Procedures, techniques, strategies: translation process operators

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The focus of this article is to bring together, analyse and classify various studies on the operations performed by a translator during the transfer process from one language to another. Within the field of translation theory, these operations have been researched from a wide range of perspectives and have been assigned a multitude of labels, among which we have ‘procedures’, ‘techniques’, ‘strategies’, ‘processes’, ‘methods’, etc. In this article I refer to them under the generic name of ‘translation process operators’. The confusing use of terminology and concepts has encouraged the fragmentation of a branch of translation research that proves to be more homogeneous than may appear at first sight. This article draws on and analyses the overwhelming profusion of terms and concepts concerning translation process operators, based on the most commonly used notions employed by many scholars.

Keywords: equivalence; teaching translation; translation theory

Introduction

The focus of this article is to bring together, analyse and classify various studies on the operations performed by a translator during the transfer process from one language to another, particularly those used for solving problems. Within the field of translation theory, these operations have been researched from a wide range of perspectives and have been assigned a multitude of labels, among which we have procedures, techniques, strategies, processes, methods, etc. In this article, I shall refer to them under the generic name of ‘translation process operators’.

I believe that the choice of the term ‘operator’ is valid for two main reasons. First, because it refers to a concept widely used in the field of psychology and, second, because it allows one to approach a series of concepts from a global perspective which, otherwise, could only be studied individually or in contrast to other concepts. Furthermore, the term ‘operator’ constitutes an expedient conceptual framework that accommodates a wide range of academic studies and publications which appear to be independent and even conflicting.

As illustrated in this article, the confusing use of terminology and concepts has encouraged the fragmentation of a branch of translation research that proves to be more homogeneous than may appear at first sight. For quite some time there has been a tendency to divorce procedures of comparative stylistics from the strategies
studied in the field of psycholinguistics, when in fact, as I see it, we are talking about parts of the same reality, that is, of the operations performed by the translator while translating.

My understanding of ‘translation process operators’ is all the procedural knowledge, conscious or unconscious, automatic or controlled, heuristic or algorithmic, that makes up the transfer process which takes place when we translate. Seen from this perspective, a global understanding of what has been said about these operators (under their various names and conceptual nuances) contributes to a better understanding of the mental processes that come into play during translation. If we begin from the assumption that many studies in this area complement each other or deal with parts of the same reality, then to unearth a linking common thread can lead to approaches that are more comprehensive and with a stronger theoretical basis.

This article will draw upon and analyse the overwhelming profusion of terms and concepts concerning translation process operators, based on the most commonly used notions employed by many scholars.

1. Terminology, definitions and usage

Researching the mental operations for solving problems that crop up in translation entails negotiating a series of difficulties which are further heightened by the inherent and prevailing confusion regarding terminology and concepts in this field. It is somewhat paradoxical that homogeneous use of terminology is not among the characteristic features of translation theory (Munoz Martín, 2000, p. 129). ‘Procedures’, ‘techniques’, ‘strategies’, ‘processes’, ‘strategic processes’, ‘rules’, ‘plans’, etc., are some of the most common terms used to refer to this more general notion of ‘translator operative knowledge’, or part of it. We might think that, despite this chaotic use of terminology, there is at least homogeneity in use. Regrettably, this is not the case. The following paragraphs will illustrate how scholars often use the same term with different meanings or even different terms to refer to the same reality.

My criteria for organising and analysing this overwhelming profusion of terminology and concepts is to begin with the notions most commonly used by scholars to refer to translation process operators, so as to be able to then analyse the differences in meaning between them.

2. Translation procedures, technique procedures or translation methods

One of the first names given to these translation process operators was ‘translation procedure’ (English translation for procédé technique de la traduction), a term coined by Vinay and Darbelnet in 1958. Unanimously acclaimed as the main proponents of comparative stylistics applied to translation, Vinay and Darbelnet understand the term ‘translation procedure’ as all those processes that come into play when shifting between two languages. In effect, in their study Vinay and Darbelnet attempt to formulate a global translation theory which is based on an entire body of equivalences obtained from comparing two languages. Vinay and Darbelnet’s translation procedures operate exclusively on three linguistic levels: lexical (lexique), morphosyntactic (agencement) and semantic (message).

