THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSLATION
THEORIES IN EUROPE

*Radegundis Stolze**

Resumo: Este artigo trata do desenvolvimento dos estudos da tradução na Europa, no século XX. O maior enfoque está na mudança da perspectiva de pesquisa, da comparação entre línguas para a confrontação de textos e da focalização da tradução como atividade pragmática para a investigação do pensamento do tradutor (perspectiva cognitiva). Paralelamente à discussão dos conceitos teóricos, comenta-se também o desenvolvimento institucional dos estudos da tradução.

Palavras-chave: Estudos da tradução; Desconstrução; Semiótica; Hermenêutica.

Zusammenfassung: Der vorliegende Aufsatz behandelt die Entwicklung der europäischen Übersetzungswissenschaft im 20. Jahrhundert. Der Schwerpunkt liegt auf dem Wandel der Forschungsperspektive vom Vergleich einzelner Sprachen hin zur Gegenüberstellung von Texten und von der Betonung des Handlungscharakters der Übersetzung hin zur Untersuchung des übersetzerischen Denkens (kognitive Perspektive). Parallel zur Diskussion theoretischer Konzepte, ist auch die institutionelle Entwicklung der Übersetzungswissenschaft Gegenstand der Untersuchung.

Stichwörter: Übersetzungswissenschaft; Dekonstruktion; Semiotik; Hermeneutik.

Keywords: Translation studies; Deconstruction; Semiotics; Hermeneutics.

0.   When talking on this topic we must first determine what we mean by *translation theories*. A **theory** is a model for description of an activity or an object in order to better understand its real substance

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or structure. A **theory of translation** may be a reflection on one's own practice of translation, or it may be a model to direct the translation procedure for didactic purposes or in a professional situation. Several theories have been developed, however, and sometimes the same things have been repeated with different terminology.

1. Early reflections on how to translate were given by ancient translators who defended their **practice** against criticism and explained their solutions. They said it is better to render the sense of a message in a "free" translation than to keep literally to the source text structure in a so-called "true" translation. On the other hand the Holy Scriptures had to be translated literally since the word order was regarded as a divine mystery. This tension between the two methods of "free translation" and "true translation" lasted for centuries. The defenders of the true translation affirmed that only this form would make the author's voice audible.

The struggle in the theoretical debate finally created the need for clear rules of translation. Theory was originally deduced from practice, as its foundation and motivation, as the comments on translation document the first translators' difficulties, but this was not yet a real translation theory. Numerous examples keep repeating the old alternative of true or free translation, and in language courses in school until today the students have been taught to translate "as literally as possible and as free as necessary". But this is a circle.

2. In the 19th century the theoretical discussion took on new impetus. Until that time only the translation of the Holy Scriptures and of classic literature had been considered a difficult work worth of theoretical consideration. The simple translations of correspondence or of technical and commercial texts in international communication were not subject to theoretical reflection. The rule had always been to make the author's voice audible, that is, to follow the **ideal of a true translation**. German Romanticism had formulated a certain under-

standing of the "spirit of a language". A classic text, a piece of art, is the external appearance of a nation's spirit. Writing is identical to thinking, says Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835). A word is the sign of a concept, and in all languages the concepts are different. Then indeed translation is not really possible. What one can only do is to "move the reader towards the author", i.e. to make a true but a strange translation, as Friedrich Schleiermacher (1764-1837), a contemporary of Humboldt, said.

The idea of a language as the expression of a nation's spirit is later taken up by B. Lee WHORF, who studied Indian languages, and by Leo WEISGERBER, who wrote about *"The strength of the German language"*. Comparisons between different languages focus on the so-called "characteristic" words which are untranslatable, for instance *gemütlich, witzig, Innerlichkeit, Weltschmerz, Gestalt, esprit, génie, savoir vivre, charme; saudade; gentleman, fairness* and others.

