Translating and Transediting News Agency Texts: Between Reader Information and Manipulation

The innovatory character of this thesis resides not necessarily in the fields it tackles (after all, Translation Studies and journalism have both a respectable tradition) but especially in their correlation and investigation in the same context, although (as it will further result) journalists themselves are not willing to associate them. Besides Translation Studies and journalism, our interdisciplinary research is based on a series of recent acquisitions from pragmatics, theories of communication, as well as on elements of the British and Romanian culture and civilisation.

The field of research we are focusing on is, at the same time, a very recent orientation in Translation Studies, called by specialists *news translation*. The need for research in this area is obvious in the current Romanian context which, in our opinion, lacks any elaborate studies combining news reporting and translation, meant to underline the specificity of the translation processes taking place inside news agencies and desks.

Nevertheless, specialty literature includes o series of names belonging to journalism practitioners and translators who have focused on this "hybrid" type of translation: Chartier (2000), Hursti (2001), Hajmohammadi (2005), Camacho (2005), Tsai (2006), Hernández Guerrero (2006), Conway and Bassnett (2006), Bielsa (2009, 2010), Vaskivska (2010), van Doorslaer (2010), Valdeón (2010) or Schäffner (2010).

In view of the above, **the main objective** of this thesis is to describe and analyse the flow of international news from the news agencies towards the Romanian newspapers, with particular emphasis on identifying the types of translation that can be found in the Romanian "quality" written press, as well as on the place occupied by translation in the creation of the press articles. We also have in mind highlighting other strategies embedded within the translation strategies in order to shape a broader picture of the international news processing, the types of international events

favoured by the national press, the propagation of ethnic images by means of the press articles and, last but not least, the functions performed by these press articles according to their content.

In order to fulfil the above mentioned objectives, we have recurred to different **methods** that have proved very useful and relevant to our research. Thus, we have used, on the one hand, the *qualitative method* implying analyses, descriptions, evaluations, argumentations and a careful documentation regarding the current research in this recent field of investigation. Bearing in mind the topic analysed, an *interactive approach* was also felt necessary, and it consisted, in our case, in several visits to the most prestigious Romanian news agencies and quality newspapers, as well as in a few dialogues, based on questionnaires, with the journalists from the departments of international news of Agerpres (4 journalists), Mediafax (1 journalist), *Adevărul* (3 journalists), *Jurnalul Național* (1 journalist) and *Evenimentul Zilei* (2 journalists). The discussions with them helped us achieve a better understanding of the phenomena taking place inside a department of international news, as well as direct access to all these realities.

Extremely important are the *quantitative* analyses of an overall corpus of 695 articles from the international (especially British, American and French) and Romanian press, based on which we have also made a series of statistics regarding the frequency of certain phenomena/tendencies, such as: the preponderant use of certain foreign news sources (international agencies, broadcasters and publications) or translation strategies for presenting international news, the selection of certain topics to the detriment of other, the presentation of (mostly) negative issues from the source text, etc. (see, for instance, Chapters IV and V).

Finally, the *comparative method* has allowed us to interpret the data obtained through analysis and parallel comparison of the source texts and target texts in the applied part of the thesis. The comparative analyses of the selected articles and of their sources have revealed important tendencies and characteristics of the Romanian written press as compared to the international press.

The thesis is broadly **organised** in five chapters, followed by bibliography and annexes. For more clarity, and in view of the interdisciplinary nature of the research, we considered it relevant to divide the paper into a predominantly theoretical part and an applied part. Nevertheless, the first section finds itself in close interdependence with the second one, which is more ample and contains minute analyses of a number of articles in the selected corpora. Thus, whereas Chapters I, II and III represent a combination between different orientations in Translation Studies, the manipulation theory and more general information on Romanian journalism, in Chapters IV and V these elements are applied to eight case studies (comprising the analysis of 85 articles).

What differentiates the applied chapters is that Chapter IV is dedicated to the analysis of those articles presenting foreign news in the Romanian press, whereas Chapter V investigates those articles presenting a certain image of Romania in the international press.

