Descriptive Translation Studies – and beyond

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by Gideon Toury

Descriptive Translation Studies – and beyond

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INTRODUCTION

A case for Descriptive Translation Studies

In contradistinction to non-empirical sciences, empirical disciplines are devised to account, in a systematic and controlled way, for particular segments of the 'real world'. Consequently, no empirical science can make a claim for completeness and (relative) autonomy unless it has a proper *descriptive* branch. Describing, explaining and predicting phenomena pertaining to its object level is thus the main goal of such a discipline. In addition, carefully performed studies into well-defined corpora, or sets of problems, constitute the best means of testing, refuting, and especially modifying and amending the *theory* itself in whose terms the research is carried out. Being reciprocal in nature, the relations between the theoretical and descriptive branches of a discipline also make it possible to produce more refined and hence more significant studies, thus facilitating an ever better understanding of that section of reality to which that science refers. They also make possible the elaboration of *applications* of the discipline, should one be interested in elaborating them, in a way that is closer to what is inherent to the object itself.

Whether one chooses to focus one's efforts on translated texts and/or their constituents, on intertextual relationships, on models and norms of translational behaviour or on strategies adopted in and for the solution of particular problems, what constitutes the subject matter of the discipline of Translation Studies is (whether actually observable or at least reconstructable) facts of real life rather than speculative entities resulting from preconceived hypotheses and theoretical models. It is therefore empirical by its very nature and should be worked out accordingly. However, despite continuing attempts in recent decades to elevate it to a truly scientific status, as the empirical science it deserves to become, Translation Studies is still only in the making. This is clearly reflected in that, among other things, it is only recently that deliberate efforts have begun to establish a descriptive branch as an integral part of its overall programme: namely, as a vital link between successive phases of its own evolution as well as between the discipline itself and its extensions into the world of our experience. Consequently, translation scholars still find themselves in a tight spot whenever they are required to put their hypotheses to the test, insofar as the hypotheses themselves are formed within the discipline to begin with, and not imported wholesale from other frameworks, not even those regarded as "Voraussetzungswissenschaften für die Übersetzungswissenschaft" (Kühlwein et al. 1981: 15).

One of the main reasons for the prevailing underdevelopment of a descriptive branch within Translation Studies has no doubt been an overriding orientation towards practical applications, which has marked – and marred – scholarly work at least since the nineteen sixties. Thus, whereas for most empirical sciences, including even Linguistics, such applications – important as they may be – are presented merely as extensions into the world, the immediate needs of particular applications of Translation Studies have often been taken as a major constraint on the formation of the theory itself, or even as the very reason for its existence. Small wonder that a scholarly framework geared almost exclusively towards applicability in practice should show preference for prescriptivism at the expense of description, explanation and prediction.

What the application-oriented variety of Translation Studies normally amounts to is an admixture of speculation, if not sheer wishful thinking, and research work pertaining to some *other* discipline which, for one reason or another, is considered more prestigious, sometimes just more fashionable, for a limited period of time. By contrast, it tends to shun research within its own terms of reference. In fact, many writers on translation still look down on studies into actual practices, practitioners and their products, the more so if such studies are properly descriptive, i.e., if they refrain from value judgments in selecting subject matter or in presenting findings, and/or refuse to draw any conclusions in the form of recommendations for 'proper' behaviour. Somewhat paradoxically, it is precisely writers of this denomination who are also the first to lament the yawning gap between 'theory' and 'practice'. Even though gaps of this kind are best bridged by taking heed of the full range of real-life behaviour (practice!), along with the factors underlying and conditioning this behaviour (theory!), the lack of a truly descriptive explanatory branch within Translation Studies has never really bothered these writers. Often quite the contrary. After all, this attitude spared them the need to justify their own preferences in the face of the fact that in real-life situations, priority has often been given to quite different options. Not without reason, to be sure.

The practice of ignoring regularities of behaviour also made it easy to back one's claims with mere 'examples'. Recourse to randomly selected translation solutions has thus come to be associated with writing that is more oriented towards the applied, which is often unjustly presented as 'theoretical', whereas writings of other kinds were subjected to severe criticism on account of the scarcity of examples – as if a handful of quotes torn out of both co-text and context could attest to anything at all. And, in fact, the main consideration underlying the selection, if not the invention of an example was normally its *persuasiveness,* i.e., its alleged capacity to assist in driving a point home, rather than its *representativeness.*

Consequently, standard behaviour was not merely overlooked; at least by implication, it was also marked as downright unsuitable, and in need of change.

All this is not to say that no attempts have been made to account for actual translational behaviour and its results. However, most descriptive studies have been performed within disciplines other than Translation Studies, such as Contrastive Linguistics, Contrastive Textology, Comparative Literature, *stylistique comparée,* or – in more recent times – Textlinguistics, Pragmatics, or Psycholinguistics. Thus, while their subject matter could well have been deemed translational, the theoretical and methodological frameworks within which it was handled could not, if only because they were not sufficiently interested in fully accounting for all that translation may and does involve.

What is missing, in other words, is not isolated attempts reflecting excellent intuitions and supplying fine insights (which many of the existing studies certainly do), but a systematic branch proceeding from clear assumptions and armed with a methodology and research techniques made as explicit as possible and justified within Translation Studies itself. Only a branch of this kind can ensure that the findings of individual studies will be intersubjectively testable and comparable, and the studies themselves replicable, at least in principle, thus facilitating an ordered accumulation of knowledge. This is what the present book is about. Its main aim is precisely to tackle some of the main issues involved in establishing such a branch and embedding it at the very heart of the discipline as it becomes more empirical.

In many ways, the book is not just a sequel to, but actually a replacement of my programmatic *In Search of a Theory of Translation,* published in 1980 and out of print almost from the start. In fact, I have long resisted the temptation to have that book published in a second edition, a temptation that has recently turned into growing pressure, from colleagues and publishers alike. The reason for my reluctance has been a firm belief that books of this kind should only be taken as **interim reports of ongoing projects**, which means that such reports are soon out of date. Be that as it may, no particular acquaintance with *In Search of…* is presupposed here. Precautions have even been taken to keep the number of references to it to a bare minimum, so as not to burden the reader unnecessarily. Instead, theoretical issues which bear directly on the present discussion have been taken up again and presented in some detail. Three of the chapters are offered as excursuses: though digressing from the main line of argumentation, the extra light they cast on essential issues was deemed reason enough to include them in the book. The semi-independence they have been given should make them easy to either skip or focus on, as the reader sees fit. A change of type-face and shading mark shorter digressions within the chapters themselves.

