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Translation into a non-mother tongue in translation theory

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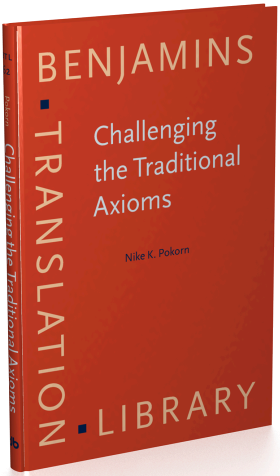

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Challenging the Traditional Axioms: Translation into a non-mother tongue
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Translation into a non-mother tongue in translation theory

Challenging the traditional

Mystification of the native speaker – the translator as owner of the TL

The assumption that translators can master only their mother tongue and must therefore translate only in that direction, despite its seemingly eternal and ancient aura, developed rather late in the Western world. In fact, it seems to have been Martin Luther who in defence of his translation for the first time explicitly considered his knowledge of the TL as a decisive advantage over his critics (Luther 1963: 18–22), which led many of his readers to the conclusion that one can translate satisfactorily only into one's own language. Luther's conviction was taken over and strengthened by the first and second, nationalist generation of Romantic authors, who also made a great contribution to the rise of national philologies. The German Romantics in particular emphasised the essential connectedness of language and nation, and therefore many of their writings expressed powerful mystification of the native speaker and of the mother tongue. For example, Wilhelm von Humboldt claimed not only that the nation was deeply connected with its language, but that the nation's language was the spirit of that nation, which consequently meant that only those who spoke the language of a particular community could access the hidden essence of the nation:

> Die Sprache ist gleichsam die äußerliche Erscheinung des Geistes der Völker; ihre Sprache ist ihr Geist und ihr Geist ihre Sprache, man kann sich beide nicht identisch genug denken. (Humboldt in Stolze 1994: 24)

The translator can thus never write the way the author of the original would have written in the language of the translator (Humboldt 1977: 42) because a complete transition from one language to another is impossible. Every language has its own means of expression, which remains inaccessible to everyone who does not speak that particular language from birth. Translation should therefore always proceed from foreign languages to one's mother tongue and never vice-versa, since the hidden essence of the target language is not attainable by any foreign speaker. It seems then that the roots of the conviction that we can grasp the ungraspable only in our mother tongue, and consequently create a convincing translation only in our native language, stem from this Romantic identification of the transcendental nature of the nation and its language.

Although the belief in the transcendental connectedness of the nation and its language abated in the modern age, its logical corollary that one should always translate into one's mother tongue survived. It can thus also be found in contemporary writings on translation, for example in Peter Newmark's work where he is short but blatantly direct in regard to this same problem:

> (...) A foreigner appears to go on making collocational mistakes however long he lives in his adopted country, possibly because he has never distinguished between grammar and lexicology. (...) For the above reasons, translators rightly translate into their own language, and *a fortiori*, foreign teachers and students are normally unsuitable in a translation course.(Newmark 1981: 180)

Translators should thus translate only into their mother tongues; even if a person lives in a TL culture for years, his or her writing will be, according to Newmark, "unnatural and non-native", full of "unacceptable or improbable collocations" (ibid.). Because of the practical nature of some aspects of Newmark's writings, the influence of his thought has spread to books on translation teaching and guides for translators, which also often defend the superiority of direct translations. Thus, for example, Alan Duff argues that the most frequent criticism of translation is that it does not sound natural and that this unnaturalness is in general the result of interference from the original, i.e the fact that translations are too strongly moulded by the source text (Duff 1989: 11). He is convinced that words have a suggestive power that goes far beyond their dictionary value and that translation should therefore always be carried out by native speakers of the TL, since only they are capable of intuitively grasping word associations which reflect the way in which language structures and organises reality (Duff 1981: 111, 125).

