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In search of an 'international translation studies'

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In search of an 'international translation studies': Tracing *terceme* and *tercüme* in the blogosphere[1]

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The idea of a more 'international' and 'multilingual' translation studies has been explored since the beginning of the twenty-first century. It has been argued that a truly international and 'de-Westernised' translation studies can and should learn from indigenous and varied conceptualisations of 'translation' around the world. The departure point of this article is the idea that before 'exporting' concepts out of a given translational tradition for the use of international researchers, one might wish to explore whether these concepts have relevance to present day practices within the continuation of the same tradition. The objective of the article is to find out whether the Ottoman concepts of *terceme*, and its later derivative *tercüme*, might yield insights into translation as part of digital text production on the internet. Focusing on a successful Turkish mommy blog, the paper will seek *not* to de-contextualise *terceme* or *tercüme*, but to find out whether at least some of their characteristics can be traced within contemporary blogs in Turkish, and whether they might therefore have insights to offer for researchers working on translation and cyberactivism in general, and translation in the blogosphere in particular.

Keywords: internationalisation of translation studies, *terceme*, *tercüme*, blogosphere, orality, mommy blogs

Background

Since the turn of the 21st century, translation studies has witnessed an 'internationalization' of the discipline (Chan 2004; Cheung 2006, 2009a, 2012; Hermans 2006; Hung and Wakabayashi 2005; Ricci and van der Putten 2011; Rose 2000; Susam-Sarajeva 2002; Tymoczko 2007; Wakabayashi and Kothari 2009). These works aimed to foreground not only different practices of translating worldwide but also the accompanying discourses on translation which were previously largely ignored in Western discourses. Their common objective was to push back the geographical and conceptual boundaries of translation studies as a historically Eurocentric discipline and to encourage learning from other discourses on translation in order to produce new models, conduct new theoretical explorations and thus further 'internationalize' the field. The debate surrounding internationalization is still lively, as has been demonstrated in the Forum 'Universalism in Translation Studies' in issues 7.1 and 7.3 of *Translation Studies* (2014) and in recent conferences.[2]

In one key work, Maria Tymoczko (2007) argues that "translation studies needs to adopt a broader – in fact, an open – definition of the subject matter at the heart of the discipline [...]" and that "there is a recursive relationship between the openness of meaning in translation, the empowerment of the translator, and the enlargement of the concept translation beyond Western metaphors related to transfer" (2007, 8). Tymoczko's concern is that the English word 'translation' denotes a Western concept deeply rooted in literacy, overlooking oral translation practices prevalent worldwide, mainly shaped by the practices of Bible translation, influenced by the ideal of a single 'pure' language corresponding to a 'unified' nation, and "closely associated with imperialism and its ancillary belief in a hierarchical relationship of languages and cultures" (2007, 57). She offers the notion of '*translation', with an asterisk, indicating "a cross-linguistic, cross-temporal, and cross-cultural concept in the emerging international discipline of translation studies" (2007, 75). Unlike the Western European notion of 'translation', which is often based on the understanding of a prototype category posited *a priori*, *translation is a 'cluster concept', where family resemblances

amongst relevant products and practices are pragmatically observed and described (2007, 83-100). According to Tymoczko "viewing *translation as a cluster concept permits translations of all cultures and all times to be worthy of equal consideration in the construction of translation theory [...]" (2007, 98). For this purpose, she discusses terms and concepts with highly diverse "etymologies, cognates, image-schemas or metaphoric meanings, lexical fields, histories, and specific practices", such as transcreation; *chaya*, *rupantar* and *anuvad* from India; cannibalism from Brazil; *fanyi* from China; *tarjama* from Arabic; *tapia* and *kowa* from the Nigerian language Igbo; *pagsalin* from Tagalog, and so on (2007, 68-77). Tymoczko points out that the "embedded presuppositions about translation in these words, as well as the translation histories and practices associated with them, suggest meanings that are as valid for understanding the international concept *translation as those of the English word *translation*" (2007, 76), yet these words "have not been fully researched or theorized, nor have they entered common discourses about translation in the international discipline of translation studies" (*ibid*.).

I agree with Tymoczko's contention that "de-Westernizing translation studies and adopting a cluster concept approach" will ultimately "encourage creativity in translation practices" in that translators will be "encouraged to borrow, blend and invent new translation strategies to meet their current immediate and long-range needs" (2009, 411). Could translation scholars similarly be "encouraged to borrow, blend and invent" concepts when researching local and/or global practices which cannot be adequately described or explained through the use of the word 'translation'? Such a move could potentially begin to address some of the questions raised by Martha Cheung about how successful initiatives to internationalize the discipline have been and what it would mean in practice to promote a translation studies that is non-Eurocentric (2009b, 229). It could prevent these endeavours ending up, in Cheung's words, as "a mere tokenization of the Other", or the "appropriation of [...local] discourses on translation by scholars theorizing from the metropolitan centres"

(*ibid.*). I would also argue that such a move could act as a reminder for us never to drop the asterisk from *translation, nor to revert back to a Western European understanding of translation as a highly-regulated transfer of meaning between two languages and two well-defined texts.