Work on the book has taken quite a while. Over the years, many of the ideas comprising it were discussed in separate articles, albeit always in a provisional manner. Tackling a topic, often selected in accordance with the requirements and limitations of a particular conference or volume, inevitably resulted in shedding new light on old ideas and often gave rise to new points, to be dealt with more thoroughly later on. At the same time, the book raises a whole gamut of new issues, many of them for the first time. When the argument of an existing article was used, the need to come up with a unified book imposed some changes, often resulting in complete rewriting. Finally, rethinking and rewriting were also prompted by some of the more serious criticisms levelled against my work, for which I am grateful to dozens of colleagues around the world. None of them should be held responsible for any of my arguments, but they were all instrumental in their shaping. Special thanks are due firstly to Prof. Miriam Shlesinger, a former student, a fellow translation scholar and a fine editor, and secondly to Prof. Andrew Chesterman, who have given a final touch to my manuscript. I will no doubt come to regret all those (quite rare) instances where I showed obstinacy and refrained from adopting their editorial suggestions!

*

The book is divided into four parts. Part One is expository. It deals at some length with the pivotal position of descriptive studies – and of a descriptive-explanatory branch – within Translation Studies. By implication, it also supplies justification to my initial decision to devote a book neither to a purely theoretical presentation nor to a full-fledged study of a particular corpus, or problem, but rather to the issue of approaching translation empirically as such.

Part Two comprises a series of methodological discussions, constituting a Rationale for descriptive studies in translation. As such, it serves as a necessary framework and background for Part Three, where an assortment of case studies is presented, referring to issues of varying scopes and levels, from a whole historical shift through the translation of single texts to the translational treatment of lower-level entities. Each chapter is self-contained, and can therefore be read in and for itself. However, the framework in which all the studies were carried out and written down lends them a high degree of methodological unity, which links back to the Rationale. The guiding principle here was to tackle each issue within higher-level contexts: texts and modes of behaviour are situated in the appropriate cultural setting, and textual components are contextualized in their texts, and through these texts, in cultural constellations again. The overriding need to contextualize is also stressed in the critical presentation of the use of experimental methods in the study of translation, as well as in the programmatic exposé of the gradual emergence of a translator – a highly neglected research domain of Translation Studies.

Finally, in Part Four, the crucial question is addressed which will already have come up in the expository part: what is knowledge accumulated through descriptive studies performed within one and the same theoretical-methodological framework likely to yield? Formulating laws and drawing implications for applied activities undoubtedly lie *beyond* the scope of these studies as such, and it is they that have contributed the last part of the book's title.

A remark on the new edition

The introduction to the first edition was signed in February 1994. Its last paragraph makes the following claim:

> One problem with books is that they seem so final. If an author may venture a request, I would ask my readers to regard what they are about to read as just another interim report; at best, a stepping stone for further developments of the discipline in one particular direction. Far from wishing to attain general agreement, my intention is to stir a debate. The former I don't believe in anyway; the latter seems vital, if any real progress is to be achieved.

The debate I hoped for started right away. Indeed, it is still very much alive today, sixteen years later. I am proud to say that *Descriptive Translation Studies and beyond* played quite a role in this evolution. Indeed, it has not only been reprinted several times in an unchanged version, but it had a special edition made (in English) for the Chinese market as well as a Spanish translation.

It is probably this lively debate, and the fact that it is still ongoing, that motivated the publishers to come up with the suggestion that being unable to produce the next stage of my thinking and study in a new book, I might at least expand the original version and update it a little. I was glad to comply, taking it (perhaps in an exaggerated way) as a vote of confidence of sorts. After all, this is the best most of us will achieve in the profession we have selected for ourselves.

What you are looking at now (and will hopefully go on reading) is just another interim report of a project which has been going on for years. The theoretical aspect has been strengthened with a new chapter on the notion of 'translation problem' (Chapter 2) and the old Chapter 2 has been expanded and divided into two: Chapter 3 on "Norm-governed Activities and Translation" and Chapter 4 on "Translational Norms and Their Study". In addition, throughout the book, many passages have been revised and others have been changed. Finally, some effort has been invested in making the reading smoother without oversimplifying the argumentation. It is therefore basically the same book, but another one.

Tel Aviv, July 2011

PART ONE

The pivotal position of Descriptive Studies and DTS

It has been almost forty years since the Third International Congress of Applied Linguistics (Copenhagen, 1972), when James S. Holmes put forward his ideas on "The Name and Nature of Translation Studies". In an oral presentation bearing that title he envisioned a semi-autonomous discipline which would cater for the whole "complex of problems clustered round the phenomenon of translating and translations" (Holmes 1988: 67), which – for very sound reasons (pp. 68–70) – he purported to call Translation Studies.[1] He then went on to outline the structure of the discipline, a compelling admixture of observations on what it was like, in the 1970s, with a penetrating vision as to the form it should, and would eventually, assume.

Until that time, very little effort had been invested in "meta-reflection on the nature of translation studies" (p. 71). It can thus be assumed that Holmes' piece would have played a much more substantial role in channelling the development of the discipline, had it not been for the unfortunate fact that, for many years, it remained virtually unknown. Actually, for the first fifteen years, the paper's full text existed only as a mimeographed pre-publication (Holmes 1972b) – a pamphlet which, paradoxically enough, was only available to the initiated, those who were already interested enough in the suggested approach to take the initiative and contact the author for a copy. The existence, as of 1977, of a Dutch version did not, of course, contribute too much to the dissemination of Holmes' ideas, most certainly not on an international scale. A personal wish to bring these ideas

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1. Since then, the name Translation Studies has been gaining more and more ground in English-speaking academic circles. It has relegated to a peripheral position alternatives such as Science of Translating (Nida 1964) or Science of Translation (Nida 1969; Bausch, Klegraf and Wilss 1970, 1972; Harris 1977b; Wilss 1982), let alone Translatology (Harris 1988a). Unfortunately, the confusion which was thus cleared up has been superseded by a new complication: several universities in Europe have renamed their translation departments 'Departments of Translation *Studies*', despite the fact that most of the time and energy is invested in the teaching and exercising of translation (including interpreting) as a *skill*, rather than in research or training for research.

to the attention of a wider audience underlay my own decision to reprint Holmes' original text in a special issue of the *Indian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, devoted to translation, which I was invited to guest-edit at the end of the eighties (Toury 1987: 9–24). This action was however not much help either, given the peripherality of the periodical and the scarcity of the book edition of that special issue, although it did enjoy a second edition (1998).

