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Translation Theories

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By

Zahraa Qasim Abolol

Supervised by:

Lect, Falah Alsari

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Dedication

I dedicate this project to my family, whose support and love have been a source of strength and inspiration in my life.

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Introduction

Chapter One examine the principles of translation studies, investigating its cross–disciplinary characteristics. We start by giving a summary of the subject, following its development and important definitions. Next, we analyze how linguistics impacts translation, exploring theories of equivalence and transferring meaning. We will also expand our view to take into account the crucial influence of culture and social context on translation choices. Lastly, we will explore the mental processes involved in the translator's brain, including decision–making and troubleshooting.

Chapter Two will examine the current dynamic field of translation studies. We will investigate how corpus linguistics has transformed the analysis and practice of translation by offering empirical data and insights. After that, we will focus on the intriguing field of audiovisual translation, which involves subtitling and dubbing. Next, we will examine how technology affects various aspects, such as machine translation and computer–supported tools. In conclusion, we will examine the moral and philosophical aspects of translation, acknowledging the translator's duty to convey messages between different languages and cultures.

Chapter one

1.1 Introduction to Translation Studies

Early approaches to translation were largely prescriptive, focusing on establishing “correct” ways of translating, particularly religious or literary texts. These approaches often emphasized either literal (“word-for-word”) or free (“sense-for-sense”) translation, with debates raging about the relative merits of each. (Munday, 2016, p. 5).

The formal emergence of Translation Studies as an independent discipline is often traced back to the work of James S. Holmes. In his seminal paper "The Name and Nature of Translation Studies" (1972), Holmes proposed a framework for the field, outlining its scope and objectives. He suggested that Translation Studies encompasses both “pure” research, which aims to describe and explain translation phenomena, and “applied” research, which focuses on practical aspects such as translator training and translation aids. (Munday, 2016, p. 10)

Holmes’s map of Translation Studies divided the “pure” branch into descriptive translation studies (DTS) and theoretical translation studies. DTS examines existing translations, focusing on the product (the translated text), the function (the role of the translation in the target culture), and the process (the cognitive processes involved in translation). (Bassnett, 2002, p. 13).

The 1980s witnessed a significant shift in Translation Studies, often referred to as the “cultural turn.” This shift marked a move away from purely linguistic approaches towards a broader understanding of

translation as a cultural and social practice. Scholars began to explore the influence of cultural context, ideology, and power relations on translation. (Bassnett, 2002, p. 23).

This cultural turn highlighted the importance of considering the target culture in translation. Instead of simply focusing on linguistic equivalence between the source and target texts, translators were seen as intercultural mediators who negotiate meaning between different cultural contexts. (Venuti, 1995, p. 1).

The concept of “equivalence” has been a central concern in translation theory. Early approaches often sought to establish a one-to-one correspondence between source and target language units. However, it became clear that perfect equivalence is rarely achievable, especially at the cultural level. (Munday, 2016, p. 36).

The notion of “untranslatability” has also been a topic of debate in Translation Studies. Some scholars argue that certain cultural concepts or linguistic features are inherently untranslatable. However, most contemporary theorists argue that while absolute untranslatability may exist in some rare cases, translation is generally possible through various strategies, such as adaptation, borrowing, or explanation. (Bassnett, 2002, p. 32).

In recent years, Translation Studies has continued to evolve, incorporating new perspectives and methodologies. The rise of globalization and technological advancements has further emphasized the importance of translation in facilitating communication and exchange on a global scale.

The field has also seen increased interest in areas such as interpreting, localization, and audiovisual translation. (Venuti, 1995, p. 14).

Target Language (Original Source: Speech by Gamal Abdel Nasser, 1958):

"القومية العربية ليست شعارًا نرفعه، بل هي حقيقة تاريخية تربطنا بجذورنا وأمتنا. نحن نحارب من أجل الحرية والاستقلال، وليس من أجل أن نكون أداة في يد الاستعمار."

