

6 IATIS Regional Workshop

Retracing the History of Literary Translation: New Areas and Methods of Research in the Polish Context

Kraków, Poland, 27-29 Sept. 2017

REPORT

This is a summary of the preparation and organizational side of the workshop; for details of the actual course of the event, please consult the workshop programme. Further information, including the book of abstracts, can also be obtained at the workshop website: <https://iatisworkshop.wordpress.com>

1. Rationale

The main aim of the workshop was to bring together scholars interested in the history of literary translation in Poland/in the Polish context, with a view to sharing experience and expertise, looking critically at existing research models and methodologies, and thinking about the future of this avenue of research in our region. The organizers felt that such a meeting is necessary to trigger a fruitful exchange among scholars from different institutions, working on different linguistic/cultural areas and historical periods. So far, the history of literary translation, especially in its various contexts and entanglements (cultural, social, political), has been under-researched in Poland, especially in comparison to our strong structuralist and post-structuralist tradition of comparative, language-oriented studies of literary translation. The idea of the workshop was to consolidate the academic environment, preparing ground for future initiatives, such as writing a multi-volume history of literary translation in Poland, which would be the first project of that kind.

2. Organizers

The workshop was organized under the auspices of IATIS by the Department of Polish Studies of the Jagiellonian University in Kraków (with its newly established research unit, Centre for Translation Studies) and the Department of Polish and Classical Studies of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, two leading departments of Polish Studies allied within the framework of the Research Consortium in the Humanities.

The event was hosted by the Kraków university, and prepared by a team of seven organizers under the leadership of Magda Heydel, head of the JU Centre for Translation Studies.

Members of the organizing committee jointly participated in developing the concept of the workshop, preparing content for the website, planning the budget, evaluating submissions, and planning the programme. Apart from that, the following division of roles and responsibilities crystallized:

3 CFP, Submissions, Pre-workshop Arrangements

The CFP was published on IATIS and workshop websites, distributed through newsletters and sent to language/translation departments across the country.

Submissions were first evaluated by the Polish organizing team, and then sent with notes/recommendations for review to IATIS Regional Workshop Committee.

Ca. 20% of abstracts were rejected, and further 25% were sent back for revision. In one case, this resulted in an entirely new proposal (change of topic). All revised abstracts were ultimately accepted. Also the authors of abstracts accepted without revisions received comments and suggestions for improvement.

Both keynote speakers and regular participants were asked to select from their reference literature key texts that other workshop participants might find helpful. Most of these texts were shared via Dropbox (due to copyright regulations, we could not put them on our website). This ‘reading room’, whose aim was to prepare some common ground for workshop discussion, was made available three weeks ahead of the workshop together with our book of abstracts.

4. Workshop Evaluation

Over the course of three days, roughly from 9 am to 5 pm, we have heard three keynote lectures (from Lieven D’hulst, Matthew Reynolds and Susan Bassnett) and twenty-five participant papers. The papers were organized into chaired panels, with a discussion at the end of each panel. The total number of attendees (keynote speakers, invited chairs, presenting and non-presenting participants, organizers) was about 40-45, varying from day to day.

Positives

- On the organizational level, we were very happy that all keynote lectures and participant papers were delivered; there were no changes to the schedule. No technical problems occurred, whether with laptop/projector, simultaneous conference equipment or WiFi.
- The number of participants was, in our view, optimal – large enough to ensure diversity of backgrounds and approaches, and small enough to facilitate exchange and create a friendly, casual atmosphere (the conference room with one large 0-shaped table rather than an auditorium-like arrangement certainly played a role here, too).
- Presentations varied in range and topic, from large research projects to small case studies, from bibliographical data and statistics to portraits of human translators or in-depth translation analyses. We had both experienced scholars and PhD students, working in different institutional environments, also abroad (Oxford, Dublin and Glasgow).
- We were happy to have avoided the usual dominance of representatives of English Studies (notwithstanding the fact that six out of seven members of the organizing team work in the area of English-Polish transfer). There was a strong representation of French and Italian, other language/culture areas included Classical Greek, Spanish, Brazilian Portuguese, Russian and Ukrainian.
- Almost half of the presentations (12 out of 25) were delivered in Polish, which proved our assumption that many speakers would not feel comfortable presenting in English, which in some cases was their fourth/fifth language. All these presentations were simultaneously interpreted into English by a team of professional interpreters with a background in TS, so that our keynote speakers could fully participate in discussion. Polish-into-English

interpretation was not necessary, although we were prepared to provide it if need be. This bilingual nature of the event, a sign of respect for ‘smaller’ languages, earned us much praise from many participants, although it must be said that it was a costly affair, interpreting equipment and fees constituting ca. 25% of our budget.

Areas for improvement

- The only serious discrepancy between plan and reality was that we had very few submissions from non-presenting participants, who were expected to pay the same fee as presenters; we were too optimistic thinking that scholars would want to participate at their own cost; Polish university do not usually cover what they call ‘passive’ participation, and they certainly do not support PhD students in this respect, which is a systemic problem;
- We feel that while the participant make-up was diverse, German and Russian/Slavic studies were underrepresented;
- Even though it was our priority to secure enough time for discussions, the QA sessions always extended into coffee breaks; perhaps an extra day for group seminars (10-15 persons) would be a good idea, so that particular problems could be discussed in a more focused and consequential matter, making the event more of a workshop than a conference;
- Although participants appreciated our ‘reading room’ (as mentioned in feedback emails), there were few references to suggested reading throughout workshop discussions; however, we are sure that many researchers will find these resources useful in the future.

5. Summary

Two interrelated avenues of prospective collaborative research into history of literary translation have arisen in the course of the workshop. The first one situates itself at the intersection of translation studies, translator studies and genetic criticism, and concerns locating and investigating translator archives, and preparing a dictionary/encyclopaedia of Polish translators through history. The second one concerns a large-scale research project: writing a history of literary translation in Poland, in the vein of similar initiatives carried out in France, the Low Countries (in preparation) and elsewhere. Having listened to all presentations (we are particularly grateful for their active participation throughout the workshop), the keynote speakers agreed that time is ripe and Polish researchers ready for such an enterprise. Professor D’hulst kindly offered to assist us in this project as an external advisor.

As for tangible results of the meeting in nearer future, we want to prepare an English-language edited volume for Routledge (subject to further arrangements) and/or publish a selection of papers in Polish in *Przekładaniec: A Journal of Translation Studies* (editor-in-chief: Magda Heydel).

On the whole, the 6th IATIS Regional Workshop can be considered a success, on both the organizational (and financial) level and, more importantly, in terms of its expected impact on the development of research on literary translation in the Polish context.

Written by Zofia Ziemann, authorized by Magda Heydel