3. Thinking and speaking is identical, and thus translation of a language is not possible, since you cannot transfer the original meaning in another world of thinking. This conception was particularly defended by the poet Walter BENJAMIN (1892-1940), who, in his reflection on translations, looked at the mysterious, the **untranslatable parts of a text**. He says that a piece of art is totally independent from the reception: "No poem is aimed for the reader, no picture is for the viewer, no symphony is for the audience." So the form is more important than the content, and Benjamin calls for true translations that imitate the original's form. But this is an utopia.

Interestingly enough this focusing on the form is later taken-up in a postmodern theory of literary translation that is **deconstruction**, initiated but Jacques DERRIDA and the American Paul DE MAN. They said that every reading of a text gives a new different understanding. The meaning of words is "floating", and therefore you can never fix a "real" meaning of a text. There cannot be a model translation, since the meaning of words is "undecidable". In traditional literary analy-

sis, the sense of texts has often been reduced to "the author's intention". Now this intention or clear understanding is "deconstructed" with reference to certain words that might create different meanings in the reader's mind. The translator concentrates on single words that may indeed be understood differently and thus change the meaning of the text. For a theory of translation this is rather problematic. The scholars' focus is on the differences between the languages and the untranslatable rest in translations.

4.   On the other hand, translations have always been accomplished and cannot be totally impossible. There is a completely different approach to the question of translation when you see the language not as the expression of a nation's spirit but merely as a **means of communication**. This conception was initiated during the time of rationalism where the man's reason was taken as the source of knowledge. The way of thinking is the same in all people, and the different languages simply serve to express the thoughts. Language is a universal instrument of reason and it is therefore seen as a reasonable structure. In mediaeval times Latin was given the status of a universal language, first in the ecclesiastic circles, then among scholars and scientists.

The logical analysis of language as a system of signs was introduced by modern Linguistics in our century. As a systematic description of languages, it reaches its object only indirectly as an abstract from empirical utterances. SAUSSURE's *Cours de linguistique générale* was very important here. He distinguished two levels of analysis: the object of linguistics is the language system *(langue)* as an inventory of words and grammar rules for their interconnection. This varies from the real speech *(parole)* of which it is an abstraction. Words have a *significant form* and a content, a *signified meaning*. The unity shall not be dissolved, since this would destroy the character of the linguistic sign. These signs are also arbitrary, not induced by the real object they are signifying. (The denomination of the *sun* in the sky for instance is different in all languages even though the object is the same.)

The concept of general logical forms at the base of all languages led to the Analysis of Universals: grammar universals are *case & number, time, subject & object, singular & plural*, etc. Phonology studies the phonetic part of the languages and compares the different combinations.

Then of course one may also look for semantic universals, and you find categories like *organic & inorganic, masculine & feminine, dimensionality, vertical & horizontal*, etc. Structural Semantics analyzes the meaning of words by distinctive features which differentiate, for example, the objects on which ons sits down: *chair, seat, sofa,* or adjectives of *temperature, colors* and so on.

Here we may see a direct link to the construction of terminology, as Georges MOUNIN did. He discussed the consequences of the Theory of Universals with regard to the possibility of translation. In the area of science he sees the absolute translatability in view of objects of universal validity. Scientific and technical translation should be accomplished automatically, when terminology follows the principle: *Only one word for one object.*

5.   This idea was then taken up by Erwin KOSCHMIEDER who defined: "Translation means to find the meaning of the source language sign and then to search for the target language sign for the same meaning."

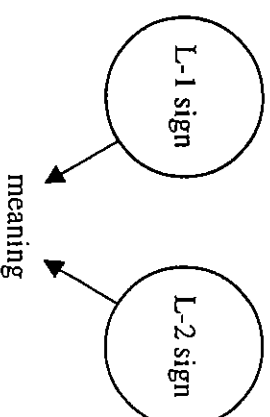L-1 sign   L-2 sign

meaning

Fig. 1: KOSCHMIEDER's model of translation

In this we have a **first model of translation** showing the basic components of the translation relationship. The same meaning is the *tertium comparationis* between the source and target language. This universal category of **the same meaning** is the guarantee for translatability. Language is no longer a mythological subject of wonder, but may be analyzed. This has initiated some important modern theories of translation.

