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## Charting the Future of Translation History

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# Conceptualizing the Translator as a Historical Subject in Multilingual Environments

*A Challenge for Descriptive Translation Studies?*

**D**uring the past few years, the study of translation from a sociological point of view has come more and more to the fore within the descriptive translation studies (DTS) paradigm. But as usual in research, the discovery of new research areas is more or less erratic. It is the goal of this discussion to indicate a few shortcomings in these important new fields of questioning.

Among other things, the functional, text- and discourse-oriented approach of DTS has been criticized for “gloriously overlook[ing] the human agent, the translator” (Hermans 1995, 222). The present volume’s aim of studying the history of translation, and thus of cultural dynamics and identity construction, would imply investigating how translators, as historical subjects translating for other historical subjects, are implicated in this history. It is striking, then, that “modern sociographies of single translators’ professional trajectories are sorely lacking” (Simeoni 1998, 31). But next to biographical research, DTS has to share with any other discipline in the humanities the more fundamental question of the

relations between the (more/less) individual and the (more/less) collective, between structure and agency. Autopoiesis and self-referentiality indeed have their limits in social systems (Fokkema 1997); communication-oriented paradigms cannot ignore human agency.<sup>1</sup> By focusing on how and to what extent varying and variable (translational) norms influence the translator's choices in the makeup of the translated product, DTS has until recently privileged structure instead of agency. Especially actor- and institution-oriented approaches like Bourdieu's field theoretical model (Bourdieu 1971, 1991, 1992) have been advanced as a welcome sociological corrective (Simeoni 1998).<sup>2</sup> As regards the human agent and its relations with collective structures, the usability of field theory's habitus concept for a functional, text- and discourse-oriented model of interlingual translation deserves closer investigation.

"Habitus" refers to the subject's internalized system of social structures in the form of dispositions. The inculcation of social structures is a lifelong process of interactions between structure and agency through various and variable individual and collective experiences. Dispositions engender practices, perceptions, and attitudes that are regular but not necessarily fixed or invariant. Under the influence of its social position and its individual and collective past, every cultural actor thus develops (and continues to develop) a social identity: a certain representation of the world and of his position therein. Habitus is hence designed to be the motor of dialectic between a theory of effects and a theory of strategies; it wants to escape a philosophy of the subject without sacrificing the agents and to escape a philosophy of structure without refusing to take into account the effects it exerts on the agent and through him (Bourdieu 1992, 97). Therefore, it is considered a crucial concept, "at least as a meta-theoretical guideline" (Sheffy 1997, 37).

Nevertheless, the concept suffers from theoretical abstraction and methodological imprecision. Fine-grained analyses being lacking for a lot of field logics, and especially for intercultural contacts, habitus seems to confirm all too often the precedence of structure over agency. It has therefore — and rightly so — frequently been criticized for being deterministic, static and one-directional (Sheffy 1997, Geldof 1997). It is

too much linked to the uniqueness and the permanence of the individual (Corcuff 2003) and does not account for the possible plurality of his/her dispositions and identities, and therefore it does not allow for the heterogeneity and dynamics of cultural choices, nor for individual variations within a given social formation (Sheffy 1997). It presents actors too much as “cultural dopes” (Corcuff 2003) that depend on structures without any reflexivity, dynamics, internal tensions.

Recent insights, however, insist on habitus as a dynamic, plural concept, as the object of confrontations with various field logics and thus of multiple definitions and discontinuities. Every cultural actor appears as a complex product of multiple processes of socialization disseminated in various institutions (family, school, friends, work, neighbourhood, and so on). His (or her) attitudes, perceptions and practices are the result of an unstable interplay of multiple kinds of habituses, questioning the uniqueness and permanence of the individual person (Simeoni 1998; Lahire 2001). Nevertheless, sociology, in particular the Bourdieu tradition, is too much linked with structures and agents that refer to national societies only. How could one deal with cultural situations before and/or after the nation-state? We thus need to adapt our conceptualization. Societal frameworks are not — all — simply national; they can even be neither international nor national. Intercultural agents, involved in intercultural relationships, develop perceptions and practices partly through cross-cultural habituses.

