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Investigación

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THEIMPACTOFTHECOVID-19PANDEMICONPUBLICSERVICEINTERPRETINGANDTRANSLATION(PSIT)AND ITS FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

EL IMPACTO DE LA PANDEMIA DE COVID-19 EN LA TRADUCCIÓN E INTERPRETACIÓN EN LOS SERVICIOS PÚBLICOS (TISP) Y SU EVOLUCIÓN EN EL FUTURO

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ABSTRACT: The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly affected the health of individuals, societies, and the global economy. It has also transformed the ways of working and communicating. In the educational field, there are numerous studies that show the necessary adaptation that was conducted throughout the world, with cases of

success and challenges that caused profound transitions and innovations inside and outside the classroom. Since the eruption of COVID-19 in December 2019, both institutions and individuals have had to reformulate their ways of teaching and learning. But have all these changes been negative or have they also implied a way to move forward? In the following pages we will try to answer this question with examples of studies carried out in different parts of the world as a sample of the global world we live in.

KEYWORDS: Translation Studies, COVID-19 pandemic, Public Service Interpreting and Translation (PSIT)

In the field of Translation Studies in general, numerous research experiences in the context of the pandemic can be found. Králova (2021), from Prague, recounts the experience with translation and interpreting students. She explains that the theoretical classes were relatively easy to organise while for the practical classes it was necessary to look for other more complex alternatives. She also highlights positive results, for example, when she mentions that online classes favoured the participation of colleagues from various universities around the world, allowing students to meet experts that they would not have otherwise met in the classes, based on the students' translations completed at home and the comments provided by their teachers and peers.

Libreros Cortez and Schrijver (2021), from Mexico, explain their experience in this country. The results of their research study indicate that, as in many other parts of the world, some students were able to successfully manage distance education thanks to their organisational and self-study skills, their commitment, their motivation, and adequate access to the Internet. However, most of the students faced various technological, didactic and health problems that interfered with their learning process, which increased their desire to return to regular classes at the university as soon as possible.

Alwazna (2021), from Saudi Arabia, address translation teaching during the COVID-19 outbreak, seeking to discover the challenges encountered by translation teachers in blended Arabic-English online teaching and the given solutions. Their analysis indicates that 40% of the participants evaluate as positive their experience of teaching translation online during the COVID-19 outbreak. No participant considers it negative. Of that 40%, about 23.33% rate it as very good, and 13.33% as good. The data also indicate that most participants have encountered obstacles in online learning and, at the same time, have proposed solutions to resolve them.

Rojo and Naranjo (2021), from Spain, draw attention to another aspect of great relevance and in which much remains to be written in these times of crisis: the emotional impact on the activity of the translator. The authors explore the emotional impact that the translation of positively or negatively marked source texts can have on translation students behaviour. The results revealed statistically significant differences in the use of emphasis and attenuation strategies, and a certain tendency to alter the attenuating or emphasizing language in pessimistic texts. The results also indicated a significant increase in the levels of anxiety and the negative effect of the participants in the translation of the pessimistic texts compared to optimistic ones. However, the authors consider that this is a study that requires more data since, even though the link between emotion and cognition is accepted, there is less agreement regarding the type of influence exerted by emotions on cognitive processing and how this influence occurs.

During the COVID-19 crisis, several research events were conducted to shed light on the development and use of virtual pedagogical tools for interpreting and translation training adapted to new ways of working. Chouc and Merakchi (2021), for instance, investigate the supposed relative reluctance of users and interpreters to turn to remote interpreting. They organised an event during which university lecturers, high school teachers, providers of home-schooling and students shared perspectives in Arabic, Chinese, French, English, German and Spanish on how they coped with the changes in education in different countries since the beginning of the pandemic. A group of professional interpreters interpreted the talks to enable the research group to examine users and interpreters' views about remote simultaneous interpreting.

There was also observed an increased interest in the development of remote interpreting training. Several translation and interpreting conferences were held in order to discuss the general pitfalls and solutions for remote interpreting in markets across the world. For instance, at the NAJIT 42nd Annual Virtual Conference 2021, Benavides et al. (2021) showed how to understand and use technical tools for team remote simultaneous interpreting in courts in the United States. They also explained the ethical considerations, best practices, and the strategies to overcome remote interpreting challenges.

