Chapter 4

Cultural and Linguistic Interferences in the Translation of *Maus* Into Spanish: Proposal of Homogeneous Translation Strategies Based on Transcreation

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ABSTRACT

Comics are a type of literature with an increasing prestige due to the change in the cultural paradigm, which has surpassed the previous idea of underground means of expression. This cultural change took place with the publication of Spiegelman’s *Maus* (Pulitzer Prize 1992). This chapter aims at analyzing the evolution of key terms in Translation Studies regarding cultural issues, from ‘equivalence’ to ‘transcreation’, and reflecting on the importance given to graphic novels since Spiegelman’s work. The author analyzes the two Spanish translations published till the date, which have remarkable differences between them, in order to reach homogeneous proposals to reflect linguistic and cultural interferences when translating this graphic novel into Spanish, essential for the adequate understanding of *Maus*.

INTRODUCTION

Comics are a type of literature with an increasing number of readers in recent years, thus demanding new approaches to translation with restrictive features (i.e. space, images/drawings, paratextuality). Comic translation entails certain problems beyond language transfer, as it belongs to a specific category called ‘constrained translation’ (Mayoral, Kelly & Gallardo, 1988; Valero, 2000). As a consequence, several parameters must be kept in mind during the translation process: i) the message does not only depend on written words; ii) there may be constraints; iii) images and paratextual elements have a direct influence on the main image.

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Furthermore, comic translation could be considered as a semiotic system. In fact, several definitions and concepts of translation from the semiotics’ point of view have been established from Jakobson’s (1971) distinction between interlinguistic, endolinguistic, and intersemiotic translation. According to more developed and recent models (Toury, 1986; Torop, 2003), and following Zanettin (2004), several types of inter- and intrasemiotic comics translation can be established, such as the change of reading direction (e.g. Western translation of Japanese manga) or the reproduction in black & white in colour or vice versa.

We cannot forget to suggest that comics translation must be seen as intercultural translation among several semiotic culturally-determined environments, which is also conditioned by space and time. These semiotic culturally-determined environments are marked by what Barbieri (1991) called ‘languages of comics’: i) visual systems; ii) temporality systems; and iii) mixed systems of images and temporality.

These specific features of comic translation may not be properly understood without the consideration of translation as a key factor in cultural evolution. There is no doubt that translation as a process has an extensive tradition from the beginnings of history; the theoretical reflections, however, have a remarkably more recent development, with a special emphasis from the 20th century onwards (cf. Background section).

In this light, one of the major concepts of translation developed just some decades ago was ‘equivalence’ (Vinay & Dalbernet, as cited in Kenny, 1998, p. 77). As it is widely known, Nida (1964) established two types of equivalence: ‘formal equivalence’ (from 1982 referred as formal correspondence (Nida & Taber, 1982)) and ‘dynamic equivalence’. Dynamic equivalence is a culture-bound concept originally related to Bible translation, even though its evolution allowed its use in all fields of translation: according to this principle, the translator aims to translate the meaning of the original text, so that the target text wording can trigger the same impact on the target culture audience as the original in the source culture audience (cf. Background section).

More recently, the concept of ‘localisation’, which has been developed recently (cf. Esselink, 2000; O’Hagan & Ashworth, 2002), focuses on translating the meaning of the words in a way that is culturally appropriate for the target culture audience, in order to maintain the meaning but adapt it to meet the target audience expectations. Going a step further, however, in the analysis of the considerations of culture in translation studies, it is necessary to reach the concept of ‘transcreation’. Despite the novelty of this concept, an increasing number of publications in recent years underlines its importance. The reason for its relevance derives from its purpose, as transcreation aims at ‘recreating’ the text in the target language to meet the linguistic and culture expectations of the target audience, including the proper translation, but also the linguistic and cultural adaptations needed for this purpose.

The main objective of this chapter consists of analysing the evolution of culture-bound concepts of Translation Studies, from the traditional ‘equivalence’ to the current idea of ‘transcreation’, regarding the cultural and linguistic interferences in the translation of Maus (Spiegelman, 1980-1991) into Spanish, considering the special characteristics of comic translation and its direct links with the reflection of culture in different contexts and languages.

**BACKGROUND: TRANSLATION AS A KEY FACTOR IN CULTURAL EVOLUTION: FROM EQUIVALENCE TO TRANSCREATION**

The crucial interplay between language and culture emphasizes the consideration of translation as a key factor in cultural evolution. The role of translation as a tool – or even process – has been present