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# Hypertextual Approach and Digital Creativity in Translation Studies

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*Abstract:*
*Computer technology, furthermore, offers new possibilities, not only for the Internet reading and writing of literary texts, but also for both the practice and theory of translation. In other words, it returns the ST to its original status, as an intertextual artefact which bears the marks of other texts, the traces of other texts. With the application of multimedia, we shatter the coherence of the original text to reveal not an ultimate meaning, but a multiplicity of signification which opens up the text as a site for different reading positions. In this paper I attempt to tackle the problems of translation through the form of multimedia. Three important concepts are discussed: 1. From Literalism to Creative Writing, 2. From Singularism to Pluralism, and 3. Intercultural Relationships. I explored the potential of multimedia to exercise the capacity for creative thought, as translation itself is a creative activity by its very nature. Not simply with visual elements in a design system but with conceptual elements in an information system, are worth of taking into account. The process increases one's visual and formal awareness of works of translation, and allows one to gain a deeper insight into the social, political and ideological factors which influence the production and interpretation of translation. My main concern is to find ways of representing the source poems to achieve acceptability and thus to activate reader response in the target cultural context. Ultimately, I wish to find a means of converting the reader of translations into a translator. Through hypertextual approach and digital creativity in cyber-space, I explored between presence and absence as it situates textual scenes and stories in new realms of habitation which can be described as 'third space' of existence, the place of coalescence between lived/ actual experience and its representation, the collapse of the conventional relationship between signifier and signified, between ST and TT. Beyond writing, the application of multimedia involves the additional strata of digital imagery, code, acoustic arrangement, colour design, and meta-scripting. These new complexities expand the field for literary translation as well as deconstructionist experimentation.*

*Keywords: Hypertextual approach, digital creativity, multimedia application, textual manipulation, recontextualisation, textual performability, translation studies*

## 1. Introduction

A text only comes to life as an aesthetic experience when a reader responds to it, when it serves as a stimulus in an actual communication process. The translated text is no exception. The reader's role is vital. When no equivalence can be observed in the way source-language readers react to a source text and target-language readers react to the corresponding target text, the 'training' of reader response comes into play to bridge the gap of mutual understanding. But the coexistence of different kinds of reading makes a the orisation of translation and the reading of translation all the more difficult. The relationship between an original and its translation is just as unstable as the one between a text and a reading. For the translator, meanwhile reader and writer, the original is no longer an intangible sacred source, but a resource which engenders a multiplicity of readings and writings, based on his or her own various responses. However, how can one measure the various responses and how can one create a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of readings and writings are generated from the original text? I believe that there are more ways than one of producing translations from an original. And correctness in translation is a relative term, depending on linguistical, social, political, ideological situations. What one community or historical period calls correct may be quite different from what others, or some of us today, may call correct. Multi-versions and experiments of poetry translation point out new directions for the reader to explore different dimensions of the poems and sheds light on the multifarious problems of translation activities. Computer technology, furthermore, offers new possibilities, not only for the Internet reading and writing of literary texts, but also for both the practice and theory of translation. In other words, it returns the ST to its original status, as an intersexual artifact which bears the marks of other texts, the traces of other texts. With the application of multimedia, we shatter the coherence of the original text to reveal not an ultimate meaning, but a multiplicity of signification which opens up the text as a site for different reading positions. And this open space corresponds to the open form of all texts and certainly, urges the necessary shift in the power relations between authors, readers, and translators. In this paper I attempt to tackle the problems of translation through the form of multimedia in the hypertextual environment. My main concern is to find ways of representing the source poems to achieve acceptability and thus to activate reader response in the target cultural context. Ultimately, I wish to find a means of converting the reader of translations into a translator.

