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Translatorial habitus as a function of target language and culture: a contrastive analysis of the habitus of Hungarian-to-English and English-to-Hungarian literary translators

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Abstract
In this article, I compare some aspects of the habitus of literary translators working from Hungarian into English, and those translating from English into Hungarian. By analysing the identity talk of six established literary translators, I try to reconstruct how the habitus of translators working in different socio-cultural fields, and from a peripheral to the hyper-central language or vice versa, shapes their practice and their career as well as the end products: the target texts and their reception. I focus on four clusters of topics that appear to be salient in this respect: the background and work trajectory of the translators; their self-perception, especially their views on translators' submissiveness and on their own roles as literary translators; their attitudes to bilingual editing and domestication vs foreignization; and their views on their own socio-economic situation and future prospects.

Introduction

The question I propose to examine in this article is the difference between the habitus of literary translators working from Hungarian into English, and those translating from English into Hungarian.

I have been working for many years with translators who belong to these two groups, and have noticed certain divergences in their self-perception and their practice.[1] For an article I published recently, I assembled a questionnaire for literary translators from Hungarian into English (Orzóy 96). The responses to this questionnaire showed that the differences were even more marked than I had thought, and that they required further examination.

In order to consider the reasons for these differences, I conducted interviews with translators working in both directions. I was particularly interested in certain issues that had emerged as potentially relevant in my previous research, including translators' attitude to the source text and its author; their attitude to editing and editors; their views on domestication and foreignization; and their perception of their own role. When choosing to focus on these issues in the interviews, my hypothesis was that certain differences were due to socio-cultural factors rather than mere personal differences and were related to whether the translator worked from a peripheral into the hyper-central language, or vice versa.

In the last two decades there has been a shift from Translation Studies to "translator studies", as part of the so called "sociological turn" in this field that highlighted the social context of translation (Chesterman, "Name" and "Questions"; Wolf, "Sociology"). Translation Studies scholars have been giving greater consideration to the networks, institutions and agents of the translation process. Bourdieu's theory of social fields is one of the sociological theories that has been widely applied to Translation (and translator) Studies, with research on translators

[1] I have worked with translators as an editor, and I also used to work as a literary translator from English into Hungarian, as well as a (non-literary) translator from Hungarian into English.

often focusing on the Bourdieusian concept of habitus (e.g., Gouanvic; Simeoni; Vorderobermeier). Although this concept has a number of definitions, by Bourdieu and others, it remains a largely heuristic tool used in fieldwork to conceptualize translators' agency (Gouanvic 30). In this article, I use this concept as an interpretive framework, without delving into its theoretical complexities.

Habitus, as outlined by Bourdieu, is the sum of dispositions, patterns and norms acquired in various social contexts; an informal, practical default operation of the individual.[2] Primary habitus is acquired in childhood, whereas professional habitus is a function of the individual occupying a certain position in a field. The latter is a concurrence of subject and field in the sense that the field makes use of the ambitions of the individual actor, while allowing the individual to act upon their ambitions (Vorderobermeier, "The (Re-)Construction of *Habitus*" 154). It is both "structured" and "structuring" – i.e., individuals are not only governed by (highly patterned) norms and conventions but they themselves reinforce them (Simeoni 21). Although the concept of habitus has been criticized for its potential determinism – for being "virtue made of necessity" (Bourdieu, *Logic* 54) – it is far from being a straitjacket; it allows agents playing in the field to be innovative, to revise, modify and transgress it, and it is also subject to change (Gouanvic 31; Hanna 65; Abdallah 114). It is not necessarily a prerequisite for entering a field to already have a certain habitus; however, one should possess a certain malleability that allows one to acquire professional habitus. Also, habitus is not necessarily adapted to the real conditions of the field nor is it necessarily coherent (Vorderobermeier, "The (Re-)Construction of *Habitus*" 153).

To account for the perceived tension between the potential determinism of the concept of habitus as defined by Bourdieu and the actual diversity between translators' backgrounds, dispositions and practice, Sela-Sheffy integrated identity research and introduced the concept of identity negotiation into translator habitus studies ("Translators' Identity Work" 43, 49). Coined by William Swann (1038-1051) and used in sociology and psychology, the concept of identity negotiation refers to the "set of processes through which people strike a balance between achieving their interaction goals and satisfying their identity-related goals, such as the needs for agency, communion, and psychological coherence" (Swann and Bosson 449). I found Sela-Sheffy's approach especially fruitful in the case of a profession where the cultural importance and intellectual investment are in stark contrast with the social and financial status of its practitioners.

There are a fair number of studies that aim to reconstruct habitus empirically, ranging from studies on various aspects of translators' habitus to those on various languages and territories (Vorderobermeier, "Introduction"). An important benefit of these studies is that they help "trace the interaction between (translation) text analysis and social analysis" (Wolf, "Habitus"). In the present article, I will try to reconstruct and compare some aspects of the habitus of translators working with Hungarian and English as source language/target language and target language/source language, respectively, by analysing their "identity talk" (Sela-Sheffy, "Translators' Identity Work" 52). It is my hope that such a contrastive analysis will help understand how the habitus of translators working in different socio-cultural fields shapes their practice and their career as well as the end products: the target texts and their reception.

[2] Bourdieu defines habitus as "systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. Objectively regulated and regular without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of a conductor" (Bourdieu, *Logic* 53).

Methodology

In order to reconstruct the habitus of literary translators, and thereby examine the differences between translators working with English and Hungarian as a source language/target language and vice versa, I conducted semi-structured qualitative interviews (Leavy 277-299) with six established translators, three of them working in one and three in the other direction. I chose individuals who are respected translators – who all have several, in certain cases a great number of, book-length translations to their name; who have been (or, in the case of one interviewee, had been) active translators for a significant length of time; and who are (or used to be) first and foremost translators rather than professionals who do translation as an occasional side-job.[3] I also strived for diversity. In terms of gender, three of my interviewees are men, three are women. In terms of age, the youngest translator I interviewed is in his early thirties, the oldest are in their seventies. For reasons of convenience, I mostly interviewed translators who are based in Budapest, except for one translator who lives in London, with whom I conducted the interview online.

