Translation Theories

Translation is a vehicle through which ideas and pieces of information are disseminated from one culture to the audience of another culture. In this way it enables the exchange of ideas among a diversity of people from different cultures. It is therefore an intellectual exercise that aims at transmitting diverse and necessary information to a multiplicity of people from different cultures. It involves detaching meaning from an original text, called the source text and transferring it into another text or the target text.

Scholars in the field of translation studies have attempted to provide the translator with tools and procedures, which can enable him to understand the process of translation. In fact, in the latter half of the 20th century an impressive body of research emerged in what is now known as translation studies, offering fresh and vital contributions to its theory and practice. This has brought about a more extensive range of approaches to the theory and practice of translation and provides a sound ground for studying the process of translation.

Translation theory can help the translator to analyse and interpret a source text and the context of its production, think about the audience for whom the translation is intended (its reception) and consider a range of possible strategies for the translation. Furthermore, translation theory makes the translator more *aware* translator, in the sense of thinking more carefully about the different options for a given translation and the effect that choosing a particular option may have.

1. **Linguistic Theories:**

   The period mid-20th century was seen as a golden age for linguistic equivalence in translation theory. The most notable of these scholars was the American Bible translator Eugene Nida, whose thoughts proved extremely influential among secular theorists as well as biblical scholars. Others working in translation theory from a linguistic perspective included Roman Jakobson and J. C. Catford.

a) **Roman Jakobson**:

As a literary theorist and linguist, Roman Jakobson (1896–1982) was already well known in the field of comparative literature. He was one of the founders of the influential Prague School where he mixed with a group of scholars working in areas from phonology and syntax to literary theory, all across a range of European languages (Snell-Hornby 2006:20). In 1959, he wrote an essay titled *On Linguistic Aspects of Translation* in which he introduced three notions called intralingual translation, interlingual translation and intersemiotic translation, defined as follows:

1*. Intralingual translation* or *rewording* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language.

2. *Interlingual translation* or *translation proper* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language.

3. *Intersemiotic translation* or *transmutation* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems. (Jakobson 1959/2004:139,)The second of these, interlingual translation, represents the traditional, historic understanding of translation, while the first approximates to the paraphrase or imitation occasionally discussed by 17th and 18th century theorists. But it was the third aspect, intersemiotic translation, which was the true innovation, with its concept of a semiotic process that went beyond words. As Snell-Hornby has pointed out, "What is significant for Translation Studies, as assessed from today's perspective, is however that he goes beyond language in the verbal sense and does not look merely across languages" (2006:21).

b) **Eugene Nida:**

The American linguist Eugene Albert Nida (1914–2011) is recognised as the most influential theorist in 20th century Bible Translation, he is best known for the

concept of dynamic equivalence, later renamed 'functional equivalence. Although he began publishing on translation in the 1940s, his work on equivalence came to

prominence only in the 1960s when he published full-scale, technical descriptions of his studies in two books, *Toward a Science of Translating* (1964) and *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (1969). This period, the 1960s and 1970s, has come to be described as "The age of equivalence" (Pym 2004:44) and Nida's work was well suited to the prevailing thought of the time. He differentiated between two types of equivalence: *formal and dynamic*. Formal equivalence (later 'formal correspondence') attempts to reproduce source text surface structure as closely as possible, whereas the preferred dynamic equivalence attempts to reproduce the same reader response among target audience readers as that found among source text readers (Nida and Taber 1969:24). Although the term *equivalence* is imprecisely used, it generally refers to the nature of the linguistic relationship between a source text and a target text that enables the target text to be recognised as a translation. Today, equivalence enjoys much less popularity than in the 1960s and 1970s; for instance, Pym notes that equivalence had seen a "fading afterlife into the 1990s" (Pym 2004:44).

c) **Catford***:*

He went further than Nida and others in adopting ideas and terminology from linguistics, insisting that, "the theory of translation is essentially a theory of applied linguistics" (Catford 1965:19). This sentiment appears to be somewhat restrictive for contemporary translation studies, where a more interdisciplinary approach might be preferred. Catford's definition of translation itself was not revolutionary ("a process of substituting a   text in one language for a text in another", 1965:1), but he introduced a number of definitions that divided and subdivided translation into various criteria. The most important of these was the

idea of 'grammatical rank', where he added to the concept of equivalence by introducing the following two categories:

1. **Rank-bound translation**: here, each word or morpheme in the source text receives an equivalent target text word or morpheme, enabling precise exchange.