The Internet environment creates a hypertextual reading situation which can electronically arrange and rearrange both ST and TT in whatever way, the designer wants. The click device and multiple windows on the screen can disperse fragments of text, insert fragments into the other texts, and supply relevant information about the text. Through these devices, we are able to connect, intercut, mix as a montage, texts, pictures, fragments, images, speech or film, and so the work in progress, the text's history of production and the process of translation can be made visible. A multivariant reading experience is cultivated so as to facilitate the reader's participation and creativity. Computer technology enacts intertextuality and contributes to the reader's involvement, which will inevitably bring about a fundamental change in the ways we read, write and translate. In the following discussion, I will point out three important concepts of translation in the hypertextual environment: 1. From Literalism to Creative Writing, 2. From Singularism to Pluralism, and 3. Intercultural Relationships.

## 2. Literalism to Creative Writing

Multimedia performance perhaps, is one of many ways to respond to the vagueness, the double gesture in the TT. The promise of interactional space is that the viewer-reader's heart and mind can span time and space to engage and connect. The original translational labyrinth can then be expanded into a multicursal setting made of many meeting points and crossing lines, with more than one start and more than one destination. I explored the potential of multimedia to exercise the capacity for creative thought, as translation itself is a creative activity by its very nature. Not simply with visual elements in a design system but with conceptual elements in an information system, are worth of taking into account. The process increases one's visual and formal awareness of works of translation, and allows one to gain a deeper insight into the social, political and ideological factors which influence the production and interpretation of translation. For the translator, the text-based world seems to be more comfortable and hard copy is familiar, secure and not replaceable. Yet on the other parallel uncontradicted way, we can still create and facilitate on-line interaction environments and multimedia productions, to continue to explore, and experiment with, different modes of presentation and different methods of translation. Cultural exchange, translation circulation, processes of communication are speeded up, as is the reader's participation. The complicating relationship between culture and identity through the web becomes problematic. For instance, one might start to ask what effect hypertext has on traditional assumptions about scholarship. And if we allow censorship and aesthetic opinion, do we loose the organic power of the Internet? A possible middle ground between quality and creative freedom needs to be further explored. Digital creativity helps us to re-discover the nature of translation, but as like as translation itself, it can hardly be theorised. Digital involvement offers an alternative way to present translation work but also throws more variables into translation activity. Some of the things the reader is encouraged to do in the process of interaction through the Internet, have been offered in the hard copy, such as wordplay, intersexual references, collaborative production of texts, and re-translating, etc. However, with the swift development of computer technology, it becomes more difficult than one can anticipate, far more complicated than just a new form of textuality, based on a discursive need. The cyber-space has become an open place, an open form so that the TT is subject to alteration through interaction. The TT is produced as a mode of creative writing, and cannot resist the tendency towards pluralism. In this way, on-line writing appears to be far more ambitious than a new treatment of literature. The artificial reproduction of traditional literary forms mocks the fallacy of originality and pure imitation. The reader can be an innovator of translatorly texts. Giovanna (2011) points out the textual experimentation with new ways of writing or rewriting particularly in cyber-space makes possible the textual invention of digital computing with various media so as to provide the cyber-reading with a new significance.

Furthermore, the proposition that the translator creates the original is in fact not new at all. Luo (2010) states that in translation, the structure and expressive habit are different between two languages; TT therefore needs to be adjusted, in order to gain more readability. However, during the process of adjustment, very often, creative input comes and plays an important role to re-share or re-create the text itself. One might derive the idea from the deconstructionist to undermine the notion of authorship. It is argued that original texts are constantly being rewritten in the present and each reading or translation reconstructs the source text. From this point of view, each translation is a creation and the translator a creative writer. Clive Scott asserts that "the translator must therefore use the medium which most permits his own authenticity, and the multi-dimensionality of the contemporary mind, to express themselves" (Scott 2000: 54). Translation, therefore, can be considered a kind of 'extension' of the ST. Here I mean by 'extension' something entirely different from translation as a copy or imitation. For me, 'extension' is very different notion from interpretation. Interpretation tends to return us to aspects of equivalence. Translation, as Scott has pointed out, is the writing of a contemporary mind, and also a continuation of the impulses latent in an original. A TT then is a hybrid product; part of it refers back to the ST while other parts reveal the translator's input and the ST's 'futurity'.

