RISK MITIGATION IN TRANSLATOR DECISIONS

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Abstract: The translator's risk management while translating can involve several general dispositions, of which risk taking, risk avoidance, and risk transfer have been modeled previously (Pym 2015). In this paper we propose a fourth type of disposition, risk mitigation, which was identified by Matsushita (2016) through empirical research based on Pym's model. Risk mitigation is a disposition where the translator incurs one kind of risk in order to reduce another. Analyzing authentic examples in multiple languages, we ask whether mitigation is fundamentally different from the other three types, whether it involves a specific restriction on how much effort should rationally be invested by the translator, and whether a general logic of trade-offs is applicable. We further propose that mitigation correlates with factors both on the production side of the translator's discourse, where it enhances translatorial visibility, and on the reception side, where it can respond to imprecise identification of the target public.

Keywords: risk management, risk mitigation, translator decisions, news translation, translator visibility

1. INTRODUCTION

The decisions that translators make while translating can be studied as a particular form of risk management. This involves a non-binary approach (since risk is estimated in degrees, and there are more than two ways to manage it) that is potentially able to model the specificity of translation without assuming any attainment of equivalence: it is enough that the translator's decisions seek to avoid communicative failure while retaining trust in the translator.

Seen in these terms, the translator's risk management can involve several general dispositions, of which risk taking, risk avoidance, and risk transfer have been modeled previously (Pym 2015). Matsushita (2016), working in part from Pym, has more recently identified a fourth type of disposition, risk mitigation, where the translator incurs one kind of risk in order to reduce another. This is the kind of risk management to be explored here.

Analyzing a series of real-world examples, we ask whether mitigation is fundamentally different from the other three types, we propose a principle for how much effort should be invested in mitigation strategies, and we compare reception-based and production-based ways of explaining mitigation decisions. The examples are drawn from previous studies, notably from a research project on Japanese news translation (Matsushita 2014, 2016), from the history of Spanish Bibles (Pym 2000), and from accounts of personal translation practice (Pym 1993).

2. WHAT IS RISK MITIGATION?

Here we use the term "risk mitigation" to describe situations where the translator accepts one kind of risk but attempts in some way to protect against the possible negative consequences of that risk by incurring a second risk, without actually removing the initial risk. In business studies, this is sometimes generalized as "risk reduction" or "risk limitation" (as in Akbari 2009: 514), while "risk mitigation" is sometimes used to describe the whole of risk management (on the argument that the term "management" cannot be applied in situations like natural disasters, so everything we do can only reduce risk). With apologies for the possible confusion, here we stick with the restricted sense of the term "mitigation" as risk-incurring protection against an initial risk that is *not* thereby removed.

A classic example of risk mitigation would be the use of a fixed sprinkler system to put out fires in a building. The sprinklers do not remove the risk of fire, they merely reduce the possible consequences; at the same time, they create the risk of damage from water. In this kind of mitigation, there is a trade-off logic at work: the offsetting of one kind of risk (fire) involves the retention of another kind of risk (water damage), where the latter is judged to be lesser. It is thus worthwhile mitigating the risk of fire by incurring the risk of water damage. That is an example of what we are calling risk mitigation here, characterized by an *asymmetry* between the two or more risks involved. We are asking if something like this can happen in translation, and if so, how and why.

3. PREVIOUS STUDIES

Translation has been studied as risk management by a small but growing number of researchers (Wilss 2005; Pym 2005, 2008a, 2008b, 2015; Akbari 2009; Lammers 2011; Hui 2012; Matsushita 2014, 2016; Canfora & Ottmann 2015, 2016; Cornelius & Feinauer 2017). Some of these approaches (e.g. Akbari 2009; Lammers 2011; Canfora and Ottmann 2015, 2016) concern translation as just another business, without paying special attention to the specificities of the translation process. Others (e.g. Wilss 2005) take categories from general risk-management theory and explore to what extent they can be applied to translation processes. The approaches that most interest us here, however, are those that also work bottom-up, from analysis of what translators actually do when they are translating, and that then attempt to relate that kind of risk analysis with the situational risks involved in the situations in which translators work. That is, we are most interested in approaches that allow a dialectical epistemology involving both cognitive and situational factors.

