

THE EDITOR

INTRODUCTION

ON SOME REFLECTIONS ON PUBLIC SERVICE TRANSLATION

Carmen Valero-Garcés

University of Alcalá, Spain

carmen.valero@uah.es

More than a decade ago (2002), the article “Traducir de y para los que llegan: una incipiente realidad” (“Translating from and for New Arrivals: An Emerging Reality”) (Valero-Garcés, 2002), spoke about the lack of interest and relevant studies about translation—understood as the written transfer of a text from one language to another—within the then-emerging field of Public Service Translation and Interpreting (PSIT) or Community Interpreting. We said it was a neglected area compared to the interest in interpreting for publications, seminars, workshops or specific conferences like *Critical Link*. This situation does not seem to have changed much, in line with comments by researchers and teachers, as well as their continuing efforts to draw attention to this issue. One only needs to glance at the number of publications derived from *Critical Link* conferences (Brunette et al. 2003; Wadensjö et al. 2007; Hale et al. 2009; Schäffner et al. 2013) or other conferences organized by the research group FITISPos (*Training and Research in Public Service Translation and Interpreting*) over these past years (Valero Garcés et al., 2002, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014).

The idea of devoting Volume 2 of *FITISPos International Journal* to an unexplored topic with limited material began considering these aspects and from certain elements that caught our attention at the time. First, it was the creation of two associations directly related to TISP: *European Network in Public Service Interpreting and Translation* (ENPSIT) and the *Asociación de Formadores, Investigadores y Profesionales en Traducción e Interpretación en los Servicios Públicos* (‘Association of Teachers, Researchers and Professionals in Public Service Translation and Interpreting’) (AFIPTISP) in which the term ‘translation’ was included.

The second component was the European Commission-sponsored conference *Translating and interpreting for our citizens* (March 2014), which met for the first time at the Directorate General for Translation (EU DGT), the Directorate General for Interpretation (DG Interpretation, SCIC) and the different agencies involved in the preservation of multilingualism. Its aim was to foster teamwork and to go a step further in communication policy with lesser used languages, due to in part by widespread immigration throughout the EU.

The third element was the assembly of several events sharply focused on translation. We specifically refer to two conferences: one organized at the University of Westminster,

London, UK, titled *Translating cultures: translation as a tool for inclusion/exclusion in a multicultural society* in June of 2014, and the other one at the University of Western Sydney, Australia, titled *Community Translation* in September of 2014.

The main topics of the Sydney and UK conferences draw attention to the complexity of translation and the variety of necessary studies: linguistic and Public Service Translation (PST), policy, translation and inclusiveness, sociocultural diversity and translation, ideology and PST, power relations: translating vs. empowerment, translating to and from minority languages, translation quality in public services, and PST training. Additionally, the titles of some of the presented papers on this topic give an account of the interest and the need for further research in TSP:

- “Translation as a Communication Tool in the Police Environment” (Katrina Mayfield);
- “Challenges in Defining 'Community' for Community Translation” (Daniel Tomozeiu);
- “Community Translation: An Examination of Practice and Praxis” (Brooke Townsley);
- “Language Policy and Public Service Translation: The Case of European Multilingualism” (Catherine Vieilledent-Monfort);
- “Translation and Language Ideologies” (Abigail Pita).

The main objective of PST is to directly communicate specific information (on health, education, administration, society, etc.) to a specific audience: a public—as in the case of interpretation—which meets the requirements of a cultural and linguistic minority, who generally has a lower education and purchasing power than the majority and who often is unaware or does not dominate the social reality of their adopted country. Additionally, as Roberts (1997: 12) states, minority culture is not always understood by the majority group (even more so than in terms of language) who organizes and provides services to those clients. In other words, the objective is to adapt a text to the needs of a minority that lives in a country with a dominant majority (Valero Garcés, 2002: 63).

