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Translation and music: a new subfield of translation studies. Challenges and opportunities

ABSTRACT

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Challenges and opportunities

The subfield of translation and music has been considered a new area of interest of translation studies, falling under the umbrella term of audiovisual translation. Indeed, it shares similarities with the former, as it is also driven by the need to consider non-linguistic elements of translation. It exemplifies the turn towards multimodality, which has the potential to broaden the scope of research and to highlight the necessity to move beyond textual analyses. However, it seems that this potential leads to some pertinent questions that can challenge the status of fundamental principles of translation studies. This metatheoretical article attempts to demonstrate both challenges and opportunities created by this relatively new subfield and map it onto the current developments of translation studies.

Keywords: translation and music, song text, adaptation, singability, concepts, multimodal analysis

1. Translation and music

Music and translation have been mutually intertwined for a long time: it seems that as soon as the vocal element started to be considered meaningful and significant, there arose the need for translation. This may be exemplified with, e.g. holy psalms that were translated along with the first translations of the Bible or the first singable opera translations that appeared as early as opera itself.

Songs have been translated on a number of occasions and in a variety of contexts, depending on genres, aims or needs of performers. They have crossed language and cultural barriers, carrying meaning into a new context of the target audience. What is more, texts set to music have been translated in various ways, ranging from interlinear renderings done, e.g. for the sake of singers or choir directors (helping to reveal the structure and word-music highlights), through prose translation written in a coherent manner and published in opera programmes, fan translations done with a high degree of semantic fidelity, to singable translations which are beset with multiple constraints.

Despite these undeniable facts, translated songs, or vocal texts in general, have been rarely made into an object of research of translation scholars (Apter/Herman 2016: 3–4). Susam-Sarajeva (2008: 189–190) explains this by referring to the challenging relationship between translation and music: she points out that most translation scholars are “more comfortable dealing with written texts,” and hence their analyses are limited to the *how* question aimed at explaining what has happened to the original (mainly in terms of translation loss and/or departures from the source text). Along the same lines, Desblache (2019: 58) claims that translation studies and musicology are still apart, since both disciplines are relatively young and both are practice-oriented, placing the main focus on specific aspects of their objects of research. According to her, the discipline of translation studies, despite its recent move towards the multimodal dimension, is still interested mainly in the problem of semantic fidelity and strategies aimed at attaining it. Greenall et al. (2021: 14) summarise the problem when they indicate that, whenever discussed, translations of texts set to music are examined either from the point of view of a lyrics-based analysis or from the perspective of isolated case studies presented in a specific context.

It follows that there is a promising area of research that seems to have been neglected for quite a long time, and at the same time, there is an urgent need to make this area more systemised and to offer adequate tools of analysis or conceptual guidelines. It should be of no wonder then that recently translation scholars interested in the area have proclaimed the establishment of a new subfield within translation studies, i.e. the subfield of “translation and music” (Desblache 2019: 68; Greenall et al. 2021: 21–22).

The aim of this paper is to present a metatheoretical overview of the status of this subfield. To this end, the paper highlights the importance of the non-linguistic element and addresses theoretical and terminological challenges that the subfield faces, including the question concerning the object of research, basic concepts and appropriate research methodologies. It then moves on to discuss the potential of the subfield for general translation studies by indicating how the move to a less linguistics-oriented perspective may help to remedy some of the current issues of the discipline. It is argued that acknowledging

the significance of the non-linguistic dimension may help revisiting “older” concepts or theories of translation and make them meaningful and valid again.