Outside the field of translation and interpreting training, there are also initiatives that aim to bridge the gap between the scientific world and the lay user, as is the case of the work carried out by Sierra Heredia et al. (2021) entitled "Bouncing forward: Knowledge Translation for policy making in response to the COVID-19 and climate change co-emergencies" and presented at the International Society for Environmental Epidemiology congress. This work includes the series of webinars "Learning and Relearning for Planetary Health: Lessons from a Pandemic", a collection of recordings of sessions and documents produced by the Planetary Health research group at Simon Fraser University (Canada), together with academics, professionals from industry, community advocates, and practitioners. The group carried out what we might call an intra-translation example in order to produce and adapt those materials for different audiences or stakeholders in political decision-making. To help the non-academic group understand everything better, they created a toolkit that made the key discussion points and recommendations from the webinars available in various formats. This toolkit was included in a platform that also contained political briefings, a web page, infographics, and opinion articles that expand the scope of knowledge presented in the webinars.

The work of Haddad Haddad and Montero-Martínez (2021) follows this same line of research. They include a terminological study to show the importance of translation and the use of terms by a specialized audience and the general population. Starting from the official term of reference coined by the WHO in all its official languages "Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)", they carry out a corpus study to show how the most used term in the media is "coronavirus", while other English terms are emerging and translated into other languages. In their case study, they investigate the creation of these neologisms in English and their equivalents in Arabic.

He et al. (2020) report a similar study in "Translation and Expansion: Enabling Laypeople Access to the COVID-19 Academic Collection". They present the results of their research to help lay people access the CORD-19 collection (a database containing more than 51,000 academic articles on COVID-19 and coronavirus). To do this, they translate and extend the keywords used by the population to their corresponding medical terminology using the National Library of Medicine's Consumer Health Vocabulary database and develop a retrieval system called Search Engine for Laypeople to access the COVID-19 (SLAC) bibliography with open-source software.

There are also excellent studies of collaborative work in which translation has played an important role. A significant example is that by Drosopulos and Tayip (2021). The authors recount the successful cooperation between BioNTech and Pfizer in inventing a revolutionary vaccine against this virus, on which the world based its hopes of gradual salvation from an unprecedented global pandemic. As Drosopulos and Tayip say (2021, p. 2), «on a scientific level, it was a formidable achievement that marks a new era for humanity. On a human level, the story of the people who contributed to this prodigious step was a shining example of a Greek-Turkish friendship developed in a German context». According to the authors, Dr. Sahin and Dr. Bourla, scientists with an immigrant background, were part of the research team, with Greece being one of the first countries to have received doses of COVID-19 vaccine. The international media applauded the scientific success story, further highlighting its humane aspect and illustrating the fruitful Greek-Turkish cooperation as a paradigm of a successful outcome despite bilateral antagonism and cultural limitations. However, Drosopulos and Tayip show how this was not the case in the Greek and Turkish media. They point out that what was celebrated in the US or European media as an example of the "Greek-Turkish friendship" was manipulated or distorted by Greek and Turkish news. The vaccine story was described as an achievement "made in Germany" or presented unilaterally, with the aim of generating national pride by focusing only on the existence of one partner and silencing the existence of the other. What is even more interesting, according to the authors, is how, in some cases, the same information, coming from a foreign original source, was translated into Greek and Turkish, respectively, in a way that conveyed different messages. This directed readers' attention to the elements that each country prioritized as most important or most appropriate for its audience.

Social networks became massive information sources that citizens trusted and used more than official channels. Again, in these cases, translation played an important role. In "Facebook Translation Service (FTS) Usage between Jordanians during COVID-19 Lockdown", Almahasees and Jaccomard (2020) describe how during the strict lockdown in that country, Jordanians used social networks to gain access to information about the virus. In this case Facebook became the most popular social media platform. The study focused on analyzing the use of the Facebook Translation Service (FTS) as a source of information in general and about COVID-19 by those interested in posts in English that they could not understand because they did not know the language. The study revealed that 94.3% used Facebook on a daily basis; 87.1% of the participants activated the FTS service. In addition, 62.2% of the participants viewed Facebook as a primary source of information about COVID-19 and 27.8% as a secondary source. Regarding the use of FTS, 83.8% used it to translate Facebook posts from English to Arabic during lockdown. The authors further indicate that the margin of error was low in terms of adequacy and fluidity and encourage governments to use more Facebook and FTS as sources of information.

