Text and risk in translation

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The following is a model of how translators make decisions when translating. The central idea is that translators distribute their effort in terms of the risks involved in rendering different textual elements. The model can thus draw on the field of risk analysis, particularly with respect to neo-classical economics and its various psychologies. In this presentation, however, our main concern will be with the way risk analysis can be related to text analysis. Our main suggestion is that text analysis is an inadequate basis for risk analysis. It follows that, from the perspective of this model, text linguistics is an inadequate basis for the analysis of translatorial decisions. Our presentation will close with a few possible critiques of this negative finding.

The nature of risk in translation

Imagine you are translating a birth certificate. It is a relatively simple document, with only a few significantly functional parts. Let us say you have the name of the person born, the date of birth, the names of the parents, the name of the midwife, and the name of the reporting officer. Now, if you are going to make a mistake in the transcription or translation of those elements, where could you make it? Linguistically, all those elements have much the same status; they are noun phrases, just numbers and names. Functionally, however, a mistake in the name of the person or date of birth would be disastrous. A mistake in the name of the midwife or reporting officer, on the other hand, would tend not to stop the text from working as a successful target-language text. Although all the elements might look the same as parts of speech, they are by no means the same as potential functions. That difference is broadly what we want to describe as risk: some elements are high-risk (in this case the name of the person born and the date of birth), others are low-risk (the name of the midwife and reporting officer), and most of the real world lies at various stages in between.

   Our example is not entirely fictitious. Mayoral (2003) describes Pakistani birth certificates in which the name of the midwife is apparently often the same ("Dai Bibi"), as is the name of the reporting officer in the hospital ("Chawkidar"). The same woman would seem to have brought into the world a great many Pakistanis, and the same officer has reported all their births. A truly heroic feat! As it turns out, of course, the first textual element here is not a proper noun as such but the Urdu common nouns for "midwife" or "married woman". The second element means something like "concierge", so we are told. The issuing officers in Pakistan have not bothered to enter proper nouns for these elements; translators (in this case in Spain) do not bother to indicate that the apparent names are not names at all; and the Spanish receiving authorities accept the operative fiction, in the interests of expediency. Or better, the issuing and receiving authorities, along with their various intermediaries, accept the operative fiction because it puts nothing at risk. Nothing is really upset by the fact that the one linguistic woman and the one linguistic officer officially participated in

thousands of births. And yet a lot would be upset, we hope, if several thousand Pakistanis all entered Spain with the same name and same date of birth.

Some things can now be said to anyone who wants to learn to translate, or indeed anyone who wants to ask questions about how people translate:

- Lesson one: Some elements are high risk, others are low risk, most are at points in between, and the nature of that risk is not necessarily marked linguistically.

- Lesson two: In order to determine those relative risks, you have to analyze what your translation is supposed to do.

- Lesson three: When translating, work hard on the high-risk elements, and do not work too hard on the low-risk elements.

That much is easily said. Of course, it has long been said by everyone who points to the importance of context, to the priority of function over form, and to the dominant role of a translation's target-side purpose (Skopos, for some). We would hope that the above are lessons that all professionals apply, probably intuitively (this is a supposition that we should be testing empirically). If that were all, we would be saying nothing fundamentally new. However, none of those many alternative approaches to translation has, to our knowledge, tried to analyze the specific role of risk. Translation theories have not seen the wealth of insight and calculation that risk analysis offers. Here we shall try to point in that general direction.

What is risk?

Risk, let us say, is the possibility of not fulfilling the translation's purpose. The name of the midwife is a low-risk element because the purpose of the translated birth certificate is not affected by her identity or non-identity. The date of birth is high-risk because it distinguishes between people with the same name, it is used to file and retrieve information, and it will be compared with the date given on other documents. The date is thus embedded in the state mechanisms by which immigrants and citizens are identified and controlled. In this case, those mechanisms are the only ones that give the translation a purpose.

When we follow this kind of reasoning, we quickly find that the slippery fish is not risk itself, but the purpose that gives the risk a value. What is the purpose of a translation? In our example, the purpose is deceptively clear. In most real-world cases, it is very difficult to grasp. Occult functions usually lie just below the surface.

Here is another example, this time from our own translation class in Tarragona (we have commented on it elsewhere):

Foreign students will need to *convalidar* or *homologar* their first degree.

