted. We express the hope that TS research will develop a public branch and focus on the TS service for the general public (see Koskinen 2007 in Pokorn 2008: 7).

1. Language attitude studies

Attitude studies figure in many scientific fields, such as psychology, sociolinguistics, social psychology of language, cultural anthropology, ethnography, and education (e.g. bilingualism). A number of theories focus on two major competing approaches, the **mentalist** and the **behaviourist** view of attitude. The mentalist view is the most represented one and has three components, the cognitive (knowledge), affective (feelings) and conative (action) (see Lambert 1967: 91-109). Following the behaviourist view, attitudes are to be found simply in the responses people make to social situations, which implies overt behaviour. This kind of behaviour is much easier to observe and analyse, but it cannot be used to predict other kinds of behaviour (Fasold 1984: 147). The term attitude “should be used to refer to a general and enduring positive or negative feeling about some person, object, or issue” (Petty/Cacioppo 1981: 6), while at the same time attitude is “a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor” (Eagly/Chaiken 2005: 745) and varying from ephemeral to enduring². Applied to translation studies, it might be interesting to ascertain to what extent attitude imposes its imprint on the **language** and **translation** attitude.

1 Parts of this article appear in Chapters 4 and 5 of my book *Translating from Major into Minor Languages*. Diavlos 2009.

2 To be more precise, there are three kinds of attitude durations: 1. enduring attitude through one’s lifetime, 2. formed but then changed attitude, 3. formed but eventually receding and disappearing attitude (Eagly/Chaiken 2005: 746).

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1.1. Language attitudes and language status

As mentioned above, under the mentalist view, attitudes encompass three components: cognitive, affective, and conative. At this point, language attitudes rather than attitudes in general are of particular interest. In Fasold's viewpoint (1984: 148), language attitudes should not restrict themselves to attitudes towards language alone but should open themselves up to speakers of whatever language and society they live in. In fact, language attitudes affect a continuum constituted by language and society as its central notions (see Hellinger 2005: 1117) and are actually the feelings people have about their own language or the languages of others. Following attitude measurements in sociolinguistics (see Garrett 2005: 1251-1260), field studies on social evaluation of language have been conducted among linguistically and socially different participants. The results can change, as traditionally 'standard' speech varieties may lose ground, and less mainstream varieties may be judged more positively³. It is assumed that the general loosening of socio-structural norms may lead to new directions for attitude measurement (Giddens 1994: 184-197 in Garrett 2005: 1258). Language attitudes are changing all the time and so produce a different language attitude among its speakers or potential speakers. The same changing language attitude goes for the choice of a foreign language where the "niche" and the "needs" determine the language status. In this respect, Calvet states:

And this 'selection' is relatively limited: human beings are not always able to choose their languages, their choice is determined first and foremost by the milieu in which they find themselves, by the languages that coexist in this niche and then by their needs, and very little by the typological situation of the coexisting languages (Calvet 2006: 58).

But what exactly constitutes a language's status? According to Ammon (1991: 241-242), a number of components may serve as a first step and a preliminary orientation:

- (1) **numerical strength**: the number of speakers, native and non-native speakers, perhaps also monolinguals and bilinguals;
- (2) **social character**: the speakers of the language in sociological terms (e.g. social class, wealth, sex);
- (3) **functions**: the use of the language in the domains (e.g. use as a school subject, use in the domain of science);
- (4) **geographic distribution**: the regions where the speakers live, where they travel in sufficiently great numbers using the language;
- (5) **legal status**: closely related to functions, but does not coincide with them (e.g. declared status as the national language of a country, as an official language of a larger community like the EC); and
- (6) **estimation**: attitudes which important groups hold towards the language or towards its use in the domains (e.g. its speakers and non-speakers).

Each one of these components is highly complex and in their interaction they may, to a certain degree, become explanative or predictive for one another. For example, the numerical strength of a language is indicative of other components such as its legal status (Ammon 1991: 243)⁴.

³ For example, language attitudes studies also showed "the emergence of more than one standard Danish, each favoured in different professional contexts (media versus education and business) and differentiated largely on measurements of dynamism" (see Kristiansen 2001 in Garrett 2005: 1258). In a broader view, the very existence of the Scandinavian "semi-communication" is a sign for linguistic acceptance on behalf of the Scandinavian people. Their linguistic particularity implies a kind of asymmetric, passive or receptive form of multilingualism, with active use of each one's mother tongue. In other words, speakers of different language varieties accept and understand the varieties of the neighbouring languages, while at the same time they speak their own language (Braunmüller/Zeevaert 2001: 5).