Tomozeiu (2014) gives a similar definition on the importance of other underappreciated elements of translation, moving away from the “what” and the “how”:

'Public service translation' (also known as 'Community translation') is emerging as an important, distinct subfield in translation studies. Its focus on the translation of texts produced by public services for the benefit of speakers of less-established languages makes it good role relevant research area in today's globalizing world. In a multicultural society decisions about what is translated and how the translation is done far-reaching have implications for the inclusion and exclusion of uncertain communities and/or community members.

Considering these elements, we are led to think about how the process of translation is initiated (who requested the translation) and the executor of the action itself (the translator) (Nord, 1997). Regarding the first point, it usually coincides with the service provider: institutions, NGOs, associations, government offices, hospitals, schools, etc., which request translations of a variety of texts with very different qualities and complexities (from a birth certificate to a lease, for example). This also has implications for the translator, which we will discuss further on.

The literature on PSIT provides examples of the interpreter's work (Bolden, 2000; Angelelli, 2004; Ertl and Pöllabauer, 2010). However, we could barely find any studies about translators, which again raises many questions: is the translator a sociocultural mediator with specific skills and proper training that goes beyond the knowledge of languages (or dialects) and cultures? Is a good command of intercultural competence required? Why? What, if any, influence is there between working with two languages, one of which usually has a lower social status compared to the other, which belongs to the dominant culture? How can certain neutrality and distance be ensured, even when working for their (the translator's) same ethnic community? How can awareness be raised about the lack of education or about cultural differences between the two communities? What ability must be developed so that the communication professional may serve as a linguistic and cultural bridge when dealing with specific topics that may be taboo for some communities? Should he/she know work-related terminology? What kind of texts should be translated? If the goal is to communicate, should the professional be able to change their register or adapt the text to the needs of the host community, etc.?

Translators also come up against the scant recognition that this profession has, which leads to translation being a low-paid job that often keeps its practitioners from access to available training. Surprisingly, despite the large number of translation educational centers (in Spain alone, there are more than a dozen Translation and Interpretation Departments in universities), there are so few training options related to this subarea of Translation Studies (that being PST). This leads to another question: can PST be considered as specific translation?

The differences between specialized and general translation, according to Monterde Rey (2003: 107), are the following:

1. In specialized translation, the sender and receiver of the text belong to a specialized language.
2. The translator must know (or be able to find) the terminology used.
3. The translator must know (or be able to familiarize himself with) about the specialized subject.

We agree with such features as long as we are talking about professional translators/interpreters. Concerning TSP, in the attempt to encourage communication between such different participants, the translator undoubtedly works with specialized texts (e.g. medical treatments) in complex situations (e.g. application for registration), and therefore must be versatile (e.g. master the users' language, social conventions and/or text typology). Again, more questions arise: what about in the case of *ad hoc* volunteer translators/interpreters without training? How is terminology managed? What kind of documentation do they have access to? What strategies do they use to convey a certain concept or expression in the target language? How confident are they in their job? Is any particular preparation needed? If problems are detected, what happens if parallel documents, consulting experts or dictionaries and terminology banks are unavailable? How do volunteers and clients' family members serving as translators/interpreters handle this specialized language in our hospitals, healthcare centers, police stations or schools? Are there any specialized resources in minority languages in order to meet those needs?

There are three main frameworks where terminology/specific languages are used in communication:

expert -> <- expert
expert -> <- novice
novice -> <- novice

A third element can be added to this pairing for when speakers do not share the language and, thus, the following tripartite situations can be found:

expert -> <- mediator -> <- expert
expert -> <- mediator -> <- novice
novice -> <- mediator -> <- novice

In the field of PSIT, communication between an expert and a novice is very common; take, for example, a doctor's appointment in which the doctor participates with an almost illiterate patient who does not speak Spanish and a mediator or third element that makes communication possible and who has to translate a brochure about stomach ulcer treatment.

Specialized language or terminology surrounds us in our daily life. We find it in any written document addressed to experts in a specialized field (e.g. articles in a scientific journal), but also in texts aimed at people who are inexperienced in a certain field (e.g. registration application forms, lawsuits, academic transcripts, employment contracts, brochures, etc.).