### Geography and/versus habitus?

The study of (inter)cultural actors' various and variable perceptions, attitudes and practices as structured by — and structuring in their turn — their (intercultural and other) habituses is an essential complement to translation studies' habitual analysis of microtextual and macrotextual translation strategies, of discursive practices with regard to the Other, of socio-institutional and geopolitical structures. The following principle seems crucial in this respect: the less geography is a distinctive

feature between languages, literatures, and cultures, the more the actor's habituses play a key role in their definition and in the understanding of intercultural dynamics. It has often been repeated that in our globalized, postcolonial world, "space" is less and less pertinent: modern communities identify themselves partially in interaction with institutional and discursive structures that are not bound by geographical limits (Lambert 1991, 1996). But deterritorialization was an interesting component in the history of mankind long before virtual societies had been invented. Among other things, an integrated analysis of the relationships between structure and agency will prove particularly pertinent for translations taking place in one and the same geopolitical, multilingual environment. Space being irrelevant, in a multilingual society, (intercultural) actors perceive their (inter)cultural positions and develop their (inter)cultural position takings in dialogue with institutional and discursive structures that are intimately linked with the — sometimes competing — concepts of "language," "culture," "translation," and intercultural relationships.

It would of course be utopian to analyze these relationships without focusing on particular situations and cases. But on the other hand, any kinds of peculiarities also need to be located within larger frameworks. As suggested at the beginning, both the individual and the collective derive their perspective and depth from their positions and interrelationships. How general and how particular are the features and phenomena under observation? These are both descriptive and conceptual key issues. This means that the following case study can also hold interest in terms of what it reveals about similar or different landscapes in our "world systems."

Why and how is a sociological approach integrating the habitus concept necessary to grasp the dynamics of literary translations from Flemish into French in interwar Belgium?<sup>3</sup> Belgian society, and in particular its most fundamental societal evolutions, are closely interwoven with what is commonly called the "language question." This language struggle was — and continues to be — a principal point of contention, crystallizing social positions and often even paralyzing sociopolitical

life. Research on the fundamental institutional, sociopolitical, and sociocultural role of translation and intercultural contacts in this multilingual society is, however, underdeveloped.<sup>4</sup>

From Belgium's foundation in 1830 until about 1935, French was the country's official language for state administration, justice and education. Belgium thus institutionalized the romantic principles of the West-European nation-state, whose structures rely on a standardized national language functioning at the same time as one of the most powerful symbols of popular unification and national identification (Anderson 1991). Until about the 1930s, knowledge of French conditioned access to prestigious primary and secondary schools, to university education, to higher-level jobs, to a national political career, to the most legitimate literary productions, and so forth. In this regard, language functioned as one of the major elements of sociocultural distinction. Linked with the nation-state's fundamental sociopolitical institutions, it generated various sociolinguistic habituses in interaction with the individual's social position as well as individual and collective antecedents and experiences. Indeed, people's access to the legitimate language and the accompanying institutions was uneven. Belgium was a multilingual country where the individual's language use was determined by the combined parameters of geography and social class. The lower classes were often illiterate<sup>5</sup> and used various geographically differentiated dialects as a vernacular, that is to say, a number of Flemish dialects in the North and French (Walloon) dialects in the South. Standard French was the upper classes' language all over the country. Especially the North, then, where Flemish coexisted with French, was a multilingual space.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, Flemish-French bilingualism as an individual's characteristic was the normal condition of the Flemish middle classes. Indeed, these groups often used Flemish in private, and certainly for contacts with lower classes the local dialects served as a vernacular. But motivated by progressing chances for social promotion in an industrializing society, a lot of their members gained access to French schools where Flemish language and culture were disdained to the point where one was punished for speaking Flemish. Internalizing the sociolinguistic hierarchies

through interaction with such institutions and experiences, a number of them also turned to French in public life, in professional life, in contacts with the upper classes, and sometimes even at home, as a means of socio-cultural distinction and mobility.

Within one and the same geopolitical space, languages and cultures thus coincided with sociopolitical structures and (op)positions. French being the national language and the language of the ruling classes, it was synonymous with culture, education, prestige, social distinction, and mobility. In other words, the sociolinguistic habitus of the average Flemish, francophone, or bilingual adult of the interwar period was formed in interaction with socio-institutional structures that unambiguously confirmed the superiority of the French language and culture. Social discourse as a whole, both in French and in Flemish, continuously externalized these perceptions, sociolinguistic oppositions thus being one of the major structuring principles of discursive practices during the interwar period.