I opted for in-depth qualitative interviews rather than a questionnaire with a much larger sample because I wanted to give the translators a chance to steer the conversation in directions they thought were meaningful and to bring up issues of importance to them. I drafted an interview guide[4] before embarking on the interviews, with questions pertaining to the educational background of the translators; their professional practice including choice/ acceptance of translation projects; the translation process; their strategies; their opinions about editing; and their job satisfaction. I started each interview by asking the first set of questions in the interview guide (on the interviewees' first encounters with translation), then continued with questions that seemed relevant on the basis of the interviewees' responses to the first set of questions.

The choice of semi-structured interviews also proved fruitful since literary translators are less visible, less professionalized, and less institutionalized than other players in the field of art and culture, and therefore their motivations, choices and self-perception are less obvious. For these reasons, the integration of identity research inspired by the work of Erving Goffmann in researching translators' habitus, as proposed by Sela-Sheffy ("Translators' Identity Work"; see also Torikai 137), certainly seems called for. The interviews I conducted with literary translators challenge the view of translators as a submissive group (Simeoni) – the translators I talked to are a very diverse group of individuals who display strong agency and employ various strategies of identity negotiation. A caveat must be added here, however: I chose to interview individuals who belong to the élite of their respective groups and therefore they are not necessarily representative of the group as a whole.

In the course of the interviews, certain issues turned out to be more, or less, relevant than I had supposed, i.e., in certain respects, there was greater similarity or greater divergence between the two groups than I had presumed. For example, the interviewees' opinion on collaborative translation or on the translation of slang – issues I presumed would be more divisive – was surprisingly similar. In what follows, I will elaborate on four clusters of topics that proved to be relevant for my research: 1) the background and work trajectory of the translators; 2) their self-perception; 3) their views on bilingual editing and domestication vs foreignization; and 4) their views on their future prospects.

[3] All the six translators, however, have or had other careers beside translation – writer (1), poet (1), academic (1), editor (2), teacher (1).

[4] See Appendix.

Background and work trajectory

The discussion of the family and educational background of translators provides a glimpse into their primary habitus, i.e. the habitus acquired prior to the exercise of their trade as translators (Gouanvic 32). The "primacy of social learning over explicit instructions" (Sela-Sheffy, "Translators' Identity Work" 45) prevails in many professions, and this is all the more applicable in the case of literary translation, where the lack of formalized studies and the precarious social status of its practitioners are in stark contrast with the high degree and diversity of skills required for the profession.

If we compare the interviewees from the point of view of national, linguistic and ethnic belonging, it immediately strikes us that all the three translators working from English into Hungarian (henceforth E/H translators) are Hungarians based in Budapest, whereas two of the translators from Hungarian to English (henceforth H/E translators) were born in Hungary, speak Hungarian as a mother tongue, and had left Hungary with their families as children – i.e. they are bilingual and bicultural, as opposed to the E/H translators. It seems to be the case for the majority of E/H translators who are active today that their mastery of English is not the result of a bicultural background: none of the E/H translators that I know personally were bilingual as a child, and although some of them spent some time in English-speaking countries, many of them did not. As for H/E literary translators, of the twenty to thirty individuals working in this field, many are bicultural and bilingual, typically – though not necessarily – born in Hungary and living in English-speaking countries.

For two of the three E/H translators, their family background was a determining factor in their choice of profession.

> I was born into a family of well-known people, and that was really hard for me, the bouquets, the celebrations, I was trying to flee from all that as a child. I wanted to be like my mum, cool, calm and collected. I didn't want fame, so I eventually figured out that literary translation, which is such a *no name* thing [in English in the interview], was really for me (Kati).[5]

It is clear from this description how Kati's own personality – shyness and aversion to public life – and the cultural baggage of her family – her grandmother, a poet; her uncle, a painter and professor at an Ivy League university in the United States; and the constant company of artists and academics – added up to her opting for the "obvious" choice: literary translation.

> My father is a dramaturg and a literary translator, but interestingly enough, it was not so much written texts that made an impression on me but rather our time together in front of the television, watching dubbed films. My father would always speak up when there was something wrong with the translation. (…) My parents both studied English and Hungarian at the university, and they tried everything to dissuade me, but they didn't succeed (Mónika).

The discrepancy between the explicit and the implicit "instructions" of the parents is an interesting point here: aware of the precariousness of her choice, the parents try to dissuade their daughter from choosing a profession that they themselves are obviously competent and find pleasure in.

[5] In the case of E/H translators, the interviews were conducted in Hungarian. The translations are mine and were reviewed by the interviewees. In the case of H/E translators, the language of the interviews was English.

The third E/H translator also comes from a family of professionals with a lot of books in their home. In his case, however, the choice of literary translation was the result of a series of chance occurrences. Of the three translators in this group, he is the only one who has given up translation. Both Kati and Mónika have had a long and fruitful career as a translator – Kati translated more than seventy, Mónika about thirty books. Besides translating, Kati worked as an editor in a prestigious Budapest publishing house for more than thirty years, while Mónika is a poet, with five volumes of poetry and one volume of essays to her name. The third translator, Bence, however, had a serious burnout after "falling in love" with literary translation and translating more than fifty books in fifteen years.

> There was the illusion of independence, it had a certain charm, the feeling of freedom, but of course we all know what it comes down to in the end: it comes down to slavery. If I look at my ex-colleagues, there are very few who are still working as literary translators today. There are one or two who are still soldiering on, but as for me, I was totally drained. Sometimes I still say yes, but if somebody asked me now to translate the greatest novel in the world, I would say no without a second thought (Bence).