⁴ Status studies have not developed enough to give us a coherent theoretical basis for better explaining the diversity of the components. Ammon complains about the interchangeable terminology in status studies, particularly in basic terms such as status, position or function and admits that he himself uses them as they appear in the context, but that he

All these different factors present a language's status as an interesting process of creativity and stability in its development and production. The factors may also vary according to the languages in question and their geographical situation. A telling example about the functional choice of language in a specific situation comes from Calvet:

The Senegalese shopkeeper in Brazzaville, the capital of the Congo, who learns Munukutuba or Lingala does not choose, a priori, a language because it is 'beautiful', or 'pleasing', but because it is 'useful' and will enable him to carry out his job, i.e. he chooses a language spoken by his potential customers (Calvet 2006: 58).

Language attitudes have been researched at least for the last four decades, and have aided a better understanding of the concept of language attitudes and language behaviour (see Vandermeeren 2005: 1324). It remains to be seen how translation studies – especially when dealing with minor languages – can benefit from these achievements.

2. Language production, domain loss and the establishment of English as LSP

For a better understanding of a language's attitude and status, it is necessary to take a look at the language production factors. Language production is postulated by Dua as "the production of creative and original language material [which] is necessary for the stability of language development, vitality of language use, modernization and national development, and the growth of human knowledge and sciences" (Dua 1989: 137). According to Dua, the diversity, quantity and quality of language material is shown in the vitality and functional status of a language. He provides a list with different functional types of language material to define language production: a) creative literature, b) scientific and technical literature, c) literature in social sciences, d) journalistic literature, and e) production of text books (Dua 1989: 137-138).

The conclusions from the above factors are the following: a) the existence of a literary tradition alone neither leads to the development of language structure nor adequately fulfils the needs of a modern speech community; b) the production of scientific and technical literature is necessary for the development of abstract vocabulary and precise and logical thinking; and c) the production of both kinds of writings in the **same** language meets the conditions for setting up functional types of language. Otherwise, the function of the language will definitively change and lead to the development of a differential status of languages used for different purposes. This is true of many developing languages in multilingual societies, such as in Africa and Asia, where the indigenous languages are lacking in high-standard scientific and technical works, and where English has been legitimised as the language of science and technology. In less scientific areas, English has also been institutionalised, through literature, newspapers, journals, radio and TV (Gargesh 2006: 96). In India for example, English has the status of an Indian language. Furthermore, always according to Dua, the production of textbooks, journals and literature in social sciences and other areas seem to have a complementary rather than primary character when it comes to fulfilling the functional status of a language. The production of scientific and technical literature is also a strong factor in the social and functional status of a language. Throughout the British empire, "English was the vital language of power, a status that remains unchanged in almost all post-colonial countries" (Phillipson 2003: 49). But the linguistic situation is no more comforting in scientific and technical literature as far as established European languages of science are concerned:

The question then is whether the pre-eminence of English in the scientific world is occurring at the expense of other languages of scholarship, existing or potential, and whether a single privileged language, alone with the paradigms associated with it, represents a threat to other ways of thinking and their expression (Phillipson 2003: 80).

Since the 17th century, scientific communication and production across Europe has been multilingual. Scientists have always searched for universal truths irrespective of mother tongues and

is hoping that in the future these terms will be defined in more detail (see Ammon 1991: 243 and 1992: 421-422).

national origins. Until some time ago, it was all too natural for scientists to have a command of more than one language; even North American scientists were expected to have a reading competence in several languages until well into the 20th century. As science has focused on English as “the globally dominant language of science” (Phillipson 2003: 80), many scientists are limited to knowledge of English, apart from their mother tongue. This had led to discussions about domain loss, i.e. the question as to whether and to what degree national languages are losing ground to the English language in key domains such as school, education, science, business, civil administration, culture, consumer affairs and private life, thus transforming the national language from a “full-scale language” to a language of limited domestic functions (Haberland 2005: 228). Accordingly, language production and domain loss are closely interrelated.