2. General features of the new subfield

According to some translation scholars, including Desbalche (2019) or Greenall et al. (2021), the subfield of translation and music may be located under the label of audiovisual translation, which is justified mainly because of its interdisciplinary and multimodal nature. In fact, Greenall et al. (2021: 20) also indicate other adjectives that are typical of AVT and, as such, may be equally applied to translating texts set to music. These include the following: constrained, multisemiotic and multimedial. The feature of being constrained results from the intervention and significance of non-linguistic elements: the need for singability imposes specific constraints on the translator, who should mind the physical and phonetic aptness of words as well as their dependence on music. The fact that these texts are usually multisemiotic and multimodal/multimedial is again the consequence of non-linguistic elements, but also of the mode of delivery, which includes the auditory and sometimes visual media. It all highlights the fact that these features are the defining characteristics of texts set to music. Similarly, Desblache (2019: 219–220) argues that in the case of translation and music, it is important to consider both verbal and nonverbal elements, along with the audio and visual dimension. This leads the scholars to the expected conclusion that the subfield of translation and music belongs to audiovisual translation.

The subfield is consequently defined as a relatively broad area of interest that encompasses both vocal and non-vocal translation (Desblache 2019: 220; Greenall et al. 2021: 20). It means that the scope of translation studies should reach far beyond interlinguistic transfer. In fact, Desblache (2019) follows the postulate suggested by Gentzler (2017), who calls for the establishment of post-translation studies, where translation is seen as transdisciplinary and open-ended. In other words, translation should mean not only translating between natural languages, but generally between “entities and content that have commonalities” (Desblache 2019: 60). The concept of translation proper becomes insufficient or inadequate, since apart from interlingual transfer, the new subfield should include examinations of sensorial, modal, medial or generic transfer (cf. Kaindl/Desblache 2013; Desblache 2019; Kaindl 2020).

This move towards a broader scope is also visible in the postulated name: the conjunction “and” is indicative of the recent tendency observed within translation studies. It seems that scholars are inclined to underline the interdisciplinary character of TS by “combining” it with other disciplines, as indicated in titles of some of the latest publications in the field. For instance, translation has been coupled with migration, memory, emotion or contemporary art. On

the one hand, this tendency helps to demonstrate the fact that research on translation necessitates drawing from other disciplines and is rarely limited to linguistic analyses if an encompassing view is to be provided. On the other hand, though, this tendency seems to be relegating translation, and more specifically translation proper, to examples of purely linguistic transfer with little or no consideration of other (non-linguistic) factors: unless we combine translation with anything else, then we are limited by our own linguistics-based methodology and present observations that are most likely interpreted outside the relevant context of the non-linguistic reality. Another problem pertains to the question whether moving into the direction of non-linguistic transfer, i.e. cases where natural languages are not involved (e.g. translating a piano concerto into ballet), lies within the scope of translation studies and whether the discipline offers adequate tools for analysis along with proper and precise terminology.

These questions illustrate the conceptual problems of translation studies, which has been recently flooded with new terms that would frequently undervalue the concept “translation” as conditional upon linguistic equivalence (Gambier 2016: 888; see also Gambier/Kasperę 2021). Though the general problem of conceptual borders of translation studies (and their shifting) is beyond the aims of this article, it serves as a good point of departure, opening up the discussion on challenges and opportunities of the subfield of translation and music. The following remarks, however, are limited mainly to vocal translation rather than to cases of transfer between non-vocal compositions, as the presence of a natural language(s) is considered here fundamental to translation studies (as opposed to translation semiotics).

3. Translation and music: challenges and unanswered questions

The list of challenges that should be considered may be classified into three groups, starting from questions that address the nature of the object of research and its ontic features, moving on through terminology and concepts, and finishing with appropriate methodologies.

3.1. The object of research

Obvious as it may be, the first step is defining the object of research. As indicated in the previous sections, translation and music includes vocal translation, i.e. translating texts set to music, which logically should be the object of research. The first problem that is to be addressed then pertains to the interrelationship between the word and music and the following question: which one is more important from the point of view of comprehension and subsequently