Within bottom-up studies of translation (mostly without situational factors), several authors have indicated reasons why something like risk mitigation could be happening. For instance, mitigation would seem to be what Vinay and Darbelnet had in mind for the translation procedures they called "compensation": "Any loss […] should be recovered by the procedures of compensation" (1958/1972: 169). Unfortunately, Vinay and Darbelnet confusingly used the term "compensation" in both a restricted sense, as a solution located "at another place in the text" (1958/1972: 86), and in a general sense, where it is psychologically involved in *all* non-

obligatory translation solutions (1958/1972: 199). This wider sense appears to have been picked up by Hervey and Higgins (1992/2002), who allocate a whole chapter to "compensation strategies," understood as solutions where "important ST effects are rendered approximately in the TT by means other than those used in the ST. In other words, *one type of translation loss is mitigated by the deliberate introduction of another*" (1992/2002: 43, italics ours). This is coming much closer to what we are calling mitigation here. And even closer would seem to be Wilss's description of the translator as "constantly seeking to develop risk-management-sensitive compensation strategies [*RM-abwägende Kompensationsstrategien*]" (2005: 658), although we find the presence of such strategies rather difficult to locate in Wilss's examples.

These few mentions remain general and quite vague. They need to be concretized through a careful definition of concepts and a systematic comparison of examples. That is what we hope to do here.

4. A PRELIMINARY QUESTION OF EFFORT

Canfora and Ottmann (2015, 2016) recognize that translators engage in risk acceptance, risk avoidance, risk transfer, and then something called "risk-based translation processes," which would seem to occupy the place of what we are calling "risk mitigation." However, Canfora and Ottmann then describe their "risk-based processes" as specific workflows that involve greater or lesser degrees of checking, revision, and verification. This amounts to saying that the greater the risk involved in the translation, the more general effort should be put into the translation process. That is unproblematic and perhaps commonsensical: the proposal takes a principle of effort distribution (work harder where the risk is greater) and applies it to the interventions of checkers, revisers, and clients. In order to mitigate risk, invest more effort in the production process.

That basic principle of effort distribution must be part and parcel of whatever kind of mitigation one wants to talk about. Since we are looking at ways of offsetting rather than avoiding risk (non-translation would be the maximum avoidance strategy, after all), whatever we do is going to involve added effort. The principle is obvious but not banal, since it allows us to say something about *how much* effort should be involved: the effort cannot be greater in value than the difference between the primary risk (damage by fire, for example) and the secondary risk (damage by water):

v(risk 1) – v(risk 2) > v(mitigation effort)

where value (v) can be estimated any way you like (in most research projects the easiest common denominator is estimated hours of work). If this general relationship does not obtain, then the risk is probably not worth mitigating in that way. Small or infrequent risks thus tend not to warrant special mitigation procedures.

Are there general principles of mitigation that concern distributed effort? If we look at risk management in insurance, for example, we see that the basic principle of mitigation is the *pooling* of individual risks: let's say, three translators working on the one text might thus run fewer risks than just one. We can call this the "pooling principle." Do we find anything like it happening in actual translation practices?

One can easily imagine that when a translation workflow has several people working together, potentially helping each other to solve problems or at least correcting each other, there could be something like the elimination of aberrant interpretations. Such scenarios would include the following:

- Multiple revisions are an obvious case where different minds are involved in the problem-solving process, increasing effort in order to avoid the risks involved when just one mind is at work (Canfora and Ottmann 2015, 2016). This principle is enshrined in EN 15038, for example, a process-based European standard for translation service provision that deals explicitly with the need for each translation to be reviewed by someone other than the translator, and that distinguishes between checking, revision, review, proofreading, and final verification.
- In most subtitling communities there is revision and discussion, either peer-based or hierarchical, particularly in communities comprising fans of particular films and series.
- Translation problems are publicly discussed and often resolved on social forums such as Proz.com, where several translators typically offer different solutions to a particular problem and interested members of the community decide which is the best solution.
- For that matter, previous human translations are stored in the databases used for translation memory systems or statistical machine translation, which can be seen as

allowing the postediting translator to consult what previous translators have done with similar problems.

