Introduction

There is a blatant discrepancy between the obvious importance of translation in the media and the limited attention it has so far been thought worthy of.

(Delabastita: 1990, 97)

This report, entitled “Translation in the South African Popular Media: A Case Study of You and Huisgenoot”, looks at policies and processes of translation in You and Huisgenoot, that is what is translated, why it is translated, how it is translated and who translates it. It also aims to determine whether or not the readerships of these two magazines have common interests.

In attempting to investigate this aim, the following questions are also be addressed:

- What are the objectives of translation in You and Huisgenoot?
- Do the following affect these processes and policies:
  - The magazines’ make-up
  - The magazines’ subject matter
  - The magazines’ readership
  - The magazines’ circulation
  - Whether or not the translator is acknowledged for his/her work
  - Specific criteria governing the selection of translators
  - Who holds the copyright for translated articles
  - Who accepts the translations
  - Whether or not the translations undergo any type of change between the handing over of the final translation and publication in the magazine.

The mass media plays a vital role in modern society as it provides us with entertainment, information and a link to the outside world – in other words, it shapes our lives. As Otto Hesse-Quack (cited in Delabastita: 1990, 98) puts it:
Mass Communication acts both as a ‘reflector’ and as a ‘moulder’ of the values, norms, stereotypes and attitudes of a given society. Translation acts like a ‘gatekeeper’ and, accordingly the shifts introduced by the dubbing process in the imported film material [one could also say that these shifts also occur in translation of written media material]¹ can be studied as evidence of the differences between respective symbolic environments [the ‘symbolic’ environment] of source and target culture.

Scholarly interest in translation in the media is relatively new as academics have not felt that research into translation in the media carries sufficient “cultural” and “social prestige” (Delabastita: 1990, 97). The limited writing on translation in the media has centred on film and script translation and examples of these are Delabastita (1990), Innovation in Translator and Interpreter Training (ITIT): 2000 and Gambier and Gottlieb’s (eds) *Multimedia Translation* (Listserv.linguistlist Website – accessed 2005-11-21). Instances of translation in the media that have also been explored are the translation of news media (Vuorinen: 1995), (Tsai: 2005), (Schäffner: 2005). Warwick University in the UK currently has a project underway which studies translation practices in news media organisations and thereby hopes to discover the role of the translator in the global circulation of news (Translation in the Global News: accessed 2005-03-16). The translation of advertising was briefly explored by Smith and Klein-Braley (1995) and the translation of magazines (*Time Magazine* for Latin America) was documented by Sprung and Vourvoulias-Bush (2000). Most written work is in the form of papers delivered at conferences or discussions at symposiums. There has been no writing on translation in the printed popular media (Bielsa Mialet: 2005) – that is the popular magazine as such - but it is possible to apply the issues discussed in Smith and Klein-Braley (1995)² to the translation of magazines such as *You* and *Huisgenoot*.

¹ - Both sets of square brackets are my own insertion.
² - In the translation of advertising material, it is essential to check that any “culturally dependent discourse” and “pragmatic features” are translated in such a way that is relevant to the target culture (Smith and Klein-Braley: 1995, 174), which is a practice that is also in place in translation at *You* and *Huisgenoot* (see chapter 2 of this report).
With regard to other material on translation in the media, every two years conferences are held in Berlin (Languages-Media Website, accessed 2005-11-21) to discuss translating for the audiovisual media, and courses are held at universities in the UK to instruct students on the intricacies of translating for the cinema and television (City University Website – accessed 2005-11-21). However, not all university media translation courses are directed at screen translation. Warwick University in the UK runs a course entitled “Translation and Mass Media Communication” (Warwick University Website – accessed 2005-11-17) where mass media communication is examined, understood and then the translation practices that have already been learnt are applied to the mass media.

You and Huisgenoot, to my knowledge, are the longest-running pair of translated magazines in South Africa, with Huisgenoot having started in 1916, and You appearing in 1987 (Naspers Website, accessed 2005-07-05) but there have been a significant number of magazines translated into Afrikaans in recent years, for example Woman’s Value (which becomes Dit in Afrikaans) and TV Plus, to name a few (De Wet: 2005). Growth in the area (as well as in the broader area of media translation) means that research on translation in the popular media provides valuable information to current and future translators in this branch of the media. In this way they will be made aware of current translation practices and will be able to improve on these practices where necessary. Research into translation in the popular media also has the advantage of informing students of translation of the work available in this industry and how best to approach translation in this particular field.