Be that as it may, the sad fact is that, for more than twenty years, Holmes' visionary paper was hardly ever mentioned by other authors, especially in books and articles which became standard works in the field,[2] nor could any direct signs of its influence on other scholars be traced. Thus, despite the incontestable unfolding of Translation Studies over the past decades, including the (re)discovery of the original paper when it was included in *Translated*!, the posthumous collection of Holmes' papers so meticulously edited by Raymond van den Broeck (Holmes 1988: 67–80), a complete realization of his vision is still a long way off. What was achieved, especially after the James S. Holmes Symposium on Translation Studies, held in Amsterdam in 1990),[3] was its adoption as a kind of *Orientierungskarte*, a grid on which individual approaches to the study of translation, of which there are quite a number, could be situated and their (inter)relations noted. However, the 'map' itself still represents more of a desideratum than a reality. Lately, some other maps have also been suggested, most notably the 'conceptual map' which was put together during the planning phase of the online *Translation Studies Bibliography* (http://www.Benjamins.com/online/tsb; e.g., van Doorslaer 2005, 2007). A number of overt or covert criticisms (e.g., Pym 1989: 2–3; Snell-Hornby 1991; Chesterman 2009) notwithstanding, Holmes' conceptualization is still the best, most fruitful one. Let me therefore present it once again in some detail.

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2. Wolfram Wilss is an exception which testifies to the rule: in his basic German book (1977: 83; English version: 1982: 78) he does devote a sentence of some 3½ lines to Holmes' lecture. However, he only refers to a one-page abstract thereof (Holmes 1972a), and does not really tackle any of Holmes' ideas.

3. Several speakers in that conference, which was held a short while after the publication of *Translated!*, indeed chose to refer to this article (see the published Proceedings: van Leuven-Zwart and Naaijkens 1991). Some of them, most notably Mary Snell-Hornby (pp. 13–23), José Lambert (pp. 25–37), Theo Hermans (pp. 155–169) and myself (pp. 179–192), even took it as a basis for their own presentations. In the years that have elapsed, recourse to Holmes has become much more common.

1. Holmes' 'map' of the discipline

For me, the main merit of Holmes' programmatic presentation lies in its notion of **division**: not as a mere necessary evil, that is, but as a **basic principle of the very organization of the discipline**, implying as it clearly does a proper division of labour between various kinds of scholarly activity having different foci. The division itself in the form it was suggested takes after adjacent disciplines, most notably Linguistics (e.g., Fowler 1974: 33–37), and is in full keeping with Holmes' conviction (1988: 71) that Translation Studies was on its way to becoming an **empirical science**:[4] main split into *Pure* vs. *Applied* branches; *Pure Translation Studies* further broken down into *Theoretical* (*General* and *Partial*) vs. *Descriptive* sub-branches, with *Descriptive Translation Studies* branching again, in terms of three different foci of research: *Function-*, *Process-*, *and Product-oriented*. The tree-diagram in Figure 1 represents Holmes' overview of Translation Studies and its divisions.

Of course, Holmes was scientifically-minded enough to realize that a 'flat' presentation such as his may have created a wrong impression. Thus, towards the end of the paper he proclaimed:

> in what has preceded, descriptive, theoretical, and applied translation studies have been presented as three fairly distinct branches of the entire discipline, and the order of presentation might be taken to suggest that their import for one another is unidirectional. (Holmes 1988: 78)

He then added a few programmatic sentences with regard to the (inter)relations – existing, but mainly desired – between the different branches and their respective sub-branches, a topic which had rarely been taken up in any serious way at that time.

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4. To cite one famous formulation of the objectives of empirical sciences, the opening passage of Carl Hempel's now classic discussion of the "fundamentals of concept formation in empirical science":

> Empirical science has two major objectives: to describe particular phenomena in the world of our experience and to establish general principles by means of which they can be explained and predicted. The explanatory and predictive principles of a scientific discipline are stated in its hypothetical generalizations and its theories; they characterize general patterns or regularities to which the individual phenomena conform and by virtue of which their occurrence can be systematically anticipated. (Hempel 1952: 1)

In fact, any systematic application of a theory also presupposes these two objectives. In Hempel's words: "all … application requires principles which predict what particular effects would occur if we brought about certain specified changes in a given system" (Hempel 1952: 20).

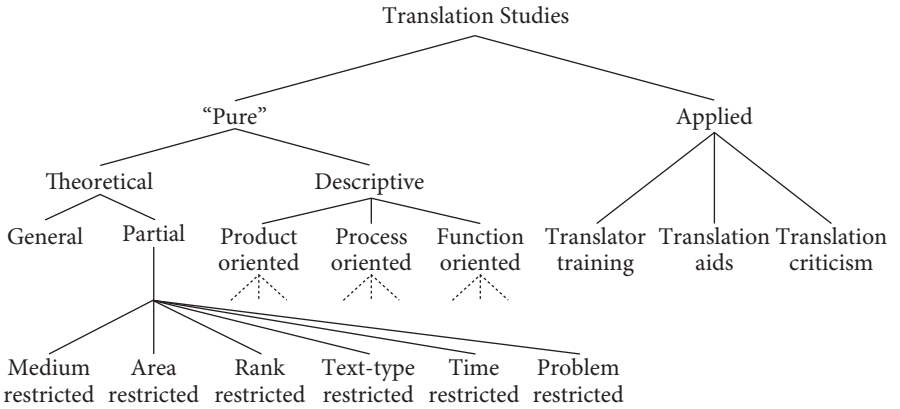

Figure 1. Holmes' basic 'map' of Translation Studies

The rest of this chapter will address itself to precisely this aspect, which is of utmost importance for scholars wishing to locate themselves in the middle ground of Descriptive Translation Studies. In addition to enhancing the accuracy of the map as such, my objective will be to make a case for the discipline's *controlled* evolution. Descriptive studies will be taken as a focal point and pivot, both as an activity and a scientific branch – in full keeping with Holmes' reasoning, I would presume. The basic question I shall be pursuing will thus be as follows:

> **It is very clear that individual studies into translation are bound to yield isolated descriptions, an obvious result being a gradual accumulation of discrete pieces of knowledge. But what kind of contribution could descriptive studies carried out within DTS be expected to make to the discipline at large?**

2. The organization of DTS[5]

The first set of relations to be superimposed on Holmes' basic map applies to DTS itself as a distinct branch of Translation Studies.

