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Action Research in Translation Studies

Self-reflection in translation research training

1. Diversity within Translation Studies Research

The wealth, abundance and intricacy of translation topics, which may be approached from different perspectives, show that this is a complex and fertile field of study. Being a novice among other linguistic, literary, cultural and communication disciplines, Translation Studies (TS) for the past, arguably three or four decades, has tried to establish its autonomy and independence finding its own niche in the humanities. What is also characteristic of TS as an independent discipline is a proliferation of theoretical schools of translation thought, approaches, objectives, paradigms, models and methods.

Questions of methodology and procedure in translation research, which has taken different forms and naturally followed the discipline's various directions, are by no means a recent problem. This divergence does not only characterize theoretical translation research but also empirical investigations into new forms, such as multimodal translation (audiovisual media and virtual texts including). These extended forms of translation, which occurred due to the globalization of communication and growing interdisciplinarity of sciences, asked for some departure from the traditional research methods. Thus investigating patterns outside the mainstream research paradigms and considering novel methods in which translation may be studied have come as a necessity in TS.

There emerge important questions with reference to translation research: does the diversity of approaches to translation phenomena and processes serve the purpose of expansion and advancement of the discipline, or does it clash with the methodological consistency and disciplinary integrity? Is there a need for uniform research models across the range of diverse translation embodiments? Should there be any dominant paradigms at all? Perhaps, as Baker encouraged us to engage in innovative new research and "prospective rather than retrospective" orientation in the Introduction to *Critical Readings in Translation Studies*:

> Translation Studies has come of age. So much so, I would argue that we are now in a position to move safely and confidently not only beyond dichotomies and taxonomies, but also beyond foundational literature and scholarly canon, and beyond reiterating and reasserting core assumptions, revisiting our institutional history, and defending our disciplinary agendas [Baker, 2010: 3].

What has become one of possible methodological inquiries into translation in its extended sense in recent decades is a methodology bearing the name of Action Research in Translation Studies (ARTS). Before its characteristics are presented, let us first localize this methodology amongst traditional models of TS research.

From within many theoretical approaches to study translation, the linguistic, textual, semiotic, communicative, hermeneutic, functionalist, cultural, psycholinguistic and cognitive schools are the ones that have achieved prominence. Application of methods within those particular approaches has been heterogeneous. One of the proposals for systematizing this complexity was given by Chesterman [2000] and Williams and Chesterman [2002], who outlined three basic groups of translation research paradigms, namely comparative, process and causal. The first group is presented as including the most traditional models being static, product-oriented and focused on some kind of equivalence. In contrast, the process model sare perceived as dynamic allowing one to investigate the translation behaviour. The two types of models do not look into the reasons and explanations of the causes for the translator's decision-making. In the causal models, on the other hand, a given translation is not analysed in comparison to its source text but the translator's decisions are considered with respect to existing translation variants,

procedure use is scrutinized and consequences of particular procedural decisions are checked (for the framework of strategic translating within the causal model [cf. Piotrowska, Dybiec-Gajer, 2012]). In defence of the application of causal models to the study of translation, Chesterman [2000: 21] clarifies that "the most important reason for the primacy of a causal model is a methodological one: it encourages us to make specific explanatory and predictive hypothesis." That is why this particular model of translation research has been found as relevant for our considerations of self-reflection.

2. Introducing ARTS

Cornerstones of AR, which was designated in many ways as a method, methodology, an approach or family of approaches, a model or a paradigm (for detailed bibliographical references see: Cravo and Nevces [2007]), were formed in the first half of the 20th century. In the second, there were further developments in sociology, education, healthcare, arts and management.

One of the established definitions of AR was provided in the Introduction of the *Handbook of Action Research* [Reason, Bradbury 2001: 1]:

Action research is a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview which we believe is emerging at this historical moment. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities.

