Creativity and translation

Douglas Robinson

Introduction

Theodore Savory (1968) noted decades ago that the prescriptions aimed historically at regulating translations have been notoriously conflicted or contradictory: translators should translate individual words/whole sentences; translators should highlight/conceal the translational nature of the target text; translators should modernise/archaise a literary classic, and so on. Partly, these tensions or contradictions are a by-product of disagreement among the authorities seeking to control translation; more importantly, they reflect the complexity of the act of translation and the impossibility of reducing it to a single simple set of rules.

Much the same is true of creativity in translation: paraphrasing Savory, we might want to say that the translator should be slavish/creative. Unpacking that a little, we might want to clarify that the translator is expected to give the impression of slavishness and hide whatever creativity is required to achieve that impression, or that translators have historically been expected to be slavish reproducers of the source text’s syntax, semantics, text-linguistic coherence, pragmatics, style, etc., and that only recently has scholarly attention begun to be drawn to the (formerly repressed) creativity that translation inevitably requires.

If we add a perspectival element to that formulation, marking the traditional demand for slavish fidelity with ‘A’ and the more recent theorisation of the translator’s creativity with ‘B’, and the practical and theoretical consequences of those two broad principles with ‘1’ and ‘2’, we obtain something like the following historico-theoretical guide to creativity and translation.

A. Translating is fundamentally a slavish act, subordinate to the source author’s expressions.

1. The translator has historically been expected to strive for slavish fidelity to the target text.
2. The achievement of that slavishness has always required (B) great creativity.

B. Translating is fundamentally a creative act, transforming both the source text and the target language.

1. The (A2) ineradicable creativity of the act of translation threatens (A1) the very definition of translation as slavish fidelity.
2. B1 is precisely why, until the past two decades or so, translation theory has so determinedly sought to enforce (A) the translator’s slavishness and to repress (B) the translator’s creativity.
If we contrast the ‘titular’ propositions there alone – ‘Translation is fundamentally a slavish act’, ‘Translation is fundamentally a creative act’ (those surreptitious prescriptions disguised as abstract universal descriptions) – they would appear to form a simple binary opposition, opposed definitions of ‘translation’. If we stop there, we have a debate: (A) traditionalists vs (B) radicals.

Once we add the numbered ‘phenomenological’ propositions, however, that binary opposition is both layered psychologically (overt mandates and ‘repression’) and curved around into circularity: emerging phenomenological awareness of A2 generates B, which at once sends shock waves through the (repressive) definitional serenity of A (translation may be less slavish than we wanted to believe) and is itself a channel of turbulence (translational creativity may undermine our foundational understanding of translation), necessitating a return to A.

The effort not to deviate from the source author’s expressions requires of the translator semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic creativity (A2)

**Semantic creativity**

The translator seeking strict fidelity to the original does not simply open the bilingual dictionary to the entry for the problematic source-textual word and choose the first target-language item listed there. Typically, professional translators list synonyms in their heads and ‘feel’ their way to the best one – although that ‘feel’ may shift in the process, so that the eighth or the tenth item in the mental list may feel right enough to type into the translation, but may then begin to look or feel wrong as soon as it is written, or later in the editing process. Even when a dictionary or translation-memory software is used, and the translator chooses from among the semantic options provided there, the choice is creative in the sense that the skilled professional translator brings to bear on it a highly nuanced feel for the connotations and collocations of each semantic option – how each has been used in hundreds, or thousands, of similar and dissimilar contexts – and weighs the closeness of each to the source-textual word-in-context.

If true interlingual synonymy were ever possible, translation might be semantically less creative than it inevitably is – but then if true intralingual synonymy were ever possible, ordinary monolingual discourse might be semantically less creative than it inevitably is as well.

