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ON GOOD TRANSLATIONS

Abstract: Assessing the quality of translations means assessing the quality of texts. The article provides a sketch of some criteria which might be useful for evaluating texts, and three criteria are suggested for "good translations". A good translation presupposes a) that the source text has been fully understood, that b) the translation results in a good text, and that c) any deviation from b) needs justification. The following sections serve to illustrate what is meant by "fully understand a text", with special emphasis on shared knowledge, text genre, associations and collocations, and the interplay of spoken and written language in written texts. There are some remarks on overt translations and on non-translatability. After that, attention is given to those circumstances which might require different types of translation. Finally, it is suggested that for translation theory to become a theory proper, more empirical evidence from parallel translation corpora will be needed.

0. Good texts

When we talk about the quality of translations, we also talk about the quality of texts. For a start, it seems reasonable to develop some guidelines for explaining what assessments like "a good text" or "a bad text" mean.

In everyday life we do a lot of reading and listening. Many texts are texts which we quickly consume, such as the newspaper at breakfast, or a magazine while commuting. When we read texts like these we might note a certain, distinct quality: we hardly ever stop at these texts and hardly ever ask questions like "Why's that?" "What's it got to do with that?" "What does it mean?" "What on earth is he talking about?" As a rule, these texts do not leave us puzzled. It is a reasonable starting point to call these texts (which we do not stop at and to which we do not take exception) "good texts". They are o.k. In this sense, nearly all newspaper texts can be said to be good.

Everyone knows that authors select their readers, by various means. If you write a book called "Latin morphology for beginners" and really write for beginners, your colleagues should not criticize you for not presenting novel insights. If you had called the very same book "Morphological theories. A Critical Approach", they would have a right to do so. But this is just one side of the coin. Authors do select their readers, but, equally, readers select their authors. Imagine a pile of magazines and newspapers before you. You might single out *The Economist*, and turn to the Science and Technology pages. If there is something that interests you, you might read some lines and then decide whether to go on or not. When going through these initial stages you construct, as it were, a kind of author's announcement or promise: this is what I (the author) am going

to talk about and how I am going to do it. When reading on you (the reader) keep checking whether the author kept his promise, or rather, your idea of what his promise is. If the text conforms to your expectations, the text is good, if it does not, it is not.

This relation between reader and author may of course be somewhat more complicated. You may have misunderstood the author's promise, read on reluctantly and get hooked or lured on. The author might fulfil his promise for about 100 lines and then fail to do so for the next 60 lines, reverting to his promise in the last 50. Quite a number of turnings are possible in these author-reader relations.

As experienced readers we are, in principle, ready to cooperate with the author. We are willing to follow them and the way they organise their text. But we always want to know what they are doing. We want to know whether sentence 14 gives an example for something in sentence 13 or whether it gives the reason for sentence 13. And, generally speaking, when we arrive at sentence x, we want to know, by hindsight, how and why we got there. We also request that there is a reasonably large amount of shared knowledge between us and the author. And finally, we want there to be some new information. If these demands are met, the text is o.k.

However, before we definitely say that a text is good, we should keep it in a kind of limbo for a while and regard it more closely, look at it as is required by the circumstances. Thus texts that are good according to the criteria just mentioned may turn out not good after all: they may be repetitive, or boring, or trivial and irrelevant, or not to the point, too short or too long, etc. and conversely. Take the novelty criterion: if you have a class in the afternoon, you might want to read up on the subject before, possibly in a handbook, which tells you nothing new but helps you not to forget anything. If, in a work of fiction, an incoherent letter serves to describe an incoherent mind, we will accept it. And some people enjoy reading texts by dark authors or very dark authors in whose books you never know where you are.

1. Good source texts

Now to translating. Translating a text means producing another text, somehow along the lines of the source text. Most of the source texts are considered good, at least by some, otherwise they would not be translated. Nobody translates for no purpose. A text must be worth translating, for instance for educational purposes, missionary purposes, or financial purposes, making a text accessible to a wider community of readers. Examples are translating Aristotle, translating the Bible, translating Harry Potter books. In the England of Elizabeth I, translation was regarded as a kind of grand scheme for civilising the nation, not to mention for building better ships and leading naval wars more efficiently. In someone's opinion, there is a gap in someone else's mind, and that gap should or must be filled.

