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THE NATURE AND ROLE OF NORMS IN TRANSLATION

HOWEVER HIGHLY ONE may think of Linguistics, Text-Linguistics, Contrastive Textology or Pragmatics and of their explanatory power with respect to translational phenomena, being a translator cannot be reduced to the mere generation of utterances which would be considered "translations" within any of these disciplines. Translation activities should rather be regarded as having cultural significance. Consequently, "translatorship" amounts first and foremost to being able to *play a social role,* i.e., to fulfil a function allotted by a community—to the activity, its practitioners and/or their products—in a way which is deemed appropriate in its own terms of reference. The acquisition of a set of norms for determining the suitability of that kind of behaviour, and for manoeuvring between all the factors which may constrain it, is therefore a prerequisite for becoming a translator within a cultural environment.

The process by which a bilingual speaker may be said to gain recognition in his/her capacity as a translator has hardly been studied so far. [...] In the present chapter the nature of the acquired norms themselves will be addressed, along with their role in directing translation activity in socio-culturally relevant settings. This presentation will be followed by a brief discussion of translational norms as a second-order object of Translation Studies, to be reconstructed and studied within the kind of framework which we are now in the process of sketching. As strictly translational norms can only be applied at the *receiving* end, establishing them is not merely *justified* by a target-oriented approach but should be seen as its very *epitome*.

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1 Rules, norms, idiosyncrasies

In its socio-cultural dimension, translation can be described as subject to constraints of several types and varying degree. These extend far beyond the source text; the systemic differences between the languages and textual traditions involved in the act, or even the possibilities and limitations of the cognitive apparatus of the translator as a necessary mediator. In fact, cognition itself is influenced, probably even modified by socio-cultural factors. At any rate, translators performing under different conditions (e.g., translating texts of different kinds, and/or for different audiences) often adopt different strategies, and ultimately come up with markedly different products. Something has obviously changed here, and I very much doubt it that it is the cognitive apparatus as such.

In terms of their potency, socio-cultural constraints have been described along a scale anchored between two extremes: general, relatively absolute *rules,* on the one hand and pure *idiosyncrasies* on the other. Between these two poles lies a vast middle-ground occupied by inter subjective factors commonly designated *norms*. The norms themselves form a graded continuum along the scale: some are stronger, and hence more rule-like, others are weaker, and hence almost idiosyncratic. The borderlines between the various types of constraints are thus diffuse. Each of the concepts, including the grading itself, is relative too. Thus what is just a favoured mode of behaviour within a heterogeneous group may well acquire much more binding force within a certain (more homogeneous) section thereof, in terms of either human agents (e.g., translators among texters in general) or types of activity (e.g., interpreting, or legal translation, within translation at large).

Along the temporal axis, each type of constraint may, and often does move into its neighbouring domain(s) through processes of rise and decline. Thus, mere, whims may catch on and become more and more normative, and norms can gain so much validity that, for all practical purposes, they become as binding as rules; or the other way around, of course. Shifts of validity and force often have to do with changes of *status* within a society. In fact, they can always be described in connection with the notion of norm, especially since, as the process goes on, they are likely to cross its realm, i.e., actually become norms. The other two types of constraints may even be redefined in terms of norms: rules as "[more] objective", idiosyncrasies as "[more] subjective [or: less inter subjective]" norms.

Sociologists and social psychologists have long regarded norms as the translation of general values or ideas shared by a community—as to what is right and wrong, adequate and inadequate—into performance instructions appropriate for and applicable to particular situations, specifying what is prescribed and forbidden as well as what is tolerated and permitted in a certain behavioural dimension (the famous "square of normativity", which has lately been elaborated on with regard to translation in De Geest 1992:38 40). Norms are acquired by the individual during his/her socialization and always imply *sanctions*—actual or potential, negative as well as positive. Within the community, norms also serve as criteria according to which actual instances of behaviour are *evaluated*. Obviously, there is a point in assuming the existence of norms only in situations which allow for different kinds of behaviour, on the additional condition that selection among them be nonrandom.[1] Inasmuch as a

norm is really active and effective, one can therefore distinguish regularity of behaviour in recurrent situations of the same type, which would render regularities a main source for any *study* of norms as well.