Bence's exit strategy turned out to be extremely fortunate as he went on to write his own novels and became a successful writer.

As for H/E translators, two of the translators I interviewed belong to the generation who left Hungary after the repression of the 1956 revolution against the Communist regime in Hungary (in fact, a number of individuals who later became much sought-after literary translators have a similar background). For one of these translators, the discovery of being bilingual was a life-changing one.

> I first became aware that I was bilingual at the age of fifteen. In grammar school a teacher used to go on his summer holidays to different countries. In 1964 or 1965, it was the turn of Hungary. He studied the language a bit in preparation, I was asked to be his aide, and this is when I had a kind of epiphany that I know both of these languages equally well. I was fifteen, and I was teaching my teacher, it was a fantastic feeling, so it first occurred to me that I could make some practical use of it (Peter).

He went on to study, then to teach, Hungarian language and culture, and published extensively on linguistics and translation.

The other H/E translator who left the country with her family as a child ended up in the United States. After finishing graduate school, she met a Hungarian film director, married him, and they settled down in Budapest. Three months later, her husband was hospitalized with an aneurysm and eventually died. Yet she stayed in Hungary.

> I stayed because he had no one, no family to remember him. He had some people from film who would remember him as long as they would see me walk along Váci utca. The other thing is that Imre was an exceptional human being. […] And I thought that any country that can produce a person like Imre I will not leave until I find out what that good is. […] Imre was steeped deep in culture and I discovered Hungarian culture and the people who made Hungarian culture through him, and I fell in love with Hungarian culture and, by the way, not so much by the way, I

> found some wonderful friends. So basically, I got compensations for staying, for example I found Hungarian literature, and I fell in love with it (Judy).

She became an editor of a Hungarian publishing house which published Hungarian literature in English translation and has had a long and successful career as a translator of major Hungarian writers.

The third H/E translator belongs to a younger generation of translators. While the older generation typically consists of émigrés, some translators in this group who are in their thirties and forties are individuals with no Hungarian background. Owen is a young Irishman who encountered Hungarian culture when he studied at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies at University College London.

> UCL had courses in Hungarian. I knew I wanted to travel and learn a language I knew nothing about, and I was interested in Eastern Europe, because I came from Ireland, which is as far west as possible, there is nothing but rocks and nature. I knew Hungarian was not related to other languages, and the teacher at UCL was good. I thought Hungary was sunny and warm, there's life, it's the heart of Europe. Also, the Irish and the Hungarians have a lot in common – they have both been occupied nations, and there is a certain easy-goingness, darker humour, more relaxed attitude in both (Owen).

He moved to Budapest after graduation, first teaching English, then taking on translation projects.

> In high school, I thought translation was a very boring, tedious job, sitting at home at your desk, it wasn't sexy enough. At university I realized I was good at it, and how much fun it was to work with literary texts, and getting paid for it, so it became a dream job. I enjoyed the fantasy of it, and the beauty of working in art and being affected emotionally, restructuring the sentences (Owen).

Owen now lives in Budapest and makes his living translating literature and related texts. When he won a Hungarian state grant for a sample translation, he was recommended to an English-language publisher by a senior translator to translate a book by a Hungarian author. Then he himself pitched another book to the publisher, who accepted his choice.

Based on this sample of literary translators, it seems that for E/H translators the primary habitus – i.e., the habitus acquired as a result of their family background – was a determining, or at least an important factor in their choice of profession, whereas for H/E translators, their career as translators started after an intense encounter with Hungarian language and culture.

Self-perception

a. Are translators "submissive"?

The discrepancy between the social and financial status of translators, and the complex cognitive task their work involves and their crucial role in intercultural communication is one of the central topics of translator studies. Although the literary field is "the economic world reversed," and although it "attract[s] a particularly strong proportion of individuals who possess all the properties of the dominant class *minus one*: money" (Bourdieu, *Field* 164, 165), the status of translators is precarious even within that field. In his seminal article on translators' mindset, Daniel Simeoni argues that "translatorial competence may be characterized by greater conformity than is the competence of other agents active in the field" (7). This, Simeoni claims,

is not only due to the fact that, historically, translators have always occupied subservient positions, but also to the fact that translators have been willing to accept their secondariness. In fact, the less visible the translator is, the more competent they seem (7).

Thus, my first question pertaining to the self-perception of literary translators is whether their attitude can be seen as submissive, and if so, in what sense, and whether there is a difference between the two groups.

It is interesting to quote in what context Kati (E/H) uses the expression "translator's humility", a set phrase in Hungarian. She was translating Isaac Bashevis Singer's books, originally written in Yiddish, from an English translation she considered poor.

> Suddenly I started to hear the text with some Yiddish expressions that my grandpa who had died when I was a child had used. So I put some couleur locale into the text. I felt that Uncle Isaac deserved better. In such cases, it is the duty of the translator to cheat a bit, for the sake of the original. You must bring out what is in there, I said to myself. This is what I call the translator's humility. I shouldn't have done this, but I did it a lot (Kati).

Thus, humility – subservience – for this translator means loyalty to the original text, or even loyalty to the intentions of the writer, even if that loyalty would be considered disloyalty by many. "I shouldn't have done this, but I did it a lot", she says – in other words: what I did goes against the norms as I know them, yet I transgressed the norms in order to be loyal to the spirit rather than to the letter of the norms.

Another E/H translator, Mónika, thinks that the word "humility" is misunderstood in the context of translation: the "humility" of translators is "rather like the pride of guild masters" – it means that one must give proper attention to the work, not that one allows oneself to be humiliated.

