

Contextualising ethics in the practice of translator education: the case of the indigenous value system of the Basotho

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This article develops the suggestions made in recent publications on translation studies concerning the role of the translator as an agent. The article discusses agency as a central theme in translation, and points out that it is not a value unto itself, but that it must be conceptualised within a value system. This value system, it is contended, is inculcated during the years of study at tertiary institutions. This suggests that the value system must be incorporated into the curriculum, the choice of which is left in the hands of the lecturer. Following the lead of Tymoczko, who argued for the internationalisation of translation studies, the indigenous Basotho value system and the concept of *ubuntu*, with its concomitant values, are explored as values that may be of interest to translation studies. If the study of translation is to be contextualised, so does ethics in translator education. The article reconsiders the implications of critical studies for ethics, arguing that it creates an impasse for human ethical action. As a value system that nurtures society and individuality, *ubuntu* may be a valuable alternative.

Die kontekstualisering van etiek in die praktyk van vertaleronderrig: die Basotho se inheemse waardestelsel as gevallestudie

Hierdie artikel bou voort op die voorstelle wat in onlangse publikasies in vertaalwetenskap oor die rol van die vertaler as 'n agent aan die hand gedoen is. Die artikel bespreek agentskap as 'n sentrale tema in vertaling en wys daarop dat agentskap nie 'n waarde op sigself is nie, maar dat dit binne 'n waardestelsel gekonceptualiseer moet word. Hierdie waardestelsel word tydens die opvoedingsjare aan hoëonderwysinstellings vasgelê. Die waardestelsel moet dus binne die kurrikulum, waarvan die keuse by die dosent berus, ingebed word. Na aanleiding van Tymoczko se werk, wat 'n saak vir die internasionalisering van die vertaalwetenskap uitgemaak het, ondersoek die artikel die Basotho se inheemse waardestelsel en die konsep *ubuntu*, met die gepaardgaande waarde, wat vir die vertaalwetenskap van belang mag wees. As die bestudering van vertaling gekontekstualiseer moet word, geld dieselfde vir die etiek in vertaleronderrig. Die artikel herbesin oor die implikasies wat die kritiese teorie vir die etiek inhoud en argumenteer dat dit 'n *impasse* vir mense se etiese optrede inhoud. As 'n alternatief sou *ubuntu*, as 'n waardestelsel wat sowel die samelewing as individualiteit koester, van waarde kon wees.

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Scenario 1: An employee is discharged from a major pharmaceutical company that sells its products globally. She bears a grudge against the company because, for the sake of this example, she is convinced that she was treated unfairly and dismissed from the company because she did not agree with their policy of exploiting third-world countries for inflated profits. As a second career, she takes up translation and finds various theories that stress the agency of the translator. She realises that translation offers her the opportunity to act as an agent of change in society. She starts to freelance for a translation company that has been contracted to translate pharmaceutical brochures for her former company. As part of her role as “agent” to focus attention on her former company, she deliberately mistranslates a number of details in the medicine brochures destined for China, causing the death of thousands of people. In the subsequent investigation and wave of negative press attention, the company is exposed for its bad business practices. She happily goes to jail.

Scenario 2: A translator working in Lesotho receives an AIDS brochure to translate into Sesotho. This student received university training where the lecturers focused on profession-based education, coaching students to produce what the market wants. This kind of training, still found in some training institutions, states that a translator may in no way change a text and that the translator is a mere conduit for enabling the message to flow from one language to another. The translator in question translates the text using the same explicit references to genitals and sexual activity contained in the American source text. The text offends half of its readers to the extent that they discontinue reading and consequently miss out on its information. The other half adopts the American ideology of knowledge constituting power and that openness about sexuality is the way to solve the social ills associated with it. They are still Sesotho-speaking, but they begin to display an American mindset.

These two examples represent two extremes on the scale of ethical issues in translation. The first takes agency to its logical – and violently extreme – conclusion, while the second takes the traditional ethical code of translators and the conduit model to its logical – and perhaps equally extreme, though non-violent – conclusion. In both instances, let us assume that the ethical choices made by the translators were, at least to some extent, influenced by the translation theory they

read during their university education. In both instances, one would most likely not find a particular, explicit set of ethical guidelines in the curriculum of the respective fictive universities, except for those (fictively) imported from the codes of conduct of professional organisations such as the International Federation of Translators (FIT). However, in whatever they may have read, the fictive students would have found embedded values which may have led them to making particular ethical decisions.