However, even at that time Vinay and Darbelnet must have been intuitively aware that describing these ‘translation procedures’ could not be limited to a merely contrastive level. It is very likely that they were aware (although lacking conceptual
tools necessary to go into further depth in their study) that these procedures were, all said and done, a mental phenomenon:

[We must] attempt to follow the way our mind works consciously or subconsciously when it moves from one language to another and record its progress ... and study the mechanisms of translation on the basis of clear and searching examples in order to derive working methods of translation and beyond these methods discover the mental, social and cultural attitudes which inform them. (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1995, p. 10; italics mine)1

This quote reveals some key points in their study of the translation process, such as the very act of referring to the way our mind works or the importance of the conscious or unconscious nature of these processes. Later, Kiraly would talk of ‘controlled and uncontrolled’ processes; L örscher of ‘potentially conscious’ processes; Jääskeläinen and Tirkkonen-Condit of ‘automated processes’, and so on. Similarly, Vinay and Darbelnet would later refer to (albeit only touching on the matter) the operations that go on in the translator’s mind such as the decision-taking process – even though these considerations were to have no practical impact on the results of their study, which, as is well-known, is limited to contrasting linguistic systems:

In the process of translating, translators establish relationships between specific manifestations of two linguistic systems, one which has already been expressed and is therefore given, and the other which is still potential and adaptable. Translators are thus faced with a fixed starting point, and as they read the message, they form in their minds an impression of the target they want to reach. The initial steps they take can be characterised as follows: to identify the units of translation; to examine the SL text; this consists of evaluating the descriptive, affective and intellectual content of the units of translation; to reconstitute the situation which gave rise to the message; to weigh up and evaluate the stylistic effects, etc. But translators cannot leave it at all; all these reflections upon the SL text as a whole and its units must lead to a target language message. Going through these processes in their mind translators search for a solution. In some cases the discovery of the appropriate TL unit or sentence is very sudden, almost like a flash, so that it appears as if reading the SL text had automatically revealed the TL message. In such a case translators still have to go over the text to ensure that none of the elements from the SL have been omitted before the process is finished. (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1995, pp. 30–31; italics mine)2

Malblanc (1968), following the lines laid down by Vinay and Darbelnet, adopts not only the terminology used by his predecessors, but also their corresponding conceptual content. Throughout his book, Stylistique comparée du français et de l’allemand (published in the same collection as Stylistique comparée du français et de l’anglais, 10 years later) there is not even the least mention of any definition of what he also calls ‘translation procedures’, limiting himself to referring the reader to Vinay and Darbelnet’s study. This fact is significant in that it gives us an idea of the degree of influence of the work by these two scholars in studies that were to appear much later.

A further illustration of the impact of Vinay and Darbelnet’s study, this time in Spanish, is the comprehensive study, Introducción a la traductología, curso básico de traducción, by Vázquez Ayora (1977). Here, Vázquez Ayora uses the term ‘procedimientos técnicos de ejecución estilística’ (‘stylistic technique procedures’) to refer to the concept introduced by Vinay and Darbelnet, which, as happens with Malblanc, is not even referred to in the form of a direct quote. Nonetheless, as far as Vázquez Ayora is concerned, these procedures are linguistic tools to facilitate the work of the translator:
Only systematic practice can provide translators with mastery over these procedures with which they can achieve certainty, ease and speed. Without the knowledge of these techniques which contemporary linguistics have put within the translator’s reach, the empirical translator will continue to be embroiled in continued puzzles which will take up precious time and, most important of all, s/he will be condemned to using literalisms which are the universal cause of all manner of mistakes. (Vázquez Ayora, 1977, p. 251, my translation)

But, if there is something which distinguishes Vázquez Ayora from his predecessors, it is the distinction he makes between ‘stylistic technique procedures’ (‘procedimiento técnico de ejecución estilística’) and ‘general translation procedures’. While the first term includes two fundamental types of translation (literal translation; oblique or dynamic translation), the second encompasses the preparation of the translation project and its revision. From a conceptual and methodological standpoint, this distinction opens the way to a new, more complex and heterogeneous understanding of the study of the translation process.