The possibility of using actionist methodologies in TS to investigate translation-related problems first appeared in the last two decades of the 20th century, which witnessed their rapid spread. The rationale for this kind of methodology is grounded in Holz Mänttäri's theory of translational action and Reiss and Vermeer's skopos. Many translation authors have recently been using it as an approach or method with reference to translation research in order to inquire into the causes of translator choices [e.g. Hatim, 2001; Vermeer, 1989 in: Venuti 2000: 223; Williams, Chesterman, 2002]. Indeed, as proposed in the causal models, ARTS

seeks to interpret and describe, to explain and predict, with predictive hypothesis relying on knowledge resulting from translation action. In translator education, the most prominent use of this approach is clearly attributed to Kiraly [2000], whose social constructivist theoretical framework forms the background for ARTS. Approaching translation phenomena through ARTS offers a possibility of investigating unexplored issues or providing rationale for translation practices. Thus, for the purposes of this paper, as well as generally in translator education, the term can convincingly be used to refer to a methodological approach.

In the knowledge that using ARTS is complex and relatively new in the field, we would like to address the issue by setting its basic principles. Although there are various interpretations of what ARTS means and how it is to be implemented, there are some characteristics which appear as generally attributable to it. Among the consistently important components of ARTS are: reflexivity between theory and practice (1), the participating researcher (2), the object and method of study (3), cyclic nature (4) and the reflection (5).

(1) The foremost specification is an integration, or balance between theory and practice, as well as research and action.

Diagram 1. Integration of research and action in ARTS
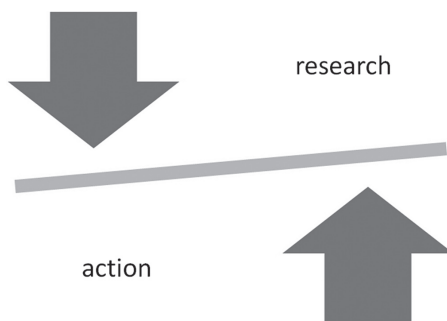
Bridging the gap between theory and practice in reflexive connection is a dominant tendency of ARTS where there is mutual productivity of theory for practice and vice versa; their infiltration and inspiration. The never-ending translation debate on whether practice can be of any

usefulness and relevance for building theoretical models and paradigms; whether theories can enhance the quality of practical renditions, apparently can find a certain compromise here. Sharing practitioners' benefits from inspired theoretical self-reflection, on the one hand; and sharing theoreticians' insight in the practice of translation may efficiently enhance research.

(2) The traditional dichotomy in any research between a researcher – scholar and a practitioner seems to have no validity here. 'Practisearcher', a term coined in TS by Gile, reflects that compromise between theoretical and practical components. This kind of research "is not only something done to or on practitioners, but is also something done by practitioners" [Hatim, 2001: 6]. The nature of inquiry may be the third person, as is the case with ST-TT comparisons in comparative models; or it may be the first person investigation. In the latter case, the researcher has a peculiar profile because s/he combines the role of the scholar and the role of the practitioner who questions their own translation choices and decisions. There may be co-researchers present. The researcher may be the subject and object of the study. His/her work takes place in an authentic real world environment, the translation market.

(3) In any research methodology what is of primary importance is the relationship that a researcher establishes with the object of study. In TS, the focus of interest is the human factor: understanding the translation work performed by human translators. The object of research may be people, groups, institutions or procedures, and a given translation topic should never be studied in isolation but in context, which allows for change. This kind of research permits both qualitative and quantitative studies. Other methods used are journals and logs, case studies, content analyses, interviews or questionnaires. For more complex and time-consuming projects a combination of methods may be applied and some field work needs to be done.

(4) Two of the important features that are repeatedly mentioned in the relevant bibliography on ARTS, namely its participative and cyclic nature, signal that people who are involved in this kind of research, are active in the process which consists of series of cycles. This contrasts with traditional research where members are objects of the study not being simultaneously active in the translation process that is being investigated and active as investigators of this process.