Most translation decisions will have to be made in situations that are more complicated in nature than those mentioned earlier. The question, however, remains: What are the (hidden) values that imbue the curriculum of translation students? Put differently, in which values are translation students immersed at university? Searching for these values implies a twofold effort, namely, considering what is being offered on the surface as part of a curriculum and, in the style of critical discourse analysis, trying to unearth the hidden assumptions about values and ethics in the curriculum by assessing the values underlying the material which students are likely to encounter.

The nature of this article is to a large extent exploratory. Rather than prescribing a set of values or even ethical guidelines, the value context within which translation students currently operate will be investigated by exploring some of the trends in translation studies which may inform their value judgements. On the basis of the value analysis of translation studies in the first section, the researcher embarks on an experimental discussion of a feature of the Basotho value system proposed to be of relevance for translator education in general. The article concludes with a few suggestions relating to possible implications of the above for pedagogy and curriculum development in translator education.

1. The context of translator education: agency

This section addresses the following question: What is the intellectual context, specifically the value system, within which translators are currently educated? Questions concerning ethics and values in translator education cannot be asked in a conceptual or philosophical void. Both the demands of the profession and the current theoretical perspectives in the discipline play a role in a discussion of ethics.

Gouadec's (2007: 235-40) point of view is a good example of current scholarly perspectives on translation as a profession. From a European perspective, he provides cogent arguments on matters concerning translation as a profession and on the contemporary requirements for the industry. His five-page section on professional ethics basically provides a number of rules for professional practice. As Tymoczko (2007) argues throughout her book, the problem with this type of rule-making is not that it is wrong *per se*, but rather that it may be biased towards the interests of clients, larger institutions, and the market in general. This bias, in her opinion, is not in the best interests of humanity. Therefore, it is not a matter of having no professional ethics. Very few people would probably condone the use of translation portrayed in scenario one. In addition, professional ethics obviously does play a role in translation practice, as Nord (2001: 123-8) argued in terms of her concept of loyalty regulating values and expectations in the field of translation.

However, from a translation studies point of view, the past decade has seen a proliferation of ideas on the role of the translator as agent.¹ These theories all posit that the very nature of the act of translation, as re-narration, resistance, reported speech, cluster concept or game, implies translator agency. It seems fair to argue that translators have always played the role of agent and that this role has always enjoyed recognition, for example, Jerome's letter to Pammachius (Jerome 2006: 21-30).² Tymoczko (2007: 189) also argues that, even when the field of translation studies was dominated by linguistic views, scholars stressed the (linguistic) choices made by translators. Since the cultural turn and, in particular, the sociological turn in translation studies (Wolf 2011), what had been considered an inevitability in the hard choices translators had to make, is now being regarded and theorised as an active, intentional choice made by the translators.

In a postgraduate translation studies course students would probably read Herman's (2007) views on translation as reported speech, which is combined with and based on Lefevere's notions of

1 Cf Baker 2006, Gentzler 2008, Hermans 2007, Tymoczko 2007.

2 At this stage, I choose not to enter into a debate about a particular definition of agency. In this article, I use agency as a generic term for all conceptualisations of translation which do not accept the conduit model – the translator as a passive conveyor of information.

translation as rewriting as well as Gutt's use of relevance theory in translation studies. These views would strengthen the notion among students that they are inevitably in a position where they have to manipulate the source text in order to produce a target text.

In addition, students would read Baker's (2006) views on narrative, which imply that translations are retellings, and as such, cannot but be ideologically slanted. She basically argues for the incommensurability of narratives and thus that "... there can be no criteria for assessing narratives" (Baker 2006: 140). Because narrative is constructive, creating rather than reflecting reality, communication between narratives breaks down, which leaves translators with one option only – taking sides. Her solution, to call on reason to solve the conflict between narratives, does not really solve the problem of a never-ending conflicted world where people are prisoners of their own narratives.³ In a more recent article, Baker & Maier (2011: 3) argue that an awareness of ethical issues should at least sensitise the translator to such an extent that s/he is able to realise a situation as ethically important. I am of the opinion that one needs to go even further by arguing that ethical education should, at least, provide translators with the ability to analyse the ethical implications of the choices they have to make.