The centrality of the norms is not only metaphorical, then, in terms of their relative position along a postulated continuum of constraints; rather, it is essential: Norms are the key concept and focal point in any attempt to account for the social relevance of activities, because their existence, and the wide range of situations they apply to (with the conformity this implies), are the main factors ensuring the establishment and retention of social order. This holds for cultures too, or for any of the systems constituting them, which are, after all, social institutions ipso facto. Of course, behaviour which does *not* conform to prevailing norms is always possible too. Moreover, "non-compliance with a norm in particular instances does not invalidate the norm" (Hermans 1991:162). At the same time, there would normally be a price to pay for opting for any deviant kind of behaviour.

One thing to bear in mind, when setting out to study norm-governed behaviour, is that there is no necessary identity between the norms themselves and any formulation of them in language. Verbal formulations of course reflect *awareness* of the existence of norms as well as of their respective significance. However, they also imply other interests, particularly a desire to *control* behaviour i.e., to dictate norms rather than merely account for them. Normative formulations tend to be slanted, then, and should always be taken with a grain of salt.

2 Translation as a norm-governed activity

Translation is a kind of activity which inevitably involves at least two languages and two cultural traditions, i.e., at least two sets of norm-systems on each level. Thus, the "value" behind it may be described as consisting of two major elements:

1 being a text in a certain language, and hence occupying a position, or filling in a slot, in the appropriate culture, or in a certain section thereof;
2 constituting a representation in that language/culture of another, preexisting text in some other language, belonging to some other culture and occupying a definite position within it.

These two types of requirement derive from two sources which—even though the distance between them may vary greatly—are nevertheless always different and therefore often incompatible. Were it not for the regulative capacity of norms, the tensions between the two sources of constraints would have to be resolved on an entirely *individual* basis, and with no clear yardstick to go by. Extreme free variation may well have been the result, which it certainly is not. Rather, translation behaviour within a culture tends to manifest certain *regularities,* one consequence being that even if they are unable to account for deviations in any explicit way, the persons-in-the-culture can often tell when a translator has failed to adhere to sanctioned practices.

It has proven useful and enlightening to regard the basic choice which can be made between requirements of the two different sources as constituting an **initial**

norm. Thus, a translator may subject him-/herself either to the original text, with the norms it has realized, or to the norms active in the target culture, or, in that section of it which would host the end product. If the first stance is adopted, the translation will tend to subscribe to the norms of the source text, and through them also to the norms of the source language and culture. This tendency; which has often been characterized as the pursuit of adequate translation,[2] may well entail certain incompatibilities with target norms and practices, especially those lying beyond the mere linguistic ones. If, on the other hand, the second stance is adopted, norms systems of the target culture are triggered and set into motion. Shifts from the source text would be an almost inevitable price. Thus, whereas adherence to source norms determines a translation's adequacy as compared to the source text, subscription to norms originating in the target culture determines its acceptability.

Obviously, even the most adequacy-oriented translation involves shifts from the source text. In fact, the occurrence of shifts has long been acknowledged as a true universal of translation. However, since the need itself to deviate from sour ce-text patterns can always be realized in more than one way, the actual *realization* of so-called obligatory shifts, to the extent that it is non-random, and hence not idiosyncratic, is already truly nor m-governed. So is everything that has to do with non-obligatory shifts, which are of course more than just possible in real-life translation: they occur everywhere and tend to constitute the majority of shifting in any single act of human translation, rendering the latter a contributing factor to, as well as the epitome of regularity.

The term "initial norm" should not be overinterpreted, however. Its initiality derives from its superordinance over particular norms which pertain to lower, and therefore more specific levels. The kind of priority postulated here is basically *logical,* and need not coincide with any "real", i.e., *chronological* order of application. The notion is thus designed to serve first and foremost as an *explanatory tool*. Even if no clear macro-level tendency can be shown, any micro-level decision can still be accounted for in terms of adequacy vs. acceptability. On the other hand, in cases where an overall choice has been made, it is not necessary that every single lower-level decision be made in full accord with it. We are still talking regularities, then, but not necessarily of any absolute type. It is unrealistic to expect absolute regularities anyway, in any behavioural domain.

Actual translation decisions (the results of which the researcher would confront) will necessarily involve some ad hoc combination of, or compromise between the two extremes implied by the initial norm. Still, for theoretical and methodological reasons, it seems wiser to retain the opposition and treat the two poles as distinct in principle: If they are not regarded as having distinct *theoretical* statuses, how would compromises differing in type or in extent be distinguished and accounted for?