What is of utmost importance in ARTS are cycles. ARTS consists of spiraling cycles that start with observation and follow the stages of planning intervention, data collection, planning new intervention and analyses. The process is not linear with its phases overlapping and co--occurring. The metacycle of final reflection may be implemented in the form of, e.g. M.A. or PhD thesis.

The cycle of enquiry in ARTS was presented by Hatim in the following diagram [Hatim, 2001: 189].

Diagram 2. The cycle of enquiry in ARTS

A → PP

PP → CR

S

CR

R
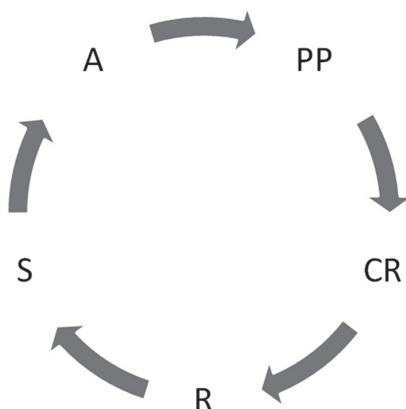
PP (*Professional practice*) – translating a text
CR (*Critical reflection*) – identifying and verbalising translation problems
R (*Research*) – systematic analysis of gathered material
S (*Strategic planning*) – findings from critical observation are interpreted for prospective applications
A (*Action*) – action is started

The concepts of participatory and cyclic are further supplemented by the term spiral also applied to ARTS in the sense that a research process where each turn marks the beginning of a new cycle relies on the understanding of the previous one (see: [Dick, 1993]).

(5) The duality of ARTS realised through mutual correspondence between translating as an action and researching translation; reflexivity of theory and practice is enabled and activated by the reflective component,

which gives rationale to this methodological approach – it consists in subjecting everyday practice to ongoing critical reflection. The research may take the form of first understanding and then critical evaluation of action performed by its participants. Action and understanding lead to a change, which is another outcome of ARTS, unlike in traditional research patterns which focus more on creating knowledge and forming abstract constructs, such as theoretical models or principles based on that knowledge. Traditional approaches centre on disseminating information about research results, whereas ARTS is targeted at implementing change as a result of a given research project, which makes it a more desirable form of academic activity for the professional world.

Self-reflection has appeared more prominently in translation research in recent years both as a theoretical concept and a tool for translation teaching methodology. Related to human critical reflection, introspection and metacognition, the term is situated in new psychological and psycholinguistic models of the translation process. This psychological dimension has occurred as an innovation in the treatment of translation [cf. Piotrowska, 2012].

> A reflective teacher needs a kind of educational technology which does more than extend her capacity to administer drill and practice. Most interesting to her is an educational technology, which helps students to become aware of their own intuitive understandings, to fall into cognitive confusions and explore new directions of understanding and action [Schon, 1983: 333].

Self-reflection is conducted by the researcher to address translation problems and make new decisions potentially leading to better solutions. All authors, irrespective of their standpoint, refer to the importance of constant reflective analysis of each and every turn of every cycle. Through this analysis, some insight may be gathered by the researcher into the very nature of the translation process and the outcome of a particular procedure use on the effect and quality of the target text. The aim of the research is always concerned not with abstract problems but with the understanding of a specific reality and concrete resolutions to translation dilemmas; with improvement of translation choices and translator decisions. Specific problem solutions have certain impact on translation quality, which in turn may signal some strategic hints for prospective translation assignments in given contexts.

To characterize ARTS in the most succinct way, the following speci-
fications seem crucial:
- – reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action [cf. Schon, 1983];
- – insider (practitioner's) knowledge (linking theory and application);
- – problem-solving (identification of problems, prediction of outco-
  mes, reversal of procedure use;
- – reflection and introspection;
- – 'hands-on' experience (simultaneous translating and researching);
- – collaboration and dialogic intervention.