While Peter (H/E) concedes that "it is possible that the personality of the average translator of literature is such that he is not going to go out and fight on the barricades", he does not think it means that they allow themselves to be subjugated.

"You don't exercise any undue liberties, you have to respect, honour and love the original", says Judy (H/E). However, her description of the process of translation – which she prefers to call "re-imagining" – is entirely that of a creative process.

> When I wrestle with a certain phrase, I stand up and start walking up and down, I start saying the sentence in Hungarian, and I start moving to it. My body then comes up with a gesture, and then the gesture will lead me to the words I need. I'm not text-bound, nor audience-bound. I do not envision an audience, and I do not let words influence me. My only true point of reference is the original text – is my sentence adequate to the original? Besides the explicit content, there is an implicit content, which is the author himself/herself. As Wittgenstein said, the thought is the significant proposition. So my 'audience' is the original Hungarian text and all that it conveys. There is a stage when there are no words yet in English, you feel the text, there's a pre-verbal stage: 1. You re-imagine the original, 2. You re-create it: you give this something a habitation, a shape, a form in another language – you give unembodied entities a habitation, as Shakespeare would have said (Judy).

Although none of the translators in either group thinks that the translator is a co-author, most of them agree that the name of the translator should be written on the title page. Besides the necessary prominence required, they mentioned compensation for the lack of financial

reward; accepting responsibility for the translation; and marketing reasons if the name of the translator is a brand in its own right. Only one translator said she preferred her name to appear not on the cover, but rather inside, on the title page.

> It's not because I'm shy, but because I feel that when a really fine book ends up in a bookshop, I as the translator would like people to read it as if it were the original. I don't want to come in between the readers and their reading experience. That's the death of the thing (Judy).

b. How do translators view their own roles?

As a scholar, Peter (H/E) was strongly motivated to spread Hungarian language and culture, and felt he could not reach many people by teaching, "so the first thing that occurred to me that had to be done was a dictionary. That was the first thing I did for a broader audience". Later, when he realized that dictionaries had gone online, he took up translating in order to reach a larger number of people. Although he himself limits his activities to translating literary and academic texts, and publishing academic articles and essays on various aspects of Hungarian culture, his motivations include "countering some of the negative publicity surrounding the country in the English-speaking world at the moment". He wants to show "that there is a great deal of culture that is worth transmitting and that, as I often say, Hungary has spent eleven hundred years in the Western orbit and that cannot be just dismissed like that". When asked if he thought some translators viewed their roles as being authorities on more than just the literature of their source language, he answered:

> That's a good point. A translator from French or Spanish into English wouldn't deal with, say, politics, unless the French or Spanish they are translating is from a country which is kind of politically of interest or it has an oppressive regime or something special. Then, I think, they become more like people looking at a small country that a lot of people don't know anything about in detail and they do, so they feel entitled to have opinions on aspects of their politics and so on. Not only entitled but to be public intellectuals on the topic. In that respect they would be like somebody translating from a Nicaraguan poet or writer who they feel particularly attached to because he's suffering under an oppressive regime (Peter).

After publishing his first book-length translation, Owen (H/E) started to pitch books to the same publisher. When asked why he had pitched those specific books, he gave aesthetic reasons – "the structure, the rhythm, the language" – as well as political/ideological ones: one of the books he chose "tells a lot about people's roles in disasters, about mass hysteria, conspiracy, lies and fake news, and I thought people outside Hungary could also relate to it".

Thus, both of these H/E translators view their own role as a cultural ambassador (among other things). This is even more marked in the case of Judy, the third H/E interviewee who stayed in Hungary after her husband's death, and "fell in love" with Hungarian literature.

> And I loved – oh God – the honesty that I found in many Hungarian writers, and I found as an American – America, listen, learn! – that the best Hungarian artists write or create with their blood. They are not doing it to create something nice, popular or aesthetic. These writers, painters, filmmakers, all have this in common, that they were and sometimes still are writing for their lives. They had something extremely important that they had to say. […] These are the writers I love to translate (Judy).

She started to translate because she "wanted to share literature with those that I loved".

> I don't think of translation as a profession. I just kept bumping into literature that I found especially fine – so I asked myself, does that fit in the English-language literature stream, if only marginally? If I felt that it did and if I felt that the author could advance the course of world literature by expanding on it, and I loved what I read, then I translated it. I like to say that my nerves are too weak to let exciting literature pass me by (Judy).

Especially at the beginning of her career, Judy engaged in a literary agent's work as well, looking around for publishers. Without being paid to do so, she did all the work agents do: making lists of publishers with the right profile; writing personalized letters; and visiting publishing houses. Although she could easily have found a Hungarian publisher for the books she translated, she insisted on finding major UK and US publishers.

> I think of myself as a mover. It is one thing that I translate an author, but then as a lover of Hungarian literature, as a serious translator, translation is only a small part of my job. It is also to make sure that other Hungarian writers will find good translators for their work. […] [Translators] also have to be familiar with editing. And they must learn to think with the head of the publisher. My life as a translator also includes teaching translators how to be professionals (Judy).

As for E/H translators, their role does not seem to include that of a cultural ambassador or an authority on the culture of the language they translate from. Besides the obvious reason that their source language is the hyper-central language whose culture imbues Hungarian society, translators list exhaustion, stage fright, lack of remuneration, and lack of competence as their reasons. Also a lack of demand: Bence reports that as a highly sought-after translator for more than a decade, he was invited to participate in talks only twice, while after his own first novel was published, he was invited to about thirty talks within six months. "There may be sexy translators", he says, "but the typical image of a translator is still someone sitting around in a room full of cobwebs. Non-professionals tend to think of writing as more exciting and more intimate".