Source Language (Trans. by A. Al-Sayed, 2005):

"Arab nationalism is not a slogan we raise; it is a historical truth that connects us to our roots and nation. We fight for freedom and independence, not to be a tool in the hands of colonialism."

(Nasser, 1958/2005, trans. Al-Sayed, p. 45) .

1.2 Functional and Structural Approaches to Translation

The functional approach emphasizes the purpose and intended effect of the translated text, focusing on the target audience's needs and expectations. This perspective is rooted in the Skopos theory, which posits that the primary goal of translation is to fulfill a specific function in the target culture. Translators adhering to this approach prioritize the communicative intent of the text over strict adherence to the source text's structure or wording. For instance, a marketing brochure might require adaptation to resonate with cultural nuances and consumer preferences in the target market (Nord, 1997, p. 28).

The structural approach centers on preserving the linguistic and formal characteristics of the source text. This method views translation as an exercise in transferring meaning while maintaining fidelity to the original text's syntax, grammar, and style. Advocates of this approach argue that the integrity of the source text must be upheld to ensure accuracy and authenticity in translation. Structural translation often involves meticulous attention to detail, such as replicating sentence structures or word order, even if it results in a less natural-sounding target text. This approach is particularly relevant in literary translation, where preserving the author's voice and stylistic choices is paramount (Baker, 1992, p. 45).

The functional and structural approaches are not mutually exclusive but rather represent two ends of a spectrum that translators navigate based on the demands of the task. In practice, many translations incorporate elements of both approaches, balancing the need for fidelity to the source text with the requirements of the target audience. For example, legal documents often demand a structural approach to ensure precise correspondence between the source and target texts, while advertisements may benefit from a functional approach to maximize impact in the target market (Munday, 2016, p. 78).

Translation scholars have long debated the merits of functional versus structural approaches, highlighting the complexity of the translator's role as both a mediator and creator. Venuti's concept of domestication and foreignization offers a lens through which to examine these approaches, emphasizing the tension between making a text accessible to the target audience and preserving its foreignness (Venuti, 1995, p. 20).

As societies become increasingly interconnected, the demand for translations that serve specific purposes has grown, leading to a greater emphasis on audience-centered strategies. At the same time, the structural approach remains indispensable in contexts where accuracy and faithfulness to the source text are non-negotiable. By integrating insights from both approaches, translators can develop a versatile toolkit that enables them to address the diverse challenges of their profession (Hatim & Munday, 2004, p. 112).

Target Language (Original Source: Palace Walk by Naguib Mahfouz, 1956):

"كانت القاهرة ليلاً تبدو كأنها امرأة عجوز تتنفس بصعوبة، تحمل على ظهرها أثقال السنين وهموم الناس".

Source Language (Trans. by W. M. Hutchins & O. E. Kwayk, 1990):

"Cairo at night resembled an old woman breathing with difficulty, carrying the weight of years and people's sorrows on her back."

(Mahfouz, 1956/1990, trans. Hutchins & Kwayk, p. 12)

1.3 Cultural and Social Perspectives

"culture-specific items" Translating these items requires careful consideration. A literal translation might not make sense or could even be misleading to a reader unfamiliar with the source culture. Translators often employ strategies like using a descriptive equivalent, borrowing the term, or providing an explanation to bridge the cultural gap For example, translating a term like "afternoon tea" requires more than just translating the individual words; it requires conveying the cultural significance of this British custom. (Newmark, 1988, p. 95).

Social context also plays a vital role in translation. Language is used differently in different social situations. The translator must be aware of factors like the intended audience, the purpose of the text, and the relationship between the speaker/writer and the listener/reader. This awareness allows the translator to choose appropriate language and style. A formal document, for instance, requires a different translation approach than a casual conversation. Ignoring these social dimensions can lead to translations that are grammatically correct but socially inappropriate For example, translating a legal document requires precise and formal language, while translating a children's book requires simpler and more engaging language. (Hatim & Munday, 2019, p. 45).