translation? On the one hand, it is possible to enjoy sung texts without understanding the lyrics, which is a fact underlined by some scholars (Bristiger 1986: 13; Davies/Bentahila 2008: 250; Low 2017: 6–7; Desblache 2019: 85–86) and also a fairly common experience of listening to songs in foreign languages. On the other hand, there are specific genres of songs, where the meaning of the lyrics is of major importance: a good example may be protest songs, which often touch on social matters, or narrative songs, aimed at telling a story that unfolds along with music, in which case knowing the sense behind the lines would be required by definition. Additionally, there is also the original intention of the songwriter, composer or lyricist, all of whom have intended to use both semiotic resources and create *a text set to music*, probably without indicating any hierarchies of importance. It follows, then, that dividing texts set to music into logo- and/or musico-centric as suggested by Low (2017: 10) may be considered a simple attempt made to systematise the corpus of potential texts and to underline the importance of different genres rather than a definite answer to the question. It seems that a full understanding of vocal music requires recognising both the word and music, as intended by the author(s) and hence the question posed at the beginning may prove unnecessary or even wrong.

Then, there is the question concerning music and its meaning. It is true that music signifies, as it is possible to describe, e.g. particular keys by using some general descriptors (for instance, the key of C major would be identified as pure, basic or innocent, whereas that of C minor would be associated with sadness and longing for something that may have been lost). But the question is whether these features are universal and still valid or rather based on arbitrary culture-related associations established in the past. While it would be probably too risky a statement to say that there is a “dictionary” of music, it may be claimed that there are cross-cultural features, which result from, e.g. specific conventions of composing music (Desblache 2019: 63), and which allow music to travel across cultural or social borders. Still, there is the question of how detailed such analyses should be from the point of view of translation and which research methods would be appropriate.

Considering the above, it is necessary to address the problem of the overall meaning and how it is created in the case of a text set to music. A similar question was asked in the context of AVT several years ago, with Gambier (2008: 22–23) arguing that in the case of an audiovisual production sense is “produced neither in a linear sequence nor with a single system of signs,” but results from the interaction of multiple sign systems. Similarly, even though a vocal composition is organised linearly (e.g. the musical notation is written as a sequence, it unfolds in time), the overall meaning is created in a more space-oriented manner, especially if we consider the relations between the word, music and performance, often accompanied by the spectacle. In this regard it is necessary to recognise

the interplay between these dimensions, which are founded on the “internal nexus between sound and meaning” (Jakobson 1960: 373). It means that in the case of vocal translation the overall sense is a result of a multidimensional meaning-construction, where both the content and the form of delivery count as significant (see also Bristiger 1986: 30).

Finally, still in the context of the nature of the object of research, there is the problem of authorship and originality, which according to Greenall et al. (2021: 19) is a “relative concept,” since translating texts set to music may involve writing completely new lyrics (cf. Franzon 2008 and 2021; though it may be questioned whether it is actually an example of translation). In addition, translating such texts may require collaborative work, as professional translators are not normally trained in music, and changes may come from other agents as well (e.g. musicians or performers), which may contribute to questioning the single authorship or translation status of this activity. It means that texts set to music are complex compositions, exemplifying not only the interplay between semi-otic systems, but also the interplay between actors involved in creating the product. Along with relevant contexts, these aspects determine the translation of texts set to music and constitute the object of research.

3.2. Terminology and concepts

Another group of challenges is directly related to translation studies and its concepts, which should be general enough to have a desired level of representational capacity. The first dilemma concerns the (source) text itself: what is it in particular? What does it mean that we translate texts set to music? Do we mean a three-minute song, song lyrics or maybe a whole operatic performance understood as a polysemiotic text? Are these literary, musico-verbal or musico-literary texts, all of which require different strategies (Bednarczyk 1993: 136–137), or are these “great musical texts” consisting of several subtexts (Bristiger 1986: 23)? The concept of a text is probably one of the most challenging ones (not only) within translation studies, which may be illustrated with the initial debate on AVT or various approaches represented by scholars researching vocal translation. For instance, Low (2017) uses several terms interchangeably, writing about lyrics, songs or song-texts, concentrating mainly on the linguistic dimension; by contrast, Mateo (2008) and Desblache (2019) use the term “musical text,” and underline the semiotic complexity of the composition; Franzon (2008) suggests a definition of a song, in which he draws attention to three elements, i.e. lyrics, music and performance, arguing that the first two are usually adapted to each other. This definition is echoed by Greenall et al. (2021: 16), who, subsequently, concentrate mainly on lyrics, indicating that they are an example of Reiss’s audiomedial text. These discrepancies prove that the concept has been problematic and there is actually no “official” definition that may be found in the literature on the subject.