This interest in English as a starting point for receiving and producing information is unquestionable. However, there are new voices advocating greater attention to other languages. Moreno-Fernández and Álvarez Mella (2022) in their paper "Reexamining the International Importance of Languages" draw attention to the scientific and social interest of a comparative analysis on the international importance of language. The authors conduct a study based on the following criteria: the perception of importance, the estimation of importance and the calculation of complex indexes. In this way, they offer an update of the international linguistic index for the year 2020, in which a more plural and polycentric image of international languages emerges according to their areas of influence and diffusion, including Spanish and Portuguese. Moreno-Fernández and Álvarez Mella (2022) add:

Finally, in terms of communication spaces, it is true that English predominates in international communication (press, television, publishing, the Internet), even in geographic and cultural spaces defined by other languages. However, the universal expansion of mass media, and especially social media, is enabling the emersion of other international languages, national languages, and languages that are limited to local regions, which are occupying broad communication spaces, even in the form of translated content originally produced in English or in other international languages (Moreno-Fernández and Álvarez Mella, 2022, p. 19).

According to Eberhard et al. (2020, as cited in Dreisbach and Mendoza-Dreisbach, 2021), the appearance and immediate spread of the coronavirus in the world population has also allowed us to test the linguistic limits of the world's living languages, especially in minority languages that have not undergone the intellectualisation process, since the main political efforts of linguistic development focus on the dominant languages of a country. This brings us to the field of Public Service Interpreting and Translation (PSIT). As Dreisbach and Mendoza-Dreisbach (2021) point out, health authorities suddenly faced intercultural communication in crisis situations in an internationalized society that is affected by multilingual and multicultural factors. Public health experts recognise that communication errors caused by language barriers are life-threatening situations for patients who cannot express their symptoms in a second or foreign language.

Voices soon emerged from the epicenter of the pandemic to advocate for the need to pay attention to all minority languages in the environment. Li et al. (2020) argued that it was necessary to go beyond English-mediated knowledge production to fight COVID-19 crisis. And they suggested (...) "an epistemological shift from the global north to the global south where multilingual realities form thousands of years of history and civilization, and where indigenous knowledge constitutes the essence of guiding principles embedded in social practice". Such consideration implies going beyond health education through the mother tongue of the interlocutors, the recognition of multilingual realities and the translation of materials related to COVID-19 into the mother tongue of the readers in order to introduce practices that are closer to their own social and cultural sensitivity. According to Dreisbach and Mendoza-Dreisbach (2021), in Wuhan, the globally recognised source of the disease, translation was soon identified by crisis managers as an underdeveloped tool for managing the disease outbreak at the time when foreigners were allowed to leave the city in January. In an effort to mitigate the increase in COVID-19 cases of people coming from the city, its municipal government deployed both government and external volunteer translators to educate the local population and affected foreigners on preventive measures such as social distancing, self-isolation and the use of masks, among other initiatives (Wang, 2020, as cited in Dreisbach and Mendoza-Dreisbach, 2021). These crisis managers also realized that in order for their volunteer translators to effectively translate materials, they needed to pay attention to translation and organise it into specific areas related to their expertise. The focus was on teaching, business and public administration in the English, Portuguese and Spanish languages. As Zhang and Wu (2020) indicate, beyond being mediators, these translators became true protagonists of multilingual communication in the event of a crisis, since their linguistic skills allowed them to provide emergency linguistic services.

When the disease reached Shanghai, university student volunteers immediately organised multilingual translation activities in collaboration with local community health workers who assisted the multicultural communities in the metropolitan area. Foreign language students from local universities collaborated effectively and consistently with the health authorities in providing health education materials to the multilingual communities in the city, which improved emergency language services and communication in case of crisis, especially in the Arabic, English, Japanese, Korean, Russian and Spanish languages (Zheng, 2020). A group of linguists from across the country created the Epidemic Language Service Corps, which provided emergency public language services and produced health education materials such as the Hubei Dialects Glossary for Fighting the Epidemic, the Foreign Language Glossary for Fighting the Epidemic, and Concise Chinese for Fighting the Epidemic (Li et al., 2020, as cited in Dreisbach and Mendoza-Dreisbach, 2021). They are good examples of collaborative translation that highlight the reality of PSIT and the need to include emergency language management practices in crisis prevention and preparedness strategies.