Geoffrey Samuelsson-Brown also repeats the axiomatic conviction that language conceals in its core undefinable components that are hidden from those who are not its native speakers:

> Yes, you may be able to translate quite correctly into a foreign language but it will eventually become evident that the translation was not written by a "native". (Samuelsson-Brown 1995: 16)

Both Samuelsson-Brown and Duff do not define the concept of the native speaker, leaving it vague and undetermined; they do, however, repeat and strengthen the unproven assumption that native speakers structure reality differently compared to the speakers who learned or acquired language later in life and that therefore translations done by non-natives are necessarily inferior to those done by native speakers of the TL.

This traditionally indisputable stand, however, reveals considerable cracks and inevitably provokes the following questions: Who is the native speaker these theoreticians are talking about? The speaker of the core or the speaker of the peripheral variant of the language? Are the children of immigrants who are born in a foreign country also native speakers of this foreign language or not? Is a person who moved to a new linguistic environment in his/her childhood a native speaker of that new language, and if so, when does childhood stop? What about pairs of translators consisting of a native and a non-native speaker of the TL – which language is their mother tongue? Since the supporters of native superiority do not define the concept of the native speaker, despite the central position they grant to this notion in their theoretical works, their categorical claims seem more than suspect. They do not provide in support of their views any proofs concerning the greater competence and proficiency of native speakers compared to those of near-native speakers and they often ignore or downgrade the possibility of translation pairs, consisting of a native and a non-native speakers of the TL (see e.g. Samuelsson-Brown 1995: 16). The advocates of this view simply take the concept of the native speaker for granted, as if its meaning is objectively defined and final, and never seem to question and theoretically challenge any of the idealisations connected with the term – for example, the assumption of the infallibility of the native speaker – despite the fact that the concept is used in such prescriptive sentences as the ones quoted above.

Some contemporary translation practicioners and theoreticians then uncritically accept the concept of an ideal native speaker as an arbiter and model of grammaticality, who masters his/her mother tongue completely and in all its details, who has access to all the hidden channels of unutterable associative connectedness between words and concepts, and can therefore also create linguistically and culturally impeccable translations. This theoretical position, however, also has an additional corollary: it ethnocentrically defends the notion of the superiority of the "natural native speaker", the innate state that can never be acquired, and thus rejects the marginal and peripheral (i.e. translators from immigrant communities and the practice of team translation) as necessarily inferior.

The idealisation of the translator – a perfect bilingual translator

The essential vagueness of the basic terms "mother tongue" and "native speaker" has most probably led another group of translation theoreticians to avoid the question as to whether translators should be native speakers of the source or of the target language altogether; instead, they have idealised the subject involved in the process of translation and assumed that translators are, or at least should be, perfect bilingual speakers of both, source and target languages, translating from one mother tongue to another.

This requirement of a perfect bilingual speaker for a successful translation, however, is not often found explicitly expressed before the period when Translation Studies entered its linguistic era. One of the rare exceptions is the German philosopher, poet, critic and translator Johann Gottfired Herder (1744–1803) who, as early as the late 18th century, claimed that the translator should not get too close to either of his two languages, i.e. to the one he translates from or to the one he translates into (Herder 1977: 33). Despite this general principle, however, Herder reveals in the same text that the languages mentioned are not completely equal and that the translator should therefore adapt words and manners of speaking from a more developed language, e.g. from Greek or Latin, and then transport them into his mother tongue (Herder in Lefevere 1992: 74) – which means that, according to Herder, the ideal bilingual translator in real life nevertheless works from his foreign language into his mother tongue.

Although rare before the 20th century, the call for a bilingual translator became very common in the linguistic current of translatological thought. We can find it, for instance, in J. C. Catford's structuralist work *A Linguistic Theory of Translation* (1965), where he claims that the "discovery of textual equivalents is based on the competent *bilingual* informant or translator" (Catford 1965: 27). However, by the end of the century, bilingualism seems to have been by-passed: translation was no longer considered as a solely linguistic event – other skills and knowledge were needed for the successful transfer of text. Thus Ernst-August Gutt (1990: 143), in his relevance theory of communication, not only demands that translators be bilingual, but also adds that since translation is a cross-cultural event (ibid.: 139) it presupposes more than just the language competence of the translator. Similarly, Roger T. Bell (1991: 15, 38, 40) claims that the ideal translator must possess, in addition to linguistic competence in both languages, communicative competence in both cultures (Bell 1991: 42).