New concepts for new media

In recent years, considerable attention has been paid to the challenges of researching translation and interpreting in new settings such as digital media, which require alternative theoretical frameworks, methods and conceptual tools. This article aims to deepen our knowledge of *translation in the context of social media and to integrate local and/or historical concepts of translation with mainstream discourses in the discipline. It was possible to export Western European conceptions about 'translation' to a worldwide audience; terms and concepts from other traditions may prove to be similarly portable, if they prove to be meaningful and effective in explaining contemporary translational phenomena. Importantly, before 'exporting' translation-related concepts out of a given tradition for the use of international researchers, one might begin by exploring whether these concepts are relevant to present day practices within the continuation of the same translational tradition. The article will therefore trace two allegedly time-bound and culture-bound concepts, *terceme* (Ottoman) and *tercüme* (Ottoman/Turkish) within the blogosphere, bringing in Turkish examples from a particular genre of blogging.

Since their popularisation in the 1990s, blogs have become a highly diverse medium of communication, fully embedded in political, social and economic life (for a brief history and definitions of blogs, see e.g. McNeill 2009, 146-154; Miller and Shepherd 2004). The emergence of big social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp, have not been detrimental to the hundreds of millions of blogs active today; the relationship between the two seems to be more complementary than competitive. People still blog today "to

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document their own life, express their opinions, have an outlet for catharsis, inspire their own creative juices and participate in a community forum" (Nardi et al., cited in Lopez 2009, 734).

Despite the prevalence of blogs, translation activities in the blogosphere are under-researched (e.g. Pérez-González 2010; McDonough Dolmaya 2011). Studying blogs from a translation studies perspective can offer us valuable insights into translation in use by lay people, for lay people. Blogs, after all, are seen as "a welcome rise in the status of ordinary people" (Myers 2010, 125), as opposed to professionals. Translational phenomena in blogs appear, on the whole, to be carried out by people who do not see translation as their profession, who do not receive payment for it and, most importantly for my arguments here, who do not necessarily conform to professional standards and expectations of translation. The way they approach translation is not necessarily constrained by training or formal education in translation, or the patronage and expectations of a commissioner, other than those of their intended audience.

Limitations of the term 'translation' when researching blogs

During my research on translation and new media (e.g. Susam-Sarajeva 2010) the term 'translation' kept emerging both as a yardstick against which one is tempted to measure the output of non-professionals and, also, as a straightjacket. Having started their existence as weblogs, lists of links to noteworthy sites on the web, blogs embody hypertextuality to an extent that is hard to find in other genres (Myers 2010, 8); indeed, hypertextuality is the rule rather than the exception. Blogs often do not make full sense unless you click on at least some of the links that are embedded in them. Users of blogs have thus developed a reading habit that is in keeping with the blogging style, going back and forth between links. This, on top of further forms of intertextuality in blogs, such as quotations, echoing of familiar slogans, commonplaces, new phrases or acronyms (Myers 2010, 45), make it more difficult to talk

about 'texts' in the blogosphere, let alone identifiable source and target texts, or translations and non-translations – i.e. fundamental concepts within translation studies research.

The second reason for the unease I have felt with the words 'text' and 'translation' in the context of new media, and blogs in particular, is the orality inherent in blogs. The question of how much orality actually exists in today's digital communication networks is still open for debate. Some scholars, following Walter Ong's influential work on 'primary' and 'secondary' orality' (1982), argue that there is a 'digital orality' involved in computer-mediated communication forms such as podcasting and vodcasting (Barrow online). Others (e.g. Papacharissi 2015) extend the concepts of 'secondary orality' and 'digital orality' to other online networked platforms, including those that are mainly text-based, such as blogs, where the relevant communication technologies "blur the distinction between formal writing and speech" (Lieber 2010, 628). In contrast to the print media that preceded them, digital/electronic media "reprise several qualities of oral cultures, including simultaneity of action and reaction, widespread access, an emphasis on feeling over analysis, and a weakening of centralized authority" (Miller and Shepherd 2009, 282). While the ancestral genres of blogs are in written form – diary and journal but also log, commonplace book, curio collection, media monitoring service, anthology and genres of political journalism such as pamphlet and editorial (Miller and Shepherd 2004) – blogs use certain features which bring them close to oral forms of communication. They are personal and often informal in style, despite the fact that most readers are, at least initially, strangers. Blogs borrow heavily and strategically from patterns of spoken communication including directly addressing the audience through the use of the personal pronoun 'you'; enacting conversational interaction; using questions, directives, conversational self-interruption, and emoticons (Myers 2010, 79-85). The concept of translation, deeply rooted in primary literacy, does not adequately address the impact and significance of these traits of orality in the blogosphere.

As a corollary, audience design is a constraint on blogs; in order to survive, blogs *have* to be interactive (Myers 2010, 112). One of the most obvious features of blogs, the regular updates, is necessitated by this drive towards interaction (Blanchard 2004). Bloggers usually facilitate audience response via a comments section, rendering the medium suitable for "many-to-many rather than one-to-many interactions" (Myers 2010, 93). Considering blogs not as objects or products but as 'events' "aligns with the network model of production, in which the collective act of production is as central as the resulting interwoven texts to understanding the act and purpose of communication" (Morrison 2011, 45). This many-to-many interaction amongst bloggers turns into an 'intimate conversation' which supports the whole blogging community.