In the 1990s, at first in Scandinavia, discussion about the domain loss vis-à-vis powerful international languages like English (Haberland 2005: 227) started among politicians, linguists, national language commissions and the media. In the beginning, the concept of domain loss was only used as a political buzzword without proper definition (see Laurén/Myking/Picht)⁵. A decade later, research in Denmark confirmed that domain loss is actually taking place (see Jarvad 2001 in Laurén/Myking/Picht)⁶. As a matter of fact, domain loss, defined as a “loss of ability to communicate in the national language at all levels of an area of knowledge because of deficient further development of the necessary means of professional communication” (Laurén/Myking/Picht)⁷, involved the increased use of English rather than the influx of English loans into the national language. As such, domain loss does not have to do with English loanwords or neologisms, which would mean, for example, a development on a lexical and terminological or syntactical and stylistic level, but with corpora from different scientific and other fields which deal with certain areas or domains. This is a development which started on a corpus level and has meanwhile turned to sociological and political aspects, thus leading to a situation on a status level which implies a loss of status of the national language (Laurén/Myking/Picht 2004: 5)⁸.

Despite its lack of identity and the assurance from many scholars and specialists that English does not function on the level of a national identity, the dominance of English as a world language may lead us to the following question: “Will English not someday replace the other national languages?” This question is legitimate if we take a look at the number of countries where English is used in everyday business communication, as well as in scientific and technological dialogue. History has shown that English has in the past replaced local languages in most of the British Isles, North America and Australia, while it has established itself in many parts of Asia and Africa alongside the local languages (Brutt-Griffler 2002: 108). The fear that English might replace local languages is refuted by Brutt-Griffler (2002: 122), who distinguishes between the role of a world language (“World English”) and the language used in the “internal economy” of local languages. The establishment of English in a country with another national language does not necessarily mean that people will speak English instead of their mother tongue. Even in countries, where English was imposed as an official language, the national language continues to be official and people are (at least) bilingual. It is yet another thing to say that the status of certain languages has fallen in comparison to the world language English. This can be easily confirmed by a look at the linguistic situation in the scientific field. Here, the motto “publish or perish” is applied to the English language and its fuller version could be “publish in English or perish”. This situation is not new to the minor languages. What is new with English as a language of science and technology is the diminishing status it imposes on other major scientific languages such as German and French:

5 http://www.infoterm.info/pdf/activities/Picht_DomainDynamics.pdf

6 http://www.infoterm.info/pdf/activities/Picht_DomainDynamics.pdf

7 http://www.infoterm.info/pdf/activities/Picht_DomainDynamics.pdf

8 http://www.infoterm.info/pdf/activities/Picht_DomainDynamics.pdf

The status of all other languages has declined in comparison to English. For scientists from many countries, for example Scandinavia or the Netherlands in Europe, this development is not new. The “smaller” European languages never played a very important role as international scientific languages. For the Germans, however, and also for the French, it means giving up languages which once had been important not only for national but also for international communication (Skudlik 1992: 391).

As a language of science, technology and international diplomacy, English is undoubtedly the world’s major language and will remain so in the near or medium future. If we agree that English as LSP is not a “national” language, is as such lacking “collective cultural capital, identity” and “integration” (House 2003: 560), and that its only bond is to science and technology, then it is neither the homogenisation of world culture nor the understanding of globalisation as expressed by the homogeny position which is of interest for LSP. Is it the heterogeny position which affects LSP? Is LSP in this case in favour of the ideological implications of periphery Englishes, of the power in language, the political implications of English as LSP, or the different varieties of English in the form of world Englishes? Or is it more the neutrality of English that interests most people involved in LSP? We tend to agree with this last point. We can achieve this by looking at English not as a threat to our national languages, at least as far as LSP is concerned. It will thus come as no surprise when we realise that the spread of English in science and technology is reflected in any language, minor or major, by translation. If we realise that today English is the language of the international scientific community and is linked to the political and economic power relationships, connected with the emergence of the USA as the political and economic super-power, we will agree that for the purposes of LSP and translation, English certainly serves as **the** international link language and not as a language imposed on the other languages, as for example since colonial times, or for purposes of intranational communication in multilingual countries.