Already before the twelfth century, the French language was introduced in Flanders in the most natural way, without any pressure in favour of it, by the free course of civilization and of contextual conditions. Since the twelfth century, French had become a second national language for the leading classes. . . . French is a language of universal importance, which is not the case at all for Flemish. Moreover, a lot of the Flemish, especially the bourgeoisie and the intellectuals, prefer to use, often exclusively, French. We can thus see that we can have equality of rights for the two languages. But it is impossible to have factual equality, for the simple reason that a law, even a royal speech, cannot make one equal ten. (Wullus-Rudiger 1929, 7; our translation)

But as already mentioned, dispositions are not fixed or invariant imprints of structures; the latter can actually evolve through agents' (inter) actions. From the second half of the nineteenth century on, dominant groups within the Flemish middle classes claimed Flemish institutions

for the Flemish. They lobbied so that a standardized form of Flemish could become the official language in the North for state administration, justice, and education. Internalized sociolinguistic inferiority as a collective sociolinguistic habitus was thus, little by little, challenged. Although most of them had themselves been in francophone school and/or university, were often employed in francophone administration, and in some cases even fulfilled a political role in francophone political institutions, these bilinguals struggled against the privileged position of French in the nation's institutions; it would impede social mobility because of the supplementary exigency of bilingualism imposed on the Flemish. The francophone upper classes, with their superior sociolinguistic habitus, perceived the new claims as a threat to their political and sociocultural hegemony. As a consequence of the instauration of universal suffrage after World War I the Flemish lower classes' political weight increased gradually. As a result, important linguistic laws made Flemish the official language for administration, education, and justice in Flanders at the beginning of the 1930s. However, it is important to stress that these legal measures and the new structures they progressively brought about did not immediately change the sociolinguistic habitus of the cultural agents. For several decades it partly continued to be structured around formerly internalized schemes, keeping intact the association between the French language and sociocultural distinction.<sup>7</sup>

### Who has the right to be(come) a translator?

In interwar Belgium, "language," "literature," "translation," and other forms of intercultural contacts thus functioned as ideologically very loaded categories. The sudden boom of literary translations from Flemish into French in the 1920s and 30s is really significant in this respect.<sup>8</sup> It accentuated the ideological and sociocultural fault lines of Belgian society and constituted a statement about its cultural identity. Since (inter)cultural practices among actors living within this geopolitical and institutional space were inevitably linked with sociopolitical and sociolinguistic structures and oppositions, and with various and varying

collective and individual sociolinguistic, sociopolitical, and literary habituses, a close investigation of these interculturals' habituses is a necessary aspect of the study of intercultural dynamics.

The sudden increase of literary translations from Flemish into French in the Belgian interwar period was a defensive response of the francophone upper classes to the Flemish sociocultural and sociopolitical emancipation claims. The translations were seen as a patriotic act in service of the francophone nation and its national, francophone literature. They would help to overcome linguistic and sociopolitical tensions by bringing together the two cultures.

What book written in French could tell me something about contemporary Flemish literature? . . . This needed book has finally been published: it is *Flemish Contemporary Literature* by M. André De Ridder. I recommend this work to all Belgians who don't understand Flemish. I hope for them that they, like myself, feel a strong desire to know this literature. I hope that they don't turn away from the Flemish and from the Flemish soul because of the linguistic quarrels that oppress the internal politics of our country. On the contrary, just because of these quarrels it is important that we come to know the soul of the Flemish people. They are, like us, natural intermediaries between German and Franco-Latin civilization. (Gilkin 1924, 492; our translation)<sup>9</sup>

At the same time, translation into French functioned as a way to delegitimize Flemish as a literary language. Flemish works had to pass through French translation in order to exist and gain prestige. The underlying francophone's perception was that writing in Flemish signified a questionable sociopolitical plea for the emancipation of the Flemish minority culture. Indeed, since Flemish writers belonged to the middle classes who had normally been to French schools, most of them were perfectly bilingual. In theory, they could have chosen to write in French instead of Flemish.

