

Book reviews

CĂTĂLINA ILIESCU-GHEORGHIU: A POLYSYSTEMIC MODEL FOR THE COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF DRAMA FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF DESCRIPTIVE TRANSLATION STUDIES

Mona ARHIRE

Transilvania University of Braşov

e-mail: mona.arhire@unitbv.ro

Abstract: *This review presents a recently published book authored by Cătălina Iliescu Gheorghiu, an academic actively involved in Romanian studies and a translator of Romanian literature. As the title suggests, it is a study that falls under the scope of Descriptive Translation Studies implying the polysystemic model posited by Lambert and Van Gorp for the comparative analysis of drama. The corpus under scrutiny is made up utterances extracted from the play A treia țeapă (The Third Stake) by Marin Sorescu and the corresponding utterances from two of its translations into English. The analytical part is backed up by a solid theoretical framework with its latter section lending the overall structure of the analysis. The categories subject to investigation are (i) preliminary data, (ii) the macro-level structures, (iii) the micro-level structures and (iv) the systemic context. The methodology experimented with drama translation and the findings deriving from it have proved their validity and are valuable input for other similar and possibly more comprising research that can use these findings as hypotheses to be tested further.*

Keywords: drama translation; Polysystem Theory; Descriptive Translation Studies;

The book titled *Un model polisistemic de analiză comparativă a textului dramatic din perspectiva traductologiei descriptive* (A Polysystemic Model for the Comparative Analysis of Drama from the Perspective of Descriptive Translation Studies), published by Editura Universității din București, Series ROMANICA 28, 2018 (127 p., ISBN 978-606-16-1011-2) mirrors a blending of some of the cultural and scientific interests that Cătălina Iliescu Gheorghiu, a professor of Translation and Interpreting Studies and of Romanian language and literature at the University of Alicante, has displayed over the past years. On the one hand, she is a promoter of the Romanian culture, substantially contributing to its visibility especially in the Spanish cultural area. Among the diverse activities

promoting the Romanian culture, Iliescu Gheorghiu's translating Romanian literature and studying it from a translational perspective occupy central positions (involving prose, drama and poetry by authors such as Mihai Eminescu, Ion Creangă, Petre Ispirescu, Marin Sorescu, but also Ana Blandiana, Mircea Cărtărescu, Ion Pop, Alexandru Mușina, Florin Iaru and many others). On the other hand, her scientific interest in drama translation has already been materialized in a book published by Institutul European in 2010, *Traducerea textului dramatic (The Translation of Drama)*. Elaborating on these endeavours, the book reviewed herein is a valuable scientific work falling under the scope of Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS), addressing scholars in Translation Studies interested in the translation of drama and translators of the genre, both benefitting from new perspectives precious to be taken into account in their work.

Albeit the boost that DTS has determined in Translation Studies in its scientific and applied facets alike, not so much attention has been granted to the translation of drama from the vantage point of DTS, less so to the translation of Romanian drama. This very study not only contributes importantly to this area, but it also opens up new paths for translational investigation relative to drama and for drama translation itself. Therefore, its outreach touches upon both the descriptive and the applied areas of drama translation. In more precise terms, firstly, the book proposes a theoretical account of the polysystemic comparative approach to drama translation as posited by Jose Lambert and Hendrik Van Gorp and, secondly, it engages in applying this methodology to a Romanian dramatic text and two of its translations into English. This twofold objective generates a logical organization of the work in two parts, dedicated to the theoretical and to the analytical undertaking respectively, with the two of them in a relation of complementarity. The latter part is intended to test whether the Lambert-Van Gorp polysystemic model is applicable to drama translation and whether it is appropriate for the extraction of information on translation and translating that is otherwise concealed.

To narrow down further, the work is overall structured in five chapters, emerging with an introductory section announcing the objectives, stating the hypotheses and the research methodology and briefly describing the corpus under scrutiny. This is also where the author discusses the cultural context that might have influenced the two translations.

The theoretical part is dense, well-documented and relies on relevant scholarly work. It first offers a synthetic view of the conceptual evolution of Translation Studies and then focusses on its descriptive component as introduced by Holmes and Toury. Descriptive Translation, with its justified concern for empirical research, is then attached the polysystem theory advanced mainly by Even-Zohar (1978), therefrom deriving the Lambert and

Van Gorp model. In this context, the author states that “the researcher’s duty is to establish a hierarchy of the relations within the communicative situation he/she examines, while taking account of the priorities imposed by the two key translational concepts: acceptability and adequacy” (p. 17, my translation).

This conceptual framework is systematically applied in the most substantial part of the work enclosed in Chapter 4, which presents the corpus analysis. The undertaking is grounded on a corpus consisting of a representative amount of utterances, the author implicitly acknowledging that an utterance is the “inherently dramatic unit (réplica) which is instrumental in describing and comparing drama texts, be they translated or not” (Merino, 2000: 357). The 400 utterances are extracted from the Romanian play *A treia țepă* (*The Third Stake*) by Marin Sorescu and two of its translations into English. Among the aspects differentiating the two translations, the most important one stems from the directionality: the first translated version, by Andreea Gheorghiuțoiu, a professional translator in Romania, is translated out of the translator’s mother tongue, whereas Dennis Deletant, a professor in London, translates the play into his mother tongue.

