

# Directionality and *Spracherleben* in the Biographies of Multilingual Literary Translators

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**Abstract:** The paper explores the issue of directionality, i.e. the question of whether translation is made into or out of one's first language, by placing it within the framework of Translator Studies. Drawing upon this framework, the article investigates the topic from the biographical perspective of multilingual literary translators, with the aim of promoting a phenomenological approach to translators as experiencing subjects, that is as living bodies who constitute themselves through language and translation.

**Keywords:** translator studies, translator biography, directionality, lived experience of language, multilingualism, subjectivity

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In a famous article which appeared in 1964 in the “New York Times”, the South African author Nadine Gordimer wrote: ‘Once that you master a language, it is yours’ (Gordimer 1964, 492), thereby claiming the right of postcolonial writers and their full capacity to write in the colonial language, colonizing it back. The problem of the choice of language in which to write, and the social and identity issues associated with postcolonial, migrant, minority, transnational literatures, have challenged the question of competence and belonging of/to the language, and many are the perspectives and studies analyzing the writers and texts of these literatures. In turn, this issue also affects translators (who are sometimes also writers, and vice versa), but the experiences of translators are far less investigated than those of writers [. . .]. Translators are not asked [. . .] “Why did you choose to translate from this language to this other?”, or “What is your relationship to L1, 2, 3...?” – writers are much more easily allowed to choose, translators much less so. Yet these are questions that would, sometimes, make much more sense if addressed to translators rather than to writers, who, quite honestly, are often no longer interested in discussing the question of language many years after they have made their choices (even if they don’t say it). (Bazu 2020)<sup>1</sup>

The quoted thoughts of Livia Claudia Bazu, an Italian literary translator and author of Romanian origins, ideally sum up the starting point of this paper. Bazu speaks of a choice of language made by translators, referring especially to those bi- or multilingual translators who translate into a language that is neither their first language nor mother tongue. Thus, the issue she touches on is that of so-called directionality, a term which in Translation Studies indicates the practice of translating or interpreting

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<sup>1</sup> All translations from Italian and German texts are mine, unless otherwise stated.

into a language that does not correspond to the translator's first language (cf. Pokorn 2011; Apfelthaler 2019). Actually, in a broader sense the term originally denoted the language pair within which the translation process takes place, but has since undergone a semantic restriction, and is now primarily used to refer to the process of translation into a second language (see Pokorn 2011). An interesting semantic development that suggests translating outside of the first language is perceived as something special and outside of the norm, so much so that it needs to be named. At the same time, since the other direction, from the so-called foreign language to the first language, does not need to be named, it could be assumed that this direction is perceived as norm/normal.

The terminology used in Translation Studies in order to refer to one direction or the other supports this hypothesis and has, as we shall see, given rise to a lively debate. In most cases, this debate remains fundamentally anchored to the main object of investigation in Translation Studies, that is to say the text. However, the present article proposes to relate the directionality topic to the person of the translator, and thus explore it within the context of so-called Translator Studies. More specifically, the research paradigm adopted is that of translator biography, which is part of the broader field of Translator Studies.

I will begin with an overview of the concept of directionality within the context of Translation Studies, followed by a look at the field of Translator Studies. I will then connect the concept of translator biography, as it is developed within the framework of Translator Studies, with the concepts of directionality and lived experience of language, the latter developed by Brigitta Busch (2012; 2017). Finally, drawing upon this framework, the paper will focus on multilingual translators and the textual material in which they reflect upon the language question from their own experience, with the aim of promoting a phenomenological approach to translators as experiencing subjects, i.e. living bodies who constitute themselves through language and translation.<sup>2</sup>

### **1. Directionality in Translation Studies**

Directionality is a relevant topic within Translation Studies, as evidenced by *A Comprehensive Bibliography*, published by Apfelthaler in 2018 and updated in 2020, which presents a long list of publications addressing the issue from both translation and interpretation perspectives, most of which are from the last two decades (cf. Apfelthaler 2018). Directionality is also a controversial issue, and this has a lot to do with the way in which we define the languages that are part of a person's linguistic repertoire. Put very simply, there is a tendency to identify the mother tongue or first language with the

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2 I would like to thank the reviewers, whose comments were very helpful to me in further developing this article.

language of the country of one's birth, at the same time automatically attributing it the highest level of competence. The matter is of course much more complex, as many sociolinguistic studies have shown (see for example Harris and Rampton 2003), yet this reductionist perspective still conditions the terminology used in classifying the languages that belong to one's linguistic repertoire – “mother tongue”, “native language”, “first language”, “second language”, “foreign language”, are just some of the most common ones –, with the consequence that all of these terms have an “ideological charge”, as pointed out in the Proceedings of the 2002 Forum on Directionality in Translating and Interpreting (cf. Kelly et al. 2003b, 35).

