





Interart Translation: A Review, A Definition, and a Critical Assessment

Sanatlararası Çeviri: Bir Kaynak Taraması, Bir Tanım ve Bir Eleştirel Değerlendirme

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ABSTRACT

This article proposes the concept of interart translation based on an examination of the relevant literature in the fields of translation studies, literary studies, cultural studies and visual art. Interart translation may be defined as transformations of artistic expression between genres. Examples include theatre or film adaptations of literary works, sculptures inspired by poetry or installation art inspired by music. For the purposes of the paper, interart translation refers to those processes of creative transfer where the point of departure, or source “text,” and the outcome, the target “text,” are works of art in their own right. There is a body of scholarly engagement that explores works of art created through intermedial transpositions from a multiplicity of perspectives. However, to date, they have not been addressed in conjunction with each other and the term “interart translation” remains marginal. The paper outlines contributions to various research traditions and puts them in dialogue with each other. The discussion highlights the relevance of the concept, offering it as an umbrella term to cover phenomena that have hitherto been referred to as intersemiotic translation, adaptation, etc. The article points out the benefit of having a new term in circulation by connecting disparate research avenues.

Keywords: Translation, interart translation, intersemiotic translation, adaptation, literary translation

ÖZ

Bu derleme makale; çeviribilim, edebiyat çalışmaları, kültür çalışmaları ve görsel sanatların birbirine yakın alanlarında yapılan bir kaynak taramasına dayanarak sanatlararası çeviri kavramını ortaya atmaktadır. Sanatlararası çeviri, sanatsal ifadenin farklı türler arasında dönüştürülmesi olarak tanımlanabilir. Örnek vermek gerekirse, edebiyat eserlerinin tiyatro veya film uyarlamalarını, şiirden esin alınarak yapılmış heykelleri veya müzik parçalarından esin alınarak üretilmiş enstalasyon eserlerini sayabiliriz. Bu makale kapsamında sanatlararası çeviri ifadesi, kalkış noktası veya kaynak “metni” ve çıktısı, yani erek “metni” başlı başına birer sanat eseri olan yaratıcı aktarım süreçlerine işaret etmek için kullanılmıştır. Literatürde ortamlararası dönüşüm aracılığıyla yaratılan sanat eserlerini birçok farklı bakış açısından ele alan çok sayıda akademik çalışma mevcuttur. Ama bunlar şimdiye kadar bir arada ele alınmamıştır ve “sanatlararası çeviri” ifadesi, yerleşik bir terim olarak yaygın biçimde kullanılmamaktadır. Makale farklı araştırma geleneklerine

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ana hatlarıyla deęinirken bunlar arasında bir diyalog kurmayı amaçlamaktadır. Buradaki tartıřma sanatlararası çeviri kavramının gereklilięine vurgu yapmakta, bugüne kadar göstergelerarası çeviri, uyarlama ve benzeri terimlerle adlandırılan olgular bütününi kapsayan bir şemsiye terim olarak sanatlararası çeviriyi önermektedir. Çalışma birbirinden ayrı kalmıř araştırma alanları arasında çeřitli baęlantılar kurarak yeni bir terimi dolařıma sokmanın yararını da ileri sürmektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Çeviri, sanatlararası çeviri, göstergelerarası çeviri, uyarlama, edebiyat çevirisi

Introduction

Interart translation may be defined as transformations of artistic expression between various genres. Examples include theatre or film adaptations of literary works, sculptures inspired by poetry or installation art inspired by music. The plethora of scholarly works on the topic has remained disparate although they could arguably constitute a research tradition when combined under an overarching term. This article aims to review the relevant literature exploring similar phenomena across the disciplines of translation studies, literary studies, cultural studies and visual art to propose a unified concept. It incorporates both theoretical accounts and empirical analyses to delineate the concept and offer a methodological framework to be used in the above-mentioned disciplines. As the ambit of translation studies widens, there is an increasing need for methodological and/or theoretical interventions juxtaposing scholarly works from different angles; hence, the study aims to bring together relevant contributions as a work of reference while also challenging the hitherto alternative status of such work for the discipline of translation studies.

