

People behind the Scenes: Positioning Drama Translators in the Czech Theatrical System after 1989

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Deriving from the premises of descriptive and systemic approaches to translation (Even-Zohar 2010; Heilbron 2010; Toury 2012), this paper explores the drama/theatre translation history in the Czech Republic in the Post-Communist period. With reference to the sociologically driven studies that emphasize the need to study the human translators and their role in the translation process (Pym 2006; Wolf and Fukari 2007), the paper focuses on the role the drama translators play in the Czech theatrical system after 1989. The aim is to demonstrate – within the selected time period and selected domain – the validity of combining both quantitative and qualitative methods in researching translation history.

First, the results of the quantitative analysis of theatrical plays translated from English into Czech and staged in the Czech Republic between 1989 and 2009 are introduced. The data are derived from the DCS-CTI database (database of theatrical plays staged in the Czech Republic, administered by the Czech Theatre Institute) and further analysed from the thematic, temporal and territorial points of view. Second, as the focus of the study concerns primarily the “people behind the scenes” (drama translators, theatre agents, etc.), the results of the analysis of the DCS-CTI database are further combined with biographical information from the CLT database (Czech literary translation), and supported by other biographical resources.

The analysis attempts to prove that the position of drama translators within the Czech theatrical system may be recognized as a powerful one as they serve either as “gatekeepers” (Fischer and Jensen 2012) for letting the Anglophone theatrical plays and specific playwrights be introduced on the Czech stage, and/or as cultural mediators who introduce (or reintroduce) works by canonical authors to the Czech theatrical system.

Keywords: translation history, drama and theatre translation, position of the translator, Czech theatrical system

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