So-called *realia* – terms in the source language for which there are no target-language equivalents, typically because the objects to which they refer do not exist in the target culture – are a special case requiring semantic creativity of the translator. A humorous version of this might be ‘the thing described by the source text is exactly like a doughnut, except that it’s flat, square, black, and doesn’t have a hole in the middle’. Does the translator call it a ‘doughnut’ in the target language, because that is the closest natural equivalent, even though he or she knows (and knows that the target reader will not know) that it is nothing like a doughnut? Does he or she use the source-language term and provide an explanation in the text or a footnote? Does he or she invent a word? Does he or she simply omit the word and translate around it?

**Syntactic creativity**

The syntactic differences between languages have been recognised for thousands of years; translators negotiate those differences in virtually every job they do. In the aggregate, the
professional translator does not find these differences difficult: every working translator develops transfer schemas for specific syntactic structures in the source language, and those transfer schemas often operate unconsciously and very rapidly to effect the creation of a target-language equivalent. But those very transfer schemas – convert a passive syntax to active, unpack an embedded syntax into subordinate clauses, etc. – are the automated products of past conscious creativity and continue to channel syntactic creativity into the translator’s work.

Nor is the syntactic complexity of translation ever merely an aggregate affair, as the following demonstrates.

- **Source texts are not always syntactically felicitous.** Technical texts in particular are often written very badly and, when faced with a bad sentence, the translator will need to exert considerable syntactic creativity first to figure out what the source text is trying to say, then to come up with an equivalent in the target language. (Literary texts often have syntactic problems like this as well. Not all literature is James Joyce; much of it, in fact, is popular fiction that has been edited badly, or not at all.)

- **Every instantiation of a familiar syntactic pattern brings its own co-textual challenges, requiring slight modification(s) of the transfer schema.** Transfer schemas only partially automate the syntactic aspects of the translation process; local modulations require creativity.

- **Not every syntactic pattern in a source language will be familiar to the translator.** Translation is an intelligent activity, and every translator is continually learning new patterns. ‘Learning new patterns’ proceeds from the initial encounter (surprise, bafflement, frustration), through exploration (seeking understanding through mental extrapolation, checking in grammar books and other published or online resources, asking a friend) and mastery (understanding this one case, understanding similar/analogous cases), to habitualisation (developing a new transfer schema that will translate unconsciously).

- **The source author’s style is often in part a conglomerate effect of syntactic and semantic preferences.** Recognising and reproducing those preferences in the target language well enough to give the target reader the impression of an equivalent style is often difficult and requires great creativity.

- **Even apart from stylistic fidelity to the source text, there is a marked difference between a translation that is syntactically faithful, but ‘flat’, and one that feels ‘alive’.** Not all syntactically faithful translations of a given sentence or paragraph are stylistically equal in the target language. The difference between a ‘flat’ and an ‘alive’ translation is often difficult to articulate or analyse, because the ‘differential impressions’ (Christiansen, 1909) on the basis of which we make such distinctions operate below the level of conscious awareness.

- **Any form of literary experimentation will require enhanced syntactic creativity.** Literary experimentation is typically not so much idiosyncratic expression as it is a playing with unused potentials in the relationship *between* idiosyncratic expression and established usage – and every one of those elements (usage, expression, and the relationship between them) is grounded in the history of each language. This makes recreating a source-language literary experiment in the target language extraordinarily difficult.
Pragmatic creativity

Given that the pragmatics of any text is shaped by the culture, and that the target culture by definition differs significantly from the source culture, the translator seeking strict fidelity to the source text will be faced with apparently insoluble pragmatic problems, and will be forced to call on considerable reserves of pragmatic creativity to reach even barely tolerable solutions. Registers of politeness and formality rarely overlap between cultures. Canons of relevance and verbal action differ from culture to culture. The skilled professional translator must be sensitive to these differences; but even the translator who recognises them easily will often be hard pressed to make the shifts in translation. If the speech act that the translator is attempting to reproduce does not exist in the target culture – is not recognised as a speech act, and therefore has no conventionalised meaning and no contextual variability – how is the translator to get the target reader to (a) understand what it is attempting to do, (b) recognise it as a speech act that might be performed effectively in the target culture, and (c) recognise it as a speech act that is taken for granted in the source culture? If what Grice (1989 [1975]) calls the ‘Cooperative Principle’ and its maxims differ from culture to culture (and they always do), how can the translator structure the target text so as to make it possible for target readers to work out conversational implicature?