2.1. Language production: the example of the Greek language

An interesting example of a minor language as to language production is Greek. First of all, it is vital to make a few remarks about the Greek language. Greek is a particular case of a minor language defining a linguistically homogeneous society, used in Greece and in Greek-speaking Cyprus⁹. What makes Greek so particular is that it neither fits into the category of languages which have been discussed within the framework of post-colonial theories, such as Hindi, nor belongs to a totality of languages such as the anglophone, francophone, hispanophone, or lusophone post-colonial literature, nor into the category of newly planned scientific languages, such as Catalan or Icelandic. On the other hand, it belongs neither to the category of “internal colony” languages such as Irish, Welsh or Scots (Hechter 1975 in Branchadell 2005: 4)¹⁰, nor to the relatively major languages, such as French, German or Spanish. The Greek language is the only minor language today which was a powerful *lingua franca*, still representing a linguistic pool to the scientific world, without itself being able to draw great advantage from its rich linguistic arsenal, because of its minor status as a scientific language. Since Greek science and technology are not in a leading position worldwide, the Greek language is not able to offer much material for basic research and propose new scientific and technological terms to the worldwide community, and so Greek terms coined in major languages are coming back into Greek in the form of back loans.

As to language production, the Greek language as used in Greece can be described as having

- an important local literature and journalistic production,
- a local scientific and technical literature written both in Greek and other languages, mostly in English,
- a translated LSP-literature, mostly from English, less so from German, French etc.

⁹ The focus here is only on the Greek language as used in Greece.

¹⁰ Hechter was criticized for claiming that Scotland belongs to this category of internal colony and withdrew this statement soon after (in Branchadell 2005: 5).

As a consequence, Greece has Greek as its national, official language for everyday, public, and educational use, and as such, cannot be compared to countries with an indigenous and another official language or with countries with more than one language at everyday level (TV, science, tourism etc.). It is not particularly dissimilar to languages such as German or French, which nevertheless are major languages as compared to Greek inasmuch as both kinds of languages easily adopt the English LSP terms, as well as domains from science and technology totally from English, thus creating the phenomenon of domain loss, which leads to a status loss of the national languages.

3. Translators' attitudes towards translation and attitudes towards translators

Translation has long occupied a relatively low status within and outside academic culture. This attitude towards translation is one that has to do with a specific language, in a translation situation involving mainly the reader's mother tongue, due to the lack of originality of the translated text; a situation which is reversed only when the translation manages to surpass its source and to function as an autonomous expression. In all other cases, translation is considered to be rather of a derivative and secondary nature (Warren 2007: 51). This is more so when a minor language is involved. An example given by Bassnett affects the translator's attitude when confronted with an unequal relationship between cultures or texts. She is very positive "that translators are going to react very differently to the text in hand if they see it as either belonging to a literary system of great importance or to one deemed marginal" (Bassnett 1998: 77). Bassnett states that there is no equality in the textual transfer between cultures and that there are no equal terms when perceiving a culture: "All cultures do not perceive themselves as equal, all texts are not regarded as equal, all linguistic transactions are not regarded as equal" (Bassnett 1998: 77).

Applying this situation to a situation translators find themselves in, one can easily conclude their attitude towards a text. Of course, the professional translator will be less of a layperson than students are. It is true that according to Álvarez and Vidal (1996: 6), translators are affected in many ways by all the above-mentioned components of attitudes by: a) their own ideology; b) their feelings of superiority or inferiority towards the language in which they are writing the text being translated; c) the very language in which the texts they are translating is written; d) what the dominant institutions and ideology expect of them; and e) the public for whom the translation is intended.

Some vital questions regarding translators of minor languages could also be: What is their own attitude about their work, their function and position in society, in the present historical, economic, social and cultural context? To study the above questions, it is important to begin with the current situation of the translation profession. In the first place, what affects the attitude of the qualified translator and leads to frustration regarding his profession, is the way his job is often regarded. Many companies do not call them by the name "translator", simply because they do not recognise translation as a separate professional skill. Often, translators have the official status of the manager's personal (bilingual) secretary, a trainee coming in from abroad, a technician or engineer, a documentation manager or in general a second-job, part-time or occasional translator (Gouadec 2007: 101-102.). According to Esther Monzó Nebot (2006: 173 in Pym 2008: 234)¹¹, "what we have is not conflict between professions, as happens in other sectors, but a lacking socialization of professionals and an under-defined common identity"¹². But how can translators achieve a common identity and self-confidence, when it is known that "where translators lack translatable self-awareness, they are also lacking in self-confidence as translators" (Hönig 1991: 85). Hönig adds that self-confidence through increased self-awareness is fundamental to translating. He concludes that self-confidence may be acquired through recognition and the money which a professional translator earns in contrast to a semi-professional. The question why so many trans-

¹¹ Reviewed by A. Pym 2008: *Quaderns. Rev. trad.* 15, 234.

