

Abstract

The paper researches the status and production of self-translated texts using the Afrikaans-English self-translations of the novels *Kringe in 'n Bos / Circles in a Forest* and *Kennis van die Aand / Looking on Darkness* by Dalene Mathee and André Brink respectively as a case in point. The paper is based on the assumption that the self-translated text may constitute an important tool for the study of translation theory and translation practice, in that self-translations are less encumbered by any external “noise” or other distracting influences that might be present in conventional translations. Since this form of translation is carried out by the author him/herself, he or she enjoys a level of freedom rarely bestowed on other translators. The additional fact that self-translators are “privileged translators” in that they have complete access to the author’s creative process and his/her original intentions also makes for a more suitable translation case study. Consequently, the examination of self-translated texts may well cast light on the translation process itself.

The questions posed in the study are:

1. Are self-translators authors or translators? In other words, do they follow conventional translation procedures, or is their translation distinctly different, and if so, in what ways?
2. If self-translators are, indeed, translators par excellence, and the self-translated text a quintessential translation product, what are the translation phenomena observed in the self-translated texts of Brink

and Matthee, and what do these tell us about the translation process in general?

3. How do self-translators transfer culture-specific items, which are usually highly challenging for any translator? What can we learn from the way they have chosen particular translation strategies over others for transferring such items?

4. Do Afrikaans-English self-translations possess any unique characteristics of their own, seeing that they are not “alien” to each other, rather **both simultaneously** claiming the status of mother-tongue of a great many?

Chapter One contextualizes the two works chosen (one by each of the said authors) in the broader framework of self-translation theory, in search of a definition that would best define their status as products of this unusual form of transfer. Using the various discrepancies noticed in the Afrikaans and English versions, it is shown how the self-translators in question have followed common translation procedures despite the fact that they enjoy an authority and a liberty that other translators usually lack. The point is then made that it is ultimately the fact that a transfer between two language systems has been made that determines the type of process followed, rather than the identity/status of the producer.

Following the examination of each of the author’s texts, the two texts are compared and contrasted. The self-translations are found to be quite different in the strategies

employed by the self-translators, and the type of text produced. This further strengthens the point that self-translators are indeed translators, varying in their choice of translation strategies and the type of translation they produce, in much the same way as other translators. Focusing on various omissions, additions and explicitations noticed in the second versions of each of the self-translators, this chapter also makes the point that the reader of **both** texts, i.e. the bilingual reader, is best able to appreciate both versions as part of one bilingual work, in that the reading of both versions provides the reader with the broadest picture – of both the text and its creator.

Chapter Two complements Chapter One by elaborating on the translation strategies used by each of the self-translators to transfer particularly difficult items. Since self-translators cannot be suspect of misinterpreting their own work, strategy choice on their part cannot be arbitrary or stemming from ignorance or lack of comprehension of the source text. Using available theories pertaining to the transfer of culture-specific items and the strategy categorization thereof, strategy use for the various culture-specific items is outlined (as utilized by each of the self-translators). It is then demonstrated how strategy choice affects the type of text produced – in terms of adequacy, acceptability, foreignization and domestication, for example, and how this is directly linked to translation *skopos*. The fact that once again the two self-translators make use of very different strategies further emphasizes the point that the fact that an author translates him/herself does not necessarily make his/her text similar to that of other self-translators, or vouch for the fact that some strategies will be used more than others. Rather, self-translators differ from each other in the same way that

all translators do, and strategies are chosen or rejected strictly on the basis of how this will effect text production and translator *skopos*.

Chapter Three focuses on the Afrikaans-English bilingual text and introduces the concept of *intra-bilingual* writing i.e. a form of writing that takes the bilingual quality a step further, in that the “bilinguality” is manifest in one and the same text. Unlike the term “bilingual writing”, which refers to two separate texts written by one bilingual writer, what is termed an *intra-bilingual* text would be a text written in language A but interspersed with language B. The point is made that *intra-bilingual* writing is not a form of mere codes-switching, a phenomenon not uncommon to both translated and original texts. Translations often utilize code-switching i.e. by retaining words from the source text in the target text, either because these are voids in the target language, or for the purpose of creating a “foreign flavour” in the target text, reminiscent of the source culture. *Intra-bilingual* writing, which is not uncommon among South African writers, is not a passive retention of words in language A in a text that is largely written in language B for linguistic or stylistic purposes; rather, it can be said that it is the most natural form of South African writing because it actively reflects a reality that is bilingual, and which is based on, and affected by, the power relations of two rival yet complementary languages. It is for this reason that South African reality might best be expressed bilingually. A comparison of Brink’s and Matthee’s English versions reveals that Matthee’s writing is not *intra-bilingual*, but simply bilingual (in that she has created separate and distinct versions of one text). Brink’s text, however, is *intra-bilingual* par excellence and the “intra-bilinguality” is carried to the level of the word. It is suggested that the differences noticed in the degree of “bilinguality”, or rather “intra-bilinguality” in the

texts of these authors are related to differences in translator *skopos*, as was the case with the self-translators' choice of translation strategies, and perhaps the degree to which the text is a reflection of the writer's own reality in the dichotomy of Afrikaans-English culture.