Pavlović (2007, 80) observes how any use of two contrasting terms can be “fundamentally misleading”. Even the terms L1 and L2, which are drawn from language acquisition studies and are probably the most commonly used because they seem to be rather neutral, carry this risk, as they “suggest a much clearer distinction between two languages than the one that exists in many real-world cases, not only when ‘bilingual’ speakers are concerned (‘bilingual’ being another term eluding easy definition).” Pavlović also reminds us how “the binary opposition between ‘L1’ and ‘L2’ rests on an idealized notion of ‘native competence’ and fails to take into account the realities of the multicultural, multilingual world we live in” (Pavlović 2007, 80). In doing so she refers to Pedersen (2000, 109), who emphasizes that the distinction between L1 and L2 does not necessarily reflect a chronological order, but rather refers to a more or less immediate availability of one language or the other to the translator. This point of view becomes particularly relevant and necessary “in the case of translators who have lived most of their lives in a linguistic environment other than that into which they were born” (Pavlović 2007, 80), which is the situation we are discussing.<sup>3</sup>

The terminology used in Translation Studies reflects these defining problems in many ways. In terms of addressing the issue, and especially with regards to the older terms, it also reflects an ethnocentric and Eurocentric worldview based on the aforementioned assumption of the uniqueness of the mother tongue, as well as the implicit correspondence between the latter and the highest level of linguistic competence. The result is an inevitable devaluation of translation into a language other than the first. The most classic example is the image which Newmark (1988, 3) creates of it, calling it “service translation” and recommending that translators avoid the practice of translation “out of their own language”. Descriptions such as “translation into the non-primary

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3 Although I am aware of the terminological ambiguity, I use the term L1 here in reference to the language which dominates in the social context in which one is born.

language” (Ahlsved 1978), “A-B translation” or “inverse translation” (Kelly et al. 2003a), contribute to the “ideological charge” mentioned previously.<sup>4</sup>

The traditional idea that translating into the first language is the most obvious and normal choice has been challenged over the last several decades (cf. Campbell 1998; Grosman et al. 2000; Pokorn 2005; Pavlović 2007; Pavlović 2013 and 2017). Scholars particularly criticise the link between direction and quality, which suggests the idea that the change of direction may have an adverse effect on the quality of translation. Several studies, which were also carried out on literary texts, demonstrate that this is not the case (see Pokorn 2005; Prunč 2000).

Despite the criticism, the “Mother Tongue Dictate”, as Stoklosinski (2013) calls it, is still very much established and diffused. As pointed out by Pavlović (2007, 81–82), “the principle that translators should only work into their mother tongue still seems to be accepted as one of the ‘golden rules’”, so much so that it is strongly advocated in the codes of ethics of many professional associations. Her empirical research conducted among translators and interpreters in Croatia, who were asked about their professional practice and their attitudes regarding directionality, reveals how translators themselves remain attached to the traditional principle, despite the fact that in their everyday practice, many of them do exactly the opposite (cf. Pavlović 2007, 89). As a result, translation out of the first language is primarily relegated to countries where so-called “languages of limited diffusion” are spoken. In other words, it is seen as a solution of necessity. This applies to both specialized translation and, even more so, literary translation.

In consideration of this premise, it is evident that speaking of direction in translation, and in particular of directionality as a change in the direction traditionally considered as normal, can still represent a taboo in literary translation discourse. Which is exactly what Bazu suggests in the opening quote. Relocating the discourse within the framework of Translator Studies, and in particular of translator biographies, may help us to address it in a more constructive way.