Translating is fundamentally a creative act, transforming both the source text and the target language (B)

The translator always transforms the source text

At the very simplest level, the translator, by definition, transforms the source text into the target text; at a somewhat more complex level, the impossibility of exact equivalence between languages means that the target text will never mean or say the same thing as the source text; at a more complex level still, the very fact that the translator is not the source author means that the target text will reflect the translator’s personal interpretive idiosyncrasies. If we take translation to be a form of quotation, it should be clear that no one ever quotes another person’s words without transforming them – tonally, if in no other way. Bakhtin’s (1984 [1929]) concept of ‘double-voicing’ would suggest that every quotation of another person’s words retonalises those words with the new speaker’s voice either ‘unidirectionally’ (agreeing with them, and so merely stylising them slightly differently) or ‘varidirectionally’ (disagreeing with them, or wanting to cast a critical eye on them, and so parodying them in some way). Sperber and Wilson’s (1986) notion of ‘echoic’/‘interpretive’ speech follows Bakhtin closely on this point.

More complexly, too, Hermans (1996) has argued persuasively that the basic communicative situation in translation is the translator addressing the target audience through the translation, in the supposed voice of the source text. In that sense, the translator ‘quotes’ the source author in the target language in order to have a certain kind of impact on the target audience. In Gricean terms, the translator manipulates the target-cultural Cooperative Principle and its maxims in order to elicit in the target audience a certain kind of desired implicature. In Bakhtinian terms, just as the source author of a novel creates (and double-voices) a narrator, who ‘creates’ (double-voices) a variety of characters, so too does the target author (translator) of that novel create the source author as a kind of narrator and double-voices that author/narrator. In that sense, the translator ‘adds another voice’ (Robinson, 2009) to
the mix of voices that is the source text and addresses the target reader not only through the added voice, but also through the composite of all of the resulting voices.

**The translator always transforms the target language**

Because languages and cultures differ so substantially, the translator’s task of mediating between them inevitably introduces novel ideas, images, and expressions into the target language. From a purely phenomenological perspective – what it feels like to translate – it is clear that the translator is constantly pushing on the target language, trying to adapt it just slightly to the demands of each specific translation job. One metaphor for this experience is reflected in several languages’ main verb for ‘to translate’: the Latin (con)vertere and Finnish kääntää both mean ‘to translate’ and ‘to turn’, and German wenden can be used in similar ways in certain contexts. One attempt to take this metaphor seriously imagines that the translator turns from the source text into the target text not quickly and easily, but slowly, laboriously, like a bulldozer turning off a paved highway into the forest, in the process blazing a new road (Robinson, 1991) – which is to say, transforming the target language.

In many linguistic domains, this process is manifest and recognised everywhere.

- **Television and film subtitling**, especially from a more powerful language to a less powerful language, tends to introduce the concepts of the former into the latter, typically via the medium of new coinages invented specifically as target-language equivalents. The popular audiovisual media of television and film tend to disseminate such coinages quickly through a population.

- **Philosophical vocabularies** in any given language tend to consist mainly of translations from key philosophical thinkers in other languages. Sometimes, rather than translating, translators will carry the original term over into the target language, as a loanword: dao from Daoism, mimesis from Plato, catharsis from Aristotle, etc. Sometimes, translators will simply translate literally: Kant’s Ding-an-sich becomes ‘the thing in itself’, Heidegger’s In-der-Welt-Sein becomes ‘Being-in-the-World’, etc. And sometimes there simply is no good target-language equivalent, and the philosophical target culture makes do with an awkward combination of the original as loanword and translation, as is the case with Heidegger’s das Man, variously (and always inadequately) translated as ‘the They’, ‘the Anyone’, ‘the Everyone’, and so on.