- On an even more commonplace level, simple consultations of a bilingual dictionary or quick web searches involve distributed cognition of a sort: the individual translator calls on the work of others.

Looking at these instances, it seems that collective workflows are an important part of contemporary translation practices, in part thanks to new technologies: communication between translators has been made much easier, and the use of translation memories and machine translation means that there are a lot of mistakes to correct through processes of revision, reviewing, and post-editing.

That said, can these various modes of distributed cognition really be seen as pooling risk? The issue is not clear. If we consider the mental attitudes of the translators, not to mention their professional relations, they would seem to be quite unlike the pooling of risks in fire insurance. Translators typically look to see what the "machine" has proposed, for instance, without considering that the actual solutions in the statistical machines were first put forward by humans. They may impose the assumed authority of their own preferences or the inside knowledge of norms and style sheets. And when working as professionals in a competitive market, they can just as easily bluff their way through a multitude of minor uncertainties. There is little, in such attitudes, that necessarily resembles our narrow sense of mitigation.

As a companion to the principle of risk pooling, let us now propose that each new partner in the process, each new bringer of effort, incurs new risks, and that those risks are in an asymmetric relationship (some are greater than others). How increased effort can involve risk is best seen in cases of failure, when effort is *not* distributed in accordance with appropriate risks. For example, Spanish students of English not infrequently come out with expressions like, "Spain is a great country, overcoat in summer" (this is an unhappily authentic example). The genesis is not hard to recover if you know Spanish: *sobre todo* in Spanish is literally "above/over all", meaning "especially" or "particularly," but a student in doubt might have recourse to a dictionary, invest extra effort, and find "overcoat" as a rendition of *sobretodo* (with no space, as in the Catalan *sobretot*). The investment of extra effort (consulting the dictionary) incurs a risk of further error, especially when the student somehow trusts the dictionary rather than common

sense. In this case, it would probably have been better to go with intuitive literalism: "over all in summer" is not right but at least the sense is recoverable; "above all in summer" would have navigated the risk quite successfully; omission of the phrase could perhaps have worked even better.

The problematic element in these examples is the nature of the mitigating risk (the equivalent of water damage, in our analogy). It could be that each added step, each new consultation, introduces an added risk: do we really trust this source more than the others? When different renditions contradict each other (when two experts disagree), how much more effort (further experts) will then be needed? This principle clearly contradicts the idea that several heads think better than one, that distributed cognition is better than individual decision-making, that a pooling of minds necessarily reduces risk.

Let us leave those two principles there, facing each other across a divide that can only be defined by the multiple factors involved in actual cases. There need be no grand winner of that particular contest (pooling and asymmetric mitigation can both be used at the same time). The more common failure is not particularly the trust invested in the other, but the excessive investment of effort in the solving of problems that are ultimately trivial. Avoid that excess, and you are already gaining something from risk management.

The more interesting question for us is not *whether* extra efforts should be invested but *what kinds of things* can be done with the extra efforts.

5. EXAMPLES OF MITIGATION

5.1. Multiple Presentations

A variant on distributed cognition is when the one translator offers more than one solution for a translation problem, effectively working like a second translator: if there is no communicative success with A, then there might be with B.

Perhaps the most common of these solutions is when a transcription of the foreign term is coupled with a straight rendition. A simple example is offered by Newmark (1981: 31) when he suggests that the German term *Gemeinde* can be rendered as "*Gemeinde* (German unit of local government)". If the text user recognizes the German term, success is assured, and if not, the information in parentheses gives enough of a clue for most purposes. Of course, there is still a

risk that the information is insufficient and the user is left perplexed, but that secondary risk is certainly less than the primary risk of leaving the German term without any gloss at all. And the added effort involved, the simple addition of the information in parentheses, is minimal, if and when the translator knows that such multiple translations are legitimate.

