

To find variables for the analysis of translation between lesser-diffused and medium-diffused languages

J.M. ZABALETA

Introduction: History prior to this meeting

The 1991 Conference on translation was organized for the Summer Courses of the University of the Basque Country in Donostia-San Sebastián.

As for the origin, the Association of Translators, Correctors and Interpreters of the Basque Country (EIZIE) was in charge of the Committee of Languages of Limited Diffusion within the International Federation of Translators celebrating its Congress in Belgrade in 1990 and nominated our Association for such a task. Indeed, most of the professors who came to these conferences were members of that committee and came with the intention of holding further meetings in conjunction with the Conference in order to determine progress and put decisions into effect.

Secondly, it can hardly be denied that strengthening and facilitating the ties between us Basque translators and society can

only be a good thing for us. One of EIZIE's goals, among others, was to bring Basque translators into contact with translators from other countries. Indeed, one characteristic of Basque translators is precisely that they have had little contact with translators from other lands. At the founding congress of EIZIE which was held at the Main Hall at the EUTG (now Deusto) University in San Sebastián, one thing that was mentioned in one of the analyses was that, compared to the contacts that translators from other countries usually had, the Basque translators were decidedly lacking. Confirmation of this is, at that time, only 3% of EIZIE translators were members of other translation associations. Since then, it has been clearly shown that the situation is changing and contacts have greatly expanded — a boon for Basque translators. Those who participated in these conferences and talked to translators from so many countries had a golden opportunity to get to know their respective situations.

The subject under study in these conferences was about taking the first overall steps towards bringing lesser-used and medium-diffused languages closer together and later going on to deepen and define the subject with the aim of coming up with some kind of a typology for translation work done in these 'kinds of languages. All kinds of approaches still have to be made, all kinds of information remain to be gathered on the subject of this conference being held in Donostia-San Sebastián, in order to find, define, and to become acquainted with the variables involved in situations (which are or may be different) of lesser used and medium-diffused languages. Armed with this knowledge, it is our task to define and be able to carry out proposals required to direct, strengthen and bring about the dignity that these translations merit wherever and whenever they are needed. This is, in the final analysis, our ultimate goal and will have to be achieved using all channels of knowledge, by improving co-ordination among ourselves and by channelling aid, in order to give translations from lesser- and medium-diffused languages their rightful place in the world of translation.

In addition, analyses of the translation of lesser- and medium-diffused languages can undoubtedly contribute enormously to translation science. Indeed, by definition, there are more small and medium-sized languages than widely-diffused ones, and there is a greater variety of modes of translation or translation situations with the former kind of languages than with the latter. The scope of research, therefore, is wide open for those of us involved in translating into lesser- and medium-diffused languages. This is

so in many aspects: one being, because among languages that come into contact through translation, when they are lesser- and medium-diffused languages, there is a greater difference among them than between the widely-diffused languages involved in translation. In this aspect, it would seem that the results of this kind of translation would be especially enriching for linguistics as it would allow for a greater knowledge of the world's languages.

As for the possible contributions that this analysis means for translation science, it should be remembered how important the study of translation work in such languages has been in making progress in translation science. One of the foundations of the science, for instance, was based on Bible translation, i.e. by analyzing the experience of Bible translation. It has a long tradition both from a translation and a translation science point of view; if we compare it with interpreting, translation science based on Bible translation goes back to St. Jerome's work while interpreting only dates from the Nuremberg trials or the inception of the League of Nations. One of the characteristics of Bible translation that is always mentioned is its sacred nature and the many problems that respect for the original words pose for translation science. Another characteristic of Bible translation, which is less often mentioned, is that it has been translated into hundreds of languages — fortunately, most of them lesser-diffused languages! — and it would not have come about were it not for those researchers and theoreticians involved in the translation of the Bible into languages of very little diffusion: E. Nida, for example.