Chapter I begins by placing contemporary journalism in the context of globalisation, skimming the most important steps in its evolution. We found it relevant to make a distinction between the written press and the online press, especially in the context of the previously mentioned objectives, which aim at analysing both the written and online press articles, with all the negative or positive consequences currently implied by this separation. This chapter pays particular attention to the path followed by the press articles from the ''international mother-news agencies'' to the national news agencies and newspapers, the way in which these ones are processed, as well as the main selection criteria of international news. In this sense, we provide illuminating evidence obtained through the benevolence of the Romanian journalists working for Agerpres (see Table 1 which indicates the number of international news in the agency's console on 2 May 2011), as well as Mediafax documents (pages 30-35) illustrating the spatial and temporal constraints information is subjected to when major international events, such as Osama bin Laden's death, take place. The chapter also brings into discussion two vital concepts in journalism, *gatekeeping* and *agenda setting*, which will be illustrated by the tables, graphics and figures in

Chapters IV and V. The last part offers a bird's eye view on Romanian post-communist journalism, as well as a brief description of the most important international news agencies - Agence France Presse, Reuters, Associated Press and United Press Association. The element of novelty resides in the recent data on the most prestigious Romanian news agencies, Agerpres (state agency) and Mediafax (private agency), which were partly provided by the journalists working for these news agencies.

Chapter II presents a series of theoretical orientations in Translation Studies, which will mainly serve as a departing point for our analyses in the applied part of the thesis. In the introduction to this chapter we debate on the difficulty of the theme approached, which is mostly due to the journalists' refusal to admit that translation is a daily indispensable tool necessary for adapting foreign news to the target audience and culture (see, for instance, the statement made by the editor-in-chief of the *Jurnalul Naţional* newspaper, p. 63). In a series of successive sub-chapters we clarify essential concepts and approaches in Translation Studies and imagology we will subsequently recur to, such as Toury's norms, the *skopos* theory proposed by Reiss and Vermeer, accompanied by Reiss's and Nord's classifications of the main language functions, the issue regarding the translator's *invisibility* and the rewriting of texts according to the expectations and needs of the target readers, the concept of *image* successfully applied in the case of those translations creating certain stereotypes in the written press, the association of the Romanian language with the *minority languages*, which inevitably leads to inequalities of power and status as compared to the *major* languages and cultures.

Chapter III firstly presents three of the most important quality newspapers in Romania (*Adevărul*, *Jurnalul Naţional* and *Evenimentul Zilei*), monitored for this thesis and analysed in the applied part, the personal contribution consisting in the information obtained from the journalists working for these publications in relation to the structure and characteristics of their departments of international news. Here we find out which are the main international languages foreign news is usually translated from, the sources used

for their presentation, the type of audience addressed by these newspapers, etc. We dedicated an entire sub-chapter to the *manipulation theory* both in relation to journalism and Translation Studies. We felt it necessary to introduce this theory precisely because the end product (the translated article) undergoes, most of the time, modifications able to affect not only its form, but also its content as compared to the sources. In the opinion of the (professional) journalists interviewed, the processing of international news is not performed with a view to manipulating the Romanian readers but mostly in order to enrich their information horizon and/or to clarify the information, objectivity and honesty being primary requirements in the journalistic field. On the other hand, we must emphasise that every reference to media manipulation (via translation) in this thesis must not necessarily and entirely be understood in a negative way; manipulation should also be considered as a rewriting technique of adjustment, according to the receiving context of the journalistic texts. At the same time, as underlined by the journalists interviewed, a certain degree of subjectivity is inevitable because as long as the press is made by humans and not by robots, there is no one hundred per cent independent publication, and nor will there be any.