Most uncommon also was that this bourgeois child, raised in French, decided to write in Flemish, an extremely dispraised language at the time; but since it was the language of the little people among whom he lived every day and whose lifestyle he wanted to paint in his future work, he chose it simply as the language of his works without any ulterior motive of linguistic claims. (Maes 1932, 312; our translation)

This was exactly the reason why writing in Flemish was promoted by the Flemish. From the 1930s on, fewer and fewer Flemish bilinguals chose French as their literary language.

Needless to say, this also strongly affected the positions and position takings of the translators. Belgian interwar interculturals were in an unenviable situation: they had to hover between competing views on languages, literatures, cultures, and translation. Who was, or better, who had the right to be a translator became a crucial question then. Given the prevailing sociolinguistic structures, the bilingual Flemish middle class had the highest potential to deliver translators. Due to lack of instruction, the Flemish lower classes had insufficient knowledge of French. For the francophone, on the contrary, learning Flemish, the disdained language of the minority culture, was of no sociopolitical or sociocultural necessity. But belonging to a source culture that struggled against the target culture for its sociolinguistic emancipation within one and the same multilingual geopolitical space, these translators of Flemish origin had to deal with radically opposed and sometimes problematic cross-cultural habituses. Those Flemish colleagues who had internalized their linguistic and literary inferiority to the point that they hoped to gain legitimacy through participation in the dominant culture were in favour of intercultural contacts. Translations into French were welcomed as a sign of francophone admiration and as a form of active and most effective propaganda for the distribution of modern Flemish literature. Translators were appreciated for doing an excellent job.<sup>10</sup> In contrast, Flemish groups fighting against their internalized linguistic and literary inferiority, in favour of access to Flemish structures for the

Flemish, staunchly attacked translations and other types of intercultural contacts. For emancipationist Flemish bilinguals, to translate was to betray: it confirmed and prolonged the monolingualism and thus the sociocultural superiority of the francophone upper classes. The emancipating milieu of a dominated source culture within a multilingual space form thus an obstacle to intercultural contacts; their ideal is non-translation.

It behoves André De Ridder to have written out of dilettantism a thin booklet about "Les Lettres flamandes," whereas for a Flemish person this could as well and probably even better have happened in Flemish. . . . I foresee an easy answer. "Do exclusively French-speaking people not have the right to be informed about Flemish literature?" The privilege, you mean? Because I consider it as a more or less doubtful privilege to be able to lick in such playful manner the lentil dish that in these circumstances is best kept for us alone. This is not the way that any of us, bourgeois kids raised in French, took possession of the treasure of a foreign literature! It would be much more logical if the French-speaking Belgians would learn the Dutch language in a decent manner in order to become happy possessors of the sane centre of our literature. (Van Den Oever 1908, 515; our translation)

The French translations and other intercultural activities evoked reactions in the source culture that made the position of the Flemish intercultural professionals quite ambiguous and every so often even untenable. They had to deal with sometimes problematic cross-cultural habituses, being treated as traitors of the Flemish culture and of the Flemish sociopolitical cause.

In fact, in all the writings from the Ruimte group against me, that is the only thing that could hurt me: that they insisted on treating me as a "*franskiljon*." The fact that one runs a French journal points not towards "*franskiljonism*," believe me, but towards spiritual international-

ism. The reason for founding "Signaux" has only been personal friendship and like-mindedness with French writers. . . . No politics was involved. (Letter from André De Ridder to E. De Bock, 19 September 1922 [AMVC R462]; our translation)

Disillusioned by these reactions, they often stopped their intercultural activities.<sup>11</sup>

### Who has the obligation/mission to remain a translator?

At first sight, the most important translator of the interwar period<sup>12</sup> didn't have to care about these kinds of negative reactions because he was of francophone origin. Roger Kervyn de Marcke ten Driessche was one of the typical upper-class adults of the interbellum period. He was born in Ghent (Flanders) in 1896 but lived mostly in Brussels. Son of a francophone Flemish aristocrat and a Dutch mother, he was raised in French, in full accordance with the sociolinguistic habitus of the time. Still, from his early childhood on, he also became familiarized with Flemish through his mother's family, through contacts with domestic servants, and in the streets of Ghent and Brussels. In 1904, after the death of his father, the family moved to a Brussels neighbourhood that was chic but also very near to the Marolles, the most famous popular quarter of the city. The Marolles was known for its picturesque language: a mixture of Brussels Flemish and French dialects. Kervyn went to a very prestigious francophone secondary school where speaking Flemish was forbidden. Among other things, these factors would have contributed to the child's internalization of the superiority of the French language and culture. At the same time, and more than the average francophone child of his milieu, he was in contact with the popular, bilingual world of the Marolles. The child had to pass the area on his daily way back and forth to school. More than once he was so fascinated that he forgot time and arrived late. His multilingual experiences left their traces in his later works. In his most famous book Kervyn constructed a literary variant of the Marolles dialect (Kervyn 1923, Meylaerts 1999); in