For the sake of clarity, it would be helpful to draw the limits of interart translation as those cases of transfer where both the point of departure and the final product of the process¹ are works of art. The interlingual translation of literary texts for a different target audience – e.g., an abridged version of a novel for young readers – represents a grey area in this regard: technically, such instances can also be included in this category. For that matter, the interlingual translation of novels for a comparable target audience, or the intralingual translation of novels for a different target audience also does count.² However, what is meant by the term “interart translation” denotes semiotic transference as it often takes place between works of art embedded in different media. Some works of art entail multimodality as part of their original conception; these could only be considered “translations” if the various components have been inspired by or “carried across” from other forms of artistic expression – even if the source works of art have not been published/released/exhibited by an institution established in the art world or otherwise made available to the public.

The present study is based on the assumption that the points of convergence between discrete genres of art, like music, visual art, and literature, are substantial enough to warrant an overarching analysis: they have, after all, been borne out of a need for artistic expression, constrained by similar aesthetic concerns and aim at eliciting similar responses in receivers/consumers, which is corroborated by the well-established research exercise in the theory of art (see Carroll 200). We therefore feel that we are justified in addressing various genres in the same breadth, leaving aside differences between artistic genres. The article collates literature

1 We avoid using the conventional terms of source text and target text where possible as they represent a linguistic bias. The terms “source work of art” and “target work of art” may be used for the sake of convenience.

2 The term “adaptation” has also been used to refer to interlingual translation where the target text departs considerably from the source text (see Bastin 2008, Milton 2010). However, reconsiderations of the notion of “translation” will likely collapse such distinctions (see Discussion).

reviews in multiple disciplines. These follow a common thematic framework; nonetheless, none of the publications reviewed actually employ the term “interart translation,” which constitutes the main thrust of this study. Therefore, we believe that a definition and a critical assessment would be well-placed here, unlike in some other reviews which simply synthesize relevant research in a given discipline.

To our knowledge, this is the first publication³ investigating the phenomenon of interart translation from a theoretical perspective and putting the contributions of various tangential disciplines in dialogue. This study aims to highlight the fact that interart translation warrants more attention as an object of research within translation studies. Demonstrating the scholarly affinities between these methodological perspectives and exposing their relative weaknesses and strengths will help us think critically about the topic of interart translation and put forward a well-rounded concept. The proposed term is also intended to enrich translation nomenclature.

Following a broadly historical trajectory, the review of literature will cover debates on ekphrasis and adaptation from literary (and theatre) studies, and intersemiotic translation from translation studies before opening up to contributions from cultural and visual arts. The review will dwell on contributions from each field in some detail, mentioning relevant methodologies and highlighting areas of overlap and disjuncture. Based on this review, the Discussion section will include a theoretical evaluation and offer some ideas for future directions.

Ekphrasis and adaptation

In literary studies, transpositions from the visual to the narrative have been discussed under the rubric of ekphrasis, which refers to the vivid, poetic description of a scene, a painting, or a sculpture. Ekphrasis has been a staple of the Western canon from Antiquity to the Renaissance and to modern times, culminating in a new genre of writing, according to Ruth Webb (1999). For our purposes, the genre association could help open up a fruitful debate about interart translation constituting a genre in itself. This could apply to cases where the act of translation is an integral part of the target artwork with no source work of art widely publicized, as well as those works of art that have been produced through an intermedial transformation from another – publicized – work of art.

Gabrielle Bersier (2013) explores narrative adaptations of visual representations in Goethe’s *Elective Affinities* and *Wilhelm Meister’s Journeyman Years*, calling them “iconotexts.” This article illustrates how studies in ekphrasis come close to studies in translation in their methodology: she considers interlingual translations of the same intersemiotic/intermedial translation in the German original, paying attention to what are, effectively, “transfer operations” or “strategies” from a translation studies perspective. Thus, the author points out “repeated exercises in disambiguation,” “double subordinate construction,” etc. (Bersier 2013: 245,

3 At the time of submission, the only other study to bear the title “interart translation” was an unpublished conference paper available online (see Tewfik 2015).