¹² Trans. A. Pym (2008: 231-235).

lators are frustrated by their work is answered by him as follows: a) most translators are not really aware of what they are doing (and for whom), and b) most translators are not allowed to develop the self-confidence necessary to do their work well (Hönig in Schäffner 1998: 84).

The paradox of “the better the translation [...] the more invisible the mediator” (Cronin 2003: 125) is certainly not helping translators to achieve self-confidence; and it reminds us of Robinson’s remark concerning the traditional view of translators today: “that they both *be* the author when they write and *not be* at the same time” (Merrill 2004: 289), and leads us to use it in its shortened form “to be **and** not to be”.

3.1. From language attitudes to target culture attitudes

Language attitudes are all the more interesting for translators, since by changing, they may give the impression of an equal attitude and power relationship towards many languages. Language attitudes applied to translation will lead to translation and target culture attitudes, implying the value or the status a language gains when it comes to translating it. How could attitude research help translation studies? Or, to put it another way: which scientific areas of attitude studies are of interest to translation studies? Apart from attitude measurement, other possible areas would be attitude changes versus attitude stability, interpersonal and social context of attitudes and their application to translation studies.

Our purpose here is to give an incentive to better study each language-pair involved in translation and to try to identify each language in relation to the other language. An example could be studying the spread of the languages involved in relation to changes in industrialisation or, generally speaking, studying the relationship between state economic policies and individual language use (Davis 1992: 140). In our view, language attitudes and translation attitudes should be studied more intensely, probably also within the framework of the recent sociology of translation¹³.

To try to give the impetus to minor languages to continue to cultivate their linguistic and translational self-confidence, we could state that what is encouraging for translators into minor languages is the non-static position of any major language and the constant move up and down the prestige ladder of all languages, minor or major (Cronin 2003: 145). Another fact that is encouraging and should boost the self-confidence of translators and translation scholars of all minor languages, is that the busiest translation workers are mostly non-native English speakers, i.e. native speakers of minor or less major languages. This means that they have the highest degree of translation expertise, which for the translation scholars belonging to minor or less major languages means a feedback to do more precise and scholarly work, given the amount of practical material they are provided with by the translations into their languages. More translation expertise should also lead to more scholarly expertise. Minor languages should feel more self-confidence about the translation process they perform, since it is they which are responsible for producing any “translation effect” (Cronin 2003: 146). The greater their effort in this direction, the better the result and the translators’ satisfaction. Cronin is turning towards the scholars as well, showing them that translation theory is not a superficial thing to deal with. As a consequence for minor and some major languages and their behaviour towards translation, it must be stressed here that the responsibility lies with the translator and the translation scholar likewise, since the **major** languages are not the ones that do the **minor** translation work. The major translation work is performed by the less major and the minor languages. So why should the major languages be the ones to set up the rules on how to proceed in translation and translation studies? Translation attitudes regarding major-minor languages and translation become all the more interesting if we consider Robyns’ (1994:

13 See e.g. Chesterman, Andrew (2006): Questions in the sociology of translation. In Ferreira Duarte, Joao (ed.), *Translation Studies at the Interface of Disciplines*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: Benjamins, 9-27; Pym, Anthony (2006): Introduction – On the social and the cultural in translation studies. In Pym, Anthony/Shlesinger, Miriam/Jettmarova, Zuzana (eds.), *Sociocultural Aspects of Translating and Interpreting*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: Benjamins, 1-25; Wolf, Michaela/Fukari, Alexandra (eds.) (2007): *Constructing a Sociology of Translation*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: Benjamins.

408ff.) four general types of attitudes toward target culture attitudes, namely **imperialist** (where otherness is both denied and transformed), **defensive** (where otherness is acknowledged but still transformed), **trans-discursive** (where there is neither opposing nor refusing otherness, i.e. both otherness and transformation are accepted) and **defective** attitude (where alien migration is both acknowledged and stimulated)¹⁴. It is clear that these four types of attitudes describe general features of target cultures translation attitudes, which may overlap. Robyns is concerned about the attitudes a culture may have toward the migration of alien elements into its social discourse, always depending on the prevailing language ideology within the target culture (in Pryce 2006: 5, 9)¹⁵.