6. In the sense of Rationalism and Universals Theory, linguistic concepts treated only scientific texts. All literature was expressly excluded from linguistic discussion. The initiative for the scientific analysis of translation came from the research into Machine Translation right after World War II. The theory of translation was used as an assistant discipline for the target of formalizing of language to make texts translatable by computers. Though the target of Fully Automatic High Quality Translation has not yet been reached even today, many useful applications have since been introduced.

In this theoretical framework the Leipzig Translation School defined the "science of translation" as part of linguistics and called it "*Translationslinguistik*". Translation was defined as a "special form of the communication" where a message is encoded by a sender, sent through a channel and then decoded by the receiver. Translation is a special case of that model: there must be *code-switching* between sender and receiver who speak different codes or languages. So the translator or the computer is the "*code-switcher*". The message remains identical.
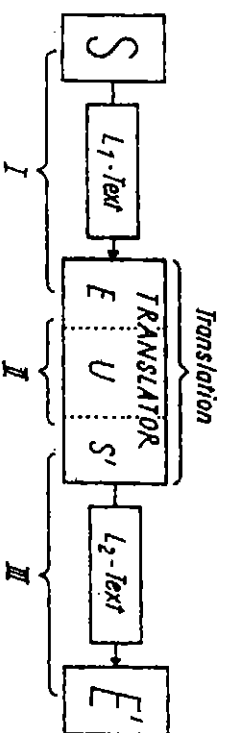

Fig. 2: Translation as code-switching

This logic of an identical message being preserved in translation creates the "translation basic problem" of looking for "equivalents". There are differences between the languages, and the substitution of source text material by target text material, as CATFORD puts it, causes some problems.

The task of the linguistic Science of Translation is then defined as a "description of the **relationships of equivalence** between languages" on the system level (*langue*). Otto KADE stressed four kinds of "potential equivalents", such as *one-to-one* (total equivalence), *one-to-many* (facultative equivalence), *one-to-part* (approximate equivalence), *one-to-zero* (non-equivalence, a gap). This definition regards individual words and is later extended by Contrastive Linguistics and Lexicography.

7. Wolfram WILSS builds on this basis and goes one step further. He seeks a didactic rule of teaching the **translation process**, and claims that the Science of Translation should develop procedures of transferring the source text meaning into the target text. The single factors of this transfer should be integrated into a logical model of description for evaluation in translation theories and didactic application for a language pair. The goal is the development of a translation method as a problem-solving activity corresponding to certain text genres.

The communication act of translating is seen as a **transfer procedure** which may be analyzed in its individual factors. The transfer should be a quasi automatic activity in the translator's mind. WILSS calls this *Übersetzungsfertigkeit* (ability to translate). Cognitive schemes should guide standard behavior and enable effective learning techniques. Translation teaching may train the routines. This could render translation quicker, as is wanted in the modern hectic times. WILSS states that literal translation as a direct imitative transfer is easier since it does not require difficult thinking byways.

8.   The problem of information transfer between two languages has led to the discipline of *Stylistique comparée*, which analyzes the transfer in a particular language pair. There are among others *Comparative Studies of French and English* (VINAY/DARBELNET).

Comparing existing translations, they describe seven procedures applied by the translators, namely *emprunt, calque, traduction litterale, transposition, modulation, equivalence, adaptation*. The first three are a literal substitution, transposition and modulation are a non-literal paraphrasing. These procedures are **reactions on the syntactic level** to the structure in the source text.

Translation is seen as a series of technical translation procedures which can be applied in translation didactics. This has determined decisively the orientation of translation pedagogics in the sixties. Many translation handbooks follow this language-pair model, because it also is a useful instrument for translation evaluation in the classroom. You can determine every deviation from a literal translation by these procedures. The focus in the translation technique is on syntax and sentence level in a language pair, never on whole texts. The interest was to find a logical method to teach translation. But it became clear rather soon that it is not enough to analyze linguistic structures.