The task was to translate the sentence from Spanish to English for inclusion in our university's website. Everyone did quite well except for the two terms we have left in Spanish. How should those words be rendered in English? Dictionaries give five or six candidate terms, but our students are supposed to be smarter: they ideally spend a few seconds on Google, locate a few parallel texts (in this case, the corresponding websites of a few English-language universities), and come up with a

fairly convincing equivalent: accreditation plus cognates. So the above phrase might be rendered as

Foreign students will need to seek *accreditation* of their first degree.

End of story? Well, a few doubts might remain. If there are two terms in Spanish, can we really get away with just one in English? Should we perhaps leave the Spanish terms alongside some English equivalents? And then, are we sure the two cultures really think the same way here? Accreditation is usually made of a course or an institution, whereas the Spanish terms refer to ways value can be given to a student's degree or diploma. And so on.

Those are very serious doubts. We might try to manage them in various ways. We could say, for example, that "seek accreditation" is probably not perfect, but it at least has some kind of similar function and will certainly lead the reader down the right track. It might be a good low-risk option, especially since it only required a few seconds of Google to produce. In the same way, if we are worried about the possibly different cultural approaches to the issue, we might decide to leave the Spanish terms as they are. This would be another low-effort low-risk option, since we are not telling any lies, and the readers are free to go off on their own and discover the secret meanings of the terms. What else could we do without working too hard? Omission is a common enough strategy, especially in low-risk situations. Here, however, it might give a high-risk rendition, at least if we are wary of having hordes of foreign students arrive without the necessary paperwork and under the false impression that Spanish bureaucracy is a piece of cake.

We have thus identified three possible low-effort solutions. Two of them are low-risk, one is high-risk. So we should logically either pursue one of the low-risk options (or better, combine them), or decide to invest more effort in the problem. If we choose the latter course, we should go looking for more information about the purpose of the translation. And we would have to know how much risk is at stake, in order to justify our added effort in research.

So much for the model.

Refining the terms

Some notes, in passing, on the terms we are using:

Translation problems: A linguistic element becomes a translation problem when the translator has to decide between more than one way of rendering it. This is something we argued years ago (Pym 1992) when we distinguished between binary errors (only two options: one right, one wrong) and non-binary errors (many options, some of which are "right, but…" or "wrong, but…"). At that time we argued that translators should invest effort in the non-binary problems, and that translator training should basically leave the binary problems to the language class. We are now in a position to revise that distinction (which in any case did little more than reserve all the interesting stylistic and pragmatic stuff for the translation class, in a shamelessly self-interested way). No, a binary problem may be very high-risk (e.g. the dosage quantities on a medical label) and a non-binary problem may be very low-risk (the use of formal or informal second-person pronouns is always very tricky, but it can often be avoided quite successfully). So the question of risk goes beyond our juvenile distinction between binary and non-binary. Translation problems can then in themselves be described as high-risk, low-risk or, again, anything in between.

Translation solutions: In our simple model, translators work on problems until they produce a rendition, which is what they put in the translation. Whatever they put in the translation can then be

regarded as a "solution", at least in the sense that it is the solution that the particular translator proposes. Some solutions are undoubtedly better or worse than others, but here we have no need to enter into that kind of blunt subjective evaluation. There is, for us, no such thing as the definitive solution to a translation problem (by definition, translation problems allow for more than one solution). All we want to be able to say is that, first, some solutions involve more risk than others, and second, some involve more effort than others. The goodness or badness of a solution is then a question of the way risk correlates with effort. And that is really a question about strategies.

Translation strategies: The various steps or procedures used to solve a translation problem can be analyzed in terms of strategies such as transcription, omission, paraphrase, compensation, footnotes, expansion, recasting and so on (we have no need here to produce any kind of definitive typology). Various translation strategies can be used to reduce or maintain levels of risk, and the strategies can consequently be described as having low-risk or high-risk consequences with respect to the problem concerned. It would be an error, however, to believe that the strategies carry risk values in themselves. The strategy of omission gives a high-risk rendition when applied to our *homologación* problem, but often gives low-risk renditions when applied to other problems (we usually omit watermarks and printing-office stationary information when translating official documents). Transcription may be low-risk with respect to *homologación* (as we shall soon see) but would be high-risk in situations where the reader will probably not have knowledge or need of the source language.

