

TRANSLATION STRATEGIES IN TRANSLATIONS OF ENGLISH DRAMA INTO SPANISH: 1950–1990

RAQUEL MERINO

The purpose of this paper is to draw attention to the largely neglected field of drama translation and to present the results of a large scale project which I have carried out in the past five years mainly as part of the investigations leading to my PhD dissertation.

The need to study large corpora in research done in the field of Translation Studies has been recognised and claimed in articles and papers on the matter (Van den Broeck 1985 & 1986). This need, however, is not reflected in most studies on translated literature. The belief that research on literary translation should be carried out using large corpora so that the findings of such research are not only relevant to one author or work but to a period, genre or specific set of works, is the overriding criterion used in this project aimed at studying translated English drama in Spain in the last five decades.

The corpus consists of 150 published translations of plays. I use the term “translation” as defined by Theo Hermans: “a (literary) translation is that which is regarded as a (literary) translation by a certain cultural community at a certain time” (Hermans 1985: 13). When these target texts were published, read and performed, they all functioned as translations in this sense of the word. These translations were originally written in English by playwrights from English-speaking countries, mainly from Great Britain, the U.S. and Ireland. There is a wide variety of playwrights and plays (commercial, famous and widely-acclaimed, even modern classics) which reflect the way drama written in English has been presented to the Spanish audiences, readers and theatre-goers alike.

In order to analyse and study this corpus of plays I devised a four-stage scheme which would enable me to study the texts in the corpus at different textual and non-textual levels. This division into four stages and their names (preliminary, macrostructural, microstructural and systemic respectively) were taken from Lambert and Van Gorp’s paper “On Describing Translations” (Hermans 1985: 42–53). In the first preliminary stage I observed and studied all non-textual information rendered by the edition of the play: the way it was presented, the commentaries or blurb accompanying the text, the relevance given in the edition to the name of both source and target authors, and who held the copyright, together with any references to the source or target performances

of the play, and up to sixteen variables of this type were studied in the set of 150 editions. In the second stage a textual comparison on a macrostructural level of 100 target texts and their corresponding originals was carried out. In the microstructural stage a textual comparative study of a small selection of translations led to further analysis in the systemic stage where extratextual elements, such as other editions or performances of the plays, and criticism have to be considered.

To be able to carry out the comparison of source and target drama texts, mainly at a macrostructural and microstructural level, the need for a minimal structural unit which would facilitate the description and comparison of plays was felt. Traditional divisions such as acts or scenes, or thematic divisions, such as episodes, were of no use in practice when attempting this study of source and target texts. As a result of a myriad problems encountered when attempting the description and comparison of source and target drama texts, I defined and postulated an inherently dramatic unit which I called *réplica* in Spanish, and which could be termed "utterance" in English.

The *réplica* is the minimal structural unit by means of which drama (written and performed) can be described and analysed. Acts and scenes are further subdivided into *réplicas* and plays which are not conventionally divided into acts or scenes are always presented by means of *réplicas*, in such a way that the *réplica* is the only intrinsically dramatic unit without which drama would not exist as such. Thus defined this unit is productive in studying the field of drama which includes, as Martin Esslin affirms (Esslin 1987), theatre, cinema and television. The *réplica* reflects the two main levels of dramatic language: dialogue and frame¹) (also called primary and secondary text) and, since it is found on the page as well as on the stage, it accounts for the twofold nature of drama and its specificity. Graphically the *réplica* is distinctly presented on the page, introduced by the name of the character whose turn to speak and act is reflected in this way. Part of the frame or secondary text of the *réplica* is the name of the character and all stage directions and comments that are not to be verbally represented on the stage. The dialogue or primary text to be uttered verbally on the stage by the actor is also graphically differentiated on the page.

This unit was of vital importance in the macrostructural and microstructural stages. In the macrostructural stage those target texts for which source texts could be found were compared globally. The total number of *réplicas* in the target text was compared with the number of *réplicas* in the corresponding source text. This comparison was carried out with two thirds of the corpus of translations and their corresponding originals. The purpose of this global comparison of total numbers of minimal dramatic units, was to discover whether there were any general identifiable translation strategies used in producing the target texts in the corpus. The number of acts or scenes and of characters were also taken into account in this stage and, although there were discrepancies that had to be further studied, the results partially complemented those achieved through the com-

¹) Terms used by J. House in A. Model for Translation Quality Assessment.

parison of *réplicas*.²⁾ These results have a direct relation to those of the comparison of number of *réplicas* which is mentioned below.