## **2. An outline of the research paradigm: Translator Studies**

The term *Translator Studies* denotes an increasingly emerging direction of study within Translation Studies which, as the suffix *-or* suggests, places the subject of the translation process at the centre of the investigation. The focus thus shifts from the text, which for a long time has been the main topic of research in Translation Studies (as source or target text), to the translator as person. As pointed out by Klaus Kaindl in his introduction to the volume (*Literary*) *Translator Studies* (cf. Kaindl, Kolb and

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4 For a more exhaustive overview, see the bibliography provided by Apfelthaler (2018).

Schlager 2021), this shift, which is now also reflected at the terminological level, is the result of a very long process, the beginnings of which date back to the late 1970s (see Kaindl 2021, 3–9). Nevertheless, the text has remained the main focus of Translation Studies for a very long time. Indeed, still in 2001 a scholar like Theo Hermans criticised Translation Studies for their more or less implicit demand on the translator to remain, “hidden, out of view, transparent, incorporeal, disembodied and disenfranchised” (Hermans 2001, 14).

Decisive for the emergence of a more “humanized gaze on translation” (Kaindl 2021, 5) was the publication in 2009 of the special issue *Translation Studies: Focus on the Translator* of the online journal *Hermes – Journal of Language and Communication in Business* (School of Communication and Culture at Aarhus University). Andrew Chesterman (2009, 13–14), one of the authors of the issue, points out how “(all) research on (human) translations must surely at least imply that there are indeed translators behind the translations, people behind the texts.” Pym (2009), too, invites us to deal with translators, understood as human beings; that is, to use an image the scholar had already used a few years earlier, of translators as “people with flesh-and-blood bodies” (Pym 1998, 61). From his perspective, this means above all to give space to subjectivity and the human dimension, recognising them as a constitutive part of scientific research: “A humanizing project should add positive dimensions to the critique of scientific objectivity. In particular, it should create awareness of subjectivity in both its object and its approach” (Pym 2009, 24).

The “call for humanization” (Pym 2009, 44) launched by the special issue was followed by various scientific conferences studying the translator, particularly the literary translator, from different perspectives,<sup>5</sup> which paved the way to Translator Studies. The long path that led to this subject tells us how difficult it can be to foster a research perspective that focuses on the individual, his or her history, experience, identity, and biography. At the same time, the fact that in recent times Translator Studies are gaining more visibility and importance, invites us to think that the need to recover a more human and more corporeal idea of translation is particularly felt at present. Kaindl (2021, 9) compares the discipline to “[A] house with many rooms”, each of which offers a view into a research perspective focused on the person of the literary translator. Among the various approaches he describes, I will focus on the biographical perspective, to which the translator biography belongs.

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5 To give just some examples: *Literaturübersetzer als Entdecker* held in 2013 at the University of Germersheim, The Translator Made Corporeal: Translation History and the Archive, organised in May 2017 by the British Library and University College London; *Unexpected Intersections: Translation Studies and Genetic Criticism*, held in November 2017 at the University of Lisbon; *Staging the Literary Translator: Roles, Identities, Personalities*, organised in May 2018 by the University of Vienna.

As recalled by Kaindl (2021, 15), the biographical approach has a rather long tradition in the field of Translation Studies. However, the interest in this kind of approach to the person of the translator has undoubtedly been growing in recent years, as the creation of biographical databases of translators in several languages/literatures shows: the *Swedish Translators' Encyclopedia*,<sup>6</sup> for example, which was launched by the Södertörn University Library in 2009 and has served as model for similar databases, such as the German *Germersheimer Übersetzerlexikon*,<sup>7</sup> promoted in 2014 by the Germersheim Institute for Translators and Interpreters (University of Mainz).

Unlike the databases which provide a biography of the translators in the classical sense of the term, the notion of 'translator biography', as developed in particular by Renata Makarska (2014; 2016) and Markus Eberharter (2021), refers rather to "a closer examination of those key biographical elements that were important for translation activities, in order to facilitate a better understanding of the translators and their translations [. . .]" (Eberharter 2021, 74). The term clearly recalls the concept of language biography, developed in sociolinguistics with reference to "the narrative (prevalently oral) autobiographies focusing on individuals' experiences of different varieties (dialects as well as languages)" (Franceschini 2022, 71). In a broader sense, this kind of biography can also be defined as "a result of reconstruction on the basis of language biographical statements of the person, general biographical data, as well as all available relevant information" (Novak 2012, 400; cf. Franceschini 2022, 71). Likewise, translator biographies focus on the individuals' experiences of translation, which are intimately related to the individual, autobiographical viewpoint on languages in the translator's own repertoire.

