

TRANSLATION STUDIES: FROM PAST TO FUTURE

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Translation was originally studied as a linguistic phenomenon, as a process of sense transfer via linguistic encoding, and therefore, translation studies were opened as a linguistic integrated discipline. Efforts were made to cultivate a “science of translation”, or a linguistic theory of translation, whose purpose was to provide an accurate description of the equivalence relations between signs and combinations of signs in the source language and the language of translation. After many periods prevailed by a recurring and, according to the philosopher Steiner, ‘sterile’ debate over ‘literal’, ‘free’ and ‘faithful’ translation, in the 1950s and 1960s more comprehensive approaches to the study of translation appeared and they were linguistically focused. During the following years, as the professors of English and Translation Studies Ulrych and Bolleteiri Bosinelli showed, the ties between translation and linguistics got even stronger, thanks to the evolution within linguistics of new paradigms which investigated “[...] language as a social phenomenon that takes place within specific cultural context”, like discourse analysis, text linguistics sociolinguistics and pragmatics [1].

By the early 1960s radical changes had taken place in the area of translation studies (TS), with the increasing acceptance of the study of linguistics and stylistics within literary criticism that had led to developments in critical methodology and also with the reconsideration of the work of the Russian Formalist Circle. The most important developments in translation studies in the 20th century deduced from the groundwork done by groups in Russia in the 1920s and later by the Prague Linguistic Circle and its disciples. Since 1965, global progress has been made in translation studies. The work of scholars in the Netherlands, Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, Germany and the United States seem to point at the formation of clearly marked schools of translation studies, which place their accent on different aspects of the entire vast area. In addition, translation specialists have retrieved a great deal from work in marginally related areas. Arising in the 1970s, progress in the 1980s and prosperity in the 1990s TS has evolved incredibly in the past 20 years and is now in the process of the synthesized process of unification. TS has progressively emerged into a discipline in its own right, or rather, as said, into a ‘multidisciplinary, which draws on a wide spectrum of other discipline and consequently could be efficiently described as “a house of many rooms”’.

One of the first moves towards interdisciplinarity was explored by Snell-Hornsby’s “integrated approach”. The method was meant to bridge the

gap between linguistic and literary-oriented methods, proposing a model which would embrace the entire range of language and draw ideas from other disciplines, such as psychology, ethnology, philosophy, as well as cultural history, literary studies, sociocultural studies and, for specialized translation, the study of the specific domain involved (medical, legal, etc.). In Europe translation was seen for many decades either as simple linguistic transcoding (studied as a sub-discipline of applied linguistics, and only navigating on specialized translation), or as a literary practice (considered as a branch of comparative literature and only concerned with the translation of canonical works of art). The translation theorist Andre Lefevere suggested that the name “translation studies” should be accepted for the discipline that concerns itself with the issues raised by the production and description of translation. The Routledge Encyclopedia of translation studies determines ‘Translation Studies’ as “[...] the academic discipline which concerns itself with the study of translation”. As Baker says, although originally aiming at literary translation, TS “[...] is now understood to refer to the academic discipline concerned with the study of translation at large, in particular literary and nonliterary translation”. The Iraqi-British translator Hatim says about TS as the discipline “[...] which concerns itself with the theory and practice of translation”. While attempting to determine the purpose of translation studies, Lefever offered that its goal was to produce an inclusive theory which can also be used as a useful tool for the production of translations, and whilst some may question the peculiarity of this position, his clear aspiration to link theory with practice is considered undisputed. The necessity for systematic study of translation arises directly from the issues faced during the actual translation process and it is as important for those working in the area to get their practical experience to theoretical polemic, as it is for growing theoretical penetrating to be put to use in the translation of texts. To set the theory from the practice, to set the scholar against the practitioner as has happened in other disciplines would be sad indeed.