Teresa Cabré (2004: 101-102) also underlines that it is impossible to draw a defined line between the notion of what is general and what is specialized, which applies to any field related to knowledge or language. Here she gives three specific reasons:

1. Because most individuals' daily activities always take place in specialized areas, although the everyday nature of these activities makes it go unnoticed.
2. Because a permanent transfer between ordinary and specialized life occurs, resulting in the appearance of two opposing phenomena in the lexicon used to refer to reality: the transfer of general vocabulary units to specialized (*terminologization*) and the transfer of specialized terms to general (*trivialization*).
3. Because a subject may be at different levels of abstraction, with different communicative purposes in different communicative situations and for different language functions (Cabré, 2004: 102).

Again, further questions arise: if problems are detected, what happens if there are no parallel documents, experts to consult or dictionaries and terminology banks? What strategies are used to convey a concept or expression in the target language and how is terminology and documentation handled? The foreign population, as well as the service providers, make use of phrases and special terms in their daily contacts, terms which the translator must understand and translate in order to ensure that information is correctly transferred. Very often, this terminology is not found in common dictionaries. In fact, there may not be any dictionary containing the majority language and the language spoken by the minority (Valero

Garcés et al, 2011). The translator must then resort to the same strategies used by the specialized translator, e.g. an omission, the use of an “approximate” or “provisional” equivalence, the explanation of the concept, the lending or the creation of new words entirely (Niska, 2003). In short, we could say that PST is a complex and hybrid case of specialized translation at the crossroads of many different factors and that it requires specialists and adequate training, as with any type of specialization.

In sum, there are many issues to explore and research papers published on public service translation. Hopefully, this subject will help fill the void in the field of PSIT and help raise visibility of this emerging area of Translation Studies. And, in echoing the multi-language nature of this piece, articles in Spanish, English, Russian and Chinese are included.

Due to its awareness of this diversity of topics and approaches, *FITISPos-IJ*, vol 2, includes eight items sorted alphabetically by the author's first name.

The first chapter, in English, has been written by Ineke Creeze and Hanneke Lustig, under the title *A look inside the translators' workspace: Discussions around a large nursing text translation*. The authors investigate about the challenges of translating texts, in this case nursing issues, for different communities in different countries (New Zealand and Belgium) and languages (Dutch – English). Their theoretical approach is based on the *skopos* theory and proposals for translating cultural terms.

The second article, written by Ula Idzikowski in English and entitled *Public Service Translation in Flanders: On the continuous efforts to evolve from paraprofessionalism to professionalism*, contributes to calling the attention to PST studies by providing an overview of the steps taken towards its professionalization in Flanders (Belgium) and the remaining challenges posed by the future of PSIT.

Ivona Ivanova Angelova is the author of the third article, and it is entitled *Introducción al concepto de tortura como punto de partida para una base de datos (inglés-español/ Introduction to the concept of torture as a starting point for a database (English-Spanish))*. she writes in Spanish about a new subject in PST, even though at first sight it might seem alien to this field. As we all know, translators and interpreters in PSIT must work in very different contexts and situations and they are in contact with people from different backgrounds and origins who might have suffered some kind of torture in their countries, while traveling or after arriving in police stations or customs. The article introduces the reader to the concept of torture by providing hints about its historical development, types of practices and places where it has been (and still is) practiced as the basis for a first draft glossary (English-Spanish). Attention is called to the lack of bilingual resources about this topic.

Mengshuan Ku, in the fourth paper, takes us to another very different environment (Taiwan) and another language (Chinese) as an example of the diversity of topics in PST. Under the title 台北捷運營運資訊簡介「西班牙語版分析/*Analysis of the translation of 'Taipei Metro Guide' on its Spanish version*, Ku studies the multilingual context of public services in Taiwan and compares the Chinese and Spanish version of metro guide from the perspective of a Spanish speaker living in Taiwan. The main objective is to analyze the acceptability of the target text for new-comers attracted by the economic prosperity of this country.