Alongside the linguistic factor, Eberharter and Makarska count other key elements such as the way one approaches the activity of translation ("the moment of transition to translation", in the terminology of Eberharter (2021, 76)), the choices of the authors and texts to be translated, the network of contacts (authors, publishers, critics, readers etc.), the translators' auto-presentations and representations of their work and their role. Eberharter also introduces the category of "*translatorial identity*",<sup>8</sup> which includes "both the issue of self-definition, i.e. the concept of self as a translator [. . .] as well as the image of one's role as a translator and of tasks fulfilled in this role, including the method of work and its evaluation" (Eberharter 2021, 76). This is a useful category which suggests how the perspectives from which the person of the translator can be observed are intimately connected: the biographical one inevitably calls into question

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6 <https://litteraturbanken.se/%C3%B6vers%C3%A4ttarlexikon/om>.

7 <http://www.uelex.de/>.

8 Italics in the quotations are in the original, unless otherwise indicated.

the sociological dimension, which focuses on “translators as social beings, as well as their relations and interactions with other agents, their social positions, status, professional networks, image and role in society” (Kaindl 2021, 14). The biographical perspective should also be related to the narratological one, since “[E]very statement a translator makes about themselves is the result of a selective and constructive process” (Kaindl 2021, 17).

In consideration of these factors, an important issue from the methodological point of view is that of collecting and gathering data that can be relevant for biographical research on translators. The sources range from autobiographical texts, interviews, paratexts from translators, personal papers, to portraits in newspapers and magazines as well as articles and essays in dictionaries and databases. Each of these raises to a greater or lesser extent the issue of fictionality, which any biographical reconstruction raises. As pointed out by Eberharter, this “latent fictionality” or “constructedness”, as he calls it, results “from the researcher’s attempt to attribute actual significance to certain biographical events in the context of how a given person became a translator” (Eberharter 2021, 74–75). From this point of view, the classification criterion adopted by Jeremy Munday (2013 and 2014) in describing this kind of textual material (“extra-textual material” in his terminology) seems to me very useful. Based on the degree of mediation of these texts, Munday distinguishes between “more overtly mediated testimonies”, such as interviews or autobiographies, for example, and “less overtly mediated testimonies”, which include working texts and paratexts from translators or epistolary exchanges (see Munday 2014, 68).

The opening quotation, for example, refers to an essay written by the translator herself, who was asked to reflect on the issue of directionality, and as such would fall into the category of more overtly mediated testimonies.

### **3. *Spracherleben*, the lived experience of language, and the issue of directionality**

Both Eberharter (2021) and Makarska (2014) do mention language among the components of translator biographies. However, while Eberharter (2021, 75) refers to “*acquisition of language competencies*” – a criterion which seems to me rather reductive, since it confines language to its cognitive and instrumental dimension –, Makarska (2014, 56–57) places the linguistic factor in the category of “*language and topographical biography*”. Through this last category, she points out the connection between language biography and the geographical and cultural space, which can have an impact on translator biography, especially in the case of multilingual and multicultural spaces. She refers to the historical space of Galicia and to translator biographies from this linguistic area. Furthermore, Makarska (ibid.) explicitly mentions the factor of multilingualism – in relation to multicultural spaces, as well as to migration phenomena – and

in this context advocates moving away from the “notion of one mother tongue” in language biographies. In this respect, even though she does not mention it explicitly, Makarska touches on the issue of directionality, challenging the traditional view of the uniqueness of the first language. This creates, in my opinion, fertile ground for thinking about directionality in terms other than those mentioned before, i.e. origins, competence, necessity, utility, opportunity.

To this purpose, I suggest taking into account the concept of *Spracherleben*, the lived experience of language, as elaborated by Brigitta Busch (see Busch 2012; 2017). Taking up the concept of *Erlebnis* as developed by Husserl (cf. Husserl [1913] 1982), the notion casts light on “the so far rather neglected question of how speakers – through emotionally loaded and bodily inscribed experience – ‘live’ the languages and ways of speaking to which they are exposed” (Busch 2017, 341). This implies a phenomenological extension of the notion of linguistic repertoire itself, which in this way sees language not only as a “set of competences” (356) determined by grammatical and social rules and conventions, but also (or even rather) “as subjected to the time-space dimensions of history and biography” (Busch 2012, 19). As pointed out by Busch, it is a fundamental extension, considering current phenomena such as increased mobility, migration, or participation in transnational networks.