247). Bersier also carries out a comparative analysis of the written and pictorial renderings of the same representation:

Not only do the rays of sunset fail to reach all the way down to the shaded, rocky mountain path, but the downward motion that sets off the literary ekphrasis from the stasis of the pictorial tradition quickly transitions the group from the shades of twilight into the darkness of night. How pitch-dark it is down below is suggested by a chromatic touch of the “poet in colors,” when his protagonist sees the pious pageant disappear behind the blue shady walls of a cliff (Bersier 2013: 251).

The above quote highlights the similarities between studies conceived from a literary studies perspective and from a translation methodology. On the other hand, this study throws into relief one difference between cases of ekphrasis and other types of interart translation to be reviewed below: the former is usually partial (see Atherton and Hetherington 2022: 5) or at best metonymic; however, the latter often involves two complete, self-enclosed works of art as a point of departure and destination.

Gremels (2015) combines visual ekphrasis and written translation with yet another form of art: music. Analyzing the lyrics/poem of a Cuban song and a literary essay drawing on a French romantic painting, the article invokes the metaphors of border, territory, travel and transgression, bringing together intermedial and intercultural transfer. Moreover, it operationalizes the conceptual tools of rewriting, equivalence, and directionality, bringing the study closer to the translation terrain.

In an article exploring their own artistic practices from the perspective of ekphrasis, Cassandra Atherton and Paul Hetherington (2022) theoretically draw from Heffernan, who argues that “ekphrasis commonly reveals a profound ambivalence toward visual art, a fusion of iconophilia and iconophobia, of veneration and anxiety” ([1993] 2004: 7, qtd in 2022: 2). This tension arguably echoes the ambivalence, so to speak, around the source text in studies of interlingual translation within translation studies. Just like the functionalist approach is said to dethrone the source text (Newmark 1991: 106), this discussion of ekphrasis stands out with its irreverence towards the artistic origin of ekphrastic expressions. The authors finally conclude that the “ekphrastic space is thus a salutary and liminal one, characterized by collisions and mergings of sense and meaning and the destabilization of existing understandings” (Atherton and Hetherington 2022: 13). The focus on liminality throughout the text is reminiscent of Homi Bhabha’s (1994) third space, which has been applied to theoretical accounts of translation (see Batchelor 2008) and overall, the quote reveals points of convergence between ekphrasis and translation “proper.”

In conventional accounts of translation, ekphrasis is not considered as part of the remit of translation (cf. Venuti 2010), perhaps due to a chronological oversight, given that the former predates interlingual translation as a focus of scholarly attention. It is interesting, from this

regard, that the concepts of translation (see Webb 1999: 8) and intermediality (Wagner 1996) have been used to theorize ekphrasis. This testifies to the versatility of the concept of translation and also arguably, the maturity of the discipline of translation studies to subsume adjacent phenomena. On the other hand, translation studies can benefit from the scholarly heritage of the concept of ekphrasis as it originated in literary studies.

Adaptations – theatre and film productions based on novels – constitute creative transfers in the opposite direction: from the written to the visual. These productions are more dramatic (pun intended) and less metonymic in that a more or less complete version of the originating text is often carried across to the other medium, as opposed to ekphrasis, where the description of the visual only constitutes part of the work of literature. In his theoretical account, John Bryant defines adaptation as revising an original with a view to recontextualizing it for a new audience (2013: 54). Although the basic tenet of the field of adaptation studies is derived from the idea of “adapting,” the concept of “rewriting” has gained traction in this discipline as it offers a more nuanced understanding. For example, in his study exploring adaptation in the context of *film noir*, Barton Palmer goes as far as suggesting that we dispense with efforts to gauge the degree to which an adapted text reflects the originating one; according to the author, all adaptation is “by definition intertextual” (2004: 264). Along the same line, Robert Stam puts forward the idea of intertextual dialogism, which is based on the premise that “every text forms an intersection of textual surfaces” (2000: 64). This challenges the assumption that a film adaptation constitutes a subordinate form of expression compared to the original. Championing a broader definition of the term, Linda Hutcheon similarly points out that adaptation is a “derivation that is not derivative – a work that is second without being secondary” (2006: 9). Such concerns sound familiar in translation studies, where the value and legitimacy of target texts, independent from source texts, have been asserted (see Venuti 1995).

