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A hybrid translation theory for EU texts

EU texts are produced by way of multilingual negotiation in a supranational multicultural discourse community, where there is no linguistically neutral ground and where internationalisation of concepts and ideas is a *sine qua non*. As a result, they are idiosyncratic texts, reflecting specific textual features which may clash with target language (TL) and target culture (TC) conventions and norms (Schäffner and Adab, 1997, 2001; Trosborg, 1997); in other words, they are ‘hybrid’ texts. Their translation in the current 23 official EU languages is equally idiosyncratic and challenging, to say the least, especially since it is shaped under the EU’s overwhelming cultural and linguistic diversity, the constraints of its policy of multilingualism, and the subsequent policy of linguistic equality which states that all languages are equal, or ‘equally authentic’ (Wagner, Bech and Martinez, 2002: 7), and that translations are not really translations but language versions. In other words, in the framework of EU translation, the terms source text (ST) and target text (TT) cease to exist, while the *prima facie* illusory notion of ‘equivalence’ in actual fact constitutes the cornerstone of translation practice. The aim, it seems, is not the production of functional TTs which respect the TL and TC conventions and norms, but the production of ‘versions’, which conform to the ‘sameness format’, i.e. the literal rendering and the closest possible syntax and lexis, and the stringent quality rules issued by the EU institutions, i.e. the commissioner. It thus goes without saying that in the case of EU texts and their translation the validity of many classic concepts of Translation Studies (TS), such as ST, TT, equivalence, translator’s visibility and functionalism need to be re-evaluated and redefined, while the postmodernist concepts of intertextuality, hybridity and in-betweenness should come to the fore. The proposed translation theory for EU texts flaunts the feature inherent in their production, it is – just like them – hybrid.