My final reason for trying to find alternative concepts to the term 'translation' in my research is linked to the appellative function of blogs, especially of those with an activist agenda. Bloggers use a range of direct and indirect devices "that can make readers feel like they are being talked to, included in a group, and involved in the blog" (Myers 2010, 77). They see their blogs as a way of developing relationships and social networks, e.g. through linking back to other blogs, indicating "'the tribe to which they wish to belong'" (Blood, cited in Miller and Shepherd 2004).[3] The careful way bloggers present their opinions indicates how aware they are of the sensibilities, knowledge, expectations and concerns of their potential readers. "[M]aintaining traffic and link statistics seems important to bloggers" (Miller and Shepherd 2004) as they are keen to know how many people from which parts of the world are reading their blogs. This appellative function, the drive towards building communities, and bloggers' awareness of their readers' backgrounds necessitate a 'freer' and more creative approach to the use of source material during the 'text' production process, to the extent that it becomes difficult to pinpoint where any translational activity starts and where it finishes giving way to autochthonous material.

It is for these reasons that I find the concept of 'translation' rather lacking when it comes to research on blogs. In order to substantiate this argument, I will focus on a particular form of blogging which started in the Anglophone world, but has also found its way into the Turkish blogosphere.

Mommyblogs

Within the blogosphere and within research on the blogosphere, attention has hitherto focused on so-called 'filter-style' blogs, where the blogger's role is primarily that of an editor and annotator of links to topical news and political information, or on knowledge-logs, focusing on technology – i.e. both 'important stuff', usually associated with male bloggers (Herring et al. 2004; Lopez 2009, 734).[4] I would like to address this gender imbalance by focusing on 'mommy bloggers'. This genre of blogging clearly demonstrates the hypertextuality, orality and community-building aspects discussed above, and therefore offers a significant opportunity for gauging the suitability of alternative terms for 'translation'.

The term 'mommy blogger' has come to be the generic name for a widespread and diverse group of users,[5] despite the unease which went with the title itself. Motherhood could be "a source of pride", but being referred to as a 'mommy' could lead to belittling or patronizing (Lopez 2009, 730, 737), and could act as a constraint on those who project multiple and fragmented identities on their blogs in addition to being mothers (*ibid*., 738).[6] Even though they often include references to motherhood in their blogs' titles, such as *Chronicles of a Young Mother* or *Wading through Motherhood*, mommy bloggers do not only write about motherhood or their children; they also write about subjects ranging from their occupation to popular culture or current events. Their style is informal, often employing humour and levity to keep their audience engaged.

In the ostensibly male-dominated arena of the blogosphere, mommy bloggers have come to be regarded with the same suspicion and marginalisation initially directed to women

authors of diaries, journals or autobiographies, which allegedly expressed the personal and emotional – read by some as superficial, pedestrian, domestic, and trivial (Siegel 2001; Herring et al. 2004; Lopez 2009, 734).[7] Yet mommy bloggers are quick to point out that theirs is "a radical act" (Bradley, cited in Lopez 2009, 730). It transgresses the conventions of the virtual public sphere by 'airing dirty laundry in public', threatens the patriarchal public/private dichotomy by bringing motherhood 'out of the closet', and embraces the identity of 'mother', despite all the modern-day frustration and concerns over failure or being overwhelmed that come with it. This genre of blogging can be seen as an "expansion of the private sphere" or a "new kind of 'public' private" (Lieber 2010, 622) or "an intimate public" (Morrison 2011, 37) where one can, within the confines of a limited online space, have a "more pronounced voice and reach an expanded network of 'insiders'" (Lieber 2010, 632). The audience for these blogs usually remains small in scale, as the texts "circulate according to *network* rather than *broadcast* theories of transmission" (Morrison 2011, 37, emphasis in original). These blogs thus offer an environment where

> [b]y disclosing and withholding information by turns, wooing some readers and discouraging others, these writers collectively labor to turn an individual set of private experiences into a public discourse that can nevertheless retain the intimacy of private speech among close confidants (Morrison 2011, 51).

Mommy bloggers focus on the daily joys and struggles of being real-life parents, which is a far cry from the sanitised-idealised or sensationalized images of motherhood propagated by the mainstream media (Bradley, cited in Lopez 2009, 732). This is the gist of their contribution to society: focusing on the "unexciting, every day, in between stuff" that "doesn't sell" (*ibid.*) but that exposes the widely upheld myths of motherhood. Much has been written on blogging's simultaneously self-constructing, ego-gratifying, social-action-fostering

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and community building aspects (e.g. Miller and Shepherd 2004; Blanchard 2004; Lopez 2009; Grafton 2009). While blogs perpetuate the modern-day individual's fascination with "self-expression" and "mediated voyeurism and exhibitionism", they concurrently serve the purposes of establishing relationships and community development (Miller and Shepherd 2004). If social support is defined by interconnectedness and networks of shared norms, values and ideologies (Oakley 1992, 29), mommy blogs embody them all. As Lori Kido Lopez observes,

> [...] these communities gain strength from their democratic spirit; instead of learning about parenting from experts or institutions, this generation of parents prefers to garner wisdom from those who are striving alongside them. It is *community-building in the classic oral tradition*, harkening to a time when women *shared stories* between each other instead of relying on institutions or male experts for advice on child-rearing; for example, Dr Spock's industry of self-help advice (Lopez 2009, 743; my emphases).

This new form of storytelling ushers in the notion of voice. Getting one's voice across is a recurrent theme in women's rationalizations for blogging in general, regardless of whether they are mothers or not. Women often venture into blogging in order to "give voice" to their experiences and feelings which would otherwise not be possible in their immediate day-to-day environment and societies at large. Through their blog entries they try "to vent", "to shout out to the entire world", to let out their "primal scream" (Lieber 2010, 629).[8] Mommy blogs thus emerge as sites where the links between voice, orality, community-building and online activism are highly visible.

