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**Report on the 5TH HANDS ON TRANSLATION
SEMINAR *Research in Translation Studies*
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The BABELIUM language centre of the Institute of Arts and Human Sciences of the University of Minho organised its fifth edition of HOT (hands on translation) seminar on the topic “research in translation studies” featuring three internationally-renown speakers: Yves Gambier (University of Turku, Finland), Andrew Chesterman (University of Helsinki, Finland) and Christina Schäffner (Aston University, UK). The purpose of this two-day seminar, entirely dedicated to the field of translation, was to create an environment for discussion on the latest developments in translation studies, with a special focus on the theoretical and methodological issues of scientific research. The 34 participants were mainly local M.A. students, though a significant percentage of guests came from the professional field (translators or teachers), as the seminar was open to anyone interested and involved in translation. On the opening day, the board of hosts warmly welcomed all participants briefly presenting their BABELIUM language centre and providing an overview of

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its activities since 2006, when the centre joined the ELC (European Language Council).

“Different stages in a pluridisciplinary research project” was Professor Yves Gambier’s contribution to the first morning session. However, instead of delivering a speech, he proposed a practical activity: participants were divided into small groups and had to describe what types of knowledge were needed either for a child to drink a glass of milk or for a man to play football. The goal of the experiment was to become aware of the fact that in real life as well as in research different types of knowledge are required (emotional, experiential, religious, aesthetic etc.) and that these interfere with scientific knowledge. This means that would-be researchers need to make sure they know they are doing a scientific type of work – and not simple speculation – and to make decisions on the basis of motivated hypotheses or calculations. In fact, a project based on mere speculation would end up causing “des disequilibres cognitives” [cognitive unbalances] giving rise to weak hypotheses and, consequently, to disputable conclusions. Moreover, Gambier invited to build on what one learned in the past in order to strengthen personal motivation, a key factor for anybody approaching this profession. Finally, variables such as time and resources must be taken into serious consideration when designing a research project.

The second intervention of the morning was entitled “Hypotheses about translation”. Professor Chesterman emphasised the fact that hypotheses can sometimes be wrong and compared science to a clock of which we can only see the surface. What we do is trying to guess how it works inside, meaning that the goal of every research is to understand something better. He also provided some very helpful hints on how to write a research hypothesis; in particular, he suggested that a reason for each choice made should always be provided, that a hypothesis should never contain a modal verb and counter evidence as well as authors disagreeing with it should be given proper attention. A project can also be designed on the basis of a question, in this case the answer will be our starting hypothesis. In a very effective way, he summarised all this in the following scheme:

1. I am working on _____(topic)
2. because I want to find out _____ (research question)
3. in order to understand _____ (justification)
4. convince your reader.

The research question should be tested on the basis of the justification, which, in turn, should consider gaps, disagreements and connections with other topics. Being the floor quite restricted and mostly made up of

Ph.D. students, this intervention gave rise to a very productive discussion with the speakers on personal ideas and proposals on research projects.

The afternoon session was opened by Professor Chesterman with a reflection on “Translation universals”. The notion of translation universal was discussed in depth and its – both positive and negative – aspects were discussed along with a final reflection on its actual usability in research projects. What clearly emerged was that generalisation – which is one of the basic characteristics and scopes of universals – tends to be used in works closer to hard sciences, while the so called soft sciences appear to prefer more specific descriptions for framing concepts.

The first evening was enlivened by a delightful dinner, to which most attendants participated. The local chosen in the city centre was the cultural centre “Casa do Professor”. The occasion also allowed all to keep discussing the day's topics as well as establishing new collaborations.

The second day was opened by a speech of Yves Gambier on “The metalanguages of translation”, in which the issue that translation studies are not yet a fully-fledged discipline was raised. This is mainly because a truly scientific discipline needs to have a clearly defined object of investigation and a set terminology, while scholars in this field do not agree on notions such as ‘translation’, ‘adaptation’, ‘equivalence’, ‘text’ etc. and many of them question the fact that phenomena like localisation, subtitling etc. can be included in translation studies. Such state of the art is certainly due to its young age (it started out in 1965) and to a rather poor metalanguage, as it has been borrowing many of its terms from other disciplines. Hence, the words and concepts used are always inside a network of other concepts, which makes them difficult to define. Another cause of disagreement is the multiplicity of the languages involved, which makes the establishment of a clear-cut terminology even more difficult, and the use of English as a lingua franca doesn't seem to be of help. Its humanistic character, then, is a further cause of problems, as hard sciences do not experience such terminological intricacy and translation schools are often competing to have their own terminology established. Also, the first generation of scholars has not been trained to work in this specific field but come from different backgrounds (applied linguistics, sociology, economics etc.). Finally, the weak institutionalisation of translation studies has contributed to the present situation.

The second speaker of the day was Christina Schäffner, who presented a work on “Norms in translation studies”. The starting point of her presentation is Toury's notion of translation as “norm-governed behaviour”, meaning that translation is subject to socio-cultural constraints (absolute rules, norms or idiosyncrasies) established by a certain group of people. Norms provide a descriptive notion of correctness, appropriateness, adequateness etc. and have been used to exert control over translational behav-

ious. They can be then divided into preliminary (overall strategy and choice of texts), initial (ST vs. TT fidelity) and operational (specific decisions made when translating). They can be studied both through textual and extratextual sources considering regularities, though these are not the norms themselves, but only their external evidence; hence, norms are only explanatory hypotheses rather than entities on their own. They should be studied because they account for translators' choices, thus being an investigation tool and can tell something about the cultural history of translation. However, the concept of norm has also been criticised for its excessive descriptiveness, because it sees translators as passive subjects and it does not explain creativity. Another concept introduced is that of habitus: does it belong to a social group or is it restricted to the single translator? Finally, a few suggestions on possible research questions regarding norms were provided.

The last part of the seminar was dedicated to a workshop held by Andrew Chesterman "Reading literature in TS". A paper written by a Ph.D. student was to be read before the conference and during the workshop its features were discussed, highlighting strengths and weaknesses. This activity gave participants the chance to express their views and make comments on this work, as well as to concretely understand the basic requirements for a well written paper.

Considering the high value of the contributions given in this two-day seminar in sunny Braga we cannot but wait for the next HOT meeting.