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TRANSLATION THEORY
AND PRACTICE

*Cultural Differences
in Tourism and Advertising*



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INTRODUCTION

“Who can say if the thoughts you have in your mind as you read these words are the same thoughts I had in my mind as I typed them? We are different, you and I, and the qualia of our consciousnesses are as divergent as two stars at the ends of the universe. And yet, whatever has been lost in translation in the long journey of my thoughts through the maze of civilization to your mind, I think you do understand me, and you think you do understand me. Our minds managed to touch, if but briefly and imperfectly. Does that thought not make the universe seem just a bit kinder, a bit brighter, a bit warmer and more human? We live for such miracles.”

(KEN LIU, *The Paper Menagerie and Other Stories*)

Ken Liu is a science fiction writer but he is also a translator and anyone who translates knows that translation means a miracle of communication. Translation is in our daily life, we are surrounded by translations, any text brings us something from different languages and cultures. Translated texts are, as a matter of fact, forms of cultural exchange and material artifacts of cultural conceptualisations.

This volume reflects the many ways in which the “Cultural Turn” in Translation Studies has influenced different theoretical approaches and translation methodologies. Starting from the awareness that also in the field of specialised translation the cultural dimension is central, in order to promote understanding across cultural gaps, I believe translators need to interpret not only the linguistic but also the cultural signs scattered in a text.

Translation is a social practice and, as such, many questions intersect the translator’s work; we are now aware that political and economical constraints arise in everyday communication and in the process of translation. The so-called “Cultural Turn” has shifted the focus on many aspects of the practice of translation, firstly, the translator’s ethics and

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agency, which have acquired a higher importance and status in the debate on how to translate texts from one linguistic/cultural context to another; secondly, the conceptualization of various subject fields in different cultures and the distinct characteristics of textual typologies in source and target cultures, that lead to a different adaptation of genres and communicative strategies. If for LSP (Languages for Special Purposes) translation purpose and function are central, it is helpful to be aware of scientific communities sharing certain values and beliefs, which may vary interculturally and can be said to reflect determinate specific cultural aspects. Moreover, the translator's genre competence helps in understanding the purpose of the interaction among participants, recognizes the intentionality of the source text, understands the socio-linguistic context and has thematic and cultural knowledge.

For a long time studies on culture in LSP texts have been restricted to lexical terms, to culture-specific terms connected to political, institutional, socio-cultural and geographical facts, which were characteristics of a context. However, following the "Pragmatic Turn", the behavioral concept of culture was borrowed from cultural anthropology (Vermeer 1986) to serve as a framework to discuss translation as cultural transfer. It became clear that lexical, morphological and syntactic issues, which should be taken into account in translating into a target language, were as important as pragmatic issues related to rhetorical purposes in different languages/cultures. As a matter of fact, culture in LSP texts is reflected in many textual elements such as relevant features in items of information sequencing and textual cohesion/coherence. Moreover, the practice of specialised translation demonstrates that the cultural impact is on both the source and receiving culture.

The volume intends to demonstrate that being competent in two languages is not sufficient in order to translate well, and if specialised translation is a form of communication among different languages and cultures, specialised translators should become professionals whose main aim is to help this communication and act as cultural mediators. The volume starts from the premise that, nowadays, specialised translation is recognized as a research field in its own right. For a long time, the cultural aspect, which has been considered as central only in literary translation, has acquired relevance in specialised translation. The growing awareness of cultural factors in LSP translation demonstrates that it is of crucial importance in this field, too. The translator has many factors to consider, namely, extra-linguistic phenomena together with the translation of intra-linguistic and pragmatic

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issues. Looking backwards at different methodological approaches and translation theories, the volume wants to demonstrate how scholars have tackled the issue of culture in translation from different perspectives and how in the last decades we have witnessed a re-elaboration of the concept of *Cultural Translation*.

Moreover, since specialised texts belong to a specific time and space and are the product of a specific culture, translators must be able to recognize the web of discourses and references present in a text. The volume intends to demonstrate that *intercultural awareness* in LSP translation brings a different approach to the translating process and choices. Words are used in a particular linguistic and cultural context in which they are embedded and are part of a consistent linguistic network governed by syntactic, semantic, lexical and cultural stylistic relations. These relations must be understood and perceived by translators to convey correctly the meaning of those words in the target language. Thus, specialised translation requires cultural and stylistic competences, and insufficient knowledge in syntactic, semantic or lexical areas leads to mistranslation or inaccurate translation.