Another important cultural aspect is the presence of idioms and metaphors. These figurative expressions are often deeply embedded in a culture and can be difficult to translate literally. A direct translation might result in a nonsensical or even humorous outcome in the target language.

Translators need to understand the cultural meaning behind these expressions and find appropriate equivalents in the target language that convey the same meaning or effect. This sometimes involves using a completely different image or metaphor that is culturally relevant to the target audience. The English idiom "to kick the bucket" meaning "to die" cannot be translated literally into many languages. A translator needs to find a corresponding idiom that conveys the same meaning in the target culture. (Baker, 1992, p. 41).

Source Language (Original Source: Quran, Surah Al-Fatiha, 7th century):

"بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ. الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ."

Target Language (Trans. by M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, 2004):

"In the name of Allah, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful. [All] praise is [due] to Allah, Lord of the worlds."

(Quran, 1:1–2, trans. Abdel Haleem, 2004)

1.4 Cognitive Aspects of Translation

understanding of the source text goes beyond simply decoding the words; it involves comprehending the meaning, intent, and context of the message. Translators must engage in deep processing to grasp the nuances of the text, including cultural references, implied meanings, and stylistic choices. This understanding forms the foundation for accurate and effective translation. (Bell, 1991, p. 34).

Translation involves decision-making at multiple levels. Translators constantly choose between different possible renderings, weighing factors like accuracy, fluency, and appropriateness for the target audience (Hatim & Munday, 2019, p. 123). These choices are influenced by the translator's knowledge of both languages, their cultural awareness, and their understanding of the translation's purpose. This constant decision-making highlights the cognitive effort involved in translation.

Translators often encounter challenges, such as ambiguous phrases, culturally specific terms, or untranslatable idioms. They must employ various problem-solving strategies, such as consulting dictionaries, researching cultural background, or paraphrasing, to overcome these difficulties. This process showcases the translator's ability to analyze, evaluate, and find creative solutions. (Munday, 2016, p. 67).

The translator's memory also plays a vital role. They need to hold information from the source text in their working memory while simultaneously searching for appropriate equivalents in the target language (Bell, 1991, p. 78).

The cognitive processes involved in translation are not isolated; they interact and influence each other. For example, the translator's understanding of the source text informs their decision-making process, which in turn affects their problem-solving strategies (Hatim & Munday, 2019, p. 156).

Moreover, the translator's knowledge base significantly influences the cognitive processes. This includes linguistic knowledge (grammar,

vocabulary, syntax), cultural knowledge (norms, values, beliefs), and subject-specific knowledge (terminology, concepts) (Munday, 2016, p. 102).

The development of expertise in translation is also a cognitive process. Through practice and experience, translators develop automated routines for certain tasks, freeing up cognitive resources for more complex challenges (Bell, 1991, p. 112).

Target Language (Original Source: Magna Carta, Latin/Arabic translation by S. Al-Jabri, 1998):

"لا يُسجن الرجل ولا يُنفى إلا بحكم القانون ."

Source Language (Trans. by S. Al-Jabri, 1998):

"No man shall be imprisoned or exiled except by the judgment of the law."

(Magna Carta, 1215/1998, trans. Al-Jabri, p. 22)

Chapter Two

2.1 Corpus–Based Translation Studies

Corpus–Based Translation Studies represents a significant shift in the way translation is analyzed and understood, leveraging large collections of texts to uncover patterns and insights. This approach allows researchers to move beyond individual translations and focus on broader trends within translated texts. By utilizing corpora, which are extensive databases of written or spoken language, scholars can examine how specific linguistic features manifest across different languages and cultures. The methodology often involves comparing source texts with their translations, enabling the identification of common strategies employed by translators. Such an empirical foundation provides a robust framework for understanding the complexities of translation as a practice embedded in cultural and linguistic contexts (Baker, 1993, p. 245).