After careful analysis of the results of the comparative study of number of *réplicas*, three clear strategies were found: addition, deletion and adequacy with respect to the original. These results had a direct relation with the twofold characterisation of the whole corpus of edited plays found in the first preliminary stage. In this first stage, after editorial data were analysed, two main types of editions of plays were clearly distinguished: *acting* editions and *reading* editions. There was an even distribution of these two types in such a way that half of the editions in the corpus conformed to the acting type and half to the reading type. Reading editions of translated drama texts, are not normally published in collections devoted to drama, they are often published immediately after the source text. The source author and target author's name have a primary and secondary position respectively in the edition. The text in reading editions is presented mostly as literature with prefaces, introductions and critical studies. The source performance is sometimes mentioned and the name and status of the source author are usually well reflected in the edition, the copyright is quite often held by the source author or source publishing company. Acting editions, unlike reading editions, are normally found in collections devoted to drama, the text is usually published shortly after it has been performed in the target language and the position of the source and target author varies greatly from edition to edition. If the target author is an outstanding member of the target theatrical system, his name and status will be clearly reflected in the edition, usually in the place devoted to the source author's. The copyright is held by the target author or target publishing company. The source title is rarely mentioned and it is often changed to make it more attractive to the target audience. The target text is rarely presented as a "translation", labels like "version" or "adaptation" are preferred. Some texts are even presented as the product of two processes: one interlinguistic, translation proper, and another intralinguistic, adaptation.

As I have mentioned before, both types of editions were regularly distributed in the corpus (50% approximately of each kind). This distribution was very similar in the group of target texts that were compared with their originals at a macrostructural level. The comparison of global figures of *réplicas* in the pairs of texts revealed two main translation strategies in acting editions: *deletion* and *addition* of *réplicas* characterising texts of the acceptable type. As for reading editions, one general translation strategy was observed: *adequacy* to the source text in number of *réplicas*. If the results are distributed on a scale, acting editions seem to be driven by a centripetal force and reading editions by a centrifugal force. The extreme of addition is occupied by the target text which shows the greater number of *réplicas* added with respect to the total found in the

²⁾ Changes in the number of acts and scenes or characters were found in one third of the target texts in the corpus, mainly in acting editions. The number of characters, when compared with that of the corresponding original, was different in 15 TTs, 14 of which were acting editions.

original (*Mulatto* by Langston Hughes, translated by Alfonso Sastre). In the other extreme we find a translation of a commercial play by Jack Popplewell, *Busybody*. Right in the centre of the scale we find a translation of the adequate type, that of Edward Bond's *Passion*, which is the only target text with the same number of *réplicas* as the original.

The three texts mentioned are obviously extreme cases. Around the centre of the scale — same number of *réplicas* in ST and TT — we find the majority of reading editions studied in the second stage (85%). Most of the acting editions compared (approximately 70%) are found around the extreme of deletion and 15 % around the addition extreme. This shows that the strategy of deletion occurs more commonly in acting editions than the strategy of addition, and that a tendency to be adequate to the original is the main strategy found in reading editions. Acting editions then prove to be target texts of the acceptable type whereas reading editions are found to be target texts of the adequate type.

The three strategies found after comparing number of *réplicas* in ST-TT pairs in the macrostructural stage, were checked in a further comparative stage, which consists of a textual comparison at a microstructural level. The three target texts representing extreme cases of the main strategies discovered in the second stage, were compared in this microstructural stage. The unit *réplica* proved to be of vital importance in this stage because the description of ST and TT respectively, and the comparison of both, could only be effectively attempted using a minimal structural division of the dramatic text.

Since the acting editions chosen for the third stage were extreme examples of deletion and addition strategies and instances of these would therefore occur with higher frequency, an intermediate step was deemed necessary to approach the texts. Before attempting the textual comparison proper, equivalent pairs ST-TT *réplicas* were searched for. Starting from TT *réplicas* numbered consecutively, ST equivalent units were looked for. This intermediate stage allowed me to corroborate the global impression of deletion and addition strategies. This process of pairing *réplicas* did not have any effect in the comparative study of the target text of the adequate type, for ST-TT pairs of *réplicas* run parallel in this case. Both deletion and addition strategies were corroborated and highlighted in this intermediate comparative stage. More subtle processes of addition and deletion at the level of *réplicas* were discovered. Such is the case of gemination and reduction respectively. Other processes which could not be accounted for in the global comparison were revealed here, one example is substitution, that is, deletion of one ST *réplica* and addition of a TT non-equivalent unit of the same type. At the end of this intermediate stage, it became clear that the extreme case of addition, *Mulato*, was even more so and that added *réplicas* occurred concentrated in groups showing addition at higher structural levels, such as episodes or scenes. In the extreme case of deletion, *Busybody*, I found that the main strategy of deletion was highlighted by a compensatory process of addition which could not be discerned in the global comparison of figures.

A microstructural comparison showed that processes of addition, deletion, substitution and gemination also took place at lower textual levels, affecting syntactic units such as the sentence or phrase and the two levels of dramatic language: dialogue and frame. Some other shifts, common to most processes of interlinguistic transference, were also distinguished and classified.