In addition, the case for introducing hypertext into translation presentation is that it might enable the reader to manipulate information and concepts in ways which make use of graphic imagery and visual modes of thinking. In other words, the process of inputting might extend to the side of the reader. Translation, in its own way, displays choice, makes it public, and crucially, invites the participation of the reader. Therefore, the relationship between the TT and the ST is not a hierarchical one- neither should submit to the other- but a harmonious one. Each complements the other, supplements the other, while they can equally survive without each other. Hypertext technology is, perhaps, one of the many forms which make possible the in-between where ST, TT, author, translator and reader can all meet together. It is not only a meta-textual area, but also a meta-cultural area, which neither the ST nor the TT could be realised on its own. With the advent of an electronic interactive environment, opportunities are available for the reader to develop approaches to textual manipulation and presentation which can draw upon non-linear modes of thinking. And this is particularly helpful

in poetry writing and translating. The hypertext version of translation plots multiple pathways by reproducing the translator's mental map during the translation process. The use of such technology in the context of Translation Studies allows the reader to engage in, and develop, his own process of textual experience. These educational aims and creative writing skills are pursued through media which are very different from the text-based linear mode of writing. The TT in its hypertextual version establishes links between editing, re-making, intercutting, quoting, and commenting. It makes the TT and other possible re-creations coexistent with each other so as to undermine the power relations between the author, the translator and the reader, to liberate cultures from hermetically sealed isolations, and to acknowledge the recontextualisation of a text. Context is significant to language expression, in understanding and conveying the meaning of authors. The hypertextual approach does not ask to be highly computerised, but in the totality it accumulates transitory effects, that is, as a pathway. Besides, all the texts pasted on the site are as those in hard copy, require good textual quality by the reader. It is a mode of utterance motivated by the anti-linear, the acoustic, the visual or documentation-dealing, i.e. a well-structured code. Applying multimedia TT, people can swiftly enter into the textual world, and truthfully experience the meaning of ST (Wang, 2009; Ohlander & Chuang, 2009). The characteristic of animated hypertextual TT is having readers experience through their senses by watching and listening. This can eventually assist readers to re-create the textual meaning on their own.

In the traditional form of hard copy, meaning and image are projected by printed words; in the hypertextual version, the words are published in cyber-space where performance is likely to happen and react if one wishes. In comparison with hard-copy translation, the invention of digital multimedia text can meet more reader's needs. In recent years, the strategy of employing images and language is to create a "visuality" and it has become a tendency in an authentic world (Mao, 2006). Audiomedial (later 'multimedial') texts are not to be read silently but to be more engaged with the actual viewer-reader and be more dependent on non-verbal media. Both acoustic and visual expressions reach their intended audience (Snell-Hornby, 2007). Mayer and Moreno (2002: 88) indicate that animation refers to "simulated motion picture depicting movement of drawn (or simulated) objects. An animated text can certainly help to deliver the textual imagery more powerfully and effectively. Besides, in the electronic world, the boundaries of time and space leak away. With the application of multimedia, textual movement enjoys much greater freedom, and also exploits possible transmutability more uninhibitedly. Placing ST, word-for-word, TT, and other versions on the same continuum, at the parallel ends of hyperlinks, always provokes a dialogic relationship between them. Suffice it to say, an even more fruitful relationship is set to develop between theoretical research and practical presentation in Translation Studies on the one hand, and the characteristics of hypertext on the other. To sum up, the hyper textual environment helps us to re-think what translation can do, what ends it can serve, how it can improve our understanding of different cultures, how different reading modes can influence the formation of textual meaning, and what the translator needs to do to justify his part in the process, as a creative writer.