Students would also read Tymoczko's (2007) attempt to conceptualise the translator's role of agency. From the perspective of a philosophy of science she clearly indicates that the move towards translator agency holds huge implications for ethics. She rejects an ethics of neutrality or even resistance as inadequate and argues in favour of ethical awareness grounded in an ethics of difference (Tymoczko 2007: 315). Tymoczko uses strong words when she discusses agency, arguing in favour of conceptualising translation as activism and engagement. She defines engagement as the "... commitment to (specific) principles as well as actions involving solidarity with other people" (Tymoczko 2007: 212). The thread of her argument is thus that translators should tend towards stronger activism in their actions and that they should indeed take sides.

3 Cf, for instance, Floros's (2011) attempt to find a universal value on which to base ethics in translator education.

In a university context, students of translator studies could also read Bandia's (2008) postcolonial notions on translation as reparation and the ways in which postcolonial African readers "translate" oral narrative and its style into their literary works as a form of resistance and reparation. Similarly, Gentzler (2008) has put forward the hypothesis that translation does not merely entail mediation between cultures but the creation of new culture.

If these hypotheses hold true, translators are even more strongly conceptualised as agents of the creation/change of culture, not only by what they choose to translate but also by how they translate, as Venuti has argued. If students have also read Milton & Bandia's (2009) compilation of the histories of translators who have made deliberate choices to use translation to further their cultural ideas, the next generation of translators should find it extremely difficult to commit themselves to the type of rules proposed by Gouadec.

It appears that the examples mentioned earlier indicate that current scholarly thought in translation studies is making a strong case for the inevitable fact that translation is a hermeneutic endeavour, a representation, and thus ideologically compromised, implying that it does not take place in an ethically neutral space (Barnett 2003, Tymoczko 2006). However, it also challenges translation students with respect to their own role as agents. Agency scholars argue that attention to ethics needs to entail more than the interests of the client, the industry, and the market. It would appear that translators are personally responsible and are held responsible by society for the ethical choices they make, the allegiances they pledge, and the stances they take on ethical matters. Every word implies an ideological choice which, in turn, is embedded in some philosophical stance. In other words, translation is not merely a matter of technical skill but of ethical understanding.

In sympathy with the position outlined above, however, I sense an ethical dilemma related to the conceptualisation of translators as agents. Nord (2001) has already drawn attention to this dilemma and subsequently developed her theory of loyalty as a possible solution. The question is: Considering the nature of translation as a form of human interaction which, according to convention, is based on an already existing piece of human interaction, once you relax the power

of the source text (implying that the source text is not given the value of being a yardstick) or the ethical responsibility towards the client or the target audience in favour of the translator as an (self-appointed) agent of sorts, how do you curb pure selfishness or selling out to a preferred ideology?⁴ Or, in Derrida's terms: how do you respect the Other (in this case both the text and the reader as Other) (Eco 1990 & 1992, Garrison 2004: 96-8)? It is hoped that the translator in my first scenario represents one that will only be found in a horror movie, but frankly, are we not creating a Frankenstein in this instance? To mention but one example, Uchiyama's (2009) article, in which he explains how Yukichi used translation to enhance a particular ideological view of Westernisation, raises a number of ethical questions. Who decides what is good for a society? What advantages, if any, does this agent bring to his/her society? What damage was caused to society by this agent? How did this role of agency realise the power differentials between East and West? In raising these questions, I argue that agency is not a value in itself, but a choice made on the basis of some other value. For example, because I value Westernisation, I use translation to promote it.