A similar example is identified by Matsushita (2016: 170-172) in the Japanese newspaper *Nikkei Shimbun* of June 20, 2013. The paper quotes Ben Bernanke, then Chair of the U.S. Federal Reserve. The Japanese journalist authored the article as identified by the byline, but where Bernanke mentions that the risks of a recession "have diminished since the fall," the word "diminished" was given in English, along with the Japanese translation. Since "diminished" could be rendered in several different ways in Japanese with varying degrees of intensity, the journalist offers *gentai shita* (減退した) first, followed by "diminished" in parentheses, both within Japanese quotation marks. Like the Oracle of Delphi, the Chair of the Federal Reserve pronounces words that everyone tries to interpret. So the exact form of those words is extremely important, lest major financial decisions be based on a faulty or partisan translation. The presence of the Japanese version certainly mitigates the communicative risk that would be incurred by assuming that the entire readership can understand English perfectly (if that were so, why would they be reading this in Japanese?), at the same time as it incurs the lesser risk that the journalist-translator's words be mistaken as an authoritative pronouncement. Beyond the workings of this particular trade-off, the strategy in this case also operates as an instance of risk transfer. If the prediction is wrong, then the fault will lie with Bernanke and those who interpret his words, not with the translator, who self-consciously here offers no more than a version.

Mitigation through multiple presentation can be made rather more adventurous. The added information, for example, could be put in a translator's note, in a glossary, or perhaps in a translator's preface, if and when the problem is important for an understanding of the text as a whole. These would all be modes of mitigation through multiple presentation, playing with the asymmetries of risks.

5.2. Multiple Translations

A slightly different solution would be the actual presentation of more than one translation, with or without traces of the start text.[1] Kayo Matsushita's study of Japanese news translating

includes the following rendition by an interpreter at a press conference given in 2013 by Mayor Hashimoto, the outspoken Mayor of Osaka, who is addressing the very delicate issue of Japanese Imperial Army's involvement in the forced prostitution of foreign women during the Second World War (Matsushita 2016: 152):

ST: この国家の意思として、組織的に女性を拉致した、国家の意思として組織的に人身売買をしたという点が、おそらく世界のみなさんから、日本は特有だと非難される理由になってるかと思います

[I think the reason why people around the world criticize Japan as being *peculiar* is because it was the will of the State to systematically abduct women; it was the will of the State to systematically commit human trafficking.]

The interpreter expends particular effort on the expression *tokuyū da*（特有だ), for which "peculiar" seems not to be enough:

TT: It is this point that seems, I think, in the eyes of the people of the world to separate Japan from all of the other nations and all of the other peoples of the world. It is the area that Japan is considered to be *unique and peculiar and odd and different* from everyone else. [italics ours]

Why four English synonyms for the one Japanese expression? It is perhaps significant that the mayor was looking at the interpreter as she worked, sometimes nodding in agreement but generally indicating that he was following the English. The speaker thus becomes the prime end-user, or at least the most powerful one. So what English word did he want for this high-risk expression *tokuyū da*? Four short synonyms, like formation bombing, will probably hit the sense he wants somewhere, at the risk of three strikes being slightly off-target, and the risk of not getting the strike is presumably judged to be greater than the resulting diffusion of meaning effects. The ultimate effect is perhaps *like* generalization or the use of a superordinate, but here the explicit use of multiple translation should count as a case of risk mitigation.

The same press conference includes enough cases of multiple translation for the solution to be considered a general strategy. The following is an instance where the solution type includes

recourse to the ST expression:

> ST4: ただ、この慰安婦問題に関して、不合理な議論はもう終止符を打つべきだと思っています
>
> [However, I think that we should put an end to such irrational debate regarding this comfort women issue.]
>
> TT4: Having said all of this however, I believe that we have now reached a point in time where we should perhaps put an end to what I would call… *fugori* is the word that the mayor is using… perhaps irrational, or unreasonable arguments or debates.
>
> (Matsushita 2016: 156)

Here the risk management is similar, except that the use of the Japanese term introduces a change of footing: the interpreter refers to the speaker in the third person, thereby assuming a first-person discourse for herself (technically breaking with her translational use of the alien-I). One could argue that all multiple translating involves at least implicit traces of this change of footing, but here it becomes particularly explicit. In a later interview, the interpreter explained something of her reasoning:

> Risk management, I am always very, very aware of. Which is why I throw out so many different translations so that I can satisfy everybody who might be listening. Absolutely. And I always try, first of all, to give the official translation first, and then to make the people who think that's not good enough or that doesn't explain enough [satisfy], then I always get… throw out these others, and I always try to make sure I don't go too far […] I always apologize from time to time if I see that maybe I have gone too far or gotten something wrong so that people develop a feeling of trust for the interpreter.
>
> (Interview with Kayo Matsushita, November 9, 2014; Matsushita 2016: 159)

The intention to use mitigation seems clear enough here, although whether or not this builds trust in the mediator could depend on many further factors, including the attitude of the speaker-user (the mayor) and the cultural norms in play. In another situation, trust might also be sought through the authoritative use of just one rendition, with silent bravura rather than public apology.

The following is a similar example from Anthony Pym's commercial translation practice (recounted in Pym 1993). It dates from 1992, when there was much ado about Columbus's first voyage to the Americas exactly 500 years previously. The Spanish start text sought to cash in on the publicity in order to attract tourists to the Canary Islands:

CANARIAS, otro mundo que debes descubrir.
¿Quieres descubrir un mundo nuevo?
Haz como Colón, pasa por Canarias.

A literal translation is possible:

The Canary Islands, another world you must discover.
Do you want to discover a new world?
Do what Columbus did. Pass by the Canaries.

The key elements in the text pick up on the wider commemorations: "New World", "Columbus," and the little-known fact that Columbus actually set off from the Canary Islands (where he found a lover). If those elements are not there, the connection with the publicity campaign would probably fail. The literal translation nevertheless incurs a more important risk: "pass by" in English really means "avoid," which would not bring in many tourists. That risk can be avoided by using something like "drop in on the Canary Islands," "have a stop-over in the Canary Islands," or "come and take a look at the Canary Islands". These, however, run into a second kind of risk: they are all too long to be good publicity. In fact, why should there be repetition of "another/new world"? Surely the whole thing is too heavy to be catchy in English? So what should a translator do?

In this case, the translator decided to submit the following two versions:

The Canary Islands. A whole world waiting to be discovered.
Looking for a new world? See the Canaries first.
Columbus did.

The Canary Islands.

Looking for a new world? See the Canaries first.

Columbus did.

Both versions were then sent, along with a note saying that the shorter version was better but the longer version was quantitatively more exact. The publicity agency could then make the appropriate decision, although the translator was never informed about the fate of his work.

In terms of risk management, the main risk to be mitigated here probably concerns the sensitivities of the client. Whoever produced the long start text was not likely to be enthralled by a translator cutting out whole phrases. But whoever was employing the start-text-author would perhaps be happy enough with the proposed improvement, as hopefully would be the end-user of the text. The problem, in this example, was that the text reached the translator through an agency; the identity of the end client was not revealed; the translator had to work blind, as is often the case. The mitigation process was thus rather like placing bets on different client identities, without any real hope that the true identity would be revealed. It is thus the *plurality of possible clients or end users* that produces the risk here, and the mitigation is ultimately based on the construal of those various possibilities.

This same key factor can be found in the discourse of the Japanese interpreter, who refers to the "official" version, and then to a range of other people who would not be wholly satisfied with it. The bets, in both these cases, are placed on different receivers, who are then the cause of the underlying asymmetry.

As for the effort involved in the Columbus case, the removal of a few phrases was not particularly onerous. But the translator never received further publicity slogans to translate, much to his chagrin. Mitigation can help, but it does not eliminate the risks – it is not the same thing as simple risk avoidance.

6. ALTERNATIVE READERSHIPS

The use of mitigation can sometimes operate like a contingency plan of the kind "if procedure A fails, then try procedure B." When the translator simply produces multiple translations, the operation of such a plan is not usually evident: the text user is offered both version A *and*

Version B (and so on), usually without any visible instruction that B is to be used only when A fails.

Something like a contingency plan might nevertheless be at work in cases like Bible translations where one solution is put in the main text and other readings are relegated to miniscule footnotes. The text user might then understand: go with the main reading, and only if that incurs risks should you go rummaging around in the notes. And if this doesn't work for you, perhaps you should look for a Bible translation more suited to you.