4. Some proposals for setting up a translation attitude culture in minor languages

Generally speaking, without creating an understanding and an attitude towards the languages and realities involved, the translators cannot pay sufficient attention to their demanding task. Any import of foreign ideas and theories that may apply to other languages may probably not apply to their language pair; and “any ‘absolute’ strategy taught without reference to this basic relation will end up as an isolated micro-strategy, destroying rather than building up the translator’s self-confidence” (Hönig in Schäffner 1998: 84). So, in order to make translators turn away from a pessimistic view on their language and translation, it would be advisable for the translators and/or trainee translators, to follow some advice that could help them to work more consciously with their languages, especially when minor languages in translation are involved.

4.1. Careful selection of the language pair(s) by the trainee translator

Among the ideal combinations is a major language – English has proven to pay off – be it an A- or a B-language and another major or minor language. For example, in the case of a native Greek-speaking student, the combination of English and Greek seems to be a choice in the right direction. Greek reality has shown that most translators are employed in the language pair English-Greek and secondarily German-Greek, French-Greek and Spanish-Greek. Most, if not all, Greek translation students choose the combination English-Greek plus either French-Greek or German-Greek¹⁶. During the last few years, other major languages such as Chinese, Japanese and Arabic have experienced increased demand from future translators. As a general rule, for future translators of minor languages, the ideal language combination seems to be having two major languages at their command, one of them certainly English. Apart from classical French and German, for the second major language the trend at least in Greece is moving towards major languages such as Chinese, Japanese, Arabic or Russian. The case of Greek as the minor part of a language pair shows a direction going from minor towards major (mostly Greek-English) and not from minor to another minor, even though, for example, the Balkan languages as minor languages offer job opportunities to Greek translators. Other European minor languages are moving in the same direction. For example, translators of the minor languages of the new EU countries are well served if they already know a major language, which is again mostly English. The knowledge of another minor language alone would do them no favour at all, because, despite the much-propagated

14 Robyns’ reference of the terms *migration* and *transformation* becomes clearer if we keep in mind his definition of translation: “the migration and transformation of discursive elements between different discourses” (1994: 59).

15 Pryce (2006: 9) gives an example from Finland: “During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when Finland was experiencing a flowering of its self-awareness as a nation, the attitude vis à vis *the other* may have been *defensive*, to use Robyns’ terminology again (1992, 1994). It has been our hypothesis that attitudes in Finland toward *the other* became hardened, intolerant and prohibitive towards alien persons and cultures at that time. Language politics were both nascent and emerging, and Finns adopted a defensive stance to protect their cultural and national treasures such as language and folklore. The findings of other researchers (Paloposki 2002: 102ff) reflect this view”.

16 This is at least the present situation at the Department of Foreign Languages, Translation and Interpreting of the Ionian University where the author has been employed for the last 10 years.

multilingualism that the EU represents, English is its most used language and the linguistic turning point.

As part of a translation language pair, the Greek language falls within the category of a minor language (Koller), a language of limited diffusion (Radó) or a peripheral language (Calvet), or else, to use the EU's terminology, a lesser-used language, or according to Comrie and Neu, a less spoken language. Thus, for the Greek language, to a high degree, translations are performed from a major, i.e. hypercentral, supercentral, or central language to a peripheral language, namely Greek. An empirical study based on results from twenty five translation companies from all over Greece showed that 90.91% of the translation flow is from English into Greek as compared with the translation flow of 95.45% from any other language into Greek, while the amount of English as a TL from any other language is 68.18%. Most of the other languages the translation companies mentioned are minor languages¹⁷, with the exception of German, French, Spanish, Russian, and Arabic. Greek as a SL and TL amounts to 59.09% and 95.45% respectively (Ioannidou 2006: 3-4)¹⁸.