However, amid all this terminological randomness surrounding the concept of text, scholars writing on translation and music have agreed on one point: namely, they have been underlining the role of the non-linguistic dimension. This may partially explain the unease with which they approach the term “text.”

Non-linguistic elements, especially the musical ones, account for multiple constraints, which determine the process of translating vocal texts to a great extent (see e.g. Apter/Herman 2016: 14–25 or Low 2017: 63–70). Singability appears to be the key feature, which should be attained at the cost of, e.g. semantic fidelity. As a result, the concept of equivalence also becomes problematic: if we agree that translation, as argued by Greenall et al. (2021: 17), is most frequently understood as a process “geared towards maximum semantic closeness to a given source text,” then we need to accept the fact that in the case of vocal translation aimed at providing singable renderings this maximum level of equivalence is at best limited. Instead of aiming at semantic closeness, translators concentrate on providing easily performable strings of words that would bear at least some resemblance to the original. Therefore, in this case equivalence does not necessarily stand for a quality close to some kind of semantic faithfulness, which casts doubts on the usefulness of this concept for the subfield and on the status of the target text.

The derivative character of target lyrics is hence another challenge of the new subfield. The target text status is genuinely guaranteed by a desired level of equivalence resulting from the rule of fidelity. As indicated in the previous paragraph, equivalence is particularly “negotiable” in vocal translation. Consequently, the subfield of translation and music has highlighted the problem that AVT was confronted with a few years ago: the translation/adaptation dichotomy is another terminological issue. Even though some scholars see little point in trying to differentiate between both, claiming that this is simply unnecessary or even undesirable in certain contexts (Susam-Sarajeva 2008: 189) or it means attempting at the impossible (Greenall et al. 2021: 17), others have established artificial borders and rather ambiguous criteria. This may be exemplified by the latest introduction of the all-encompassing term of “interlingual cover versions” by a scholar who would advocate avoiding the question whatsoever (Susam-Saraeva 2018) or the threefold distinction between replacement texts, translations and adaptations (Low 2017), standing for non-derivative new lyrics, transfer of the most significant elements, and absence of the most significant elements, respectively. There is doubt whether such classifications push the debate any further, especially that scholars researching vocal translation seem to agree that translating in this case goes “much beyond a search for lexical and other equivalences” (Desblache 2019: 7).

The tendency of coining new terms that would help to remedy the questionable status of some renderings fidelity-wise is also visible in how scholars have been trying to measure or classify degrees of equivalence (as in the times of,

e.g. the Leipzig school of the roundly criticised linguistic turn, see e.g. Kade 1968). A case in point may be the recent typology of strategies introduced by Franzon (2021: 91–116), who starts at the level of maximum closeness in the case of near-enough translations and finishes at the level of all-new target lyrics. In between, the scholar lists perspective shift, lyric hook transposition, single-phrase spinoff and phonetic calque. The actual ease of applying the typology in practice may be again challenging, as there are no clear lines between the strategies, with the criteria lacking objective measures. What is more, the question whether another classification of translation strategies (even if intended as exclusive to vocal translation) is really needed remains open.