There are many other aspects to the analysis; to mention one of many, the degree of influence that translation has had in the initial stages of literature in many languages is a very well-known fact. Also the profound influence that translation has had on the diffusion of knowledge and thought in the world, whether it be in the West — the system of knowledge and translation from classical Greek times down to modern thought —, or in the East — in the diffusion of Indian and Chinese thought and science, although this is less well-known. Another analysis claims that in lesser- and medium-diffused languages, or in societies where they are spoken, the popular acceptance of translation should also be subject to study. Indeed, it would seem that several kinds of translation — especially literary translation — is taken to be a secondary task in many languages and is even more so the case in lesser-used languages; *a posteriori* recognition is the best that can be expected. There seems to be the feeling that translation is something akin to original sin. We need only to come closer to home in our case to see that: nearly half is pure translation while a good part of the other half in this country — I do not know exactly how much — is at least indirectly a translation. Even today, while direct or indirect translation is very important, it is a fact that, from many quarters, from the government in particular, translation is systematically underrated and aid is being reduced (the EIMA or text subsidy programme, for example, gives translation 0.5 points while original Basque production gets 1 whole point).

Translation and the translator in lesser- and medium-diffused languages

Translators have always been around as have translations, even in lesser-diffused languages. Perhaps we could even go further: people who speak lesser-diffused languages have been obliged to translate more than those who speak greater-diffused languages. Translation, to be sure, has a lot to do with the degree of bilingualism in a society. It is a well-known fact that the more reduced a language is to any area, the more multilingual speakers of that language tend to be. That seems to be the case among Indians in the Brazilian, Peruvian, and Bolivian Amazon who have the greatest and most widespread degree of multilingualism: it is quite normal to find many people capable of speaking four or five languages among the population.

The multilingualism/backwardness concept is only a result of the consolidation of the false but common notion that “a small people = a backward people” or “a small language = a backward language”. Such disdain for the small comes in many forms, and it seems difficult to dispel such attitudes.

However, there is no lack of examples refuting such notions, although in our case at least, we have not made much of an effort in this respect. The problem of people’s attitude towards language — us Basques included —, has often been the subject of study: the attitude of self-esteem and self-deprecation. In our case not long ago, “also” knowing Basque was knowing less than a language than knowing “only” Spanish — despite the illogical arithmetic of this. In endless, senseless debates Basque was denied the status of being a “language”, and since it was not a

"dialect", it was barely granted the status of being a "vernacular", "vernacular" being a term in which virtually anything can be pigeon-holed.

However, it seems that in a society, the attitude that seems most widespread towards a certain language (e.g. towards its own language) is closely related to the degree of acceptance of a translator (especially the degree of acceptance of translation) and to the image of the translator and to his or her status.

The need for clarifying certain concepts

Thus, it is best to begin by distinguishing between concepts that can help us to have clear ideas on these matters, instead of confusing them, and which can be useful for some kind of testing — by using them as free or mutually dependent variables — in order to arrive at a description: what is limited diffusion regarding language? What is or might be the task of translation in language and what is usually the case? What is translated? Who translates it? That is an example of a question that could provide a thousand answers.

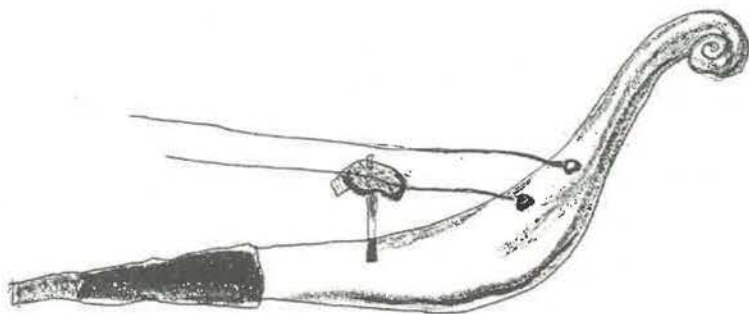
1. Lesser- and medium diffusion – Minority situation

Lesser- and medium-diffusion languages are taken to be those languages with less than 50 million people. However, as far as the situation of the language is concerned and especially its extension throughout the world, some people (G. Radó, Yo-In Song, etc.) regard English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, and Russian as world languages and

all the rest as lesser-diffused or medium-diffused languages. However, Georgy Radó proposes a third level: "languages that have a middle-level extension" which he names as Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Swahili, Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, etc.