4.2. Knowledge of the history of translation of national languages and literatures

Translators should know the historical course of their language and national literature regarding translation. For example, Newmark (1991: 40) writes that the English translators of a hundred years ago “were considered as leisured and literary figures: often a professor of classics or a diplomat who translated in their spare time”. This shows immediately the lack of professional translators and the kind of translations they performed. These “pre-professional age practitioners, with their amateurish vigour and dedication” (Chau 1999: 233) who translated mostly classics, are far away from the image of the translators of some fifty years later when translators still had no professional training, and turned to non-literary translation “by force of the situation” or “by force of circumstances”, as for example in the case of the Hungarian translators of the time (Bart/Klaudy 1996: 26-27). At the same time, literary translators all over Europe enjoyed relatively high prestige. This was also due to the fact that in countries with absolutist regimes authors were not always allowed to publish their own works and some of the best writers and poets of the country were engaged in literary translation. This unequal prestige that is still accorded to literary and non-literary translators has also had consequences for the history of translation. Translation history scholars deal mostly with literary translation far into the 20th century, and much less with non-literary translation. Literary translators are famous for having translated the Classics, the Bible and other highly valued literary works (Snell-Hornby 2008: 34-35). Non-literary professional translators are mostly not mentioned at all, but luckily enough for them, their prestige has increased during the last decades – so has their income. In fact, the new discipline of translation studies no longer has anything in common with the “ancient art of translating” (“alte Kunst des Übersetzens”) (Snell-Hornby 2008: 33-46). Today, translation is no longer the domain which theologians, philosophers and poets deal with. Translation has been taken over by non-literary translators, namely from the domains of natural science (Snell-Hornby 2008: 37). As Snell-Hornby (2008: 37) states, the bridge towards poetry has turned into a bridge towards technology (“aber aus der Brücke zur Dichtkunst wird eine Brücke zur Technologie”).

4.3. Careful study of the emergence of one literature compared to another

It must be stressed here that it is not sufficient to see the translator's position in a sociocultural, geographic and temporal space (see Woodsworth 1994: 55) alone, since with the implication of attitude studies, much socio-psychological material comes into play. The latter element is a strong factor which attitude studies have introduced into translation studies and which, in our opinion,

17 E.g. Dutch, Rumanian, Turkish, Bulgarian, Portuguese, Albanian, Polish, Serb, Swedish, Norwegian, Hungarian, Croatian, Czech, Finnish, Slovak, Armenian, Slovene.

18 Similar results are found in Siskou (2006).

will especially help translators of minor languages to consciously and scientifically want to analyse and study their language pair and see clearly the (dis)advantages of their language in the translation process. The key to a better understanding can be seen in the study of the emergence and/or development of minor national languages and their translation. When examining the emergence of a particular literature compared to another, relationships such as dominant and minor, or peripheral and central come into mind. Woodsworth (1994: 58-61) distinguishes three categories of emergence:

1. Development of national literature at the same time as, and parallel to, the constitution of a political entity. Woodsworth mentions the example of the strengthening of Roman literature through translations from the Greek and the emergence of vernacular literatures alongside national languages in Europe from the Middle Ages on. We could add here that these newly constructed European countries sought to bring forth and strengthen their national languages, by, for example, avoiding Latin and Greek neologisms and at the same time by employing their national languages in writing.

2. “Re-emergence” or re-direction of national literatures. An example is shifts in literatures brought about through a convergence of political and literary events toward the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th century in Europe. Woodsworth does not give any examples here. We could probably refer here to the strong translation activities from Chinese into Japanese, before the first Sino-Japanese War. The Qing Dynasty in China symbolised at the time its cultural strength and political power also in its translation ratio: 10% of the translated books from Japanese into Chinese and 90% from Chinese into Japanese.

3. Emergence of new literatures. Examples here could be contemporary and, in particular, post-colonial literatures, or minority literatures growing out of and distinguishing themselves from dominant traditions. We could refer here to the revival of the Irish language when, after a 1984 policy reversal, the Arts Council began to encourage the translation of Irish poetry into English and other European languages (Cronin 1991 in Woodsworth 1994: 60). Woodsworth (1994: 61) mentions another positive side-effect of this openness to other languages and cultures, namely the translation of poets from Sweden, Hungary, Romania, and Latin America into both Irish and English by Irish writers.