ARTS is potentially applicable to various educational settings – from
introductory pragmatic considerations at elementary stages of translator
training (TT) to advanced master's and doctoral dissertations. Suitabi-
lity for small-scale projects (such as M.A.'s) gives it the advantage of
being relatively easily employed as a method in university settings. Ho-
listic ARTS may be both useful at the level of translator education and
translator trainer training, where self-reflection is of particular relevance
and importance. ARTS fosters such characteristics as: questioning abi-
lities and self-criticism, reflective thinking, pre-disposition to learn and
to improve, a will to adapt to change, which are all attributes of empo-
wering learning strategies (see: [Kiraly, 2000]). Possible applications
of ARTS may range from providing audio description for the visually
impaired at Krakow Film Festival (M.A. research projects at UNESCO
Chair, Jagiellonian University in 2010-11) to translating academic texts
for publication.

3. Framework of Translation Research Training and ARTS example at M.A. level

The growth of TS as a new discipline brought about considerable trans-
formations in teaching translation and educating translators [cf. Pio-
trowska, 2012]. Acknowledging institutional versus non-institutional
training, which reflect the apparently dichotic settings of "the academia"
and "the market"; the contemporary translator education, at least in the
framework of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) bears certain
fundamental similarities – universal theoretical assumptions, credit sys-
tems, compatibility of curricula and programmes and transferable skills.
In spite of this assumed universalism or homogeneity of methodological

frameworks, there arise issues in micro-educational environments and contexts, with respect to macro-trends in TT that need to be carefully approached and considered. Is there a specific Polish context as distinct from general European (Western/Eastern, English/German/Spanish) methodology for TT? Do local methodologies, if there is any peculiarity in the local approaches, matter? Such and similar questions remain open as the discipline further expands incorporating broader and new translation research areas.

One of the important issues raised in TT is professionalisation of the discipline, and here, the specifics of the Polish translation market with a very prestigious position and high focus on the literary translation clearly distinguish it from West-European markets. Global trends in new profiles of the translator – not merely a language specialist, anymore; not a freelance solitary individual who works with texts and has real contacts with clients; are dictating certain re-profiling in TT and re-consideration of the trainee skills that are needed on new market in the globalised world. What used to be a "retail" text translation is now text production and language services provision (LSP) "wholesale". New labels for experts using their language and translation competences appear: language specialist, language expert, specialised translator, community interpreter, IT specialist, project manager, localizer, proofreader, fact checker, and others. Such labels signal the professional changes that the translation market has experienced for some time now with an increasing rate, and they provide feedback for translation trainers as to what skills and qualifications may be expected to be introduced in academic curricula.

The debate about methods and forms of educating translators on the one hand, and training in translation research, on the other, has continued for a few decades now. The former is a broad discussion topic which goes beyond the scope of the present paper, whereas the latter needs to be specifically addressed here. Final year research projects at undergraduate and graduate levels, which are obligatory graduation requirements at some European universities, constitute a natural setting for this kind of research training. The challenges that the Bologna process has brought to the academic education of future professionals, including translators, cannot be easily resolved by a given methodological framework, however certain advantages of implementing ARTS are not too difficult to demonstrate.

M.A. specialisation in TS within university teaching frameworks appeared toward the end of the 20th century, and has been spreading in its scope since. In some academic environments M.A. translation work precedes more advanced research projects at PhD level although the academic status of TS is still obscure (e.g. formally, there is no PhD in TS in Poland as of today, because TS as a discipline is placed within applied linguistics, literary studies or cultural studies, cf. the site of the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education http://www.nauka.gov.pl/home).M.A. dissertations have become a widespread form of practising TS research in the academia at the beginner level. At some universities, they are preceded by bachelor thesis that is written in the third year of undergraduate programmes. A practical implementation of ARTS may be provided by student final research projects which are prepared towards the completion of M.A. programmes in the second year of postgraduate studies in the form of an M.A. thesis, which typically takes on one of the given forms; it is either own translation of a chosen text in the source language with an extended commentary, oran analysis of the source text with its translation(s).In both cases theoretical and empirical components are present, as well as critical reflection on procedures used in the process of translation. It is also possible to have other forms of theses, such as a terminological work of which the project discussed in this article is an example.