The volume is divided into five chapters: Chapter 1 “Specialised Translation and Culture” introduces the various theoretical approaches that have dealt with cultural references, the issues of intertextuality and interculturality and the translation of cultural-bound terms in different linguistic and cultural contexts. All the theoretical and methodological approaches taken into consideration, which demonstrate a development on the awareness of cultural aspects to be translated, share something in common: 1) an explicit attention to the text to be translated and its function on the TT culture; 2) they all start from the presupposition that translation is a social practice culturally situated and carried out by an individual marked by his/her position, age, gender, values, ideas and not only his/her linguistic competences. All these approaches reveal that the cultural dimension greatly affects LSP translation choices and practices because it is an action that takes place in a web of socio-cultural factors and human agency. The translator’s agency and ethics are nowadays central issues both in the theoretical debate within Translation Studies and in professional domains. Translators are agents of cultural transmission, their role as cultural agents cannot be dismissed.

Chapter 2 “Translating Advertisements” deals with advertising texts and aims at showing how translation decision and solutions are not repeatable in all social contexts, but are influenced by many factors such as the individual translator’s decisions with respect to the text to be

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translated, the commissioner of the translation, the aim of the text, and the target language and culture. Advertising tells us about social change and its language reflects the ideologies behind these changes. This is the reason why interculturality is deeply rooted in advertisements. The chapter outlines the specialised nature of the language of advertising and offers some theoretical and methodological tools for the analysis and translation of different textual typologies from a diachronical perspective. The corpus is principally made of printed advertisements belonging to the American and British contexts. Although I am aware that textual typologies both in the fields of advertising and of tourism are changing and evolving continuously due to new technologies and new forms of communication like blogs, apps and different kinds of online texts, I have chosen to focus on more traditional genres like printed ads that still necessitate further analysis and discussion, especially in the translation of cultural aspects. The examples chosen in Chapter 2 have been selected in order to discuss various aspects of advertising translation: the complexity of translating texts full of rhetorical figures, wordplay and colloquial language, translation practices related to international marketing choices, the recent notion of *transcreation* in advertising campaigns and the translator's work as part of a team.

Chapter 3 "Translation, Advertising and Culture" is dedicated to the analysis of advertisements where the categories of race, class and gender in different cultures are central. A section has been devoted to the analysis of the translation of Italian products in Anglo-Saxon countries in order to show how advertising texts are permeated by a precise and stereotypical representation of Italian culture in these contexts. A second section has been dedicated to the issue of gender in advertising and a third section on gay-friendly advertising and its translation into the Italian context. Another section has been dedicated to gay-friendly advertising and its translation into the Italian context.

Chapter 4 "Translating Tourism" focuses on tourist texts and wants to highlight how cultural aspects are a fundamental element of tourism texts. Starting from the premise that the language of tourism is a recognized specialised language, the chapter refers to sociolinguistic studies on tourism and identifies the linguistic and verbal strategies of different tourist genres, specifically websites and brochures. The chapter analyses how culture-specific terms have been treated in the translation of tourist texts while underlining how cultural references come to the surface through intertextual allusions. Practical examples for possible translations are offered in order to show how the translation of international campaigns is part of a wider marketing strategy and to compare different translation practices and strategies.

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Chapter 5 “Translation, Tourism and Culture” also deals with tourism texts and, as in the previous chapter, as in the previous chapter some examples have been chosen in order to propose a possible translation, while others have been offered for an analysis of translated versions in order to stress the importance of the translator’s linguistic, subject and cultural competence. While the first two sections focus on tourism genres like guides and brochures, the last section focuses on the translation of texts dealing with food and drink, which is a field strictly related to culture and which deserves more attention.

This volume is my “translation” of years of teaching and researching LSP texts and their translations; some texts have been discussed and translated in second year courses of *Mediazione Linguistica* and *Modern Languages* and *Magistrale* courses in theories and practices of translation at the Universities of Trento, Calabria and Naples L’Orientale. It is also the outcome of years of research in the field of Cultural Translation and specialised translation. Previous results of my research on specialised translation and on the languages of tourism and advertising have been presented in international conferences and have been published in collected volumes, some of which can be found in the References.

The volume is offered as a tool for students in courses in *Mediazione Linguistica* and specialised translation and as an instrument for further investigation in the fields of advertising and tourism texts translation for researchers interested in these topics.