Interlingual activities in the 'Blogging Mom'

While blogger mothers in the Anglophone world avail themselves of the opportunities offered by the digital platform to share personal stories of everyday motherhood and thus support each other through challenging transitional periods, their counterparts in Turkey have quite a different attitude towards the use of expert advice. In her analysis of the phenomenon of blogger moms in Turkey, ethnographer Selcan Gürçayır Teke observes that through mommy blogs, the knowledge pertaining to motherhood is no longer passed on from one generation to the next, as was the case until about the end of the 20th century, but is instead shared in a digital environment, thus making the culture of motherhood publicly visible (2014, 35). As the rift between their generation and those of their mothers widens, contemporary mothers in Turkey are, like in many other cultures, juggling a variety of social roles. At the same time, they feel the need to "read, research, even become experts in diverse areas such as medicine, psychology and pedagogy" (*ibid*., 42).[9] Suggestions by grandmothers about childcare and education may be met by the new generation with scepticism, regarded as inappropriate, inefficient or downright harmful for the child. Therefore, mommy blogs in Turkey seek to acquire and regularly update information on a large scale. More often than not this information is derived from sources in foreign languages, mainly English, introducing interlingual activities into the blogs.

Gürçayır Teke considers the frequent recourse to foreign sources found in these blogs as a means to camouflage or circumvent any immediate generational conflicts the bloggers might be experiencing within their lives (2014, 43). Out of self-censorship and self-protection, most bloggers avoid referring to struggles within the family, particularly with elderly family members, who have traditionally been highly respected. Gürçayır Teke sums this trend up (2014, 43):

By including details of up-to-date scientific research concerning childcare and child-rearing practices, blogger mothers professionalize and neutralize the field. It can be

hypothesized that the professionalization and neutralization pre-empt any possible generational conflicts, through 'expert knowledge' deemed to be true.

Traditional knowledge, passed on orally from one generation to the next, gives way to scientific knowledge within the virtual environment. The voices of foreign experts are strategically interwoven with the voice of the blogger. In order to exemplify these multiple voices within blogs I shall now give examples from one of the most popular mommy blogs in Turkish, *Blogcu anne* [The blogging mom, at http://blogcuanne.com/], hosted since 2009 by Elif Doğan, who is also a natural-birth activist and the initiator of the Breastfeeding Reform in Turkey.[10] The subheading on her home-page banner reads "Annelik her zaman tozpembe değil" [Motherhood is not always rosy]; in 2013 Doğan published a book with the same title, collating some of her blog entries. I focus on this particular blog because Doğan's background as someone who has lived, attended university and worked both in the United States and in Turkey gives her a particular edge when it comes to being able to access sources in English and to gather information from them.

Interlingual activities appear in various forms and guises in the pages of Doğan's blog. The first manifestation of foreign sources is passages told in reported speech. These passages provide brief information on research findings, opinions and arguments from an acknowledged foreign source, usually accompanied by phrases such as "according to X…", but offering no precise reference. For instance, "Ina May Gaskin, meslektaşlarıyla birlikte yaptırdığı üç bini aşkın doğumun sadece 1.7'inde sezaryene gerek duyulduğunu söylüyor" [Ina May Gaskin notes that amongst the 3,000 plus births she and her fellow midwives attended, only 1.7% of them necessitated c-sections],[11] which presumably refers to the statistics offered at the end of Gaskin's *Ina May's Guide to Childbirth* (2003).

Longer direct quotations from an acknowledged foreign author's writings can be found embedded into the blogger's commentary. For instance, an entry focusing on natural

birth[12] includes two quotations in Turkish translation from Randi Hutter Epstein's *Get Me Out: A History of Childbirth from the Garden of Eden to the Sperm Bank* (2011) as well as a sentence from Gaskin's above-mentioned work. In another entry[13] Doğan summarizes some of the main points of Ricki Lake and Abby Ebstein's film *The Business of Being Born* (2008) and their subsequent book *Your Best Birth* (2010), as well as providing translations of brief quotations from both. Elsewhere, quotations from Harvey Karp's *Happiest Baby on the Block* (2002) are interspersed with the blogger's summary of Karp's main principles on child-rearing.[14]

In a particularly noteworthy example, 'What your doctor does not tell you about pregnancy',[15] Doğan choses passages from Vicki Iovine's *The Girlfriends' Guide to Pregnancy: Or everything your doctor won't tell you* (2011), translates them, adapts them to the Turkish context and enhances them with her own experiences as well as those of other mothers she personally knows; she thus effectively erases the differences between 'translation', 'adaptation', and 'original' writing. In another case, a prose version of a poem by Helen Buckley, 'A Little Boy',[16] is offered, as a poignant summary of the pitfalls of the mass education system in Turkey. [17]

Let me now turn to an in-depth example in order to give a better idea of the weaving of the blogger's voice with that of the foreign expert. I have chosen this example because it reflects in detail the variety of the interlingual strategies involved and because it was relatively easy for me to locate the source text passages, for which no page numbers are provided in the blog entry, due to my familiarity with the work in question.

The entry focusing on 'Sphincter Law'[18] incorporates brief passages based on Gaskin's work retold with the use of the Turkish inferential tense suffix *–miş*, which indicates one has heard about something and has not personally done or witnessed it. This is also the standard suffix used in recounting hearsay, stories and fairy tales, as well as reported speech. The entry also includes one abridged quotation of an anecdotal experience recounted by

Gaskin, presented within quotation marks (see Gaskin 2003, 174-5) and a ten-sentence summary of headings and information from pages 172-182 of her *Guide to Childbirth* (2003), again within quotation marks. The entry concludes with hyperlinks to further information on Gaskin and to an interview with her, both in English, as an invitation to readers to continue reading about the renowned American midwife. Below I shall examine the passages told in reported speech, those embedded in the blogger's own narrative.

