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CONTRIBUTIONS OF SCIENTISTS TO THE THEORY OF TRANSLATION

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Abstract: The present article is devoted to analyzing the present state of the Russian science of translation and its historical perspective. The rationale behind this article is the fact that in Russian academic community there is a persisting viewpoint that research in translation studies is an auxiliary and applied area of linguistics and that science of translation does not exist at all because it is diluted in pluridisciplinary continuum and, which is essential, does not have scientific paradigms. Historically speaking, scientists have lived and worked in a multilingual world. Given that, in such a world, translation is simply part of (scientific) life, it is all the more remarkable that practices of translation in science have received less attention from historians of science than one might expect. A focus on translation allows historians of science to scrutinize the changes and transformations of scientific knowledge in motion. Instead of presuming that processes of translation are betrayals of the original, and thus asking about the "fidelity" of a translator or the "faithfulness" of a translation, the contributions to this Focus section see those processes as productive of knowledge, part and parcel of the history of science.

Key words: translation studies, literary studies, linguistic philosophy, translation theory, science, hegemonic language, knowledge, practices.

Introduction. Various disciplines have shown interest in the field of translation studies, as an empirical discipline. This includes disciplines that are somewhat related to the field, such as literary studies, linguistics, linguistic philosophy and others, and also those that are remote such as cultural studies, mathematics, information theory, post-colonial studies, etc. These disciplines have introduced new paradigms and methodologies into the field of translation studies as an attempt to advance it as a developing discipline. This is what sparked the many paradigms shifts in translation theory during the period of the 1950s–2000s.

This chapter aims to provide an account of the major developments that have occurred in translation theory, from the 1950s and 1960s in which prescriptive approaches reigned to the 1970s – 2000s, where more descriptive paradigms dawned. The chapter commences with the earlier approaches, namely the word-for-word and sense-for-sense approaches spanning the period of the 1950s - 1960s. The description of the equivalence-based approach, which emerged in the 1960s, will follow, which will then be followed by the functional approach of the 1970s. The chapter will proceed to the discussion of the polycystic theory, which also reigned in the period of the 1970s, which will be followed by the description of the descriptive translation studies (DTS), which dawned in the 1980s. The discussion of the cultural turn, which emerged in the 1990s, will be provided next and then the description of the corpus-based translation studies (CTS) approach of the late 1990s will conclude the chapter.

Global English dominates science; and from reading the pages of this or any other recent issue of Isis one would think that it also dominates the history of science. However, just a glimpse at the first issue of this journal teaches us that the discipline is—or has been—multilingual: George Sarton's inaugural editorial was published in French.1 For Sarton, an Arabist as well as a foundational figure of our discipline, the idea of translation was crucial to his understanding of the history of science, which he saw primarily as a series of translation

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movements and cross-cultural intellectual contacts between civilizations across the world. As historians, we know that the past—including the past of science—did not happen exclusively in English, despite the present dominance of Global English. “The collapse into monolingualism is, historically speaking, a very strange outcome,” Michael Gordin has argued, “since most of humanity for most of its existence has been to a greater or lesser degree multilingual.” A recent Isis Focus section on linguistic hegemony shows, in fact, that hegemonic language regimes—from Latin in the European Middle Ages to Global English today—have never been totalizing and that even in times of dominance of one language scientists have lived and worked in a multilingual world.3 In such a world, translation is simply part of (scientific) life.

This Focus section approaches this same multilingual world from a different perspective. We discuss not so much the choice of language in scientific communication, and the reasons for the emergence of dominant languages, but the practices of translation in science. These issues are, of course, connected, since practices of translation tie in directly with questions of language: the perceived status of a language, the reasons behind the choice of language, and the targeted audience of a translation and its linguistic competences. We do not intend to use translation in a purely metaphorical sense—that is, as disconnected from language. Rather, we define translation along the lines laid out by Scott L. Montgomery in a seminal book: translation “is the process of transforming a specific piece of one language (commonly a text of some sort) into another language.” This is not to say that only linguistic transfer is concerned. Recent work has highlighted how translation is always cultural translation. And it works the other way around, too: historians of science have called on concepts and insights from the field of translation studies to scrutinize issues of transmission, appropriation, and cultural translation in the history of science. Science cannot avoid translation, not even when written in the universal language of mathematics. The translation of scientific texts does not produce replicas. Change is not incidental to translation. Rather, it is its very essence—even when the change is not deliberate; and indeed, historically speaking, change has not rarely been intended. One example that comes to mind is that of the Jesuit missionaries in China who turned qi into the elemental matter of “air” in order to show that the literati were in need of Christianization.