In many industries, translation is not a highly regarded profession as many feel that anyone who is able to speak a language or two will be able to translate - at You, translators are expected to perform other tasks such as writing articles (see chapter 2 of this report). These pseudo-translators are thought to perform an adequate job and their services are attractive to translation commissioners, as they do not charge as much as qualified translation professionals do. Venuti (1998: 1) gives his opinion on why translation, and thus translators, are marginalised:
… [translation is marginalised as] it occasions revelations that question the authority of dominant cultural values and institutions… Like every challenge to established reputations, it provokes their efforts at damage control, their various policing functions, all designed to shore up the questioned values and institutions by mystifying their uses of translation.

In the same work, Venuti states that translation is almost forgotten, ‘pushed under the carpet’, due to the fact that authorship of the source text is considered to be of primary importance and the translator merely serves the function of allowing an audience, who would not normally have had access to that text, to be able to understand its intended meaning. He states that translation practises an assimilation of the foreign text into the domestic culture (“domestication”) so that the resulting target text appears to have been originally written in the target language (Venuti: 1992, 1 - 13). The translator at *Huisgenoot* (the discussion throughout this study is limited to *Huisgenoot* as most material is produced in English and translated into Afrikaans) practises a policy of domestication in his translations (see chapter 2 of this report) and the translation process is invisible. However, this lack of visibility does not imply that the translated text is a “good translation”. In some cases, the fact of translation is hidden as many feel that a translated text is not as good as the original. *Huisgenoot* does acknowledge their translator on the masthead of the magazine but the contribution of the translator is not made conspicuous so that the formula that has made *You* and *Huisgenoot* so successful over the years is not disrupted (see chapter 2 of this report).

Although *Huisgenoot* is not guilty of blatant translator invisibility may or may not lead to the translator being overworked and not receiving adequate compensation, a good deal of the media industry has committed this ‘crime’. The American Translator’s Association (ATA) has been very active in trying to remedy the marginalisation of the translator. They held a conference in 1999 to discuss how the translator and translation are seen in the Popular Media (*Accurapid* Website, accessed 2004-10-07) and so far they have been highly successful in improving the plight of the translator, both in the media and elsewhere (Hendzel: accessed 2005-03-17).

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3 - My own insertion
In order to find out how translation is dealt with at *You* and *Huisgenoot*, this report is contextualised in terms of *Huisgenoot*’s history (which is dealt with in chapter 1) as well as the format that *Huisgenoot* took when it started (which is dealt with in chapter 2). Also in chapter 2, current translation practices at *You* and *Huisgenoot* are contextualised in terms of the format that these two magazines now have. Finally, chapter 3 deals with theoretical issues concerning translation, the media and ethics as these have a bearing on how translation is conducted in the popular media.

The first chapter of this report deals with the history of *Huisgenoot* from its inception in 1916 to 2005, including the history of South Africa around 1916, how *Huisgenoot* fitted into the Afrikaner Nationalist Plan, the reason why *You* magazine was started and other English publications that were present in South Africa at this time.

Chapter 2 deals with the current practices of translation at *You* and *Huisgenoot* and these practices are contextualised in terms of the past and current formats of the two magazines. It also considers the questions of what is translated, who translates this material, why this material is translated and how this material is translated. Two methods were employed to answer these questions. Interviews were conducted with the translator, sub-editor and assistant editor at *Huisgenoot* (see appendices A, B and C for the full text of the interviews) and a content analysis was conducted in order to test the answers given in the interviews.

The theory discussed forms the last chapter of this report and it deals mostly with the popular media, its functions, structures and how the media relates to society as translators translate according to the needs of the media – sometimes at the expense of other factors, which will be expanded upon. The translation theory discussed is that which I, as a scholar of translation studies, feel would be best suited to performing translation in the popular media as no formal translation theories are currently being applied. Ethics are discussed with media and translation theory as they guide how one undertakes a certain task and can be thought of as “rules” which dictate how issues should be treated in the media or how translation should be undertaken (Bokor: 1994, 99). Ethics also inform the decision of the translation commissioner of whether
or not to perpetuate translator invisibility. Thus, translator invisibility is discussed in conjunction with ethics.