In her book, Gaskin foregrounds "The Basics of Sphincter Law" through a bullet point format, set apart from the main body of text in a frame, and lists them as follows:

- Excretory, cervical, and vaginal sphincters function best in an atmosphere of intimacy and privacy – for example, a bathroom with a locking door or a bedroom, where interruption is unlikely or impossible.

- These sphincters cannot be opened at will and do not respond well to commands (such as 'Push!' or 'Relax!').

- When a person's sphincter is in the process of opening, it may suddenly close down if that person becomes upset, frightened, humiliated, or self-conscious. Why? High levels of adrenaline in the bloodstream do not favor (sometimes, they actually prevent) the opening of the sphincters. This inhibition factor is one important reason why women in traditional societies have mostly chosen other women – except in extraordinary circumstances – to attend them in labor and birth.

- The state of the relaxation of the mouth and jaw is directly correlated to the ability of the cervix, the vagina, and the anus to open to full capacity. (I recommend that you remember this if you ever suffer from hemorrhoids and are afraid to poop, as this aspect of Sphincter Law is helpful in this situation as well.) (Gaskin 2003, 170)

Doğan lists these laws as follows,[19] not necessarily in bullet point format, but as short

paragraphs (In this passage, she uses the *–miş* suffix throughout, which could have been

translated into English as 'apparently' or 'according to Gaskin'; for the sake of avoiding

repetition, I have opted to simply mention this at the outset):

Boşaltım ve doğum sürecinde devreye giren, Sfinkter adı verilen bu kas grupları, ancak

ve ancak özele ve mahremiyete saygı duyulan ortamlarda etkili bir şekilde

işleyebilirmiş. Kapısı kilitli bir banyo gibi…

Bu kas grupları Ikın! ya da Gevşe! gibi dışarıdan verilen komutlarla isteme bağlı olarak

gevşetilemezmiş.

Bir insanın sfinkterleri, açılma sürecindeyken, o insanın korkması, sinirlenmesi, ya da

herhangi bir şekilde rahatsız hissetmesi sonucunda aniden kapanabilirmiş. Neden?

Çünkü kan dolaşımındaki yüksek miktarda adrenalin bu kasların açılmasını

önleyebilirmiş. Doğum yapmakta olan bir hayvanın, saldırı tehtidi hissetmesiyle aniden

doğumunu durdurup koşmaya başlayabilmesi de bu sebepleymiş.

İnsanın ağzının ve çenesinin gevşek olması vücuttaki diğer sfinkterleri de etkiler, ağzın

ve çenenin rahat bırakılması dışkılama sırasında anüsün, doğum sırasında da serviks ve

vajinanın tam olarak açılmasını sağlarmış.

[These muscle groups, called Sphincters, which go into action in the processes of

elimination and birth, can only function efficiently in an environment where privacy is

respected. Such as a bathroom with a locked door...

These muscle groups cannot be relaxed at will through outsiders' commands such as

Push! or Relax!

When a person's sphincter is in the process of opening, it may suddenly close down if

that person becomes frightened, nervous, or disturbed. Why? Because high levels of

adrenaline in the bloodstream can prevent the opening of these muscles. For the same

reason, if an animal feels threatened during birth, it can suddenly stop the birthing

process and start running.

Keeping the mouth and jaw relaxed has an impact on the other sphincters in the body,

enabling the anus to open fully during elimination, and the cervix and vagina during

birth.]

In these passages, medical jargon shared by practicing midwives such as Gaskin (e.g.

"excretory, cervical, and vaginal") are explained in lay terms ("elimination and birth").

References to medical conditions deemed irrelevant to the discussion, such as those related to

hemorrhoids, are omitted. Information gleaned from other parts of the same book (Gaskin

2003, 174) which the blogger apparently found interesting and pertinent are added in (the

reference to the 'fight-or-flight' hormones in relation to giving birth, with animals given as an

example). The blogger deletes references to home birth, which, unlike in the United Kingdom

where the book was first published, is not supported by the national health services in Turkey,

and references to the questioning of the male presence during birth. The latter is presumably

deleted because the majority of births in Turkey are attended not by midwives but by

obstetricians, who are likely to be male. The phrase "upset, frightened, humiliated, or self-

conscious" is softened to "frightened, nervous, or disturbed", avoiding difficult questions such

as who or what could cause mothers to feel humiliated or self-conscious during birth.

To approach this passage through the lens of the term 'translation', and the

expectations that go together with this term, would be to do injustice to it. The impact Doğan

wants to achieve with her entry is contingent on her making the information as accessible and

striking as possible, without alienating the readers with medical jargon or with details that

would go against the established conventions of birthing in Turkey. She is therefore selective.

Furthermore she uses the reported speech, through the *–miş* suffix, bringing her narrative

close to the immediacy and promixity of storytelling for didactic purposes. As Papacharissi observes:

> Every era is characterized by its own orality or preference for a particular variety of storytelling. It is these traditions of storytelling that eventually amalgamate collective and subjective interpretations of signs and symbols into what we consider relevant and familiar – what comes as close as possible […] to what we think of as knowledge (2015, 1098).