Translation is, thus, the process by which science and knowledge are transferred from one place to another, more often than not being altered in the process. Therefore, the problem of how people went about the process of translation, and what effects their efforts had, has recently begun to attract the attention of historians of science. A focus on translation allows historians of science to scrutinize the changes and transformations of scientific knowledge that occur in the course of the process of translation—that is, in translation, or the movement of knowledge from one place to another. In this sense, translation offers a particular lens for looking at the circulation of knowledge. Historians of science have shown how translation can invest a scientific text with new meaning and how strategies of translators and attitudes toward translations have depended on ideas about the nature of science, which were also shaped by geopolitical factors.

Recent work on translation in the history of science has shifted the focus with regard to earlier scholarship on translation. The massive translation migration of classical texts from antiquity into Latin and the vernaculars during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, often via Arabic and Hebrew, has traditionally received much attention from historians of science. More recent work, over the past decade, is primarily concerned with early modern and modern times, roughly the period from the sixteenth century, a time in which the greater production of books, the growth of literacy, and the diversification of language skills increased the need for translations and translators. Scholarship has also shifted attention to contexts involving the

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confrontation of erudition with local knowledge. This entailed problems of how to express information and knowledge for which no equivalent in learned circles and the languages they used was available. One typical context in the early modern period is that of the encounter with local plants and plant names, particularly outside Europe. Travelers were confronted with a plethora of unknown names, terms, and concepts. Structurally similar to the processes of naming in the encounter with indigenous, non-European plants is the invention of vocabulary in the context of the artisanal workshop and the appropriation of this terminology in print and translation when no equivalent in Latin or the vernaculars existed—what I have called "the translation of artisanal knowledge." The expansion of the domain of science meant a consequent expansion of vocabulary. This work has complicated the issue of language. What is a language? And if a language is not static, with well-defined borders with respect to other languages, how should we think about translation as a transfer from one language into another? Here, translations are also translations between spaces of expertise. Therefore, it might be useful to consider the issue of translation in the context of "trading zones," which, as Pamela Long had argued, created the conditions for the exchange of knowledge and values between different cultures of knowledge (in her case, early modern artisans and scholars). Especially in the usage of Peter Galison (from whose analysis of modern physics Long has borrowed the term), the concept of the "trading zone" emphasizes language. Galison describes the trading zone as characterized by the development of pidgin languages and, at times, full-scale creole languages as a means of communication between people from different cultures. Indeed, in many times and places, multilingualism was the norm—not just in the sense that there was more than one language of science (even if one was dominant) but that the language of science was a miscellaneous mix of more than one language. For example, in the Ottoman Empire in the seventeenth century, the dominant language of science, known as "Turkish," had adopted many terms and words from Persian and Arabic. Similarly, Latin and vernacular languages and names coexisted in the practice and publication of plant knowledge from the 1550s. In early modern Europe, the naming of plants was a complex process only rarely involving straightforward translation. The more typical situation was that of inventing a name by combining the local vernacular with a description in Latin or one of the vernaculars.

While Latin was used to facilitate international communication, it thus turns out that Latin did not have a special conceptual status (for example, in developing a classification in natural history). Nevertheless, the lack of special status of one language for science (or natural philosophy, mathematics, natural history, etc.) is anything but self-evident. In various times and places scientists have made arguments for such a special status of one language and have sometimes wondered about the possibility of doing, writing, and reading science in any other than this special language. In antiquity, people openly posed the question whether natural philosophy could be done in Latin at all and reflected on (what Daryn Lehoux in his contribution calls) "discourse translation." Against this background, it is all the more striking that in the rapidly developing discourse on translation in Europe from the 1550s the conviction of translatability between languages was widely shared.

Conclusion. This Focus section brings together a wide variety of languages and practices of translation in different places and times from antiquity to the second half of the nineteenth century—that is, just before the beginning of the rise of English as the dominant language of science. Daryn Lehoux discusses Greek and Latin in antiquity; Scott Montgomery translations from Greek, Syriac, Persian, and Sanskrit into Arabic; Harun Küçük Arabic and Turkish in the seventeenth century; Rienk Vermij Dutch and English, with minor attention paid to French and German translation in the eighteenth century; Yulia Frumer Dutch, Japanese, and Chinese in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; and finally, Julia Kursell German and English in

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the mid-nineteenth century. There is no attempt here at completeness: Italian, Russian, and Swedish—to name a few languages in which science was published that immediately come to mind—are missing; and, given their historical significance, Sanskrit, French, and Persian might deserve more than the passing reference that they receive here.

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