The presented thesis by Dominika Szymura, a student of UNESCO Chair for Translation Studies and Intercultural Communication at Jagiellonian University in Krakow, was submitted in 2010 with the title *Terminology of Vocational Education and Training Policy in the EU – Preparing a Polish Language Version of the Enlarged Cedefop's Glossary of Terms*. The research project concerned the terminology of European vocational education and training policy (VET) and its theoretical aims were to present Action Research as a new methodological approach in the translational analysis of terminology, and produce self-commentary on the translator's decision-making process, whereas the empirical part consisted in preparing an updated version of the glossary of English and Polish terms covering the field of education and vocational training in the EU. In its practical part, the project was an actual assignment and it was prepared in cooperation with Cedefop (the European Agency for the Development of Vocational Training). Cedefop was also its initiator and consultant.

The translation brief for the assignments which the M.A. project relied on could be presented as follows:
- the initiator and commissioner: Cedefop;
- the ST producer: Cedefop's Translation Service and VET experts and a number of the Centre's partners;
- the TT producer: the author of the M.A. thesis;
- the TT user: training stakeholders, especially policy-makers, researchers and practitioners; generally all those involved in VET policy in Europe;
- the TT receiver: e.g. mobility coordinators and people organising work placements within European mobility programmes.

The enclosed example illustrates a cycle in the researcher-translator decision-making process with terminological considerations of a single translation unit of 'lifelong learning' [Szymura unpublished M.A. thesis].

Source text item e): *lifelong learning*.
Renderings:
e1) uczenie się przez całe życie/ kształcenie przez całe życie
e2) kształcenie ciągłe
e3) kształcenie ustawiczne
M.A. thesis author's commentary:
"The valid Polish translations of *lifelong learning* are renderings e1) *uczenie się przez całe życie* and *kształcenie przez całe życie*, though the former is used more frequently as an official translation of the original. Both renderings were accepted by Cedefop in the 2008 glossary version. The lifelong learning is understood as all learning activity undertaken throughout life, whether formal or informal. The concept is closely linked to continuous education and to continuing education and continuing professional development. That is the reason why equivalents such as e2) *kształcenie ciągłe* and e3) *kształcenie ustawiczne* have also been proposed as renderings of the ST item e). However, although renderings e2) and e3) seem to sound more natural in the target language than the equivalent e1), in the target culture, they carry slightly narrower meaning than the original phrase. The concept of lifelong learning encompasses everything that is assumed in continuous education and even a wider range of learning. Although some institutions such as AEC[1]

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[1]   AEC was established in 1953. It represents the interests of institutions that are concerned with training for the music profession. Today, the AEC includes 273

(European Cultural and Educational Network) do not differentiate between lifelong learning and continuous education, it is essential to do so in the context of Polish education policy. Therefore the term e1) was introduced in order to distinguish the concept from continuing education and continuing professional development."

The data corpus of the presented thesis was compiled of 61 revised translation units of the already existing terms included in the previous Cedefop glossary of 2008, 18 new items that have not been rendered in the 2008 glossary version and 25 new terms proposed for the 2011-12 glossary. All units were verified and accompanied by comments on the problematic issue and on the identified translational procedure, like the one provided for the term *lifelong learning*.

Szymura's project shows an on-the-translation-job activity with critical reflection on it and has a direct link with the translation market. We tend to assume, with graduate feedback rather supporting this assumption, that the models that students experience at higher education institutions will be replicated in their professional lives in the future. This kind of understanding brings us to accepting ARTS in the education and training of future translators.