2. "Criteria" for good translations

In order to assess the quality of a translation one might set up some criteria. However, most of the criteria one can think of overlap. Here, three criteria are suggested.

a) Producing a text along the lines of another text presupposes that the source text has been fully understood. The target text must render the entire communicative value of the source text words and constructions.
b) The target text meets the requirements for a good text.
c) A target text that deviates from these criteria needs special justification for deviating.

3. Some examples

Here are some examples showing what "fully understand" means: in an article on the German pop singer Guildo Horn, *The Economist* commented on

(1) the master's propensity to shed bits of his odd garb during performance

The words *propensity, shed, garb* are deliberate choices, they are, lexicographically speaking, labelled, and these choices must be observed when translating.

(1a) des Meisters Neigung, sich Teilen seiner eigentümlichen Gewandung während der Vorstellung zu entledigen

Shed and *garb* are nicely matched by *sich entledigen* ("formal") and *Gewandung* ("pompous"), but there is no such close match for *propensity* and *Neigung*, which means a tiny loss. You could however say that if you match two words out of three in a single phrase you have done a nice job. Umberto Eco (according to a newspaper article) has recently pointed out that translating a sentence means extended "negotiations". But, at least in some cases, "long battle, and after that, never-ending skirmishes" would be more appropriate.

(2) Eeyore was very glad to be able to stop thinking for a little, in order to say "How do you do?" in a gloomy manner to him [Winnie-the-Pooh]
(2a) … um, ganz niedergeschlagen, "Guten Tag" zu sagen

We note Eeyore's pragmatic blunder and we might ask why the author used *in a gloomy manner* and not *gloomily*. The communicative value of *in a gloomy manner* derives from the fact that it is given a separate tone unit (cf. *in order to say gloomily "How do you do?" to him*) hence the separate construction in German. *How do you do* is misplaced and dated. *Sehr erfreut* or *angenehm* might do in German but they are too dated and probably beyond a child's passive vocabulary. *Hallo* would not serve because it would be an appropriate way of greeting. You can say *Guten Tag* when being introduced to someone. *Guten Tag* could also be a minimal response, and thus contrasts with Pooh's probably emphatic

(3) And how are you?,

for which you need a modal particle:

(3a) Und wie geht's dir denn?

Supplying correct (or, at least, likely) intonation is part of fully understanding a text. From a book on European History:

(4) It was only eight years earlier that Granada, the last Muslim region of Spain, had succumbed to the armies of Ferdinand and Isabella; but that signified the end of a regional campaign, not of the far larger struggle between Christendom and the forces of the Prophet.

This campaign was, presumably, *a REGional campaign*, not a *regional camPAIGN*, and should therefore be

(4a) ein örtlich begrenzter Feldzug

or

(4b) ein nur regionaler Feldzug.

Written English may indeed be difficult to understand because it retains or implies features of spoken English. Here is another example, from the same book:

(5) The knowledge which contemporaries possessed about the great civilisations of the Orient was fragmentary and all too often erroneous, based as it was upon travellers' tales which had lost nothing in their retelling.

You could read *The KNOWledge which* ... or *The knowledge WHICH ...*, which would both approach the meaning of 'the (little) knowledge which contemporaries possessed at all' or

(5a) Das wenige Wissen, das die Zeitgenossen überhaupt besaßen....

Note that (5) contains two restrictive relative clauses. The second one (... *traveller's tales which* ...) might be paraphrased as 'the kind of traveller's tale that' and must be translated according to this paraphrase, since restrictive relative clauses are not distinguished from non-restrictive relative clauses in written German. Moreover, *lost nothing* is clearly ironic, but it would be difficult to detect irony in "die durch fortgesetztes Erzählen nichts verloren". Here we need *durchaus*.

(6) It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.

Is this *must BE in WANT of a WIFE* or is it *MUST be in WANT of a WIFE*? If you read it as *MUST be in WANT of a WIFE*, you get a nice rhythm, and you could argue that in stressing *must* Jane Austen (in *Pride and Prejudice*) emphasises the pseudo-logic of that truth. You would then have to translate as if it contained a hidden "for this very reason". If you chose stressing the *be*, note that you would not not interpret the text but interpret it differently. You have to choose either one or the other, and leaving the matter open would be very difficult.