Finally, the claim that it is basically a norm-governed type of behaviour applies to translation of all kinds, not only literary, philosophical or biblical translation, which is where most norm-oriented studies have been conducted so far. As has recently been claimed and demonstrated in an all too sketchy exchange of views in *Target* (M.Shlesinger 1989 and Harris 1990), similar things can even be said of *conference interpreting*. Needless to say, this does not mean that the exact same

conditions apply to all kinds of translation. In fact, their application in different cultural sectors is precisely one of the aspects that should be submitted to study. In principle, the claim is also valid for every society and historical period, thus offering a framework for historically oriented studies which would also allow for comparison.

3 Translation norms: an overview

Norms can be expected to operate not only in translation of all kinds, but also at every stage in the translating event, and hence to be reflected on every level of its product. It has proven convenient to first distinguish two larger groups of norms applicable to translation: preliminary vs. operational.

Preliminary norms have to do with two main sets of considerations which are often interconnected: those regarding the existence and actual nature of a definite translation policy, and those related to the directness of translation.

Translation policy refers to those factors that govern the choice of text types; or even of individual texts, to be imported through translation into a particular culture/language at a particular point in time. Such a policy will be said to exist inasmuch as the choice is found to be non-random. Different policies may of course apply to different subgroups, in terms of either text-types (e.g. literary vs. non-literary) or human agents and groups thereof (e.g., different publishing houses), and the interface between the two often offers very fertile grounds for policy hunting.

Considerations concerning *directness of translation* involve the threshold of tolerance for translating from languages other than the ultimate source language: is indirect translation permitted at all? In translating from what source languages/ text-types/periods (etc.) is it permitted/prohibited/tolerated/preferred? What are the permitted/prohibited/tolerated/preferred mediating languages? Is there a tendency/ obligation to mark a translated work as having been mediated or is this fact ignored/ camouflaged/denied? If it is mentioned, is the identity of the mediating language supplied as well? And so on.

Operational norms, in turn, may be conceived of as directing the decisions made during the act of translation itself. They affect the matrix of the text—i.e. the modes of distributing linguistic material in it—as well as the textual make up and verbal formulation as such. They thus govern—directly or indirectly—the relationships as well that would obtain between the target and source texts, i.e., what is more likely to remain invariant under transformation and what will change.

So-called *matricial norms* may govern the very *existence* of target-language material intended as a substitute for the corresponding source-language material (and hence the degree of *fullness* of translation), its location in the text (or the form of actual *distribution*), as well as the textual *segmentation*.[3] The extent to which omissions, additions, changes of location and manipulations of segmentation are referred to in the translated texts (or around them) may also be determined by norms, even though the one can very well occur without the other.

Obviously, the borderlines between the various matricial phenomena are not

clear-cut. For instance, large-scale omissions often entail changes of segmentation as well, especially if the omitted portions have no clear boundaries, or textual-linguistic standing, i.e., if they are not integral sentences, paragraphs or chapters. By the same token, a change of location may often be accounted for as an omission (in one place) compensated by an addition (elsewhere). The decision as to what may have "really" taken place is thus description-bound: What one is after is (more or less cogent) *explanatory hypotheses,* not necessarily "true-to-life" accounts, which one can never be sure of anyway.

***Textual-linguistic norms*,** in turn, govern the selection of material to formulate the target text in, or replace the original textual and linguistic material with. Textual-linguistic norms may either be *general,* and hence apply to translation qua translation, or *particular,* in which case they would pertain to a particular text-type and/or mode of translation only. Some of them may be identical to the norms governing non-translational text-production, but such an identity should never be taken for granted. This is the methodological reason why no study of translation can, or should proceed from the assumption that the later is representative of the target language, or of any overall textual tradition thereof. (And see our discussion of "translation-specific lexical items".)