3.3. Research methodologies

The final group of challenges pertains to researching the translation of texts set to music. First of all, in order to indicate appropriate methods we need to define the object of research. Though it seems fairly clear (as we all seem to have common, more or less accurate definitions of songs), again if there is no consensus on the concept of a text, there is also no consensus on translation units: is it a particular verse that should be analysed, a verse along with its corresponding bars or maybe the whole song text? This, in turn, has a bearing on the adequate method of analysis. Purely textual analyses, though prevailing and limited to case studies, have been criticised by some scholars representing the subfield, who have been calling for a more descriptive, systematic and explanatory approach. In other words, instead of concentrating on the linguistic dimension and dissecting it out of the relevant context, it is necessary to consider the integrity of a text set to music. Accordingly, the appropriate method of analysis would be founded on a multimodal approach that allows the inclusion of the non-linguistic dimension as “an integrative component of a functional text” (Kaindl 2020: 55). Such an approach involves the analysis of, e.g. the already mentioned aspects of genre-related changes, instrumentation, voice qualities and performance or changes made to melodies. In brief, the multimodal approach embraces a text set to music in its entirety and, as such, helps to see the translation of this text in a wider context of all relevant aspects.

Apart from the multimodal approach, scholars investigating translation and music have advocated functionalist and descriptive approaches. The former helps to underline the pragmatic aspect of vocal translation and its *skopos*, which in turn may serve a good purpose of explaining potential manipulation or translation loss. The latter, theoretically, helps to move beyond single case studies, since it is aimed at establishing common norms. However, in both cases, there is the risk of keeping research at the level of lyrics, addressing only the *how* question and moving towards prescriptivism. Combining these approaches with the multimodal one seems therefore desired.

What it means in practice is that the appropriate translation unit is a text set to music, i.e. a text understood from the perspective of semiotics. Rather than a sum of its elements, including acoustic signs, words or paralinguistic elements, each text is an organic whole or a system, as once argued by Klemensiewicz (1955: 93). He underlines that each element exists within and against the background of the textual system and in this way serves both communicative and stylistic functions intended by the author. A similar claim is made by Bristiger (1986: 85), who refers to texts set to music, or “verbo-musical texts.” He argues that the meaning of the lexical dimension is complemented, intensified, modified or blurred by the musical dimension, i.e. lyrics are to be interpreted against the musical background, which co-produces the intended semantic effect.

Hence, analysing only some elements of texts set to music does not provide a full picture, since they are rendered by means of several modes and/or media in order to convey intended meanings. Looking beyond natural languages may be especially difficult if we follow the absolute understanding of intra- or interlingual translation, but on the other hand, if we ignore other sign systems and codes, the interaction and integration inherent in a text set to music becomes lost and so does its meaning. For these reasons, a multimodal approach along with a comprehensive descriptive-explanatory approach that is aimed at analysing lyrics in multiple contexts, including the musical and socio-cultural contexts, as advocated by Greenall et al. (2021: 31–32), both seem the right framework of analysis. Apart from the actual usability of these methodologies, there is also another merit: it is not necessary to abandon concepts introduced within translation studies throughout the years. It appears that the only problem is the question whether the adjectives “multimodal” and “explanatory” really mean what they are supposed to mean.

All of the challenges listed above lead to a tentative conclusion: it follows that it is vital to define the concept of a text, which will hopefully resolve potential dilemmas or doubts. Unless it is understood as an integrated composition that should be examined in all three dimensions, i.e. the linguistic dimension, music dimension and performance, the questions listed above will most likely remain unanswered or will be answered differently, depending on the adopted methodology. True, it is possible to concentrate on lyrics only and examine them separately, but the analysis would be then only partial, aimed at assessing choices made at the level of words or sentences. Rejecting the atomistic approach in favour of the multimodal one seems a logical solution, as it may address other issues by e.g. helping to redefine the concept of equivalence as a kind of “compromise between fidelity to the music, lyrics and performance” (Franzon 2008: 377), challenging the usefulness of lower-rank translation units or revisiting the translation/adaptation status of the target text.

