
EXPLORING THE BOUNDARIES OF TRANSCREATION IN SPECIALIZED TRANSLATION

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Abstract

Transcreation has recently become a buzzword in Translation Studies. Definitions abound, some of them placing it within a functionalist perspective (e.g. Baker 2011), some interpreting it as a heuristic method to be used in the translation of poetry (e.g. Snell-Hornby 1994), some others relating it to the translation of computer games (O'Hara & Mangiron 2006). Nowadays often used in advertising and the media, transcreation is a portmanteau word made by combining together translation and creation, in order to emphasize the considerable amount of creativity required in the process. Yet, since a varying degree of creativity is implicit in the translation of any type of text, this study argues that creativity is not the discriminating factor in order to recognize the difference between translation and transcreation; the aim, rather, is to restore the original conception of the term, based on the word 'creation', i.e. the generation of new words or meanings. From this perspective, no single domain (e.g. poetry, computer games or advertising) can be said to have priority in the use of transcreation. In particular, I argue that even a domain which is thought to impose the heaviest semiotic constraints on the translator, i.e. legal translation, is developing in ways that generate 'semantic voids' to be filled; an example is the lack of lexicalization of new concepts.

1. Introduction

A decade ago a buzzword – transcreation – began seeping insistently into the world of translation causing immediate reactions. It was welcomed almost enthusiastically by translation service providers, who were getting wind of the new business that the term heralded, while reception from professional translators was rather cool, if not suspicious, as they were feeling that a useless new category had been assigned to the activity that they had been doing for years, i.e. translating¹.

Although this might be the case, in this study I will attempt to prove: a) that the

¹ Many translators wondered whether the term was just a linguist's trick. "What is transcreation? A fancy name for high-quality outbound translation?" (Konstantin L., 18 Jan 2003); others had never heard of transcreation before and preferred to view it as "doing your job properly if you are a translator specializing in marketing" (Julie B., 26 May 2010); some others tried to assign the category a more familiar term: "What is called transcreation here is really no more than copywriting based on an original idea" (David P., 3 Nov 2010). (source: www.badlanguage.net/translation-vs-transcreation).

term ‘transcreation’ is not abusive of any other established concept in Translation Studies², i.e. it does not duplicate or fully match any other term, not even the more general term ‘translation’, and therefore it has its own right to exist (no case of unlawful appropriation!); b) that the confusion arising around the term transcreation requires thorough investigation of the actual use (or abuse) of the term in the academic, professional translator and LSP business communities; c) that the term transcreation needs (re-)defining to blow away the clouds that are obscuring its intrinsic meaning.

The purpose of this paper is therefore to revisit the concept of transcreation to add to and extend previous research referring to this issue. Thus, one contribution of the paper is the semantics debate it introduces around the use of the term transcreation. Past research has also argued that there is a lot of confusion both in academia and in the business world around the concept. This paper tries to shed light on the confusion created by the key players (academia, translators and Language Service Providers) and contribute to resolving it, by challenging the widely accepted (if not, already established) use of the term ‘transcreation’.

2. Defining transcreation

It is customary that a section on definitions of a particular word or phrase should start by referring to current dictionary entries for that word or phrase. It is therefore rather unusual that the term transcreation has failed to enter any English monolingual dictionary in spite of its being around since the late 1960s. The long gap in the history of its usage – the term seems to have almost disappeared, except in Brazil and India, for about 30 years – may account for lexicographers’ reluctance to add the term to their dictionaries.

It will therefore be useful to refer to the seminal studies by Cabré (2003) and the equally authoritative work on terminology processing by Sager (1991) to be able to account for the yet-to-be-standardized term transcreation. In her ‘Theories of terminology’ Cabré (2003: 163) wrote that she was surprised at the sudden revival of interest in terminology in the late 1990s, which parallels the rebirth and renewed use of the term transcreation. In fact, both the term and the concept behind it have developed in new directions ever since and are still being redefined today. Sager (1990: 114) explains that “Provided the validity of a new concept is generally acknowledged, it will become established within the specialist community. [...] This stage can be called regularization of usage and sets of definitions in textbooks, glossaries or manuals are the outward manifestation of this process of promulgation of agreed usage.” Therefore, in order to verify whether transcreation has already gone through this first stage of regularization, we will check if there is agreed usage of the term in the main stakeholders’ communities.

² *Transcreation* would appear closest to ‘free’ on the literal – free cline (Hatim & Munday 2004: 11-14).

2.1. *The academic standpoint*

The first attested use of the term transcreation dates as far back as 1957 when Lal (1957), an Indian Sanskrit scholar, used the term to refer to his own versions of classical Indian drama in English, which brought across the richness and vitality of the original.

Some twelve years later, in 1969, the Brazilian concrete poet H. de Campos used the term to characterize a new approach to creative literary translation that aimed at phonetic, syntactical, and morphological equivalence achieved by appropriating the best contemporary poetry and the existing local tradition (Milton & Bandia 2009: 259).