For our purposes, rather than separating them out, we believe it is more important to get to grips with the reasoning behind such separations. The Korean translator and professor, Yo-In Song, clearly explains such reasoning in an article in the journal *Traduction, Terminologie, Redaction*: "Remarks on Cultural Transfer from an LLD" (Association canadienne de traductologie, vol. IV, 1. Quebec 1991). Taking a language as one of wide diffusion requires it to be widespread as a mother tongue or a second language on a world-wide scale: A culture can be more "complex" or "dominant"; "simple" or "subordinate" than another or it can lie somewhere "in-between" or "intermediate". Thus, the axiom can be stated: cultural complexity or dominance does not necessarily enhance linguistic diffusion and vice versa; nor does the size of a population have anything to do with linguistic diffusion... The key word is "the global scale".

It is thus not the number of people of a society that speaks a language (large or small) that has an impact on the diffusion of that language: more people speak Chinese as a second language than those who speak English as both a first and second language. It is not even the cultural level and coherence of a society that speaks a language that has an impact on the diffusion of that language: the culture expressed in Chinese is not any plainer than the one expressed in German, and even throughout history, it has held as much



influence in the Orient as Graeco-Roman culture held in the West.

From that point of view, it is easy to understand why among translators of medium-diffused languages, or in publications dealing with that topic, the concern most often brought up is why there is translation from those languages to lesser-, medium-, and widely-diffused languages.

Thus, in order to come up with a typology of lesser- and medium-diffused languages, such a differentiation is not enough since there are still many kinds of situations within that set, and a number of other concepts should be used to delimit and classify them: especially territoriality and diglossia.

1.1. Territoriality

It seems that the fact that a language is, or was, spoken within a society that lives in certain limited geographical confines, changes the perception of that language to a great extent. Speaking it in a confined and defined area that a political structure brings with it, i.e. an official status for it, conditions the

perception that a society has of a language. In that society, the identity function of the language is fulfilled to a great extent by political structures, and hence the use of the language is not the same expression of identity as much as in the others.

Thus, in theoretical reference to the territoriality of languages, three main situations can be distinguished:

- a) Where a language is spoken in one or more territories with a unified political structure and which identifies with that language, most of its population being monolingual or at least having it as the main language. French in France, for example.
- b) A language that is the main or only language in a given territory and not in another one. French in Canada, Belgium, or Louisiana, for example.
- c) A language that does not predominate anywhere. Two main varieties should be distinguished within this category, even if it does not coincide with the language political structure: on one hand, when

there is no attack waged against it from such a structure and, on the other hand, when it is clearly given up for extinction and banned or marginalized. Basque, for example, was given up on during some periods of its history. For instance, some Inuit languages are languages that have been completely marginalized in Canada: in a society where there is no homogeneous community (Canada), they are marginalized languages of ethnic groups. From this aspect, the concept is linked entirely to the concept of diglossia.

1.2. Diglossia

The concept of what diglossia is has always been rather fuzzy since there are at least three kinds of concepts that, although all interrelated can be confused in any one work: an individual's diglossia, social diglossia, and territorial diglossia.

Diglossia on an individual level has usually been taken to mean that that person's usage of different languages for different registers in which s/he may distinguish between the dominant and the dominated language. In that way, the main register is used for the language that is deemed to be dominant for high-level or formal occasions while the lower register corresponds to the language taken to be the dominated language and used for humbler, subordinate, or informal occasions.

Social diglossia is usually said to be when one language is designated for use in high-level situations while another language is taken to be a second-class language. In this situation, as has been the case in the Basque Country, speakers of the second-class language are usually bilingual while a part of

the society is monolingual in the dominant language. The process goes on until the second-class language completely dies out.

If both the kind of territoriality of the language and diglossia are to be taken into account, there are thousands of kinds of situations to be found: e.g., languages of marginalized groups mentioned above (Inuits, Gipsies, etc.) and minorities of widespread languages living in the great cities abroad (New York's Chinese community). Not all of these situations can be studied since it would serve more to disperse the results rather than help arrive at a synthesis.