2. **Unbounded translation**: here, equivalence does not take place at the same level or rank but exchange can take place at the sentence, clause or other level.

Catford also introduced a distinction between formal correspondence9 and textual equivalence. A 'formal correspondent' is "any TL category (unit, class, structure) which can be said to occupy as nearly as possible the same place in the economy of the TL as the SL given category occupied in the SL" (Catford 1965:27). Since in the process of translating, a target language may not have a formal correspondent, a "shift" (1965:73) may take place whereby equivalence occurs at a more general level. The translator thus uses a 'textual equivalent' defined as, "any target language text or portion of text which is observed on a particular occasion to be equivalent of a given SL text or portion of text" (Catford 1965:27).

Catford's work represented a detailed attempt to apply linguistic studies to translation theory in a systematic fashion. It is striking, though, that contemporary writers almost unanimously dismissed his ideas, mostly because the theory was too prescriptive, too one dimensional (in that it operated mainly at the sentence level), and characteristic of the growing interest in machine translation in the 1960s which tended to oversimplify translation by ignoring cultural factors (Bassnett 2002:40; Joshua 2008:5). Even by the 980s, less than 20 years after it

was published, one reviewer dismissed his book as "by and large of historical academic interest" (Henry 1984:157, cited in Munday 2008:61).

2. Functional and cultural theories:

The 'cultural turn' refers to a movement across the social sciences to incorporate matters of socio-cultural convention, history and context in conjunction with the development of cultural studies. Among translation scholars, it is understood as a change from a formalist and linguistic approach to one that emphasises extra-textual factors and cross-cultural interaction, with the 'turn' usually dated as occurring around the early 1980s (Snell-Hornby 2006:47).

This cultural turn saw a rejection of theories based on linguistic equivalence in favour of emphases on non-linguistic matters and cross-cultural interaction, so that translation theory, once seen as a sub-discipline of applied linguistics or literature studies, became identified with a new interdisciplinary approach. As Theo Hermans has commented, "Translation used to be regarded primarily in terms of relations between texts, or between language systems. Today it is increasingly seen as a complex transaction taking place in a communicative, sociocultural context. This requires that we bring the translator as a social being fully into the picture." (Hermans 1996:26).

In translation studies, the main emphasis of the cultural turn has been its placing of the target culture as central in the minds of the translator. This would become a distinguishing development in the study of translation in the 1980s, promoted by theorists such as Bassnett and Lefevere (1990). The link between the cultural turn,

functionalism and consequences for source-orientated equivalence has been noted by Hanson:

What is emphasised by the Cultural Turn is the cultural setting of the target text, and especially the function of the translated text in this new setting. This is the central question put forward by the Skopos Theory … And it entails serious implications for

the seemingly inevitable, but at the same time highly problematic, notion of equivalence. (Jansen 2002:124).

Yet this does not mean that all translation scholars have moved beyond equivalence and the applied linguistics of the 1960s and 1970s. Although accepting that the equivalence paradigms is today an "unpopular view" (Pym 2010:6).

3. **Target Text Approaches:**

In her examination of important developments in the study of translation, Mary Snell Hornby nominates the 1980s as a period of "ground-breaking contributions, as seen from today's perspective, which led to a fundamental change of paradigm" (2008:47). The radical developments are best summarised in the following statement by Edwin Gentzler:

The two most important shifts in theoretical developments in translation theory over the past two decades have been (1) the shift from source-text oriented theories to target-text oriented theories and (2) the shift to include cultural factors as well as linguistic elements in the translation training models. Those advocating functionalist approaches have been pioneers in both areas. (2001:70)

By "source-text oriented theories" Gentzler is referring to the linguistics-dominated notions of equivalence popular from the mid-20th century onwards, particularly Nida's theories propounded in the 1960s and 1970s; indeed, he devotes substantial pages to criticising the concept of dynamic equivalence. By "target-text oriented theories"

Gentzler is speaking about 'functionalist' approaches such as skopos theory. The "shift to include cultural factors" refers to the growing interdisciplinary approach of translation scholars mentioned above, who called for a shift of emphasis towards one that considered broader issues of social and cultural context.

Skopos Theory:

Developed by Hans Vermeer in the late 1970s, skopos theory is the best known of the functionalist approaches. Indeed, the term skopos theory is sometimes used as a synonym for functionalism itself, but strictly speaking, it is one of various examples of functionalism. Although their work can be traced back to 1978, it was not until 1984 that Reiss and Vermeer published their *Grundlegung einer allgemeinen Translations theory* (Foundations of a General Theory of Translation). Although skopos theory was subject to subsequent fine tuning, the basic tenets were formulated in 1978 and the single overriding rule was that a target text is determined by its function (Reiss and Vermeer 1984:119).