Let us remember that from a phenomenological point of view, the body, more precisely the living body<sup>9</sup> “as the subject of perception, feeling, experience, action, and interaction” (Busch 2017, 350), represents the centre of experience. This idea of body has regained importance over the past few decades within the concept of embodiment, which has become central not only for cognitive sciences but also for several disciplines in the humanities (cf. Farina 2021), including Translation Studies (see Ivancic and Zepter 2022).

With regard to the latter, it is worth recalling the “phenomenological ‘way-to-translation’” elaborated by Clive Scott (2012, 2; see also Scott 2022): by engaging with Merleau-Ponty’s thought, Scott claims that the translational act should not so much be conceived as an interpretative act, but rather as a readerly experience which comes into existence through translating and implies “an existential and bodily encounter with text” and its languages (Scott 2012, xi). Although focusing on the text rather than the person of the translator, the phenomenological assumption that language is not a mere means of transforming experiences into words, but, on the contrary, fundamental for the constitution of experience itself clearly resonates in this thesis.

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9 *Leib*, in the German philosophical tradition, or *corps vivant* in the French, carried out especially by Merleau-Ponty ([1945] 2012).



Coming back to the perspective of the person of the translator, I argue that the notion of *Spracherleben* can also contribute to the reconstruction of translator biographies, especially of multilingual translators who decide to change direction. As can be assumed, this choice is intrinsically linked to the bodily and emotional dimension of perception and speech, i.e. to the lived experience of language, even before it is a cognitive act of representation and symbolisation.

Let me try to exemplify this through extra-textual testimonies of multilingual translators, starting with Livia Bazu, whose reflections on the topic of directionality opened this paper. In that same text, the translator, who arrived in Italy from Romania at the age of 12, immediately after the fall of the Iron Curtain, recounts an episode from her school years which, in her personal experience, symbolically represents the moment when Italian became the language into which she would translate, although at the time she was probably not yet aware of that choice. The episode dates back to a Latin written exam at secondary school in which she gained – the only one in the class – ten, the highest and very rare mark in Italian school assessments. The exam consisted of a translation from Latin into Italian, and in remembering the episode, Bazu recalls the sense of profound “intimacy” she felt when confronted with a form of the Latin fifth declension, which brought her in an instant back to well-known forms of the Romanian language. The sense of intimacy is provided by finding something well known, albeit distant in space and time, and recreating it in the here and now of her life in Italian. This kind of intimacy was most likely decisive for the directionality issue in the case of this translator, just as was the sense of acknowledgment symbolically represented in the mark she received.<sup>10</sup> In reflecting consciously on this episode today, Bazu (2020) states that the language choice is not so much a question of competence in single languages as of “acrobatic competence to mediate diversity”, thereby supporting what Busch (2017, 349) calls a “shift of perspective: from discourses that form the subject to the subject itself that is enabled, through its very formation, to perceive, feel, experience, act, and interact, thus to position itself vis-à-vis others and with regard to discourses.”

Something similar can be observed in the case of the author and translator Elvira Mujčić. Born in 1980 in Yugoslavia, Mujčić has lived in Italy since the age of 14 and is the Italian translator of many contemporary authors from the Yugoslav area, such as Slavenka Drakulić, Robert Perišić, Faruk Šehić. Reflecting upon the choice to translate into Italian, she explicitly emphasises the bodily and emotional dimensions of language, which she considers decisive in her relationship with Italian: “Italian did not

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<sup>10</sup> With regard to this last aspect, which draws attention to the role of discourses that form the subject, see Busch (2017, 346–349).

become my language of expression the moment I learned its vocabulary and grammar, it became so later, when, passing through me, the words acquired a body, from being volatile and intangible as they were they descended and rooted themselves in reality” (Mujčić 2020). She goes on to argue that the choice of Italian is inextricably linked to the experience of losing the language of her childhood, and the childhood itself, due to the war:

My need to translate is rooted in the experience of incommunicability and the sense of impotence in my early days in Italy. Precisely for this reason from the very beginning the direction of translating followed the trajectory of the movement of my life: from “our language” [which is the way Yugoslavian people were used and partly are still used naming the pluricentric language spoken in that country, N.d.A] toward Italian, to bring here linguistically the world and the language I had abandoned and to which I was bound by an invisible loyalty. [ . . . ]

I availed myself of the ploy of growing old in another idiom, to crystallise forever a world lost in the words of a child. The spontaneous flow which was interrupted between words and emotions in my first mother tongue, the loss of the so-called feeling for language, made me escape into another language in order to restart that circuit. And translation was the key to this revitalisation. (Mujčić 2020)

The “revitalisation” enabled by the new language, the one of writing and translating, inevitably involves the body and its memory, the latter being understood in a phenomenological sense as “the totality of our subjective perceptual and behavioural dispositions, as they are mediated by the body” (Summa et al. 2012, 418). As argued by Thomas Fuchs (2012, 19), body memory “does not represent the past, but re-enacts it” constantly through interaction with other bodies. Drawing on this concept, Busch states that:

If we conceive language as part of this body memory, it becomes possible to understand repertoire in its biographical dimension, as a structure bearing the traces of past experiences of situated interactions, and of everyday linguistic practices derived from this experience, a structure that is constantly present in our current linguistic perceptions, interpretations, and actions, and is simultaneously directed forward, anticipating future situations and events we are preparing to face. (Busch 2017, 352)

From this point of view, it can be assumed that translating from the languages and literatures of the Yugoslav area into Italian enables the translator to recreate the experience of familiarity which was interrupted in the first language and thus to re-enact the memory of the body by means of another language (see also Mujčić 2022).

In the quoted text, Mujčić also emphasizes how she would not be able to translate into the so-called mother tongue and how this statement always arouses much disbe-

lief in others. At the same time, she notes that she often feels compelled to justify her choice to change direction as translator, even more than she does with respect to choosing to write in Italian. Here we return to the thought which opened this paper, namely that changing direction as literary translators seems to be perceived as even more risky than doing so in writing.

Another very interesting and particular case is that of the author and translator Ilma Rakusa. Born in 1946 in Slovakia to a Slovenian father and a Hungarian mother, Rakusa has lived in Zürich since 1951, after having spent her early childhood in Budapest, Ljubljana and Trieste. Her biography is thus representative of what Schmitz (2020, 141) calls a “transcultural biography”, and the term *transcultural* is also appropriate for her rich translational oeuvre, in which there are several source languages (Russian, Serbo-Croatian, French and Hungarian), while the target language is always German. Rakusa translated, among others, Marina Zwetajewa, Danilo Kiš, Marguerite Duras, Imre Kertész.

Rakusa dedicated various essays to the topic of translation, including a lecture as part of her Dresden Poetics Lectures (see Rakusa 2006), in which she primarily addresses the relationship between authorship and translation from her own experience, as well as her relationship to the translated authors and works. Interestingly, she does not mention the directionality issue, but at the same time, her statements about the translated authors are also telling with regard to this topic. For example, referring to the author Danilo Kiš, she writes that he described a Central Europe, the so-called Mitteleuropa, “that seemed to spring from the memory space of my family”. The crucial factor for her “translational adventure”, as she calls it, was a fascination based “on the paradox of simultaneous familiarity and strangeness” (Rakusa 2006, 53). In this, as well as in other authors, Rakusa finds her Mitteleuropean history and recognises her own “desire for a poetic *back to the roots*” (74). From this point of view, translating those authors and languages responds to the mentioned desire, which, as the author points out, “is only possible as a *work in progress*, a continuous search” (74). From the same perspective, German appears indispensable to this research, and it is significant that in another text Rakusa (2008) describes the German language as a refuge, a kind of “‘reliable’ counterpoint in the ‘language orchestra’ that the author has to conduct in her head” (Schmitz 2020, 146).