This is also the case in the Philippines. Along the Western Philippine Sea and due to its proximity to China, the Philippines was also heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. With 184 living languages spoken by the country's 105 million people (Eberhard et al., 2020), there have always been ethnic tensions between dominant and minority ethnolinguistic groups. However, despite the linguistic and cultural divergences, the country's linguists and translators joined forces to face the translation challenges of the multilingual crisis brought by the pandemic. Language Warriors PH organisation was created as a meta-translation initiative that organised volunteer translators across the country to translate COVID-19 educational materials into Philippine languages. 927 health education materials were translated in 10 thematic areas, including physical and mental health, into 70 Philippine languages, among others, Philippine Sign Language and Philippine Gay Language, to make it inclusive in deaf and gay communities (Encarnacion, 2020). According to the advocates of the organisation of volunteer translators, the production of materials was necessary to promote inclusive and equal access to information, but dissemination was equally important to mitigate the action of COVID-19. This group of volunteer

translators also believe that having access to accurate and quality information is part of the fundamental human rights of Filipinos.

The creation of multilingual materials increased in all majority languages but also in some minority languages thanks to national and international organisations such as the Center for Disease Control and Prevention of the United States (2020), the European Commission (2020) or the Center for Cultural Diversity in Ageing (2020) of the Australian government, among others, which have created multilingual educational resources for immigrant minority populations in their respective countries.

The COVID-19 also caused great uncertainty in companies of all sectors and levels. In general, companies were forced to make changes and adjustments to adapt to the demand for new needs (Morales, 2021). Translation in general, and specifically PSIT, had and still has a significant role in the COVID-19 crisis, as it has had it in previous crises, and it continues to have a significant role in the crises that are happening in this 21st century (Afghanistan, Ukraine, Mediterranean Sea, etc.).

Actions and research conducted in crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic serve to highlight the growing multilingual and multicultural complexity in which we live and the challenges and consequences that this brings. However, contrary to the expected uniformity, we can still find significant differences in the responses to the challenges of multilingualism in humanitarian crisis by institutions and stakeholders. The experience of large institutions shows that, although declarations and legislation may seem necessary and urgent, this alone does not guarantee that change will happen. The complexity of contexts and situations is so diverse that the solutions are also diverse.

The idea that people living in a foreign country are responsible for communicating with the authorities is an idea generally supported by those in power to limit their access to public services. Such an assumption reveals a certain degree of ethnocentrism (Cruz Pérez et al., 2018) and ignorance since the language spoken in everyday life is not the same as that of legal or medical jargon, where a high linguistic register and technical expressions are used, and whose comprehension is made difficult by the stressful situation experienced by defendants in criminal actions and patients.

The current war in Ukraine while writing this paper in May 2022 is a case in point. The EU is providing an unprecedented response to the Ukrainian exodus following the outbreak of war. The European Directive on temporary protection, activated for the first time since it was drafted 20 years ago, determines, and makes unique, the solidarity response of its EU partners. After the outbreak of war, many governments reacted swiftly with the deployment of reception resources (regional and state), express procedures, reception centres, information telephones and daily announcements committed to the welfare of those fleeing war at the gates of the EU.

In these crisis environments in a globalised world, the presence of translators and interpreters (T&I) is necessary. Many professional T&I are involved in facilitating

communication, but also many volunteers and non-professional T&I, bilinguals, professionals from other areas (doctors, engineers, social workers), and anyone who can help (children, elderly people, refugees, family members, neighbours and so on). Research on the challenges these *ad hoc* T&I find offer avenues to explore the ethics of translation and interpreting in a new light and to delve deeper with interdisciplinary, cross-disciplinary studies on the role of volunteers and non-professionals, their motivations, their personal ethics and their adherence or alignment with institutional policies, codes of conduct or good practice guidelines. The debate on the ethical performance of these communicators in relation to professional T&I remains open as the rising number of publications demonstrate.