Translatorial effort: Translators exert effort when solving problems. This effort takes many forms (documentation, consultation, reflection, rewriting) and can be measured in many different ways (time, hardship, technology costs, interpersonal exchanges). All we require here is the idea that the solving of a problem incurs a total effort (the sum of all the forms), and that the effort will vary according to the problems identified and the strategies selected. Different strategies need not correspond to different degrees of risk, but they usually do incur very different degrees of effort. The important thing about the degree of effort is that it should ideally correlate with the degree of risk involved. Although we do not want to describe translation solutions as good or bad in themselves, we would certainly posit that a low-effort solution to high-risk problem is more advantageous than a high-effort solution to a low-risk problem.

In sum, problems are high-risk or low-risk; solutions can be high-risk or low-risk; strategies are different ways of expending effort to manage risk; and the translator's efforts should ideally correlate with degrees of risk.

Our terms have thus been described and our main principles announced. But we are still saying little more than common sense.

Risk and failure conditions

Back to our problem with *homologación*. After a little collective reflection, our class browsed around the website where our translation was to go. That is, we analyzed the target location rather than the parallel texts. Under the influence of a coercive teacher, we came to the conclusion that the function of this particular webpage was rather more complex than met the eye. On the one hand, the text was supposed to attract foreign students, hopefully good ones. On the other, it should give them the information they need in order to start studying at our university. To attract and to inform, one might say, is a fairly common purpose, poised on a fine balance, like the neo-classical literature that

was supposed to "instruct and entertain". If we inform potential students too much (for example, by giving all the gory details of the bureaucratic hoops they have to jump through), they will be turned off and take their intellects elsewhere. And if we emphasize the marketing hype excessively, students will come in droves and then run headlong into bureaucratic barriers, screaming blue murder to all the intermediaries who failed to inform them adequately. In the careful balance between attraction and information, translation strategies have a key role to play. We can tip the scales either way.

So which of those particular functions should we privilege? In order to decide, it is not enough just to analyze the source text in linguistic terms. In fact, in most cases it is probably a waste of effort to do anything like a complete text analysis. Christiane Nord (1991) describes 76 questions (we counted them) that students should ask in their source-text analysis prior to translating. Surely all that effort would be excessive in anything but the most basic of pedagogical situations? Our basic reasoning here (along with the whole tradition of *Skopos* theory) is that the same text can involve different distributions of risk when used in different situations. The one text can be translated in different ways in order to achieve different functions. Our webpage could be rendered so as to attract and nothing more, or to inform and nothing more. And there is nothing in the source text as such, or in those 76 questions, that can tell us which of those aims, or which balance of aims, is the one we should seek to achieve.

This point is unusually important for our approach. It sometimes means that the kinds of risk that a linguistic analysis will pick up are not those that translators should be spending their time on. The particularly "difficult" or "untranslatable" passages are quite often of little relevance to success conditions. Translators deploy a range of avoidance strategies for simply side-stepping them. For example, the anthropological linguist Michael Agar (1994) talks about the "rich points" where cultures reveal their differences and great effort has to be invested in order to communicate. To pick up a previous example, the different cultural divisions between the T and V pronouns for the second person demand subtlety and experience in cross-cultural situations. They are rich points in the sense that they are difficult to codify in terms of rules, yet heavy with cultural information. To get the pronoun wrong might easily convey unintended connotations and would then logically be a high-risk mistake. We might expect experienced translators to be exceptionally good at judging the right pronoun to use in the right situation; they should have invested considerable effort in mastering those evaluative skills. However, what we tend to find in cases of doubt is that professionals are exceptionally good at avoiding the second-person pronoun altogether, resorting to nominalization, reflexives or omissions. The points that are the richest from the perspective of linguistic comparison are quite possibly of no particular consequence for the function of the translation, and their minor problems can be solved quite efficiently. That is, a linguistic rich point is not necessarily a high-risk problem. We thus have to go in search of information beyond the text, and certainly beyond comparative linguistics.