The bilingualism or multilingualism of the mentioned translators is in all three cases the expression of a history of migration which, in turn, has different historical and socio-political reasons and origins. As such, they all highlight the close connection between biography and the lived experience of language. To say it again with Busch (2017, 349–350): “Taking a subject perspective makes it easier to focus on the biographical dimension of the linguistic repertoire, that is, to reconstruct how from a speaker’s

perspective the repertoire, starting in early childhood, develops and changes throughout life." I would claim that this perspective is not only useful, but also necessary when questioning the issues of directionality and, more broadly, of multilingualism and translation from the perspective of Translator Studies.

#### **4. Some concluding remarks**

Finally, it might be interesting to return to the aspect mentioned at the beginning and also highlighted by the quoted translators, namely that choosing the other language as the language to translate into is still viewed with some suspicion within the field of literary translation. One reason, at least from the European perspective, may be the attachment to the concept of mother tongue. The aforementioned 'Mother Tongue Dictate' probably affects the way we approach those who translate into a language that is not their first, just as it affects the way we approach those who write in a language other than their first. However, as the quoted extra-textual testimonies highlight, scepticism is even greater on the translation side, and my guess is that this happens because translators who change direction trigger the tricky questions of authorship, subjectivity, visibility and belonging, even more than translators who translate into their first language.

To support this hypothesis, it may be useful to recall the poststructuralist concept of a speaker "as a subject formed through and in language and discourse" (Busch 2017, 346). During the translation process, the moment of subjectification occurs through the translation itself. Aleksey Tashinskiy (2014) applies this notion of the subject, which he borrows from psychoanalysis, to the person of the translator, pointing out that the constitution of the subject always takes place in relation to an Other: in the case of the translator, the author of the original text and the text itself. Here the scholar finds an explanation for the complex and sometimes contradictory relationship between translators and authors, as well as the ambiguous status of the translator, who needs the author but at the same time constitutes him- or herself as a subject through his or her own language, as well as his or her own voice (see Tashinskiy 2014).

It is quite evident that this process becomes even more complex in the case of translators who change direction, since in this case the subject constitutes him- or herself through a language which also becomes his or her own through the process of translation. The process of constituting oneself through language therefore becomes more visible, and so do the translators themselves. This inevitably raises questions concerning the relationship between familiarity and strangeness, as well as the uncomfortable issue of to whom language belongs.

At the same time, translator biographies such as those outlined in this paper shed light on "the exceptional importance of bodily and emotional dimension of language

as gesture oriented toward the other” (Busch 2017, 355), which is still neglected by linguists, as well as by Translation Studies scholars. In both fields, however, there is a need for it. In regards to this, Translator Studies and particularly the paradigm of translator biographies linked to the concept of the lived experience of language represent a significant opportunity, not least to address the issue of directionality in the field of literary translation in a constructive way that reflects the plurality of existential pathways.

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## Suunalisus ja *Spracherleben* mitmekeelsete ilukirjandustõlkijate elulugudes

Barbara Ivancic

**Võtmesõnad:** tõlketeadus, tõlkija elulugu, suunalisus, elatav keelekogemus, mitmekeelsus, subjektiivsus

Artiklis käsitletakse suunalisuse küsimust, s.t ülekandesuunda tõlkeprotsessis mitmekeelsete tõlkijate perspektiivist, kes tõlgivad keelde, mis pole nende emakeel. Suunalisus on tõlkeuringutes oluline ning ka vastuoluline teema, mis on viimastel kümnenditel põhjustanud elavat arutelu. Sel on palju tegemist viisiga, kuidas me defineerime keeli, mis moodustavad osa inimese keelelisest repertuaarist. Nagu mitmed uurijad osutavad, on traditsioonilised ja kõige laiemalt kasutatavad dihhotoomiad nagu esimene ja teine keel või emakeel ja võõrkeel kõik äärmiselt küsitavad, sest viitavad selgetele eristusjoontele, mida selles multikultuurse maailmas, milles me elame, paljudel juhtudel ei eksisteeri.

Tõlkeuringutes kasutatav terminoloogia peegeldab neid defineerimisprobleeme mitmeti. Suunalisusküsimuse puudutamisel, eriti vanemate terminite osas, peegeldab see ka rahvuskeskset ja eurosentristlikku maailmavaadet, mis põhineb emakeele ainulaadsuse eeldamisel ning selle ja kõrgeima taseme keelelise pädevuse implitsiitsel vastavusseviimisel. Tulemuseks on mitte-emakeelde tõlkimise paratamatu devalveerimine.