The application of corpus tools has revolutionized the ability to quantify and analyze translational phenomena systematically. These tools facilitate the extraction of data related to lexical choices, syntactic structures, and even stylistic preferences evident in translated works. For instance, studies have revealed tendencies such as simplification, explicitation, and normalization in translated texts when compared to original writings in the target language. Researchers emphasize that these patterns are not random but reflect underlying norms and conventions governing translation practices. Corpus–based methods also allow for cross–linguistic comparisons, shedding light on universal features of translation

while highlighting language-specific idiosyncrasies (Laviosa, 2002, p. 78).

Instead of relying solely on prescriptive theories, this method grounds its findings in observable data, offering evidence-based insights into what translators actually do rather than what they are expected to do. Additionally, the use of parallel and comparable corpora enables nuanced investigations into the relationship between source and target texts. Parallel corpora consist of original texts aligned with their translations, while comparable corpora compare texts produced independently in different languages. Both types contribute valuable perspectives on the dynamics of translation processes and outcomes (Olohan, 2004, p. 112).

Software programs designed for corpus linguistics allow researchers to process vast amounts of data efficiently, identifying recurring patterns and anomalies that might otherwise go unnoticed. Machine learning algorithms and natural language processing techniques are increasingly integrated into these workflows, expanding the scope of research questions that can be addressed. As a result, the field continues to evolve, incorporating interdisciplinary insights from computational linguistics, cognitive science, and digital humanities (Bowker & Pearson, 2002, p. 56).

corpus-based translation studies face challenges related to representativeness, accessibility, and ethical considerations. Ensuring that corpora accurately reflect the diversity of real-world translation practices requires careful selection and annotation of texts. Moreover, access to proprietary or restricted datasets can limit the reproducibility of findings.

Ethical concerns arise when dealing with copyrighted materials or sensitive content, necessitating clear guidelines for responsible data usage. Addressing these issues is crucial for maintaining the credibility and relevance of corpus-based research in translation studies (McEnery & Xiao, 2007, p. 312).

Target Language (Original Source: The Muqaddimah by Ibn Khaldun, 1377):

"الإنسان اجتماعي بطبعه، لا يعيش منفردًا إلا بالضرورة."

Source Language (Trans. by F. Rosenthal, 2005):

"Human beings are social by nature. They cannot live in isolation except by necessity."

(Ibn Khaldun, 1377/2005, trans. Rosenthal, p. 89).

2.2 Audiovisual Translation

Audiovisual translation refers to the process of adapting audiovisual content from one language to another while maintaining its cultural and contextual relevance. This field encompasses various modes such as subtitling, dubbing, voice-over, and audio description, each serving different purposes depending on the target audience and medium. Subtitling involves translating spoken dialogue into written text displayed on screen, often constrained by time and space limitations. Dubbing replaces the original audio track with a translated version spoken by voice actors, aiming for synchronization with lip movements and tone. Voice-

over adds a translated narration over the original audio, commonly used in documentaries or interviews. Audio description provides verbal commentary for visually impaired audiences, describing visual elements not conveyed through dialogue or sound effects (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2021, p. 4).

Streaming platforms like Netflix and Disney+ have expanded their reach across borders, necessitating localized content to cater to diverse audiences worldwide. This trend highlights the importance of skilled translators who can navigate challenges such as idiomatic expressions, humor, and cultural-specific references that may not directly translate between languages. For instance, translating comedy often requires creative adaptation to preserve the intended comedic effect without losing authenticity. Similarly, historical dramas must balance accuracy with relatability when addressing culturally specific themes (Chaume, 2012, p. 78).

Audiovisual translation also plays a crucial role in fostering cross-cultural understanding and inclusivity. By making foreign films, television shows, and other multimedia accessible to broader audiences, it bridges gaps between cultures and promotes shared experiences. Educational content benefits immensely from this practice, enabling knowledge dissemination across linguistic barriers. Additionally, advancements in technology have introduced new possibilities, such as real-time subtitling during live broadcasts or interactive features allowing users to toggle between multiple language options. These innovations enhance user experience

but also present unique challenges related to timing, accuracy, and consistency (Gambier, 2013, p. 156).