1.3. Relegation of a language to minority status

The situation of a language can be generally studied from the angle of to what degree it has been normalized. The idea that languages do not change has been discarded for a long time. The fact that a language is able, *per se*, to adapt and mould itself to any cultural situation, especially to ongoing developments — in other words there are no backward or progressive languages *per se* — is taken to be an incontrovertible fact by linguists. The development of a language and a culture do not usually go hand in hand, however, not even in the most widespread and developed of languages. In this sense, it can be said that the language is always adapting itself to cultural changes in which change in the language itself always means a cultural change.

However, it cannot be said that every language, at least as a society knows them at any given moment, is equally suitable for a cultural situation a society finds itself in or

for world knowledge. It is clear that all knowledge used in social life is verbalized by society as a whole: if someone turns a light on, it does not mean that he knows everything about the physics needed to understand what electricity is. However, in society taken as a whole, such knowledge has usually been expressed through words, or has been moving towards expressing it through words.

Although there are many sides to diglossia, this is what is the most important aspect to bear in mind because the goal that is taken to be fundamental and which is especially stressed in normalization efforts is "modernizing the language", to enable the language to express the cultural content of contemporary culture, at least by expressing such cultural content, since speaking it can have a

close verbal link with the reorganization and reinterpreting of perceptions. New cultural content, which is to find its way into society, does it through language, often through translation.

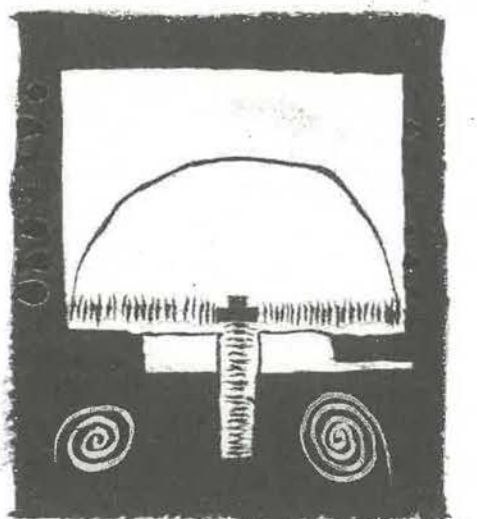
In that sense, a translator in every language is, to a certain extent, a generator of language, insofar as he or she introduces new concepts into a language. There is no doubt, however, that, in some languages, situations, or topics, the translator creates more language than in others.

In short, it could be said that the situation regarding the territorial nature of the language, diglossia, and normalization totally determine a translation.

The function of translation

A society's endeavours regarding language has to do with at least two goals, expressed by two points of view about how, in some way or other, a society is or could be regarding language, and which are linked but distinguishable: on one hand, a society looks upon a language as a tool of social communication and, on the other, as a point of common reference or unifying factor of the group or society in the very same way that speaking itself is an act of communication, an act to expound things, and an act to be communicated. The first is, thus, a very functional point of view while the other one is more symbolic, as if it were an element of group identification, a part of one's identity, in which the act of speaking consists of two components placed between both poles.

As for the goal of speaking, talking is, at an overall abstract level, not a very difficult thing. However, since acts of concrete speak-



ing do not have abstract goals, and, therefore, since we have to come down to a concrete level of the goal corresponding to the intention, it is no easy thing to shed light on those goals of speaking and bring them to the surface. The whys and wherefores of translation in a society are not easy to ascertain, but as far as speaking is concerned, since there are hints for guessing the intention behind it, the same could be said for translation.

1. The function of communication

A translation is an act of communication in the same way, in theory, as all speaking is. *A priori*. However, it is a well-known fact that it has often not been translated — or even written — as an act of communication but as an act to establish the group. A version that hinders an act of communication is thus an act that strays away from that act of communication and thus it is something with another intention behind it.