You might say that the phrase "for this very reason" was put in there by time. If, 200 years ago, a woman had said to a female companion "A single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife", the reply might have been "How right you are, my dear". If this were said today, the reply would probably be "Why on earth should he?" Now, translating this hidden "for this very reason" a translator assumes the

role of a mediator between the text and the reader, also between centuries or different cultures.

(6a) Eine Lebensweisheit, die allgemein anerkannt ist, sagt: Was einem jüngeren Mann mit beträchtlichem Einkommen notwendigerweise noch fehlt, ist eine Ehefrau.

With this translation, we have bridged the gap between life in the 19th and the 21st century, we have kept Austen's pseudo-logic and irony. We have also provided the *universally acknowledged* with a separate tone unit. We might call that a good bargain, or a victorious battle, admitting, however, that we could not deal with *good fortune*: That is a technical term which defies a short paraphrase, and so the skirmishing goes on.

One might say that *good fortune* is (or was) something specifically British, not known anywhere else. Instances of such specificness are numerous.

(7) The Pacific is inconstant and uncertain, like the soul of man. Sometimes it is grey like the English Channel off Beachy Head, with a heavy swell. Sometimes it is boisterous ...

(This is the beginning of Somerset Maugham's description of the Pacific Ocean, in his *The Trembling of a Leaf*, 1921.) *Beachy Head* has no referent in German, it needs an explanation.

(7a) ...Manchmal ist er grau wie der Ärmelkanal bei Beachy Head, einem großen Kreidefelsen in der Nähe von Dover...
(7b) ...Manchmal ist er grau wie der östliche Ärmelkanal ...
(7c) ...Manchmal ist er grau wie der Ärmelkanal bei Dover ...

a) is too wordy and chatty for the genre (explanatory appositions tend to disturb the original distribution of information), b) is perhaps too geographical, but, luckily *bei Dover* sounds fine. Note that if *Beachy Head* were some sixty miles off any larger town, we might have to give up. Also note that here *Beachy Head* does not associate suicide: if it did, the translator would be at a loss. And finally note that the Pacific is not always pacific and that you should say *Stiller Ozean* (since there is no *pazifisch* meaning 'peaceful'). This ocean is said to be blue, at times.

(8) Then, indeed, the blue is arrogant.

If you say, in German, that the blue is "arrogant" you risk producing a zero reference, something like "haughty blue", because German *arrogant* cannot mean "assuming power over others, influencing people" (which is one of the meanings of *arrogant* in English and which is what the ocean does). The polysemy of *arrogant* must be realised, but its effect will be lost.

The change from British readers to German readers makes it necessary to tamper with "shared knowledge". In article on zoos *The Economist* wrote:

(9) Predictably enough, it was the colonising British who laid down the pattern for modern zoos. Sir Stamford Raffles, the founder of Singapore, re-enacted the conquest of empire in the London Zoological Society he founded.

Raffles is, for Germans, an unknown entity. Therefore, *founder of Singapore* is much more important than *Raffles*:

(9a) Der Gründer von Singapur, Sir Stamford Raffles ...

The words *colonising* and *Raffles* make it abundantly clear, by coherence, that the second sentence is an expansion of or example for the first sentence. For a German reader this is not at all clear and you should translate it as if the original were

(9') The founder of Singapore, Sir Stamford Raffles, was also the founder of ..., for whom he re-enacted ...

The founder of Singapore provides the necessary link (for a German reader) and if you then say that he was also the founder of ... , you drive home exactly the same point as the source text. This is not a free translation but a reasonable one, justified by the theory. Incidentally, if you render *founder ... founded* by *Gründer ... gründete*, you produce a repetition that is frowned upon by many writing experts of German, hence the rhetorically distinct *Gründer ... auch der Gründer....*

The following defies a neat solution. A book on English cathedrals starts with:

(10) The cathedrals of England have always been one of my special loves.

In everyday German, *England* comprises Scotland and Wales and there is no way of fitting in "excluding Scotland and Wales". You have to rely on your reader and hope that those who read books on English cathedrals will know all about England, Scotland and Wales.

The associative value of some words may also cause difficulties. An example from P. G. Wodehouse:

(11) Inasmuch as the scene of this story is that historic pile, Belpher Castle, in the county of Hampshire, it would be an agreeable task to open it with a leisurely description of the place.