The other question is whether the activist/engagement stance and, in particular, the critical framework within which it is cast, proposed by translation scholars can solve the problems related to issues of power in society. What remains troublesome mainly is the critical paradigm within which translation studies casts its ethical choices. Though most probably not intended in this way, thinking in the typical critical paradigm forces one to simplify ethical problems because youone views all ethical choices as basically binary – either for the oppressed or against them and always opposed to some degenerate power. Critical theory, I claim on the basis of Morin's (2007, also see Jansen 2009: 256-7) analysis, critical theory in this sense mutilates reality by imposing on it a simplified ethical system in terms of which to make ethical choices. The critical position does not assume a world in which values and ethical choices are more complex than being for or against, or than being good or bad. It also does not assume a kind of ethics that will be able to operate in a situation where there

4 LaFollete (2007: 3) argues that ethics is basically about a choice between self-interest and the interest of others.

is no particular contrast between good and bad. In essence, its ethics is de(con)structive, not constructive. Perhaps I should make clear that one should perhaps differentiate in this instance between the intention and the unintended consequences of the current views on agency in translation studies. I do not claim that Baker or Tymoczko, for instance, set out to put forward a binary ethical system. My claim is that the underlying critical schema within which they are working “forces” them to assume good and bad. If one “has to” be an activist when one translates, this is already an ethical choice; it is not a call towards ethical translation practices.

Socially engaged figures such as Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu have grappled with the question of whether a specific resistant position does not perpetuate the violence and power imbalance inherent in particular structures. It would appear that the dominant Western discourses of resistance, activism, being opposed, siding with, and so on are in themselves so aggressive that they perpetuate the power imbalances they try to oppose. This is evident in many postcolonial contexts where power imbalances remain despite the large-scale structural changes following activism. A word of caution is warranted in this instance, without wishing to condemn the criticism of power *per se*, because one can hardly have enough of it. I am of the opinion that one should emphasise the question of the ability to resist/be activist in such a manner that one does not perpetuate the violence, in other words promote a constructive value system, a value system that can also speak up for what it stands for, not only for what it opposes.

As a subtext to the article, my choice to explore the Basotho value system, which forms part of the context in which I teach, is an attempt at considering the implications of “de-Westernising” theories for translator education. Assuming that this “de-Westernising” call is valid, differing perspectives from all across the globe should be heard so that conceptualisations other than Western ones can also be voiced and considered in the construction of a “theory of translation” or, in this case, a “theory for ethics in translation”. Far from being parochial, the line of argument is global but is arrived at by exploring the implications in a local context.

My contention is thus that agency itself cannot be an ethical value. It has beyond doubt been established that translators are agents of cultural creation. The question remains whether all kinds of agency or activism are good. This raises a meta-question: Against which values is agency to be assessed? The next section examines a local value system with the aim of participating in a global debate on ethics in translation studies.⁵

2. Aspects of indigenous value systems of the Basotho

A person is a person through persons – Sesotho proverb

A dream is not a dream until it is a dream of the community – San proverb

My humanity is caught up and bound up in yours – Desmond Tutu

Like all cultures, the Basotho culture is of a hybrid nature, having been influenced, among others, by French missionaries, English colonisation, the South African apartheid environment, as well as a particular history of its own.⁶ The concept of “indigenous” is thus not a construct indicating something purer than a current value system, but an effort to fathom yet another, historically determined, localised source of knowledge (Praeg 2008, Silitoe *et al* 2006: 3-7), which I suggest may be relevant to the current discussion. In addition, I am aware of the immensely problematic nature of notions such as indigenous, African, or traditional.⁷ In this article I make use of

5 I have argued on another occasion (Marais 2011) that indigenous knowledge should form part of the research methodology of translation studies in the African context. I am well aware of the contentious nature of this claim, as well as the methodological debates raging on indigenous forms of knowledge. Mine is an experiment in following Tymoczko’s (2007) suggestions for investigating whether non-Western notions of translation and values in the field hold something for translation studies.

6 Cf, for instance, Ashton 1967, Gill 1993, Hammond-Tooke 1974(not in bibliography), Matsela 1979.

7 The scope of this article does not allow any in-depth exposition of the highly contentious notions of African worldview, African philosophy, African anthropology, etc. My aim is merely to explore, on the surface, some values that may be of use for translator education, without analysing the underlying

these as working concepts, not denoting anything essential in any sense. They are mostly used in contrast to concepts such as scientific, universal, and Western. This text is a representation of Basotho values by someone who is an outsider to the particular culture (Sturge 2007), with all the epistemological and power implications attached to that position. Allowing more voices than my own to be heard in this article, and listening to voices other than the one to which I have grown accustomed, are ways of relativising the power of my own representation of (Basotho) values.