For contemporary Translation Studies the ideal of the bilingual translator with high competence in receptive and productive skills in both languages is thus coupled with additional demands that the translator should also be bi- or even multicultural. Expertise in the cultures involved is particularly stressed by theorists belonging to the so-called cultural turn in Translation Studies: Lefevere and Bassnet, for example, even claiming that for the translator biculturality is even more important than bilingualism (Lefevere and Bassnett 1990: 11).[4]

Some scholars, however, are even more demanding: for them the ideal translator is supposed to be experienced in translation, possess grammatical, textual and pragmatic competences, but above all have broad knowledge in multiple subject areas covered by different texts (Cao 1996: 330, 337). Neubert and Shreve claim that the translator should not only be a linguistic, communicative and cultural expert, but also an expert in the economic, scientific, cultural or technical domains communicated through the original (Neubert & Shreve 1992: 38).

The influential "skopos" theory of translation also did not escape the idealisation of the translator's aptitudes. Thus Vermeer, when asked in January 1998 in Ljubljana whether the ideal translator within the framework of the "skopos" theory translates into his/her mother tongue or also vice-versa, replied that the theory does not, in fact, take this problem into consideration. The translator within the "skopos" theory is a bilingual, bicultural (maybe even multicultural) person who knows well the subject area of the original text and is therefore able to transfer it adequately to the reality of the target culture. According to Vermeer, the question of whether such a person exists or not in real life is not relevant, since every theory should operate only with abstract, ideal notions. Most probably under the influence of this theoretical position, such idealisation was then introduced into translation didactics. Thus Mary Snell-Hornby, for example, writes that the aim of all translation teaching is to create "not only a bilingual but also a bicultural (if not multicultural) specialist working with and within an infinite variety of areas of technical expertise" (Snell-Hornby 1992: 11).

However, none of these theoreticians attempts to define bilingualism or biculturalism, they just take those concepts for granted. And, as in the case of the notions of "native speaker" and "mother tongue", linguists, unfortunately, admit that the notion of "bilingualism" is theoretically unclear in evades water-tight definition. The crucial problem that remains unsolved is which level of competence and proficiency in the two languages involved defines bilingualism, since, as said before, linguistics lacks acid tests which would allow us to define the level of proficiency and competence acquired by a particular speaker. Some linguists are therefore much more prudent – Crystal, for example, avoids generalisations when describing bilingual speakers and argues that "real", i.e. perfect bilingual speakers who would master both of their languages equally well are very rare, if they exist at all:

> The notion of proficiency raises some very complex issues. Again, the obvious answer is to say that people are bilingual when they achieve native-like fluency in each language. But this criterion is far too strong. People who have "perfect" fluency in two languages do exist, but they are exception, not the rule.
> (Crystal 1987: 362)

Moreover, Crystal claims that bilingual speakers often do not attain the level of competence and proficiency of the native speaker in any of the languages they speak (ibid.). Bilingualism in linguistics therefore does not mean the "perfect" mastery of the two languages involved, but greater or lesser ability to communicate in both languages. Such understanding of bilingualism could also be found in post-colonial translation theory, focussing on the works of bilingual and bicultural subjects writing in their language "in between" (see e.g. Mehrez 1992, 121), which has nothing in common with the theoretical idealisations mentioned above. But not all translation theoreticians take this relativism into account: the majority still cling to the concept of the ideal bilingual and bicultural translator, despite the fact that they know that this quintessential state we all aspire to and never really attain, this idealisation of the translator's aptitudes, has no tangible reflection in real life.