It is clear that preliminary norms have both logical and chronological precedence over the operational ones. This is not to say that between the two major groups there are no relationships whatsoever, including mutual influences or even two-way conditioning. However, these relations are by no means fixed and given, and their establishment forms an inseparable part of any study of translation as a norm-governed activity. Nevertheless, we can safely assume at least that the relations which do exist have to do with the initial norm. They might even be found to *intersect* it—another important reason to retain the opposition between "adequacy" and "acceptability" as a basic coordinate system for the formulation of explanatory hypotheses.[4]

Operational norms as such may be described as serving as a model, in accordance with which translations come into being, whether involving the norms realized by the source text (i.e., adequate translation) plus certain modifications or purely target norms, or a particular compromise between the two. Every model supplying performance instructions may be said to act as a *restricting* factor: it opens up certain options while closing others. Consequently, when the first position is fully adopted, the translation can hardly be said to have been made into the target language as a whole. Rather, it is made into a model language, which is at best some part of the former and at worst an artificial, and as such nonexistent variety.[5] In this last case, the translation is not really *introduced* into the target culture either, but is *imposed* on it, so to speak. Sure, it may eventually carve a niche for itself in the latter, but there is no initial attempt to accommodate it to any existing "slot". On the other hand, when the second position is adopted, what a translator is introducing into the target culture (which is indeed what s/he can be described as doing now) is a *version* of the original work, cut to the measure of a preexisting model. (And see our discussion of the opposition between the "translation of literary texts" and "literary translation" as well as the detailed presentation of the Hebrew translation of a German *Schlaraffenland* text.)

The apparent contradiction between any traditional concept of equivalence and the limited model into which a translation has just been claimed to be moulded can only be resolved by postulating that **it is norms that determine the (type and extent of) equivalence manifested by actual translations.** The study of norms thus constitutes a vital step towards establishing just how the functional-relational postulate of equivalence has been realized—whether in one translated text, in the work of a single translator or "school" of translators, in a given historical period, or in any other justifiable selection.[6] What this approach entails is a clear wish to retain the notion of equivalence, which various contemporary approaches (e.g. Hönig and Kussmaul 1982; Holz-Mänttäri 1984; Snell-Hornby 1988) have tried to do without, while introducing one essential change into it: from an ahistorical, largely prescriptive concept to a historical one. Rather than being a single relationship, denoting a recurring type of invariant, it comes to refer to any relation which is found to have characterized translation under a specified set of circumstances.

At the end of a full-fledged study it will probably be found that translational norms, hence the realization of the equivalence postulate, are all, to a large extent, dependent on the position held by translation—the activity as well as its products—in the target culture. An interesting field for study is therefore comparative: the nature of translational norms as compared to those governing non-translational kinds of text-production. In fact, this kind of study is absolutely vital, if translating and translations are to be appropriately contextualized.

4 The multiplicity of translational norms

The difficulties involved in any attempt to account for translational norms should not be underestimated. These, however, lie first and foremost in two features inherent in the very notion of norm, and are therefore not unique to Translation Studies at all: the socio-cultural specificity of norms and their basic instability.

Thus, whatever its exact content, there is absolutely no need for a norm to apply—to the same extent, or at all—to all sectors within a society. Even less necessary, or indeed likely, is it for a norm to apply across cultures. In fact, "sameness" here is a mere coincidence—or else the result of continuous contacts between subsystems within a culture, or between entire cultural systems, and hence a manifestation of interference. (For some general rules of systemic interference see Even-Zohar 1990:53–72.) Even then, it is often more a matter of apparent than of a genuine identity. After all, significance is only attributed to a norm by the *system* in which it is embedded, and the systems remain different even if instances of external behaviour appear the same.

In addition to their inherent specificity, norms are also unstable, changing entities; not because of any intrinsic flaw but by their very nature as norms. At times, norms change rather quickly; at other times, they are more enduring, and the process may take longer. Either way, substantial changes, in translational norms too, quite often occur within one's life-time.

Of course it is not as if all translators are *passive* in face of these changes. Rather, many of them, through their very activity, help in shaping the process, as

do translation criticism, translation ideology (including the one emanating from contemporary academe, often in the guise of theory), and, of course, various norm-setting activities of institutes where, in many societies, translators are now being trained. Wittingly or unwittingly, they all try to interfere with the "natural" course of events and to divert it according to their own preferences. Yet the success of their endeavours is never fully foreseeable. In fact, the relative role of different agents in the overall dynamics of translational norms is still largely a matter of conjecture even for times past, and much more research is needed to clarify it.

Complying with social pressures to constantly adjust one's behaviour to norms that keep changing is of course far from simple, and most people—including translators, initiators of translation activities and the consumers of their products—do so only up to a point. Therefore, it is not all that rare to find side by side in a society three types of competing norms, each having its own followers and a position of its own in the culture at large: the ones that dominate the centre of the system, and hence direct translational behaviour of the so-called *mainstream,* alongside the remnants of *previous* sets of norms and the rudiments of *new* ones, hovering in the periphery. This is why it is possible to speak—and not derogatorily—of being "trendy", "old-fashioned" or "progressive" in translation (or in any single section thereof) as it is in any other behavioural domain.

