

## REVIEWS

**Udaya Narayana Singh**, *Translation as Growth: Towards a Theory of Language Development*. New Dehli: Pearson Education, 2010. Pp. ix + 231. ISBN 978 81 317 3086 7.

Reviewed by Teodora Popescu, *1 Decembrie 1918* University of Alba Iulia

In his book *Translation as Growth: Towards a Theory of Language Development*, the well-known poet, linguist and translator Udaya Narayana Singh addresses the issue of translation from a developmental linguistic perspective. He posits that translation, like authoring, is a creative act that enriches both the original and translated language, as languages are interrelated, with translation being a major force behind 'linguistic convergence'.

The main tenet is that *translativity* is the solution for today's languages to develop. The two options to choose from would be either to re-implement policies that have been viable elsewhere, or to translate models if the elites that influence decision-making processes of the state choose so. The role of the translator is also emphasized, as he may be invested with the right to introduce 'foreign' terms, to coin new ones for the sake of language development. The sooner the translations are naturalized, the faster the language will grow. The present book will provide models of language growth through translation, thus contributing to translation theory and language planning and development.

The book is structured into 10 chapters: 1. Writing as Othering: Translation as Changing Personal Terminations; 2. Creativity and Translativity: A Case for Double Articulation?; 3. Thoughts on Theories of Texts and Translation; 4. Translation: 'Try Thy Metaphor'; 5. Translation, Translucence and Transcendence; 6. Translating Uttar-Aadhunikataa: Debates from the Bhaasaa Literary Scene; 7. Some Thoughts on Transcreation of Texts; 8. Saying It Again: On Building Models of Literary Translation; 9. Translating Alien Cultures: Search for the Native; 10. Lamentations and Celebrations.

Chapter 1 challenges the common assumption that authors are solitary geniuses for whom social context carry little importance. At the other end lies the belief that authors are constrained by their language and society to act as social agent, and therefore their role is to write "social texts" that may either reproduce or reiterate the current social order or generate a chaos that underlies the world they are living in. In this case, the texts will only perform the deictic function of syntactical categories. In other words, all 'texts' are constrained both by *language* and *social forces* that together 'domesticate' writing. Going further, texts will author writers themselves, imposing constraints on authorial sensibility and subjectivity, especially social ones. The author states that as soon as 'texts assume and appropriate the authors' 'self', the authors are

pushed into the background as the 'others'. When the translators' turn comes, they will make the text multi-dimensional, introducing a second degree social reading. Singh asserts that although 'reading writes', it will also destroy the text, since 'the responsibility of interpreting what is 'undecidable' rests on reading'. Moreover, he claims that apart from a few texts that are recycled to turn into metatexts of a given speech community, all the others seem to live for only a given period and have a fatalistic self-destructing tendency. According to the author, the solution is that of translation, which can save a text from destruction. The chapter starts with an outline of the author's position at the intersection of grammar/linguistics and translation, which would often evade grammatical categories, in order to bridge the cultural distance. Singh posits that all cultural spaces get hold of special locations and relate themselves to three types of 'others': 1. other cultures, or the cultural 'other', 2. the textual 'other', and 3. the analytical 'other'. Along this line of thought, a translator negotiates with the textual other while deciding on his or her illocutionary strategies.

The second chapter opens with the bold assertion that *all original literary work is translation and all translation, original creation*. Starting from Octavio Paz's (1971:9) theory that every text is the translation of another one, since language itself is already a translation of the non-verbal world and every sign and phrase is the translation of another sign or phrase. Singh upholds that human language has the inherent characteristic of double articulation, and that all original writing in a given language is nothing but a recreation – a translation twice removed. It is important however to bear in mind that the difference between an author's (or any creative person's) understanding and conceptualization of the outside world and the common man's universe, which gets reflected in the creative output of an author. Singh introduces the concept of 'creative internal text' (CIT) seen as a methodological field of happening where a continuous flux of signs revolves in an interrelated manner (Singh & Pandey 1996). The creative impulses of an author transcend into the reader's space, called the *physical space*, lying in the form of texts, in such a way that an author is articulating twice. The text will become a re-creation, as creation lies in CIT and the mismatch between the logical and the physical space of a text resembles the discrepancy between the translation and the original. For this reason Singh describes creative writing as a translation twice removed, the first layer being that of the creative person's creation of CIT, while the second is the text the author produces. It entails that creativity 'could be and should be defined as a rearrangement of existing signs'. The author, like the translator, decides on sounds, smells, colours, words, symbols and icons, from their surroundings and renders a certain interpreted reality. We are faced with two model worlds, each with a different set of icons, of rules, signifiers and signifieds. They do not have a transitive relation to each other, but a partially transitive one, through the agency of somebody, such as the translator, who can travel between the two worlds, which do not merge into each other, but can be transcended by the subject concerned.