What should one do with such information? If we have too much of it, or it is too contradictory, we are going to spend effort even before knowing if it is worth our while. Some efficiency can nevertheless come from thinking negatively. This means trying to define not the ideal function of the translation, but the probable "failure conditions", the ways in which the translation would obviously not do its job (here we borrow from Popper's "negative ethics", particularly as applied to translation in Chesterman 1997). Failure might involve the receiving authorities not accepting our translation of the birth certificate. It could be foreign students being frightened away. Once such worst-case scenarios are clear, success becomes a matter of avoiding failure. We are not going to produce the perfect definitive translation (it would take us too much effort to do so). All we are going to aim for is a translation that avoids failure. That is the bottom line. Anything soaring

above that line would be nice to have, but it would quite probably involve unjustified effort. In the case of our *homologación* website, we found that the question of success or failure depended very much on where our text had to appear. The translation was actually for two places. One was at the front end, close to where prospective students would enter the site. In that position, the text should be rendered so as to attract, more so than to inform: "…seek accreditation…" might be good enough. The other position, however, was near the back end, deep down where only the most seriously interested students would still keep clicking. In that position, the translation should ideally provide all the information the students would need. There, our version actually became a whole new webpage, giving the Spanish terms (students coming to Spain will need to recognize them), explaining them as succinctly as possible, and giving links to the Ministry website where the official terms and procedures are all spelt out in frightening detail. In this case, the two translation strategies were very different because the two positions in the website were very different.

Where did we get all that contextual information? Some came from simply talking about the text; other information came from looking at parallel texts; more definitive orientations came from clicking around our university's website; and then, of course, we asked our client (the university's International Office) about the configuration of the English website and, most importantly, if we would be paid for producing a new explanatory webpage. Information can come from source texts, co-texts, linguistic contexts, human clients, and a lot of common sense. The balance of those sources is not really at issue here. In all cases, the general principle should stand: in order to define success or failure conditions, we need more information than is in the text. It follows that translators do not really work on texts; they work on projects, understood as texts plus extensive contextual information, to which we now turn.

Job descriptions as reducing risk

The French translation theorist Daniel Gouadec (2002) has long elaborated a vision in which translation problems are solved by getting as much information prior to translating anything. Gouadec thus produces very complete models for the "job descriptions" that translators and clients should agree on, and for the pre-translation analysis where technical and especially terminological problems are addressed in a specialized way. Gouadec's general message would be that investing effort in the various pre-translation phases is a more efficient way of managing risk than is having everyone translate differently and trying to solve problems as they arise. This is a lesson that can be learned from most business models; it is the essence of the "internationalization" part of localization theory (cf. Pym 2004). Its basis is simply that risks are reduced by foresight. Planning is good.

What might a job description entail? Here we seek a maximalist answer, gathering all the things we would like to have and to know before beginning to translate a text. The following list is loosely based on Gouadec (it is actually the one we use when training our technical translators):

MATERIAL
Source text
ST images, appendices, etc.
Specialized glossaries
Parallel texts
Previous translations
Contacts with experts or consultants.

FUNCTION INFORMATION

Text function (what is to be the effect of the translation?)
Readership profile (whom is it for?)
Quality required (for information?, for publication?, revisions?, terminology?)
Who revises?

TASK INFORMATION
Deadline (for delivery of raw translation?, of revised translation?)
Format of translation (which CAT tools?)
Costing basis (by word, character, page, hour, day?)
Estimated cost (proposed by translator, agreed to by client)
Terms of payment (when will you see your money?)
Signed contract.

AGREEMENT ON TRANSLATOR OPTIONS:
Forms of address
Spellings
Cultural adaptation
Possible omissions and additions.

This list has no definitive status. Numerous variations are possible; much could be added (all of Nord's 76 questions, for example), even more could be taken away (we might reduce the whole thing to the fundamental question "Why"). The general point usually made here (by Gouadec and others) is that the more such information is available to the translator at the pre-translation phase, the more risks are likely to be reduced. Fair enough. But our own insistence is that such information be made available when it concerns high-risk problems; extra information is not necessary with respect to low-risk problems. In short, translators should make sure they get enough information on high-risk options so as to eliminate as much guesswork as possible.