The practical aspect of translation without a theoretical base tends towards a cleanly subjective exercise. As Professor Colin Yallop reminds us, one of Halliday’s basic contributions to linguistics is his eagerness to build bridges between linguistic theory and professional practice. “When dealing with translation, we firmly believe that this need is even stronger. Knowledge in two languages, the source one and the aim one, is needless to say not sufficient to become a wise and experienced translator”.

Translation theory is topical to translators’ issues, and not only for academic goals, but also to the practice of a professional translator, since it can “[...] offer a set of conceptual tools [that] can be thought of as aids for mental problemsolving” [2]. Theory and practice are inseparably connected, and

are not in conflict. Understanding of the processes can only help in the production and, a philosophy of translation without a link to practice is simply an abstraction.

Furthermore, as the translation theorist Bassnett mentions, although translation studies cover such a wide field, it can be tentatively divided into four total areas of interest, each with degree of rediscovery. Two are product-oriented, in that the accent is on the functional aspect of the TL (target language) texts in relation to the SL (source language) text, and two of them are process-oriented, in that the accent is on analyzing what actually takes place during translation. The first direction includes the History of Translation and is an individual part of literary history. The type of work involved in this field includes investigation of the concepts of translation at different times, the critical response to translations, the practical processes of publishing translations, the role and function of translation in a given period, the methodological elaboration of translation and, by far the most common type of study, analysis of the work of individual translators. The second direction, translation in the TL culture, expends the work on single texts or authors and involves work on the influence of a text, author or genre, on the absorption of the norms of the translated text into the TL system and on the principles of selection operating within that system. The third direction, translation and linguistics, involves studies which place their accent on the comparative agreement of linguistic elements between the SL and the TL text with consideration to phonemic, morphemic, lexical, syntagmatic and syntactic levels. Into this category come studies of the issues of linguistic equivalence of language-bound meaning of linguistic untranslatability of reproduction translation, etc. and also studies of the translation problems of non-literary texts [3]. The fourth category, freely called translation and poetics, involves the whole field of literary translation, in theory and practice. Studies may be general or genre-specific including research of the particular problems of translating poetry, theatre texts and the related problem of translation for the cinema, whether dubbing or sub-titling. Under this category also arrive studies of the poetics of individual translators and comparisons between them, studies of the problems of articulation a poetics, and studies of the interrelationship between SL and TL texts and author-translator-reader.

Ulrych and Bosinelli expounded the burgeoning discipline of TS as follows: the term 'multidiscipline' is the most capable in describing the present state of translation studies since it emphasizes both its independent nature and its plurality of perspectives.

Translation studies can in fact be browsed as 'metadiscipline' that is able to locate various dis-

ciplines with their concrete theoretical and methodological frameworks and thus to conceptualize field focusing, for instance, on linguistic aspects of translation, cultural studies aspects, literary aspects and so on. Their consideration of TS is akin to the Iraqi-British translators Hatim's view that "[t]ranslating is a multi-faceted activity, and there is room for a diversity of perspectives' According to opinion Snell-Hornby [...] Translation studies reveals new perspectives from which other disciplines – or more especially the world around – might well benefit. It is concerned, not with languages, objects, or cultures as such, but with communication across different cultures, which does not only consist of the sum of all factors includes. And what is not yet appropriately realized is how translation (studies) could help us communicate better – a deficit that sometimes has catastrophic results.

Besides, nowadays translation research has started to take a different way, which is more automatic. The invention of the internet, together with the new technological developments in communication and digital materials, has increased cultural exchanges between nations and individuals. This leads translators to look for ways to cope with these changes and to look for more practical techniques that enable them to translate more and waste less [5]. Screen translation translates all kinds of TV programs, movies, series, etc. This field bases of translation software programs; composed of two methods, dubbing and subtitling, audiovisual translation starts a changing era in the domain of translation.

In conclusion it can be said that translation has a very rich history, it has been the subject of lots of research and conflicts between theorists, each of which approached it according to his own viewpoint and field of research.

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