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5. From this point on I will use the abbreviation DTS, introduced by Holmes himself (1988: 71), to refer to the scientific branch. The longer denomination, 'descriptive [translation] studies', will be retained for any research procedures addressing translational phenomena (which may or may not be within DTS). Needless to say, my main concern throughout will be with research procedures pertaining to DTS.

Thus, it is certainly true that three approaches – function-, process- and product-oriented – are not just *possible*, but *justified* too, so that each one of them delimits a legitimate field of study of its own. However, to regard each of the three as a field in itself is a sure recipe for reducing the studies to superficial **descriptions** – whether of a translation's position in the culture in which it is or will be embedded; of the process through which a translation is derived from a so-called source text; or of the textual-linguistic make-up of a translation (or aspects of/phenomena within it), along with the relationships that tie it to its source and/or the 'shifts' which are manifested by the one vis-à-vis the other. Once **explanations** are also sought – and no study deserving of the name can afford to dispense with attempting them, at the very least – the picture is bound to change considerably. After all, no hypothesis which is even remotely explanatory can be formulated unless all three aspects have been brought to bear on each other.

In fact, to the extent that the descriptive branch, DTS, aspires to offer a framework for individual studies of all kinds, at all levels, there is no escape from proceeding from the assumption that functions, processes and products are not just 'related', in some obscure way, but rather, **form one complex whole whose constitutive parts are hardly separable from one another except for methodical (and, yes, convenience) purposes**. Consequently, whether an individual study is process-, product-, or function-oriented, when it comes to the global level, that of the discipline as a whole, the programme must aspire to lay bare the interdependencies of all three aspects if we are ever to gain true insight into the intricacies of translational phenomena, and to do so within one unified framework.

Seen as such, individual studies of whatever denomination emerge as a two-fold enterprise: each one is a local activity, pertinent to a particular corpus, problem, historical period, or the like,[6] as well as part of an overall endeavour, an attempt to account for ways in which function, process and product can and do determine each other.

Attempts to apply experimental methods to the study of translation (see Chapter 14) have certainly shed new light on the need to account for those tripartite interdependencies, as no significant conclusion can be drawn from an experiment unless all parameters which are deemed relevant have been established, along with their interrelationships. Moreover, control over as many parameters as possible is a precondition for the execution of a proper experiment, not to mention the (relative) replicability of one, which renders the need to account for the variables and their interrelations all the more pressing. And the fact that very

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6. One cannot but wonder why Holmes neglected to duplicate his division of the *theoretical* branch into 'partial theories' in DTS. This lack is corrected by adding optional sub-branching to each descriptive branch in Figure 1.

often this need is not taken seriously has been, to my mind, a major impediment to the development of this promising brand of descriptive-explanatory research.

Thus, the [prospective] position (also called 'function'[7]) of a translation within a culture or a particular section thereof should be regarded as a strong governing factor of the very make-up of the product, in terms of underlying models, linguistic representation, or both. After all, translations do not come into being in a vacuum. Not only is the act performed in a particular cultural environment, but it is designed to meet certain needs there, and/or occupy a certain 'slot' within it. **Translators may therefore be said to operate first and foremost in the interest of the culture into which they are translating**, whichever way that interest is conceived of. In fact, the very extent to which features of a source text are retained in a particular translation thereof, or even regarded as requiring retention in the first place (which may at first sight seem to suggest operation in the interest of the *source* culture, if not of the source *text* itself), is also determined on the target side, and according to its concerns. Features are retained, and recast in TL material, not because they are 'important' in any inherent sense, but because they have been *assigned* importance: namely, from the recipient vantage point. The establishment of a set of required (or preferred) translation relationships may also form part of the deal, but only inasmuch as the retention of one or another aspect of an SL (source language) text 'invariant under transformation' is considered a necessary condition for a translation to fulfil the function allotted to it in the target system.

It is the prospective function of the translation, via its required textual-linguistic make-up and/or the relationships which would tie it to the original, which yields and governs the strategies which are resorted to during the production of the TL (target language) text in question, and hence the translation act as a whole.[8] This logic, summarized in Figure 2, has important implications for any research which is carried out within DTS. Thus, there is no real point in a product-oriented study if questions pertaining to the determining force of its intended function, and to the strategies governed by the norms of establishing a 'proper'

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7. I use the term 'function' in its *semiotic* sense, as the 'value' assigned to an item belonging in a certain system by virtue of the network of relations it enters into, with other constituents as well as the system as a whole (see, e.g., Even-Zohar 1990: 10). As such, it is not tantamount to the mere 'use' made of the end product, as seems to be the case with *Skopostheorie* (e.g., Vermeer 1986) or *Handlungstheorie* (e.g., Holz-Mänttäri 1984), let alone more naïve approaches (e.g., Roberts 1992). The different uses of 'function' may well correlate, but this particular aspect still awaits scholarly processing.

8. Even with respect to the gradual emergence of a translator under 'natural' circumstances – that is, outside any schooling. system – environmental feedback greatly influences the strategies resorted to in the act of translation, thus giving them a considerable degree of uniformity across a societal group. This issue will be taken up towards the end of the book (see Excursus C).

product, are not taken heed of. Similarly, there is little point in a process-oriented study of whatever type, unless it incorporates the cultural-semiotic conditions under which it occurs.

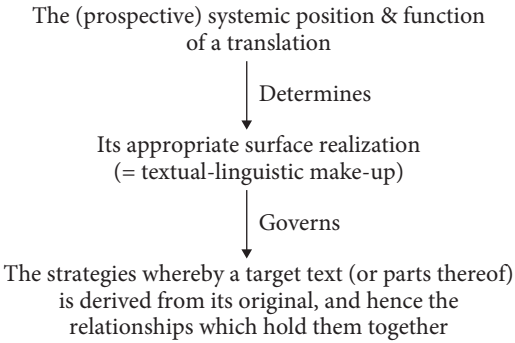

Figure 2. The relations between function, product and process in translation

Finally, it is not translations alone (as textual-linguistic entities) whose position in the hosting culture is changeable. Translating itself, as an institutionalized mode of text generation, may also assume varying positions, in terms of e.g. centrality vs. peripherality, prevalence vs. rarity, or high vs. low prestige. This variability with its possible ramifications, e.g. in terms of texts pertaining to different types, or translation activities performed in different cultural groups, is again intimately connected with the strategies adopted by translators, and hence with the make-up of translated texts and their relationships to their respective sources.