In both communication and translation, there is the enunciator of the message, the translator and the recipient of the message — the customer, reader, etc. The recipient of the message is, more than any other subject, the target of the act of translation while the translator is more of a sender than a purveyor. Thus, the translator who fails to bring himself down to the situation of the recipient of the message, is aiming at another goal in his or her activity.

In that way, we could say that the tendency towards radical purism that has been present in Basque literature is not intent on communication since it does not adapt itself to the Basque readership; or, to put a new

twist on it, radical purism is an event that impedes the act of communication and thus, the more radical the purism, the more it impedes. Generally speaking, this is when the translation subject is totally distant from society, client, as it were, of the translation.

These concepts, to be sure, are not to be taken in absolute terms and should be looked at in their relative context. There are always customers, however small in numbers they might be, who are capable of understanding any topic, and generally speaking there are always readers or listeners that are well prepared, even in the most impoverished of languages.

However, such a different goal has an impact on those translations: purists wanted to purify Basque so that the Basque Country could have the Basque it so deserved. The post-war translators (B. Amezaga, B. Larraikoetxea) wanted to raise the cultural level of Basque by referring to the classics. It was therefore a clear pedagogical aim which, nevertheless, might have been an element of communication itself when the aim of the *text* was pedagogical. However, the pedagogical factor may have been uppermost regarding the language itself, which is the case of radical purism.

These two pedagogical aims nearly always come together, especially when efforts in translation take place at the beginnings and foundation of the literature of a given language. We should not forget that in many of them, translation efforts coincide with cultural change — Christianization, for example —, and the text being translated is usually the basic tool for that change. That has happened, for instance, in literatures that began with the translation of the Bible: Cop-

tic, Armenian, Old Slavonic, Gothic, Lithuanian, German itself, etc. However, Buddhism exerted the same or similar influence on the East as Christianity did on the West, e.g.: translations from India's sacred texts, especially by the Mahayana and Vajrayana schools, into Tibetan, Mongolian, Korean, and even in Chinese, not to mention the influence of the Hinayana school in Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, etc. That is not altogether the case in Basque since translation was not the first attempt at writing but the second one, and from a linguistic pedagogical point of view, we cannot say that Leizarraga's translation effort made much headway.

After those efforts came ones to fix terminologies in the language once and for all, often basing their efforts on foreign languages. In that way, Plato's and especially Aristotle's texts are taken as the basis in scholastic philosophy in order to fix philosophical terminology. In China, to take an example, after the translations carried out in the second century A.D., and those of the fourth and fifth centuries (especially by Kumarajiva and Paramartha), in the days of Xuanzang and Yijing in the seventh and at the beginning of the eighth centuries, special translation groups were formed and a definitive, *ne varietur* dictionary of Buddhist philosophy was compiled in order to be able to translate the most difficult texts. Likewise, the same process took place in Tibet: in the sixth century, all of the translations of Buddhist texts were re-examined by making a near literal translation with profound respect for the sacred nature of the texts, by establishing unchanging, fixed relationships between Sanskrit and Tibetan philosophy and religious dictionary

ies to such an extent that even today Buddhists use Tibetan texts to check or complete original Sanskrit texts.

The above statement opens the way for me to interpret what is likewise being done in Basque today, in order to stress the overwhelming pedagogical sense that communication through translation — which is, to a large extent, the innermost communication of this society — has. Indeed, in many fields translation has brought creativity in language or speech and boosted the spread of that language. In political administration, for instance, to the extent that translation efforts — nearly all of the Basque used in government administration is translation — have been more to create and spread Basque rather than to communicate in it (e.g. in legislation the Basque text is not legally binding). In others, like education, textbook preparation is linked to education through translation and it has mostly been linked to the creation of terminology. In the mass media, especially in television, translators are constantly on the lookout for a model of language that the TV viewer will find suitable.

Such a pedagogical goal seems to play an important role in languages that have become minority languages, more than ones that have been normalized. Indeed, all of the examples that I have mentioned hitherto have been, for one reason or another, or in some fields of knowledge, examples of languages that were in a minority situation. Unwritten languages, or those which were, at a given moment, unwritten, found themselves in a minority situation; the peoples speaking those languages also felt the very same way, i.e. that they were in a minority situation.