A litmus test for any Christian Bible is the dogma of the virgin birth (Isaiah 7:14, echoed in Matthew). The Hebrew has (עלמה *'almah*); Jerome's Vulgate clearly has the word *virgo* (virgin); the Greek of the Septuagint has παρθένος (young unmarried woman, maiden, or virgin). The multiple-translation *Complutense Polyglot* (Cisneros 1514), intended to establish the doctrinal text for once and for all, efficiently aligns those three words with each other (since the words share the same superscript numbers), so עלמה= *virgo* = παρθένος in Isaiah, justifying another *virgo* in Matthew 1:23. The doctrine of the virgin birth is thus reinforced with the authority of three languages and simple equivalence. If, however, a text user is aware that the Hebrew word עלמהcan also mean "young girl," some contingency plan might be needed. In some copies of the Spanish-language Ferrara Bible (1553), the Jewish translators use the term "moça" (young girl), which has the virtue of generality but runs the risk of contradicting Church doctrine, and did so in years when the Inquisition was active. But that translation was ostensibly for use by Sephardi Jews, for whom the introduction of virgins would have been even more high-risk. Yet another solution is found in the *Biblia de Alba*, translated by a Jewish rabbi for Christian clients (see Pym 2000: 104ff.): the Hebrew *'almah* is rendered in Spanish phonetically as "alma" (soul), which will never be wrong (Mary did have a soul, and the Spanish word does look exactly like the Hebrew) but will never be a virgin with surety. The in-text strategy here is pure risk transfer (the translator reproduced exactly what was in the start text, at least on the phonetic level). To cover his bets, though, the translator then explained the doctrine of the virgin birth in the accompanying notes, wherein his Christian readers were invited to find satisfaction.

In this example we once again find that the use of mitigation corresponds to a multiple readership, in this case with clear tensions between the different receiving groups. Indeed, the problem of the imprecise target audience can be found in virtually all our examples, on one level or another: the translator of economic oracles works for an audience that may or may not know

English well; the Japanese press conference interpreter is effectively working for the mayor, but she is painfully aware that there are many others listening; the Columbine publicity was translated so as not to offend the client and to appeal to a future English-speaking audience. The various strategies of intrepid and cunning Bible translators are perhaps not so different.

7. ENHANCED VISIBILITY

In all these modes of mitigation, there is some degree of implicit self-reference to the act of translating. For some translation regimes, such self-referencing is considered norm-breaking, since the discursive position of the translator is supposed to be invisible, along with the translatorial footing (the translating translator in principle has no "I"). All mitigation should thus, to some degree, challenge the ideal of translatorial invisibility.

In some cases, this challenge is so pronounced as to suggest a specific kind of mitigation. Examples can be found in translations that are somehow obliged to go back into the start language of a text. Here is one such instance.

In 2013, following the bombing at the Boston Marathon, the Japanese novelist Haruki Murakami published a piece in *The New Yorker* titled "Boston, from one citizen of the world who calls himself a runner" (Manabe 2013), which was originally written in Japanese and translated into English. The Japanese newspaper *Asahi Shimbun* then published partial translations of that piece, without having access to the initial Japanese version. So how should they proceed? If they just published a straight translation, it would surely differ from the initial Japanese version and this would almost certainly eventually be picked up by the newspaper's readers, many of whom were fans of Murakami. If they did not translate at all, perhaps by offering some kind of summary or paraphrase, the impact of the piece would almost certainly be compromised: the reader would want to know what Murakami actually wrote. The solution in this case was to steer a course between those two extremes. The newspaper added the following note in Japanese: "This contribution was translated from Japanese into English and the excerpts which appear in this article are translations by the reporter," followed by the byline of the New York correspondent who filed the article. This particularly honest form of visibility mitigates the risk of readers being outraged by a false presentation of a very popular novelist, even as it incurs

the lesser risk of compromised media impact: this is what Murakami contributed, even though these are not his actual words.