One's status as a translator may of course be temporary, especially if one fails to adjust to the changing requirements, or does so to an extent which is deemed insufficient. Thus, as changes of norms occur, formerly "progressive" translators may soon find themselves just "trendy", or on occasion as even downright *"passé"*. At the same time, regarding this process as involving a mere alternation of generations can be misleading, especially if generations are directly equated with age groups. While there often are correlations between one's position along the "dated"—"mainstream"—"avant-garde" axis and one's age, these cannot, and should not be taken as inevitable, much less as a starting point and framework for the study of norms in action. Most notably, young people who are in the early phases of their initiation as translators often behave in an extremely epigonic way: they tend to perform according to dated, but still existing norms, the more so if they receive reinforcement from agents holding to dated norms, be they language teachers, editors, or even teachers of translation.

Multiplicity and variation should not be taken to imply that there is no such thing as norms active in translation. They only mean that real-life situations tend to be complex; and this complexity had better be noted rather than ignored, if one is to draw any justifiable conclusions. As already argued, the only viable way out seems to be to contextualize every phenomenon, every item, every text, every act, on the way to allotting the different norms themselves their appropriate position and valence. This is why it is simply unthinkable, from the point of view of the study of translation as a norm-governed activity, for all items to be treated on a par, as if they were of the same systemic position, the same significance, the same level of representativeness of the target culture and its constraints. Unfortunately, such an indiscriminate approach has been all too common, and has often led to a complete blurring of the normative picture, sometimes even to the absurd claim that no norms could be detected at all. The only way to keep that picture in focus is

to go beyond the establishment of mere "check-lists" of factors which may occur in a corpus and have the lists *ordered,* for instance with respect to the status of those factors as characterizing "mainstream", "dated" and "avant-garde" activities, respectively.

This immediately suggests a further axis of contextualization, whose necessity has so far only been implied; namely, the *historical* one. After all, a norm can only be marked as "dated" if it was active in a *previous* period, and if, at that time, it had a different, "non-dated" position. By the same token, norm-governed behaviour can prove to have been "avant-garde" only in view of *subsequent* attitudes towards it: an idiosyncrasy which never evolved into something more general can only be described as a norm by extension, so to speak (see Section 1 above). Finally, there is nothing inherently "mainstream" about mainstream behaviour, except when it happens to function as such, which means that it too is time-bound. What I am claiming here, in fact, is that historical contextualization is a must not only for a *diachronic* study, which nobody would contest, but also for *synchronic* studies, which still seems a lot less obvious unless one has accepted the principles of so-called "Dynamic Functionalism" (for which, see the Introduction to Even-Zohar 1990[7] and Sheffy 1992: passim).

Finally, in translation too, *non-normative behaviour* is always a possibility. The price for selecting this option may be as low as a (culturally determined) need to submit the end product to revision. However, it may also be far more severe to the point of taking away one's earned recognition as a translator; which is precisely why non-normative behaviour tends to be the exception, in actual practice. On the other hand, in retrospect, deviant instances of behaviour may be found to have effected *changes* in the very system. This is why they constitute an important field of study, as long as they are regarded as what they have really been and are not put indiscriminately into one basket with all the rest. Implied are intriguing questions such as who is "allowed" by a culture to introduce changes and under what circumstances such changes may be expected to occur and/or be accepted.

5 Studying translational norms

So far we have discussed norms mainly in terms of their activity during a translation event and their effectiveness in the act of translation itself. To be sure, this is precisely where and when translational norms are active. However, what is actually available for observation is not so much the norms themselves, but rather norm-governed instances of behaviour. To be even more precise, more often than not, it is the products of such behaviour. Thus, even when translating is claimed to be studied directly, as is the case with the use of "Thinking-Aloud Protocols", it is only *products* which are available, although products of a different kind and order. Norms are not directly observable, then, which is all the more reason why something should also be said about them in the context of an attempt to *account* for translational behaviour.