### 3. Singularism to Pluralism

A detailed investigation of these factors in the translator's re-creation and in the translation phenomenon, would probably reveal that there is no generally acceptable, definable, and operational concept of translation. We can analyse a TT from the standpoints of the translator's aims, obligations, elective affinities, strategies and approaches, and also from the perspectives of goal-oriented action, reader-oriented communication, process-oriented activity and power-oriented manipulation. However, we can hardly draw any conclusions about the specific criteria we should adopt. And it is therefore necessary to distinguish between one translator and the next, between one TT and another (even with the same ST), and between one translation situation and the next. This should allow us to confront a translation not only with its ST but also with other relevant texts, with other relevant extra-linguistic elements. Instead of measuring variance and invariance, the exploration of forms and expressions are more significant, in particular, in terms of poetic translation. Nevertheless, in poetic translation, pursuit of equivalence is in vain as the so-called equivalence is an illusion. Zheng and Yu (2007) point out the three major manipulated factors in translation and they are translator, text and target culture. Translation very often concentrates on how to recreate the relationship of the ST and TT according to form and content, and translators have disputed about literal or free translation (Reiss, 2014). And yet, literal and free translation approaches are deficient in catering to the needs of real translation situations. Equivalent translation principles have provided some kind of guidelines but again during the actual translation process, they are of little help, as the theorists fail to see that a translation text is embedded within its own network of both source and target cultures (Venuti, 2012). Therefore, what we need to do and can do is not to translate to satisfy the requirements of these guidelines or rules but to find compensation to supplement the insufficiency of the translated text. A famous comment made by Robert Frost is quoted as follows: "You've often heard me say- perhaps too often- that poetry is what is lost in translation. It is also what is lost in interpretation" (Untermeyer 1964: 18). Translating a poem is not to translate the interpretation but to translate one's own response to the poem. Only by doing so, translator can really show his homage to the ST and can create a great work with all possibilities of 'compensating' what is lost. Awareness of the need for multi-version, multi-translation, may be common to many translators, but the actual achievement largely depends on a gradual change in the criticism of translation practice. In other words, a more open-minded working environment makes possible the translator's visibility and an understanding of his accomplishments.

Besides, because ST cannot be regarded as an unchanging unified essence, the translator can never reconstruct the text objectively. It always involves subjective responses which vary from one period to the next, from person to person. His translations, indeed, highlight a significant change from singularism to pluralism, from a single authorised resolution to pluralistic and proliferating hybridity. Meanings are slippery, reminding us that neither the original writer,

nor the translator can ever be totally in control. This noteworthy conception has the advantage of making possible the reconstructing the process of translation and thus the process of creation. And it contributes to the recognition that reading is a creative activity, too. Neither ST nor TT can be reduced to a unified, and easily identifiable, conceptual core, nor can the reader's version.

Thus, translation can never be treated as a formal procedure of substitution on the basis of a simple one-to-one correspondence. Instead, ST and TT stand in a one-to-many relation. And this confirms the relevance of applying multimedia and hypertext in translator performance. We must devote more attention to experimental situations in which the process of choice can be tracked, in which memory for information can be assessed, and in which individual differences can be systematically explored. During the process of making the digitalized version of my translated work, I realised that it is possible to arrive at a strategy for resolving at least some of the difficulties inherent in the source language and source culture. In Internet, my published translated texts fully enjoy the way of promoting themselves through a single entity combining many different types of media, related documents and multi-versions. To achieve this, one must enter into the correlative dynamic of cyber-space. One may not have to face the dilemma involved in understanding the original in its own context while writing for a readership that shares neither the context nor the assumed knowledge, because the alternative translation, or related information, can be attached by hyperlinks. The readership of the translation is looking at a different horizon of understanding, not the one within which either the ST or the TT operates. It is the new horizon of cyber-culture in which the viewer-reader's reading habits, selections and demands are different from these in both cultures. It is possible to make both the source and target horizons overlap in a third cyber-culture. An increased understanding can be obtained by viewing proliferating discourses and multiplied versions. Multiple meanings in a text may still necessitate a literary juggling between languages but alternatives of presentation are given and pathways of translation are revealed. Thus we can acquire insights, not into how translators perform in general but into how a translator performs a specific text with all its inherent array of complex problems. Thus any text in the hypertextual environment is a meta-text, a form of meta-communication. All types of processing, all manipulations of the ST, whether by authors, readers, critics or translators, can be made available by clicking the links. The translated texts with digitalized format in cyber-space become meta-texts, because they speak other texts, other textual events, other criticism or commentary or glossing. The difference here is that the meta-texts speak not by interpretation or analysis but by performance and interaction. A text's multiple meanings are unfolded to celebrate its pluralism, and translations stand reborn as different forms of rewriting. Susan Bassnett particularly stresses on the idea of rewriting, suggesting that:

> Perhaps this is another area in which different forms of rewriting need to cooperate: we could imagine the translated text, translated in a way that also appeals to the non-professional reader, preceded by a long introduction which sets out to show how the original text works on its own terms, within its own grid, rather than to tell readers only what it is 'like' or even 'most like' in their own cultures. This kind of attempt is most likely to bring us up against the limits of translation, a necessary confrontation, for without such a challenge, how else are we ever to overcome such limits and move on? (1998:11)

The idea of rewriting gives us a new perspective to view any TT as a dynamic plural being; with that the ST is no longer the only source, but a kind of reference to construct a metaphorical textual being, perhaps bearing more originality of the ST in the target cyber-culture.

## 4. Intercultural Relationships

The idea that a text is an interactive process identifies Translation Studies as an interdisciplinarity discipline and predicts the direction of its potential development in the Internet. The cross-cultural is established by computer technology and this exhibits a more compatible and acceptable diversity. Translation is not only the bridge but also the form of its embodiment. Translation cannot deny its social, cultural, and cross-cultural characteristics by claiming that it is a pure art; referring to translation as an art does not fundamentally change its status as a cross-cultural, cross-linguistic, now cross-media, cross-spatial, text-producing (or multi-text-producing) activity. Translation is a process of text-induced text and also text-generated text production, in the electronic context.

In addition, application of multimedia is going to extend the researcher's horizon to the interaction between the canonised central sectors of the cultural domain and less prestigious, more peripheral areas. Through hypertext, the information is shared and the translator can open up his black box to the reader, if he wishes. It establishes a new culture of its own, whether we can call it interculturality, hyperculturality, multiculturality or cyber-culture, and it is not to be confused with the fact that many cultures can be found within the one society or political unit, nor with the fact that things can move, can be imported or exported, from one culture to another. The basic idea of forming a new culture through the Internet can be represented graphically as follows, where this cyber-culture is assumed to be operative in the overlaps of Culture 1, Culture 2, Culture 3, Culture 4, and Culture 5:
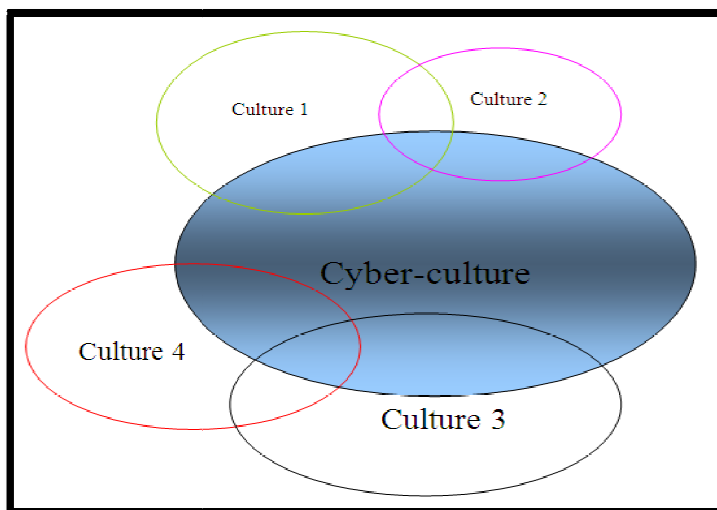
*Figure 1: Cyber-Culture 1*