other works Flemish words or sentences pop up in the French text (Kervyn 1954).

After secondary school, Kervyn studied law at university, a completely francophone institution at the time. But he very quickly regretted his choice because it was only inspired by the expectations of his social class. "I never liked law studies," he confessed, "and if I became a lawyer it is perhaps because of a lack of pugnacity, because I didn't resist pressure from part of my entourage that wished it" (Kervyn 1934, 23; our translation). He rather quickly abandoned this profession to become a writer.

A Flemish francophone aristocrat, Kervyn belonged to the upper classes that cherished the francophone nation and were opposed to the Flemish sociolinguistic emancipation claims. Both his works and his correspondence contain evidence of these dispositions.

The thing, thus, could be summarized as follows: in one of the smallest countries of the smallest part of the world, which is itself a rather small planet in our solar system, which is not the biggest, a handful of people who speak bad French quarrel with a handful of others who would like to oblige them to speak — like them — bad Flemish. (Kervyn 1934, 96; our translation)

Aristocracy means "the rule of the best." It is also these best who — because they are the best — govern, occupy the leading positions (forgive me this cliché!). But, are we the best? And what leading positions have we occupied? . . . have been left to us? . . . Besides, the people and the bourgeoisie, have they enough lamented the fact that one did not allow them free access to everything they wanted! "I don't achieve anything, the nobles and the franskiljons get everything." "I don't achieve anything, the democrats and flamingants get everything." Isn't it easy to hide one's own inertia behind those excuses? (Kervyn 1954, 83–84; our translation).

But Kervyn also became the most important translator of Flemish regionalist novels during the interbellum period in Belgium. The trajectory is

remarkable. Due to a number of sometimes rather accidental individual experiences in interaction with specific sociolinguistic and sociocultural structures in a particular geopolitical context, this aristocrat had enough knowledge to translate from Flemish, a language at the time mostly ignored if not dispraised by his social milieu, but finding at that very same moment its way through the nation-state institutions. And his translations were most successful; the translator, to a large extent sharing his sociolinguistic and cultural habitus with his target public, brilliantly interpreted its aesthetic tastes. All his translated texts belonged to the regionalist genre, naively portraying the everyday life of the lower and middle Flemish classes in small villages. In the eyes of the francophone upper classes, the novels' plots confirmed all the clichés of an ideal world where "Flemish" continued to be synonymous with popular life and backwardness — in short, with the lower (or middle) class, a world at a distant remove from the sociolinguistic emancipation claims of some within the Flemish middle classes.<sup>13</sup> Kervyn's uniform selection strategy gave rise to the label "simply Flemish" among his colleagues and editors. The expression occurred numerous times in reviews, in prefaces, in editors' and translators' letters, and so forth, always with a positive connotation.

I'm looking as much as possible, among the Flemish translations, for works that have a simply Flemish character, like the ones you gave us until now in fact, and in particular this beautiful study of Brussels manners entitled *Matbias*, about which I received, from numerous sides, the most flattering echoes. (Letter of Pierre Goemaere, editor, to Roger Kervyn, translator, 17 September 1932 [ML4331/475]; our translation)

Moreover, as an example of the socio-stylistics of habitus-governed translating (Simeoni 1998), Kervyn also found the appropriate tone for his translations. Unlike his Flemish bilingual colleagues, he constructed a style perceived as "simply Flemish": a radical and continuous mixture of literary language with more popular, familiar, and vulgar registers,

resulting in a general lowering of the translations' language in comparison with the originals. It was appreciated by the readers for this popular undertone; often it had a picturesque, comic side effect, again in harmony with the dispositions of the target public, who were only asking for more of the same.