A hidden traditional conviction

The most common approach to the problem of directionality in translation theory is, however, a silent acceptance of the "traditional" conviction of the necessity to translate into one's mother tongue. Most translation theoreticians do not discuss openly the possibility of choosing one's TL in translation; however, they do covertly express their conviction that only translation into one's mother tongue guarantees a good translation. This opaque discourse can already be found in the 17th and 18th centuries, for example in the preface to Ovid's *Epistles*, where John Dryden writes: "No man is capable of translating poetry, who, besides a genius to that art, is not a master of both of *his author's language, and of his own*..." (Dryden 1997: 173; emphasis added), or in Jacques

Delille's (1738–1813) writings, where he claims that with translation we import the wealth of the *foreign* language into our own (Delille 1992: 37).

The Romantics were even more determined in their claim that translators should only be members of the TL culture, partly because they regarded translation as a means to augment the significance and expressiveness of the native language (see e.g. Humboldt 1997: 239). Victor Hugo, for example, argued that every translation of a foreign author adds to the national poetry (Hugo 1992: 18) revealing that, according to him, translation is always done from a foreign language into one's mother tongue and never vice-versa. A similar conviction could also be found in the famous lecture by Friedrich Schleiermacher *Über die verschiedenen Methoden des Übersetzens* (1813), in which the author, among other things, emphasises that a translator should not allow himself anything that would not also be allowed in an original work of the same genre in *his native language* (Schleiermacher 1985: 322, emphasis added).[5] Although Schleiermacher never openly claims that the translator should translate only into his mother tongue, this conviction permeates his panegyric of the German language and culture – direct translation seems to be the only translation he envisaged.

Walter Benjamin is even more prescriptive. In his seminal text "The Task of the Translator", written as an introduction to Baudelaire's *Tableaux Parisiens* and, according to Paul de Man, one of the most important texts of Western thought (de Man 1991: 21–52), Benjamin reveals that the only possible direction of translation is from a foreign language to the translator's mother tongue:

> It is the task of the translator to release *in his own language* that pure language which is under the spell of another, to liberate the language imprisoned in a work in his re-creation of that work. (Benjamin 1982: 80)

Benjamin, revealing the influences of German Romanticism, demands that the translator should not only master his own mother tongue but also allow the foreign language to transform the target language by means of translation and thus liberate the power of the pure, original language – and this extremely important and difficult task seems to be possible only if one is translating into one's mother tongue.

In addition to traditional writings, the hidden assumption that one always translates into one's mother tongue can also be found in contemporary theories – thus we can find it in Eillis Barnstone's work (Barnstone 1993, 109),[6] in Barbara Johnson's deconstructivist thoughts (Johnson 1985: 142),[7] in Sherry Simon's feminist work (Simon 1996: 94),[8] and in Mary Snell-Hornby's integrated approach. Although Snell-Hornby often explicitly insists on the bilingualism and multiculturality of the translator (e.g. Snell-Hornby 1992: 11), it is obvious that the prevailing practice in the major linguistic communities nevertheless influenced some of her statements. For example, in *Translation Studies: An Integrated Approach* she writes:

> The translator starts from a presented frame (the text and its linguistic components); this was produced by an author who drew from his own repertoire of partly prototypical scenes. Based on the frame of the text, the translator-reader builds up his own scenes depending on his own level of experience and his internalized knowledge of the material concerned. *As a non-native speaker*, the translator might well activate scenes that diverge from the author's intentions or deviate from those activated by a native speaker of the source language (a frequent cause of translation error).
>
> (Snell-Hornby [1988] 1995: 81; emphasis added)

According to Snell-Hornby, the ideal translator, despite his/her multiculturality, nevertheless remains primarily the native speaker of the TL, with all the limitations and advantages such a position entails.