In the microstructural comparative study, the play *Busybody* was finally characterised as a partial translation of the acceptable type (about 70% of the original text does not seem to be in the TT). The process of deletion has been evenly effected throughout, influencing the unit *réplica* as well as lower syntactic levels. Thus the basic plot of the play is intact even though the style and characterisation of characters has been changed. Most cases of deletion in the frame are compensated by addition in the dialogue of the main character. *Mulatto* is a completely different case, in this target text the process of addition has affected mostly episodes and scenes, the beginning of both the first act and second act of the play have been added to the original, and the final scene of the play has been substituted and is also completely new. The effect is utterly different, the plot of the play, the interaction of characters and the intention of the story told is reversed and changed. Most of the shifts classified after comparing the translation of *Passion*, a target text of the adequate type, can be considered optional shifts affecting the level of the word and phrase (mostly in the dialogue), and rarely the sentence.

The analysis of extreme cases such as the three translations mentioned here, helps understand the way the three main strategies found in the second stage of the study are reflected in the text. In the systemic stage the reception of these three texts was taken into account, critics statements relating to the performance and edition of the plays were checked and socio-cultural circumstances surrounding the reception of the written texts and performances were taken into consideration.

The Spanish text *Pasión* is a clear example of a translation commissioned and done as a reading edition, trying to show the English play in its environment, not adapting it for the target audience or culture. Whether it is used as a reading or acting edition the text remains an example of a drama translation of the adequate type. The translation of the commercial play *Busybody* is an example of a translation of a commercial play commissioned to work as a box office success and to be adapted to the playing style of the leading actress whose role is enhanced while the rest of the characters' parts are reduced. In this sense the target text of Popplewell's play serves a clear purpose: to function in the target stage at the service of a company and an actress. The translation of *Mulatto* signed by the famous Spanish playwright Alfonso Sastre unveils a very different territory. Presented as a version of an American author's play, it was received by the critics coldly, it was taken for granted that the original was of poor quality and that only the fact that Sastre had undertaken the task of translating the play had conferred it some success and value. Sastre, a powerful, though polemical, playwright at the time of the performance of the version (1963) was never

questioned in his role as translator, the source author, on the contrary, was made known to the Spanish audiences through this version of his most famous play.

Sastre's text, after close comparative study with the original proves to be but a rewriting. It is Sastre's in organisation, intention and characterisation, approximately half of the target text is the product of Sastre's invention, the rest is just material borrowed from Hughes' original text. Sastre has used Hughes' topic, title and most of the characters, and even some of the scenes, but these have the status of quotations in a play who might as well have been signed by Sastre.

By way of conclusion, I would like, once more, to stress the fact that the analysis of a large corpus of plays was mainly possible after positing the existence a minimal dramatic unit, the *réplica*, which enabled me to carry out a comparison of a large number of texts at a macrostructural level. The results of this global comparison pointed to the existence of three main translation strategies in the texts of the corpus. These strategies were further checked at a microstructural level where the unit *réplica* was also of vital importance. The three general strategies found were related to the two types of editions, acting and reading, described at the end of the preliminary stage of the study. It has been proved that reading editions tend to conform to the adequate type of translation, favouring the source text, author and culture. Acting editions, on the other hand, conform to the acceptable type, favouring the target pole. Deletion and addition in relation to the original are the main strategies found in acting editions, being the former, by far, the most common strategy. Acting editions could be said to be thus more often, and more thoroughly, manipulated than reading editions, understanding the term "manipulation" in its widest sense. Various socio-cultural factors may explain the degree of manipulation of target drama texts, the most important being the relations of power and status within a theatrical system at a certain time.

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PŘEKLADATELSKÉ STRATEGIE V PŘEKLADECH ANGLICKÝCH DRAMAT DO ŠPANĚLŠTINY: 1950–1990

Résumé

Cílem příspěvku je upozornit na opomíjenou sféru překladu dramatu a předložit výsledky pětiletého badatelského úsilí.

Široký vzorek 150 španělských překladů divadelních her od nejrůznějších autorů z anglicky mluvících zemí je materiálem, který byl analyzován na textové i mimotextové úrovni. Byla definována minimální strukturální jednotka, jejímž prostřednictvím lze popsat a analyzovat divadelní hru v psané nebo živé podobě.

Po pečlivé analýze výsledků srovnávacího studia „replik“ objevily se tři zřetelné překladatelské strategie: dodatek, výpustka nebo adekvátnost vzhledem k originálu (jasně se to projevilo u divadelních her určených ke čtení a her určených k veřejnému převádění). Ve vzorku jsou obě modalities rozděleny půl na půl. Z prostudovaného materiálu vyplývá, že vydané hry určené ke čtení jsou přeloženy adekvátním způsobem, hry určené ke scenifikaci směřují k divákovi a ve srovnání s originálem se překladatel uchyluje ke strategii výpustky a dodatku.