Following the Indian literary notion of transcreation (Gopinathan 2006; Lal 1972; Mukherjee 2004; Trivedi 2005, 2006), Bollettieri Bosinelli (2010: 190) used the term to refer to Joyce's writing strategy of "transforming a commonplace meaning into something new and unexpected" and defines it as follows (*ibid.*: 191):

The term "transcreation" describes some examples of the manipulative use of English, which can best be explained from a post-colonial perspective, and more specifically, the term helps to articulate one of Joyce's tactics in appropriating the language of the British whose domination over Ireland had tried to erase the native Gaelic language and culture.

Recent studies on the localization of games (Mangiron & O'Hagan 2006; O'Hagan, 2005) suggest the term transcreation to describe the greater freedom of the games localizer compared with any other translator. With games localization, the translator is expected to convey a game-playing experience that is as close as possible to the original, which implies an adaptive approach with strong domestication tendencies when it comes to the treatment of jokes, plays on words, linguistic varieties and lyrics of theme songs (Mangiron & O'Hagan 2006)³.

A critical voice about the use of the term transcreation as referred to the translation of video games was raised by Bernal (2006: 34) who felt it lacked consistency, although he did not substantiate his conservative position with any relevant details (*ibid.*: 35):

The terms 'game localisation' and 'transcreation' do not seem accurate enough to be used in Translation Studies, since 'localisation' is an industry-used term and includes non-linguistic activities, and we do not have a clear definition of 'transcreation'. TS do not seem to gain anything from their acceptance. In my opinion, 'translation' is still the most adequate term to refer to any type of language transfer, but if 'localisation' is to be used it should always be preceded by 'linguistic' or 'cultural'.

The influence of the translations in the development of a video game, together with the variety of different texts found in them requiring all the techniques

³ However, the case studies on Final Fantasy (O'Hagan & Mangiron 2004) also found that aspects concerning the traits of main characters require a foreignization approach where overseas fans expect a distinctive original flavour to be retained.

utilised for other translation specialities at the same time, is what makes the translation of video games different from any other translational activity.

Very few scholars have attempted to investigate the application of the notion of transcreation to non-literary fields of translation. What strikes one most is that every talk or discussion on transcreation as applied to the business area, i.e. in marketing or advertising etc., has been left to the professional counterpart, i.e. translators and LSPs. Translation scholars seem to have abdicated their role as critical investigators of a substantial part of their discipline and passed the buck to the industry, which is free to dictate the preferred terminology to be used in this sector.

2.2. *The translators' voice*

It is therefore essential that we now turn to the translation business and analyse the main stakeholders' stance. Below is a selection of contributions by professional translators to the debate about the notion of transcreation at the time when it started to become a buzzword. The idea of the traditional divide between technical translations and more creative translations, the latter being equated to literary translations due to their expressive power, emerges quite clearly.



Figure 1. Translators' contributions to the debate about the notion of transcreation.

More recent contributions by translation professionals only confirm the underlying ‘assonance’ with literary translations and the particular ‘resonance’ of a text tailored to the specifics of a target audience in the local markets, i.e. a TT should not only epitomize everything the brand stands for but also resonate with the target audience.

However, while transcreation seems to offer a culturally-specific solution to the translation of marketing texts, translators agree in arguing that good translation already involves cultural adaptation; therefore, a good translator will already be a transcreator. Which brings us to the question: “What makes a good transcreator?” To this question Patricia L., a native French and English professional offering copywriting, translation and adaptation, replied ⁴:

Short list and in no particular order! To be a lateral thinker, to have a strategic view, to be very creative (and not only in playing with words), to know how to take a darn good client brief, to enjoy working in a team, to bounce right back if a client doesn’t do cartwheels at your first suggestions, to have the courage to tell your client if a concept isn’t going to fly for whatever reason, and to know how to get *behind* the words and *away* from them because effective communications is not just ‘words’.

In the same interview, Patricia disclosed her thought that transcreation is not limited to marketing and advertising as most of her colleagues believe: “Heavily adapting an original version could be needed in Human Resources policies and training programmes, too.” She also identified other areas requiring bold adaptation in internal and external communications. The idea of transcreation as adaptation or copywriting emerges powerfully from many other comments by professional translators. For instance, David E., a Japanese-to-English commercial translator, suggests (21.03.2010): “In transcreation you look for opportunities to improve the text to better achieve not just its skopos, but even the commissioning intent. At some point, the emphasis shifts and goes beyond adaptation”. However, by the examples he provides ⁵ it can be argued that the emphasis is shifting towards copywriting or copy-adaptation.

2.3. *The business perspective*

In order to complete this brief overview of definitions of the term ‘transcreation’, we shall now turn to the third node of the triangulation: language service providers (LSPs).

⁴ In an interview by Catherine Jan, author of the blog catherinetranslates.com, on Nov 10, 2010 (see <http://interculturalzone.lokahi-interactive.com/2010/11/10/transcreation-adaptation-whats-that-all-about/>).

⁵ “If you get an announcement for a shopping mall that says in the source: ‘Terribly sorry to keep you waiting. Please wait a little longer. The mall will open shortly.’ You could render it as: ‘We are sorry to keep you waiting. We hope that you will enjoy shopping here today. The mall will open shortly.’ A transcreated text may, for example, contain embedded commands that subconsciously tell the waiting horde that it is OK to spend and to enjoy shopping: ‘Thank you for choosing to spend some time here today. The doors will soon open and you can start to enjoy shopping’” (David E., 21.03.2010).