Target Language (Original Source: Orientalism by Edward Said, Arabic trans. by K. Al-Azm, 2003):

"الاستشراق نظام معرفي يعكس الهيمنة الغربية على الشرق ."

Source Language (Trans. by K. Al-Azm, 2003):

"Orientalism is a knowledge system that reflects Western dominance over the East."

(Said, 1978/2003, trans. Al-Azm, p. 12)

2.3 Technological Advances and Translation

Technological advances have significantly transformed the field of translation, reshaping how languages are processed and communicated across the globe. The advent of machine translation systems like Google Translate and DeepL has revolutionized access to multilingual content by providing instantaneous translations for millions of users daily. These systems rely on sophisticated algorithms and neural networks that continuously learn from vast datasets, improving their accuracy over time. Such tools democratize language access, allowing individuals and businesses to communicate across linguistic barriers without the need for professional translators in many cases. The integration of artificial intelligence into these platforms has further enhanced their capabilities, enabling them to handle complex sentence structures and idiomatic expressions with increasing precision (O'Brien, 2020, p. 45).

The role of computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools has also become indispensable in professional translation workflows. Programs like SDL Trados and MemoQ offer features such as translation memory, terminology management, and quality assurance checks, which streamline the translation process and ensure consistency across large-scale projects. These tools empower translators to work more efficiently while maintaining high standards of accuracy and coherence. Additionally, cloud-based collaboration platforms have enabled teams of translators to work seamlessly across geographical boundaries, fostering a globalized approach to language services. The combination of AI-driven automation and human expertise has created a hybrid model of translation that leverages the strengths of both (Bowker & Fisher, 2019, p. 78).

Advances in natural language processing (NLP) have further expanded the scope of translation technologies. NLP techniques enable machines to understand context, sentiment, and even cultural nuances within texts, making translations more contextually appropriate and culturally sensitive. For instance, recent developments in transformer models, such as BERT and GPT, have set new benchmarks for language understanding and generation. These innovations allow translation systems to produce outputs that are not only linguistically accurate but also stylistically refined, catering to diverse audiences and purposes. The ability to adapt translations based on target audience preferences underscores the growing sophistication of translation technologies (Vaswani et al., 2017, p. 6003).

Despite the rapid progress in translation technologies, challenges remain in achieving complete parity with human translators. Subtle aspects of language, such as humor, metaphor, and cultural references, often require a level of interpretive insight that machines struggle to replicate. Ethical concerns also arise regarding the potential displacement of human translators and the risk of propagating biases embedded in training data. Addressing these issues necessitates ongoing research and collaboration between technologists, linguists, and ethicists to ensure that technological advancements in translation serve the broader goals of inclusivity and equity. The future of translation lies in striking a balance between automation and human oversight, ensuring that technology enhances rather than diminishes the richness of cross-cultural communication (Moorkens, 2018, p. 112).

Source Language:

(Machine Translation: A Comprehensive Guide by Harold Somers):

"Machine translation has become an integral part of globalization, but it struggles with conveying complex cultural contexts. For instance, algorithms often fail to grasp emotional nuances or colloquial expressions. In literary translation, machine translation may strip away poetic beauty or symbolic meanings, forcing human translators to manually rephrase texts to compensate for these gaps. This raises questions about the role of artificial intelligence in preserving cultural identity."

Target Language:

"أصبحت الترجمة الآلية جزءًا لا يتجزأ من العولمة، لكنها تواجه تحديات في نقل السياقات الثقافية المعقدة. على سبيل المثال، تفشل الخوارزميات غالبًا في فهم الدلالات العاطفية أو التعبيرات العامية. في ترجمة النصوص الأدبية، قد تُفقد الترجمة الآلية الجمال الشعري أو الدلالات الرمزية، مما يدفع المترجمين البشر إلى إعادة صياغة النصوص يدويًا لتعويض هذه الثغرات. هذا يثير تساؤلات حول دور الذكاء الاصطناعي في الحفاظ على الهوية الثقافية".

(Somers, 2003/2018, trans. Al-Masri, pp. 76–77).