9.   In view of practice the relationship between the original and the translation in its content and effect are more important. This was the experience of the early bible translators. They wanted to preach the gospel in many languages without changing its content, but then they met many cultural barriers. In order to set a scholarly base for bible translation Eugene A. NIDA developed his *Science of Translating*.

He stated that it is most important that the message be understood. He shifts the focus from formal equivalence, i.e. verse to verse, sentence to sentence, concept to concept, over to **dynamic equivalence**, which aims at complete naturalness of expression, and tries to

relate the receptor to modes of behavior relevant within the context of his own culture.

NIDA calls for a three-phase method: an analysis of the sentences into kernels or basic structures, their transfer, and the reconstruction of the translation, according to stylistic aspects.

SL text form ————→ TL text form
                      encoding

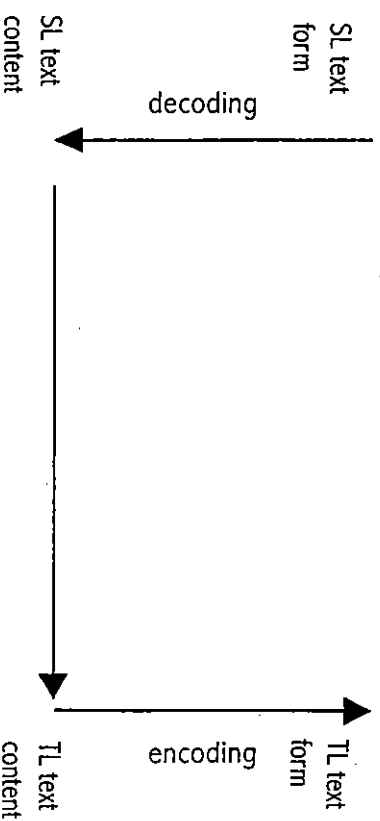   decoding

SL text content ————→ TL text content

Fig. 3: NIDA's model of translation

Example: In the Bible we often find difficult phrases like *the will of God*, which really means *God wants*, in comparison with *the peace of God*, which does not mean *a peaceful God* but rather *God creates peace*. Such analysis led to new bible translations in the sixties, which were meant to appeal to people of different cultures and the modern young in the Western world.

10.   NIDA's "dynamic equivalence" gave new impact to German translation studies. It initiated a big discussion of the term *Äquivalenz*. Werner KOLLER determines "equivalence" as the relationship between a text and its translation. However this relationship must be further determined. He states five **reference points for equivalence**: (1) the *denotative e.* refers to the extralingual facts which should be maintained; (2) the *connotative e.* refers to stylistic, dialectal, sociolectal

etc. connotations of expressions; (3) the *textnormative e.* refers to standards of the respective text genre; (4) the *pragmatic e.* refers to the adaptation to the understanding conditions of the target reader; (5) the *aesthetic e.* refers to aesthetic aspects of individual style to be preserved in the translation. Every time a translation is evaluated one of these points may be assessed. KOLLER sees it as the task of translation science to descriptively determine factors of equivalence in the individual points, with regard to a language pair. He expressly denies any normative rules for translation.

The problem of the term *equivalence* is that its meaning in English and in German are not totally identical. *Equivalence* means something like *correspondence*, while *Äquivalenz* indicates the logical identity of two parts (A = B). In German there appeared other words like *Angemessenheit, Adäquatheit, Gleichwertigkeit, Übereinstimmung, Korrespondenz, sinngemäße Entsprechung, Wirkungsgleichheit* etc. Also the term has various meanings in the theories of different authors. As a general rule however we can say that *equivalence* is a term of static, retrospective evaluation. A translation may be "equivalent" in a certain point (word or sentence), or even totally, but we cannot say "I will translate equivalently". There are no benchmarks on how to reach that.