In the business arena, definitions of transcreation abound: it is quite comprehensible that, once language service companies have found a new niche market, they will try to exploit it. After perusing the numerous definitions available, I have selected some of the most articulated definitions offered by major LSPs which appear to be the closest to the idea of transcreation as it has developed from previous definitions, aware of the fact that their common denominator lies in the region of creativity (adaptation) and their connectedness to the marketing area (translation brief).

The first contribution comes from BizReport⁶, namely from Kristina Knight⁷'s email interview with Chanin Ballance, President and CEO of viaLanguage®⁸, an online translation services company. Ms Balance's idea of transcreation is that it is "normally reserved for marketing copy with heavy messaging that does not 'translate' simply. It is localization at its best combined with a flair for copywriting". She adds that transcreation "allows you to reach the audience at an emotional and intellectual level, making the communication both more meaningful and more effective".

While this definition focuses on such keywords as 'marketing copy', 'localization' and 'copywriting' which have already been targeted in section 1.2, one interesting construct is the idea that transcreation is involved with texts that are hard to translate. The idea is expanded in one of viaLanguage® whitepapers, titled "Transcreation: The next step beyond translation"⁹, which offers both a definition of transcreation and an enlightening chart in which translation and transcreation are compared.

Reading past the questionable beginning of the definition of 'transcreation', which would separate the process of translating from that of cultural adaptation, what we understand from the comparison between transcreation and translation is that transcreators are granted greater creative licence than 'simple' translators, while the latter are requested to take a faithful approach to translation. Of utmost importance to the purpose of this study is the identification of a transcreator not really as a more experienced or more creative translator, but as a "professional copywriter who may also translate".

The concept is further expanded in the NTIS website¹⁰: "the translated text must be reviewed by a local reviewer capable of transforming the translation into a fully-fledged example of *copy editing*", and the difference between translation and transcreation is brought to the forefront: "Translators translate, whereas Transcreation is an entirely different ballgame, involving the creativity and discipline of professionals specialised in adaptation."

WordBank¹¹ provides a few random definitions of transcreation from around the Net:

⁶ BizReport – News & Insight for Online Marketers, <http://www.bizreport.com/>

⁷ Kristina Knight is a freelance writer based in Ohio, USA.

⁸ <http://www.vialanguage.com/>.

⁹ <http://www.vialanguage.com/vl-2009/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/marketing-transcreation.pdf>.

¹⁰ <http://www.ntis.co.nz/marketingtranslation.htm>.

¹¹ <http://transcreationblog.net/2010/02/11/transcreation-now-youre-talking-my-language/>.

Transcreation is the process of taking content that has already been translated and adapting it to be culturally relevant for your audience. ... By adapting the message to the specific culture to which you are communicating, transcreation allows you to reach the audience at an emotional and intellectual level, making the communication both more meaningful and more effective. ... To ensure that the content being worked with achieves a linguistic and cultural appropriateness, transcreation usually means translators are granted greater creative license with the copy than is common with translation. They are encouraged to go beyond the words to ensure that the copy not only captures the intended message but also reflects a deep understanding of the culture of the audience. ...

Translation	Transcreation
Renders words and phrases in the target language. Effort is made to retain the exact meaning, tone and literacy level of the source material unless specified otherwise. Takes a faithful approach.	Re-writes or edits content with a creative license that may result in re-phrased wording and changes in a tone to render intended meaning. Takes into account factors like the target audiences' environment, lifestyle, family values, cultural beliefs and other practices that affect their connection to the campaign. Less effort is made to adhere to original word and sentence structure.
Best for - legal documents, terms and conditions, official notices, reports, statistical information, etc.	Best for marketing materials and branding
Pricing: Most often charged on a per word basis and possible to achieve 10-20% translation memory savings.	Pricing: Most often charged on a per hour basis with a yield of zero to very low translation memory savings.
Talent: Professional translator with 3-5 years experience	Talent: Professional copy writer who may also translate
Revision Cycles: Not included or rounds are in addition to per word pricing	Revision Cycles: Often 1-2 rounds are included

For more information visit: www.vialanguage.com

Figure 2. Notion of transcreation, and comparison with translation, by viaLanguage®.

“a packet of services aimed at those operating in the advertising sector, including translation, localization and copy editing services”; “a form of translation, closer to copywriting, resulting in a text linguistically and culturally adapted for its intended audience. Transcreated material is supposed to have the same impact on the target audience as the original source text.”; “a bundle of services designed for clients operating in the advertising sector. It consists of the complete set of translation, localization and copyediting services. Transcreation is a more complex service as it involves the creativity and discipline of professionals whose core activity is content adaptation” before offering their own: Wordbank transcreation services “adapt rather than translate your marketing and advertising ensuring that, by staying true to the original and reflecting local culture, you achieve maximum impact in each market”.