In contrast, Vázquez Ayora states that (as opposed to Vinay and Darbelnet) he adopts a generative and transformational approach. Later on, I shall attempt to demonstrate how these advisory notes have no real influence on how he develops his study, the methodology of which continues to be based to a large degree on the comparison of two linguistic systems.

Newmark also adopts the term ‘translation procedures’ from Vinay and Darbelnet, although he distinguishes these from what he calls ‘translation methods’:

While translation methods relate to whole texts, translation procedures are used for sentences and the smaller units of language. (Newmark, 1988, p. 81)

However, the position he adopts is still that of contrastive linguistics, just as we can find in more recent studies, such as the method formulated by López Guix and Minett Wilkinson (1997). They use the term ‘procedimientos de traducción’ (‘translation procedures’) as synonymous with ‘strategy’, contrary to Wotjak’s approach, where they reject the possible prescriptive nature of these procedures:

Of course, we are not talking about formulating transformation ‘rules’, but rather to underline a series of linguistic features which the translator, when faced with a recurrence of these, has to learn to develop multiple and varied strategies to prevent the appearance of foreignised items and idiosyncracies from Spanish in his/her version. (López Guix & Minett Wilkinson, 1997, p. 85; italics mine)

From a more communicative approach, Nida (1964) uses the term ‘techniques of adjustment’ to refer to those processes whose aim is to ‘produce correct equivalents’ (Nida, 1964, p. 23). According to Nida, the function of these techniques of adjustment is to: (1) allow for adjusting the form the message takes to the structural requirements of the receptor language; (2) produce semantically equivalent structures; (3) provide stylistically appropriate equivalents; and (4) allow for a communicative equivalence.

Wotjak (1981) uses the term ‘transfer techniques in communication’ to refer to the transfer process from one language to another. Nevertheless, throughout his book he also uses the terms ‘strategy’, ‘rule’ and ‘procedure’ with the same meaning as ‘translation techniques’:

The scarce attempts at formulating these specific ‘rules’ are little known; these techniques and procedures whose mastery is always a valid requirement, although not the only one. (Wotjak, 1981, p. 198; italics mine)
The association of terms such as ‘rule’, ‘norm’, ‘law’, ‘standard’, etc., with terms such as ‘procedures’, ‘techniques’, ‘strategies’, etc., has been and continues to be a common feature in translation studies. But perhaps what is of particular interest here is the introduction of the communicative aspect as a fundamental element in the translation process. Wotjak is the first to transform the concept of ‘communicative equivalence’ into one of the main features in the development of comparativist theories in translation:

The end purpose of both translation and interpreting, which are summarised here under the general heading of transfer consists of producing for a given source language text a communicatively equivalent text in the target language. (Wotjak, 1981, p. 197; italics mine)

Mason (1994) makes no distinction between his use of ‘translation techniques’, ‘procedures’ and ‘method’. In his study, he proposes revising Vinay and Darbelnet’s procedures as well as the harsh criticism they have received. According to Mason, this discussion brings to light fundamental questions of methodology, such as the sometimes confusing distinction between procedure and result. He proposes the following definition: ‘A procedure is a method adopted to achieve a result. It is a way of proceeding in order to complete some activity’ (Mason, 1994, p. 63).

3. Translation processes and strategic processes

With a similar conceptual content as these ‘procedures’ (albeit under a different name), we find what some scholars have called ‘translation processes’ or ‘strategic processes’. Noteworthy figures among these are Kiraly (1995), Kohn and Kalina (1996), Hödig (1991) and Jääskeläinen and Tirkkonen-Condit (1991).