There are two major sources for a reconstruction of translational norms, textual and extratextual:[8]

1 **textual:** the translated texts themselves, for all kinds of norms, as well as analytical inventories of translations (i.e., "virtual" texts), for various preliminary norms;
2 **extratextual:** semi-theoretical or critical formulations, such as prescriptive "theories" of translation, statements made by translators, editors, publishers, and other persons involved in or connected with the activity, critical appraisals of individual translations, or the activity of a translator or "school" of translators, and so forth.

There is a fundamental difference between these two types of source: Texts are *primary* products of norm-regulated behaviour, and can therefore be taken as immediate representations thereof. Normative pronouncements, by contrast, are merely *by*-products of the existence and activity of norms. Like any attempt to formulate a norm, they are partial and biased, and should therefore be treated with every possible circumspection; all the more so since—emanating as they do from interested parties—they are likely to lean toward propaganda and persuasion. There may therefore be gaps, even contradictions, between explicit arguments and demands, on the one hand, and actual behaviour and its results, on the other, due either to subjectivity or naïveté, or even lack of sufficient knowledge on the part of those who produced the formulations. On occasion, a deliberate desire to mislead and deceive may also be involved. Even with respect to the translators themselves, intentions do not necessarily concur with any declaration of intent (which is often put down post factum anyway, when the act has already been completed); and the way those intentions are realized may well constitute a further, third category still.

Yet all these reservations—proper and serious though they may be—should not lead one to abandon semi-theoretical and critical formulations as legitimate sources for the study of norms. In spite of all its faults, this type of source still has its merits, both in itself and as a possible key to the analysis of actual behaviour. At the same time, if the pitfalls inherent in them are to be avoided, normative pronouncements should never be accepted at face value. They should rather be taken as *pre-systematic* and given an explication in such a way as to place them in a narrow and precise framework, lending the resulting explicata the coveted systematic status. While doing so, an attempt should be made to clarify the status of each formulation, however slanted and biased it may be, and uncover the sense in which it was not just accidental; in other words how, in the final analysis, it does reflect the cultural constellation within which, and for whose purposes it was produced. Apart from sheer speculation, such an explication should involve the comparison of various normative pronouncements to each other, as well as their repeated confrontation with the patterns revealed by [the results of] actual behaviour and the norms reconstructed from them—all this with full consideration for their contextualization. (See a representative case in Weissbrod 1989.)

It is natural, and very convenient, to commence one's research into translational behaviour by focussing on *isolated* norms pertaining to well-defined behavioural dimensions, be they—and the coupled pairs of replacing and replaced segments representing them—established from the source text's perspective (e.g., translational replacements of source metaphors) or from the target text's vantage, point (e.g., binomials of near-synonyms as translational replacements). However, translation

is intrinsically *multi*-dimensional: the manifold phenomena it presents are tightly interwoven and do not allow for easy isolation, not even for methodical purposes. Therefore, research should never get stuck in the blind alley of the "paradigmatic" phase which would at best yield lists of "normemes", or discrete norms. Rather, it should always proceed to a "syntagmatic" phase, involving the *integration* of normemes pertaining to various problem areas. Accordingly, the student's task can be characterized as an attempt to establish what *relations* there are between norms pertaining to various domains by correlating his/her individual findings and weighing them against each other. Obviously, the thicker the network of relations thus established, the more justified one would be in speaking in terms of a normative *structure* (cf. Jackson 1960:149–60) or *model*.

This having been said, it should again be noted that a translator's behaviour cannot be expected to be fully systematic. Not only can his/her decision-making be differently motivated in different problem areas, but it can also be unevenly distributed throughout an assignment within a single problem area. Consistency in translational behaviour is thus a *graded* notion which is neither nil (i.e., total erraticness) nor 1 (i.e., absolute regularity); its extent should emerge at the end of a study as one of its conclusions, rather than being presupposed.

The American sociologist Jay Jackson suggested a "Return Potential Curve", showing the distribution of approval/disapproval among the members of a social group over a range of behaviour of a certain type as a model for the representation of norms. This model (reproduced as Figure 1) makes it possible to make a gradual distinction between norms in terms of *intensity* (indicated by the height of the curve, its distance from the horizontal axis), the *total range of tolerated behaviour* (that part of the behavioural dimension approved by the group), and the *ratio* of one of these properties of the norm to the others.