The following are the most frequent collocates of *pile*, taken from www.wortschatz.uni-leipzig.de:

cash (58), compost (56), rubble (44), top (31), trash (22), bottom (19), debris (19), sitting (16), tailings (14), garbage (13), rubbish (12), fire (11), junk (11), onto (11), rocks (11), sand (11), Pounds (10), atop (10), big (10), bricks (10), dirt (10), stacked (10), wood (10), floor (9), foundation (9), sticks (9), desk (8), feet (8), garden (8), huge (8), leaves (8), papers (8), soil (8), them (8), through (8), unopened (8), worms (8), If (7), like (7), piles (7), rugs (7), BAe's (6), Kinematic (6), Windbreaks (6), anchovies (6), bags (6), books (6), front (6), gob (6), heaped (6), my (6), paper (6), processed-shale (6), tires (6), yard (6), your (6), Buttimer (5), Pile (5), blocks (5), bodies (5), cards (5), carpet (5), dog (5), dumped (5), find (5),grouted (5), high (5), large (5), laundry (5), metal (5), near (5), non-linearly (5), off (5), radon (5), sawdust (5), sleeve (5), small (5), snow (5), spoil (5)

To put it short: neither luck nor inventiveness will help you find a German equivalent with the same effect, and what you translate is a neutral *Gebäude*. The loss seems bearable, but if you consider that on the first two pages of Wodehouse's *Damsel in Distress* there are more than ten occurrences of this kind, it is little wonder that Wodehouse was not successful outside the English-speaking world.

It is obvious that we need criterion c) for making allowances in cases which simply cannot be translated following criterion a). These cases may be occurrences of culture-specific phenomena. Above all, they are instances of a metalinguistic use of the source

language: as soon as facts of English are mentioned or employed, such as associations, homonymic puns, rhyme, alliteration, dynamic rendering (in the sense of Nida 1964) becomes completely incidental, for the simple reason that writing about English cannot be re-written by writing about German.

4. Text genre

"Retaining text genre" was not mentioned as one of the criteria above. Certainly, retaining text genre appears to be self-explanatory and attractive. Transforming a cooking recipe into a report or a biographical story would be odd indeed and would need a lot of justification. There are, however, many ways of writing a cooking recipe, or a weather forecast, and it may be doubted whether, for our purposes, it makes sense to establish prototypical weather forecasts or recipes.

It might be more promising to say that broad register distinctions should be observed, such as conversation, news, fiction, academic prose, as in the LGSWE (see Biber 1988 and Biber et al. 1999). These are obviously related to text genre, but not rigidly. But even then you may encounter difficulties. The fact that we have academic prose in English and *akademische Prosa* in German does not mean that they are the same. Austin's book *How to do things with words* is known in Germany as *Zur Theorie der Sprechakte*, which is alright and reflects the formal dignity of academic prose in German. (But of course the translator did not rewrite the entire book in that style.)

Nor do, for instance, spoken English and spoken German correspond neatly. It might be, that e.g. spoken English, particularly spoken American English, has a wider domain within the language than spoken German has in German: that is to say, spoken English might be used in circumstances where spoken German is not used.
The Economist calls bitumen

12) mucky stuff,

which is rather

12a) zähe Masse

than

12b) klebriges Zeug.

After the United States had captured Saddam Hussein, President Bush announced

13) Ladies and Gentlemen, we got 'im.

Of course, you can say in spoken German

13a) Wir ham ihn.

but you would not use spoken German under these circumstances. This bit is therefore untranslatable.

Translating a good, coherent and cohesive text does not automatically result in a good text. Another sentence from the history book:

14) Whereas these threats seemed part of a coherent grand strategy directed by Sultan Mehmet II and his successors, the response of the Europeans was disjointed and sporadic.

Whereas is explicitly contrastive and *strategy* has nuclear stress.

14a) Während diese Bedrohungen Teil einer großen und konzertierten Strategie Sultans Mehmet II. und seiner Nachfolger zu sein schienen, ...

This version has two weak points. *Während* can be both durative and contrastive and its ambiguity is resolved only at the very end of the clause, if at all. And in case *schienen* receives nuclear stress, which it might, the reading is 'seemed, but wasn't really'. You have to translate this sentence as if it had been

14') Although these threats gave the impression of being part of a coherent grand strategy directed by Sultan Mehmet II and his successors, the response of the Europeans was (nevertheless) disjointed and sporadic

Our tentative German version would force the reader into reading the sentence twice (which is one of the features of a bad text).