In “Reaching new markets through Transcreation: when translation just isn’t enough” (2010), Rebecca Ray and Nataly Kelly of Common Sense Advisory take a closer look at what transcreation means, confirming that industry players define it in very specific terms and that buyer definitions focus more on the end result. They

realize that transcreation touches nearly every vertical market¹², with marketing and advertising materials reigning among content types, and that demand for transcreation continues to grow. They believe that transcreation requires extensive customer education and a team mentality, and underline the fact that it demands a workflow of its own, in which the creative brief is critical to the transcreation team, and requires more iterations and stakeholders. They say that, unlike translation which is increasingly pervaded by MT (Machine Translation), humans still rule in transcreation projects. They suggest that talent and proximity to the customer determine transcreation quality and that, in addition to in-country reviewers, also crowdsourcing¹³ could be considered as a possible help to ensure transcreation quality. Finally, the authors list a number of terms that are often used to convey the same concept including ‘marketization’, ‘cultural adaptation’, ‘multilingual copywriting’, ‘copy adaptation’, ‘marketing translation’, ‘international copy’, ‘adaptation of marketing materials’, ‘creative international marketing’, and ‘transliteration’.

Although dismissed as a buzz-word by some within the translation industry, figures suggest that transcreation is on the rise. John Yunker¹⁴, president of Byte Level Research LLC, Oregon, USA – a sort of hub for translation agency seekers – explains why transcreation is having such a momentum: “I suspect we’ll be seeing a lot more of transcreation in the months ahead. Why? Because translation sounds like a commodity; transcreation sounds like a service”.

Transcreation is basically understood by translation buyers as an effective way to ensure that the marketing message is culturally relevant and appropriate for the target audience. What is unclear is whether translators are involved in the process at all.

It is therefore suggested that interaction with LSPs on translation policies and translation quality issues should be increased, and international projects such as OPTIMALE¹⁵ be supported at even a larger scale.

¹² Vertical marketing can be defined as ‘niche marketing’, catering to the specific and specialized needs of a trade, while horizontal marketing meets the needs of a variety of industries. Vertical market segments are industry-specific (as in the case of a manufacturer of automobile parts, or vertical market software, designed to automate specialized tasks in a specific market or business), while horizontal market segments cut across industry boundaries (as in the case of a furniture manufacturer reaching a variety of markets, e.g. hotels, restaurants, schools, hospitals, businesses, churches, etc.).

¹³ A form of UGT (user-generated translation), the evolution from unsolicited fan translation to solicited community translation (O’Hagan 2009: 94). “Term coined in 2006 for the practice whereby non-professionals perform tasks that would otherwise be out-sourced to independent professional agencies. In the field of translation it functions as a synonym for community translation, fan translation, user-based translation, lay translation, self-organized citizen translation, etc.” (Pym 2011: 80).

¹⁴ <http://www.translationdirectory.com/article498.htm>.

¹⁵ One of the aims of the OPTIMALE (Optimizing Professional Translator Training in a Multilingual Europe) project is to monitor market needs and identify emerging specialisms by working together with the national and international professional bodies (EUATC) to identify changing professional needs induced by new business opportunities and client requirements, and on new work practice and processes induced by new tools and technological environments. The author is a local coordinator for the OPTIMALE EU Erasmus Academic Network.

3. Redefining transcreation

As we have seen in the previous sections, transcreation can be a very elusive concept, and a one-size-fits-all definition of it is an arduous endeavour (maybe even pointless to some¹⁶). We will now explore the concept under a new light hoping to remove the fuzziness that comes with its meaning/s.

Newmark (1995: 45) identified eight types of translation approaches, from the most source-oriented to the most target-oriented:

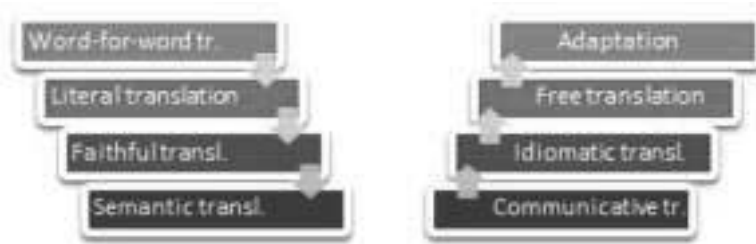


Figure 3. Newmark's V diagram of translation methods.

He identified adaptation as the 'freest' form of translation, mainly used when translating plays or poetry, with themes, characters, plots left unchanged, the SL culture converted to the TL culture and the text rewritten. It should be noticed that it is not by chance that 'adaptation' is the only term that stands out for not being a pre-modifier of the word 'translation', most probably because it generally departs from the source text to such an extent that it is no longer recognized as a translated text, but has the standing of an original text.

The difficulty mainly arises from the clustering and overlapping taking place at the far right hand of the V diagram (fig. 3). A sensible thing to do to achieve a clearer picture from fuzzy and elusive concepts¹⁷ is to isolate the essential features that allow us to discern between that concept and others within the same macro-category.

As we have seen above, transcreation has often been equated to adaptation: we should therefore take a closer look at both concepts.

Adaptation is understood as "a term traditionally used to refer to any TT in which a particularly free translation has been adopted. The term usually implies that considerable changes have been made in order to make the text more suitable for a specific audience (e.g. children) or for the particular purpose behind the translation". (Munday 2009: 7). The notion of quantitative assessment (a relative notion,

¹⁶ Munday (2007: 7) sees it as a futile exercise suggesting that, since no watertight categories can be expected, we should better refrain from defining them individually and view them "as a cline of strategies under the overarching term 'translation'" as shown in a figure resembling closely Newmark's V diagram in figure 3 below.