To drive the point home: Lists like the above, and indeed Gouadec's approach in general, would tend to suggest that there can never be too much information. If there are mistakes in the translation, it is because the translator was not properly informed. This is a very bureaucratic solution, suited to a form-filling culture, and perhaps strangely French. On this view, if all the forms are filled out correctly, either no risks will remain or, in the case of any kind of high risk, the translator's personal responsibility will have effectively been eliminated. This is the kind of risk management that might underlie a bureaucracy like the European Commission's Translation Service, where the translation of a text first requires the production of another text (the complete job description). As in finite-state game theory, the complete information will lead to the optimal solution to all problems (cf. Levý 1967) and any remaining responsibility will thus be purely collective. This, we believe, is not necessarily true. Excessive contextual information leads to excessive transaction costs, which cannot be justified in terms of risk. There must still be room for experience, pragmatism, justified non-translation, creativity and inspiration, all of which can reduce effort. Further, there are many cases of low-risk problems where numerous very different low-risk solutions are possible, and the translator is quite entitled to use guesswork (or any other low-effort strategy) in order to choose between them. In fact, the translator should use little effort in such cases, since the cost of locating and evaluating the information would exceed the value of the results produced.

How much information is needed? At first, just enough to define the translation's failure

conditions. At that point, high-risk elements can be isolated, and we can go in search of information on them. They in turn might lead to a revision of the purpose, or to further items that initially concealed their risks, or to a decision not to seek further information because the visible risks have been managed. And so on. In this question-and-answer process, lists like the above might exhaust their effectiveness after just a few lines. Or they might require massive extension. The main mistake would be to believe that they are always necessary or at all definitive.

Criticisms of this approach

We have now seen a few ways risk analysis can help model translatorial decision-making. Our notions certainly do not address all the problems faced by translators, but they do concern many real-world aspects. Further, they do so while avoiding idealist traps such as meaning transfer or absolute correctness. That is, our approach lies within the probabilistic frame informing most of the human sciences.

There are, however, several good criticisms that can be made of the approach. The negative comments we have received along the way at least serve to show that we are saying something more than mere common sense. Here we review just a few of criticisms, and the possible ways they could be answered:

Criticism 1. All textual items are high-risk, since any mistake may mean the translator loses the client's trust, and trust is everything in the translation game.

Common experience does indeed suggest that translators are open to mistrust until proven trustworthy, and that mistrust can grow on the back of even the most apparently insignificant of errors. A brilliantly creative and communicative translation might be expected to fail if it has spelling mistakes in the key terms. Clients and readers will pick up those mistakes; they will not be in a position to judge the wider virtues of the work; the translator will lose trust; the communication act will probably fail. However, does this mean our whole approach has ceased to apply? Surely we have just shown that trust and mistrust can be handled quite easily within the general frame of risk analysis? Translators must learn that the largely unseen and commonly misunderstood nature of their task means the small superficial details can involve high risks and must thus be accorded corresponding effort. More simply, one of the implicit purposes of all translations is to create trust in the figure of the translator. Our approach can thus show why the attainment and maintenance of trust is so important. Without it, translators would never gain the freedom required to distribute effort away from low-risk problems.

Criticism 2. Most clients do not know about job descriptions. They never give specifications for small projects. They assume that translators should manage risks by themselves.

True enough, very few small translation projects would have anything like the specification sheets that Gouadec presents, and many large jobs that should have them do not. Our first response to this situation is thus pedagogical: clients could be taught to provide as much information as possible, and translators could be trained to teach them. A second response, however, is more realistic: If the specifications are not given, it might be because the risks are not high enough to warrant them. Or better: Clients that do give translators information concerning high-risk items should ultimately communicate more efficiently than those that do not (if not, then not). This moves the discussion towards hypotheses that can be explored in case studies and tested empirically. And that is precisely

where we would like our approach to be most operative.

So are we describing what always happens in all translating? Yes, in part, we are saying that some kind of risk analysis must always be present, even when it is with unfortunate results. (A novice looks up a term and sees it has three possible renditions, two of which do not suit the context and the third is unknown to them; the novice thus selects that third term, since it could still be right… In their own disastrous way, they are managing risk.) Or are we perhaps describing what happens in only the best translating? Yes, in part, the relations between effort and risk can say why some solutions are better than others, so we potentially have a way of describing "best practices". Or are we perhaps describing only what should happen, in our own ideal world? Yes, in part, the model has a prescriptive potential. This, however, should become properly predictive through the testing of what actually happens in case studies (on the step from prescriptive to predictive, see Chesterman 1999). There is no reason why the one approach cannot have something to say on all three levels (or more).

Criticism 3. The default norm for translators is to reproduce exactly what is in the text. This is what translators are expected to do, and what they should be trained to do. Any risk analysis that moves away from text analysis is thus likely to defeat expectations.