The best thing to do was to come with your wife, a-toddlng on her arm. The wife said: "Your honour, there is some change in him. And we have to work so hard to get by!" It worked sometimes, although it couldn't happen too often. (Van Cauwelaert 1932b, 482; our translation of the French translation)

At the peak of his success, and therefore at first sight perhaps rather surprisingly, Kervyn stopped translating. Why does a (successful) translator quit the job? How individual and how collective is such a decision within a given context? From 1932 on, the year in which his reputation as a translator of Flemish literature was firmly established, Kervyn began to express an increasing disdain towards the type of literature he felt obliged to translate. His personal archives contain evidence of this attitude:

Read with discomfort the "Harp van St. Franciscus" of Timmermans. The author — he justifies himself at the end of his booklet — having read the "books" that deal with the Little Poor Man of Assisi, has come up with a plan to produce a version in his own manner for his wife, his children, others also, and "a few simple persons of our street" . . . You feel what that must . . . what that has to . . . what that has to result in! . . . "They clapped with their hands like farmers at the market" . . . and then others who eat and the fat that drips along their fingers and chin. . . . Pouah! Melloy would have liked us to translate that together. Really, I think that this is not feasible. . . . Moreover, I can't imagine myself writing, for the people of my street, the life of one or another well-known man which I would make, for the circumstance, somewhat vulgar, so as to make him more accessible! (Letter of

Kervyn to Marcel Lobet, editor, n.d. [August 1932]; ML3858/487; our translation)

The translator wanted to go beyond the expectations of his public and dreamt of translating “modern” Flemish authors. But all his attempts failed because his readers swore by “simply Flemish” novels.

Thank you also for *Forum* and the *Jazzspeler*. . . . I've done some correspondence this morning and answered Roelants that I would get to work on the translation of the *Negerbeeld* this same afternoon. . . . Roelants is a “gentleman”; this has nothing to do with skimmed milk or beer, nor with a dampening plate of potatoes. It is not specifically “Flemish,” but specifically (I repeat the adverb on purpose) modern. The plot is thin, of course, but in the end I it would work well for the R[evue] B[elge]. . . . In a special issue devoted to Flemish literature it would strike a special note next to the simplicities of Buysse and so many others. (Letter of Roger Kervyn to Marcel Lobet [1932] [ML3858/492]; our translation)

His personal aesthetic evolution, probably in some degree due to his more elaborate contacts with Flemish literature, surpassed the more conservative literary and cultural habitus of his readers.

Still, along with this individual intercultural habitus, more collective, structural factors influenced the individual's decision. About the same period Kervyn was very upset by starkly negative reviews of his translations, and of French translations in general, written by Flemish critics in the francophone press. Because of the intersections between (source and target) languages, texts, and discourses in a multilingual space, bilingual Flemish critics did also write for the francophone press. But using the dominant language did not necessarily imply internalizing the dominant viewpoint on translation and intercultural contacts. These Flemish bilinguals condemned both the unilateral selection criteria and the style of the translations for giving a one-sidedly popular, condescending, old-fashioned image of Flanders and of Flemish literature,

confirming perceptions of the francophone nation's and literature's superiority. They argued for a more modern selection in a less popular style (M. E. 1932, Kenis 1932). Although his personal preferences went in the same direction, Roger Kervyn felt caught between two poles. When, through multiple intersections, the gap between the personal history of the translator, the collective history of his francophone public, and the collective history of the emancipating Flemish interculturals was increasing, he stopped translating. Thus, the divergent internalization of the structuring principles of the source and target literary fields and of their mutual contacts in an intercultural individual, his monolingual target public, and his multilingual source public co-determined the end of his translations of Flemish novels into French.

"Sources" and "targets": are they irrelevant then?

The question to what extent this "Belgian" history is exceptional can of course only be answered on the basis of similar projects. A reference to parallel Canadian situations seems obvious, but it cannot be made on the basis of the so-called bilingual position of both countries because this is a quite naive assumption about similarities, especially those that relate to language. Besides the number of languages in question and their exact positions, we also need to take into consideration such factors as particular neighbours and their size. It would also be naive to stick to nation-based patterns only. It is precisely the sociological component that provides functional-systemic concepts and questions with more depth: what kinds of systems/fields are at stake?