Adaptations have formed a fruitful line of research in literature, drama and cinema for decades. Strands of research have focused on aspects of transference, aesthetics, and reception as adaptation studies has formed a discipline in its own right. However, Luc van Doorslaer and Laurence Raw (2016: 194) project that it might be swallowed by translation studies, which actually predates it and addresses a wider range of topics. Van Doorslaer (2021: 2) reminds us that the difference in methodology between translation and adaptation studies is not essential but gradual.

In effect, adaptation studies and translation studies have moved closer to each other: contributions to Raw’s 2012 edited volume, for example, explore the interstices of translation and adaptation (cf. Chan 2012). In this collection, Katja Krebs (2012: 42) calls translation and adaptation “two sides of an ideological coin” whereas Cynthia S.K. Tsui (2012) offers her take on adaptation from a translation perspective. Her overview reveals that translation and adaptation studies alike have been plagued by concerns of “fidelity” and “quality”. Such reflexivity may afford a more rigorous conceptualization for the concept of interart translation.

From a translation studies perspective, though, all these debates on the nature of adaptation still remain largely confined to the textual mode (cf. Leitch 2008: 65). Any conceptualization of interart translation needs to go beyond the borders of written texts, and for this, we turn to intermedial transfer below.

Intersemiotic translation and beyond

In translation studies, intersemiotic translation (Jakobson 1959: 233) has been widely used to account for transfers between different modes of expression. Roman Jakobson defines this as “transmutation or interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems” (1959: 233). It is telling that a departure from the “verbal” to the “nonverbal” is referred to as “transmutation,” which is negatively charged. The inherent linguistic bias in Jakobson also manifests itself in framing interlingual translation as translation “proper.” Jakobson’s framework has been popular and convenient in studies of intermedial transposition; however, methodological setbacks remain. The tripartite model lists interlingual and intersemiotic translation as coordinate categories, but since verbal language is also a semiotic system, the distinction between them is lost. Moreover, although Jakobson does not use the term, Anderson and Lotman (2018) have recently come up with the notion of intrasemiotic translation in their study focusing on an art museum, but this notion, in turn, renders the category of intralingual translation fuzzy for the abovementioned reason.

The cultural turn of the 1990s has accentuated areas of convergence between translation, rewriting and adaptation. Lefevere’s (1992) concept of rewriting has offered an alternative frame of reference to conceptualize creative renderings of texts. This concept highlights the parallels between writing and translating, questioning the power differential between putative “originals” and “copies,” placing translating on an equal footing with adaptation (Kıran 2020: 86). In her theoretical intervention exploring the possibilities offered by the concept of rewriting, Aysun Kıran highlights that “along with the cultural turn, Lefevere’s conceptualization of translation as rewriting has made it necessary for the metaphors that evoke transfer and equivalence to be replaced by those which convey the sense of re-birth or re-shaping in another form” (2020: 88). However, as mentioned above in the appraisal of adaptation, the idea of “rewriting” remains logocentric.

