

ANNIE BRISSET

“The Search for a Native Language: Translation and Cultural Identity”

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1. Author information

Annie Brisset is a professor at the University of Ottawa, affiliated to the School of Translation and Interpretation and the Department of Theatre. She is also a member of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies and thereby authorised to supervise theses. Since 1996 she has been a consultant to UNESCO, and has worked on various projects for the development of multilingual communication in Central and Eastern Europe, including the establishment of the network of UNESCO Chairs in Translation and Cross-Cultural Communication. In addition, she is the president and founding member of IATIS (International Association for Translation and Intercultural Studies).

She has published plenty of articles, essays and publications, whose topics are mainly connected with theatre, problems of translation and identity of the reader.

Her contribution to Translation Studies is great and known all over the world. As the president of the International Association for Translation and Intercultural Studies, she has coordinated plenty of projects, delivered lectures and published many works, which have significantly improved the development of studies on translation.

Her best-known works are:

Brisset, A. 1996. *A Sociocritique of Translation*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

----- 2003. “Alterity in Translation: An Overview of Theories and Practices”, in: Susan Petrilli (ed.), *Translation*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

----- 2004. "Translation and Identity", in: Laurence Venuti (ed.), *The Translation Studies Reader*. Londres. New York: Routledge.

2. Abstract

The first part is an introduction to the topic of translation. The author explains, from the linguistic point of view, what translation is and what the major problems are while doing it, e.g.: "(...) the difficulty of translation does not arise from the lack of specific translation language. It arises, rather, from the absence in the target language of a subcode equivalent to the one used by the source text in its reproduction of the source language" (Brisset 1996: 344).

Brisset also cites Henri Gobard's tetraglossic analysis, according to which a cultural field or a linguistic community has at its disposal four types of language or subcodes: a vernacular language, a vehicular language, a referential language and a mythical language.

In the remaining parts of the article, she looks at plays that have been labelled by translators as translated into Quebecois. She tries to answer the questions if it is really possible to do a translation into such a language and what kind of social and cultural consequences it brings.

The author analyses the history and the status of Quebecois in the context of stereotypes, nationalistic movements, and xenophobic acts in Canada.

3. Terminology

Source text term	Meaning	Term in Polish
bilingualism	quality of being bilingual (using or knowing two languages), using two languages in some proportion in order to facilitate learning by students who have a native proficiency in one language and are acquiring proficiency in the other	dwujęzyczność
distinctness	the quality or state of being distinct; a separation or difference that prevents confusion of parts or things	odmienność, inność
diglossia	situation in which two dialects or languages are used by a single community, one for everyday communication and the other in formal situations or literature	dyglosja
homogeneous	of the same kind of nature; consisting of similar parts, or of elements of the like nature; opposed to heterogeneous; as, homogeneous particles, elements, or principles; homogeneous bodies	jednolity
mother tongue	the language learned by children and passed from one generation to the next	

native language	the language that a person has spoken from earliest childhood	
sociolect	the language spoken by a social group, social class or subculture	socjolekt
source language	a language that is to be translated into another language	język źródłowy
retranslation	to translate (something already translated) into a different language	retranslacja
target language	the language into which a text written in another language is to be translated	język docelowy

4. Methodology

The text is based on the author's observations made while studying translations of plays into French and Quebecois. It is also an interesting piece of research on the topic of connections between translation and language, and national and cultural identity. There are many references to other authors and works on translations and linguistics.

In her work, Brisset not only compares pieces of translations but also quotes translators and tries to build a solid view on making a proper translation in French and Quebecois.

5. Links with other publications on the subject

Muñoz Calvo, M. 2010. *Translation and Cultural Identity: Selected Essays on Translation and Cross-cultural Communication*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Da Silva Matte, N. 1996. *Translation and Identity*. Porto Alegre: Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul.

St-Pierre, P. 2004. *Translation: Constructing Identity out of Alterity*. Montreal: Université de Montréal.

6. Critical commentary

In my opinion, the article is a very interesting piece of research, not only from the linguistic point of view; there are also many facts connected with Canadian history, relations inside Canadian society and problems with nationalism and xenophobia in Canada.

There are plenty of fundamental remarks on the topic of translation, accurate quotes and comments connected with translation studies.

The outcome is quite interesting. Brisset shows how important the role of the translator is, what kind of consequences the application of specific vocabulary can have and how the translation can be used for nationalistic purposes.

7. Quotation to remember the text by

“The task of translation is thus to replace the language of Other by native language. (...) Translation becomes an act of reclaiming, recentering of the identity, a re-territorializing operation. It does not create a new language, but it elevates a dialect to the status of national and cultural language” (Brisset 1996: 346).

“The existence of native language presupposes that its speakers are ‘in the world according to culture, that is according to an ontology’ which is unique to that language, and to that language only. In other words, the emergence of a native language implies the elimination of alterity. To acquire a native language is to be reborn in a free country, to have a country entirely to oneself” (Brisset 1996: 353).

“(...) the difficulty of translation does not arise from the lack of specific translation language. It arises, rather, from the absence in the target language of a subcode equivalent to the one used by the source text in its reproduction of the source language” (Brisset 1996: 344).

8. References

Brisset, A. 1996 *A Sociocritique of Translation*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

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