To functionalists, what makes a translated text 'good' is whether it is fit for purpose; in the words of Christiane Nord, "the ends justify the means" (1997:29). The *primary* aim of the translator is to fashion a target text that is functional in the target audience community: in terms of importance, achieving equivalence with the source text is therefore a lower priority. Famously, Vermeer described the source text as having been "dethroned". The consequence of this is that there is no single 'correct' translation: multiple purposes (skopoi) exist for translation. Since there are a potentially infinite number of target audiences for whom translation could be undertaken, there are also a potentially infinite number of skopoi.

If a text is to be functional for a certain person or group of persons, it has to be tailored to their needs and expectations. An "elastic" text intended to fit all receivers

and all sorts of purposes is bound to be equally unfit for any of them, and a specific purpose is best achieved by a text specifically designed for this occasion (Nord 2000:195).

Snell-Hornby observes, "This approach relativizes both text and translation: the one and only perfect translation does not exist, any translation is dependent on its skopos and its situation" (2006:52). Nevertheless it is important that for a particular

translation effort, the skopos should be clearly identified (Vermeer 1996:7), yet even when this is absent, "there invariably exists an unspoken brief that professional translators will be able to infer from experience" (Gentzler 2001:73).

The skopos is determined by what Vermeer and Reiss called a 'commissioner' or 'initiator' often depicted as the sponsor of a translation effort but perhaps more pragmatically identified as the translators themselves. Whatever the case, the skopos must be determined by the perceived requirements and expectations of the target audience. Since a translator may fail to fulfil the intended skopos, it is possible that the recipient perceives a different purpose from that intended by the translator.

REFERENCES:

- ✓ *Eugene Nida: Toward a Science of Translating* **(1964)**
- ✓ *Eugene Nida: The Theory and Practice of Translation* **(1969)**
- ✓ *Roman Jakobson: On Linguistic Aspects of Translation*
- ✓ **Catford: A linguistic Theory of translation.**
- ✓ **Snell Hornby: The Turn of Translation Studies(2006)**
- ✓ **Edwin Gentzler: Contemporary Translation Studies.**
- ✓ **Reiss and Vermeer: Towards a General Theory of Translation Action. Skopos Theory Explained. Katharina Reiss and Hans J. Vermeer. Translated by Christian Nord.**

Literary   Translation:

Translation plays an important role in increasing awareness and understanding among diverse cultures and nations. Literary translations in particular help these different cultures reach a compromise. The increasing interest in the literature of other languages has required a more studious regard for the problems of literary translation. In addition, translation plays an important role in bridging the gaps between the different cultures and nations. Literary translations in particular help these different nations reach a universal culture on a common ground"(Bahaa-eddin Abulhassan Hassan,1).

Belhaag (1997) summarizes the characteristics of literary translations:

- expressive

- Connotative

The Pragmatic Approach:

- Symbolic

- focusing on both form and content

- Subjective

- allowing multiple interpretation

- Timeless and universal

- using special devices to „heighten" communicative effect

- Tendency to deviate from the language norms.

Furthermore, literary translation should inevitably reflect the aesthetic value of the source text, i.e. the imaginative, intellectual and intuitive writing of the author. In fact, literary translation must reflect all the literary features of the source text such as sound effects, morphophonemic selection of words, figures of speech etc. (Riffaterre 1992). By the same token, Gutt (2010) stresses that in translating a literary work one should preserve the style of the original text: "...it is not surprising that theorists concerned with literary translation have paid

considerable attention to the preservation of the stylistic properties of texts". In addition, Anani defines it crudely as "the translation of the different genres of literature including poetry narrative and drama. Like other types of non-literary translation, it involves transforming a verbal code into a different code, but unlike them, it is concerned not only in the referential meaning of words but also

in their significance and effects" (1997, ch. 1).

Most writers and translation theorists have not provided definitions for literary translation in clear terms. However, some classic writers define it through the literary translator"s tasks and characteristics, what is translated (i.e. the spirit rather than the sense), the method of translation (i.e. free translation (or Dryden"s "paraphrase"), not literal translation), or the function of the translation (that is, to educate readers in foreign literatures and cultures, increase the expressivity of meaning of one"s own language, etc.) (see Schulte et al., 1992).