Another way of theoretically accounting for intermedial transfers is transmediality or multimodality (see Kaindl 2013 for an overview). Klaus Kaindl has put together a more nuanced model which partly carries forward the problem of fuzziness in Jakobson’s framework. He believes that a distinction must be made between mode and media since “the semiotic dimension influences a text in many dimensions and is problematic for a translation-relevant text typologization” (Kaindl 2013: 261). Mode has to do with either textual or visual aspects and is generally a broader category than media, which is more specific. Examples of media include opera, theatre, comics, radio, TV, and the Internet. Kaindl’s definition of translation

– “a conventionalized cultural interaction which modally and medially transfers texts from a communication entity for a target group that is different from the initially intended target group” (Kaindl 2013: 261) – is more flexible, but it still favours the linguistic mode. The distinction between modes and media is further divided into intra- and inter-modal, and intra- and inter-medial. Although the terminology is unfortunately complicated, it allows for a more refined analysis. According to this framework, a work of installation art originally inspired by a folk song would be considered intermodal translation since it involves a translation between a verbal and a visual production. However, it would also have intermedial aspects since installation art is usually mixed-media: comprising images, (oral) dialogue, sometimes songs and sometimes (written) subtitles. In this case, a distinction between intermodal and intermedial helps address the media dimensions of transfer.

Venuti (2010) and Chan (2012) have proposed a broadening of the translation perspective to include ekphrasis and adaptation, respectively, both rightly claiming that translation studies provides the methodological tools to explore the relationship between the source and target in these cases of artistic transformation. In a similar vein, Claramonte (2019) treats works of contemporary art as translations. That said, even more inclusive frameworks are available. Echoing Even-Zohar, who, in 1990, admitted that “sooner or later, I believe, it will turn out to be uneconomical to deal with transfer and translation separately” (1990: 71), Kobus Marais (2019: 120-157) argues for an integrated theory of translation to include all instances including transmodal and intersemiotic cases. On the other hand, there is a benefit to be gained from a degree of specificity of a theoretical model in accounting for real-life phenomena, so it would be helpful to have a separate framework focusing on genres of artistic expression.

On an empirical level, it is relatively recent that translation studies researchers have picked up empirical cases of what could be termed interart translation. These contributions, mostly based on the framework of intersemiotic translation, represent a welcome diversity. In a 2008 study, Jessica Yeung analyzed a dance adaptation based on Gustav Mahler’s symphony entitled *The Song of the Earth*. In what she calls a “loop of intertextuality,” the original script for the song was adapted from adaptations based on Chinese poetry from the Tang period. The German symphony was adapted to the stage in 2002 by a Chinese choreographer, with verses of the Chinese translation recited at intervals. According to the author, “in each of these translational acts, the movement from the source text to the target text represents the momentum of creativity involved; the distance between the two texts is the creative space the translators have marked out for themselves” (2008: 293). Tong-King Lee (2013) examines three projects where technology meets art: *Text Garden: An Experiment with Poets and Designers* by Hong Kong Polytechnic’s School of Design contains the interlingual and intersemiotic translations of *Lining up to Pay* and *War Symphony* by Taiwanese poets Hsia Yü and Chen Li. These productions afford a view of translation as multimodality and a view of multimodality as translation in the digital age (Lee 2013: 254). The researcher’s take suggests an understanding

of the concept as encompassing all intersemiotic and transmodal transference. Guanglin Wang (2016) considers the novel *Shanghai Dancing*, a modernist assemblage of text and image, to be an intersemiotic translation of the city of Shanghai. His study explores the pictures, photos, posters and maps in Brian Castro's 2003 novel. Focusing on the semiotic aspect, he argues, "releases us from the prison-house of language and poses a great challenge to logocentrism in the West where language is cherished above everything, and dictates the traditional theory and practice of translation" (Wang 2016: 202). In their comparative study, Nazarloo and Navidinia (2018) examine illustrations of Omar Khayyam's *Rubaiyat* by Persian and Thai graphic artists. They conclude that the Thai artist's work features more cultural elements since the intersemiotic translation was carried out for an international audience. Chen's 2018 paper similarly concentrates on the transmodal adaptations of the Chinese classic *Mulan*. These studies exploring works of art drawing from national cultures rightly take into consideration the dimension of culture-specific items and cultural images. In her analysis of street art as translation, Ayşe Ayhan (2021) looks at how an unfamiliar artistic production is rendered into the target culture through cultural intermediaries in an act of intercultural and interart transfer that transforms the urban space of Istanbul. She conceptualizes street artists as cultural mediators as well as agents of cultural translation, actually collapsing the difference between cultural mediation, which is based on the products and services of the creative industries, and cultural translation, which largely refers to culture in the anthropological sense (see Asad 1986). More recently, Duygu Tekgöl Akın (2022) discusses an art exhibition from the perspective of cultural and transmedial translation. Indian artist Sudarshan Shetty's collection titled "Self-Trans/lation" offers glimpses into the artist's life experiences against the backdrop of Indian culture whereas the works of art on display represent transmedial transpositions of each other.