Traditsioonilist mõtet, et emakeelde tõlkimine on kõige ilmsem ja normaalsem valik, on viimaste kümnendite jooksul küsimärgi alla seatud. Enamikul juhtudel jääb debatt fundamentaalselt kinnitunuks tõlketeaduse peamise uurimisobjekti, see tähendab teksti külge. Kuid käesolevas artiklis panakse ette siduda suunalisusteema tõlkija isikuga ning seega vaadelda seda niinimetatud tõlkijauuringute kontekstis, mis on tõlketeaduse valdkonnas üpris uus ning alles kujunemisejärgus valdkond, mille eesmärgiks on seada teadusuuringute keskmesse isik. Viimastel aastatel on tõlkijakeskne lähenemine arenenud mitmes suunas, sealhulgas hõlmates ilukirjandustõlkijate uurimise metodoloogilisi ja kontseptuaalseid vaatenurki. Elulooline perspektiiv, millele käesolev uurimus osutab, on üks neist. Täpsemalt on kasutatavaks paradigmatõlkijaelulugu – mõiste, mis ilmselt meenutab keele-elulugu, sotsiolingvistikas välja töötatud mõistet, mis on seotud eluloonarratiividega, mis keskenduvad indiviidide keelekogemustele. Ka tõlkijaelulood keskenduvad indiviidide keelekogemustele, mis on intiimselt seotud isiklike, autobiograafiliste vaatepunktidega tõlkija enda repertuaaris esinevatele keeltele. Siinkohal soovitan arvesse võtta elatud keelekogemuse mõistet (*Spracherleben*), mis valgustab taju ning kõne kehalist ja emotsionaalset mõõdet, viidates seega fenomenoloogilisele eeldusele, et keel pole üksnes vahend kogemuste sõnadesse valamiseks, vaid vastupidi, sel on fundamentaalne tähtsus kogemuse enese moodustumisel.

Väites, et see perspektiiv pole suunalisusteemade küsimärgi alla seadmisel mitte üksnes kasulik, vaid ka vajalik, käsitleb artikkel kolme mitmekeelse tõlkija kogemusi, kes tõlgivad keelde, mis pole nende jaoks sünnijärgne. Nendeks on Rumeenia päritolu itaalia ilukirjandustõlkija Livia Bazu, Elvira Mujčić, kes on elanud Itaalias alates 14. eluaastast ja tõlkinud itaalia keelde mitmeid nüüdiskirjanikke, kes on pärit Jugoslaavia regioonist, kus ka ta ise on sündinud, ning Ilma Rakusa, kes on 1951. aastast saadik elanud Zürichis, olles veetnud varajase lapsepõlve Budapestis, Ljubljanas ja Triestes ning kelle

„kultuuriülene elulugu“ peegeldub tema rikkalikus tõlkeloomingus, millesse kuulub mitmeid lähtekeeli (vene, serbohorvaadi, prantsuse ja ungari keel), kuid tema sihtkeeleks on alati saksa keel.

Mainitud tõlkijad on kõik ka ise kirjanikud ning nende kakskeelsuses või mitmekeelsuses väljendub migratsioonialalugu, millel on omakorda erisuguseid ajaloolisi ja majandus-poliitilisi põhjusi. Kõik need rõhutavad omakorda eluloo ning elatud keelekogemuse tihedat seotust. Tõlkijate tunnistustest nähtub ka, et teise keele valimisele keeleks, millesse tõlkida, vaadatakse ilukirjandustõlke vallas ikka veel teatava kahtlusega. Lisaks tundub, et seda peetakse isegi riskantsemaks kui suunalisuse muutmist ilukirjanduse loomisel. Oletan, et see toimub nii seetõttu, et traditsioonilisele seisukohale väljakutse esitavad ilukirjandustõlkijad käivitavad keerukaid küsimusi autorsusest, subjektiivsusest, nähtavusest ning kuuluvusest isegi rohkem kui tõlkijad, kes tõlgivad oma emakeelde. Selles suhtes pakuvad tõlkijauuringud ning eelkõige elatud keele kogemuse mõistega seotud tõlkijaelulugude paradigma olulist võimalust tegelda suunalisusküsimusega konstruktiivsemal moel.

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