"The frontier mentality that infuses much World Wide Web discourse fosters the sense of both possibility and lawlessness" (McNeill 2009, 144), exempting those who have recourse to interlingual activities on blogs from the constraints imposed upon professional translators. In several areas of contemporary translational practice,[20] and I would argue that this includes blogs, oral translation and performative aspects are increasingly *demanded* of translators (Tymoczko 2009, 410). This type of practice enhances the translators' "initiative, authority and agency" (*ibid*.) in reformulating the material in such a way that the audience will be able to receive it better. Those who 'translate' may adapt the text, break it up into manageable chunks of information and/or move the focus away from word or sentence level to a whole idea or argument supporting the common cause or interests, especially when it comes to the purposes of community-building, networking, activism and education.

If this is the case, how far can we go by using the term 'translation' in our research on the blogosphere without the term acting as an impediment rather than a useful conceptual tool? Could there be other conceptualisations of translation available in other languages and cultures, which might better correspond to the intricacies of translation-related phenomena observed in mommy blogs and other similarly community-oriented blogs in particular, and

new media in general? Could these terms better account, for instance, for the orality and fuzzy boundaries between source material and final product observed in blog entries?

Terceme and *tercüme*

While blogs are a product of the "*kairos* of mediated voyeurism, widely dispersed by relentless celebrity, unsettled boundaries between public and private, and new technology that disseminates these challenges beyond capital and corporations to individuals" (Miller and Shepherd 2004) seen from the late 1990s onwards, they nevertheless carry traces of older conceptions of text production. Blogs are "a complex rhetorical hybrid (or mongrel), with genetic imprints from all these prior genres" (Miller and Shepherd 2004) mentioned above, some of which go as far back as the European Renaissance. In fact, the blog is "alternately conceived of by scholars and internet users as a new genre enabled by technology and as a '*remediation*', or remedying, of existing genres" (Maurer 2009, 124; emphasis in original). Citing K. Jamieson's 1975 article on 'Antecedent Genre as Rhetorical Constraint', Elizabeth G. Maurer also notes that "when people encounter a *new* rhetorical situation, one without a typified solution ready to hand, they turn to older rhetorical situations, drawing on the 'antecedent' genre that worked in those situations" (2009, 116; emphasis in original; see also McNeill 2009).

What happens then when twenty-first century Turkish mommy bloggers embark upon interlingual activities? How can they best interact with their audience, keep them engaged and entertained while opening up new avenues of thinking and acting by incorporating voices in foreign languages? I would argue that in *The Blogging Mom*, traces of two conceptualisations of translation found in the Ottoman/Turkish traditions are clearly visible: those of *tercüme* and *terceme*. The contemporary Turkish word *tercüme* has a long historical continuity and is usually considered to be a derivation from the Ottoman *terceme* (see Demircioğlu 2009 for a counter-argument), in turn derived from the Arabic *tarjama*.[21] The use of *terceme* in Turkish

goes back to the fourteenth century (see Paker 2002) or the sixteenth century, according to other sources (e.g. Demircioğlu 2003, 13), but the term itself is mostly studied within the late nineteenth century context by Turkish translation scholars Cemal Demircioğlu (2003, 2005, 2006, and 2007) and Saliha Paker (2002, 2006, 2007, and 2011). In this article it is impossible to do justice to the conceptual domain covered by *terceme* throughout the centuries,[22] but I note that in the nineteenth century, which has greater influence on conceptualisations of translation in Turkey today, due to proximity in time, *terceme* was "generally associated with *exegesis/interpretation*, *commentary*, *stating/expressing* and *conveying*" (Demircioğlu 2005, 331; emphasis in original), all of which are observable in the interlingual activities in the blog in question. While information and ideas of foreign origin are conveyed through the blog entries, they are mostly expressed in the words of the blogger and interpreted through her point of view and her commentaries. After all, it is the blogger's opinions and his/her projected or constructed personality which make the blog entries attractive for their dedicated audience.

Terceme, with its emphasis on retelling, rewriting, saying again, reinterpreting and repeating for a new audience, and on intertextuality, emerged in the 'Ottoman interculture' (1299-1923), where the "boundaries were not clear" and where "source and target overlapped in both language and literary tradition" (Paker 2011, 244). In this interculture between Turkish, Arabic and Persian sources, a Western European concept of 'equivalence' to a source text would have been unnecessary, even unwelcome. "[G]ood poets were not expected to maintain strict equivalence to their sources" (Paker 2011, 249) but were instead expected to aim for creative ways of retelling the ancient stories in poetic form. Boundaries between what was *terceme* and what was autochthonous writing were particularly fuzzy (Paker 2007, 272). 'Original' was a concept the Ottomans were gradually introduced to in the nineteenth century, as a result of increasing familiarity with European Romanticism and decreasing interaction with the literatures of their eastern neighbours (Paker 2011, 251-2).

According to Demircioğlu, by the end of the nineteenth century, *serbest* [free] *terceme* came to be the preferred strategy, especially for dealing with scientific and technical material coming from Europe, to adequately satisfy the needs of communication and to ensure intelligible transmission of knowledge (2003, 18).[23] The emphasis was on rendering the source material lucid and comprehensible – an emphasis very much in tune with the concerns of lay people 'translating' for other lay people on blogs.