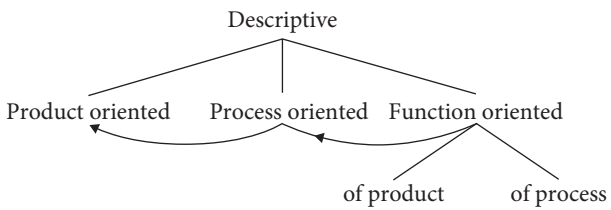

Figure 3. The main relations within DTS

The array of relations represented by Figures 2 and 3 may seem to work the other way around too, in the sense that the strategies a translator resorts to, and the resulting textual-linguistic make-up and translation/source relationships, may be seen as affecting the position of the end-product in the recipient system. However, under the semiotic perspective we have adopted throughout (see fn. 7 above), functions

should be regarded as always having at least *logical* priority over their surface realizations (also called 'carriers', or 'functors'). This idea has been a cornerstone of Dynamic Functionalism (Even-Zohar 1990; Sheffy 1992) ever since the late 1920s and early 1930s, when it was formulated by scholars such as Jurij Tynjanov, Roman Jakobson and Pëtr Bogatyrëv. Once such a perspective has been opted for, the reversal of roles is no longer viable. Since translating, like any other communicational activity, is *teleological* by its very nature, its systemic position, and that of its future products, should be taken as forming constraints of the highest order.

This principle does not lose any of its validity when the position actually occupied by a translation in the target culture, or its ensuing functions, is found to differ from the ones it was initially designed to have; for instance, when the translation of a literary work, intended to function as a literary text too and translated in a way which is deemed suitable for attaining that purpose, is nevertheless rejected by the target culture, or relegated to a position which it was not designed to occupy (e.g. a children's book or a piece of journalism). One of the objectives of descriptive studies is precisely **to confront the position a certain translation (or group of translations) has actually assumed in the host culture with the position it was intended to have**, and offer explanations for the perceived differences.

3. Between DTS and Translation Theory

One point should be made very clear: the programme I wish to present pertains to Translation Studies *as a discipline* rather than to the immediate concerns of any *individual* researcher, let alone every single attempt to tackle translation in a scholarly way. Needless to say, such a programme would cut across Holmes' distinctions. Not only will it not be located within any single sub-branch of DTS, but it won't be confined to DTS to begin with, given that one of the aims of the discipline is to bring the results of studies executed within DTS to bear on the *theoretical* branch.

This is not to say that every single study is, or even should aspire to be, performed with a view to revising the theory in whose terms it is executed. Still, inasmuch as a study is well-performed, its findings will always bear on the underlying theory. Whether the theoretical implications will be drawn by the researcher her/himself or by some other agent, most notably an empirically-minded theoretician, they will inevitably contribute to the verification or refutation of general hypotheses, and to their modification in particular. The bi-directional relations obtaining between DTS and Translation Theory are represented in Figure 4.

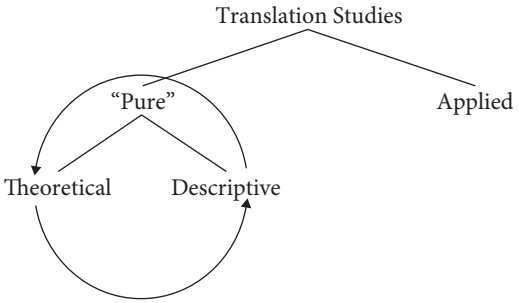

Figure 4. The relations between DTS and Translation Theory

To be sure, the status of both the principle of interdependency and the priority of functions over carriers is *theoretical*. However, as soon as *concrete* relations between function, process and product are laid bare by an individual study and brought into the game, the course taken by the discipline is bound to be affected. After all, Translation Studies as a whole is called to tackle fully and systematically three types of issues which, although related to each other, differ in scope and level:

1. all that translation CAN, in principle, involve;
2. what it DOES involve, under particular sets of circumstances, along with the REASONS for that involvement, and
3. what it is LIKELY to involve, under one or another array of specified conditions.

Although level (1) yields a truly theoretical entity, in terms of a theory of *translation* it is most elementary – a mere co-ordinate system which makes it possible to account for anything connected with translating and translation. Level (2) is, of course, tantamount to DTS's programme. Yet the significance of studies of this kind lies not only in the possibility of supplying exhaustive descriptions and tentative explanations of instances of actual behaviour. No less important are their implications for the discipline at large. Thus, when the initial potentials subsumed under (1) have been modified by diversified factual knowledge accumulated in actual studies under (2), only then will ample grounds have been furnished for making some predictions, and in a justifiable way too, as becomes the empirical status so appropriate to Translation Studies. In this vein, (3) would pertain to the theoretical branch again, only in a far more elaborate form.

In the long run, the cumulative findings of descriptive studies should make it possible to formulate a series of coherent *laws* which would state the inherent relations between all the variables that will have been found relevant for translation. Lying as it does beyond descriptive studies as a scholarly activity and beyond DTS

as a sub-discipline, the formulation of laws of this kind may be taken to constitute the ultimate goal of the discipline in its theoretical facet.

The laws as we envisage them are anything but absolute, designed as they are to state the *likelihood* that a certain kind of behaviour, or surface realization, would occur under a particular set of conditions. Needless to say, not even one conditioned law can be formulated unless the conditioning factors have been identified and specified. What the formulation of laws thus presupposes is the establishment of *regularities of behaviour*, along with maximal controllability of the parameters of function, process and product.

Looked at from a slightly different angle, such an evolutionary process would entail a gradual transition from Holmes' *partial* theories of translation, which show large areas of overlap anyway, to a *general* theory thereof. This kind of generalization would be achieved by **introducing the principles on which the restriction of specific theories is based** (e.g., medium, rank, text-type, time, problem [Holmes 1988: 74–77], and many more) **into the theory itself: namely, as parameters governing the probability of the occurrence of one or another kind of behaviour, phenomenon, relationship, etc.** Among other things, a theory thus refined will make possible the performance of yet more elaborate descriptive-explanatory studies, which will in turn bear back on the theory, making it even more intricate; and so on and so forth.