From the *Economist* article on zoos:

15) In 1450 BC Queen Hatshepsut of Egypt brought back many animals from "the Land of Punt" (probably Somalia), including a giraffe which particularly impressed her subjects.

15a) ...die ihre Untertanen besonders beeindruckte.

"Giraffe" has female gender in German, and therefore the pronoun "ihre" becomes ambiguous, an instance of sloppy writing.

This is where translating does turn into "art". People translating know the source text very well, brooding over it. They will grasp the links and ties in the source text. They may therefore produce sentences which they think are coherent and cohesive whereas in reality these features are not present in the target text. The absence of these features may then go unnoticed by the translator, since in the translator's mind they are present, due to comprehending the source text. (If you translate a text into your native language, leave it for four weeks and read it without consulting the original: the art consists in keeping a watchful distance to your translation, disregarding the mental history of the text in your brain.)

5. Covert and overt translations

The mediator role of the translator is related to a general distinction between two kinds of translations, namely, between covert and overt translation (see e.g. House 1977). A covert translation hides the fact of being a translation, an overt translation openly admits to being a translation. To illustrate this distinction (quoted from Roald Dahl, *Boy*):

16) We called them masters in those days, not teachers.

You either admit translations with

16a) ...nannten sie "Masters", nicht Lehrer.

16b) … nannten sie "Masters", nicht einfach Lehrer.

or you leave out this sentence. One of John Updike's novels describes two lovers on the way to their "tryst". Shortly before they meet, there is *Born to Lose* on the car radio:

17) Every dream
Has only brought me pain.

For obvious reasons you cannot translate *Born to Lose*, but the lyrics may contain an important hint and ought to be translated.

17a) Jeder Traum
Hat mir bisher nur Schmerz gebracht.

This is fine, except for the fact that American songs have no German lyrics and that German lyrics do not come out of the radio on a Connecticut beach. Translating overtly you refuse to take responsibility for your target text and say: it is not my fault if there are cultural differences; it is not my fault that the source text is obscure, etc.

This distinction is not generally known, and overt translations are out of fashion. In Elizabethan times translators freely admitted of translating from Latin, drawing on the prestige of that language, its authors and its culture. It is beyond imagination why nowadays there are e.g. editions of Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* with annotations for the contemporary British reader, and modern translations into German with no annotations at all.

6. A text not to be translated

Let us now look at a longer text from *The Economist* (April 9th 1994), with a view to rather not translating it.

Some corner of an English field

Spring is a time for hardy perennials, but also for new fashions. In the English garden the present novelty is an interest in wild flowers. Seed catalogues devote as much space to wild flowers – cowslips and primroses, for instance – as to established favourites such as showy hollyhocks or multicoloured pansies. You might expect conservationists to approve of this, looking on contentedly as country gardens and motorway verges turn scarlet with poppies and blue with speedwell. They might smile to see reclaimed land that would once have been blanketed with ryegrass strewn with a mix of meadow flowers. They might breathe deep of perfumes almost lost lifted again on the spring breezes.

Then again, they might not. In fact, conservationists are becoming alarmed. Their fears are summed up in "Seeds of Destruction?", a report produced by Plantlife, a wild-plant conservation charity. The problem is foreigners. Much of what the 50 suppliers of wild flower seed and plants in Britain sell comes from overseas. For instance most of the yellow-flowering birdsfoot trefoil now sown on roadsides originates in the southern Alps. Kidney vetch often comes from the Central and Eastern Europe. According to Plantlife, this fad for the wild and natural is bringing seed from nearly 100 different countries into Britain.

