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TRANSPOSITION OR ... LITERARY TRANSLATION ?

'Transposition' series resulting from the translation of Armenian nominalized infinitives into European languages.

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This paper was inspired by K.-R. Bausch's article "Die Transposition. Versuch einer neuen Klassifikation" (1968) and particularly his observation that the studies than available on interlinguistic transposition series (TS) had drawn exclusively on the major European languages, whose word class systems are on the whole congruent (Bausch : 280).

It is the aim of this paper to broaden our perception of translation procedures, and especially transposition, by including in the comparison a non-European language, Armenian[1], whose agglutinative properties set it apart from other languages in the Indo-European family. To this end, I will offer some empirical observations on the form and function of the Armenian nominalized infinitive and on its translation into European languages.

Such a study requires a brief introduction to the Armenian infinitive and a few comments on the pertinent structural properties of Armenian as a whole.

As anyone who has ever dealt with the translation of Armenian into a European language knows, the Armenian infinitive, shows a high degree of recurrence in all text types. Indeed, upon closer examination of the morphological and syntactical behaviour of the Armenian infinitive we find not only extensive similarities with infinitives in the major European languages[2] but also a number of striking differences. It is these differences which make the Armenian infinitive an interesting subject for comparison.

The most distinctive feature of the Armenian infinitive is the prevalence of its agglutinated forms. The Armenian infinitive in its unmarked form occurs much less frequently on text surfaces than do the marked forms bound to various semantic and syntactic functions.

The Armenian infinitive occurs :
a) as a verbal infinitive with the feature (+V) ;
b) as a nominal infinitive with the feature (+N).

Examples of the (+V) as well as (+N) infinitive stem forms are :
greld– (to write) and *kardal–* (to read) where *gr–* and *kard–* are the original verb stems, and *-el and* and *-al,* the most common infinitive endings in Armenian[3]

Most Armenian grammarians fail to distinguish clearly between these two classes (Menk 1970 : 38). The problem can perhaps be traced to the following formal features :
1. As we saw above, both (+V) and (+N) infinitives coincide in their bare stem forms as bases for agglutination.
2. All (+V) infinitives can have (+N) infinitive parallels.

3. The (+V) infinitive can, despite its verbal character, be declined by taking on case markers, where case is determined by the finite verb, with which the (+V) infinitive occurs.

Despite these deceptive correspondences, however we can establish that the Armenian (+N) infinitive (NI) differs from the (+V) infinitive (VI) in both function and form.

Firstly, unlike the VI, which can appear either in its citation form or agglutinated with at most, one flexion (the case marker), the NI as a deverbal noun can be flexed according to the complete nominal inflexion paradigm, i.e. it assumes the morphology of the noun by taking on right-adjuncted actualisation markers, case markers and plural markers. In its citation form, it is distinguished from the VI by the presence of the actualiser, specifically the definite postposed article -ə.

Compare :   Arm VI : *grel*   / NI : *g-rel-ə*
            E. (to write   / the writing)
(For other nouns, this actualiser operates on the syntactic level as the definite article, creating definite/indefinite oppositions as in *tun* / *tun- ɔ* (house, a house / the house)]

Secondly, most NI-s coexist with other roughly synonymous *nomina actionis* derived from the same verb and formed, as in many European languages, by the addition of suffixes.

Compare Armenian NI-s with the abstract nouns formed by means of the suffixes *-um, -munk', -ust*, etc. :

Arm. *hačaxel-ə* — E. the visiting / Arm. *hačaxum* — E. visit

Arm. *mtacel-ə* — E. the thinking / Arm. *mtacmunk'* — E. thought

Arm. *gal-ə* — E. the coming / Arm. *gal-ust* — E. arrival

Thirdly, and most importantly for this study, the Armenian NI can result from intralinguistic transformations of more extended sentence structures and be supported by them (Jahowkyan 1975). Indeed, Armenian is extremely versatile in transposing finite verbal forms into NI constructions : full sentences are readily transformed into compressed forms in which the synthetic nominalized infinitive (SNI) assumes a great deal of underlying sentence information.

Students of the Armenian language such as Abean (1912), Arakelyan (1968), Menk (1970) and Jahowkyan (1974) have described the nominalization rule for NI constructions as follows :

a) the nucleus of the original sentence, the finite verb, becomes a *nomen actionis* in the form of a NI ;

b) the subject of the base-sentence is transformed into a *genitivus subjectivus* ;

c) all objects, both direct and indirect, are retained in the cases governed by the verbal unit in its finite form.