11. In the seventies Linguistics turned towards the text level, **Text Linguistics** was created. Translation Studies also opened itself to questions of the text.

Since NIDA's studies a "text analysis" is considered essential for a translation. The rhematic structure of sentences and texts was analyzed, and the different focusing structures in a language pair with relevance for translation could be discussed, as with HÖNIG & KUSS-MAUL in their book *Strategie der Übersetzung*.

Furthermore, the communicative situation determines various text types, and this is of great interest for translation. As there is no

special text type for each new situation, characteristics of text types must also be discernible internally on the text level. Such characteristics may be described and compared with others in a language pair.

Katharina REISS developed a much discussed **text typology** oriented for translation. Departing from the three basic language functions – representation, expression, appeal – she stated three text types, i.e. the *informative text type* is facts-oriented, as is the case of documents, reports, handbooks etc.; the *expressive text type* is sender-oriented, as in literature texts; the *operative text type* is behavior-oriented, as in publicity, propaganda, advertisements etc. Each text has a major function, even if the other language functions are not totally missing. This might determine the method of translation, i.e. more oriented towards the content or towards the original form or towards a persuasive style in the operative text type. This especially is a good model for text evaluation, but not so much as a translation strategy.

12. The orientation towards the structure of texts in their situation opens the view to **pragmatic aspects**. John L. AUSTIN and John R. SEARLE have analyzed speech acts, and this is also important for translation since the translator must recognize the corresponding words like *to warn, to baptize, to beg, to acknowledge, to assure, to guarantee, to promise* etc. in the texts to be translated. Again HÖNIG and KUSSMAUL stress this pragmatic aspect of translation. The illocutionary effect of an utterance is not often very clear, for instance when it is meant ironically, or when a question in reality is a forced statement. Further speech act theory is relevant for legal translation as the contractual clauses are always verbalized in such speech acts.

The translator shall see any sentence in its function as an utterance, not only as a grammatical sentence. Example: *Ich bin fertig* may have the translation *I've had it!* Or *I have finished (my work)*. – At the end of the Olympic Games at Innsbruck in 1976 the organizers showed on the screen: *Auf Wiedersehen in Lake Placid (Até logo na*

Lake Placid) which was meant as a greeting to the next games, and then in English: *Good-bye in Lake Placid*. The translation office had given a literal translation of the sentence, but not of the utterance *Welcome to Lake Placid* or *We'll meet again in Lake Placid*.

13. All these theories had till now concentrated on general language and technical texts. There is another theory regarding literature texts that was initiated in the Low Countries. It is **Descriptive Translation Studies** connected with the authors Theo HERMANS and André LEFEVERE. Their point is completely descriptive. They do not apply a certain translation theory on the translation of literary texts, but rather they analyze literature texts the way they are present. Thus one may detect the underlying translation procedures, cultural norms and traditions of translation as well as the impact of translations on the target polysystem. This may also have interesting results in countries where there were colonial regimes. How was the local literature affected by translations of classical works from the mother country? Also one may analyze the translator's attitude towards his translation, for instance in theatre adaptation, or in gender studies. Lawrence VENUTI describes *The Translator's Invisibility* showing that translators always tried to follow the ideal of a "true translation" in order to make the author's voice audible.

14. Later, the analysis of the **discipline of Translation Studies** as such comes on the agenda. It was James HOLMES who as early as in 1972 presented his ideas on *The Name and Nature of Translation Studies*. The latter term took prevalence over the previous terms of *Translation Science or Translatology* in English. Translation Studies does not mean the teaching and studying of translation, which is translation pedagogics or didactics.

HOLMES sees Translation Studies as a field of several different study areas, such as theoretical, descriptive and applied studies. All individual study perspectives may contribute to a general, valid theory

of translation and generate new approaches. So there is no overall theory of translation studies, but they represent a **field of studies**. The descriptive part of it shall analyze the process, product and function of translations, and today this is represented by Gideon TOURY (*Descriptive Translation Studies and beyond*). Of course, this descriptive part is closely linked to those literature translation studies mentioned above.