Let us now try to answer the questions raised at the beginning of this chapter: can the attitude of the translators interviewed be seen as submissive, and if so, in what sense? Even though many translators seem to be endowed with certain character traits – e.g., a tendency to avoid competitive situations and/or public appearances – subservience or submissiveness is not among these traits, at least not in the case of the translators I interviewed. The translators in both groups have strong opinions about their craft and their roles. They all take pleasure in their work, which they describe as creative intellectual work. Rather than being subservient towards the publisher or the reader, they are loyal to the translating profession (Chesterman, *Memes* 169-170).

There seems to be a difference between the two groups, however, in the way they view their own roles. In her article on translators' identity work, Sela-Sheffy identifies three main role images among top Israeli literary translators: the cultural gatekeeper, the cultural mediator, and the artist ("Translators' Identity Work" 50). The interviews with the translators indicated that H/E translators view themselves more as cultural mediators, whereas E/H translators are more focused on literature and translation, acting as cultural gatekeepers – i.e., "culture makers who set the norms" (Sela-Sheffy, "How" 7). To use Erich Prunč's metaphors, they may seem

"pariahs" from the outside, working "for ever lower prices and rates," yet they are also "princes" in a way, "as guardians of the word and as the gatekeepers and constructors of culture" (48-49).

As cultural mediators, some H/E translators are focused on "taking on the task of opening up the local culture and enriching its language and forms of expression, so as to rescue it from provincialism and petrification" (Sela-Sheffy, "How" 8), others go further and act as authorities on socio-political issues in Hungary, confirming the status of translation as "cultural political practice, constructing or critiquing ideology-stamped identities for foreign cultures, affirming or transgressing discursive values and institutional limits in the target-language culture" (Venuti 15).

Accuracy or fluency? Bilingual editing and domestication vs foreignization

a. Attitude to bilingual editing

Responses to the questionnaire of my previous article indicated that bilingual editing was virtually absent from the experience of H/E literary translators. At first sight, the issue of line-by-line language editing by a bilingual editor or lack thereof seems to be merely a financial issue. As the publication of translated books in English is a financially insecure venture unless the name of the author guarantees that the book will be a bestseller, publishers try to economize wherever possible, therefore they dispense with language editing. Yet the fact that the difference between the experience of H/E and E/H translators is so conspicuous in this respect indicates that there may be more at play here than mere financial concerns.

The process of editing literary translations – including the participants involved, as well as the dynamics between and the relative power position of the participants – varies according to country and language, and even according to the size and prestige of the publishing house (Zlatnar Moe et al.). The question of editing also raises ethical dilemmas concerning the boundaries of revising someone else's text (Robin). Here, I will only focus on the attitude of my interviewees to line-by-line language editing by a bilingual editor.

All the E/H translators I interviewed were of the opinion that bilingual editing was absolutely necessary, in accordance with the practice of many Hungarian publishers of translated literary fiction. A bilingual editor makes the translator "feel safe", says Bence, who is of the opinion that "translation is not a one-man show". Even if "the translator reads the text four or five times, they certainly omit a few things, and some other things fall on their blind spot", says Mónika, who feels that there is an ethical dimension to the issue of editing as:

> the translator and the editor are working on the same text, and they are not enemies, although of course both of them are full of vanity as the translator has just put her very own newborn infant on the table, and then the editor comes with a hunter's instinct, and the interaction has to end with both of them being grateful for the contribution of the other (Mónika).

"One can see that English-language books in translation have not been edited by a bilingual editor", says Kati, who is also of the opinion that editing makes the translator feel safe. Bence thinks that the reason why English-language publishers do not use a bilingual editor for their books is that "it is a very closed market, and maybe translated books would not be well received if they were not domesticated to a great extent". This is an interesting point not only because of what the sentence explicitly states but also because of what it implies: that a bilingual editor's corrections tend to shift the target text towards greater accuracy, i.e., towards faithfulness to the source text.

In the H/E group, Peter is of the same opinion as the E/H translators, and is frustrated by the practice of English-language publishers and by what he regards as the misconception of translators into English of their job, regarding the latter as complicit in this issue:

> In Hungarian, the language editor is the umbilical cord. From Hungarian to English, [language editing] almost never happens. Yes, it is impossible: the general trend is against it, the cost is prohibitive, and they often cannot find the right people. But I think some translators are getting above themselves. They are simply not entitled to the same respect as the author of the original. They should write their own work, and get that published, not hide it in the skin of some other writer (Peter).

Owen is also of the opinion that a bilingual editor is "absolutely necessary, especially for an emerging translator. […] A bilingual editor is not going to make or break a novel, but they correct mistakes, oversights, logistical things". As the publisher of his translations does not use a bilingual editor, Owen shows his texts to his ex-teacher, a prestigious translator, who reads Owen's translations line by line, and discusses them with Owen. The editor is not paid for his work, nor is he credited in the book. Although Owen thinks that bilingual editing is necessary, he also sees why many translators are against it: "the text is being taken away from you, after you spent a lot of time and effort, had an emotional ordeal about it. It is as if it was not recognized by the publisher".

While Judy feels that a "good, perceptive editor" provides "a safety net" for the translator, she does not think that the editor must be bilingual:

> The reason that we in Hungary do kontrollszerkesztés ['control editing' – Hungarian expression for line-by-line editing] is because here it is not that difficult to find a good editor. Publishers in the States might be able to find someone bilingual, but I would be worried if my translation were given to someone who doesn't understand writing, translating, and revising texts. In the US and in the UK 1. It's not customary, 2. I'm glad they don't do it because I need someone who is at least as good as I am, 3. All my translations with English-language publishers have in my contract one clause that says that I am responsible for the control editing, which means that I have to check the translation against the original as many times as I need to, and I have to send a translation that does not misrepresent the original. Which is, after all, the translator's responsibility to begin with (Judy).