As one can see, I have smuggled a symbolic translator into the overlapping space where different cultures encounter each other. This is only a hypothesis, not a definition. For the moment, though, the figure  merely posits that there are three types of interactions on the overlapped areas. The real situation can be more complicated than this figure . First, from the area where different cultures influence each other, a mutual space is created in which one might find, say, hyper-language (a kind of electronic equivalent of pidgin) uses, such as the valid composition of half native-half foreign words. In the second type of overlap, all the cultures are drawn into the vortex of the cyber-culture by means of Internet website, international chat-room and e-commerce. A kind of unified way of thinking and behaving develops, where different sites can present their specific cultural characteristics but also manage to communicate with others at any time from any where. The third type is the most fascinating and complicated. Cultures talk to each other in cyber-space, so the intercultural space is expanded to integrate the new computer technology shared. It is, indeed, a real fulfilment of globalisation and the translator plays an active role as a bridge, and as a remover of obstacles. In fact, the interaction of the third space is an expanding one. Frequently, it is not the second overlap introducing the third one but rather the other way round. Cyber-culture brings strange cultures together and helps them to understand each other. The real situation should be drawn like this:
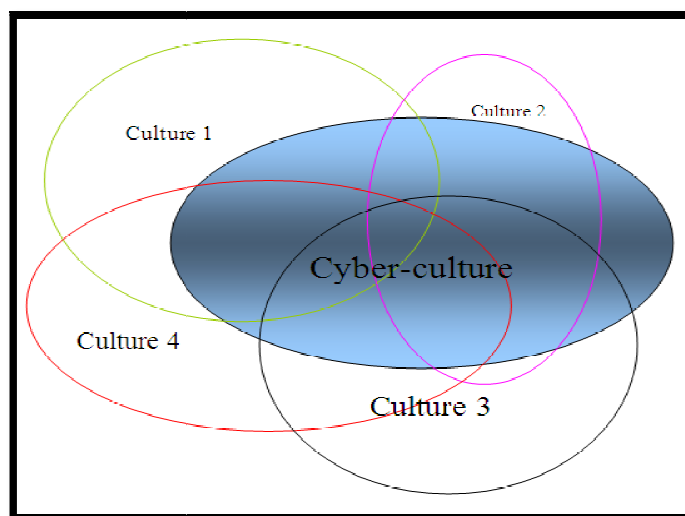


*Figure 2: Cyber-Culture 2*

Presumably, the overlapping areas in the above figure can and should count more than twice, at least, once as a part of mutual cultural interflow, twice as their relationship in the cyber-culture and perhaps third time as their individual technological development requiring the encounter with other cultures. As one can foresee that the third type of overlapping, as shown in the central area, is likely to grow faster and larger, involving more and more interactions between different cultures. And as we have already mentioned, translators are active catalysts in this process. They tend not to share the same linguistic horizon as the target readers and so they cannot be circumscribed, along with everyone else, in an independent target culture. They used to be described as someone in-between but they are more than that: they are also doing the shaping, forming and producing jobs. The purpose of defining an intercultural cyber-space is to call

intersections between cultures, and yet in such a way that one can start to indicate several avenues of experimentation. And this experimental intervention will promote textual instability; even when we work with a text that we think has been established, we still cannot assume that the text is stable.

This instability draws us to discover cyber-space and cyber-space, in turn, helps us to re-discover the nature of translation and writing. Through Internet, I explored between presence and absence as it situates textual scenes and stories in new realms of habitation which can be described as 'third space' of existence, the place of coalescence between lived/ actual experience and its representation, the collapse of the conventional relationship between signifier and signified, between ST and TT. Perhaps, texts are not only written to convey meaning but to enact meaning; meaning goes everywhere for those who understand, or nowhere for those who do not. Notional spaces remain in perpetual attendance. In translation studies, the textual performability should be more encouraged. Bhabha (1994) asserts that 'translation is the performative nature of cultural communication.' I believe that both in subject matter as well as in form, there are crossovers between the strategies and ideologies of non-linear poetry and typographic design, and that is where the performability can come to play. Through Internet, we can begin to think how writing can negotiate space in such a way that this 'writing space' becomes a territory invested with voices, as well as a formally inscribed and articulated site. I want to make the translated texts, structurally and textually, look like architectural plans so that my reader can trace the changes I have made through different versions and designs. I hope all this will open up further issues in the relationship between translation and creative writing, questions of authorship, appropriation, citation, quotation, intercutting and various forms of translation, and also the relationship between the static mode of the book and the more dynamic mode of the web. Beyond writing, the application of multimedia involves the additional strata of digital imagery, code, acoustic arrangement, colour design, and meta-scripting. These new complexities expand the field for literary translation as well as deconstructionist experimentation.

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