15. Taking up the idea of a field, Mary SNELL-HORNBY in an "integrated approach" defines translation studies as an **interdiscipline**. She denies the harsh distinction between the various relationships of equivalence, translation procedures, text types, true or free translation etc. She sees a "prototypology" in texts: you cannot clearly distinguish between texts; they move on a scale from technical up to literature texts. And therefore we also have to integrate various linguistic disciplines and apply them for the purpose of translation.

Every text includes various dimensions, such as syntax, semantics and pragmatics and shifting focuses in metaphors. There are various perspectives, such as the viewpoint of the speaker, and of the readers and their intention. All these individual aspects have already been analyzed in Linguistics and this should lead to translation studies as an Interdiscipline.

16. A totally new vision of Translation Studies is given by Hans J. VERMEER. He localizes it within the action theory (*Handlungstheorie*). Translation theory is part of action theory, and texts and all translations are acts, and they have a certain purpose. That is why this theory is also called "*skopos theory*". The purpose, the *skopos*, is the decisive factor in translation. This must be determined before anything else, and it determines the structure of the translation. So one and the same text may be translated in two different ways, according to the commission. All comments on translation studies have to take into consideration this activity, the *Handlung*.

That theoretical approach of a *skopos* theory has been applied as **"functional translation"** by VERMEER himself and Christiane NORD. In translating adequately for the function you first of all have to consider the cultural differences. Translation is also **intercultural** (not interlingual) communication. This is something what NIDA already had seen. The consequence is that a translation must imply transformations of the text structure and of its content with regard to cultural differences. In order to decide this, the translator as a person must be "bi-cultural", he or she must know both cultures and know where there are incongruencies.

Integrating the *skopos* theory they established a **model of the factors of translation** that states the translator as a central "factor", and then all aspects about the sender, his information, his receptors, the communication act, the original as a text type, and its situation in place and time are mentioned. The same is done for the target text.
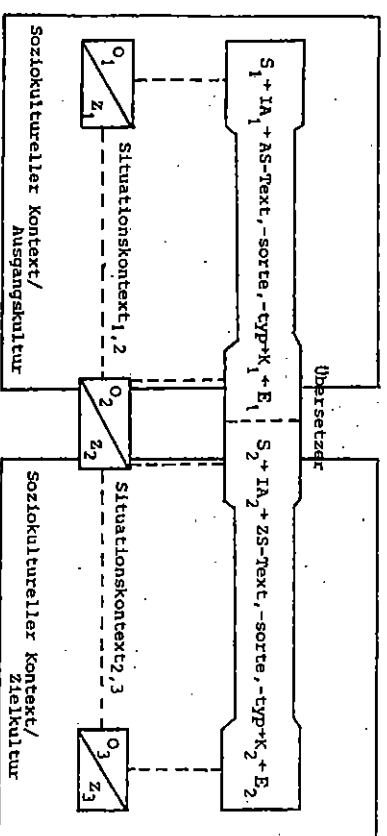

Fig. 4: VERMEER's model of translation

17. A didactic application of the functional translation theory is presented by NORD. Her main point is that in translation pedagogics one should first of all establish a **translation assignment** that determines the function. Then a source text analysis to decide on the maintenance of text structures or cultural adaptation will follow. She

stresses the translator's double loyalty to the source text's author and his intention, and to the target readers and their text function. She discusses several translation problems and develops a scale of difficulty of texts which might help translation teachers to structure their lessons.

18. When we reconsider the various translation theories mentioned till now, we may observe a **shift of focus** from the language system as the expression of a nation's spirit and the language as a communicative system of signs to translation in its relationship to texts. More recently, Translation Studies has also made efforts to structure its field of activities as a scientific discipline.