Britons have been importing flowers and plants for millennia. The cornflowers that used to enliven fields were introduced in the stone age. The Romans brought sweet chestnuts, while the horse chestnut found some other route from Greece and Albania to Greenwich and Ilford. All are too well-established for anyone to care about their antecedents. Some newcomers, though, are troublesome. The rhododendrons introduced as cover for their

> game birds by Victorians have spread like glossy triffids through oakwoods in parts of western Britain. Dense and poisonous, they choke off young trees.
>
> It is this sort of thing that worries Plantlife. The robust Alpine birdsfoot trefoil could oust its more delicate British cousin. Sainfoin, a pinkish grassland flower, is already suffering at the leaves of a more robust continental form, and thus is poorly placed to fight off the depredations of giant sainfoin, an even tougher relative from overseas. The risk is of a loss of biodiversity, the new eco-buzzword for the variety and wealth of plant and animal life. Some species will go under; others will interbreed with close relations, eventually losing characteristics that the well-trained rural eye has come to know and love. Perhaps not far from Grantchester there will be a corner of an English field that is forever foreign.

Basically, this is a text for readers in a land of amateur gardeners (Germany is not). It worries about foreign plants imported to Great Britain, plants that threaten the existence of indigenous wild flowers there (not a major concern in Germany). It mentions a lot of plants hardly anybody knows in Germany, evoking a kind of botanical Götterdämmerung ("seeds of destruction"), which is hard to follow. It contains facts which are not known in Germany (our average rhododendron is about 50 inches high, and there are no rhododendrons outside gardens). Nobody knows Charles Wyndham's *The Day of the Triffids*. What is the purpose of mentioning Greenwich and Ilford and, near the end, Grantchester? Nobody knows Rupert Brooke's poem on the death of a soldier, alluded to in the title and the last sentence, perhaps not to everyone's taste.

You couldn't possibly translate this text for continental readers, at least not according to the criteria above. You might, however, write a short ironic summary, intending to show how quaint the British are.

7. "As is required by the circumstances"

Some types of translation require specific methods and observations, as is exemplified by the following points.

- When dubbing films, the target utterance must have the same length as the original utterance. As long as you see lips moving there must be sounds. As long as you hear sounds there must be lips moving. Target utterance nuclei must coincide with original utterance nuclei: nuclear syllables are accompanied by facial and other gestures, and discrepancies can or may be noticed. Prominent labial sounds (here subsumed under "b") should be used at least in the vicinity of original utterance labials.

Original: ----------time in seconds
Target: ----------time in seconds

Original: -------N----------N----
Target: -------N----------N----

Original: -------b----------N----
Target: ------ b----------N----

- Subtitling has similar strategies, and voice-over in news seems to follow the rule: begin later and end earlier than the original.
- Elizabethan translators wanted to educate their readers and improve the English language. For better understanding they inserted all sorts of homely comparisons and adaptations: for enriching English they came up with doublets like *abbreviate* or *make shorter, obviate* or *hinder, augment* and *further*, thus introducing new latinate words.
- If you prepare a synoptic translation (source text on the left side and translation on the opposite page) you might aim at a didactic version, remaining in various aspects close to the original. You would then help the reader to plough through the original, with your help, which is a legitimate purpose.

Applying the escape criterion is, however, different from saying that the purpose of translation governs the act of translation. That is, there is a difference with regard to the so-called *skopos theory* (see e.g. Vermeer 1996, Gentzler 2001). A translation is a text on a text, reproducing the source text's full meaning by default. You escape from insurmountable difficulties in a 'local' way. You can of course choose other kinds of metatextual information, such as summaries, adaptations, re-writings or pieces "inspired by ...", but those should not pose as translations.

A good text should conform to its respective standard on all levels of description (unless of course there is reason to deviate from it). Standard, however is not just a matter of syntactic and semantic structure, but also a matter of frequency. It may well be that many translations have a quality which we might call translationese, meaning: the over-representation of source language structures and features in the target text, and the under-representation of certain target language structures or features of the target language.

19) Italians tend to own the houses they live in.
19a) Italiener tendieren dazu, die Häuser zu besitzen, die sie bewohnen.

The English sentence (from *The Economist*) means that many Italians live in houses which they own. You could say that the German sentence can mean just the same, that it mirrors, at any rate, the English sentence "exactly". But it might be that *tendieren* is an anglicism, that is, it is influenced in this sense and its construction by English *tend. Own* is strictly speaking not correct: *besitzen* is a consequence of the fact that you cannot work with the word *Eigentum* here, and finally, there is postmodification where you might have premodification.

19b) Vielen Italienern gehören die von ihnen bewohnten Häuser auch.
19c) Viele Italiener sind auch/gleichzeitig Eigentümer der von ihnen bewohnten Häuser.
19d) Viele Italiener wohnen in eigenen Häusern.