To illustrate the complications of using bilingual editors, Judy gave the example of a bilingual editor ending up practically retranslating a Hungarian novel, and being commissioned by the publisher to translate the book instead of the translator who had been commissioned originally. Not being familiar with the Hungarian text, the publisher brought out a translation that Judy considers lacking in certain respects compared to the Hungarian as well as the original translation. She thinks that "a [non-bilingual] editor should be good enough to be able to tell if the translation is not doing justice to the original". Yet a story she told me about the editing process of *Celestial Harmonies* by Péter Esterházy illustrates how an editor who does not have command of the source language and is not familiar with the source language culture can fail to detect essential elements of a text – in this case, irony:

> *Celestial Harmonies* ended up in the hands of an editor whose parents were Polish so she had some inkling of a Central European background, but she didn't know

> much about Hungary. We had eighty pages of correspondence. We had a profuse correspondence because 1. She wasn't familiar with Esterházy, 2. She wasn't familiar with the Hungarian reaction to a certain kind of frustration under Communism. For example, she didn't understand the sentence 'My father was already happy when nothing happened', and corrected it to 'when only a little happened'. In order to have my safety net, I had to train my American editor to read and understand Esterházy, and to get a feel for his humour and irony (Judy).

b. Views on domestication vs foreignization

As mentioned above, one of the E/H translators opined that the reason for the lack of a bilingual editor could be that the English-language book market being very closed, it is hard to sell translations that are viewed *ab ovo* as "exotic" and "untrustworthy".[6] Therefore, English-language publishers feel less need to be faithful to the source-language text which could be enhanced by having another bilingual person working on the text, and more need to be readable, which is better served by an editor who is unfamiliar with the source language and culture. Such an editor is more likely to edit out unconventional elements, on the lexical, grammatical, narrative, semantic etc. level, irrespective of whether those elements are the results of conscious choices by the author (and the translator) and/or of different writing conventions, or the results of incompetent/clumsy solutions by the translator.

This leads us to the complex issue of the political and ethical dimensions of domestication vs foreignization that we can discuss only briefly in this article. These terms were introduced by Venuti in 1995, and have been discussed by many translation scholars (e.g., Berman; Apter; Spivak). Venuti argues that the tendency in British and American translation has been to "domesticate" foreign texts, i.e., to minimize their strangeness and to produce a fluent, transparent text. By contrast, he advocates "foreignizing translation", i.e., a practice which retains the foreignness of the ST, and thereby "resists dominant values in the receiving culture so as to signify the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text" (18).[7]

One of the E/H translators I interviewed mentioned the issue that there is a hierarchy of languages in which one translates "up" to English, and "down" to other languages. In this hierarchy, the commitment to diversity has its limits.

> English editors are saying: our readers are not going to understand it, this is not how a novel works in English. Even cultural realia are being translated, the more the smaller the language. And this can spill over into style. Also, English culture is self-obsessed, there is a feeling of superiority. This way of relating to the world transpires into how you relate to literature as well. Readers will 'not be able to deal with' [Owen was doing air quotes here] alien things. Diversity is superficial, a label rather, diversity of actual content and form are not allowed. This means you sometimes miss an important characteristic of the text (Owen).

[6] Cf. "Sure, there's still a bit of a bias if people saying if it's a translation, it's a bit esoteric or elitist – and we have to overcome that" (Nawotka); "The underlying assumption on the part of many publishers seems to be that readers don't trust translators and won't buy a book if they realize it's a translation" (Croft, par.6).

[7] In an article which examines cultural asymmetry between translation from a major into a minor language and vice versa, Klaudy concludes that although it may be assumed that the while former involves foreignization, and the latter involves domestication (32), the analysis of 400 translated texts has proved that on a cultural level translators seem to prefer domestication (35). Here, however, we are interested in the views of translators on domestication vs foreignization rather than analysing their actual practice which may yield different results.

Over-domestication, motivated by the fear of rejection by readers of unconventional writing can also be a choice by the translator: when asked what kind of translatorial practices he does not agree with, Owen mentioned the "timidity where translators don't accept that the sentence can be translated the way it was written, and then it loses its character, its essence".

The choice between domestication and foreignization is, of course, not an absolute one: it is a "constant walk on a tightrope, there is no permanent answer that is applicable to every circumstance. A certain amount of domestication is probably inevitable", Peter said. He mentioned the example of someone whom he considers an extremely good translator:

> he polishes and polishes until it feels like a yet undiscovered work of English literature. He makes the maximum amount to make it palatable. This is not a bad thing at all, this is what enables [the writer this person translated into English] to be accepted into the European canon. People read it and thought, gosh, here is someone writing European literature in Hungary. This is a fine achievement. On the other hand, I wonder if sometimes he hasn't rubbed off too many edges, he hasn't smoothed it down so much that it may be too much for me personally. It is a constant battle because of course you want Hungarian literature to be accepted as European literature, and so you cannot blame anyone who does this successfully, makes it a commercial success (Peter).

For E/H translators, translating from the hyper-central to a peripheral language, the issue of domestication vs foreignization seems to be of a different nature. Bence seems to tend more towards domestication, Mónika more towards foreignization; however, their choices are motivated not by issues of power and reception, but rather by linguistic and literary considerations.

> If you don't try to bridge the distance between the two languages, something very strange happens. To copy the English text without a conceptual framework may work in other languages, but from English to Hungarian, that's a crime against the text. You must convert the text into Hungarian, on the level of the sentence and the word order as well (Bence).

> [My professor] had a saying: we translate the tree not the forest. If there is a dialogue, you have to translate it to sound like the way people talk, but in narrative parts I attach significance to everything that is there in the text, often even things that are perhaps not important. [Smiles] […] I prefer the structure of the sentence to resemble the original as much as possible, following its logic. And if it says 'he said' in the English text, I leave it like that [even though in Hungarian it sounds monotonous[8]] (Mónika).