In Chapter 3, the author moves further with the theory of the relationship between the text and the world. In the case of writers who assume the role of social agents, or who claim to represent the oppressed, they have a dual life – the one they present in the text, and the other, their own, real life. Singh addresses the question whether texts are meant to change the world, or the world to change the texts, or both.

As texts are constrained both by *language* as well as by *social forces* that domesticate writing, we have to understand if ‘translators enter the scene as liberators or as a new set of agents who would create a social theory of the text that will remove its one-dimensionality’ (cf. Marcuse 1964). Other questions addressed by this chapter are: The chapter deals with more questions such as these: Is narrativity a dangerous weapon with which to write a history that proceeds from the dilemma of setting a stage to reach a revolutionary anticlimax? Do the events which would otherwise have unfolded as unknown seem to fall into a pattern as we historicize them? In an attempt to address them, Singh raises further issues: (i) What is the response of the author or that of ‘reading’ towards this cultural capitalistic onslaught? (ii) Is there a textual theory of writing, which tries to understand the contemporary nature of ideology at a time when one can easily transcend between *text* (which holds the world as a reflection) and the *world* (which holds the text as yet another product)? (iii) Do we need a social theory of the text to relate it with ideology or with the possibilities and limits of the critique of ideology? (iv) Can ideologies be criticized, their mythologies demystified and illusions pierced, in order to stimulate social change? (v) Is it at all necessary to retain a critical distance between the author and the translator, between the text and the reader, or between the reading and the world to comprehend an object without being influenced by it? Finally, (vi) is it desirable to be so objective as to not be influenced by such proximations or breakdown of dyadic relationships? Answers to all these questions are needed if we want to construe a sociology of translation. The author posits that (cf. Agger 1989), there is a need for ‘a new theoretical mapping that locates Marxism, postmodernism, feminism, environmentalism and anticolonialism on the same cognitive map. It is also clear that we need both global and local explanations of various theoretical positions vis-à-vis writing and translating’.

In the fourth chapter, Singh addresses the issue of various metaphors that dominate the scene of translation theory-building activities today. He upholds that the theoretical enterprise has taken a course where the old metaphors are being constantly replaced with new ones. The shift is towards metaphors of governance as to which text will rule in the target language (TL) culture, or on the metaphor of disease when they talk about ‘uncontaminated’ versus ‘contaminated’ texts. The author also poses the question of the literary translator’s difficulty to decide on, or even create, a language that lies beyond the officialese that is now in vogue. Singh considers that all translation is essentially communication – not just a driving force of culture, but also a method of fostering and preserving a culture. As for finding an all-encompassing definition of translation, the author admits that this is an impossible undertaking, given the vast differences in the materials translated, in the purposes of translation and the existence of different types of prospective audience. However, a working definition would be that ‘translation is primarily an act of transforming messages from one form of human expression to another, distanced by time or space, and this act interfaces variegated factors, each one capable of influencing the other’. Translation is an effort at mediation or negotiation – *mediation* between two people, their culture and their civilization separated by time or space (cf. Belitt 1978: 38). The chapter ends with a few more questions about translation, and raises an important issue, that of the existence of two models of translation, namely, vertical versus horizontal translation, and various hierarchies that exist in the field of writing and translation. More specifically, Singh

addresses the question whether the typical colonial context in which a ‘translating’ culture would only vertically engage itself in ‘borrowing’ or translating a text from another culture (the ‘donor’ culture?), with special reference to the growth of the indigene or the BhaaSaa literatures in India.

Chapter 5 deals with the work of a translator who needs to ‘appreciate’, ‘evaluate’ or ‘analyse’ a literary text, and wear two hats at the same time—of a critic and of a creator. The issue at stake here is not whether translators have any right to deviate by deliberately under-translating texts or by bringing in additions or substitutions, but, rather, whether such deviations can also lead to literary innovations in their own right and, if so, whether they entail rewriting. It must be borne in mind that translated literatures have been responsible for major literary movements in all ages, and for this reason some structuralists interpret reading of a literary text as a productive and creative activity. With relevant examples, Singh demonstrates that a translator often finds it difficult to decide whether he should (i) transcribe, (ii) translate, (iii) substitute with something similar from TL, (iv) naturalize, by making minor modifications (be they grammatical or phonological), (v) by loan translating, or (vi) by paraphrasing. Further on, he posits that translation is capable of positively contributing to literary appreciation and criticism, sometimes more than the work of monolingual, conventional critics.