One convenient division that can be re-interpreted with the aid of this model is tripartite:[9]

a. **Basic (primary) norms,** more or less mandatory for *all* instances of a certain behaviour (and hence their minimal common denominator). Occupy the apex of the curve. Maximum intensity, minimum latitude of behaviour.
b. **Secondary norms,** or **tendencies,** determining favourable behaviour. May be predominant in certain *parts* of the group. Therefore common enough, but not mandatory, from the point of view of the group as a whole. Occupy that part of the curve nearest its apex and therefore less intensive than the basic norms but covering a greater range of behaviour.
c. **Tolerated (permitted) behaviour.** Occupies the rest of the "positive" part of the curve (i.e., that part which lies above the horizontal axis), and therefore of minimal intensity.

"A special group," detachable from (c), seems to be of considerable interest and importance, at least in some behavioural domains:

c'. **Symptomatic devices.** Though these devices may be infrequently used, their occurrence is typical for narrowing segments of the group under study. On

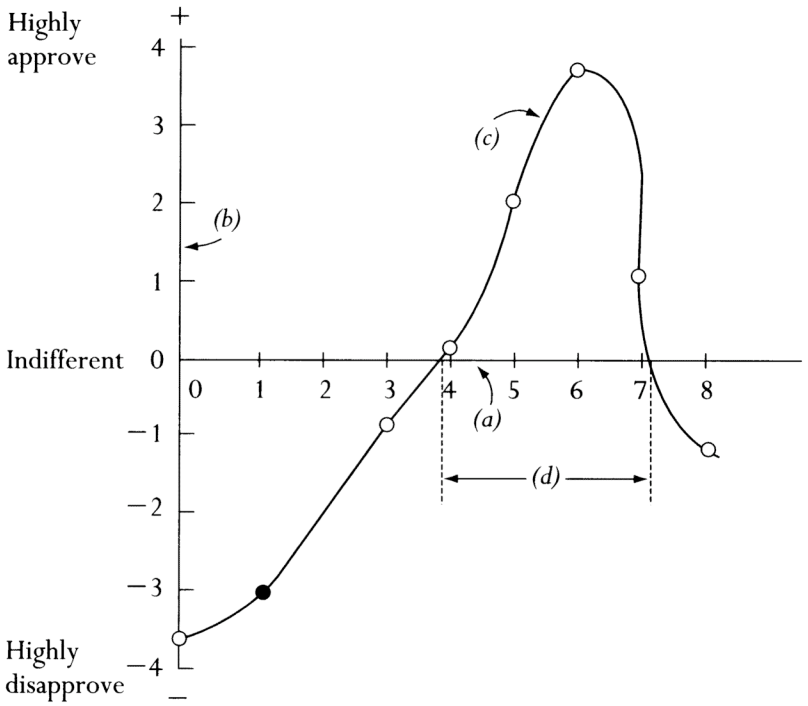

Figure 1 Schematic diagram showing the Return Potential Model for representing norms: (a) a behaviour dimension; (b) an evaluation dimension; (c) a return potential curve, showing the distribution of approval-disapproval among the members of a group over the whole range of behaviour; (d) the range of tolerable or approved behaviour.
Source: Jackson 1960.

the other hand, their absolute *non*-occurrence can be typical of other segments.

We may, then, safely assume a *distributional* basis for the study of norms: the more frequent a target-text phenomenon, a shift from a (hypothetical) adequate reconstruction of a source text, or a translational relation, the more likely it is to reflect (in this order) a more permitted (tolerated) activity, a stronger tendency, a more basic (obligatory) norm. A second aspect of norms, their *discriminatory capacity,* is thus reciprocal to the first, so that the less frequent a behaviour, the smaller the group it may serve to define. At the same time, the group it does define is not just any group; it is always a sub-group of the one constituted by higher-rank norms. To be sure, even idiosyncrasies (which, in their extreme, constitute groups-of-one) often manifest themselves as personal ways of realizing [more] general attitudes rather than deviations in a completely unexpected direction.[10] Be that as it may, the retrospective establishment of norms is always relative to the section under study, and no automatic upward projection is possible. Any attempt to move in that direction and draw generalizations would require further study, which should be targeted towards that particular end.

Finally, the curve model also enables us to redefine one additional concept: the actual *degree of conformity* manifested by different members of a group to a norm that has already been extracted from a corpus, and hence found relevant to it. This aspect can be defined in terms of the distance from the point of maximum return (in other words, from the curve's apex).

Notwithstanding the points made in the last few paragraphs, the argument for the distributional aspect of the norms should not be pushed too far.