From choreography to museums

Further in the spectrum, this section covers contributions to the debate from other genres, including dance and photography. In terms of theory, the work of two authors has been pertinent, so the discussion will offer a brief outline of their work, followed by empirical contributions to contemporary art.

Aguiar and Queiroz (2013) have worked on a conceptual framework of intersemiotic translation based on Peirce's theory of sign, proposing two competing triadic models comprising the constituents of sign, object and interpretant. The authors illustrate the two models through an example of a dance choreography based on a novel. According to the first model, the sign corresponds to the novel, the object to the topic of the novel, and the interpretant to the choreography. The second model, which is favoured by the authors, features the choreography as the sign, the novel as the object, and the interpretant as the effect the choreography has on the viewers. Notwithstanding the over-complexity and the abstract terminology of the framework, it has the advantage of applicability on a range of phenomena both inside and

outside the world of art, whether in textual, visual or multimedia form. On the other hand, the framework does not offer analytical tools addressing transfer procedures, which are essential for a thorough understanding of any phenomenon considered to be a translation. In a paper co-authored with Pedro Atã (Aguiar, Atã and Queiroz 2015), the researchers further elaborate on the concept of “transformational creativity,” derived from Boden (2010). This study offers a more specific theoretical framework, better suited to explore transfer.

Later work by Aguiar and Queiroz (2015) on choreography based on the novels of American novelist Gertrude Stein offers more in the way of an empirical analysis. While defining intersemiotic translation as a relation between multilevel systems, they concede that correlations between different levels of sign systems cannot be easily mapped. Focusing on how repetition and the continuous present play out in two contemporary dance pieces, the researchers identify singular movements, movement sequences, sound objects and light behaviour as reflections of the novelist’s choices regarding syntax. The researchers apply the analogy of syntax on choreography as well, which bears resemblance to Mieke Bal’s concept of “museum syntax” (2001: 41-64). In effect, both dance pieces and museum collections are browsed in a linear fashion, therefore the analogy of “the work of visual art as text” moves the debate closer to the realm of textual, interlingual translation (see also Sturge 2007: 7). Aguiar and Queiroz actually compare the use of repetition in Stein’s novels to cubist paintings, establishing yet another interart connection.

In another empirical case study, Vitral, Aguiar and Queiroz (2016) focus on the translation of a mobile art project into a photographic essay. This study investigates aspects of the translation process to a greater extent, also touching upon which elements from the source are selected for transposition. These elements, shaped by the constraining factors from Rio de Janeiro’s architecture, are then transferred into “juxtaposed sequences,” “overlapping of virtual collection of objects,” “repetition” and “super-imposed information” (2016: 95). The authors even present corresponding features from the mobile art project and the photographic essay in a table, establishing an aesthetic equivalence of sorts. Out of the three studies conducted within the same framework, this last one comes closest to a translation studies methodology in that it unpacks the transfer procedures and teases out their implications.