For the sake of a thought experiment in ethical contextualisation, and in following Tymoczko's (2006) line of argument that translation studies should shed its Western bias, I am positing *ubuntu* as a value relevant to the current discussion. Though it is clear in my mind that *ubuntu*, like any value, is not practised absolutely and is thus an ideal rather than a reality, I still consider it worth the attention of ethical studies in translator education.⁸ I am also aware of the cheap ways in which it is used for party political gain and money-making (*cf*, for instance, Jansen 2009).

Ubuntu is the Nguni form of the value that claims: persons depend on persons to be persons (Shutte 2001: 3). In Sesotho, it is phrased as follows: *motbo ke motbo ka batho ba bangwe*, which is literally translated as *a person is a person through other persons*. It primarily indicates the interdependence of humanity (Boon 2007: 28-9, Mbigi 2008: 67), the fact that humanity is a social phenomenon at heart (Mead 1967: 18). A quote by Desmond Tutu adds another voice to this concept (Mbigi 2005: 67):

Africans have a thing called UBUNTU; it is about the essence of being human, it is part of the gift that Africa is going to give the world. It embraces hospitality, caring about others, being willing to go the extra mile for the sake of another. We believe that a person is a person through other persons; that my humanity is caught up and bound up in yours. When I dehumanize you, I inexorably dehumanize myself. The solitary human being is a contradiction in

strata of culture, thought, or religion. I have chosen to use Shutte's (2001) effort of comparing *ubuntu* and freedom as a basis for my discussion. Cf also Praeg's (2008: 369) differentiation between constative and performative statements in this regard.

8 One could for instance question whether the "Western" ideal of "freedom" (Shutte 2001) is an ideal or a lived reality in most Western countries.

terms, and therefore you seek to work for the common good because your humanity comes into its own in community, in belonging.

Tutu gave another conceptualisation which is relevant to the matter at hand:⁹

A person with Ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed.

To this, one could add the voice of Nelson Mandela, who is regarded as a living embodiment of the value of *ubuntu*:¹⁰

A traveller through a country would stop at a village and he didn't have to ask for food or for water. Once he stops, the people give him food, entertain him. That is one aspect of Ubuntu, but it will have various aspects. Ubuntu does not mean that people should not enrich themselves. The question therefore is: Are you going to do so in order to enable the community around you to be able to improve?

Basotho culture has traditionally sought wholeness of character (Shutte 2001: 30), and education was aimed at preparing children to occupy their place in society as whole characters (Ashton 1967: 41, Van der Vliet 1980: 211). In the view of the Basotho people, this cannot be attained through individualism, but by being intrinsically part of other people. The “Other” is another self (Shutte 2001: 31). It entails a paradox of community and self that is not subsumed in any higher notion. The value of *botho*, being human, is based on a notion of community in which a society is more than a collection of individuals who live next to one another. Shutte (2001: 26) quotes Senghor who stated that the type of community he is talking about is one in which people “con-spire”, breathe together. In this conception, a community is an organism, a natural whole living together in symbiosis. In fact, the entire community may be regarded as one person. Put differently, people view the community as themselves (Shutte 2001: 27). In terms of modern complexity theory, one could claim that a community is something that emerges out of the people who constitute it, without subsuming the individuals into the whole (Griffin 2006: 1-26).

9 <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ubuntu_\(philosophy\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ubuntu_(philosophy))>

10 <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ubuntu_\(philosophy\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ubuntu_(philosophy))>

The notion of *ubuntu* draws on a very subtle balance between the individual and society and is based on the insight that individuals cannot attain wholeness of character without a community. This value then leads to moral virtues such as respect and sympathy for others. Decisions in life should consider the delicate balance between the individual and the community. Shutte (2001) works out the ethical implications of this position in areas such as sexuality, work, politics, education, and so on. One of the implications of *ubuntu*, once again as an ideal, is the notion of a *lekgotla*, a meeting of leaders in which the intended outcome is consensus. For discussions such as these, leaders sit in a circle and not opposite one another, an arrangement that symbolises the fact that all collaborate to solve a problem. This differs, for example, from the seating layout of the English and South African parliaments where opposition is built into the system *a priori*.¹¹

On reading through the literature, it became obvious that various exponents of *ubuntu* provide various explanations and implications which, on the surface, appear to be similar to ethical notions in other cultures, such as compassion, forgiveness, responsibility, honesty, self-control, care, love (Broodryk 2007), humanness, non-racialism (Bhengu 2006), and solidarity (Bujo 2001). What could one claim to be the unique contribution of the *ubuntu* value system?