By pushing this logic just a little further we reach something we might call "translation by confession." Pym (1993: 136-137) recounts the case of a letter he had to translate to invite Scottish sportsmen to the Canary Islands. The Spanish start text requested a "levantador de piedra escocesa," which can be rendered literally as "a lifter of Scottish stone." In those pre-Wikipedia days, the translator had no way of locating local terms for the sport (the impressive Gaelic of *Clach cuid fir* and *Clachan-ultaich* can now be found on Wikipedia: men lift big heavy stones as a test of their strength). The translator was thus obliged to guess, much like the Japanese back-translator of Murakami. But then, any guess was sure to be wrong, since specific sports have specific names. What to do?

The solution in this case was not unlike the Japanese journalist who publicly declared his translatorial position, or perhaps the Romanian translator who inserted a history lesson. The final letter read:

> Please let us know if there is any chance of having a Scottish rock lifter come here as well (there must be a more technical term for the sport, but I'm afraid we don't know it).
>
> (Pym 1993: 137)

The bet here was thus that the friendly tone would outweigh the lack of a technical term ("rock" actually turns out to be much less appropriate than "stone"). This was not without a certain rationale: the Scottish sportsmen would come to have a good time and teach the Canary Islanders something about their sport; they would be less likely to come if everything were known already. The secondary risk, of course, was that the translator's client, who had to sign the letter, would not appreciate being attributed with the translator's confessed ignorance. And the "unknown" part of that risk was the extent to which the client could follow the English and appreciated the strategy – in translator-client relations, and much else, a little English can be a dangerous thing. There was thus more than simple visibility at stake.

Linguistically, the mitigation here involves use of a "we" that logically includes both the translator and the client as one voice in the discourse production. There is thus enhanced visibility, similar to the case of the back-translating journalist who has to declare his discursive

position. And something similar is found again in the interpreter who mentions "*fugori* is the word the mayor is using": as soon as the discourse-producing mayor is mentioned in the *third* person, the translator is necessarily in the *first* person, and the invisibility of the alien-I is lost. One could more generally posit that, each time alternative translations are presented, the receiver is necessarily aware of the subjective presence of the mediator. So in all these cases, it seems, mitigation entails enhanced visibility.

One could go further here. Each time translators protrude beyond their cloak of discursive invisibility, they incur a heightened risk of being scrutinized as individuals, as interveners, or more simply as discourse producers. The loss of invisibility is itself a mode of risk-taking, to be counterbalanced by risk of multiple presentation or whatever particular solution is being employed. That is, loss of invisibility is not just a *result* of certain forms of risk mitigation, it is *an element in the risk calculation itself*: the translator has to calculate the specific risks of enhanced visibility, alongside whatever other risks may be pertinent

Is that enough of an explanation for why translators use risk mitigation?

8. CONCLUSIONS

We have shown that translators can indeed manage risks through mitigation of the asymmetric kind. We have suggested that this kind of risk management extends beyond simple principles of pooled effort or enhanced work on high-risk items, and that it should respect the commonsensical principle that the effort invested in mitigation should be of less value than the difference between the risks involved.

Our analysis of examples has then proposed two main ways of conceptualizing mitigation. On the one hand, we have found that translators use mitigation when they are unsure about exactly who will be receiving the translation, or when there are several contradictory receiving profiles that can be envisaged. On the other, we have observed that the plurality of renditions and the changes in discursive footing that are occasioned by mitigation can directly enhance the visibility of the translator, to the extent of challenging the limits of the Western translation form and thus incurring an additional risk in itself.

Although there is no contradiction between these two approaches, we suggest they are unequal in explanatory power. Hypotheses concerning under-defined or different reception

groups retain a *causal* potential that cannot easily be extended to questions of discursive footing, which operate more as calculable *effects*. In other words, one might hypothesize that it is *because* the translator is unsure about who will be receiving the translation that mitigation strategies are used (to be sure, in places occasioned by the difficulties of the start text), while it is *because* mitigation is sought that the discursive footing changes, greater visibility results, and the risk of direct discursive exposure enters into the calculations.[2]