Within such a recursive pattern, descriptive studies emerge as occupying a **pivotal** position: While one is always free to speculate and/or indulge in introspection, it is only through studies into actual behaviour and its results that hypotheses can be not just formulated, but actually be put to the test. In fact, even if a study doesn't have such testing as an explicit goal – which it most certainly doesn't have to have – this will inevitably wind up being an important concomitant of the study; the more so if constant heed is paid to the underlying theoretical assumptions and to how the methods used actually derive from those assumptions and are answerable to them.

4. Between Translation Studies and its applied extensions

As was to be expected, the bulk of this chapter has been weighted towards the internal structure of DTS, on the one hand, and the mutual relationships between it and Translation Theory, on the other. We should recall, however, that the first and main split in Holmes' basic map, which we adopted as our starting point (Figure 1), was between the 'Pure' and the 'Applied', so that an introductory chapter which sets out to impose better order on the field cannot afford to ignore the relationships between those two altogether.

Thus, it is precisely one of the advantages of the kind of laws envisioned in the previous Section that they may be projected onto the applied extensions of the discipline with relative ease, and may make possible the elaboration of these extensions in a way which is much closer to reality, hence enhancing their chances of being successfully implemented.

It has always been my conviction that **it is no concern of a scientific discipline, not even within the 'human sciences', to effect changes in the world of our experience.** Thus, as should have become clear, I would hardly subscribe to the view shared by so many that "translation theory's main concern is to determine appropriate translation methods" (Newmark 1981: 19); definitely not any more than "linguistics' main concern is to determine appropriate ways of language use". Strong as this conviction is, however, it doesn't preclude the possibility of drawing conclusions from theoretical reasoning, or scientific findings, to actual behaviour, be its orientation retrospective (e.g., translation criticism) or prospective (e.g., translator training or policy making). This possibility does exist, of course. However, drawing such conclusions is up to the *practitioner*, not the scholar. It is up to these practitioners to bear the consequences too, and they might just as well be ready to take full responsibility rather than blame theorists (or the 'theory' as such) for their own blunders in the 'practice', as is all too often the case.

Mentioning practitioners, in this context, those I have in mind are first and foremost those who indulge in *applied activities*, e.g., critics, teachers and policy-makers rather than practising translators, unless they wish to train for the profession in a fully conscious way. Translation is, of course, the object of Translation Studies in all its branches, and not an 'application' or 'extension' of any of them, just as speaking, in either L_1 or L_2, is not an application of Linguistics, Language Teaching or Speech Therapy, even though it is certainly connected to them.[9]

Needless to say, there is no direct transition from Translation Studies proper to any of its extensions into the world. Even less can the derivation of one from the other be regarded as automatic. Rather, any such transition would necessitate the application of some *bridging rules* – a fact which renders the relations between Translation Studies and its applied extensions slightly different from all the relations previously discussed, as indicated by the use of a different type of arrow in Figure 5. Furthermore, the bridging rules are bound to be different for different types of application, and, at any rate, none of them will draw on Translation Studies alone. This fact is indicated by an additional set of incoming arrows, which point towards the various extensions. For instance, a set of bridging rules

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9. Needless to say, what goes on in an applied extension of any discipline can become an object of study too. It will, however, constitute not only a different *object*, but also an object of a different *order*.

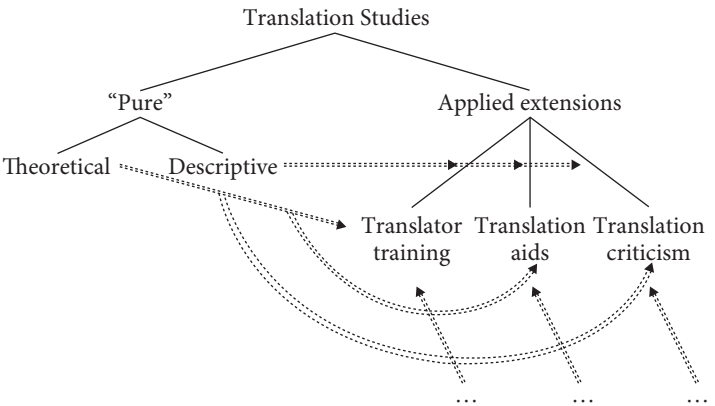

Figure 5. The relations between Translation Studies and its applied extensions

for translator training would, in all likelihood, come from a theory of teaching and learning, and hence include notions such as 'exercise' and 'drill', or 'input' vs. 'intake'. These concepts would probably be of very little relevance to an extension such as policy-making, whose establishment would require a completely different set of bridging rules. This inherent heterogeneity is precisely the reason why the label 'applied extensions' (of Translation Studies) seems so preferable to Holmes' straightforward but simplistic, and hence potentially misleading, 'Applied Translation Studies' (1988:77): each of the branches is an extension 'into the world' of the discipline, but not of it alone.

In contrast to the two 'Pure' branches of Translation Studies, which are *theoretical* and *descriptive*, respectively, the applied extensions cannot be anything but *prescriptive*. This is so even if they are brought closer to reality, as is the aspiration here, and even if their pluralism and tolerance are enhanced. They are not intended to account either for possibilities and likelihoods or for actual facts, but rather to set norms in a more or less conscious way. In brief, to tell others what they should have done or should be doing, if they accept these norms (or, very often, acknowledge the authority of their proponents) and submit to them.

One level where the inherent differences between the various branches are manifested most univocally is in the kind of verbs that are typically used in them. Thus, each branch is characterized by verbs of different categories, and their actual use in discourse about translation may therefore serve as a marker of its respective place in the discipline, even if (or, rather, precisely when) it is masked; most notably, when recommendations for 'proper' behaviour appear in the guise

of theoretical or descriptive pronouncements. To take so-called 'translation relationships' as a case in point, this difference finds its expression in the existence of four levels of observation, along with the different criteria (or types of conditions) for the application of the relationship in question, as summed up in Table 1.