The other concept I am interested in here, *tercüme*, denotes, in modern day Turkish, (oral) translation. In daily parlance, it is used interchangeably with *çeviri* – derived from the Turkish word *çevirmek* [turning over] – a concept of translation which was introduced in the 1930s and 1940s, following the Turkish Language Reform, a state-supported and collective initiative which aimed at 'cleansing' the Turkish language of words of Arabic and Persian origin.[24] However, when the term *çeviri* was first introduced into Turkish, it mainly represented a Western European understanding of written 'translation', in which close adherence to a source text was taken as the norm, the emphasis was on transfer of meaning, and some form of equivalence between an identifiable source text and an identifiable target text was expected. This arguably narrower understanding of translation stood out in sharp relief against the more traditional conceptualisations of translation inherited from the Ottoman period as discussed above. Today, derivations based on *tercüme* still abound: *tercüme etmek* [to translate/interpret]; *tercüman* [translator/interpreter], *Tercüme Bürosu* [Translation Bureau], etc. *Tercüme* is also used in idiomatic language, as in *hislerime tercüman oldu* [s/he expressed my feelings very well – which, presumably, I could not]. Derivatives of *çeviri*, on the other hand, such as *çevirmek* [to translate] or *çevirmen* [translator] are mostly limited to the professional world of translation,[25] and are associated with written, as opposed to oral, translation.

Within the context of participatory production, as evidenced in the example discussed above, digital technologies enable bloggers to 'go back' to a form of orality and community-building. Accessibility of information and immediacy of style are paramount in establishing common ground with the blogs' audience. In that case, a conceptualisation of 'translation' which incorporates both oral and written forms, such as *tercüme*, can be more illuminating for translational research on new media genres such as blogs. Similarly, if we would like to draw attention to the reinterpreting and hypertextuality inherent in blog entries, *terceme* can alert us to the nebulousness of interlingual and intertextual activities in blogs, where the emphasis remains on retelling, reinterpreting, commentary, and conveying information and opinions derived from other sources in a way as accessible as possible.

Conclusion

Describing *terceme* practices within the Ottoman tradition, Saliha Paker has argued that fifteenth-century poet-translators "resort[ed] to domesticate [*sic*] their texts to fit in with the possible expectations of their readers/audience by inserting texts of their own invention or by appropriating other sources in ways that oppose our modern concept of translation proper (2007, 275). What if, in this quotation, we replaced 'fifteenth century poet-translators' with 'twenty-first century bloggers'? Would the observations be drastically different? I would argue they would not. I am aware that taking *terceme* and *tercüme* out of their historical context, as I have tried to do in this article, may be regarded as a sacrilege by scholars in Ottoman Studies, as it risks severing the ties between these concepts and other related ones prevalent at the time. Yet I see this as a necessary evil when introducing non-Western conceptualisations of translation to an international audience. My research does *not* seek to de-contextualise *terceme* and *tercüme*, or transplant them into an environment where they will barely be meaningful. Demircioğlu and Paker's main argument in studying *terceme* and other translational concepts within the Ottoman period has been to ensure that contemporary

research criteria and notions are *not* superimposed upon translational practices that were prevalent within the Ottoman Empire – that we try and understand those practices through the spectacles worn at that time, so to speak. In this article, I wanted to approach the same concepts from a different angle, to go beyond the culturally and temporally specific. My aim was to find out whether at least some of their characteristics could be traced within contemporary digital platforms in Turkey and whether they might therefore have insights to offer for researchers working on translational phenomena in the blogosphere in particular, and on the internet in general. As Tymoczko argues, "[…] In advancing theoretical analyses of the cross-cultural concept *translation [...] translation processes and products must be considered in the broadest and most general sense possible rather than in ways that are *culturally specific and culturally restricted*" (2007, 97; my emphasis).

Up until recently (e.g. Susam-Saraeva and Pérez-González 2012; Antonini and Bucaria 2016), translation studies has turned a blind eye to the prevalence of interlingual activities on the net by non-professionals, considering them outwith the boundaries of the discipline. If this situation continues, however, not only the translation scholars, but also practicing translators will keep losing valuable opportunities for growth. As I have argued above, non-professionals usually do not undergo professional training in translation. They are not 'indoctrinated', so to speak, about certain professional norms, such as close adherence to a source text. Therefore, for instance those in Turkey may feel more akin to the more traditional concept of *tercüme*, rather than the more professionally-associated, Western-influenced *çeviri*. They are more prepared to innovate, play around with the material in hand, retell it in a way that will be more interesting and intelligible for their audience. Who are we, then, to say that their output is not meaningful for translation studies research, or worse still, to compare it to the delimitations of the contemporary English term 'translation', or its Turkish counterpart '*çeviri*', and find it ill-fitting?

New terms have emerged to describe the rather recent and varying practices of translation in the West, such as 'localisation' or 'trans-editing'. These indicate a move away from viewing translation as an interpretive activity and towards viewing it as a performative one. I argue that we could similarly introduce non-English concepts related to translation – such as *tercüme*/*terceme* – into studies of interlingual activities in the new media, in order to challenge the implicit assumptions surrounding the concept of 'translation' in Anglophone and mainstream translation studies. The alternative seems to be admiring these concepts as exotic artifacts from faraway lands, while they are securely enclosed in their shiny glass boxes in a rhetorical museum. We could breathe new life into culture- and time-bound concepts, as Martha Cheung successfully did by using the 'pushing-hands approach' to research on translation history (2012). Such a move could challenge the dominance of Anglophone concepts in the discipline, with their associated histories, practices, and the inevitable theoretical limitations. In itself, it would not ensure the 'internationalization' of the discipline, but it could nevertheless be a step in the right direction in expanding the boundaries of *translation.