The chapters in the applied part of the thesis are organised in a similar manner. They both begin with a short introduction to the topic under discussion, followed by a series of case studies, and, finally, by a first set of conclusions. Nevertheless, not only are the topics of two corpora (mentioned earlier) different, but also some of the objectives set forth for our investigations are distinct. Thus, the main objectives of Chapter IV are: to identify the cases of news translation in the Romanian press and the main translation strategies used inside the departments of international news of the three quality newspapers monitored (*Adevărul*, *Jurnalul Național* and *Evenimentul Zilei*), as well as of the news agencies, such as Mediafax, or of certain local newspapers (*Ziarul de Iaşi*); to retrace the flow of international news from source to print; to emphasise the types of international events favoured by the national press and the role of translation in constructing the articles into Romanian; to identify the

main functions performed by those articles. The objectives of Chapter V are different. Here, our aim is, in particular, to monitor other issues, paying special attention to the modification of meaning and the propagation of ethnic images by means of the press articles, even though we do not lose sight of the flow of international news, the translation strategies used for their presentation (accompanied by graphics where the examples are more interesting, such as: *Examples 1, 4, 7, 8, 10 and 11*) or the functions of those articles.

Thus, **Chapter IV** develops four main topics, which were, in fact, the most debated issues in the 2011 Romanian media, and which consequently became, due to the media's *agenda setting* function, central to the Romanian society: *The Arab world*, *Natural disasters*, *The European Union* and *The Schengen area*. The monitored newspapers were mainly *Adevărul*, *Jurnalul Național* and *Evenimentul Zilei* during March 11-31, 2011 (283 articles) and May 2-31, 2011 (355 articles). We have also analysed 5 articles from *Adevărul*, *Jurnalul Național*, *Mediafax* and *Ziarul de Iași* for the February 2-4, 2011 period, one article dating back to December 2011 (*Adevărul*) and another to February 2012 (*Jurnalul Național*). This corpus was used not only for the analyses grouped in the case studies, but also for the statistics (illustrated by the tables, graphics and figures) meant to support our investigations.

The case studies are preceded by two introductory sub-chapters offering a bird's eye view on the departments of international news of the Romanian newspapers. They also represent an important departing point for the analyses in this applied part by defining the main translation strategies we will operate with in this thesis, namely: *transediting*, *rephrasing* and *literal translation*. They are translation and editing strategies journalists frequently resort to in order to "adjust" international news to the expectations of the target audience. Whereas literal translation presupposes a faithful rendition of the source texts (or parts thereof), transediting and rephrasing imply more complex modifications, such as permutations, dislocations, change of paragraph order or of the order events are presented (in the case of transediting) or meaning preservation, but

under a different form, according to the linguistic acceptability of the source text (in the case of rephrasing).

The case studies in Chapter IV are preceded by a short informative introduction meant to familiarise the readers with the topics under discussion. The departing point of the 12 examples analysed were the Romanian texts. In fact, the articles were carefully selected so that they could reflect the main tendencies of the Romanian press, as well as the diverse translation strategies used inside the departments of international news of the central press. For each article we provide figures illustrating, on the one hand, the percentage of information preserved from the source text, and, on the other, the main translation strategies found in the target text.

The analysis of the articles in the corpus has unveiled some interesting issues, such as the fact that the selection of international news presented in the Romanian press is massively dictated by economic reasons because the Romanian newspapers (unlike the foreign famous publications) cannot afford to send as many field correspondents abroad. Also, the space allocated to foreign news is smaller and totally insufficient for a specialised analysis of the international events which might influence us at political and diplomatic level.

Our analyses have also revealed the predominance of the informative function (exposed in sub-chapter II.2) in presenting this type of news, the journalists trying to preserve, as much as possible, their objectivity, although they show a certain orientation (probably justified by political reasons) towards the American press. Other tendencies of the Romanian press are the creation of certain stereotypical images for the Romanian readers through the "demonisation" of some international figures (for example, Bin Laden, Mubarak) and their presentation as mainly negative characters or the adaptation of each and every international event to the Romanian realities (*Examples* 4, 5, 6 and 7).