4.4. Constitution of fora both for translators and translation scholars

Hungarian shall serve here as an example of a minor translation language which has established its Translation Research Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Science (Klaudy 1996: 7). Greece, with its minor translation language, has some associations for professional translators such as the Panhellenic Association of Translators-Interpreters in the Public Sector (Piraeus), the Panhellenic Association of Professional Translators Graduates of the Ionian University (Corfu), the Panhellenic Association of Professional Translators (Athens), the Panhellenic Association of Translators (Thessaloniki) and the Hellenic Society of Translators of Literature (EEML, Athens) (see also Phelan 2001: 191-192), but has no scientific translation committee for translation scholars.

As a conclusion to the identity of translators, their function within society, whether they themselves are writers with an established reputation, and whether they are ‘invisible’ or not, we must admit that, especially for the translators of minor languages, it is very important to know the history of their profession, i.e. the history of translation, so as to know how to position themselves within the framework of this vast field of translation. How can these persons who were trained to promote better understanding among peoples and become cultural bridge-makers remain in the dark and have no names? As Newmark writes (1991: 41), translators must not be regarded as anonymous, because they are responsible for all definitive, therefore written, bilingual and interlingual communications. Looking at other parts of the world than the West, and in particular, at the “misnamed *developing* or *Third World*” (Chau 1999: 233) we will see that “[t]he battle, and

with its social transformation, begins with the transfer of information” (Chau 1999: 235). Translators here serve as “windows on the world for their communities” and these “people hear about the ‘reality out there’ only through the filter of translation”. And Chau (1999: 235) writes that “what gets translated, and how, charts the future of such societies”.

Let us add at this point that the publishing boom in books on translation studies and journals is helping the self-confidence of translators and, surely, that of translation scholars. We think that with further publications of more translation studies literature on minor languages, these languages and their translators will also become more self-confident and will develop a specific national translation culture of their own, not least with the implication and application of the results of attitude studies. Involving attitude studies and the scientific fields in which they figure, fits in with the interdisciplinary development in translation studies as it started to materialise in the 1980s, especially so with the emergence of the functional approach in translation, which has been working in favour of the equal treatment of all languages, starting by respecting the needs and intended functions of a translation, and not by judging languages.

Conclusion

When translating from a major language into Greek, as into other minor languages, the ethnocentric translation practice coming from major languages is in use. Since all theoretical work on translation is written for and in major languages, minor languages such as Greek are in need of a translation strategy. We think that the time has come for all minor languages such as Greek to found translation studies journals as well as scientific associations, and to hold more numerous and regular conferences on translation studies, so as to promote translation studies in Greece. This means that minor languages have until now had to adopt the translation strategies imposed by major languages. The difference between translating from and into major languages is that when translating into a major language, this language has the right to choose, for example, between the domesticating and the foreignising translation method, without losing its linguistic and cultural status and interest. When Greek translators try to use either of the two methods, they will always be torn between a non-fluent, foreignised text and a fluent but not foreign text. Whatever the translators’ decision may be, we must always keep in mind two major tenets. Firstly that “[m]inority is the expression of a relation, not an essence” (Cronin 2003: 144), and secondly that the majority status of a language may be determined by political, economic and cultural forces that are rarely static (Cronin 2003: 145). The knowledge of these two statements, in addition to the fact that Greek translators mostly translate from a major language into Greek, should be borne in mind by translators of minor languages. Greek translators should know the Greek language’s heritage and status in history. In fact, this knowledge should make them stop feeling indebted to other languages, mostly the major ones. Besides, one experience is common to all trainee translators and is most comforting especially to minor language translators:

One of the most common difficulties experienced by trainee translators is that they suffer from a deficit of particular attachment to their native language and tend to neglect it or take it for granted and so fail to produce acceptable work in the language which is their own (Cronin 2003: 170).

All the above-mentioned arguments might give an incentive to different minor translation studies scholars to step forward and present their problems without feeling minor, and to translators, who may feel that it is futile to want to learn one’s native language at such depth.

As a consequence, attitude studies, as dealt with above, would give a better idea about a) internal values (cognitive, affective, behavioural), and b) practical, external factors, such as actions which lead to translation and help achieve a better understanding of the translators and their work. So if we want to better understand what happens when people come into contact with major and minor languages in the translation process, we have to a) take a close look at people’s attitude as to the status of each language of a particular language-pair, and b) examine the sociology of translation and translators in more depth in the future. A socio-attitudinal approach would perhaps suit

both the translators and the minor languages, so as to better evaluate the status of each language and to better see the future prospects of each one.

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