In short, the magnitude and speed of the changes we face globally in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic have been taking shape over the months of confinement and in the following years. Numerous experts in different fields of knowledge, from health sciences and education to economics, technology, and the world of culture, are still trying to clarify the future that awaits us. The devastating effects of the pandemic and the successive crises have urgently reinforced reflection on both personal and institutional commitment to society, bringing to light actions characterised by precariousness and invisibility. The pandemic has raised ethical questions of generational and social justice.

The crisis unleashed by COVID-19 has served as a dress rehearsal to see how numerous professional activities had to change to the digital world. Many of these activities have been carried out not only by professional T&I but also by many other professionals from other areas, polyvalent and invisible in most cases, working in the language market or in other professions. This new situation has led governments, international organisations, public opinion, professionals, and experts in different areas to consider how to respond to the ethical challenges posed by the new social and professional situations for which there is no single answer.

This situation has again reminded us that in the event of a crisis, the most vulnerable might be at risk of losing their fundamental language, and therefore human rights. During the pandemic, in many countries face-to-face communication has been reduced to a minimum and many less privileged ones have seen their access to virtually all types of information drastically reduced. The question is whether the pandemic has also changed the way we will communicate in the "new normal" (for example, possible extended use of remote communication) and how this might affect those at risk of exclusion.

This search for answers is a constant nowadays as demonstrated by the numerous publications and thematic congresses to be held in 2022. It seems to be time for us as a discipline to prepare for the challenges of the future, as our "understanding of the complexities of translation and interpreting practices and their contexts, requirements, and constraints is still developing" (Monzó–Nebot and Wallace 2020, p. 20). A look at the call for papers in international congresses to be held in different parts of the world in 2022 are excellent examples. Among many others, we will briefly refer to the 10th International Conference of the European Society for Translation Studies (EST) to be held in Oslo, Norway; the conference of the Conférence internationale permanente d'instituts universitaires de traducteurs et interprètes (CIUTI) to be

held in Lima, Peru; and the 10th International Conference of the Iberian Association for Translation and Interpreting Studies (AIETI), to be held in Braga, Portugal.

The European Society for Translation Studies organises the 10th EST Congress in June 2022 under the topic "Advancing Translation Studies". According to the programme, there are 49 panels and at least 10 (5%) are directly or indirectly related to the key words such as covid, crisis, migration, or linguistic rights. Attention is addressed to significant topics such as: ethical issues and training challenges; PSIT in the time of the pandemic; translation policies and practices in multilingual settings; migration and translation at a crossroad; or non-professional interpreting and translation.

All these topics raise questions for debate in search of solutions. Research shows that the coronavirus global disease has made even more pressing the long-standing needs of intercultural mediators, interpreter and translators well versed in human rights protection, which if well understood, include a broad range of economic and social rights, access to information included. The COVID-19 pandemic has also demonstrated the importance of providing information reaching all members of multilingual societies, both in cities characterised by superdiversity and in less-densely populated rural areas, as well as in developed or less-developed countries. However, the high rates of COVID-19 cases in migrant and minority populations show that many communication strategies have not been successful (Finell et al., 2021). This brings to the fore the topics of community translation (Taibi, 2018) and translation policy (González Núñez & Meylaerts, 2017), as well as the potential of translation policies and practices in achieving trust relationships and influencing changes in behaviour. From this position, the examination of the intersections among theories, policies and practices could help to provide practical solutions but also will benefit Translation Studies. The study of certain ethical issues at stake, the risks of injustice, good practices in efficient translation and the training challenges we face in preparing TeI experts to act in disaster management are also issues that need to be addressed (Declercq and Federici, 2019).

Migration is a complex phenomenon. There is a myriad of circumstances that intervene in the migratory journey, right from route planning at the pre-departure phase, to orientation on arrival, and settling at the final stage. Along this journey, written and oral multilingual communication is essential in different aspects and moments of the journey as for example, for accessing information about travel routes, borders and safety issues; for identity-verification processes; for navigating services on arrival; or for finding sustainable solutions in long-term integration. In this context, according to Rico Pérez (2019), there is still a need to explore the role of T&I, including non-professional interpreters and translators (NPIT), as key elements in enhancing communication, providing access to information and advocating for and on behalf of the people they work with.