¹⁷ Another example is the much debated notion of 'translation competence', to define which I have contributed a systemic-functional model that gives prominence to the translation process while integrating interrelated background competences, and allows translation competence acquisition to be assessed both quantitatively and qualitatively (Gaballo 2009: 54-58).

indeed)¹⁸ to distinguish ‘adaptation’ from ‘translation’ is reiterated by the editor in the Key Concepts: “In general terms, adaptation denotes a TT that draws on an ST which has extensively modified it for a new cultural context” (Munday 2009: 509). The questions then arise: to what extent can a ST be said to have been adapted instead of translated? Is the adaptation of a single element (word, collocation, extended unit of meaning) reason enough to consider the whole TT adapted if that element is the only one requiring adaptation in the ST? Can the notion of adaptation be applied to specific text types only, e.g. children’s literature, theatre texts, advertising texts, visual texts, song lyrics, fiction, poetry, and more recently web sites (Milton 2009: 51-52)?

The few scholars who have conducted a thorough analysis of the phenomenon of adaptation in its relation to translation insist on the tenuous nature of the borderline which separates the two concepts. Some scholars prefer not to use the term adaptation at all, as they believe that the concept of translation is capable of covering all types of transformation from ST to TT (Baker & Saldanha 2009: 5-6).

If we can hardly distinguish adaptation from translation, it should be even more difficult to identify the fine line separating adaptation from transcreation, dwelling as they do in the same realm of creativity and (relative) freedom of translation. My suggestion is that it lies in (linguistic) *productivity*¹⁹, i.e. in the production of new (novel, non-established) conceptual structures and the related terminology. A communication system is said to be productive when, given combinatory rules, any combination that does not violate them – operated by the sender of the message – can be understood by the receiver of the message, even if the combination has never been experienced before²⁰. The capacity of extending the target language (and culture) with unprecedented conceptual structures adds a new colour to the term ‘transcreation’ thus making it stand out from other strategies or approaches to transla-

¹⁸ Cfr. Molina & Hurtado Albir’s (2002: 509) definition of adaptation as a translation technique: “To replace a ST cultural element with one from the target culture, e.g., to change *baseball*, for *fútbol* in a translation into Spanish. This corresponds to SCFA’s adaptation and Margot’s cultural equivalent”.

¹⁹ In Plag (2003: 52) productivity is defined as “the *possibility* of creating a new word”, based on Bolinger’s insight of more than half a century ago that productivity is “the statistical readiness with which an element enters into new combinations” (1948: 18). Plag (2003: 45) also specifies that “the notion of productivity must make reference to the speaker’s ability to form new words and to the conditions the language system imposes on new words.” Spencer (1991: 49) considers a rule productive if it is “regularly and actively used in the creation of totally new words.” Bauer (1983: 18) says that a word formation process is productive “if it can be used synchronically in the production of new forms” and puts forward a distinction between the productivity of compounding (implying rule-governed behaviour: Bauer 2006: 483) and the creativity of other types (implying the predominance of analogy and other processes which are not rule-governed). Although the term productive is used in various ways, we can fundamentally say that “a process is productive while and to the extent it (is) used in the coinage of new forms” (Bauer 2006: 484).

²⁰ An extreme example is *typoglycemia* (the ability to understand the meaning of words in a sentence as long as the exterior letters of each word are correct and all the letters of the word are present), a neologism used to describe, for instance, the ability of most English speakers to comprehend nonsensical texts like this: “I cdnuolt blveiee taht I cluod aulaclyt uesdnatnrđ waht I was rdanieg: the phaonmneel pweor of the hmuan mnid. Aoccdrnig to a rseeach taem at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it deosn't mtttaer in waht oredr the ltteers in a wrod are, the olny iprmoatnt tihng is taht the frist and lsat ltteer be in the rghit plcae” (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Typoglycemia>).

tion. A very short story (1) and a few examples from diverse fields (2, 3 and 4), all based on the author's direct experience, will serve the purpose of clarification.

1. *Ante-litteram* transcreators: the case of Icelandic translators

Back in the 1960s when the aluminium industry was flourishing worldwide, and multinational corporations had their branches in many countries, the Switzerland-based corporation Alusuisse decided to bring the aluminium industry to Iceland. "The construction of the first smelter was a major boost for the Icelandic economy, which had hitherto depended heavily on fishing for export earnings"²¹. However, together with the first smelter came the need to lexicalize objects, activities and processes that had never been part of the Icelandic vocabulary before. At that time the label on the door of the translating staff read "Word creators"! They are probably no longer called this way, but they can boast of having been the European 'ancestors' of the modern 'transcreators'.

Iceland has now the highest per capita production of primary aluminium in the world. Is linguistic productivity a source for industrial productivity?