- **Translations of key theological, legal, and educational terms from a colonising culture to the colonised culture** tend to reshape the latter in the image of the former. Post-colonial translation studies tends to deal with the history of such reshapings in the past, the resulting cultural hybridity that has resulted from them in the present, and the potential for transformative retranslations in the (decolonised) future (see Robinson, 1997b).

**Historical perspectives**

*Until the past two decades or so, translation theory has determinedly sought to enforce the translator’s slavishness*

As Pym (1992: 152–3) has noted, the primal scene of translation is the summit meeting of two kings who do not speak each other’s language and so have to rely on interpreters. The first question in that situation might be: ‘Who will bring the interpreter?’ But obviously,
if King A relies on the interpreter brought by King B, he has no way of knowing whether
King B’s interpreter is not simply spinning the conversation to suit King B; and the same
is true if King B relies on the interpreter brought by King A. The obvious solution to that
stand-off is for each king to bring his own interpreter. But that raises the second question:
‘How can either monolingual king trust his own interpreter not to betray him to the other
side?’ After all, translators and interpreters are, by definition, intercultural beings who have
learned not only the language of a foreign culture, but also the values and norms of that
culture. The loyalty of translators and interpreters has always definitively been in question.
Hence the historical importance of stressing fidelity not only to the source text, but also
to the source author – not only to linguistic structures, in other words, but also to human
agency and its intentions.

Normatively, throughout history, the translator or interpreter has been conceived as the
slave (or servant) of the source author, required to translate or interpret in loyal service to
his or her intentions:

We as translators subjugate our pen to a foreign language and enslave our minds to the
tyrranny of another.

(Etienne Pasquier, in a 1576 letter to Odet de Tournebus,
quoted in Robinson, 1997c: 113)

But slaves we are, and labour on another man’s plantation; we dress the vineyard,
but the wine is the owner’s: if the soil be sometimes barren, then we are sure of being
scourged; if it be fruitful, and our care succeeds, we are not thanked; for the proud
reader will only say, the poor drudge has done his duty.

(John Dryden, in his 1697 Dedication to the Aeneis,
quoted in Robinson, 1997c: 175)

The problem inherent in that orientation, of course, is that human beings are not robots – that
is, it is ultimately impossible to thwart their creativity. Ideally, from the king’s perspective,
the translator-as-slave would be a mere mechanical extension of the king-as-source-author;
hence the perpetual attraction of machine translation. Unfortunately for such idealisations,
and fortunately for the actual human beings involved in creating translations, that mechani-
cal reduction has proved elusive. Machine translation systems, especially the statistical kind
pioneered by Google Translate, are beginning to produce nearly acceptable target texts – but
they still require post-editing. (The new ‘slavery’ that translators complain about today is
enslavement to translation-memory software and machine-translation systems, which seem
to turn translators into mindless line workers.) Even the most loyal post-editor can get creative
and introduce new ideas or attitudes into a text.

Pym (1993: 131, 149–50) elsewhere makes the important distinction between ‘external
knowledge’ (the knowledge of clients, for whom translation is a text that should serve
as a reliable guide to the foreign text that they cannot read) and ‘internal knowledge’
(the knowledge of translators, who know the extent to which the activity that produces
that text is saturated in interpretive creativity), noting that translators have nothing to
gain by revealing their ‘internal knowledge’ to their clients. In that sense, the ‘creative
turn’ in translation studies has constituted a determined shift from the perpetuation of
clients’ ‘external knowledge’ (translation as structures of equivalence) to an exploration
of translators’ ‘internal knowledge’.
Beginning in the mid-1990s, translation theory has determinedly celebrated the translator’s creativity

The year 1995 seems to have been a watershed for the study of creativity in translation, and the next few years saw the appearance of a rash of theoretical statements emphasising the creative nature of translation. If we take the title of Gui’s (1995) paper – ‘Das Wesen des Übersetzens ist kreativ’ (‘The essence of translation is creative’) – to be indicative of the work published in those years, the approach seems radical, precisely because of the history of insisting the opposite – that the essence of translation is slavish; in fact, all of the arguments in this first group are fairly timid, arguing fundamentally (A2) that translators have to work very hard to create the illusion of slavishness.