Maneerat Marnpae, in the fifth article, titled *La traducción funcionalista en los servicios públicos: un caso de materiales de apoyo del ámbito sanitario para la población inmigrante/Functionalism in translation in public services: support materials related to the*

healthcare setting for immigrants, anticipates that incorporating functionalist approaches in Translation Studies would be relevant to produce effective target texts and so she carries out an analysis of Spanish healthcare related materials for Thai users.

Moreover, Araceli Rojo Chacón, in *La transposición al derecho nacional de la Directiva europea 2010/64/UE en España, Francia, Bélgica y Luxemburgo 'Lost in transposition'/The transposition of European Directive 2010/64/EU into national law in Spain, France, Belgium and Luxembourg: 'Lost in transposition'*, takes us to the legal field in order to display a comparative study of the situation of legal translators in Spain, France, Belgium and Luxembourg before the transposition of the Directive. Their situation is compared with the Austrian system. The study samples the differences and challenges that the different countries are facing in order to implement the Directive on issues such as the creation of a translator register to act in criminal proceedings.

Furthermore, Maria Shcherbakova in *Концептуальный подход к разработке глоссария по медицинской терминологии (русско-испанский)/Conceptual approach used in the development of a glossary of medical terms (Russian-Spanish)* written in Russian, focuses on terminological work in the medical field in a combination of languages - Russian-Spanish- in which resources are almost non-existent. The aim is to create a glossary of terminology related to the cardiovascular system, after a comprehensive analysis of the problems posed by their translation. Her hypothesis is that, despite the Greek and Latin origin of most of the terms selected in Spanish and a large part of the terms in Russian, the literal translation of these represents the most serious and frequent errors due to the peculiarities of both medical systems (Spanish and Russian) in which terminology has evolved and followed its own guidelines.

Finally, Luisa M^a Serrano Patón, in *The School of Translators of Toledo and the identification of Gundisalvo's main contributor*, takes us into another quite unexplored area: the history of PST. First, she introduces the *School of Translators of Toledo*, one of the first European institutions to perform translations that could be considered as examples of PST; then, she investigates the identity of one of its most mysterious translators: the main contributor to the significant translator Gundisalvo, through the analysis of documents found in the library of the School of Translators itself and the Cathedral Archive of Toledo.

References

- Angelelli, C. 2008. "The role of the interpreter in the healthcare setting: A plea for a dialogue between research and practice". Valero-Garcés, C. and Martin, A. (eds.). *Crossing Borders in Community Interpreting. Definitions and dilemmas*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: Benjamins: 147-164.
- Bolden, G. 2000. "Toward understanding practices of medical interpreting: interpreters' involvement in history taking". *Discourse Studies*, 2(4): 387-419.
- Brunette, L., Bastin, G., Hemlin, I. and Clarke, H. (eds.) 2003. *The Critical Link 3: Interpreters in the Community. Selected papers from the Third International Conference on Interpreting in Legal, Health and Social Service Settings*. Montreal. Quebec. Canada. 22-26 May 2001. Benjamins Translation Library, 46.