So as not to mention only examples from the West (Cyril and Methodius, Ulfilas, Mesroes), in the fourth century the Tibetan king, Tho-tho Ri-gyan-Btsan, sent his minister, Thon-mi Sanbhota, to India so that he could learn to write and invent a writing system for the language of Tibet.

In the 13th century at the behest of Kubilai, a monk called Phags-pa from the monastery Sa-skya came up with the Mongolian writing system.

Much later, and on the other side of the world, the Cherokee Sequoyah, believing that the superiority of the whites over the Indians lay in their ability to write, invented a syllabary for the Cherokee language at the beginning of the 19th century.

1.1 Means of communication

When we say translation, usually we are nearly always thinking of a written translation. Other different kinds of translations should be stipulated: interpreting, simultaneous translation, etc. Translation is not limited to, there are many other kinds. We must not forget, for example, that other modes of translation — simultaneous translation and interpreting — were around before written translation, and the first mention of translators in history referred to interpreters. Even in our day and age, unwritten languages or those with a scant writing tradition abound.

Thus, what should be considered as the most basic means of communication is face-to-face speech, and perhaps together with that, the other means of communication based entirely on human memory. Pure speech is communication at a given moment, "words that are gone with the wind", but if

they go hand in hand with discourse, even in unwritten languages, they are kinds of messages that are based on memory that do not have the undependability and ephemerality of speech but are constructed so as to last and not fall into oblivion.

In advanced countries, besides the highly-regarded position that writing occupies, many other kinds of communication are also used which transcend previous boundaries of speech, which owe their perseverance not to human memory but to the compactness of support devices (such as recorded writing, images and sounds, etc.) and more to technological equipment rather than to being spread by the reach of the voice (publications, radio, television, etc.)

This progress and the plethora of mass media has likewise resulted in the proliferation of manners of expressing the message, and it brought about new means of coming up with new kinds of messages: advertising, multimedia products, etc.

It is clear that the spread of a language, levels of diglossia and, above all, levels of official status, very much condition the range of media available to the language, and also, in conjunction with the mass media, condition the translation that is present in all of them.

All of the translation that takes place in a number of towns in Canada where the Inuit language is spoken, apart from translation done by missionaries, is done by interpreters in court cases. Indeed, on the basis of what has been stated up to now — the characteristics of this interpreting — which are conditioned by variables —, if they had to be defined, we could say that in Canada most translation work from Eskimo to English and

vice versa is a tool for dealing with and smoothing out the blips in the system — a crime as interpreted by a superior political structure, for example, when a marginalized illiterate people comes into contact with a broad political structure that is not theirs but one which is handed down — and a linguistically different one to boot.

In a completely different situation, in which language speakers live in a society that is largely homogeneous as far as language is concerned, in their monolingual language areas but outside towns: we have the example of Tibetans living in Sikkim and Nepal who are striving to adapt their language and culture to modern cultural needs, mostly through translation, on par with efforts made in the 8th and 9th centuries. In those days, kings were the ones pushing for modernization while today, on one hand, it is grass-roots political movements and, on the other, the University of Sikkim and the Himalaya Cultural Commission who have been behind the new resurgence. As Ringu Tulku, secretary of the Commission says, Tibetan literature has a long tradition in philosophy, logic, theology, in several kinds of medicine, astronomy, but a very scant tradition indeed in several areas: physics, chemistry, technology, geography, etc. Special efforts are being made in all of these areas in order to coin suitable terminology, promote production of texts, to publish translations, and to modernize the culture.

2 Attachment to the Language or language pride

Looking back at events over the last few decades in the Basque Country, there is no

need to look further afield in order to think about the extent to which the impact that language attachment or language loyalty — or something that is not a communicative function of language, translation among other things — can have on the use of the language.

That is why I have not put down just “attachment”, as is usually the case. Mere attachment to language is not enough in the Basque Country, at least as far as the conduct of several institutions regarding translation is concerned. The emblem or symbol that has been afforded to the Basque language to define the identity of Basque society has often influenced that conduct. Consequently, in several fields, the scant communicative value that translation has had has determined the control of the translation and the quality thereof, in which “determine” often can mean “spoil”.