Table 1. The differences between Translation Theory, DTS, and the applied extensions of the discipline as exemplified by the use of typical verbs

Type of relationship	**Criterion (or type of condition)**	**Typical verbs**	**Branch of Translation Studies**
possible probable	theoretical conditional	*can be* *is likely to be*	translation theory, basic translation theory, modified
existing	empirical	*is*	DTS
required	postulated	*should [not] be*	applied extensions of Translation Studies

We will return to the implications of the structure of the discipline from a different angle, that of the notion of 'problem' and its position in expert discourse on translation, after we have elaborated on the status of translation and translations as facts of so-called target cultures.

PART TWO

A rationale for Descriptive Translation Studies

Having established descriptive studies in a key position within Translation Studies and in its evolution, the next logical step would be to ask how any given study would proceed, if indeed it is to go beyond the individual case. Our rationale for studies aiming to expose the interdependencies of function, product and process will be presented in a number of successive stages, each building on the preceding ones.

In Chapter 1, the theoretical question of what would constitute an object of study within a target-oriented approach to translation will be submitted to detailed scrutiny. A separate discussion (Chapter 2) will then be devoted to the presentation of three senses in which the notion of 'problem' may feature in professional discourse about translation, a logical expansion of the distinction between different levels (or types) of object in the field. This chapter, in turn, will be followed by a methodological overview of discovery vs. justification procedures in descriptive studies of translation. As a kind of intermezzo, we will take a brief excursion into so-called pseudotranslations and their possible relevancy for Translation Studies (Excursus A). Finally, a couple of chapters (3–4) will be devoted to the key notion of 'norms' and its relevance to translational behaviour, and to how norms may be reconstructed and studied.

At this point, we will make a small U-turn and go back to the research method. Here (Chapter 5), an attempt will be made to apply a first layer of flesh to the bones presented at the end of Chapter 1. To make for easier orientation, the key concepts comprising the bare bones will be highlighted in both occurrences, using SMALL CAPS. We will then zoom in on one aspect of the method: the type of unit that the comparative part of a study would be applied to, along with some of its justifications (Chapter 6).

To wind up the preliminary discussion, a step-by-step presentation of an exemplary case study will be offered (Chapter 7), proceeding from a linguistic phenomenon of one basic type – conjoint phrases of [near-]synonymous lexemes – in its recurring use as a translational replacement in one particular tradition, and progressing toward generalizations of an ever higher order. The intention here will not be to unfold the study itself, in all its ramifications, but to highlight the ordered movement from one stage to the next, as an illustration of the research method; hence its modest characterization as a 'study in descriptive studies'.

CHAPTER 1

Translations as facts of a 'target' culture

An assumption and its methodological implications

The first question that suggests itself concerns **the range of objects of study in the framework of DTS**: where would the line be drawn between what is and what is not 'in'? How are we to determine what would be taken up and what would be left out? The current state of research in Translation Studies makes these questions difficult to tackle, let alone answer. On the one hand, today's discipline is a remarkably heterogeneous series of loosely connected paradigms[1] while, on the other, there is an overriding tendency to regard different paradigms as mere alternative ways of handling 'the same thing'. Which they are not, nor can they be expected to be.

As is well known, establishing an object of study is never a neutral procedure. Rather, it is a function of the *theory* in whose terms it is constituted, which is always geared to cater for particular needs. Its establishment and justification are therefore intimately connected with the *questions* one wishes to pose, the possible *methods* of dealing with the selected objects with an eye to exploring those questions – and, indeed, the kind of *answers* which would count as admissible. Thus, the question we face is not really what the object of translation studies *is* (in itself, so to speak), but rather what would be *taken to constitute* such an object, in pursuit of a certain set of goals. Evidently, any change of approach will entail a change of object, and the other way around. This is so even if various approaches superficially fall under the same heading: it is not the *label* that counts, but the *concept* it covers; and concepts can only be established within conceptual *networks*.

1. Approaching translation within a target-oriented framework

Indeed, translation scholars of different denominations all use the words 'translation' and 'translating'. Many also make use of labels such as 'transfer' and 'translational relationships', 'equivalence' and 'adequacy', 'translation problem'

1. And see, in this connection, Chesterman's 1997 account of the conceptual heterogeneity of the discipline and its history in terms of changing 'memes'.

and 'solution', and many more. However, not only are the contents of recurring words in their use as terms given different characterizations in their respective terminological systems, but there are also considerable differences between approaches as to how the object of study would be delimited, to begin with, and what objects would therefore count as legitimate. Unfortunately, the fallacious rejection of somebody else's concepts on the grounds that they are untenable within one's own frame of reference just because they seemingly bear the same name is still common practice. (The most striking case is probably the case of the label 'equivalence'.)

It will be recalled that the mainspring of the present endeavour was the conviction that the position and functions that translations (as entities) and translating (as an activity) are designed to have in a prospective target culture, the form a translation would have (and hence the relationships that would tie it to its original), and the strategies resorted to during its production constitute an ordered set rather than a mere congeries of disconnected facts. Having accepted this as an axiom, it is *interdependencies* that will be the focus of our attention, the main intention being to lay bare the regularities marking the relationships assumed to obtain between function, product and process.

The crucial step taken in pursuit of this goal is the suggestion that **translations be regarded as facts of the culture that would host them**, with the concomitant assumption that whatever their function and systemic status, these are constituted within the target culture and reflect its own systemic constellation. It was by virtue of its starting point that this approach was described as 'target-oriented'.

When it was first put forward, the target-oriented frame of reference for the study of translating and translations in their immediate contexts was considered somewhat unorthodox, and its initiator something of an *enfant terrible* (Katharina Reiß, personal communication). At that time, back in the 1970s, Translation Studies was still strongly marked by *source* orientedness, and the different scholarly paradigms were basically *application*-ridden. Whether concerned with training or quality assessment, they were mainly preoccupied with the proclaimed protection of the SL text rights. Thus, translations were approached first and foremost as representations of previously existing texts that were in a language/culture other than that of the target. To be sure, constraints originating in the target culture were never totally disregarded. They have, however, been seen as *subsidiary*; especially those constraints which did not fall within Linguistics in its narrower sense. Many of the factors that affect translational behaviour in real-life situations, along with the fact that these factors have engendered different

translation traditions, were resented, or, at best, relegated to the realm of history, which was regarded by many as a marginal field of study.[2]

In the years to follow, most translation scholars, while not abandoning the seemingly safe haven of the source text, have at least come to integrate more and more target-bound considerations into their reasoning. In addition, a second paradigm, which was heavily target-oriented, was introduced into the field. This paradigm, which has become known as *Skopostheorie*, has gained considerable footing and has left its mark on the discipline, albeit almost exclusively in German-speaking circles, first and foremost in former West Germany, since its writings were mostly confined to this area. As a result, target-orientedness as such no longer arouses the same antagonism as it did just a few decades earlier.