It is clear from the above that the issue of invisibility and that of domestication are interrelated in a complex way – no wonder that domesticating translation practices are one of the main subjects of Lawrence Venuti's seminal book, *The Translator's Invisibility*. It is not only the translator but the source-language text and the source-language culture as well that are invisible in an over-domesticated translation, a fact that has different consequences depending on whether the source-language culture is a dominant or a dominated one.

[8] While English authors prefer to use the central reporting verb ('say'), Hungarian authors use a large variety of reporting verbs (Klaudy 25).

To conclude this chapter: the divergences in views and experiences of E/H and H/E literary translators concerning bilingual editing and domestication vs foreignization seem to be related to the status of the two languages, to the status of translated texts in Hungary vs in English-language cultures, and to the self-perception of the translator in the different cultures. As for the latter, E/H translators seem to be more concerned by faithfulness to the source text, and consider themselves less an authority on the culture, and are therefore more open to editing, while the attitude of H/E translators is more individualistic. While E/H translators stress the importance of collaboration, H/E translators tend to stress the responsibility of the translator which includes making the source text accessible to English-language audiences. The fact that the collaborative aspect of translation is more present in the views of E/H translators is probably also related to the fact that they have more feedback from and are therefore more likely to be criticized by people who have command of both languages than H/E translators who mainly have to face criticism from non-bilingual target-language readers. Therefore, criticism of the former most often means criticism for lack of understanding of the source text, while for the latter it mainly means criticism for lack of readability, thus it is not surprising that the former group tends to be more concerned by accuracy and the latter by fluency and accessibility, even at the cost of over-domesticating the source text.

It must be stressed that these differences are relative: the responsibility of the translator is also very important for the E/H translators I interviewed, just as faithfulness to the source text is important for H/E translators, etc. However, the overall experience of the translators I interviewed corroborates these general observations.

Future prospects

Having discussed some aspects of the past of the translators – the formation of their primary habitus – and their present – their self-perception and their attitude to bilingual editing and domestication vs foreignization – in what follows, I will turn to their vision of the future of their profession.

In his article quoted above, Simeoni observes that the subservient attitude he attributes to translators seems less and less viable as translators are asked to perform increasingly demanding and variegated tasks, while their financial and social status remains unchanged, or if it changes, it usually changes for the worse (13-14). Indeed, one of the reasons translatorial habitus has been the focus of a number of studies recently may be that due to recent technological and socio-political changes to which literary translators are constantly exposed, the dissonance between translatorial norms, ethos and self-perception on the one hand and, on the other, the circumstances under which translators are obliged to work has become more and more marked.[9]

Of the three E/H translators, Mónika is the only one who currently works as a full-time translator. It is worth quoting her assessment of the situation of literary translators in Hungary in its entirety:

> The profession of a literary translator used to be much more valued than it is today. When asked, [the Nobel-prize winning Hungarian writer] Imre Kertész used to say about himself [before winning the Nobel] that he was a literary translator rather than a writer, because being a writer was not something serious. Our life is much easier now technologically speaking, but parallel to the technological changes it turned out after the regime change [in Hungary in 1989] that publishers don't really

[9] According to an article recently published in Hungarian, to make an average living in 1970, a literary translator in Hungary had to translate 100,000 characters per month, while today they have to translate 400,000 characters (Sohár 431-441).

> feel like spending money on translators. The situation of intellectuals worsened after the regime change, fewer books were bought, so publishers found themselves in a difficult situation, they economized wherever they could, and so they did not raise translators' fees. So translators had to work more. But we still enjoy so much freedom that we do not want to give that up. Our generation has still known that freedom and we do not want to relinquish that, but we cannot secure the financial means needed for that freedom, and the future is completely insecure. You know the saying, "if only we could afford to live the way we live" (Mónika).

The last sentence, quoted by Mónika as a common saying among Hungarian intellectuals, is key to understanding the way many literary translators in Hungary negotiate their identity, and it also sums up ironically and succinctly what Bourdieu calls "hysteresis of habitus" (*Logic* 59; Vorderobermeier, "The (Re-)Construction of *Habitus*" 153). Bourdieu's phrase refers to the "structural lag between opportunities and the dispositions to grasp them" (*Outline* 83), i.e., to the situation when, for one reason or another, habitus does not adjust to changes in the field. In this case, the freedom and prestige – among other benefits – associated with literary translation continue to be felt by the translator as overwhelmingly supporting her choice of profession, even though these are in fact threatened by worsening socio-economic conditions and other factors.[10]

Mónika's assessment of her own situation is fairly complex. A number of other E/H translators I have talked to (besides those I interviewed), however, tend to criticize publishers for paying low fees, and translators' organizations for not representing the interests of literary translators competently. This is especially typical of translators whose career started in the Communist era, when Hungarian publishers were state-owned and their operation was determined by political rather than economic considerations, and thus the working conditions and remuneration of translators were not determined by market factors.

In the case of Bence, the worsening situation of literary translators led to his exit from the field.

> One has certain standards, and I started to adjust them to the circumstances, and that was when I thought that it was possible to work on the basis of a routine, but one mustn't imagine that the result can be the same. […] There are some people who are capable of saving energy and negotiating around deadlines, but for me, it became drudgery, I did not feel the joy of creativity anymore (Bence).

When asked whether he had any suggestions for the improvement of the situation of translators, Bence was sceptical. He said that this issue was regarded as marginal by the population as a whole, and could only be resolved by cultural political means, but he did not think there was the will to do that.