For example : *underlying sentence ————— transformation*
Arm. Es k'ez namak em grum ———— K'ez namak *grel-s...*
(I to you letter am writing) (to you letter writing-mine)
E. I am writing a letter to you ———— (The fact) that I am writing to you a letter...
     The underlying sentence predication (*grum em*) is thus made to function as a noun (*grel-s*) in a new predication.

As early as 1912, Manuk Abeyan (p. 621) took issue with those grammarians who described what I have termed NI constructions as abbreviated sentences. He rightly pointed out that despite the identity of information conveyed by the supporting sentence, these constructions should be considered as sentence parts or segments to be used in new sentences with new predicates. Abeyan also suggests we attribute stylistic value to this transformation and term it 'transposition' or 'substitution'.

Thus, the Armenian language avails itself of an economical program of NI constructions resulting from the transposition of full sentences, and widely used in discourse as stylistic synonyms of subordinate analytic clauses.

Compare the Armenian *analytic* form used as a subordinate object clause :
Arm. *Bolorə giten,* vor es k'ez namak em grum.
    (Everybody knows that I to you letter am writing)
    and the Armenian *synthetic* form, an NI construction, used as an object in the main clause.
Arm. *Bolor giten* k'ez namak grels.
    (Everybody knows to you letter writing-mine.)
E.   Everybody knows *that I am writing a letter to you.*

In this paper I will focus on the structure of the Armenian SNI (resulting from what I call the 'Armenian transposition'), on the information that the SNI can bear and on its transposition into the European language E, F, G and R (which I will call 'European transposition')[4].

I will try to establish transposition series (TS) which reveal some *regular* source-target relationships between Armenian and these European languages, and which are versions of the following general formula :

    Armenian   SNI ————— European SC (subordinate clause)

where the SNI, presented in one complex sign corresponds to more than one sign in the European languages. Traditionally this would be defined as the "dilution" transposition type (Vinay-Darbelnet 1958).

The SNI, which can appear with one, two or three right-adjuncted flexions, have a most transparent, easily segmentable structure, despite their many layered morphology and high information density. Let us name these flexions *A*, *B*, and *C*, and segment them from right to left as :
    C) the actualiser (the definite article and/or the possessive article)
    B) the case marker
    A) the plural marker

In addition to these right-adjuncted flexions, which are all of nominal nature, the SNI can have a single left-adjuncted particle č- (which we will call Z) and which is of verbal origin. It is converted from such negativ verbal finite forms as :

Arm. *(Es)[5] čem grum* ——— *č-grel-s*
    (I not-am writing) ——— (not-writing-mine)
    E. I am not writing ——— (the fact) that I am not writing...

C — Actualiser

To return to the right-adjuncted particles, segment *C* as noted above is the actualiser of the SNI. Its position in this formation, as in all Armenian nouns, is final : it follows the ad-hoc stem, which in Armenian is polyvalent. In other words, it can appear after the bare infinitive stem (NI+C), after the infinitive stem + the plural marker A

(NI+A+C), after the infinitive stem + the case marker B (NI+B+C), and as well, after the infinitive stem both A and B (NI+A+B+C) (see below).

Jahowkyan (1968 : 200) divides actualisation in Armenian into two sub-categories : the postposed definite article and the postposed possessive article, which I will refer to as C_d and C_p, respectively. C_d is the postposed article -ə after consonants and -n after vowels occurring at the beginning of a subsequent word. As mentioned above, C_d is a minimal marker for the NI, where otherwise unmarked. It always stands after the NI, which follows a *genitivus subjectivus.* Compare :

Arm. *Annan grum ê*   ——— *Anna-i grel* ə
            (Anna's writing-the)
E. Anna is writing   ——— (The fact) that Anna is writing...

C_p is indicated by -s for the first person, -d for the second person and -ə or -n for the third person, where these flexions refer to the *genitivus subjectivus* corresponding to the personal pronouns of the finite verb forms in the underlying sentence.

Base Forms	Armenian Transposition	Eur. Transposition
(es) grum em	——— *grel-s*	——— (The fact) that I am writing...
(du) grum es	——— *grel-d*	——— (The fact) that you are writing...
(na) grum ê	———*grel-ə*[7]	——— (The fact) that he/she is writing...

