Larisa Schippel   Translating Cultures

The knowledge of Others: Translating as Transdiscursive Transfer

This topic is still in high demand and will continue to be so for a long time to come, because it is a question to which there is no answer, but many congresses and books. That is why I would like to come back to the question by way of a detour.

1. For centuries, it has been possible to trace the dispute over whether languages can be translated. (Incidentally, untranslatability is also a topic that is picking up speed – see Barbara Cassin's Dictionnary, Apter's translation, congresses a.s.o.).

2. Nobody translates languages! (Perhaps most likely dictionary authors, but we don't usually call that translating.) Texts are translated. And they are anchored in settings, contexts of all kinds (Coseriu called them environments (Umfelder) in his text linguistics (*Textlinguistik*)), which make them interpretable, allow disambiguation and thus understanding and communication. Texts have authors, are meant for somebody, written or spoken for somebody who will read or hear them and so on.

3. All knowledge is written in texts, mediated imparted and organised discoursively. I rely on Jan Assmann's triple jump of thematization, textualization and tradition and ask about the role of translation in these stages of the canonization of knowledge.

4. For this purpose, I want to examine the concept of discourse in the sense of the early Foucault (*Les mots et les choses/ L'ordre du discours*) as "recurrent ensembles of attributions, judgments and argumentations in recurrent linguistic manifestations [...], which are located and expected at a certain time in the horizon of contemporaries" (Schlieben-Lange), they are the contextual framework of communicative sens(creating).

5. In other words: Cultures cannot be translated just as little than languages. Only the artifacts of cultures can be translated and they are never isolated or context-free – I can't imagine any other situation.

The relation between translation and discourse must therefore be clarified, and for translation the question of cultural imprint only arises in this context: Are we dealing with a transcultural discourse - such as the

discourse on human rights - or is there an intra-national or inter-national, regional or even local discourse?

I will argue that translation is an inter-/transdiscursive activity applying some strategies and causing different discursive effects. Based on some case studies I did in the last years I would present a possible typology illustrating this discursive approach. As the majority of studies in translation history are based on literary translations I tried to explore texts in the field of knowledge transfer.

a) Translation as Knowledge transfer – creating a new discourse: PETTENKOFER and the new discourse of hygiene, starting in the 1870-ies, from Munich and "going international";

b) Translation as discourse affirmation – EU-Translation as creation of a transcultural discourse;

c) Translation as discourse disturbance (and splitting) – Jonathan GOLDHAGEN: *Hitler's Willing Executioners* in German and the media echo;

d) Bernard Bouvier de FONTENELLE – translations as adjustment into the cosmological discourse in Russia (CANTEMIR) and Germany (GOTTSCHED);

e) Translation without any effect in the target discourse: Translation of Lucian BOIA (*Istorie şi mit*) and the "non-media-echo" (RICHTER).

In this regard translations (and interpretations as well) become an inter-/trans-discursive activity which has the potential to affirm, to disturb, to change or to initiate discursive pathways in target cultures. A critical discourse analyse in different target cultures (not only a bilateral viewpoint) can elucidate the role of translation activity in all kind of knowledge circulation. Depending on translator's personality, status and abilities, publisher's strategy, ideological, cultural, religious, political circumstances, status of source text etc., which means the whole actor-network, translations are able to cause very different discursive effects in the translation field.