The situation does not seem to be so dire in the H/E group. However, it must be stressed that two of the interviewees did not depend on translation financially during most of their career. When asked about the financial side of literary translation, Peter said "The better you are known, the more you can get. There are some big names in each language, and they can make a full time living in Britain and America out of translation". He added, however, that he

[10] It is interesting to note that when I quote this sentence to people who do not live in Hungary, my difficulty in explaining it is similar to the one Judy experienced when trying to explain Esterházy's sentence ("My father was already happy when nothing happened") to her editor. The irony involved in these two sentences, referring to a precarious situation in which the individual feels that they are at the mercy of ever-changing and threatening socio-political conditions, seems to require cultural translation.

knew only one person in Britain who made a living by literary translation from any Central or Eastern European language, and "she works day and night, doesn't make a good living, but it's a living".

The third H/E translator interviewed, Owen, does make a living translating Hungarian literature. His case illustrates the financial consequences of working from a peripheral to the hyper-central language rather than the other way round: standard fees for H/E literary translators are 3-4 times the standard fees for E/H translators, even if the client is based in Hungary. Though these fees may still not be very high if the translator is based in the United Kingdom where living costs are considerably higher, in Hungary they afford a relatively comfortable standard of living.

Another difference between the two groups is that there is an emerging "star system" among literary translators in the English-speaking world (Sela-Sheffy, "How" 12), with certain H/E translators receiving not only higher fees but also prestigious prizes and gaining exposure in the media, whereas no similar schemes exist for those translating into Hungarian. At the moment the only grant that exists in Hungary for literary translators is for those below the age of forty, even though – as opposed to the career path of many intellectual professions – the fees of translators do not tend to increase with age. And while Hungarian translators with other source languages (e.g., German or Dutch) can take advantage of a number of grants and residencies, there are none for E/H translators.

Conclusion

The aim of my contrastive analysis was to examine through the example of H/E and E/H translators how source-language and target-language culture influences translators' habitus, their career choice and self-perception, as well as the process and the outcome of translation. The data provided by the "identity talk" of the translators interviewed showed that although there are many traits in common in the habitus of the individuals in the two groups that led to their choice of profession – e.g., love of the challenge of translating another language and culture; ability and willingness to be immersed in challenging work; preferring to work in flexible hours; not being highly competitive, etc. – there are nevertheless a number of differences as well that are conditioned by their respective source-language and target-language cultures. While cultural mediation seems to be an important element of the self-perception as well as of the actual job of H/E translators, E/H translators are more focused on the craft of translation itself, acting more as cultural gatekeepers in their target-language culture. Some of the norms of the H/E and E/H translation process also seem to be conditioned by target-language culture: while H/E translators, working in the highly self-sufficient market of the hyper-central language, have to be more concerned by the accessibility and acceptability of the target-language text, and are therefore more prone to domesticating practices, E/H translators, who work from a source language that is saturated by the culture of the target language, and is read by many readers in the target audience, are more concerned with accuracy. The difference between the status of the two languages also makes the H/E translator more of a "lone wolf", having to – and often wishing to – work without the safety net of bilingual editing, transposing the particularities of the language, literature and culture of an "exotic" source language into English without the help of a multitude of cultural products and commercial goods originating from the source-language culture that E/H translators have at their disposal, who, in their turn, have to take into account inadequate but widespread translations of English expressions, memes, titles, etc. into Hungarian. The increased visibility of translating from the hyper-central language often makes E/H translators more willing to be a team worker and share responsibility for the work with an editor.

Besides the topics discussed in this article, the interviews I conducted with the translators pointed to a number of other issues that could be the subject of further study – e.g., the existence and nature of translators' communities in the two cultures; or the physical and emotional side of the translator's work that most translators were very happy to talk about. It would also be interesting to study the issues discussed on larger samples and to take into consideration the public utterances – interviews, essays and work diaries – of translators.

Appendix: Questions for translators

PAST – BACKGROUND, PRIMARY HABITUS

Did your family background and/or your education play a role in your choice of profession?
When did you realize for the first time that texts not written in your first language were 'translated'?
When did it first occur to you that you would like to translate something?
What did you know about literary translation as a profession before you decided to do it yourself?

PRESENT – PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL HABITUS

Pre-translation:
How do you receive commissions?
What kind of translation jobs are you happy to accept?
What do you think about collaborative translation?
What do you think about translating from a mediating language?

Translation process – physical/emotional side:
Do you have translating rituals?
Do you use your voice and/or your body when translating?
How do you feel while translating?
What causes you pleasure when you translate?
Who do you have in mind as your audience while translating?
Why do you translate?
What do you do when you cannot keep a deadline?

Translation process – strategies and norms:
Is the translator an artist, an actor, a craftsman or a philologist?
What do you do when you encounter culture-specific terms?
Do you use footnotes?
How do you translate slang?
How do you feel about the tendency to domesticate / to foreignize a source text?
Should the voice of the translator be heard in the translation?
In your opinion, what constitutes a bad translation?
What are the most important qualities of a literary translator?

Post-translation:
How do you feel about editing and editors?
Do you think bilingual editing is necessary?

What do you think about the view that the translator's work is an autonomous work of art and should not be tampered with?
How do you feel about translation criticism?
Do you write articles or give interviews on your translations?
Do you write articles or give interviews on the literature and culture of your source language?
Do you think the translator's name should figure on the cover of the translated book?

Opinions about the profession:
Do you feel that there is a hierarchy between translators on the basis of their source language / target language?
Are there translators you consider as your models? Why?
What is the role of a literary translator?
How much has the profession changed since you have been working as a literary translator?
Are you in contact with other translators and/or translators' networks/associations?

Opinions about self as translator:
What is your most important translation ever?
How satisfied are you as a literary translator – financially, professionally, in terms of social status?
What do you like the most and the least in this profession?
Do you feel that you have become a better translator through the years?

FUTURE
Do you intend to continue working as a literary translator?
In your opinion, how could the situation of literary translators be improved?
Should the profession be more institutionalized?
To what extent is it possible to teach literary translation?

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