The term ‘process’ is used by Kiraly (1995) in reference to the translation process, that is, the mental operations taken as a whole (skills, knowledge, etc.) which come into play during translation. In effect, Kiraly is interested in what he calls ‘translation processes’ as an essential element in translator training (Kiraly, 1995, p. 36).

These translation processes, which he also calls ‘processing phenomena’, include a kind of ‘minor’ processes among which we find ‘strategies’. These are understood as conscious or potentially conscious processes for resolving a problem (Kiraly, 1995, p. 101).

4. Translation strategies

Parallel to the development of Vinay and Darbelnet’s proposals, a new way of naming the mental processes performed by a translator emerged: translation strategies. The use of this term has become widespread among those researching the translation process, and ‘translation strategies’ has become practically the most widely used term to refer to the mental operations performed by the translator when translating; nevertheless, we continue to be faced with an amalgam of meanings that do not always coincide. It may well be that the fate suffered by the term ‘strategy’ is due to the numerous criticisms raised by scholars from the field of comparative stylistics, which has perhaps led some scholars to substitute one name for another, without any significant change to its basic conceptual content. It is also within the realms of possibility that the use of the word ‘strategy’ became a common term at a
particular moment in time in the history of translation studies, often without this affecting what it meant.

All in all, in my view what is clear is that the concept of translation strategy is not so far removed from what Vinay and Darbelnet and later developments called ‘translation procedures’. All in all, it is true that for some scholars the term ‘strategy’ takes on a different meaning, and it is these that I would like to look at now.

In his book *Factors in a theory of poetic translating* (1978), De Beaugrande talks about three groups of ‘strategies for equivalence’ aimed at guiding the translation process: the first, focused on the differences between the two languages involved; the second, on the type of language use found in a given text; and the third, on choosing equivalents that meet contextual requirements (De Beaugrande, 1978, p. 13).

Although De Beaugrande does not offer such an extensive typology of strategies as other scholars, he does manage to delimit those areas which, in his opinion, are where these strategies must be effective – such as, for example, in the reading process, interpreting the source text, expressing in the target text, compensation for possible loss, etc. Likewise, De Beaugrande believes that equivalence is based on rule-guided strategies for translating and specific factors related to language use in a given text and at a given moment in time (De Beaugrande, 1978, p. 14).

This claim represents a very important shift in perspective compared to Vinay and Darbelnet, in that De Beaugrande does not conceive of strategies as elements that constitute the basis for a general translation theory on translation, but rather as tools to tackle (approximately, not definitively) the possible problems that could emerge during translation.

This additional dimension to the use of the term ‘strategy’ was to have major repercussions in later translation studies. For example, Rastall (1994) works from the basis of communication strategies to look into the strategies which characterise translating from one given language into another. In Rastall’s view, it is evident that each language resorts to its own communication strategies: that is, employing certain conventions for the purposes of communication depending on whether one is dealing with speakers of one or another language. Likewise, according to him, these strategies operate on different levels of communication (Rastall, 1994, p. 47).

Turning to psycho-linguistic and cognitive approaches, Séguinot (1991) interprets ‘strategies’ as all those mental processes, both conscious and unconscious, involved during translation:

Strategies is a term which has been used to refer to both conscious and unconscious procedures, to both tactics and mental processes. It is used with both meanings in this study. (Séguinot, 1991, p. 82; italics mine)

Séguinot investigates which resources, or strategies, the translator uses when translating a text. However, the strategies that she studies (for example, to look up all the words in a dictionary, write up a rough first draft, underline words, etc.) differ slightly from those studied by the majority of translation theorists, although they are quite close to the strategies defined by researchers in the fields of second-language acquisition and inter-language communication (cf. Faerch & Kasper, 1983; Tarone, 1983).

Hönig (1991) distinguishes between ‘micro-strategies’, ‘rules’ and ‘macro-strategies’. According to Hönig, the first are ‘controlled’ mental processes while the second are ‘uncontrolled’ mental processes. This binary division, also found in scholars such as Kiraly (1995; identified as ‘controlled and uncontrolled workspace’), was to illustrate a
new way of perceiving and classifying all the processes in operation during translation, and, as will be seen later, is also present in those studies which distinguish between the concept of strategy (more general and abstract) and techniques (more specific and often aimed at solving specific problems).