It is only recently that the translator as a historical person who actually performs translation is taken into consideration. This approach is represented by Fritz PAEPCKE and Radegundis STOLZE. The **Hermeneutic approach** considers the translator's competence. Translation is seen as the process of understanding and formulating a message. Texts are understood as integral entities and are translated as such. A word or an isolated sentence might be ambiguous when taken separately, but it is easily comprehensible when integrated in its context. The translator has the responsible task of mediating between people. Therefore he or she must reflect on the own understanding of a text and control his or her creative formulation of the translation.

STOLZE asks the question, how does the translator think, what are the necessary factors – not of the translation procedure but of translation competence. Hermeneutics sees language as a combination of social phenomena in words and grammar, and of individual aspects of the author's intention. Each text is a multifaceted entity and may only be understood and analyzed as such. Hermeneutics stresses the intuitive understanding, the spontaneous formulation, but not without the critical revision according to **translatoric categories**. STOLZE develops linguistic categories of translation, such as *thematics*, *lexis*, *pragmatics* and *stylistics*. Under the category of thematics the

translator is made aware of the thematic structure in the text, the speaker's perspective, place and time of publication, author and the status of the text. Semantic word fields represent its coherence. Under the category of *lexis* one considers any specialist terminology within the text in view of the differences between natural sciences and humanities. Under the category of *pragmatics* one takes into account the translation's function, sociolinguistic aspects in the addressees, and cultural differences. The category of *stylistics* finally focuses on the style, text type standards and questions of speech rhyme etc. We must reflect our understanding and translation pedagogics could foster sensitivity to some aspects.

19. Finally we might envisage an analysis of the **cognitive ways of thinking**. There were analyses of "think-aloud protocols". Translators had do speak aloud all their ideas in mind, then one could analyze their ways of inferring and combining ideas. Maybe this will help to change translation didactics. Such analyses have been presented by KRINGS and KÖNGS.

Hans G. HÖNIG pleads for a conscious reflection of the translator's activity, because only the awareness of the methodological basics will lay the ground for a "constructive attitude" in translating. He states that there is an uncontrolled part of our minds, and also a controlled one. The problem is that the controlling section, if there are no critical categories or strategies, often negatively revises the originally positive spontaneous formulation.

Finally, KUSSMAUL published a book on *Training the Translator* with a cognitive base for translation didactics. Its aim is to explore various aspects of the methodology of translation, with a view to **teaching translation**. He sees the translator as a conscious, responsible individual. Translation didactics should help to shape cognitive landscape.

After all we may conclude that translation is a very complicated and responsible activity that requires special training. The professional translator will combine language proficiency with subject knowledge and methodological bases.

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O TRABALHO FILOLÓGICO NA TRADUÇÃO: CONSIDERAÇÕES GERAIS SOBRE AS TRADUÇÕES DO MÉDIO ALTO-ALEMÃO PARA O PORTUGUÊS

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Abstract: This paper discusses the question of how Translation Theory and German Philology can be helpful to each other. It starts with some general observations on the history of the German Language with special emphasis on Middle High German. In the second part, a Middle High German poem is translated into Portuguese.

Keywords: Translation; Middle High German; Germanic Philology.

Zusammenfassung: Der vorliegende Aufsatz diskutiert die Frage, in welchen Punkten Übersetzungstheorie und deutsche Philologie sich gegenseitig unterstützen können. Er beginnt mit einigen generellen Beobachtungen zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des Mittelhochdeutschen. Im zweiten Teil wird ein mittelhochdeutsches Gedicht ins Portugiesische übersetzt.

Stichwörter: Übersetzung; Mittelhochdeutsch; Germanische Philologie.

Palavras-chave: Tradução; Médio Alto-Alemão; Filologia Germânica.

1. Introdução

A Tradução pode ser considerada, do ponto de vista histórico, como a atividade prática que levou o ser humano, por meio da *parole* dos clássicos e dos textos sacros, a se conscientizar cada vez mais do sistema de sua própria língua. Isso culminará na chamada fase

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