As is so well known, we are in no position to point to strict statistical methods for dealing with translational norms, or even to supply sampling rules for actual research (which, because of human limitations, will always be applied to samples only). At this stage we must be content with our intuitions, which, being based on knowledge and previous experience, are "learned" ones, and use them as keys for selecting corpuses and for hitting upon ideas. This is not to say that we should abandon all hope for methodological improvements. On the contrary: much energy should still be directed toward the crystallization of systematic research methods, including statistical ones, especially if we wish to transcend the study of norms, which are always limited to one societal group at a time, and move on to the formulation of general laws of translational behaviour, which would inevitably be *probabilistic* in nature. To be sure, achievements of actual studies can themselves supply us with clues as to necessary and possible methodological improvements. Besides, if we hold up research until the most systematic methods have been found, we might never get any research done.

Notes

1 "The existence of norms is a sine qua non in instances of labelling and regulating; without a norm, all deviations are meaningless and become cases of free variation" (Wexler 1974:4, n. 1).

2 "An adequate translation is a translation which realizes in the target language the textual relationships of a source text with no breach of its own [basic] linguistic system" (Even-Zohar 1975:43; my translation).

3 The claim that principles of segmentation follow *universal* patterns is just a figment of the imagination of some discourse and text theoreticians intent on uncovering as many universal principles as possible. In actual fact, there have been various traditions (or "models") of segmentation, and the differences between them always have implications for translation, whether they are taken to bear on the formulation of the target text or ignored. Even the segmentation of sacred texts such as the Old Testament itself has often been tampered with by its translators, normally in order to bring it closer to *target* cultural habits, and by so doing enhance the translation's acceptability.

4 Thus, for instance, in sectors where the pursuit of adequate translation is marginal, it is highly probable that indirect translation would also become common, on occasion even preferred over direct translation. By contrast, a norm which prohibits mediated translation is likely to be connected with a growing proximity to the initial norm of adequacy. Under such circumstances,

if indirect translation is still performed, the fact will at least be concealed, if not outright denied.

5 And see, in this connection, Izre'el's "Rationale for Translating Ancient Texts into a Modern Language" (1994). In an attempt to come up with a method for translating an Akkadian myth which would be presented to modern Israeli audiences in an oral performance, he purports to combine a "feeling-of-antiquity" with a "feeling-of modernity" in a text which would be altogether simple and easily comprehensible by using a host of lexical items of *biblical* Hebrew in *Israeli* Hebrew grammatical and syntactic structures. Whereas "the lexicon…would serve to give an ancient flavor to the text, the grammar would serve to enable modern perception". It might be added that this is a perfect mirror image of the way Hebrew translators started simulating spoken Hebrew in their texts: spoken lexical items were inserted in grammatical and syntactic structures which were marked for belonging to the written varieties (Ben-Shahar 1983), which also meant "new" into "old".

6 See also my discussion of "Equivalence and Non-Equivalence as a Function of Norms" (Toury 1980:63–70).

7 "There is a clear difference between an attempt to account for some major principles which govern a system outside the realm of time, and one which intends to account for how a system operates both 'in principle' and 'in time.' Once the historical aspect is admitted into the functional approach, several implications must be drawn. First, it must be admitted that both synchrony and diachrony are historical, but the exclusive identification of the latter with history is untenable. As a result, synchrony cannot and should not be equated with statics, since at any given moment, more than one diachronic set is operating on the synchronic axis. Therefore, on the one hand a system consists of both synchrony and diachrony; on the other, each of these separately is obviously also a system. Secondly, if the idea of structuredness and systemicity need no longer be identified with homogeneity, a semiotic system can be conceived of as a heterogeneous, open structure. It is, therefore, very rarely a uni-system but is, necessarily, a polysystem" (Even-Zohar 1990:11).

8 Cf. e.g., Vodička (1964:74), on the possible sources for the study of literary norms, and Wexler (1974:7–9), on the sources for the study of prescriptive intervention ("purism") in language.

9 Cf. e.g., Hrushovski's similar division (in Ben-Porat and Hrushovski 1974:9–10) and its application to the description of the norms of Hebrew rhyme (in Hrushovski 1971).

10 And see the example of the seemingly idiosyncratic use of Hebrew *ki-xen* as a translational replacement of English "well" in a period when the norm dictates the use of *lu-vexen*.