Jääskeläinen (1993, as cited by Chesterman, 1997, p. 90) also makes a similar distinction between ‘unmarked processing’ and ‘attention units’. While the former occur automatically and unconsciously, the latter take place when the translator stops during a given task that requires her/his conscious consideration.

Krings (1986), basing himself on Faerch and Kasper’s definition of strategy which states that ‘communication strategies’ are potentially conscious ‘plans’ for resolving what represents a problem for an individual when attempting to achieve a given communicative objective, offers the following definition of ‘translation strategies’: ‘Translation strategies are potentially conscious plans for solving a translation problem…’ (Krings, 1986, p. 268; italics mine). Krings was one of the first to introduce the notion of ‘problem’ as a fundamental element when studying translation strategies. Likewise, Krings was the first to pose questions regarding non-conscious processes, as well as distinguishing between strategic and non-strategic behaviours in translation (Krings, 1986, p. 268).

Another view worth noting, very similar to that of Krings – although an approach more adapted to recent times – is the interesting contribution by Lörscher (1991). His well-known definition of translation strategies was to have a major influence on a number of subsequent studies, becoming one of the main referents for any kind of analysis of the translation process:

A translation strategy is a potentially conscious procedure for the solution of a problem which an individual is faced with when translating a text segment from one language to another. (Lörscher, 1991, p. 76; italics mine)

According to Lörscher (1991) the translation process includes two types of phases: those which he calls ‘strategic phases’ (aimed exclusively at resolving translation problems) and ‘non-strategic phases’ (aimed at carrying out tasks). Lörscher sets ‘translation strategies’ against ‘translation versions’, which are processes situated in both strategic and non-strategic phases:

According to this definition, problem-oriented, potential consciousness and goal-oriented are criteria of translation strategies as well as of interlanguage communication strategies. (Lörscher, 1991, p. 77; italics mine)

In other words, what Lörscher understands by strategy is no longer the process that takes place when we translate from one language to another, but rather the process that takes place when we have to resolve a problem. This conceptual difference turned out to have a considerable impact on later studies on translation strategies, as well as on closely related fields, such as studies on translation competence. In fact, this new meaning for strategy was to be taken up by a number of researchers, which led on some occasions to major confusion while on others to interesting contributions to the field of empirical studies on translation. One such case is that of Scott-Tennent, González Davies and Rodríguez Torras (2000). According to them:

We defined ‘translation strategy’ as the steps, selected from a consciously known range of potential procedures, taken to solve a translation problem which has been consciously
detected and resulting in a consciously applied solution. (Scott-Tennent et al., 2000, p. 108; italics mine)

What is interesting here is the relationship between problem-solving and conscious procedures which had already begun to emerge in the studies by Krings and Lörscher, and which are clearly apparent in the book by Scott-Tennent et al.

Andrew Chesterman (1997) offers a more global approach, classifying strategies as ‘memes’, in the sense that they are widely used by translators and they are recognised as conceptual tools:

A strategy is a kind of process; but it should be stressed that the overall framework here is behavioral rather than neural. I make no claims about psychological reality, beyond the observation that strategies (in the sense used here) do appear to have the prima facie validity of being useful conceptual tools. (Chesterman, 1997, p. 88)

According to Chesterman, strategies are ways through which translators try to adapt themselves to rules to arrive at what they consider to be a good translation: he states that a strategy is a type of process, a way of doing something.

Basing himself on Steiner’s theory on language, by which human behaviour can be divided into three major levels (‘activity’, ‘actions’ and ‘operations’), Chesterman describes translation as a hierarchical process comprising various levels and situates strategies in the lower levels, that is, in ‘operations’.