4. A window of opportunities?

Clearly, the subfield of translation and music is then another chance to revisit the understanding of translation by emphasising the role of non-linguistic signs. This is nothing new, as this perspective shift has been visible in translation studies since interests in multimedia translation increased considerably in the 1990s. In fact, Bassnett questioned the status of a purely linguistic translation in her seminal monograph, writing that “although translation has a central core of linguistic activity, it belongs most properly to semiotics” (1980: 13). Subsequently, translation scholars would underline the importance of non-linguistic elements in translation not only in the context of multimedia translation, in which case excluding these elements was simply out of the question. Kaindl (1997) envisaged that translating texts of a hybrid nature, i.e. multimodal, polysemiotic, plurisemiotic or multimedial compositions, would contribute to the discipline moving beyond the level of linguistic translation, but at the same time, would introduce fuzzy concepts. Whereas he was certainly right about the latter claim, the prospective paradigm shift has apparently faced serious impediments. In one of his most recent publications, Kaindl (2020: 49) bitterly reflects on the move towards multimodal, which has become so predominant in the 21st century. He argues that it has its roots in applied semiotics of the 1970s and serves only as a “cosmetic means of concealing a continued focus on linguistic aspects in translation studies” (Kaindl 2020: 49). He finishes off with a similar observation, claiming that semiotics-oriented approaches to translation, though represented by prominent scholars, have not contributed to “a semiotic reorientation in mainstream translation studies,” and have not led to a genuine paradigm shift (Kaindl 2020: 65).

It seems that Kaindl is right, as vocal translation can boast a number of linguistics-oriented studies of lyrics or attempts at systemising research in the fashion of linguistic approaches, as indicated in Section 3. The buzzword “multimodality” may indeed serve as a cover put on the linguistic focus. However, it is also possible to observe the other end of the continuum, with scholars struggling to underline the different nature of their object of research by moving beyond the borders of translation studies. A case in point may be the monograph authored by Desblache (2019), who in chapter nine addresses “interspecies dialogue,” touching on biosemiotics, or an even more glaring example of new “post-positivist” analyses carried out by Vidal Claramonte. In one of her recent papers, she writes about post-translation (following the postulate of Gentzler 2017), i.e. “translation in constant movement” against traditional binaries, and exemplifies it with the analysis of a ballet founded on a creative subversion of genres and genders in the form of a “translation” of Bizet’s *Carmen* (Vidal Claramonte 2019: 106). She moves beyond the concept of interlingual translation and arrives at an inevitable conclusion: the discussed case is an example of translation that

does not intend to achieve equivalence as defined within the linguistic turn, but rather a *new* instance of translation that may open up fresh research avenues.

Whereas such research may indeed lead to broadening the scope of translation and making the non-linguistic more visible, it seems that applying the term “translation” to cases which other scholars may likely classify as a form of creative adaptation is unnecessary or even misleading, as it removes not only binaries but also conceptual borders. Instead, we could ask the following questions: is it really necessary to underline the uniqueness or novelty of translation whenever it involves non-linguistic sign systems? Is audiovisual translation or vocal translation really different from translating literary works or documents, since the former involve some intersemiotic transfer, whereas the latter does not? Is it not that intersemiotic transfer is part of every process of translation, because signs are meaningful only when translated into other signs, i.e. all types of signs? A simple act of translating does involve interlingual operations, since they are the core of the process, but also intersemiotic ones, as translators refer to the non-linguistic reality in order to understand linguistic signs, and intra-lingual ones, as they search for paraphrase or synonyms in the target language.

The subfield of translation and music makes this claim simply more palpable. That is why it may contribute to a paradigm shift of making the word “translation” meaningful again, as postulated by Gambier (2016: 902), by allowing us to step out of the linguistic equivalence paradigm, while staying within the conceptual borders of translation involving natural languages. It does not mean removing the linguistic element and concentrating on non-linguistic and purely semiotic translation (which most probably belongs to the object of research of translation semiotics). Rather, it means acknowledging the non-linguistic dimension and admitting that natural languages are sometimes only a form of supplement, a kind of addition, which is nonetheless an integral element, and should always be analysed against the background of other meaningful sign systems.