Back-structuring to the Armenian base form reveals that in NI+C_p the subject has been transposed on the morphological level, i.e. from nominative to genitive :

Arm. *Anna-n grum ê* ——— *Anna-i grel-ə*
   nominative ——— *genitive*
Arm. Es *grum em* ——— *grel-s*

The European transposition re-establishes the nominative :

Anna-i grel-ə   ——— (The fact) that Anna is writing...
genitive   ——— *nominative*
grel-s   ——— (The fact) that I am writing...

As we see, the morphological changes
   (Arm. Nom. ——— Arm. Gen. ——— Eur. Nom.)
are part of both Armenian and European transposition.

As the examples show, formations with the possessive markers tend to express a factive meaning, i.e. they refer to an action as a fact[7]. That is why very often the translation of NI+C_p into European languages demands, besides a subordinate clause, a main clause with a cataphoric head word of the type :

   Compare : E : *the fact* that...
         F : *le fait* que...
         G : *die Tatsache,* dass...
         R : tot fakt, čto...

What we see here on the text surface is one complex sign (SNI) replaced by European subordinate clauses (SC) whose head words (HW) in the main clauses are part of the information given in the SNI.

Compare :

Arm. *č-grel-s*

> E. The fact that I am not writing...
> F : Le fait que je n'écris pas...
> G : Die Tatsache, dass ich nicht schreibe...
> R : Tot fakt, čto ne pi u...

We can here formalize :

$$\text{TS : Arm. SNI} = ((Z) + NI + C_p) \longrightarrow \text{Eur.} (\pm HW) + SC$$

As we see, extensive syntactical changes are also part of these transposition series[9].

B — Case Markers

The Armenian NI is declined in the singular according to declension type -u for nouns :

Nom. Acc.	grel-ə
Gen. Dat.	grel-u
Abl.	grel-uc'
Instr.	grel-ov
Loc.	grel-u meč

Segment *B* in the SNI has a fixed position after the ad-hoc NI stem and before C, for example :

$$NI + B + (C)$$
$$NI + A + (C)$$

That the SNI can be used in the nominative case to function as the subject of a sentence makes this an indisputable instance of nominalization, for of course the nominative is the only case designating the primary participant in a predication.

Compare the use of SNI as a subject : (with B_o)

Arm. Čkardals vat ê. (Nominalized from : (Es) čem kardum)

> E : It is too bad *that I do not read* (I didn't read, I shall not read)[9]
> F : Il est mauvais que je ne lise pas.
> G : Es ist schlecht, *dass ich nicht lese.*
> R : Ploxo, čęto ne cętaju.

Armenian parallel : Vat ê, *vor čem kardum.*

TS : Arm. $SNI + ((Z) + NI + B_o + C)$ ———— Eur : SC introduced by
that, dass, que and *to.*

Since the SNI functions in the sentence as a normal noun, it can appear not only in the unmarked forms of nom. and acc., but as well in all oblique case forms with regular case markers. The case is governed by pre-, but more often postposed distant connectors with adverbial meanings, which semantically correspond to subordinate conjunctions introducing the equivalent subordinate clauses in both Armenian and European languages (see below).

CASE	SNI	CONNECTOR	CS	CONJUNCTIONS
Genitive	g'relus	patčarov	causal	because/weil/ parce que/ potomu čto
Dative	g'relus	pes	temporal	as soon/sobald/ aussitôt que/ kak tol'ko
Ablative	greluc's	arač	temporal	before/bevor/ avant de do togo, kak
Instr.	g'relovs	handerc'	concess.	although/obwohl/ malgré que/ nesmotrja na to, čto

TS : Arm. SNI+(NI+B+Cp) + Connector Eur : SC Introduced by a subordinate conjunction

A — Plural Marker

Unlike the German nominalised infinitive (Ullmer-Ehrich 1977 : 135), the Armenian NI has a plural form widely used in everyday communication (despite its dialectal origin). The NI assumes the plural suffix -ner, which, with its variant -er, represents the most common plural suffix for Armenian nouns. It occurs immediately after the infinitive stem and in agglutination with segment C (definite or possessive article), discussed above. What information does this plural particle A convey within the SNI ? How is the construction of NI+A+C to be translated into a European language ?