Thus, Chesterman distinguishes between ‘global strategies’, more in line with ‘activities’, and ‘local strategies’, which relate more to ‘actions’ and ‘operations’, and which correspond to way he usually uses the term ‘strategies’:

Furthermore, strategies (in the present sense) describe types of linguistic behavior: specifically, text-linguistic behavior. That is, they refer to operations which a translator may carry out during the formulation of the target text (the ‘texting’ process), operations that may have to do with the desired relation between this text and the source text, or with the desired relation between this text and other target texts of the same type. (These relations in turn are of course determined by other factors, such as the intended relation with the perspective readers, social and ideological factors, etc.). (Chesterman, 1997, p. 89; italics in the text)

In addition to this, Chesterman makes a second distinction between what he calls ‘comprehension strategies’ and ‘production strategies’. The first are related to analysis of the source text, while the second are the result of various comprehension strategies and are related to how the translator manipulates the linguistic material to produce an appropriate target text. He claims to focus only on the latter.

In contrast, Chesterman sees translation strategies as observable phenomena from the translated text compared to the source text. Finally, Chesterman, like Krings, Lörscher and others, understands the driving force behind a strategy, that is to say, that which activates or generates the strategy is a dark spot (Chesterman, 1997, p. 89).

5. Translation strategies and translation techniques
A further group of studies are those which share a common distinction between the concept of strategy and technique. So far, we have seen how these two concepts tend not to coincide within the work of one scholar, while at the same time they could take on the same meaning among different scholars. This is the case for the majority of quite recent studies, almost all of them published in the last decade. This fact should
motivate us to reconsider the repercussions for the already overwhelming amount of literature on strategies in present-day research, as well as the ever-increasing interest in investigating in more depth certain key concepts.

Hervey and Higgins (1992), for example, make a distinction between ‘strategic decisions’ and ‘decisions of detail’. According to them, the former have to take place before the translator begins a translation and need to address questions such as: what are the main linguistic features of this text? What is the desired effect? Which text genre does it belong to? What kind of public is it for? etc. The decisions of detail are often governed by strategic decisions, but their function is to resolve specific problems (grammar, lexicon, etc.) posed by the translation.

Kussmaul (1995), for his part, gives no precise definition for strategy or technique, yet uses both terms repeatedly throughout his book in his analysis of the translation process, that is, what is happening in the translator’s mind while translating. His analysis uses errors as a starting point to question which mental processes lead translators and apprentice translators to make certain translation errors. He calls these errors ‘unsuccessful processes’ and believes that it is the very techniques and strategies which have to solve the problems which are in the origin of these unsuccessful processes.

Kussmaul (1995) situates these strategies and techniques within the ‘therapy’ phase in his ‘unsuccessful processes’ metaphor, where ‘symptoms’ are errors detected in the target text or through TAPs, ‘diagnosis’ is the analysis of these errors (by type or individually) and ‘therapy’ is the correct use of strategies and translation techniques. This explains why he gives importance not only to the translator’s unconscious or automated skills (which he associates with the interiorising strategies and techniques), but also to the conscious processes (which he associates with problem-solving processes).

Hurtado Albir (1996 and 2001), in an attempt to clarify the evident terminological and conceptual confusion generated by studies on translation process operators, offers a different definition for the terms ‘method’, ‘techniques’ and ‘translation strategies’:

In my view the translation *method* means developing a given translation process governed by certain principles that are consistent with the translator’s objective. Consequently, the method is of a supra-individual and conscious nature (although there are times when it can be unconscious) and responds to a global option that runs through the entire text. Translation *technique* is the specific application which can be observed in the product and affects the minor zones of the text. For example, in the translation of a cartoon, a translator may, on occasions, resort to the technique of adapting a cultural referent, but this will not be the reason why the translation will be marked as free, adapted etc. *Strategy* is of an individual and procedural nature and consists of mechanisms used by the translator to solve problems s/he encounters during the translation process, depending on specific needs. (Hurtado Albir, 2001, pp. 249–250, my translation)7

So, for Hurtado Albir, the fundamental difference between technique and strategy is that the former is related to the result, while the latter is related to the process. While method affects the text as a whole, technique affects small text units. In more specific terms, Hurtado Albir (2001) defines ‘translation technique’ as:

... an analytical and classifying process of the translation equivalence with five basic characteristics: 1) they affect the outcome of the translation, 2) they are classified in comparison with the original, 3) they refer to text micro-units, 4) they are of a discourse and contextual nature, and 5) they are functional. (Hurtado Albir, 2001, p. 268, my translation)8
As regards the term ‘strategy’, she makes the following statement:

To avoid causing confusion, I believe that we should consider the term ‘strategy’ in the same way that it is conceived in other disciplines (cognitive psychology, pedagogy, language teaching, etc.): the procedures (verbal or non-verbal, conscious or unconscious) for solving problems. The notion of strategy, understood in this way, has received little analytical attention in our [translation] discipline. (Hurtado Albir, 2001, pp. 271–272, my translation)9

Piotrobska (1998), basing himself on the studies by Hervey and Higgins (1992) and Lörscher (1991), claims that strategies precede techniques in order of occurrence, are text-oriented and are less numerous. Techniques, in contrast, follow after strategies, are problem-oriented particular choices and are more numerous.

Finally, there is Zabalbeascoa (2000), who provides two different definitions for ‘strategy’ and ‘technique’. According to him, a strategy is a specific behaviour model aimed at resolving a problem or achieving a specific objective (Zabalbeascoa, 2000, p. 120). In translation, strategy is the term that he proposes for any conscious action focused on facilitating the translation task, particularly in terms of efficiency and effectiveness. For him, these kinds of strategies cannot be discovered through descriptive studies alone, since the underlying principle is that one can arrive at a particular product by different paths (Zabalbeascoa, 2000, p. 120). In contrast, he sees technique as a concept that has to be associated with the decision-taking process, and also as an acquired skill in accordance with a prescriptive method or procedure (Zabalbeascoa, 2000, p. 121). The former would include reading strategies, text analysis strategies, etc. The latter, which comes closer to the concept of Vinay and Darbelnet’s and others’ procedures, refers to ‘acquired skills’ as a whole, such as calques, modulation, transposition, etc. Then Zabalbeascoa proposes using the term ‘techniques’ to refer to these.

6. Other terms

Some writers have attempted to avoid the pitfalls of the confusing use of terminology (procedures, methods, techniques, strategies etc.) by introducing new and individual designations which, notwithstanding, make matters worse for the reader. One such example is Malone, in his book The science of linguistics in the art of translation (1988). Here, Malone invents the term ‘trajections’ to refer to (as he states in his introduction) a development of the concept of procedure or technique as used by the early comparativists. Drawing on all that pure linguistics research has contributed, Malone states that he wants to convert these techniques or procedures into tools for translating and analysing translations. He offers the following definition for ‘trajection’:

A trajection may be characterized as any of a number of basic plerematic... translational patterns into which a given source-target pairing may partially be resolved.

(1988, p. 15)

Conclusion

My proposal at the beginning of this article was to review, analyse and classify the various studies which deal with what I have decided to call ‘translation process
operators’. My objective has resulted in an initial grouping of information and an analysis of the most frequently used terms.

There is, however, a clear need for further research into these translation process operators from a global perspective which would allow for including the maximum number possible of contributions and studies on this issue. This would help us to determine, for example, how these are characterised and in what manner they are ordered in the mind of the translator, not forgetting its importance for teaching translation. In addition, a better understanding of these operators could open up the field to new considerations regarding the relationship between translation problems and translation strategies, which, as I have attempted to show here, are a cornerstone for research into the transfer process in translation.

Notes

1. ‘(Nous devrons) essayer de reconnaître les voies que suit l’esprit, consciemment ou inconsciemment, quand il passe d’une langue à une autre pour en dresser la carte . . . et étudier sur des exemples aussi précis et aussi probants que possible les mécanismes de la traduction, en dériver des procédés et par delà des procédés retrouver les attitudes mentales, sociales, culturelles qui les informent’ (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1958, p. 26; italics mine).