Praeg (2008: 378) offers a lucid view on this issue in claiming that *ubuntu* is a concept that tries to explain humanity from a particular historical point of view. It is thus an inherently ethical concept because it has a bearing on the type of humanity to which it gives rise. A society that is shaped by *ubuntu* as a value holds particular values and views of what it means to be human, what it means to live in a human community, and what is implied by human responsibility. It expresses particular views on what results in wholeness of character, what leads to happiness, and what will lead to fullness of life. I have chosen to use *ubuntu* as a working concept with which to advocate an ethical approach to the teaching of translation. As a value, *ubuntu* may help us to counter the individualistic, materialistic notions prevalent in current Western values (Praeg 2008: 380), and in translation studies.¹²

11 Cf Shutte (2001) for an exposition of the implications of *ubuntu* as an ethical ideal.

12 I am aware of the fact that notions such as “society” and “*ubuntu*” are constructs. I am aware that I am representing a culturally “other” value. Following Sturge,

In line with Praeg (2008), I thus conceptualise *ubuntu* as a historically particular realisation of the value of human interdependence, which is not absolutely unique to African or Basotho society but which also does not denote exactly the same value as socialism and communalism found elsewhere in the world (Praeg 2008: 370). Praeg's (2008: 380) argument that modern claims on the independence of tradition, for example those of Kant, are grounded in interdependence, because when you declare your independence, you realise the existence of an Other. *Ubuntu* thus offers a reminder to current, Western value systems of this underlying interdependence (Praeg 2008: 375).

My survey of current trends in translation theory has pointed out that agency is an issue currently in need of ethical consideration, in particular in the education of translators. It appears that, in current assumptions, agency equals resistance – the opposition of ideology or particular practices in society.¹³ Tymoczko (2007: 206-28), in particular, argues for a stronger form of agency, calling it activism. She rejects resistance as a metaphor for the kind of agency she propounds, claiming instead that translators must be committed to particular principles, and must act to enhance these principles. Tymoczko's kind of thinking assumes metaphors of war, opposites, aggression, or strife. Ethically, it seems to fight fire with fire – perpetuating a violent approach to human interaction. Built on critical theory, which assumes that one must take sides (Jansen 2009: 256-7), current views on agency in translation studies seem to imply a tension or negative relationship between the individual and society. I contend that it is worth considering a notion of agency that is filled with positive values such as the wholeness of humanity, the interdependence of humanity, and the positive though paradoxical relationship between the individual and society. As Praeg (2008: 376) argues, this ethics relates to the realisation that the other cannot be reduced to the way

I adhere, however, to a notion of hybridity in the complex issue of representing “Others”. For me, the Basotho “Other” is neither so different that we cannot engage in thoughtful interaction in an academic arena, nor so similar that I can claim to know what “they” are about. I am also well aware of the possibility that I may be reading my own ideals and values into the “Other” – using the otherness to enhance my argument.

13 Cf, for instance, Baker 2006, Gentzler 2008, Milton & Bandia 2009, Tymoczko 2007.

I understand reality. It is the tension between “self-understanding” and “imposing self-understanding”. To be blunt, far too many of the calls to agency are disguised acts of “imposing self-understanding”. Translators have to reflect on the possibility that, by framing agency in a resistant way, they are perpetuating the schisms and the agonistic approaches to solving conflicting global interests. For instance, is the framing of translators and their agency in oppositional terms not currently perpetuating the schisms between the USA and the Muslim world?