Discussing the model *noun + plural suffix + possessive article* for nouns alone, Abeyan notes two entirely distinct meanings ; thus he interprets *partez-ner-s* to mean

    1. our garden and

    2. my gardens (Abeyan : 520)

Applying this rule to nominalised infinitives gives us two interpretations for SNI, for example, *grelners* :

In the first interpretation, the plurality refers not to the *noun*, as might be expected, but rather to the *pronoun* in the underlying sentence, indicating more than one participant in the given activity. For example, the sentence underlying *grelners* is *menk' grum enk'* "We are writing". What the plural suffix -ner gives us in this particular instance is material for the plural paradigm[10] corresponding to the singular forms discussed above under C (see above), where we had the following regularity :

TS : Arm. SNI=(NI+C$_p$) —— Eur : ($\pm$HW) SC with subjects in the singular

Thus the NI+C$_p$ paradigm is now complete in both the singular and the plural :

A. *grel-ner-s* nominalised *(menk) grum enk'*

                E. we are writing

A. *grel-ner-d* nominalised from *(duk') grum ek'*

                E. you are writing

A. *grel-ner-ə* nominalised from *(nrank') grum en*

                E. they are writing

E. Translation : the fact that we are writing, you are writing, they are writing.

TS : Arm. $SNI = (NI + A + C_p)$ ——— Eur : $(\pm HW)$ SC with subject in the plural

In the second interpretation of *grelners*, the plurality is taken to refer to the noun itself, as is the common rule[11].

Now, *grelners* in its second sense is : "the fact that I or we write repeatedly". Thus, the plural form is made to denote the iterative aspect. This example illustrates the parallelity observed by Jahowkyan between the category of number in the nominal system and the category of aspect in the verbal system. As Jahowkyan puts it, "the verbal aspect also includes information on the quantity of action" (p. 219)[12]. The SNI $(NI + A + C)$, given its verbal derivation, incorporates this parallelity in one synthetic form. In order to express this same iterativity, the European Languages would have to resort in lexical means in such iterative adverbs as :

E. repeatedly, over and over again, again and again, etc.

F. à plusieurs reprises, constamment, etc.

G. wiederholt, immer wieder, fortwährend, etc.

R : vse vremja, ne raz, postojanno, etc.

Thus Armenian-European transposition series for constructions with *g'relners* in the second meaning would take the following form :

TS : Arm. $SNI + (NI + A + C)$ ——— Eur. $(\pm HW)$ SC with subject in the singular + iterative adverb

Summarizing the maximum among of information that an Armenian SNI can bear we arrive at :
1. Actions/states specifically identifiable at the precise moment of utterance
2. Reference to the person (1., 2. person-participant, 3. person-non-participant in communication)
3. Reference to the number of agents (singular/plural)
4. Affirmation/negation of action/state
5. Aspect (iterativity)
6. Reference to the whole proposition as a 'fact'.

Concrete examples of Arm./Eur. correspondences exhibit that in European languages this information is conveyed almost[13] in full. The transposition seems to take place simultaneously on a number of linguistic levels : morphological, lexical, syntagmatical, syntactical and textual. This observation differs from the accepted understanding of transposition.

We have thus established that Armenian intralinguistically transforms many signs into a single complex sign via the transposition type known as concentration, while on the interlinguistic level, the European languages seem to work from one complex source sign to a number of target signs via the dilution transposition type. We can formulate these correspondences as follows :
a) Armenian transposition : analytic forms ã synthetic forms *concentration*
b) European transposition : synthetic forms ã to analytic forms *dilution*

I must however stress that the replacement of Armenian synthetic forms by analytic forms in the European languages as seen in *b)* can be defined as transposition only if we contrast the text surfaces alone. Analysis of the translation procedure itself gives us an entirely different picture.

Let us limit ourselves to the first two of the three translation phases (analysis, transfer and synthesis). During the analysis phase, where the focus is on the SL, the Ar-

menian synthetic forms are 'back-transformed' by the translator into their base analytic forms. This round-about way, which Nida describes as the translator's breaking the message down into its simplest and most transparent terms (Nida 1975 : 125), corresponds in our case to the denominalisation of the SNI into finite verbal forms. The second phase, i.e. the transfer the European TLs, does not therefore operate on the SL synthetic forms but actually on its underlying analytic forms (Wilss 1977 : 239-244). The translation procedure *per se* is nothing else than a literal translation in the sense given by Thome (1978).

The model of forward-transforming from subordinate clauses to SNI in Armenian, and back-transforming to subordinating clauses again for translation into the European languages is so very active that it can be shown to encompass almost the whole of Armenian syntax and the syntax of subordinate clauses in the European languages E, F, G and R. It was by no means our goal here, nor was it feasible to exhaust the list of such recurrent intralinguistic and interlinguistic transformation series. I believe such regular correspondences could not be registered in full without a thorough description of the syntax of the related languages from the standpoint of the same linguistic model.