For example, Kovačić (1995) argued that the cultural complexity of audiovisual subtitling requires of the subtitler new forms of translational creativity, and of the trainer of subtitlers new forms of pedagogical creativity aimed at helping future subtitlers to access their full creativity. At the Ninth International Conference on Translation and Interpreting in Prague, in September 1995 (Beylard-Ozeroff, Králová, & Moser-Mercer, 1998), scholars applied Levy’s and Popovič’s thoughts on translation as a decision-making communicative process to the creativity involved in the act of translating, with an eye to transforming translation pedagogy. Wilss (1996: 166) called translation a “re-creative” linguistic activity’, noting that ‘translation is never a creatio ex nihilo, but the context-bound reproduction of a given text’; still, ‘the most competent translators possess a malleable and creative mind’, which enables them to mediate between the source text and the target language by developing ‘decoding and encoding strategies’. Neubert (1997: 17) called the translator’s creativity a ‘derived creativity’: ‘A translation is not created from nothing; it is woven from a semantic pattern taken from another text, but the threads – the TL [target language] linguistic forms, structures, syntactic sequences – are new.’ As typical translation procedures that are creative in nature, he listed syntactical transpositions and lexical modulations; precisely because one-to-one correspondence between the source text and the resources of the target language is rarely possible, varying degrees of creative approximation or new invention are necessary. Niska (1998), following an extensive review of the literature on translational creativity (on which the above relies) and creativity in general, outlined as the core of semantic creativity in translation ‘four basic strategies for the interpreting of neologies: 1. omission; 2. use of existing term to denote “approximate” or “provisional” equivalent; 3. explanation of concept; 4. neologisms (loans, loan-translations and word creation)’.

At least three works published in the late 1990s took a slightly different tack. Nida (1996), dismissing the notion that there might ever be a ‘science’ of translation, insisted that it is always an art: a ‘creative technology’ that draws on strategies, techniques, and insights from many disciplines. And Kussmaul (1995) and Uzawa (1997) both used think-aloud protocols (TAPs) to explore creative strategies developed by their students in solving difficult translation problems, and then theorised creativity in ways aimed again at transforming translation pedagogy.

Kussmaul (1995), in particular, devoted an entire chapter to ‘Creativity in translation’, based on TAPs organised around ‘texts with “poetic” features’ (Kussmaul, 1995: 40); that is, ‘texts which deviate from general linguistic norms and set patterns and which in addition often have a very complex structure’. Drawing on the four-phase model of the creative process first theorised by Poincaré (1913; see also Guilford, 1975; Taylor, 1975) – preparation, incubation, illumination, evaluation – Kussmaul first theorises, under ‘preparation’, the creativity of comprehension, which is ‘not only guided by what we hear or read but also
Creativity and translation

by our personal knowledge and experience’, and thus is ‘not merely a receptive but also a productive process’ (Kussmaul, 1995: 41). His main focus, however, is on the ‘incubation’ phase, as illustrated by two student translators brainstorming together. Most powerful for him were examples of what Guilford (1975: 40) calls ‘divergent production’:

Divergent production is a broad search, usually in an open problem, in which there are a number of possible answers. I also sometimes say that it is a generation of logical alternatives. Fluency of thinking is the name of the game. Convergent production, on the other hand, is a focused search, for, from the nature of the given information or problem, one particular answer is required. I sometimes say that it is the generation of logical imperatives.