3. Implications for pedagogy and curriculum

The first practical implication of my conceptualisation relates to the curriculum, that is to say creating an awareness of ethical diversity by allowing students to read more than merely Western views on ethics and translation studies (*cf* Baker & Maier 2011). In this instance, philosophical/ethical works such as that of Praeg, combined with texts in which Africans themselves explain *ubuntu*, could play an important pedagogical role in exposing students to alternative points of view. This reading work could be incorporated into the research students have to do before translating, for instance, a text on *ubuntu*.

Secondly, a pedagogy of complexity in which *ubuntu* is paradoxically juxtaposed to the critical value system dominant in Western ethics needs to be developed. This implies guiding students towards realising that difference, the Other, forms part of their own humanity. The scholar or philosopher holding a contrasting point of view is a member of a common humanity seeking to solve common human problems. In particular, the dilemma of living in an ethically complex reality has to be assumed as a pedagogical starting point.

Thirdly, students could be exposed to comparative works on ethics, for instance reading Baker and Tymoczko in conjunction with Mandela. In this instance, the pedagogy is important, as is argued by Floros (2011: 72-7). Allowing students to compare different value systems without necessarily seeking to criticise them plays a large role in this instance. A number of practical applications are possible. One could divide a class of students into two groups, one following a critical value system and the other adhering to the principles of *ubuntu*. Operating from this value system, one could allow them to select texts

to translate that enhance their particular value system, motivating and comparing their choices. In this instance, I am thinking here about, for instance, considering editorials from newspapers and political speeches, on the one hand, and narratives and texts by people like such as Mandela and Tutu, on the other hand. In addition, one could provide students with ideologically sensitive texts such as those mentioned by Floros (2011) and ask each group to translate according to their (adopted) value system, providing their translations with translation plans and annotations. The mere fact that this will be a virtually impossible exercise, because a student's deep-seated belief system will always tend to shine through, could become part of the pedagogy of explaining the complexity of ethical systems. A comparative discussion of the translations could sensitise students to the influence that an underlying value system could exercise on their translation choices.

Fourthly, descriptive translation studies could be used to allow students to experience a common humanity in solving translation problems. Reframing the use of comparative work in translation studies into a cooperative, communal search for solutions could go a long way towards solving the ideological tensions in Western ethics. In this instance, the notion of comparative texts could be utilised to provide students with an understanding of the way in which they are being translators by being part of the work of other translators.

Lastly, students from various cultural groups could be given ethically sensitive texts to translate (Floros 2011: 77-88). They could then be asked to write reflective essays on the influence of their (culturally determined) value system, followed by a classroom discussion. In this exercise, the focus on an ethics of cooperation in which the society of translators works towards the greater good of society is juxtaposed with an ethics of competition or resistance, in which the Other (the one who has a different ideology from my own) is viewed as competition. The pedagogical stance of the lecturer is of crucial importance in this instance. S/he would need to make an *a priori* choice as to founding his/her ethics in critical theory or in an alternative value such as *ubuntu*, or being open to a complex ethical reality.

4. Conclusion

I have argued that the move towards both accepting and advocating the agency role of translators and interpreters is calling for a fresh consideration of its underlying value system. Rather than prescribing a number of rules for professional conduct, I have advocated the value of exposing students to ethical issues by imbuing the curriculum with values that will assist students in the choices that they will inevitably make as translators. In line with current thought in translation studies, I have examined a local value system, that of the indigenous Basotho culture. Borrowing *ubuntu* as a value, I have made it concrete by suggesting that translation students need to be exposed to a meta-value such as *ubuntu* where individualistic views on agency are tempered or countered by the well-being of the community and a basic, inviolable commitment to considering difference and the voice of the other. The unique contribution of this point of view lies in the well-being of the community which should be an ethical consideration that balances the individual agency/activist roles that have been proposed in translation studies. I am thus proposing a more complex ethical position from which to consider agency in translation.

I have put forward merely one concept of a possible local value system to underpin translator education. More discussion is needed on the meta-values underpinning agency in translator education and action. Returning to my initial scenarios, if neither pure selfishness nor pure selling out to the market is ethically agreeable, which values should underlie translation choices? In my opinion, these should include the well-being of the community, and they should include something more than the promotion of one's own ideology and something more than an individualistic "insight" into what is right. The choices made should respect difference – even though they do not agree.

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