Venuti’s (2010) above-mentioned call to incorporate ekphrasis into the realm of translation was published in a special issue of the aptly named journal *Art in Translation*, (volume 2, issue 2) dedicated to theoretical explorations of the art/translation nexus. Other contributions to the issue include Clive Scott’s (2010) eloquent piece where he considers the tactile features of handwriting as a means of synesthesia in the context of literary translation. Ruth Phillips (2010) takes a materialist approach as she investigates the role of wampum belts (hand-woven belts made of shell beads) as tokens of cultural translation in 17th-century North America. Vojtech Lahoda (2010) shifts the geographical focus to Eastern Europe as he examines the spread of cubism through translation. Claudia Heide’s article (2010) evokes translation as a metaphor,

applying the concepts of domestication and foreignization to painting and architecture. The fact that these studies should be published in an art journal testifies to the relevance of translation as a conceptual framework in addressing topics of art.

The world of visual art has seen many examples where translation gets incorporated into a work of art at its inception. The South Korean artist Young-hae Chang exhausts the possibilities of poetry while also disrupting the conventions of this genre in his videos.⁴ In a similar vein, the US-based artist John Cayley blends poetry, calligraphy and computer software to create digital works of art that revolve around the notion of translation.⁵ Tekgöl (2016) looks at how objects/artefacts recreate the plot and atmosphere at the Museum of Innocence, based on the eponymous novel by Orhan Pamuk. The study posits the Museum as a translation of the originating novel, which in turn is considered to be a translation of social reality in 70s and 80s Turkey (Tekgöl 2016: 388-389) – not unlike how Wang (2016) sees the novel *Shanghai Dancing* as a translation of the city of Shanghai. In the multiple layers of translation at the Museum of Innocence, intersemiotic translation emerges as a legitimizing strategy for the dimension of cultural translation (Asad 1986). In a recent collaboration between a researcher of visual art and a translation scholar, Puposki and Todorova (2023) weave together performativity, intersemiotic translation, and cultural translation in their discussion of *Hong Kong Atlas*, a multimodal work of art based on a Chinese novel by Dung Kai-Cheung. The authors consider the piece of post-conceptual digital art to be the outcome of “reverse-ekphrastic translation” (Puposki and Todorova 2023: 5), replacing the experience of “reading” with “looking.”

Studies on interart phenomena from the disciplines of visual art and cultural studies pay due respect to the agency of the interart translator while theorizing the creative space between the source and target works of art. The case studies reviewed above illustrate how a specific concept referring to transformations between forms of artistic expression is necessary and relevant.

Discussion: Defining and situating interart translation

After a consideration of perspectives from various academic traditions, it is safe to argue that there is a veritable body of research that paves the way for the term “interart translation” as an analytical category. This concept will best be accommodated by the discipline of translation studies since this is the academic tradition that has been conceived to address, and therefore most attuned to, what happens between the source and the target.

A new concept of interart translation building on the strengths of, and avoiding the pitfalls of the frameworks outlined above should therefore i) assume equal distance to various art forms, be it written, plastic, acoustic or mixed-media, ii) move away from Eurocentric assumptions, or exercise self-reflexivity in this regard, iii) focus on the creative leap between the point of departure, or source of inspiration, and the final product, iv) be well-equipped to address

4 His work might be browsed at <https://yhchang.com/>.

5 His work might be browsed at <http://programmatology.shadoof.net/index.php>.

“transfer operations,” or “strategies” in unambiguous terms, and v) attribute agency to the interart translator. Translation in general is discussed as a process and a product, which applies to interart translation as well. Finally, it is useful to reiterate that interart translations may be partial or complete.

The historical trajectory of the debates on equivalence (see Leal 2012), a core concept for the discipline, also reveals that the time is right for a concept such as interart translation to be situated within mainstream translation studies. Objectivist framings of translation have, in the last decades, given way to more relativist approaches (see D’hulst 2021: 1). According to Alice Leal, within the poststructuralist school in translation, “the reliance on equivalence is perceived as the epitome of essentialism and logocentrism, which in short refers to the understanding of meaning as a stable and hence easily transferrable entity from language to language, regardless of circumstances and ideology” (Leal 2012: 44-45). Non-objectivist approaches have been championed by Gideon Toury (1995), who recognized the relativistic nature of the phenomenon of translation. His definition of translation does not attribute any intrinsic value to it:

any target-culture text for which there are reasons to tentatively posit the existence of another text, in another culture/language, from which it was presumably derived by transfer operations and to which it is now tied by a set of relationships based on shared features, some of which may be regarded – within the culture in question – as necessary and/or sufficient (Toury 1995: 31).