‘Convergent production’, Kussmaul (1995) shows, is all too often the ideal in traditional translation pedagogy: focus on the problem; narrow your thinking to realistic alternatives; do whatever research is needed to exclude everything that does not contribute directly to an adequate solution. His own TAP research, by contrast, seems to suggest that divergent production is far more effective in opening up creative new avenues for the translator to explore. ‘Lateral thinking’, in particular, proved productive: students working in pairs would joke, and their jokes would take them (apparently) farther and farther away from the problem and its solution, until suddenly one of them would come up with the perfect solution. As Kussmaul (1995: 48) explains, this process both depended upon and produced a specific range of ‘positive’ or conducive emotions:

It could be observed in the protocols, especially during incubation, when relaxation was part of the game, that a certain amount of laughter and fooling around took place amongst the subjects if they did not find their solution at once. This, in combination with the ‘parallel-activity technique’ described above, also prevented them from being stuck up a blind alley, and promoted new ideas. Laughter can also be a sign of sympathetic approval on the part of a subject and may help to create the gratification-oriented condition postulated by neurologists.

(For a translation textbook based on the creativity-oriented pedagogy that Kussmaul imagines, see Robinson, 2012 [1997].)

Critical issues and topics, and current research

The critical issues for the study of the translator’s creativity arise out of (A2), an emerging phenomenological awareness of the ineluctable creativity that goes into even the most radically slavish translation, leading to (B), a new theorisation of translation as fundamentally and primarily creative. Given that traditionally translation has been theorised in terms of (A), the translator’s instrumentality – that is, dehumanisation or depersonalisation, and thus radical lack of creativity – the first critical issue addressed by students of the creativity in translation is the translator’s agency and subjectivity. To some extent anticipated by earlier approaches to translation as a turning or troping activity (Robinson, 1991), by the end of the 1990s translation scholars were increasingly concerned with the translator’s agency (Boase-Beier & Holman, 1999; Sorvali, 1998), subjectivity (Robinson, 2001), and ‘narratoriality’ (Baker, 2000, 2006; Hermans, 1996; Shiavi, 1996). The ruling assumption here might be reduced to a syllogism: translators are human beings; all human beings possess
agency, subjectivity, and creativity; therefore all translators possess agency, subjectivity, and creativity.

A signal contribution to this path was the post-structuralist insistence that the ‘original’ author is neither free nor original: if the source author’s originality (and thus agency) is deferred in much the same way as the translator’s, there is no room for a free/bound binary between them. As Shiavi (1996) puts it in her paper’s title, ‘There is always a teller in a tale’. To the extent that a translation is a ‘tale’ told by the translator, the translator’s style will be visible in the translation – and will provide evidence of the translator’s agency, subjectivity, and creativity (see also Perteghella & Loffredo, 2006).

Since this individualistic focus is increasingly experienced as too narrow for the so-called sociological turn in translation studies, the second critical issue addressed by scholars has been the relationship between the translator and the target audience. To a large extent anticipated by earlier approaches to translation as manipulation (Hermans, 1985) and rewriting (Lefevere, 1992), by the early 2000s scholars were increasingly interested in the rhetorical situatedness of translation in the target culture. In this, they set themselves in opposition to an earlier ‘transmission model’ of translation according to which the source text and target text were sequential ‘messages’ transmitted from a depersonalised ‘sender’ to a depersonalised ‘receptor’: the sender was normatively the source author, but relieved of all human desires and so on, the receptor was the target reader – and the translator was squeezed onto the diagram awkwardly somewhere in the middle.

In the new model, the translator becomes the target author who addresses the target reader through the translation, marshalling a recreation of the source text as the ‘quoted’ channel of his or her address. This model is constructed around the work of Grice, Bakhtin, and Peirce (Robinson, 2003, 2009, 2011, 2015a) and Sperber and Wilson (Hermans, 1996).