Note on contributor

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https://artisinitiative.org/) and was co-vicepresident of IATIS (International Association for Translation and Intercultural Studies, http://www.iatis.org/index.php) from 2010 to 2015.

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Notes

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[2] E.g. Translation Studies: Centres and Peripheries, 7th Congress of the European Society of Translation Studies, 29 August-1 September 2013, Germersheim, Germany, www.fb06.uni-mainz.de/est (accessed 21.4.2015); Transferring Translation Studies, Low Countries Conference II, 28-30 November 2013, Antwerp and Utrecht, Belgium, www.arts.kuleuven.be/cetra/transferringTS/home (accessed 21.4.2015).

[3] For the importance of virtual communities see e.g. Blanchard 2004.

[4] This is all the more noteworthy when research on existing authorship of blogs is considered. A 2006 study from the Pew Internet and American Life Project found that "the most popular content for blogs is the writer's 'life and experiences' (37%), with only 11 percent writing about politics and government (Lenhart and Fox, cited in Lopez 2009). Herring et al. also note in the mid-2000s that journal-type blogs that focus on personal expression and experiences far outnumber the more talked-about filter blogs, but that "[m]edia reportage about weblogs, even when ostensibly concerned with the phenomenon of blogging in general, tends to focus on adult male weblog authors" (2004). Thus blogs by a "minority elite (educated, adult males)" is privileged, "behaviours associated with members of other demographic groups" are rendered "less visible", and "societal sexism and ageism" are seamlessly perpetuated online (*ibid*.). See also McNeill 2009, 145, 150, 155-158.

[5] On the popularity of mommy blogs, see Lopez 2009, 729-730.

[6] Naming the genre itself is part of the community-building effort, as well as of ensuring the survival of that particular blog genre, as one wave of users passes it on to the next.

[7] It is worth noting that, in their meta-generic commentary and definitions, self-styled bloggers often reject being associated with the 'diary', as they draw on "traditional generic stereotypes, reproduced from print culture, that associate the diary with the narcissistic, *feminine*, and *amateur*" (McNeill 2009, 143; my emphasis).

[8] In her research on the Orthodox Jewish women's blogs blurring the public and the private, Lieber observes: "If Jewish law limits the expression of women's voices in the public sphere, the blog provides a paradoxically 'silent' way to raise one's voice. Perhaps writing is so empowering precisely because it articulates voice in a way that is perceived as non-transgressive: blogging allows for the assertion of a voice that is 'heard' by readers, but does not overtly violate the halakhic prohibitions against speaking publicly" (2010: 629).

[9] All translations from Turkish are mine unless otherwise stated.

[10] For more information on Doğan see http://blogcuanne.com/hakkinda2/ (accessed 22.4.2015).

[11] http://blogcuanne.com/2012/05/01/ebelik-sistemi-geri-gelsin/ (accessed 22.4.2015).

[12] http://blogcuanne.com/2015/02/04/mesele-normal-dogum-degil-sen-hala-anlamadin-mi/ (accessed 22.4.2015).

[13] http://blogcuanne.com/2010/02/12/doktorlar-neden-sezaryene-yoneliyor/ (accessed 22.4.2015).

[14] http://blogcuanne.com/2011/12/10/hediye-kitap-mahallenin-en-mutlu-bebegi/ (accessed 22.4.2015).

[15] http://blogcuanne.com/2010/02/01/hamilelik-hakkinda-doktorunuzun-size-soylemedikleri/ (accessed 22.4.2015).

[16] http://www.ndlcpreschool.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/THE-LITTLE-BOY.pdf (accessed 26.6.2016).

[17] http://blogcuanne.com/2014/07/09/bir-kucucuk-oglancik/ (accessed 22.4.2015).

[18] http://blogcuanne.com/2010/08/24/sfinkter-kanunu/ (accessed 26.11.2015).

[19] http://blogcuanne.com/2010/08/24/sfinkter-kanunu/ (accessed 26.11.2015).

[20] This is particularly the case in areas such as journalism (see e.g. Bielsa and Bassnett 2008) with a particular emphasis on practices such as 'trans-editing'. However, in journalism the issues of orality, subjectivity and voice which I have presented above do not play a major role. On the contrary, the emphasis often falls on the 'objectivity' of the news presented and of the people who present it. Different voices which have contributed to the news item are, more often than not, erased or blended.

[21] I will not be elaborating on the Arabic term *tarjama* (see e.g. Salama-Carr 2000 and 2006), as *terceme* and *tarjama* have followed rather different trajectories in Ottoman Turkish and in Arabic, respectively.

[22] *Terceme* was certainly not the only translation-related concept within the Ottoman tradition. For others such as *iktibas*, *nakl*, *taklid*, *tanzir*, *tahvil*, and *hülasa*, please see the cited works of Demircioğlu and Paker.

[23] Such an approach also came to be advocated for the translation of literary works (Demircioğlu 2003, 20).

[24] For a detailed discussion of the Turkish Language Reform in relation to translation, see e.g. Tahir-Gürçağlar 2008, Chapter 2.

[25] Even then, however, there is no consensus. For example, a nationwide professional association, *Mütercim-Tercümanlar Derneği* (Association of Translators and Interpreters), uses the terms *mütercim* [translator] and *tercüman* [interpreter], both derived from *tercüme*, in its title, yet refers to *çeviri* on almost all of its webpages (see http://www.mt.org.tr/, accessed 24.6.2016).