This hidden discourse on directionality is particularly interesting and contradictory in George Steiner's hermeneutic work on translation theory. Steiner never openly discusses the translator's choice of target language, despite the fact that he repeatedly fails to determine his own native language, supposedly possessing equal fluency in English, French, and German. In fact, he even claims that he experiences his first three tongues as perfectly equivalent centres of himself (Steiner 1992: 120). Although he does recognise the difficulties in defining the notion of the mother tongue itself, he nevertheless repeatedly indicates that the TL of the translator should also be his mother tongue. For example: "The translator labours to secure a natural habitat for the *alien presence* which he has imported into *his own tongue and natural cultural setting*" (ibid.: 365). Or: "He [the translator] will import from abroad conventions, models of sensibility, expressive genres which *his own language and culture* have not yet reached" (ibid.: 370). And finally: "[...] it is logically conceivable that the translator, having gained great mastery over a source-language, will conclude 'I understand this text but find no way of restating it in *my own native tongue*'"(ibid.: 372, *emphases are all mine)*.

Although he cannot define his native language, and although he has done some translating himself, Steiner never opens the question of choosing one's target language in translation. The principle that the translator is allowed to translate only into his native language seems so deeply rooted in his thought that he never challenges it. He also never disputes another principle, connected to the first one and also typical of the canonised translational norms of the English-speaking world – the principle of fluency and naturalness. This norm has prevailed over other translational strategies in English-speaking cultures and shaped the canon of foreign literatures in English (see Venuti 1995). And since it was also agreed that "perfect" fluency in the TL and the mastery of its different styles could only be achieved in one's mother tongue, the norm that the translator (of at least literary texts) should be a native speaker of the TL became widely accepted too; in fact, it seems even more deeply grounded than the fluency principle.

But norms can change. Thus Lawrence Venuti challenges the absolute validity of the norm of fluency and tries to get his readers to reflect on the ethnocentric violence of a transparent, fluent translation, i.e. of a translation that does not appear to be a translation but imposes itself as the "original" (Venuti 1995: 41) – he even pleads for the production of translations that reveal "the linguistic and cultural difference of foreign texts" (ibid.). But in spite of his openness towards the foreign, and sensitivity to ethnocentric violence, Venuti never touches the problem of the translator's TL, and thus accepts, though perhaps not consciously, the prevailing and ethnocentric norm that proclaims the superiority of TL translators.

Venuti seems to completely ignore the prevailing practice in peripheral language communities, where many translators work into a language that is non-native to them, and the deplorable fact in Western societies that many translations are praised despite the fact that their "translators" did not understand the SL.[9] In fact, he does not find this to be an issue worthy of discussion; thus he quotes Goethe, translated by André Lefevere, a Belgian translating from German into English (ibid.: 99), and he explains the translational practice of Ezra Pound, without mentioning his "Cathay" (1915), despite the fact that this, probably the most praised of Pound's translations of Chinese poems, is also famous for the fact that Pound did not understand Chinese when he translated from E. F. Fenollosa's transcription of and commentary on the ST.

Moreover, his acceptance of the unwritten rule that the translator always works into his/her mother tongue could be seen in his terminology, since he qualifies the language and culture the translator is supposed to translate into as "domestic", and the SL culture as "foreign". For example: "[...] the translator's interpretive choices answer to a *domestic* cultural situation and so always exceed the *foreign* text" (Venuti 1995: 37; *emphasis added*). The same terminology could also be found in his more recent work: "[. . .] the translator involves the *foreign* text in an asymmetrical act of communication, weighted ideologically towards the translating culture" (Venuti 2000: 484–485; see also

Venuti 1998: 12, 15). According to Venuti then, translators choose a "foreign" text and translate it in conformity with the "domestic" cultural situation, which implies that they never work away from their native language but always into their mother tongue.