Others, like Landers and Newmark, define literary translation in terms of problems and main characteristics of literary language. Newmark singles out five main features of literary language that have to be rendered by the translator: (1) figurativeness and allegory; (2) onomatopoeic nature (that sound is as important as meaning); (3) rhythm; (4) each word counts; and (5) full of polysemous words and collocations. (1998, pp. 102-103).

Main problems of literary translation:
Most of problems encountered in literary translation are due to the features of the literary text. In fact, Landers (2001) defines literary translation in terms of uniqueness and creativity, describing it as "the most demanding type of translation".

Literary Language:
There is almost a consensus nowadays on taking up *the language of literature* as a major, and to some, sole criterion for defining literature

and distinguishing between what is literature and what is not. Literary language has been assigned a special character since antiquity. It has been considered as sublime to, and distinctive from all other types of language, written or spoken, due to the special use of language that is deviant, or "estranged" from ordinary, everyday, non-literary language. It breaks the common norms of language, including graphological, stylistic, grammatical, lexical, semantic and phonological norms.

Style:

The study of style is essential in order to understand the different choices a translator makes as there are stylistic decisions involved in the process of transferring meaning from one language to another. For Leech and Short, style is an important factor in the literary genre and ―stylistic knowledge is a prerequisite for literary translation because stylistics is a study that explains ―the relation between language and artistic function‖ (2009: 13).

Boase-Beier states that style is central to the construction and interpretation of any text (2006: 1). Also, a translator who possesses stylistic knowledge will produce a better rendering than one without. She states that ―a translator who is stylistically aware is likely to be able more fully to appreciate both stylistic effects and the state of mind or view that informs them. Moreover, stylistic knowledge is a prerequisite for literary translation because stylistics is a study that explains ―the relation between language and artistic function (Leech and Short 2009: 13). My analysis accords with Boase-Beier as well as with Leech and Short. Stylistic knowledge helps the translator better understand the style of the source text author choose particular words, phrases or sentence structures in the target language, shaping the target text in the process (Boase Beier 2006: 54).

Methods of Literary Translation:

Source-Oriented vs. Target-Oriented Approach:
There are two main types of translation approaches. One focuses on the source text while the other emphasizes the creation of a target text that sounds natural in the target language. Traditionally, these approaches have been known as word-for-word translation vs. sense-for sense translation or source-oriented translation vs. target-oriented translation. Both source-oriented and target oriented approaches have their advocates. While some assert that a translation is mainly a copy of the original and that it should replicate the tone and linguistic structures of the source text, others maintain that the main function of a translation is to convey the information contained by the source text to the target readership so that it is fully accessible to them. Over the years, different scholars have described these two approaches using different oppositions: formal equivalence vs. dynamic equivalence by Eugene Nida; semantic translation vs. communicative translation by Peter Newmark, who claims that —the central problem of translating has always been whether to translate literally or freely (1993: 45); foreignization vs. domestication by Lawrence Venuti, among others.

The traditional approach to style in translation has mostly been sourceoriented. It was widely believed that translation is a secondary activity. Hence, the translator should not have a style of their own and they should replicate the style of the target text as precisely as possible. Recent studies have not been as rigid and some scholars have even argued for the recognition of the translator‚s style, namely Mona Baker in 2000 and more recently Gabriela Saldanha in 2011, among others. Saldanha herself claims that, although scholars like Malmkjær and Boase-Beier see the style of translation as influenced by the subjective interpretation of the translator, the focus remains clearly source oriented, i.e. on the source text style and its reproduction (Saldanha 2011:100).

On the other hand, a clearly target-oriented perspective is adopted by Baker, who focuses on translator style, understood as —a kind of thumb-print that is expressed in a range of linguistic – as well as non-linguistic – features, including open interventions, the translators „choice of what to translate, their consistent use of specific strategies, and especially their characteristic use of language, their —individual profile of linguistic habits, compared to other translators (2000: 245). According to Baker, in the process of recreation, the translator„s labour is obvious through their selection and organization of words, their long or short sentence structures, or their plain or oratory way of speech (2000: 245), thus leaving their —fingerprints (244) on the target text. All such labours —deserve praise and appreciation‖ (2000: 245). As for Saldanha, she places herself at the target-oriented end of the debate with Baker and she also firmly believes that for translation to be considered as a literary activity, the concept of style is very important (2011:100).

The Literary Translator:

Like any professional, the literary translator has to command certain capabilities and qualifications.

(1) Due respect for the profession with a view to faithfulness and moral commitment to translating texts from one language into another. No deliberate additions, alterations, deletions or obliterations are exercised on the original unless justified on solid social, religious, cultural, moral, ideological or other grounds.