Our modeling here has a certain critical potential with respect to several general theories of translation. Most obviously, the use of quite sophisticated strategies like mitigation, which tend to be deployed to handle isolated points of difficulty, should challenge the huge binarisms that would classify whole translations as being of one kind or the other: foreignizing vs. domesticating, overt vs. covert, documentary vs. instrumental, and so on. The categories of risk management offer a far more subtle and dynamic view of how translators make decisions. Further, on this occasion the similarly grand theorizations of visibility should temporarily take a back seat, as we ask more immediately *why* translators act as they do, rather than merely observe what they have done in their texts. And for that matter, cases of mitigation show the limits of essentialist notions of *Skopos* that assume translators fulfill just one purpose for just one client and just one target audience. Here we have been concerned with far greater degrees of doubt and contradiction.

Enhanced awareness of mitigation will hopefully be of use in translator training, since it offers another string to the novice's bow. The various principles, logics, and types of mitigation are things that students can be made aware of through critical case studies and activities, widening the student's intuitive awareness of possible solutions rather than have them apply exact calculations

That said, we have no evidence that mitigation is in any way specific to translation processes, or that the problem of the imprecise public is not a general feature of printed and electronic communication in general. The strategies that we find in translations might occur in many other discourse genres as well, albeit mostly without the problematics of the alien-I.

Overarching these propositions is our general belief that cases of mitigation indicate the extent to which translators actively manage risks while translating. The capacity to run a minor risk in order to reduce a major risk involves considerable calculation and sophistication, although one must doubt that many of the trade-offs ever reach the stage of fully conscious decisions.

When questioned explicitly, professionals like the interpreter working for the Mayor of Osaka can indeed elaborate on their reasons for using mitigation, but that degree of awareness is perhaps ultimately not necessary. It is enough that translators apply mitigation instinctively, as a strategy that makes sense and enhances communication.

9. FURTHER RESEARCH

The various possibilities opened by the risk-management approach can be pursued theoretically but also empirically, through repeated testing on data. If not, our models are likely to go the way of other approaches based on assumptions about processes: Skopos, deconstruction, and general hermeneutics are all locked into repeating their truths like self-fulfilling prophesies, without moving forward through a research program. In saying that risk mitigation is something that translators *can* use, we are simply marking out a phenomenon about which there is still much to be discovered.

We would thus like to sketch out a path that works through the testing of hypotheses. For example, since we have assumed that doubts about audience identity are the underlying cause of mitigation, we might explore this by hypothesizing that the greater the possible differences between future receivers (including clients), the more mitigation is used by the translator. Similarly, we have suggested that enhanced visibility is a consequence of mitigation, which leads to the hypothesis that the more visible the translator, the more mitigation they use (and vice versa). Or again, since we assume that mitigation requires a certain degree of professional sophistication, we might hypothesize that the more experienced the translator, the better they are disposed to using mitigation.

The causal nature of any such quantitative correlations will always be in doubt; recourse is eventually required to qualitative factors concerning specific situations or evidence of translator dispositions, as has been possible in the various cases presented here, where interviews and the researcher-as-translator have provided the qualitative data. One nevertheless need not renounce the possibility of detecting risk strategies on the basis of corpora of translations, perhaps by picking up specific low-frequency colocations, signals of multiple translation, or changes of discursive footing, then working back to information about situations (cf. Cornelius

& Feinauer 2017). And think-aloud protocols should provide reasonably clear signals of when risk mitigation is being sought.

In all, there is no reason why risk mitigation should remain at the level of an abstract model.

Notes

[1] We use the term 'start text' rather than 'source text' for technical reasons that have little to do with the current topic. These days translators work not just from a single text but also from glossaries, translation memories and machine translation output, and any one of those resources could provide the 'source' for a solution. The role of the initial text is thus relativized; it is no more than the starting point for the translation process (see also Pym 2011: 92).

[2] True, this model can be reversed: we might argue that a translator seeks greater visibility precisely in order to reach out to new receptor groups. In this interventionist reversal, however, the dominant management strategy would normally be risk *retention* (risks are taken in order to enhance rewards) rather than mitigation (where minor risks are taken in order to reduce greater risks). We thus stay with the general proposition that the prime cause of mitigation can be uncertainty about where the translation is headed.

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