4. Final comments

The benefits of using ARTS in translator education appear rather obvious although there are certain reservations which need to be taken into account. The latter would include a lack of maturity and skills for autonomous thinking among undergraduates, organizational difficulty in direct interaction among translation stakeholders (scholars, students and professionals), replicability, objectivity and possibly others that would definitely require a separate study. Being aware of such drawbacks, we need to acknowledge ARTS advantages. First of all, students gain authentic experience as translators and translation research workers. Professionalisation

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member institutions in 55 countries. The AEC is pro-active towards maintaining and creating a broad network of relations with the European institutions (European Parliament, European Commission and Council of Ministers), national governments, and institutions and networks in the field of music and education at national – [on-line] http://www.aecinfo.org/Content.aspx?id=1 – 7 VII 2010.

of academia, which has recently become an important consideration and a lure for university candidates, is a highlighted aspect in ARTS. Direct contact with professionals enables students to learn how to deal with the difficulties of the professional world in the future. By getting involved in projects that may lead to social change (e.g. disseminating the translation of a text that has not been previously rendered and published), they may potentially perceive their work as a purposeful activity for which responsibility is taken. Active involvement in the final year undergraduate or graduate students in accessibility projects that have had actual application, such as the given M.A. example, even in micro-scale, helps them think strategically and increases their level of awareness of professional issues involved in translating. Kiraly's notion of empowerment and his idea that ARTS is "a multifaceted approach to seeking answers to local problems, and one that […] can be particularly valuable for perpetuating innovation in the often unreflective practice of translator education" [Kiraly, 2000: 101] are definitely to be propagated in the translator education and translation research training.

On closing the reflection on ARTS and acknowledging the relevance of self-reflective thinking, let us agree with Cravo and Nevces [2007] who state that,

> We firmly believe that more than the orising about AR in TS, it is important that we actually do it. Only so will it be possible to understand to what extent it can be useful to the field. If no more can be got from our experience, we hope to have set forward a hypothesis that needs to be seriously addressed: that indeed there *is* space for Action Research in Translation Studies.

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Streszczenie

Ukazując zróżnicowanie w badaniach przekładoznawczych, na ich tle artykuł ukazuje stosunkowo nową metodologię ARTS. Celem jest jej zdefiniowanie i zlokalizowanie w kontekście modeli przekładoznawczych, ukazanie jej komponentów i cech charakterystycznych oraz argumentacja na rzecz jej przydatności w kształceniu tłumacza. Na wybranym przykładzie zastosowania ARTS w projekcie magisterskim przedstawiona jest realizacja podstawowych założeń tej metodologii: działanie tłumaczeniowe z krytyczną refleksją, wykorzystanie wiedzy i doświadczenia badacza-tłumacza oraz tłumaczenie strategiczne w procesie cyklicznym. Wykorzystanie ARTS w procesie kształcenia tłumacza jest metodyczną odpowiedzią na wymóg profesjonalizacji przekładoznawstwa

i realizacją nowoczesnego modelu edukacyjnego Kiraly'ego, w którym uczenie odbywa się przez działanie, a student jest aktywnym uczestnikiem-tłumaczem procesu dydaktycznego.

Słowa kluczowe: ARTS, badania przekładoznawcze, działanie, kształcenie tłumacza, metodologia, (auto-)refleksja

Summary

Action Research in Translation Studies. Self-reflection in translation research training

Demonstrating a diversity within TS research, the study enquires into ARTS as a new methodology. The aim of the paper is to define ARTS, localize it among major TS research models, present its components and characteristics and argument for its usefulness and relevance in translator training. Basic assumptions of this methodology are illustrated on the chosen example of an M.A. project, namely translation action with critical reflection, implementing the practitioner-researcher's knowledge and experience, and strategic translating in a cyclic process. Implementing ARTS in translator education is a methodological response to a greater professionalization of the discipline and Kiraly's modern educational model with student being an active participant-translator in the process of training.

Key words: ARTS, translation research, action, translator training, methodology, (self-)reflection