However, such a conduct is not something that only happens in the Basque Country. Society at large tries to highlight its symbols of identity, and language is usually one of those symbols.

The status and acceptance of the translation and translation

The status and acceptance that the translation and the translator generally have in society is the consequence of the function that translation has in society and the language overall, whereas a translation in a society is not altogether homogeneous: there are many materials in translation as there are many kinds of source languages, many different goals for translation, and many kinds of customers. These should be looked at one

by one. In addition to that, and most likely in conjunction with that, the translation market should also be taken into account. However, the market is not the only factor influencing acceptance of the translation.

In this sense, there has been a rather paradoxical and quite significant situation in our case in the Basque Country: during certain periods, translation was evaluated according to the source language: translation from Spanish to Basque which is, for the most part what the market (generally government and public administration) calls for. It is a need that is the easiest to fulfil because of the kind of bilingualism of Basques, although seen only from the need to communicate, which is also what is the least needed in this society. Although it is, in theory, no easier than translation from other languages, translation from Spanish to Basque has been held in low esteem, almost even despised; translators translating from Spanish have been "so-called translators", translating government administration texts, literature, as well as popular reading material. On the other hand, translation from some other languages, at least from English or from a Caucasian language or from another language, has been accepted and has aroused great wonder, simply because they are from different languages.

In addition, it has also been the case where the subject of the translation has usually determined its acceptance or otherwise, at least in many cases. This is the very reason that technical translations are somehow called "general reading matter" translations.

In addition to the status of the translator, when it is a case involving lesser-diffused and medium-diffused languages, the personality of the translator himself/herself is the sub-

ject of analysis and, in some cases, becomes a problem in itself. In the translation processes mentioned, in many works published on translation of lesser- and medium-diffused languages with an asymmetry that is usually in accordance with the diffusion of the language, quite a lot is translated among the widespread languages given that many of these are involved in the translation process. Indeed, teaching of such languages is widespread and thus it is easy, in every sense of the word, to find translators for these languages. There is quite a lot of translation work from widely diffused languages to lesser-diffused languages as the translators of the latter most often translate into their own languages. Little is translated from lesser-diffused languages into widely-diffused languages because speakers of widely-diffused languages do not feel the need to learn lesser-diffused languages, or because they are fewer in number. Translation among lesser-diffused languages takes place even less as it is even more difficult to find translators for these languages.

From the previous paragraph, it is implicit that translators nearly always translate into their first language, into their native tongue. That indeed is the case: into their mother tongue or into a language that has, throughout their lives, become their first language and the one into which they have usually translated the most.

As an indirect result of that, translation between lesser-diffused languages has often been carried out through widely-diffused languages. As E. Simpson mentions in an article (E. Simpson: "Translation and the Socio-Cultural Problems of Developing Countries". *Babel*, XXVI): "One serious

implication of this last point is that Africans are not trained to translate from African languages into other African languages. In other words, translation has to pass through the medium of a foreign European language”.

However, there are several situations involving lesser-diffused languages or ones that one way or another are in, or have been relegated to, a minority status, and such translations are nearly always systematically done in languages that are not their own. Indeed, it seems that over the last century, when a language was dying out, or at least when it was in very seriously minoritized situation, mostly written translations from that language into a more widely spoken one have been carried out, namely from original oral literature. As Unionmwan Edebiri said in an article about translation in Nigeria, translation from the oral literature of the Hausa and Yoruba languages was the first to appear. (U. Edebiri: *Literary Translation in Nigeria*. *Meta* XXVIII, 1, p. 24) As for the Basque Country, a situation parallel to that could be given at the turn of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries — when Basque was obviously in decline and was seen to be on its way out — collections of Basque folklore, with