Recent scholarship has begun to vigorously examine NPIT in public services, in the midst of conflict zones for humanitarian organisations and mass migrations, and in relation to social responsibility, ethics, and quality (Delgado Luchner & Kherbiche, 2019; Martínez-Gómez, 2015). NPIT advocates for a place within Translation Studies challenging the reductionist tendencies to automatically place NPIT in a peripheral or inferior position in relationship to the language mediation carried out by sanctioned, certified practitioners (Monzó-Nebot & Wallace, 2020). New perspectives to approach effective communication with migration and translation can happen when the role of NPIT as practiced by "invisible" or stigmatized practitioners (farm laborers, prisoners, asylum seekers, refugees, or children) is critically examined, and issues of power, identity, social justice, and social change when interpreting and translating are visualized from non-traditional or non-professional backgrounds in a post-monolingual world. The recognition of NPIT practitioners as actors of influence will make an advance in the field of Translation Studies.

Reexamining traditional associations between nation and identity will also bring new topics for discussion. The growing interest in minor(ised) voices in Translation Studies, less translated languages, cultures and agents (regional, female) can also provide new approaches to these topics far from the margins of translation and cultural history. Suggestions for theoretical-methodological perspectives and case studies contributing to interdisciplinary studies through different perspectives (global and literary history, gender studies, postcolonial studies, sociology of translation and digital humanities) without any spatial-temporal limitation are advocated by researchers on translation history with a focus on peripheries, gender and less translated languages (Roig Sanz & Meylaerts, 2018).

The CIUTI International Conference will be held for the first time in Latin America in September 2022 under the topic "The role of translation and interpreting in society and citizenship: interculturality, access to information, public services, and equality". The main emphasis is placed in citizens' rights and the growing international recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples. Assuming that linguistic rights are essential for promoting the exercise of other rights, debates are expected on equal access to information and public services for both migrants and indigenous peoples, the promotion of a true intercultural dialogue grounded in a decolonial perspective, or the analysis of the role professional and non-professional T&I, as well as the role universities play in this post-COVID-19 context.

Language services are fundamental to the promotion of human rights, but they are also a potential source of inequality when they are not recognised. The CIUTI congress calls on universities and stakeholders involved in interlinguistic and intercultural communication to critically analyse today's society and to produce knowledge that contributes to the construction of a more egalitarian and less discriminatory world, and to the training of professionals who guarantee access and accessibility to information using different means to foster a culture of human rights.

AIETI 10th International Conference announces in the call for papers: "under the broad organizing themes of journeys and crossings, as well as hospitality and dialogue, the conference aims to inspire discussion around the dynamics of language, culture and knowledge transmission in the context of globalisation through the circulation of texts and ideas in translation". The invitation is to re-cross "waters previously navigated," to map and write new cartographies for a "bright wide world", and an explicit call is addressed for activism, immigration and conflict.

To conclude, the strong impact of COVID-19 pandemic (and successive crises) on PSIT has made visible issues or brought to the forefront issues and arguments that were only on the minds of a minority and has opened new avenues to explore the role of T&I as key elements in shaping fairer and more accessible societies for all. In the future T&I may continue contributing to the building of a society that recognises the right to languages and assist in the development of language policies to facilitate the coexistence of different languages both explicitly and tacitly. Academia, but also societies and institutions, have become increasingly aware of the diversity that surrounds us, of how the linguistic needs of different communities diverge, and of the different opportunities that languages open and close to those who speak them. Working together to articulate a forum to foreground the diversity of situations and solutions from multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary perspectives is the challenge for the future. The articles included in the FITISPos International Journal, volume 9, 2022, hope to contribute to this task.

The following quotation from AIETI call for papers offers a view of the thousands of possibilities-ports-to be explored in Translation Studies:

Translation is voyage and the poet takes a translation across the ocean. Any ship of any description may be qualified to reach port, sailing across the sea of fidelity or the sea of license. The port too will suggest in its name the conditions of the sea by which the ship reaches its destination. So the port where the cargo of poems lies anchored may be called Saint Faithful or New Harmony or Wild Strawberries. But the port must have a name, a true name. Modest designations will do—translation, version, paraphrase, metaphrase, retelling, imitation, or whatever (Barnstone, 1996 as cited in AIETI, 2022).

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