The challenges mentioned in the previous section may help to push this paradigm shift forward by acting as an incentive to revisit some burning questions of translation studies. A good illustration may be the concept of equivalence and the translation/adaptation dichotomy: if we agree that equivalence is a relative and mediated quality, then we need to admit that the actual level or degree of similarity results from numerous factors that make up the context of translation. Accordingly, translating texts set to music means striving for different levels of equivalence of music, lyrics and performance, with adaptation being one of potential strategies. What is more, if we agree that equivalence means a mediated similarity, then it has to mean mediated difference as well, and both of the qualities result from this contextualised mediation.

It seems then that attempts made at differentiating between translation and adaptation are generally doomed to failure, as it is extremely challenging to

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indicate the criterion that would help to draw the magical line separating both forms of creation. The criteria of significant elements or the level of resemblance to the source text are all not precise enough, which, according to Bastin (2009: 3) is a fact translation scholars seem to be aware of. What is more, the discipline of translation studies has already provided a number of viable typologies and classifications that include forms of adaptation as either strategies (e.g. Venuti's domestication, Nida's dynamic equivalence or Newmark's adaptation) or techniques (e.g. Vinay and Darbelnet's adaptation, Newmark's cultural equivalents or Chesterman's cultural filtering). Renewing the discussion concerning the status of the target text in cases where semantic fidelity is "threatened" or constrained seems not only fruitless but also inadequate from the point of view of the overly critical approach to the notion of equivalence. On the one hand, contemporary scholars have followed the paradigm of the cultural turn, allowing for a greater degree of departing from semantic fidelity. On the other hand, though, they have been struggling to defend the status of translation against cases of non-translation by coining new labels, such as, e.g. transcreation or localisation.

As the subfield of translation and music has been clearly experiencing problems common to other forms of multimedia translation, it may offer an opportunity to re-examine the terminology and methodology of the discipline. It may be that all of these new labels really lead to ambiguity and do not solve the problem, whereas traditional concepts may be redefined and gain currency anew. Similarly, methodologies that have been used in translation studies may contribute to broadening the body of knowledge: the *why* question can be relatively easily tackled with the help of a truly descriptive approach, aimed at explaining and identifying specific norms and the function-process-product interrelationship. Instead of coining new replacement terms, scholars may start looking for bridges (or mediation) between what we already know and what we are learning, trying to *translate* older approaches into the new reality. Maybe it is time translation studies stopped following absolute and limiting understandings of specific concepts and retained the term "translation" as a truly meaningful one, representing *the* object of research. Naturally, in order to do it, the discipline has to confront its conceptual and ontological dilemmas, including accepting the fact that translation is rarely (if not never) a purely linguistic operation.

5. Concluding remarks

The subfield of translation and music is certainly a fascinating area of research, as it highlights and necessitates an approach that reaches beyond the linguistic dimension of translation. As indicated in the previous sections, this has both

positive and negative sides. Adopting a broader perspective may not only cast new light on specific concepts, but also help to reread traditional texts on translation and, instead of rejecting them as representing a purely linguistic paradigm, to reinterpret them against the context of contemporary challenges of digital media and the omnipresent multimodality. Jakobson (1959: 233), for instance, wrote about “three ways of interpreting a verbal sign,” without placing sharp differences between three types of mutually exclusive translation types. As already mentioned, Klemensiewicz (1955: 93) argued that translation is an operation between sign-based compositions rather than between simple sums of linguistic signs. Though both claims were made almost seventy years ago and time-wise belong to the linguistic turn, they may serve as a framework for perceiving a text as a combination of several different sign systems, which may otherwise function on their own, but which are combined in a semiotically organic whole and should be translated as such.

The fairly comprehensive list of challenges and questions created by the new subfield may help to trigger refreshing changes within the discipline of translation studies, thanks to which the word “translation” will hopefully become broad enough to accommodate all types of translation that involve natural languages and the semiotic approach will be more than just a purely cosmetic touch added to long-standing interests revolving around semantic fidelity.

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