The question now is, can we, on the basis of this material, establish for the science of translation, a clear-cut distinction between transposition and literary translation. If transposition remains oriented 'of necessity on word-class shifts, — not a very reliable criterion, by the way (Clas 1978 : 299) — the answer is no. For the dramatically different *concentration vs. dilution* transposition series which I have outlined are manifest only on the text surface, and as static correspondences are more properly relegated to contrastive linguistics. Whereas the science of translation studies translation procedures in their dynamic aspect — in our case, the interchanges we discover by back-transforming to deeper, simpler structures and thus revealing strikingly similar extended subordinate clause systems in the Armenian and European languages. And this places them in a literary translation relationship.

In my opinion, therefore, translation science should not so much describe and classify differences and correspondences between end-products as to examine deeper, regular language-pair oriented translation strategies.

SNI
(Armenian synthetic nominalized infinitive from *grel* : 'to write')

Z NI A B C Type	Example	Translation
a − + − − + $NI+C_p$	grel-s	(The fact) that I am writing
b − + − − + $NI+C_d$	(Annai) g'rel-ə	(The fact) that Anna is writing
a + + − − + $Z+NI+C_p$	č-grel-s	(The fact) that I am not writing
b + + − − + $Z+NI+C_d$	(Annai) č-grel-s	(The fact) that Anna is not writing
a − + − + + $NI+B_{Gen}+C_p$	grel-u-s (Žamanak)	While I was writing
b − + − + + $NI+B_{dat}+C_p$	grel-u-d (pes)	As soon as you finish writing

c $- + - + +$ NI$+$B$_{abl}+$C$_p$	grel-uc'-d (arac)	Before you write
d $- + - + +$ NI$+$B$_{instr}+$C$_p$	grel-ov-s (handerj)	Although I had written
e $+ + - + +$ Z$+$NI$+$B$_{gen}+$C$_p$	c-grel-u-d (masin)	About the fact that you did not write
a $- + + - +$ NI$+$A$+$C$_p$	grel-ner-s	1. (The fact) that we are writing 2. a) (The fact) that I write repeatedly 2. b) (The fact) that we write repeatedly

Notes

1. Note that of the two Armenian literary languages — the Eastern Armenian of Soviet Armenia and Iran, and the Western Armenian used throughout the diaspora, I have chosen the first.
2. Note that from the major European languages I have chosen for comparison English (E), French (F), German (G) and Russian (R).
3. Because Armenian is not a *lingua franca*, I will use a very limited set of examples.
4. Of all four European languages mentioned here, German is the only one which offers infinitive nouns.
    Compare : G. schreiben ($+$V) — das Schreiben ($+$N)
    lesen ($+$V) — das Lesen ($+$N)
    Russian, French and English do not have the converted infinitive as a noun, although English is very flexible in the nominalized rendering of underlying finite verbs to gerunds — action nominals, which often semantically come close to the Armenian nominalized infinitive. By no means, however, does the English gerund (to say nothing about the German noun infinitive) offer anything like full equivalences with the Armenian structures in questions. This consideration, as well as the total lack of contrastive work on such potential correspondences, prompted me to disregard the limited equivalences and to concentrate instead on the subordinate clause (SC) as the more comprehensive translation for the Armenian SNI in *all four* mentioned languages.
5. Note that in Armenian in finite verbal forms the personal pronoun is usually omitted.
6. As we see the third person possessive article for C$_p$ (-ə) coincides with the definite article C$_d$. On the other hand, as Jahowkyan points out (1969 : 112) the C$_p$ for the first and second persons (-s and -d) also have a determinative value. Obviously, C$_d$ and C$_p$ should be considered homonyms.
7. The same observation is made by D. Kilby (1984) with reference to the possessive variants of gerundive constructions in English.
8. A proper text-linguistic examination of any type of SNI is a topic that deserves separate study. Let me just point out here that the productivity of this model can only be appreciated within the macrotext from which these formations derive. No wonder, then, that the abundance of nominalised infinitives is not reflected in existing Armenian lexicons.
9. Note that the SNI does not express time. The tense of the finite forms in the translation is to be defined contextually.
10. Note that the possessive markers -s, -t, -o are otherwise restricted to the singular.
11. The homonymity of *grelners* (1) and *grelners* (2) is eliminated in context by predication agreement in singular or plural.
12. It must be said that whereas the model *grelners* (1) is applicable to all Armenian verbs, *grelners* (2) is restricted only to verbs expressing activities.

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