2. Transcreation in poetry: Tranter's terminals

John Tranter²² is one of the most distinctive voices in contemporary Australian poetry (Gaballo 2008). Much of his most intriguing writing is characterized by its relation to a prior text, form or style. Aiming simultaneously to mock or pay tribute to the evocative power of the original, Tranter created some poems that he called "terminals": these are constructed by taking the end-words of someone else's poem, arranging them down the right side of the page in the order that they come, then writing a different poem with the same number of lines and words at the end of each line. For example, the first five lines in the first O'Hara poem, "Que Viva Mexico!", in "3 Poems About Kenneth Koch", which read:

May I tell you how much I love your poems?
It's as if a great pipeline had been illicitly tapped
along which all personal characteristics
are making a hasty departure. Tuba? gin?
"qu'importe où?" O Kenneth Koch!

have been transcreated by Tranter in his "Three Poems About Kenneth Koch" (Tranter 2006: 256) as follows:

He never writes poems about writing poems,
this dog-eared wunderkind who's tapped
the unconscious of the race. His main characteristics:

²¹ Comment by Valgerdur Sverrisdóttir, Iceland's Minister of Industry and Commerce, in *Aluminium International Today*, Sept/Oct 2002, Redhill: DMG World Media.

²² John Tranter (b. 1943) has published twenty books of poetry and four anthologies of other writers' work. He has also published widely in British and US literary magazines, and is the editor of the free Internet magazine *Jacket*, at <http://jacketmagazine.com/>

in the fall he develops a fatal liking for stiff gin martinis. He's not a disguised Mayor Ed. Koch –

By replacing almost every word in the original – with the exception of the last word of each line – he destroys the original poem, jettisoning its meaning, diction, emotional effects, historical context, and atmosphere, even if he tries to pay homage to the original by following or updating it. No poetic forms contain such potential (Henry 2004).

The ambiguous negotiation of indebtedness and manipulation is what Tranter plays on in order to extend and enrich the formal capacity of poetic creation. In his postmodernist approach to the intralingual transcreation of both little-known and well-known poems²³, “Tranter engages with the historically different horizons of expectation that govern the writing and re-writing of texts, with a playfulness that is virtuosic but also mindful of its interpretive responsibilities” (Mengham 2010: Preface).

3. Game localization: licence to create

Game localization is characterized by a high degree of freedom and a few constraints that distinguish it from any other type of translation. As interactive digital entertainment, game localization shares some similarities with screen translation and software localization, but it stands apart because its ultimate goal is to offer entertainment for the end-user. The skopos of game localization is to produce a target version that keeps the ‘look and feel’ of the original to the extent that it passes off as the original itself. In game localization, the feeling of the original ‘gameplay experience’ needs to be preserved in the localized version so that all players share the same enjoyment regardless of their language of choice (O’Hagan & Mangiron 2004). Since it is paramount that nothing disturbs the interactive game experience, “game localisers are granted *quasi* absolute freedom to modify, omit, and even add any elements which they deem necessary to bring the game closer to the players and to convey the original feel of gameplay. And, in so doing, the traditional concept of fidelity to the original is discarded. In game localisation, transcreation, rather than just translation, takes place”. (Mangiron & O’Hagan 2006). As a matter of fact, localized versions of the *Final Fantasy* series, for instance, also added new game features, thus making each localized version an original in itself.

Here are some examples drawn from *Final Fantasy*²⁴: the weapons and weapon

²³ The most famous are John Keats’s “Ode on Melancholy”, which became Tranter’s “Thanks, Joe” – an evident anagram of the famous poet’s name which testifies to Tranter’s playful manipulation of language imbued with typical Australian irony – and W.H. Auden’s “In Praise of Limestone”, which was transplanted by Tranter from Italy (Auden wrote his poem while at Ischia) to Australia, and was turned into “In Praise of Sandstone” to celebrate Sydney and its typical landscape, characterized by this sedimentary rock on which it lies, clearly visible with its horizontal layers on the Sydney Expressway (Southbound on the Sydney-Newcastle Freeway, approaching the Mooney Mooney Bridge) and at Ballast Point, Balmain, a quarter of Sydney where the poet moved to in the 1960s, and where a short poem of his, commissioned by the local municipality, has been engraved in the stone for posterity.

²⁴ <http://www.ffonline.it/>.

abilities available to gamers contribute to creating and retaining the magical atmosphere of the game. It is fundamental that the name, description and item identified in the target language for each weapon be capable of evoking the implied scenario before this is actually displayed. The item “Dream powder” has been aptly translated “Onirolina” by the Italian translator, who succeeded in inventing a name capable of evoking a dream world, yet still related to other items in Final Fantasy weapons (e.g. Melatonina). Conversely, the same version of the game failed to achieve an acceptable result with the item “Black Magic Sphere”, which was translated – rather obscurely – as “Mnerosfera”, thus losing all reference to (black) magic. A more evocative “Necrosfera” would have immediately cast the gamer into the gloomy atmosphere of necromancy and black magic. If Icelandic translators were called WORD creators, game localizers must be called WORLD creators!

4. Crossing the borders of constitutional law

Unlike Šarāeviā (1997: 9, 17), who does not include scholarly work (doctrine) in her comprehensive study dedicated to normative texts, Gēmar (1995: 116-122, 139-176) divides legal texts into three groups and assigns scholarly work to the third group, suggesting that they are the most difficult to translate. The difficulty will be apparent in an example drawn from the author’s personal experience (Calzolaio & Gaballo 2012). The source text – an article on state and regional law after the amendment to Title V of the Italian Constitution²⁵ – discusses a novel approach to legislative powers as a consequence of the transition from a national interest model to a relational model²⁶, and of the dematerialization and re-materialization of subject matters²⁷. In the intricate network of state and regional powers cut across by “materie trasversali”, for which the expected translation into English was “cross-cutting matters”, it was clear that these had a three-fold nature, based on the criterion used to classify them (objective, teleological, or something in between the two)²⁸, which the Italian language did not help to differentiate as the adjective “trasversali” was applied to all types of “cross-cuttingness” (no other synonyms for ‘trasversale’ were available in the source language).

