Heidrun Gerzymisch

Hybridity and Translation

Abstract *

The article is an extended version of my presentation at the 2022 ATRC Symposium on Hybridity: Text.Translation.Teaching and discusses the problem of translating *hybrid* texts from a methodological point of view. The objective is to highlight the importance of *transparency* of *individual* perception categories (*transparent subjectivity*) and to relate them to text-analytic tools when translating *hybrid* texts. This is shown by describing: (1) how identified *hybrid* elements are abstracted to form *aspects* of text continuity (*atomistic* analysis) which may subsequently connect and interact (*hol-atomistic* dimension) with other *hybrid* or non-*hybrid* text elements in the process of constituting text *coherence;* (2) how such *hybrid* elements are interrelated with subjectively perceived *individual hypotheses* to form *coherent* threads or strings of a textual unit as *hybrid isotopies,* and (3) how the resulting *hybrid isotopies* are connected and integrated as integral parts of text, showing the *coherence-establishing individual hypotheses* to make up a *coherent* whole text.

Making *individual hypotheses transparent* for readers and translators in their *coherence-establishing* function as *transparent subjectivity* is illustrated by establishing *hybrid isotopies* in a sample *hybrid* lyrical text. Following a brief account of the underlying linguistic concepts, a translation-specific *hybridity* definition is offered (section 1) and applied to pre-translational analyses on different text layers (section 2). It is shown that while a purely linguistic extrastructuralism definition may capture isolated *hybrid* elements *atomistically*, integrating textual and knowledge-based *holistic* and *hol-atomistic* dimensions plus *individual hypotheses* need to be considered when a *hybrid* text is to be perceived as a *coherent* 'whole' and translated as such (sections 3 and 4).

*Hybridity and article-specific concepts are given in italics (glossary cf. Gerzymisch-Arbogast/Mudersbach 1998:338-344).

Overview

0   Introduction

Traditionally, hybrid texts and translations are difficult to understand because they often show a mixture of seemingly 'negative' linguistic features; interferences, unconventional lexis and syntax, a lack of cohesion and therefore a (seemingly) lack of coherence. It is often the general standing and popularity of the authors that makes us enjoy and appreciate the complex hybridity of texts. Typical examples are American minority literature (e.g. 'Black English') and such successful writers' hybrid instances as Lewis Carrol's Jabberwocky, Umberto Eco's Salvatore in the Name of the Rose, Christine Brooke's Between, or Ingeborg Bachmann's Simultan. As average readers, we often lack the multilingual prerequisites for understanding hybridity`s ambience and flair and appreciate the complex translation effort – a typical problem for publishers and translators alike: The readership is small and therefore the 'exotic' effort does not pay off economically. Interesting though that in the discussion of Gorman's translation of her poem at US President Biden's inauguration[1], the issue focused on whether a non-Black translator could 'understand' the original text 'properly' because of the implied culturally sensitive issues. Apart from the problem of what 'understanding' here means, the discussion raises a notorious dilemma for all translators alike: the codex to only translate into one's native language usually implies a 'limited' reception competence of foreign-language intricacies in the original, the only solution being team co-biligual translation or self-translations of bilinguals, most famously, of course, Samuel Beckett's bilingual versions (on the problem of self-translation see Munson 2007).

Looking at the translation-specific literature on hybridity, post-colonial works, most famously Bhabba 1994 (recently Bakhov 2021) have given rise to a growing interest in the underlying factors of hybridity such as migration, cultural mixing, and/or a dividedness of identity with translations of cultural hybridity resembling 'a wandering of errance, a kind of permanent exile' (Homi K. Bhabba 1994). We, as standard readers, are not sufficiently experienced in errance and exile, and thus often lack the appreciation for multilingual, culturally diverse, and emotionally complex backgrounds to value the effort, while publishers are 'not amused' at a readership so small and as a result are skeptical when it comes to publishing hybrid authors and their works.

While popular socio-linguistic translation literature offers insight and explains hybridity as a cultural and migration phenomenon, it is not concerned with and therefore does not offer systematic methodologies for (1) the functional interplay of hybrid and non-hybrid interdependencies on different layers of text and (2) the monitoring of functional progress in the translation process when constituting coherence of a 'text as a whole'. Failure to realize the multiple interdependencies of hybridity may, however, result in inconsistencies, misrepresentations and dysfunctional translations as is shown in Kembou (2019). When translating hybrid texts, we therefore suggest to apply 1) a translation-specific, operationalizeable, notion of hybridity, 2) multi-level procedural text analysis tools and methodologies, and proceed from 3) a focused individual translation purpose with priority rankings and weighted decision-making as performance control procedures of ongoing progress of interrelationships between text-internal hybrid and non-hybrid as well as text-external individual sense-constituting hypotheses.

The present article will illustrate this complex interplay by establishing coherence via an atomistic and hol-atomistic analysis, combining them with their implicit hybrid and non-hybrid interrelationships and illustrate the constitution of a hol-atomistic isotopy as a 'tertium comparationis' and blueprint for an isotopy-invariant (isomorphic) hybrid translation. We will proceed from atomistically identified hybrid elements on a syntagma level and subsequently complement them with text-specific and general world/cultural knowledge to develop into a hol-atomistic 'thread of discourse' as isotopy, including holistic features such as inferences as individual hypotheses.