For **Chapter V**, the monitoring period ranged between 22 June 2009 - 31 March 2012 (50 articles from *Financial Times*, *Daily Mail*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Sun*, *The Independent*, *The Ely Standard*, *El País*, *Rue 89*, *The*

Belfast Telegraph, *Le Figaro*, *Times Union*, *Press Europe*, *The Beachside Resident*, *Reuters*); we also used two articles published in 2003 and 2006, the years preceding Romania's accession to the European Union, which we found in *The Telegraph* and *The New York Times*. Unlike the previous chapter, where we recurred to both print and online publications, in this chapter all the foreign and Romanian news sources analysed are online sources. The 4 case studies analysed here relate to: *The Gypsies*, *The Immigrants*, *Tourism* and *Socio-political issues*. They seem to be the most highly debated topics in the international press as far as Romania and the Romanians in general are concerned, subsequently taken as (predominantly) negative examples in the Romanian press.

In this chapter, we provide 11 examples having this time as a departing point the source text instead of the target text, our investigations proving the existence, now and then, of several source texts for the same target text (*Examples* 1, 5 and 7). On the one hand, the case studies analysed focus on the way the Romanian press decided to project Romania's image (as presented in the international press) by means of (re)translations of the articles relating to the Gypsies and the immigrants of Romanian nationality living in different European cities. On the other hand, they also focus on the way in which the foreign journalists usually refer to our country based on easily perceptible deficiencies. For instance, the Romanian healthcare system or orphanages are seen as a "legacy" of the Communist regime. Even the articles relating to tourism are ambiguous, the foreigners feeling attracted to the beauty of the Transylvanian landscapes (beauty promoted by personalities like Prince Charles or Sir John Ure – *Examples* 8 and 9) and to the myth of Dracula (*Example* 7).

This chapter also shapes certain stereotypes (relating to Ceauşescu and Dracula) and prejudices (relating, in particular, to the Romanian Gypsies and immigrants). In search of sensationalism, partly dictated by the audience addressed by the publication concerned, the Romanian press seems to preserve this negative image in the target language, which makes us state that the

Romanian articles most probably have an ethical and didactic, but also a political function.

Whereas in Chapter IV the function of these press articles was mainly informative, in Chapter V the predominant functions are the expressive and operative (cf. Reiss) ones. They target the readers' feelings and emotions, and even to determine a certain reaction from their part, to change convictions or occasion concrete actions. Also, whereas in Chapter IV the main translation strategy identified for adjusting the source text to the expectations and needs of the target audience is transediting, the Romanian journalists resorting to permutations, reformulations, omissions and additions, in this chapter literal translation predominates, being reflected in the word-for-word information taken from the source text, even if parts thereof are intentionally omitted due to a certain ideology embraced by the Romanian journalist. A first hypothesis resulting from our findings would be that transediting is a translation strategy used predominantly for the articles published in print (see Figure 55), which needs, more often than not, a more elaborate treatment of the topic and a more detailed analysis of the information on the events taking place at international level. On the other hand, literal translation is a characteristic of the online articles (see Figure 56), which address a relatively young and inexperienced audience and who does not need thorough analyses or a high amount of information.

As far as the manipulation in the national written press is concerned, we have detected more instances of manipulation in the case of the international news regarding Romania's image abroad as compared to those presenting international events in general, maybe also due to the more subjective perspective present in the first case. The main manipulation strategies identified in our analyses refer to: distorsions of the truth or recontextualisations, exaggerations or hyperbolisations, headlines, omissions, clichés and the extensive use of the operative function (see the examples from pages 316-317 in the final conclusions).

The most important graphics, figures and tables synthesising and clarifying information were obviously integrated inside the main

content of the paper. Other similar visual supports relating to details or occupying too much space are nevertheless given in the Annexes.

In conclusion, we hope that the results of our research have succeeded in emphasising the presence of translation as a daily indispensable tool in the dissemination of international news, as well as in clarifying, at least in part, the way in which source news are (trans)edited according to the preferences and expectations of the target audience, i.e. the Romanian one. Also, by underlying the processes involving translation, our approach has not purported itself to undermine in any way the prestige of the journalistic profession, the specificity of which has been emphasised throughout this thesis. On the contrary, our contribution to this new direction of interdisciplinary research is meant to highlight, in a more prominent way, the complexity and importance of this activity.