However, the English language, which in this case was more productive than the source language, offered an alternative adjective, ‘cross-sectoral’²⁹, which was particularly suited to the case at issue – in spite of the fact that there was no attested use of “cross-sectoral matters” in the target language (US-English) and specialized

²⁵ In S. Calzolaio 2008, *La legge regionale fra «materie» e «competenze»*, Bologna: Libreria Bonomo Editrice.

²⁶ C. Bologna 2010, *Stato federale e “National interest”: le istanze unitarie nell’esperienza statunitense*, Bologna: Bonomia University Press.

²⁷ F. Benelli 2006, *La “smaterializzazione” delle materie*, Milano: Giuffrē.

²⁸ It is this third type of legislative matters which is the object of analysis of the source text and the designation problem to be solved in the target text.

²⁹ Unlike ‘cross-sectional’, which comes with its load of statistical and econometrical meaning – not really appropriate for the context at issue – ‘cross-sectoral’ belongs to a closer semantic area, as it collocates to such words as ‘planning’, ‘coordination’, ‘collaboration’, ‘study’, etc. in law contexts which are very similar to that of the source text.

culture (law) – as these “materie trasversali” were cutting different sectors, or (to be more precise) parts thereof³⁰.

By designating the new subset of “materie trasversali” as “cross-sectoral”, we have formally borrowed a term (Sager 1990: 121) from a similar context in the same language (intra-lingual borrowing), thus extending the field of application of the term and widening its scope. The introduction of “cross-sectoral matters” as a unit of meaning in addition to “cross-cutting matters” can be viewed as the creation of a neologism (although neither ‘cross-sectoral’ nor ‘matters’ is a neologism per se) since the concept has not yet been lexicalized in the target language variant (US legal English). The neologism is meant to help the US target readers to better orientate themselves in the complex distribution of legislative powers in the Italian system. We cannot know how the new term will be accepted by the relevant scientific community, and whether it is going to be regulated, or even standardized. As Sager puts it (1990: 115), “Standardisation is a retrospective activity which follows naming after an indeterminate length of time”.

The introduction of a neologism to re-define the evolving concept of legislative matters fulfills the goal of transcreation in that it allows the translator to cross the borders of the “established” terminology to depict the new rules of interpretation of a world of concurring powers.

In an attempt to update and revise the categorization of translation strategies/approaches offered by Newmark (see figure 2) and Munday (see notes 2 and 16), I have produced a Translation Matrix Diagram consisting of four quadrants, in each of which a specific orientation is referred to (see figure 4 below).

The Translation Matrix Diagram is a useful tool that allows us to categorize translation strategies/approaches according to whether they are predominantly oriented towards either the Source Language (SL) and the Target Language (TL), or the Source Culture (SC) and the Target Culture (TC). In the former orientation (SL – TL), translation strategies/approaches have been listed according to an increasing degree of translation licence. The latter orientation (SC – TC), instead, includes those activities which involve primarily intra-lingual work (e.g. cultural adaptation will be performed on content which has already been produced in the TL)³¹ and are therefore more likely to be assigned to copywriters, technical writers, etc. rather than to translators (except when these have already gained experience in those other fields).

While most of the labels in the diagram are recurrently used in translation literature³² and require little justification for their being listed in a specific quadrant, I believe that a couple of terms deserve explanation, for different reasons. The first is ‘transculturalization’, due to its inconsistent usage in the academic and business

³⁰ The ST author explains: “[...] if a state power is “cross-sectoral”, in operational terms, it implies overlapping powers. [...] The overlap is realized precisely in the «cross-sectoral» part of the matter at issue and usually gives rise to the intertwining of powers” (for reference, see note 14).

³¹ See section 1.3 for reference.

³² See Munday (2009: 8).

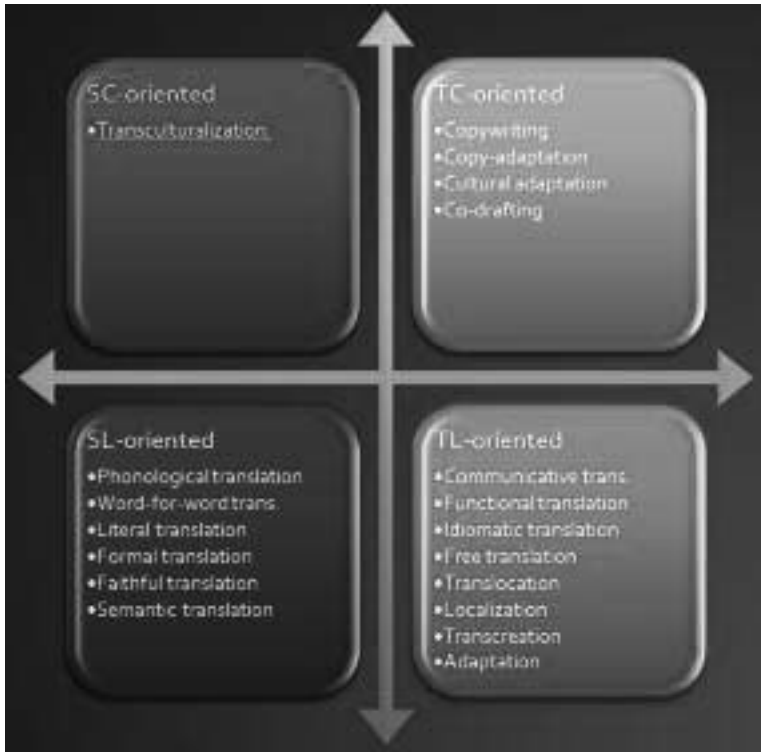


Figure 4. Translation Matrix Diagram.