2. ‘Rappelons qu’au moment de traduire, le traducteur rapproche deux systèmes linguistiques, dont l’un est exprimé et figé, l’autre est encore potentiel et adaptable. Le traducteur a devant ses yeux un point de départ et élabore dans son esprit un point d’arrivée; nous avons dit qu’il va probablement explorer tout d’abord son texte: évaluer le contenu descriptif, affectif, intellectuel des UT qu’il a découpées; reconstituer la situation qui informe le message; poser et évaluer les effets stylistiques, etc. Mais il ne peut en rester là: bientôt son esprit s’arrête à une solution – dans certains cas, il y arrive si rapidement qu’il a l’impression d’un jaillissement simultané, la lecture de LD appelant presque automatiquement le message en LA; il ne lui reste qu’à contrôler encore une fois son texte pour s’assurer qu’aucun des éléments LD n’a été oublié, et le processus est terminé. C’est précisément ce processus qu’il nous reste à préciser. Ses vois, ses procédés apparaissent multiples au premier abord, mais se laissent ramener à sept, correspondant à des difficultés d’ordre croissant, et qui peuvent s’employer isolément ou à l’état combiné’ (1958, p. 46; italics mine).

3. ‘Sólo la práctica metódica puede proporcionar al traductor el dominio de estos procedimientos con los cuales logrará seguridad, facilidad y rapidez. Sin el conocimiento de las técnicas que la lingüística contemporánea ha puesto a su alcance, el traductor empírico seguirá envuelto en constantes perplejidades que le consumirán un tiempo precioso y, lo importante en esencia, le condenarán al literalismo, causa universal de toda clase de errores.’

4. ‘Por supuesto, no se trata de formular reglas de transformación, sino de hacer hincapié en una serie de rasgos lingüísticos ante cuya recurrencia el traductor tiene que aprender a desarrollar múltiples y variadas estrategias para impedir que en su versión afloren presencias extrañas a la idiosincrasia del castellano’ (translation from Spanish mine).

5. ‘Son muy poco conocidos los escasos intentos de elaborar estas “reglas” específicas, estas técnicas y procedimientos, cuyo dominio constituye una condición siempre válida, aunque no la única’ (translation from Spanish mine).

6. ‘El propósito principal tanto de la traducción como de la interpretación, que resumiremos en este trabajo con el concepto general de traducción, consiste en producir para un determinado texto de la lengua de partida un texto comunicativamente equivalente en la lengua de llegada’ (translation from Spanish mine).

7. Original citation reads: ‘Consideramos que el método traductor supone el desarrollo de un proceso traductor determinado regulado por unos principios en función del objetivo del traductor; el método tiene, por consiguiente, un carácter supraindividual y consciente (aunque a veces puede ser inconsciente) y responde a una opción global que recorre todo el texto. La técnica de traducción es la aplicación concreta visible en el resultado, que afecta a
zonas menores del texto; así, por ejemplo, en la traducción de un cómic el traductor puede recurrir puntualmente a la técnica de adaptación de un referente cultural y no por ello la traducción será tildada de libre, de adaptación, etc. La estrategia es de carácter individual y procesual, y consiste en los mecanismos utilizados por el traductor para resolver los problemas encontrados en el desarrollo del proceso traductor en función de sus necesidades específicas.'

8. ‘… un procedimiento de análisis y catalogación del funcionamiento de la equivalencia traductora, con cinco características básicas: (1) afectan al resultado de la traducción, (2) se catalogan en comparación con el original, (3) se refieren a microunidades textuales, (4) tienen un carácter discursivo y contextual, (5) son funcionales.’

9. ‘Para no generar confusión, pensamos que conviene considerar el término estrategia tal y como se le concibe en otras disciplinas (psicología cognitiva, pedagogía, didáctica de lenguas, etc.): los procedimientos (verbales y no verbales, conscientes e inconscientes) de resolución de problemas. Entendida de esta manera, la noción de estrategia goza todavía de escasos análisis en nuestra disciplina.’

References