In the sixth chapter, Singh concentrates on the concept of *uttar-aadhunikataa*<sup>1</sup> and elaborates on the debates from the BhaaSaa literary scene. It starts with the politics of theory-building in the area of translation and different assumptions such theoreticians make. Further on, it tackles the question whether the norms of [expression are] set in every speech community by native speakers (Mufwene 1998: 111), especially considering Saussure’s claim on language, namely, that no individual can ever create or modify a language system by themselves. The problem of ‘language purity’ and ‘linguistic corruption’ is also addressed. The author brings forth the assertion of some modern critics that human language is being constantly ‘devalued’. It is argued that if modernity is a product of civilization, *uttar-aadhunikataa* allows us to understand our ‘post-enlightenment dilemma’ (cf. Jean-Pierre Mileur 1985), making it possible to realise that ‘the burden of our modernity involves the apparent necessity of a choice between the best interests of the past and those of the present and the future’. The chapter brings light on the relationship between *uttar-aadhunikataa* and postmodern approaches, focusing on the issues of canonization and universalisation of literary canons.

Chapter 7 reaffirms the role and position of translation, which should no longer be regarded as a hit-or-miss pursuit, but as ‘an equally creative and dynamic activity in every respect, and that it gives us an entirely new perspective in creating a theory and aesthetics of interpretation’. Singh suggests a comparison between literary creativity and magic, where both the poet and the magician see links and connections between things not easily perceived by a common person. Next, he identifies the coordinates and conditions in any act of critical ‘reading’ when one approaches a work of art. The chapter ends with a discussion of the replacements that are made in the process of translation – at the lexical, grammatical, and semantico-pragmatic levels.

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<sup>1</sup> A contemporary literary position in the context of Indian literature, emerging as a response to European postmodernism.

Ideal translators will strive to find proper expressions in TL, as well make sure that the way she they created/drafted/written the target language text (TLT) makes its meaning coherent. Therefore, the steps needed to achieve this aim are: (a) identification and clarification of the original theme, (b) selection of an appropriate language structure and language use according to the context, and (c) precision in utilizing the non-linguistic factors such as sociocultural background and pragmatic values, and (d) intelligible reproduction of the fullest possible *signifié* or sense structure in TL.

In the eighth chapter, the author proposes an understanding of the nature of *intra-lingual translation* of texts, discussing several positions to translation and their consequences. First, Singh discusses the view of translation as a kind of speech activity (cf. Pegacheva 1959; Zimnyaya 1993), and then the one according to which translation is a secondary speech activity, such as preparing summaries or *précis* writing and paragraph writing. The chapter also addresses the concept of ‘total translation’, described by Catford (1965:21) as misleading, since it involves a total replacement of SL grammar and lexis. In contrast, the author presents the concept of ‘partial translation’, where some parts of the SL text are left untranslated: they are simply transferred and incorporated into the TL text. Singh maintains that an inter-lingual paraphrasing will be closer to partial translation, whereas an intra-lingual paraphrasing has some inherent advantage of the same script and is generally similar with respect to phonological devices, and at least comparable at the word level; hence, closer to total translation.

Chapter 9 starts with the assertion that speech has a chaotic existence, and that chaos, like speech, has a unique pattern occupying a three-dimensional space and three different kinds of semantics – the semantic of confusion, the semantic of amorphism and the semantic of the void. Hence, one may talk about all semiotic constructs, including human language, as having a chaotic existence. It is not surprising that psychological as well as sociological theories show that layered compartments exist in that part of their brain, which are responsible for speech production and comprehension. The duality of speech (characterised by both pattern and chaos) is interpreted by theorists vertically and horizontally, psychologically and socially. However, both the grammatical and social existence of language show such patterning as are beyond individuals and idiosyncrasies, and that language is as much general as it is specific, and it is difficult to match speakers’ mental grammars with the grammarians’ theoretical grammars, as there are many versions of these constructs.

The last chapter deals with folklore studies as an extension of translation studies, opening with the question on ‘purity’ of lore and the absence of a *pure folklore studies*, as there exist, for example, disciplines such as *pure mathematics*. In the author’s opinion, however, folklore should be studied from a twofold perspective: both as an interdisciplinary endeavour where each participating discipline sheds its apparently pristine requirement of purity, and at the same time, as a discipline in its own right. Singh posits that ‘language and purity do not go together, especially because ‘prevarication’ happens to be the most essential quality of both language and its principal product, literature (and consequently, also of translation)’. Further on, if prevarication has to be an inherent characteristic of our folk knowledge and folk-expression systems, all our *real* productions and reproductions vis-à-vis language are instances of ‘double articulation’, twice removed from what could have been *ideal*. The

chapter ends with a forceful assertion that both folklore and linguistics share one major concern, namely, the primacy of speech over writing.

In conclusion, Singh offers a most valuable contribution to the theory of translation, by providing a model of growth for underdeveloped languages, built on horizontal translation, and rejecting political tenet that SL = dominant and TL = dominated (because 'the dominated' is often colonized and oppressed) is bound to carry a bias that will ultimately affect the use of translation as a tool of development. Translation is a creative activity – as much as original writing is, and demonstrates how translation is a way of growing – growing to be different.

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