**Main research methods**

The four main research methods brought to bear on the translator’s creativity have been:

1. **theoretical/phenomenological**, based on introspection and the personal experience of creative translation, as well as the work of other theorists;
2. **literary-critical**, based on the close readings of the texts – source and target – generated in specific translation histories;
3. **activist**, based on ‘intervenient’ readings of specific propagandistic translation events; and

The dominant model for both (1) and (2) may be Steiner (1975); eager imitators a few years later would include Robinson (1991). A very different approach from (1) and (2), grounded explicitly in the semiotic theories of Charles Sanders Peirce, but implicitly perhaps in the Daoist call for 想要, wuwei (‘non-action’), or 與無為, wei wuwei (‘action without action’), is charted by Hartama-Heinonen (2008: 256), for whom the problem with Robinson (1997a) is that it tracks ‘a growth of the translator and, paradoxically, his or her anti-creative routines’. For Hartama-Heinonen (2008), the drudgery of checking lexical items, analysing sentences, and other routines mandated by the professional best practices of the translation marketplace has the effect of turning the translator into an uncreative drone. It is only, Hartama-Heinonen (2008: 245) believes, by excluding those ‘anti-creative routines’ from what she calls ‘abductive translation’ – surrendering passively, playfully, to the text, and so
Creativity and translation

letting the text translate itself; without interfering, without research, without editing, without language learning, ultimately without doing anything – and then by defining translation tout court as abductive, that we can free translators from this kind of mental ‘straitjacket’. (For discussion, see Robinson, 2015b.)

Over the past decade, however, the tide has apparently been shifting from a preference for (1) and (2) towards a preference for (3) and (4); see, for example, Baker (2006, 2009, 2013), Munday (2007), and Tymoczko (2010) for (3); and Pekkanen (2010) for (4). Corpus-based studies of translator style/narratoriality (4) have considerable traction with translation scholars who believe that only empirical research is reliable and therefore worthwhile, and who reject outright the introspection-based theoretical/phenomenological approaches to the translator’s creativity (1). In the middle realm between those two extremes, the clearest shift has been from literary-critical (2) to activist approaches (3).

Future directions

The ‘cultural turn’ in translation studies dominated work in the field throughout the 1990s. The ‘sociological turn’ has tended to dominate the field in the 2000s – although translation studies have been much more diversified in the new millennium, with room for the ‘creative turn’ (explored here) as well. Strikingly, ‘intervenient’ or activist studies of translation are usually grouped under the creative turn, rather than the sociological turn, despite the obvious points of contact that they have with the latter. Certainly, the overlaps between sociological/activist and creative/activist studies of translation should be increasingly explored.

In addition, while the neurological and cognitive underpinnings of translation as an event generated by the reciprocal creativity of the translator and the target reader have long been implicitly or explicitly part of the creative turn (Robinson, 1991, 2003, 2011), there are signs that those underpinnings are receiving more detailed attention (Tymoczko, 2015) – and they should continue to do so in the future.

Related topics

creativity and discourse analysis; discourses of creativity; lexical creativity; literariness; literary narrative; literary stylistics and creativity; poetry and poetics

Further reading


This is a study of ‘creativity in constraints’ in terms of target readers’ ability to ‘feel’ the translator’s invisibility or ‘absence’ from the target text in translation tasks requiring enhanced creativity.


Huang offers a theoretical study of post-structuralist notions of ‘unmaking’ as applied to translation, with the aim of rethinking the translator’s subjectivity and creativity.

This chapter reports a comparative study examining creativity in the translation of polysemous words from English into Norwegian by professional translators and bilinguals, using keystroke- and eye-movement-tracking software.


This paper offers an ideological history of thought about creativity in translation – specifically, its destabilising and transformative effects on post-colonial contexts.


Waldinger discusses Morgenstern’s compositional strategies in writing his satirical poems as possible strategies to be adapted by translators of his work, in line with Paul Kussmaul’s work on creativity in translation.

References