Toury has come up with the source, transfer and relationship postulates to qualify a production as translation (1995: 33-35). Following from the idea of “assumed translation,” Lieven D’hulst puts forward “assumed transfer,” arguing that transfer may “aggregate several types of relations” (2021: 3). The transfer operations involved in interart translation are characterized by metonymy much like other types of discursive translation. According to Maria Tymoczko:

Meaning in a text is overdetermined, and the information in and the meaning of a source text is therefore always more extensive than a translation can convey. [...] As a result, translators must make choices, selecting aspects or parts of a text to transpose and emphasize. Such choices in turn serve to create representations of their source texts, representations that are also partial (2000: 24).

In other words, an artist who performs interart translation is free to choose those segments of the original work of art that are, in Tymoczko’s words, “saturated with semiotic significance,” (1999: 45) and transform them into another medium.⁶ The review of studies demonstrates that the umbrella term “interart translation,” covering intermedial transformations of artistic

6 “Interart translators” from the world of visual and performance art have been granted more artistic license compared to those engaged in written, interlingual translation.

expression, satisfies the source, transfer and relationship postulates put forward by Toury (1995). It represents an innovative extension of the non-objectivist, relativist approaches to translation.

Our aim here is to break with the linguistic bias, and therefore the same non-objectivist, relativist outlook may be extended to the target (and source) work of art: any production that is accepted to be a work of art in the target culture, satisfying either aesthetic, historical, institutional or other theories of art (see Carroll 2000). Let us clear one remaining question, namely, if the question of what qualifies as a work of art is relegated to the theory of art, should the concept of interart translation really belong to the discipline of the history of art? First of all, since its institutionalization, translation studies has boasted an interdisciplinary outlook; therefore, studies drawing from both translation and art theory would be welcome by the research community. Secondly, the brief outline in this section illustrates how translation studies does possess the methodological breadth to account for phenomena within the art world.

Conclusion

This review article has been limited in scope as it only drew a preliminary framework. Other theoretical interventions may investigate interart phenomenon in relation to a wealth of translation concepts including retranslation, indirect translation/directionality, pseudotranslation, self-translation, unit of translation, and translation and gender. Moreover, “transcreation” is also an overlapping concept worth exploring in relation to interart translation.

The term “interart translation” is likely to attract criticism from those quarters of the discipline where equivalence-based interlingual translation is held up as the original object of inquiry. The underlying view behind such criticism is that bandying new concepts in the name of originality stretches the concept of translation beyond its analytical usefulness, undermining the rigour of translation research (see Mossop 2016: 19-20). It is important to remember that what is being suggested here is not an alternative, blanket term replacing translation and covering any type of transfer but a more nuanced subcategory of translation where the object of research is further qualified. The only grey area that it leaves is the case of interlingual literary translation where both the source and the target are works of art in their own right; however, we have pointed out earlier that interart translation often involves intermedial/intersemiotic transfer.

The future of interart research is likely to witness a broadening of the empirical spectrum, including, for example, digital productions and online media. This will further challenge strictly linguistic notions of translation, lending support to the theoretical ambitions of the discipline of translation studies.

To recapitulate, this article reviewed the relevant literature in adjacent disciplines to test the relevance of the notion of interart translation. The term “interart translation” has been proposed in order to lay bare the overlaps between these research traditions rather than to replace terms put into circulation decades ago. By establishing these links, we hope to open

up the entire heritage of these cognate terms of ekphrasis, adaptation, intersemiotic translation and interart work within visual traditions to researchers exploring cases of interart translation.

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