

“...waterlogged somewhere in mid-Atlantic.” Why American Readers Need Intralingual Translation but don’t often Get it [1]

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Abstract



The quotation in the title is a comment on presumed American reception difficulties of British author Sue Townsend’s bestseller *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole Aged 13 3/4* (1982). A number of American reviews of the book and a questionnaire I used with American readers amply demonstrated a (partial) breakdown in transatlantic communication. Does this mean that American readers of British texts where informal register and cultural embeddedness predominate need some form of intralingual translation? As ‘speakers of the same language’ (albeit a pluricentric one) they do not often get it, in consideration of the widely held belief in a common language and culture. Thus, when shared British text producer-receptor pre-established knowledge schemata can no longer be consistently activated, Americans may well be at a

disadvantage as compared with readers of interlingual translations.

Keywords : transatlantic communication, cultural embeddedness, intralingual translation, pluricentric language, knowledge schemata

Résumé

« ...bloqué au beau milieu de l'Atlantique ». Pourquoi les lecteurs américains ont besoin de traduction intralinguale et ne l'obtiennent que rarement

La citation contenue dans le titre de cet article illustre les difficultés de réception aux États-Unis du best-seller *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole Aged 13 3/4* (1982), de l'auteure britannique Sue Townsend. Certains comptes rendus de l'ouvrage, ainsi qu'un questionnaire que j'ai utilisé auprès des lecteurs américains, démontrent clairement la rupture (partielle) de la communication transatlantique. Est-ce à dire que les lecteurs américains de textes britanniques, au sein desquels le registre informel et les traces d'un enracinement culturel sont omniprésents, ont besoin d'une certaine forme de traduction intralinguale? En tant que « locuteurs d'une même langue » (bien qu'il s'agisse d'une langue pluricentrique), ils n'en bénéficient pas souvent, compte tenu de la croyance répandue en une langue unifiée et une culture commune. Ainsi, lorsque les lecteurs américains ne partagent pas les mêmes schémas pré-établis de connaissances que les producteurs et les récepteurs de textes britanniques, ils peuvent se trouver désavantagés par rapport aux lecteurs de traductions interlinguales.

Mots-clés : communication transatlantique, enracinement culturel, traduction intralinguale, langue pluricentrique, schémas cognitifs

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John Denton is Associate Professor of English language and translation at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Florence (Italy). He is also a member of the technical-scientific committee of the San Pellegrino Institute for Translators and Interpreters at Misano (Rimini). His research interests cover many aspects of translation studies: contrastive Italian-English text analysis, history of translation with special reference to the English Renaissance, religious translation, translation of popular literature and audiovisual translation. His publications cover the same fields and include: (co-author) *Translation Revisited - Ritorno alla traduzione* (Florence, 1985/1992) as well as contributions to *Translators through History/ Les traducteurs dans l'histoire* (Amsterdam/Ottawa, 1995), the *Encyclopedia of Literary Translation into English* (London, 2000) and *Übersetzung/ Translation/ Traduction. Ein internationales Handbuch zur Übersetzungsforschung* (Berlin, 2007). He is working on a book-length study of audiovisual translation.

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