Some translation theoreticians, then, accept and generalise the prevailing practice in major-language communities, where, indeed, translation usually takes place into the translator's mother tongue. Thus, for example according to a survey undertaken in *Language Monthly,* the percentage of those translators who translate only into their mother tongue in Britain is as high as 84%, but is much lower in other countries, for example only 35% in Germany (see Beeby 1998: 65) and even lower in other linguistically peripheral countries (for Finland see McAlester 1992). But the generalisation of this practice has some serious consequences: by not taking into account the predominant practice in other linguistic communities, by ignoring the possibility of translations into a non-native language, by undertheorising and uncritically accepting the basic notions of "foreign", "domestic" and "native", these scholars covertly impose yet another ethnocentric norm on the rest of the peripheral world.

Translation into a non-mother tongue and team translation as a part of translation practice

Contrary to common belief, the principle that translation should always be done into one's mother tongue does not have a long history. On the contrary, translation into a non-mother tongue can also be found at the dawn of Western history: in the ancient world, the native language of the translator was not an issue, or at least not one of the criteria according to which the quality of the translation was assessed. Thus, for example, the seventy-two praised translators of the Old Testament from Chaldean into Greek were not all Greek native speakers, which leads to a conclusion that at least some of them were translating out of their mother tongue (Aristeas to Philocrates 1997: 5). While in classical Rome, the great and famous translators were native speakers of Latin, the first Christian Latin translators were Greeks. After a short period when Latin speakers like St. Jerome dominated the field (and Jerome, according to traditional accounts, worked with a group of helpers whom he used as walking dictionaries), we enter a period when nobody translating into Latin spoke it natively. But despite this fact, all the major Greek patristical and philosophical works were translated into Latin by such prominent translators as John Scotus Eriugena, Burgundio of Pisa and Leonardo Bruni (see Kelly

1979: 109; Robinson 1997: 57). Inverse translation was practised also in the East as well as the West: for example, the first translations of the Buddhist sacred texts from Sanskrit to Chinese were not by Chinese native speakers (see Chu Chi 2000: 43–53).

At the end of the Middle Ages, when the most heated debates about translation were usually connected with the translation of the Bible, there were few who found it objectionable that both Reformers and counter-Reformers, such as Erasmus of Rotterdam, translated into Latin. After that period, translation into a non-mother tongue still remained alive in science, where Latin was used as an international *lingua franca* until the end of the eighteenth century.

In the twentieth century, too, translation out of one's mother tongue was not such a rare occurrence: it was and still is a common translation practice in minor-language communities, or to use the current euphemism, in communities which use "a language of restricted distribution or limited diffusion" and which are forced to translate into foreign languages if they want their works to be translated at all (see also McAlester 1992: 292–296). The growing interest in this practice and its influence on the theory and didactics of translation and interpreting has also been reflected in two translatological conferences focussing on the topic of directionality: one organised in Ljubljana, the other in Granada (see Grosman et al. 2000; Kelly 2003).

Inverse translation is also common in other large but peripheral language communities, for example in China, where Chinese translators are trying to change, according to them, the distorted image of Chinese poetry created by earlier translations (Lefevere 1995a, b). It seems that this direction of translation is also inevitable for establishing communication between certain immigrant communities and their environment in major-language societies as well. This practice has also triggered a theoretical response – Stuart Campbell in his book *Translation into the Second Language* focuses on the situation in Australia, where certain ethnic communities, such as Arab and Vietnamese, have to rely on Arabic or Vietnamese native speakers to help them communicate in English. Campbell, however, explores inverse translation primarily in an educational environment, and investigates in particular how those non-native speakers, while still acquiring the language, at the same time develop the competence to translate into their second language. He argues that learning to translate is a special form of language learning and that therefore translation into a second language is not deficient *per se* but the product of developing competence (Campbell 1998).