Interestingly, the first formulations of *Skopostheorie* by Hans J. Vermeer (e.g., 1978) almost coincided with the beginnings of my own realization that a switch to target-orientedness was imminent (Toury 1977) – which sheds interesting light on how changes of scholarly climate occur, especially considering that for quite a while the two of us were practically unaware of each other's work, moving as we did in different academic and institutional circles.[3]

Finally, our roads crossed, and the two of us identified some common grounds right away. The shared elements notwithstanding, there remained at least one major difference between the interests of the two target-oriented paradigms, which also accounts for the different assumptions each of them has chosen to proceed from: whereas mainstream *Skopos*-theorists still see the ultimate justification of the frame of reference they are busy establishing in developing a more true-to-life way of dealing with problems of an applied

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2. In my view, no translation can be fully (or accurately) accounted for outside of its position in history. Thus, it is impossible for two translations whose textual-linguistic make-up is identical but which were produced in different socio-cultural and historical environments to ever count as a single translation. By the same token, any account of an instance of translation that is wrongly located in space or time (a common error of students, among others) is bound to be misleading and result in shaky or wrong accounts. I therefore fail to understand criticisms such as Pym's (1998), who has argued that target-oriented studies of translation have "neglected" history and its study. By contrast, I fully endorse Delabastita's 1991 claim that the opposition between theoretical and historical approaches to translation is utterly false.

3. An interesting attempt to associate target-oriented thinking on translation, especially of my brand, and some of the basic ideas of another contemporary approach to translation, Deconstruction, was made by van den Broeck (1990). While I would not endorse all his claims, it is certainly an intriguing article for anybody interested in the way scholarly paradigms change. In this connection, see also the attempt to compare my approach to those of Antoine Berman (Brownlie 2003) and Paul Ricœur (Weissbrod 2009).

nature, the main object being to make 'improvements' (i.e., changes!) in the world of our experience, my own endeavours have always been geared primarily towards the descriptive-explanatory goal of supplying exhaustive accounts of whatever has been presented/regarded as translational within a target culture, on the way to making some generalizations regarding translational behaviour. Recent attempts to conduct historical studies within *Skopostheorie* (most notably Vermeer 1992), on the one hand, and to apply some of the basic assumptions of the other target-oriented paradigm to didactics (e.g., Toury 1980b, 1984b, and especially 1992), on the other, indicate that the gap may have been narrowing.

This tendency is also manifest in the recent work of some second-generation *Skopos*-theorists, most notably Christiane Nord (e.g., 1991), who has made an interesting attempt to integrate a version of the notion of 'translational norms', so central to my own reasoning, into an account that is basically Vermeerian. Unfortunately (from the point of view of DTS), while doing so, Nord (re)introduced the concept of 'loyalty', and as an a priori *moral* principle at that, which lends privileged status to what we would call 'adequacy'. This may well be opening a new gap between the two approaches as the old one seems to have been closing. Although it may be too early to say for sure, the appearance in the last few years of third-generation *Skopos* theorists (see, e.g., Dizdar's review of the first edition of the present book [Dizdar 2000] and her comparative presentation of the two target-oriented paradigms in Dizdar 2006: 282–330) seems promising again.

My own programme has not fared too well either, the prevailing tendency having been to read its claims through the glasses of other approaches rather than in its own terms. As a result, many of my arguments were grossly misperceived. In view of the misunderstandings that have emerged, I find it advisable to dwell a little longer on the target orientedness of the approach in view of the type of studies envisaged within it and their ultimate goals.

2. Translations as cultural facts

Strange as it may sound to the uninitiated, there is nothing perverse in claiming that a text's position and functions, including those that go with a text's being regarded as a translation, are determined first and foremost by considerations originating in the culture that would host it. For one thing, this is the most normal practice of the persons-in-the-culture themselves. Thus, when a text is offered as a translation, it is quite readily accepted bona fide as one, no further questions asked. Among other things, this is why it is so easy for fictitious translations (which will be singled out in Excursus A) to pass for genuine ones. By

contrast, when a text is presented as having been originally composed in a language/culture, reasons will often reveal themselves – including certain features of textual make-up and verbal formulation, which persons-in-the-culture have come to associate with translations – to suspect, correctly or not, that the said text has in fact been translated.

It follows that adopting culture-internal distinctions as a starting point for the *study* of translation, as it is conceived of and executed within the conditioning framework of a culture, has the advantage of not imposing on its object any distinctions that may prove alien to that culture. It thus allows one to proceed with very few assumptions that could be difficult to maintain in the face of real-world evidence.

It seems clear that there is no way for a translation to inhabit the same space as its source, not even when the two are physically presented alongside each other, as in bilingual editions. This is not to say that, having been severed from its source, a translation will never be in a position to bear on the source culture again, or even on the source text itself. After all, culture contacts may operate in both directions (Redfield et al. 1936). And indeed, texts, and hence the cultures that host them, are known to have been affected by translations of these selfsame texts, and even revised on the basis of these. It is nonetheless significant that whenever this occurs, it always involves a **reversal of roles**, in full accordance with our starting point: while *genetically* a translation, the affecting entity no longer *functions* as one.

Nor is it just *any* translation that would be in a position to exert influence on its original. Rather, such a translation is always a fact of a particular (target!) culture, which – for that very reason – is regarded as privileged. The fact that translated texts often serve as a point of departure for further acts of translation, into other cultures/languages, is no refutation of the target-orientedness of our assumption either: while, in such instances, a translation does function as a source text, it does not really act as one. Rather, it is still a fact of a former target culture now turned into a mediating one. And it is picked up and assigned the role of a source text not because of anything it may inherently possess, but in accordance with the concerns of a new prospective recipient system.[4]

On the other hand, translation activities and their products not only can, but very often do cause changes in the *target* culture. Indeed, it is in their very nature. After all, cultures resort to translating precisely as **a way of filling in gaps**, whenever and wherever such gaps may manifest themselves: either in themselves, or (more often) in view of a corresponding non-gap in another culture that the target

4. The significance of mediated translations in the framework of a target-oriented approach will be addressed in Chapter 9.