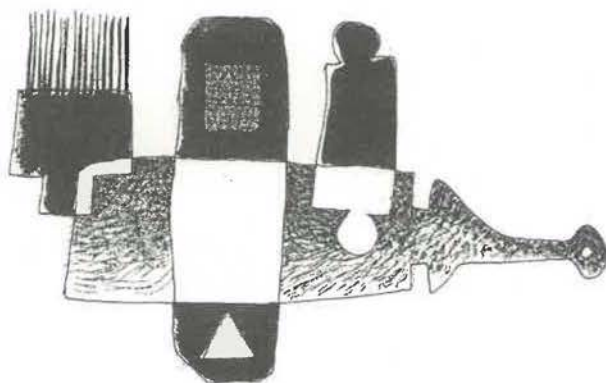
or minus Basque, and including Spanish, French and English translations were published (R.M. Azkue, J.M. Barandiaran, Cerquand, etc.).

Conclusion

In this essay, I wanted to find some factors that have had an impact on translations of lesser-diffused and medium-diffused languages. To that end, if not implicitly then at least explicitly, I have written it with translation in the Basque Country in mind, taking into account information from several languages and territories, not only in order to study those variables that I have tried to define here, but also to study situations that could prove useful for extrapolating this analysis to other situations.

To be sure, as I indicated at the beginning, by concluding the study of the many ways that people use to translate lesser- and medium-diffused languages, the information gathered can prove useful for us to the extent that each one can prepare strategies for making headway in their own area.

I am utterly convinced that the future will see a great many contributions to translation for all of us.



SINTHÈSE

Quelques facteurs déterminant la fonction de la traduction dans les langues les moins répandues

Ce travail de Josu Zabaleta fut écrit à l'occasion des Cours d'Été de l'Université du Pays Basque, en guise de présentation et introduction au cycle qui fut organisé sous le titre de « Traduction et interprétation : communication et normalisation ».

L'auteur commence par rappeler un des objectifs fixés lors de la création de l'Association de Traducteurs et Interprètes en Langue Basque EIZIE, à savoir, la collaboration entre les différents traducteurs des différentes langues les moins répandues. Il analyse ensuite ces langues en les isolant, les définissant et décrivant leur situation, et ce, dans le but d'établir une stratégie concernant les traductions en ces langues, de façon à ce qu'elles puissent occuper la place qui leur correspond.

Il existe plus de langues en situation minoritaire ou de diffusion moyenne que des langues majoritaires ; aussi, la diversité des situations et des modes de traduction est-elle plus grande dans le premier groupe que dans le second. De ce fait, le champ d'action est aussi plus ample et plus complexe.

Un autre des points analysés est l'influence exercée par la traduction lors de la naissance de nombreuses littératures nationales, ainsi que le rôle essentiel qu'elle a joué dans la divulgation du savoir et de la pensée, autant en Orient qu'en Occident.

L'auteur étudie ensuite la fonction du traducteur et de la traduction dans les langues de moyenne ou petite diffusion, leur acceptation sociale et la méfiance qu'ils suscitent souvent. Une telle méfiance est le fruit d'un sentiment, qu'il dénomme « du péché originel », existant dans les sociétés où l'on parle ces langues et qui, de par leur situation, ont eu d'avantage recours à la traduction que les sociétés parlant une langue plus répandue.

C'est pourquoi il est indispensable de définir ce que nous entendons par langue minorisée ou de moyenne diffusion. Nombreux et divers sont les facteurs ou les données qui définissent le rôle de la traduction au sein d'une société, l'étendue géographique de sa langue, le degré de diglossie et le niveau de normalisation de la dite langue en sont quelques-uns.

Toute société attribue plusieurs fonctions à sa propre langue, mais principalement deux : l'une purement fonctionnelle liée au besoin de communication et l'autre, plus symbolique, celle de servir de trait d'union et de symbole d'identification de la communauté. La première fonction de la traduction ne peut être autre que celle de la communication. Toutefois, dans beaucoup de cas, cette première fonction passe au second plan, surtout dans les langues minoritaires. L'auteur illustre cette idée en donnant plusieurs exemples pris parmi ces langues.

Il finit son article en traitant du statut du traducteur et de son acceptation sociale et s'interroge sur les facteurs qui influent sur cette acceptation.