20) These notices had been written by Christopher Robin, who was the only one in the Forest who could spell ...

This sentence (from *Winnie-the-Pooh*) shows passive voice because of theme-rheme and heavy agent.

20a) Diese Zettel waren von Christopher Robin geschrieben worden ...

The passive is alright in German, but there is also the fronting of the object:

20b) Diese Zettel hatte Christopher Robin geschrieben ...

It is tempting to speculate how many English passive forms will be rendered by German passives where fronted objects would also be possible. Which implies a smaller number of subjects-as-agents.

21) Dr Smith will now show you how it really is.
21a) Dr. Smith wird Ihnen nun zeigen ...
21b) Dr. Smith zeigt Ihnen nun ...

Again, it is tempting to assume that German translations might show overrepresentation of *werden* due to *will*, and generally, that modality, tied up strongly with the verb phrase in English, is expressed by modal verbs in translations too, cf.

22) You might have been right.
22a) Du hättest vielleicht Recht gehabt.
23) Can you see the bird over there?
23a) Siehst du den Vogel dort?

With the help of tagged texts and Paraconc it should be possible to detect, perhaps, underrepresentation of particles in that kind of German, also of heavy premodification (*the measures taken previously – die kürzlich durchgeführten Maßnahmen*), of stance adverbials in mid-position, of modal verbs, etc. Differences might also be observed in the field of sentence perspective since word order in German is not as grammaticalised as in English, cf.

24) It was Peter who saw the car first.
24a) Das Auto hatte Peter als Erster gesehen.
24b) Es war Peter, der das Auto als Erster gesehen hatte.

In case there are noticeable qualities and quantities in German under the impact of English source texts, the issue of quality will need some further discussion.

8. Conclusion and outlook

One of the great earlier translators, Marcus Tullius Cicero, was keenly aware of what he did when translating. His comment on translating (in *De optimo genere oratorum*, V) is well known. After saying that he employed language "which conforms to our usage", Tully adds that he "preserved the general style and force of the language" and concludes: "For I did not think I ought to count [the words] out to the reader, but to pay them by weight, as it were." Tully's was a sketch of a grand theory of translation, compatible with what most modern theorists hold. He did however say nothing about some basics, basics which most of us take for granted but which still need questioning. Any translation theory ought to have asked: what does "knowing a language" (as a prerequisite for translating) refer to? (Not just mean, but actually refer to.) Or: what does "knowing two or more languages" refer to? (How many Germans are there whose English might be

said to be as good as an educated Englishman's English?) What kind of process is "fully understanding a text"? Is there any kind of re-wording at all which preserves the original in its entirety? Since anybody can do a translation: what actually is a translation? What makes a translation difficult?

Questions like these will be fairly complicated. For answering them we would need a more thorough understanding of how texts are comprehended, also of the qualities of the linguistic competence of individual people, also a more sober and detailed view of "bilingualism".

Above all, we need much more empirical evidence on translation, derived from parallel translation corpora. We should then be able to base translation studies on the contrast between languages, and not on the haphazard vicissitudes of texts which, incidentally, were translated.

The following lines can be found in Raymond Chandler's *The Lady in the Lake.*

25) I put my plain card, the one without the tommy gun in the corner, on her desk and asked to see Mr Derace Kingsley.
She looked at the card and said "Have you an appointment?"
"No appointment."
"It is very difficult to see Mr Kingsley without an appointment."

25a) ...und bat, Mr. Derace Kingsley sprechen zu dürfen.
Sie blickte auf die Karte und sagte:"Haben Sie eine Verabredung?"
"Keine Verabredung."
"Es ist sehr schwierig, Mr. Kingsley ohne Verabredung zu sprechen."

25b) ...und sagte, ich wolle Mr. Derace Kingsley sprechen.
Sie schaute auf die Karte und sagte:" Haben Sie einen Termin?"
"Einen Termin – nein."
"Es ist aber sehr schwierig, Mr. Kingsley ohne Termin zu sprechen."

Here are some questions which a theory should be able to answer. In what way are 25a and 25b both "translations"? Are there any errors in translation, which are "objective"? How much exegetic effort is necessary and which exegetic effort is plausible (how plausible and to whom)? Which of the two translations displays a "better command of English" and/or a "better command of German?"

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