As is typical of DTS, the analysis entails an observant look shed on the translations. The comparative analysis is aligned to the conceptual and methodological stages pertaining to a polysystemic perspective, which is reasonably adapted here to the specificity of the dramatic text under the researcher’s lens.

As Lambert (1995) claims, among several systemic models, the polysystem theory is not only the one to use translation as its starting point, but it has also essentially contributed to the establishment of (Descriptive) Translation Studies. Also, its operating across various media and disciplines makes it suitably integrated in the research into drama translation, which justifies the approach adopted in the study being reviewed.

In applying the Lambert-Van Gorp model of investigation, the practical part of the study involves the examination of (i) the preliminary data (title pages, metatexts and general strategies); (ii) the macro-level structures (extension, theatricality); (iii) the micro-level structures (stylistic shifts) and (iv) the systemic context (the relation between the macro-level and the micro-level).

The preliminary stage focusses on the description of both the source text and the target texts and the establishment of the contextual features that impacted their production. The subsequent stage concerns the analysis of the macro-structural level according to Lambert-Van Gorp’s model, consisting of extension of utterances, metatext, theatricality, along with the subcategories of structure, *didascalía* and *dramatis personae*. This stage comprises the comparative study of the two translations in relation to the original.

The final section, which looks into the macro-structural level, includes a synthesis of the results with reference to the publication of the translations, the translators' contact with the author and their (lack) of acquaintance with the staged performances, whether the translations address the readability of the text or its playability. Additionally, questions relative to the dual polarity of the translations are raised based on Toury's (1980) adequacy and acceptability principles.

The analysis of the micro-level structures unfolds along four categories of translation options, namely (A) realization overlaps in the two translations when the second translator uses the corresponding utterance from both the source text and from the already existing target text; (B) false differences stemming from the second translator's desire to avoid resemblance between the target texts rather than from applying a translational principle; (C) perception differences determining (D) the differences in the translators' decision-making process due to idiosyncratic preferences or polysystemic ones, such as ideologies, diverse policies, etc. This last category is deemed by the author as the most representative one in terms of highlighting the translators' priorities and strategies, as well as the reasons lying behind them. This is why it is dealt with extensively in this study despite the typological problems it poses in establishing the subcategories. The differences in expression are best identified within this micro-structural category and are found to derive from textual and linguistic aspects, from contextual aspects (mainly cultural ones) and genre-related aspects, which occur due to the constraints set by the performability of a theatrical text in the target culture. Interesting is the finding that the target text that emerged second might have been influenced by the first chronologically speaking. Iliescu Gheorghiu considers that the existence of a previous translation might have determined translation choices in the second target language version meant to avoid resemblance with the first.

The last part of the analytical enterprise is dedicated to the systemic context, i.e. the intertextual relations between the target texts along with the norms governing the translation process into the polysystems of the target cultures as compared to the ones present in the source culture. This category also dwells on the relation between the macro-level and the micro-level of the translations. The results of this part of the analysis indicate that the two levels are convergent in that they share the finding that the second target text oftentimes follows manners of realization present in the first. Nevertheless, there are obvious textual and contextual differences between the two target texts, but also differences due to genre constraints. As Iliescu Gheorghiu asserts, the fourth category in the Lambert-Van Gorp model operates as a tool for the synthesis of the previously investigated categories.

The combined and complementary research methodology, of quantitative and qualitative nature applied in comparing the two translations, based on Lambert-Van Gorp's polysystemic model, enabled the observation of several tendencies relative to the translators' decisions, such as those leading to both translations being rather readability-oriented than playability-oriented. Besides, the conclusions indicate that both translations use more than one source text and that the target texts apply the adequacy principle and the acceptability principle in different ways: Gheorghîţoiu's translation is mostly oriented towards adequacy to the source culture, whereas Deletant's translation is chiefly oriented towards the acceptability of the text in the receiving culture.

These findings and conclusions were supported by the good structure of the study, its coherent development, the extracted data displayed orderly and transparently in tables for a clear depiction of the components set under the qualitative lens of the investigation, the relevant examples examined in close detail. Four sets of appendices comprising a selection of the utterances making up the corpus accompany the study. These utterances are categorized by virtue of their potential to illustrate the classification embedded in the analysis presented in section 4.3, that of the micro-structural level of the translations.

As Iliescu Gheorghiu confesses, even though this study is not exhaustive and has no universal outreach, its value resides in offering an illustration of how the Lambert-Van Gorp analytical model can be applied on a translational corpus of utterances extracted from drama. It is an enterprise worth extending grounded on additional corpora, possibly more sizable ones, comprising several plays. Additionally, it would be interesting to relate the results obtained herein to others, generated by similar studies (also applying the Lambert-Van Gorp model) that have engaged other language pairs so as to complete the methodological and analytical picture. Also, the translation of this study into English would enhance its visibility and thereby the international dimension of such research.

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