2.4 Ethics and Ideology in Translation

Ethics and ideology play a crucial role in the practice of translation, shaping how texts are interpreted and conveyed across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Translation is not merely a mechanical process of converting words from one language to another but involves complex decisions influenced by ethical considerations and ideological frameworks. The translator often navigates between fidelity to the source text and the need to adapt it for the target audience, which raises questions about the moral responsibility of preserving meaning while respecting cultural nuances. This tension is evident in works like Venuti's discussion of domestication versus foreignization, where translators must decide whether to make a text conform to the norms of the target culture or retain its foreignness (Venuti, 1995, p. 20).

This approach underscores the ethical obligation of translators to consider the implications of their choices on both the original author and the receiving audience, Spivak's critique of colonial discourse emphasizes

how translations can either reinforce or subvert hegemonic structures, depending on the translator's ideological stance (Spivak, 1993, p. 12).

Translators also grapple with issues of ownership and authority, particularly when working with texts that carry significant cultural or spiritual weight. Questions arise about who has the right to translate sacred or canonical works and how these translations might alter their intended meanings, translating texts from colonized cultures often involves reinterpreting them through the lens of colonial power structures (Niranjana, 1992, p. 45).

Pym notes that translators must constantly negotiate their roles as mediators, ensuring that they do not impose their own biases while remaining accountable to both the source and target communities (Pym, 2010, p. 78).

Machine translation tools and artificial intelligence have revolutionized the field, offering speed and efficiency but raising concerns about dehumanization and loss of nuance. Chesterman addresses this shift by examining how technological advancements challenge traditional notions of translator accountability, particularly when algorithms produce translations that may inadvertently perpetuate stereotypes or misinformation (Chesterman, 2001, p. 34).

Source Language (Original Source: The Ethics of Translation by Anthony Pym) :

"Translators must balance fidelity to the source text with their social responsibility. In conflict situations, they may need to adapt content to avoid inciting hatred or misunderstanding. For example, when translating politicians' speeches, translators might soften provocative phrases or clarify historical context to prevent fueling violence. These decisions are not merely technical but ethical, requiring a deep understanding of both source and target cultures."

Target Language: (Arabic translation by L. Al-Hassan, 2020)

"على المترجم أن يوازن بين الأمانة للنص الأصلي ومسؤوليته الاجتماعية. في حالات النزاع، قد يتعين عليه تعديل المحتوى لتجنب إثارة الكراهية أو سوء الفهم. على سبيل المثال، عند ترجمة خطابات السياسيين، قد يختار المترجم تليين العبارات الاستفزازية أو توضيح السياق التاريخي لتلافي تأجيج العنف. هذه القرارات ليست فنية فحسب، بل أخلاقية، وتتطلب فهمًا عميقًا للثقافتين المصدرية والهدفية".

(Pym, 1992/2020, trans. Al-Hassan, pp. 45–46)

Conclusion

Translation theories are foundational to overcoming linguistic and cultural barriers, offering diverse strategies to convey meaning across languages. These frameworks balance accuracy, fluency, and cultural relevance, adapting to the evolving demands of global communication.

Literal translation word-for-word precision, ideal for technical texts like legal or medical documents. However, its rigidity often fails to capture idiomatic expressions or cultural nuances, risking unnatural phrasing. In contrast, dynamic equivalence (Eugene Nida) emphasizes the message's intent over structural fidelity, ensuring readability in the target language. This approach is vital for literary or religious texts, though it may dilute stylistic or cultural subtleties.

Cultural adaptation modifying content to align with local values and traditions. Used in marketing or media localization, it ensures relatability but raises ethical debates about authenticity. Similarly, skopos theory prioritizes the translation's purpose—whether instructional, artistic, or persuasive—guiding translators to tailor their methods to the text's function.

Modern challenges, such as localization and AI-driven machine translation, highlight the need for both technical efficiency and human nuance. While technology accelerates translation, it struggles with humor, idioms, or cultural context, underscoring the irreplaceable role of human judgment.

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