Here we are paraphrasing a critique formulated by the text linguist Basil Hatim. On this view, the cases requiring risk analysis would be mere exceptions, a few ornamentations added to the solid structure of endemic translational practice. There is much justification for this, of course. If clients do not give specifications, it is probably because they and their translators implicitly adhere to the norm that everything in the text should be rendered as faithfully and completely as possible. This norm is efficient (no added effort need be put into specifications) and low-risk for the translator (virtually any solution can be justified by pointing to something in the source text). The concept of a default norm, however, cannot really explain why different translators can and do produce legitimately different solutions; it cannot provide any solid basis for choosing between those solutions (here we discount the illusion of eternally stable meaning); it certainly cannot say why this default norm has been cited to justify enormously variant translational strategies, with spectacular differences over history and across cultures. The default norm is perhaps not as cozy a home as it is made out to be.

A second reply: The traditional default norm, reinforced by the discourses of fidelity and equivalence, is being challenged in numerous fields of translation. It cannot be said to apply in all parts of localization projects, in audiovisual adaptation, in community interpreting, in postmodern literary translation, to name a few. The norm is being challenged, and risk analysis can describe the reasons for the challenges.

Criticism 4. Professional translators work more efficiently when they simply translate what is in the text. Deviations from literalism cost them time and money.

Here we paraphrase a critique formulated by Roberto Mayoral, mainly with reference to the translating of official documents. Professionals, it seems, do not have time to ask themselves sophisticated questions about risk analysis. They render what is in front of them, since that is the way they make the most money most quickly. Fair enough: straight literalism can, in these cases, manage risks quite efficiently. Yet it would be a mistake to extend the rule to all professionals, or to all kinds of translation. On that score, our reply must be the same as it is to the argument about default norms. We are not saying that all translators should always spend their time calculating risks.

Our theory might equally accept that it is cost-effective, in situations more or less codified by norms, not to waste time in looking at anything beyond the text.

Criticism 5. The active client is a feature of the Western market. Risk analysis is thus enacting a form of cultural imperialism in that it attempts to impose its model of translation on other cultures.

This one is from Basil Hatim again. It is certainly very flattering in its assumption that the West has an abundance of well-informed active clients. Unfortunately, in neither West nor East, nor probably anywhere else, is there any paradise in this regard. The relative non-professionalization of translators may well be ubiquitous, and we have argued elsewhere that some European sectors are actually undergoing a process of deprofessionalization (Pym 2000, 2004). Here again, we should clarify our argument. We are not saying that risk analysis requires the active participation of clients. On the contrary, clients may find it cost-effective to manage their risks simply by trusting their translators. What our approach does suggest, however, is that translators can in many cases manage risks better when they are given contextual information, and it may in some cases be beneficial for clients to provide that information, no matter what the translation traditions underlying their endemic practice.

Criticism 6. Risk management is no more than an evasion of the creative virtues of taking risks. Translators should be prepared to run the risks of cultural clashes.

Here we paraphrase a spirited critique made by a happily nameless South African at a conference in Athens in 2003. The easiest reply here is to plead guilty. Yes, our entire approach is based on the assumption that the main problems of today's world derive from clashes between cultures, that the finding of solutions to those problems consequently requires cooperation between cultures, and that an economics of cooperation is the most adequate frame for our risk analysis. A certain English-department *gaya scienza* might still prefer clashes to cooperation, but that is surely their problem.

More astutely, we can accept that clashes can be creative, that unforeseen benefits can ensue from them, and that some people should take the extreme risks needed for those benefits to be obtained. Those people are probably best kept locked up in university departments of literature and cultural studies. There they can do no real harm if and when they calculate the risks wrongly and simply give offence (the same critic accused the Greeks of being Greekish for selling too many icons to tourists, and Greek women of not being Greek because of excessive blond and red hair… cultural studies are very easy to do). Translators, on the other hand, tend to be out there in the field, on the battlegrounds or picking up the pieces in the long cultural aftermaths. If and when they misjudge the risks and give real offence, real damage can result. The massacres of the Balkans were not too far away from that conference in Athens. Nor are the conflicts of South Africa. Those of us who train translators should be thinking in terms of those kinds of actual conflict, where the risks are something more than metaphorical.

To mediate in situations of conflict, to seek long-term cooperation between cultures, could be the specific contribution of translators. If risk analysis can help us achieve that aim, then it is worth a good look.

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