communities. On the academic side, Irving Hallowell (1963: 519) used the term, borrowed from Ortiz³³ and intended to emphasize the dual directionality of cultural contact, to designate “the process whereby individuals under a variety of circumstances are temporarily or permanently detached from one group, enter the web of social relation that constitute another society, and come under the influence of its customs, ideas, and values to a greater or lesser degree”. On the business side, The Media Maquiladora³⁴, a Mexican company with offices in Florida, provided an interpretation of transculturalization as a synonym of transcreation. In their words:

To survive and thrive in emerging markets, be they in the US or abroad, you must first understand the cultural background and factors of meaning to your audience. You must understand how to speak to them in a way that is compelling and relevant. That is what we call Transculturalization and it is what we do more than simply provide translation services.

Quite evidently this is a wrong interpretation of the original concept, also in con-

³³ In the 1940s Fernando Ortiz coined the term *transculturalization*, an exchange of cultural traditions between groups of different ethnography, as a reaction to the concept of *acculturation*, which implied that change was unidirectional (in Donald R. Hill, *Caribbean Folklore: A Handbook* 2007: 89).

³⁴ <http://mediamaquiladora.com/our-services/translationtransculturalization/>.

sideration of the fact that cultural studies have long attested the usage of the term within post-colonial studies. For this reason, the term transculturalization is placed in the SC-oriented quadrant of the Translation Matrix Diagram, implying activities that are typical of cultural mediators.

The second term that deserves clarification is 'co-drafting'. Its listing in the TC-oriented quadrant is justified by the nature of the activity involved, i.e. drafting the two language versions of a text (legal, commercial, gaming, etc.) at the same time by using a team of two drafters, one of whom is responsible for the L1 version while the other is responsible for the L2 version. The focus is less on the languages themselves than on the cultural filters to be applied. In co-drafting, neither version is a translation of the other. As a result of working together, the two drafters often prompt each other to change or improve their versions, based on their sound understanding of both languages. Co-drafting is now a well-established practice, especially in bilingual or trilingual countries such as Canada or Switzerland.³⁵ It is particularly suited to legal contexts where bijuralism is in force (the most recent example being Hong Kong)³⁶ but it can also be applied to commercial contexts, even within the same language when the target language community belongs to different ethnographic groups (e.g. commercial texts meant for the Hispanic community in the USA can be co-drafted to meet the cultural needs of the groups of Mexican origin, mainly on the West coast, and of the groups of Cuban and Puerto Rican origin, mainly on the East coast).

4. Conclusions

Translating is a creative effort that requires interpretation and re-creation of the source text through the filters of the target language, culture and customs. In a way, the process of translation is as creative as creative writing. Creativity, however, is not the only factor to take into account when discussing transcreation. Although this has now become a buzzword in the translation business, it is a not-yet-regularized neologism that deserves its proper place in translation.

After analysing the diverse contributions by academics, translators and translation service providers to the debate about transcreation, this study examined the two strategies/approaches that have been equated most, i.e. transcreation and adaptation, to discover mutual relationships and single out the specific characteristics that differentiate one from the other and from other strategies. By reverting to the etymological meaning of the two components of transcreation, i.e. translation and creation (except in its theological meaning), I have been able to identify the peculiar

³⁵ Canada developed a unique co-drafting system in 1978 that is now the model for many bilingual, bijural countries. "The objective of co-drafting is to produce two original and equally authoritative versions through the close and constant cooperation of two drafters. Each version should fully reflect the departmental instructions while respecting the nature of each language as well as Canada's two legal systems, common law and civil law." http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/news-nouv/autres-autres/2009/doc_32413d.html.

³⁶ Šarāvi has diffusely written about co-drafting in her comprehensive work of 1997.

feature that distinguishes the term from other terms: its productivity, i.e. the capacity of generating new, unheard-of solutions. I will therefore attempt at formulating a possible definition based on the considerations made.

Transcreation is an intra-/interlingual re-interpretation of the original work suited to the readers/audience of the target language which requires the translator to come up with new conceptual, linguistic and cultural constructs to make up for the lack (or inadequacy) of existing ones. It can be looked at as a strategy to overcome the limits of ‘untranslatability’, but in fact it is a holistic approach in which all possible strategies, methods and techniques can be used. It requires fluency (the ability to generate ideas and meaningful responses), flexibility (the ability to repurpose ideas), originality (the capacity to produce rare and novel ideas) and elaboration (the capacity to develop ideas). It requires the translator not only to conceive new words, but also to imagine new worlds.

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