- Cabré, T. 2004. “La terminología en la traducción especializada”. García, C. and García Yebra, V. (eds.). *Manual de documentación y terminología para la traducción especializada*. Madrid: Arcos: 89-126.
- Carr, S., Roberts, R., Dufour, A. and Steyn, D. (eds.) 1997. *The Critical Link: Interpreters in the Community: Papers from the 1st international conference on interpreting in legal, health and social service settings*. Geneva Park. Canada. 1–4 June 1995. Benjamins Translation Library, 19.
- Ertl, A. & Pöllabauer, S. 2010. “Training (Medical) Interpreters—the Key to Good Practice. MedInt: A Joint European Training Perspective”. *Jostrans*, 7.
- Hale, S., Ozolins, U. and Stern, L. (eds.) 2009. “The Critical Link 5: Quality in interpreting – a shared responsibility”. Benjamins Translation Library, 87.
- Niska, H. 2003. “Cuando fracasan las palabras. Métodos y herramientas del trabajo terminológico para intérpretes en los servicios públicos”. Valero-Garcés, C. (ed.). *Traducción e Interpretación en los Servicios Públicos. Contextualización, actualidad y futuro*. Granada: Comares: 91-124.
- Nord, C. 1997. *Translating as a Purposeful Activity*. Manchester: St Jerome Publishing.
- Roberts, R. 1997. “Community interpreting today and tomorrow”. *The Critical Link 1: interpreters in the community*. Carr, S. et al. (eds.). Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins: 7-28.
- Roberts, R., Carr, S. Abraham, D. and Dufour, A. (eds.) 2000. *The Critical Link 2: Interpreters in the Community. Selected papers from the Second International Conference on Interpreting in legal, health and social service settings*. Vancouver. BC. Canada. 19–23 May 1998. Benjamins Translation Library, 31.
- Schäffner, Ch., Kredens, K. and Fowler, Y. (eds.) 2013. *Interpreting in a Changing Landscape: Selected papers from Critical Link 6*. Benjamins Translation Library, 109.
- Tomozeiu, D. 2014. “Challenges in defining ‘community’ for community translation University of Westminster”. Conference *Translating cultures: translation as a tool for inclusion/exclusion in a multicultural society*. Westminster University. 20 June.
- Valero-Garcés, C. 2002. “Traducir *de y para* los que llegan: una incipiente realidad en la España de principios del siglo XXI”. Valero Garcés, C. and Mancho, G. (eds.). *Traducción e Interpretación en los Servicios Públicos: Nueva necesidades para nuevas realidades. Community Interpreting and Translating; New Needs for New Realities*. Alcalá de Henares: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad.
- Valero-Garcés, C. (ed.) 2005. *Traducción como mediación entre lenguas y culturas / Translation as Mediation or how to Bridge Linguistic and Cultural Gaps*. Alcalá de Henares: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad.
- Valero-Garcés, C., (ed.) 2008. *Investigación y práctica en Traducción e Interpretación en los Servicios Públicos: desafíos y alianzas / Research and Practice in Public Service Interpreting and Translation: Challenges and Alliances*. Alcalá de Henares: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad.
- Valero-Garcés, C., (ed.) 2011. *Traducción e Interpretación en los Servicios Públicos en un mundo INTERcoNEcTado (TISP en INTERNET) / Public Service Interpreting*

- and Translation in a Wild Wired World (PSIT in www)*. Alcalá de Henares: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad.
- Valero-Garcés, C., and Mancho, G. (eds.) 2002. *Traducción e Interpretación en los Servicios Públicos: Nueva necesidades para nuevas realidades. Community Interpreting and Translating / New Needs for New Realities*. Alcalá de Henares: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad.
- Valero-Garcés, C. y Sales, D. 2007. “The Production of Translated Texts for Migrant Minority Communities”. *Jostrans*, 7. [Available at: <http://www.JOSTRANS.org/issue07/issue07toc.htm>].
- Valero-Garcés, C.; Gauthier, L.; Megdiche, Ch and Vitalaru, B. 2011. “Traducción, lenguas de la inmigración y recursos online”. *Hermeneus*, 13: 209-232.
- Valero-Garcés, C., Vitalaru, B., Mojica-López, E. (eds.) 2014. *(Re)considerando ética e ideología en situaciones de conflicto/ (Re)visiting ethics and ideology in situations of conflict*. Alcalá de Henares: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad.
- Wadensjö, C., Englund, B. and Nilsson, A. (eds.) 2007. *The Critical Link 4: Professionalisation of interpreting in the community. Selected papers from the 4th International Conference on Interpreting in Legal, Health and Social Service Settings*. Stockholm. Sweden. 20-23 May 2004. Benjamins Translation Library, 70.