This means that translation into a non-mother tongue is common in small as well as in large language communities; however, it is undoubtedly more common in cultures and communities which do not have a central status and are forced to the global periphery. Very seldom, though, do translators from peripheral cultures work alone – the common practice adopted in those cultures is co-operation between a native and a non-native translator, or a translator who is a native SL speaker and a TL stylist. This practice has also been known in the Western tradition for centuries: thus it is reported that the seventy translators of the *Septuaginta* worked in collaboration "making all details harmonise by mutual comparisons" (Aristeas to Philocrates 1997: 5); in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries translators of the Toledo school in Spain often worked in pairs consisting of Muslim and Jewish converts, and seem to have been translating Arabic and Hebrew texts first into one of the vernacular languages and then into Latin (see Beeby 1998: 65; Pym 1998: 553); and finally, the most frequently translated text in the West, the Bible, is nowadays usually translated in teams. In fact, this co-operation on an equal basis is so frequent that it has a central position in the theory of Bible translation. Thus Eugene A. Nida's *Toward a Science of Translating* is dedicated to such translation teams; in fact, Nida's work goes even further since it is primarily destined to help English-speaking Bible translators (missionaries) who translate the Greek and Hebrew originals into one of the non-Indo-European languages (Nida 1964: 147) – i.e. translators who translate from one foreign language into another, often with the help of secondary source languages (French, English), which are used as substitute bases for translation (see also Nida & Taber 1982: 6).

At first, Nida insists that ideally the translator should be bilingual in both the source and the target languages, but he soon adds that this ideal is rarely realised (1964: 149), and indeed, in case of translators from Classical Greek, bilingualism is unattainable. That is why Nida soon leaves behind the realm of the ideal and focuses on the real problems his group of translator-missionaries faces. Since he is aware of the fact that an ideal set of abilities in one person cannot be found, he distributes the essential elements in the role of translator among several persons in various ways. According to him, in a translation team, roles should be distributed among three persons: one person should interpret the meaning of the source-language message, the second should suggest the equivalent rendering in the receptor language and the third should be responsible for style (ibid.: 153–154).

When Nida describes team translation he has primarily in mind the cooperation between a foreign missionary and a native translator: the missionary being an expert for the languages of the original while the native translator is an expert for the language of the TL culture. Nida insists that all members of such a translation team should know all of the languages involved in the translation, i.e. source and target languages. In case the native translator does not know the language of the original, s/he is not, according to Nida, a translator but merely "an informant or translation helper" (Nida & Taber 1982: 102) – which means that, for example, Ezra Pound would not be considered a translator of Chinese poetry but merely a stylistic designer of an already translated text in the target language.

The basic principles of team translation described in Nida's theoretical work could also be applied to the co-operation between translators in peripheral communities, which provides this translational practice with a possible theoretical basis. Translators from peripheral linguistic communities, similarly to Nida's missionaries, work in pairs, but the role of an interpreter of the original text and the role of the translator are combined and done by one person only, usually because the texts they translate do not have a two-thousand-year-long history of exegesis.

Although team translation is often accompanied with mistrust – for example the King of Portugal, Duarte (1391–1438) in *The Loyal Counselor* argues that translation "is best done by one person" (Duarte in Robinson 1997: 60) and Samuelsson-Brown claims that translation in pairs "is usually an unsatisfactory compromise" (Samuelsson-Brown 1995: 16), inverse and team translation are not only a common fact in the contemporary world but also a theoretically grounded action with fixed rules of conduct.

Translation into a non-mother tongue has thus been known in Western history from Antiquity onwards, and can find one of its possible theoretical groundings in Nida's work. This translational practice is especially common in languages with restricted distribution, in larger linguistic communities which are pushed into a peripheral position because of the global distribution of power and in major-language societies when communicating with ethnic minorities. Western translation theory in general ignores this practice, and accepts the "traditional", i.e. predominantly Romantic, assumption that translators should work only into their own language (when translating all types of text, but especially when translating literature) if they want to create linguistically and culturally acceptable translations. This conviction of the linguistic and cultural inferiority of inverse translations in an opaque way ethnocentrically defends the superiority of post-Romantic West-European concepts concerning translation and translational practice, and thus consequently the *a priori* superiority of the translators and translational practice of major-language communities.