(2) Accuracy of rendering in the sense that everything in a text should be included or taken into account in translation, but not necessarily translated verbatim.

(3) Mastery of the two languages concerned in the translation, the SL and the TL, regarding the basics of their grammars (word order, major sentence and clause types,

parsing, tenses, etc.), vocabularies. (Word combinations/collocations, technical terms of different fields and types, main figures of rhetoric, etc.), sound features (alliteration, assonance, consonance, rhyme, rhythm, and preferably a general idea about scansion, meter and foot).

(4) Competence in *tone*. Landers defines tone as "the overall feeling conveyed by an utterance, a passage, or an entire work, including both conscious and unconscious resonance" (2 001, p. 69). That is why he regards it as one of the essential capabilities of the translator (ibid.: 8). Further, Anani assigns a whole chapter for "tone" in literary translation, defining it in terms of an attitude of irony, humor, seriousness, overstatement, understatement, etc. of the SLT author, which are prone to change from one age to another, and one language to another (1997, ch. 5).

(5) Good knowledge of the different types of style of both languages: grammatical, lexical and phonological features of style, in addition to the stylistic scales of formality (i.e. frozen formal l classical, formal/standard, informal, colloquial, slang, etc.). They can be sometimes essential to meaning in the various types of text.

(6) Good command of the differences between the conventions of the two languages involved, regarding the use, or non-use of formal/standard, old or modern, or colloquial, or mixed in both languages, and either language. In the case of English and Arabic, for example, while the conventions of English allow for a large use and borrowing from colloquial dialects, written Arabic conventions do not, and are still resistant to colloquialisms of all types. Written Arabic is standard only, but it is usually Modern Arabic described as MSA (Modern Standard Arabic), and occasionally old Arabic, or CA (Classical Arabic). Old English, on the other hand, has disappeared

from today‟s formal/standard

written dialect. It might be the case that, as Landers suggests, "the half-life of a translation…is from 30-40 years; every 30 years (or 40 or 50…) the translation loses half its vitality, its freshness, to communicate to the reader in a contemporary voice" (2001, p. 10).

(7) Good knowledge of the SL culture, not necessarily to the same extent of the translator‟s knowledge of his/her native culture, for, unlike bilingualism, biculturalism is far-fetched.

(8) Good awareness of the world around us, and the knowledge shared by all humans about the latest changes and developments with respect to science and technology, cultures, social, political, religious, moral and ideological values and attitudes.

(9) Due respect for the TL readership‟s religious, moral, social, cultural and ideological sensitivities and values. The translator is not an insensitive dolorous duck, but a sensitive human being who has feelings, values, sensitivities, biases, prejudices, attitudes and points of view.

(10) Specialism in translation (a higher degree), or at least a considerable proportion of background knowledge about *translation theory* (basic principles, guidelines, SL text, writer and translator‟s intentions, writer and translator‟s attitudes, SL and TL norms, problems and procedures/solutions) and, more importantly, the main *translation methods* (literal/semantic, free/communicative, pragmatic, non-pragmatic, creative, non-creative/ordinary, poetic/non-poetic, literary/ordinary, etc.): what, when and how.

(11) The translator‟s personal possession of the best and latest monolingual and bilingual dictionaries and references, alongside

online facilities in this regard. One or two references never make a good translator.

In addition to these capabilities, the literary translator has yet further faculties to be equipped with:

(1) Creativity, or inventiveness.

(2) Special liking of literature, what Landers calls "sense of dedication" to literature. The literary translator should be first and foremost infatuated with literature.

(3) Psychological aptitude to live the TL literary translation with respect not only to events, characters and the plot, but also, and more importantly, to every word, syntactic structure and prominent sound feature. In short, the literary translator should have personal aptness to lend himself/herself wholeheartedly to construct a matching literary text in the TL through translation.

(4) Command of conventions of reading, understanding and interpreting literature.

(5) Good knowledge of literary genres and sub-genres in both languages.

(6) Considerable competence in figures of rhetoric (metaphors/allegory, similes, puns, metonyms, symbolism, irony, etc.) and special fixed phrases (e.g. idioms, proverbs, adages, etc.) in both languages.

(7) Awareness of the basics of sound/prosodic features in both languages, especially alliteration, rhyme, rhythm, meter, foot, beat, scansion and other essentials of prosody.

(8) Flexibility and open-mindedness.

(9) Background knowledge of some famous works of literature in both languages.

(10) Working with a back-of-the-neck idea that literature is symbolic,

representing something else in human life.