What is the translator's sociolinguistic profile in a given context? How do one's stylistic translational choices relate to a certain (intercultural) habitus? Who has the right to be a translator? Why does a translator stop translating? Answers to these and other questions depend neither exclusively on individual nor on collective factors but require an analysis of the relations between structure and agency. In cases involving multilingual contexts, actors perceive their (inter)cultural positions and develop their (inter)cultural position takings in dialogue with insti-

tutional and discursive structures that are intimately linked with the overlapping — and sometimes competing — concepts of “language,” “culture,” “translation,” and intercultural relationships. More fundamentally, the less geography is a distinctive feature among languages, literatures, and cultures, the more the actor’s habituses play a key role in their definition and in the understanding of intercultural dynamics. Texts and discourses can cross so-called linguistic and cultural boundaries, shaking up the analytical pertinence of a clear-cut distinction between “sources” and “targets.” Translated texts not only function in the “target” culture but also remain a tangible reality within the “source” culture. Does this imply then that these fundamental concepts become irrelevant for translation studies? On the contrary: “it’s also in the mind.” In the numerous past and present contexts in which the ideal Western nation-state’s one-to-one relationship among territory, language, literature and people has been blurred, “sources,” “targets,” and their relationships survive with all the more pertinence through the actors’ (inter)cultural habitus. We therefore need to redefine the key concepts “source” and “target” cultures, texts, discourses, and so forth — as a matter of perception, too, since it is a function of the internalization of the institutional and discursive structures by the (inter)cultural agents through their variable and varying positions and position takings in both the “source” and “target” cultures. So we need very flexible definitions: which “sources” and “targets,” for whom, when, where? Definitions for which we have to integrate the concept of agency into communication-oriented models.

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## Notes

1. Similarly, actor-oriented paradigms have to take into account the conditions and conventions of communication analysis.
2. Until now, field theory, conceptualizing national literary functioning from a sociological point of view, placed hardly any focus on the study of intercultural relations. The first issue of *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales* to be devoted to literary translation appeared no earlier than September 2002. See also Boyden and Meylaerts, 2004.
3. Although it might at first sight appear to be a reduction, "literature" and "translated literature" deserve to be rediscovered precisely from the institutional perspective, since literature is generally much more than "just literature": it is one of the symbolic values, as much as sports or business can be in our contemporary world (Anderson 1991, Bourdieu 1992).
4. Numerous political histories give a detailed historical and political account of the language question (for example, see Luykx 1985, Witte 1990). Von Busekist (1998) analyzes the relations between language policy and nation-state construction but does not deal with the fundamental role and position of translation! For recent studies on the role of translation in the dynamics of languages, literatures, and cultures in Belgium, see CETRA (2004) and Meylaerts (2004).
5. In 1914 compulsory school attendance was fixed at the age of 12; this was late in comparison with other neighbouring countries like the German States (1850) or France (1882).
6. Of course, the South was also multilingual (French–French dialects), but individuals' sociolinguistic and sociocultural positions and position takings there never had the conflictual character they had in the North. The gradual superposition of standard French over the various dialects took place with the kind of "minor" problems that normally occur when a series of vernaculars and a related standard language coexist. On this see, for example, Klinkenberg (1981).
7. First of all, in the beginning these laws didn't provide for any measures in case of non-observance. Furthermore, political life remained francophone for several decades; until 1962, ministers used only French in cabinet meetings. In public life, the middle and higher classes continued to speak French in the chic stores of big Flemish cities.
8. The 1920s–1930s was the only period in which French was the first target language for Flemish prose translations. For the exact numbers, see Meylaerts (2004).
9. I thank my colleague Michael Boyden for the correction of the English translations.
10. See, for example, Van Cauwelaert (1932a).

11. The average number of translations of Flemish in French is only 1.5 volumes per translator.
12. Between 1931 and 1933 Roger Kervyn translated 5 volumes (Timmermans 1931, Claes 1931, Walschap 1931, Verhavert 1932, Claes 1933); besides that, more than ten translations were published in Belgian francophone journals.
13. The regionalist genre was at the time the most successful Flemish literary genre, with real bestsellers that everybody still knows today. For the Flemish reader these picturesque stories had an emancipating function, giving a voice to the popular characters they depicted.

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