

particularly qualified to deal with language and communication. The frequently cited work of Holz-Mänttari (1984) has emphasised the role of the translator as a qualified professional.

Basically, the translation process consists of three stages where the translator is the operator. They are: (1) analysis of the ST and of the translation task in question; (2) problem-solving (on various levels); and (3) reevaluation. What actually happens in the translation process is a central area of research which can and will fruitfully be further explored both by translation scholars and researchers in other disciplines (including neurophysiology) as well as by translators themselves who set down their reflections. The translator-scholar James S. Holmes (1988) is a pre-eminent example of both; as regards the practitioner, there have been several volumes representing the craftsman approach (for instance Arrowsmith & Shattuck, 1971). Professional journals, too, afford examples of insights shared in this way. Bassnett (1991: xiii-xvi) remarks that translators' preferences and other statements on their work reflect the views on translation held by their communities, and offers some intriguing examples of how metaphors for translation have changed in the course of time.

Lörscher (1991), however, has questioned whether translators can really describe what has become to them an automatised process. Empirical research into the aspect referred to as 'what goes on in the heads of translators' (Krings 1986) uses the think-aloud protocol method combined with observation of translators at work and performance analysis (for example Lörscher, 1991), and it has, for instance, found differences in the way professional and non-professional translators operate (Jääskeläinen & Tirkkonen-Condit, 1991; see also Fraser, 1996).

Instead of trying to illuminate the nature of the translation process itself, this study focuses on problem-solving and decision-making with regard to the intercultural problem of translating allusions. The translator is seen in an active role as a cultural mediator⁸ and decision-maker. S/he is thought to be an independent and competent professional, a language and communication expert serving both author and reader, who are equally in need of his/her special skills. The notion of serving does not imply a subservient role.

The keywords in my conception of the translator as cultural mediator and decision-maker are 'competent' and 'responsible'. These roles are of crucial importance in the translation of allusions. A writer (mostly) writes for people who share a certain amount of cultural background information with him/her. It is therefore not necessary, and would in fact be counter-productive, to make all such information explicit in the text – consider

Chapter 1

Chinese and Western Thinking on Translation¹

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In the following pages I shall make an attempt at comparing Chinese and Western thinking about translation. Obviously, I am far more familiar with Western approaches than with Chinese thinking on the subject; what interests me mainly here, however, is translation itself. Precisely because histories of translation are increasingly being produced, we are now able to begin to historicise the phenomenon of translation itself. In consequence, we are also able to move away from the normative approach that has obstructed our view of translation for so long.

Different cultures have tended to take translation for granted, or rather, different cultures have taken the technique of translating that was current at a given time in their evolution for granted and equated it with the phenomenon of translation as such. Histories of translation in the West have shown increasingly that the technique of translating in Western cultures has changed repeatedly over the centuries, and that what was accepted as 'obvious' at one particular time was, in fact, little more than a passing phase. The important point is that shifts and changes in the technique of translating did not occur at random. Rather, they were intimately linked with the way in which different cultures, at different times, came to terms with the phenomenon of translation, with the challenge posed by the existence of the Other and the need to select from a number of possible strategies for dealing with that Other. We are, therefore, finally beginning to see different methods of translating as well as different approaches to translational practice as contingent, not eternal, as changeable, not fixed, because we are beginning to recognise that they have, indeed, changed over the centuries. Paradoxically, once it is accepted that translation is contingent, it becomes possible to highlight the central position it has always occupied in the development, indeed the very definition of cultures. That contingency is even easier to see when two different traditions are compared. Such a comparison may, I believe, shed