

## THE POLITICS OF CONTEMPORARY TRANSLATION THEORY

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*У статті розглянуто сучасний стан розвитку теорії перекладу, подано опис філологічної, лінгвістичної та соціолінгвістичної теорії перекладу, проаналізовано праці видатних вчених-перекладазнавців.*

*Modern state of translation theory development is studied, philological, linguistic and sociolinguistic theories of translation are described, and works of prominent scholars are analyzed.*

The purposes of translation are so diverse, the texts so different, and the receptors so varied that one can readily understand how and why many distinct formulations of principles and practices of translation have been proposed. All who have written seriously on translating agree that translators should know both the source and the receptor languages, should be familiar with the subject matter, and should have some facility of expression in the receptor language. Beyond these basic requirements there is little agreement on what constitutes legitimate translating and how the science of linguistics, or even the knowledge of language structures, can and should be applied. For a better understanding of the causes of this lack of agreement and in order to construct a framework for the analysis and evaluation of the various theories of translation, it is essential to review the relations between the source, the message, and the receptors in the communication process, and also the function of the medium of communication which is employed.

In discussing the various theories of translation it is important to recognize that these theories are seldom developed in a comprehensive form. In most cases the theories are far more implicit than explicit. Nevertheless, the largely implicit formulations must be treated as theories of translation, because the stated principles or rules for translating rest on important underlying considerations and reflect corresponding theories.

Because translation is an activity involving language, there is a sense in which any and all theories of translation are linguistic. There are, however, three quite different ways in which the principles and procedures of translation have been formulated and defended. These diverse approaches to the problems of translating are essentially matters of different perspectives or foci. If the focus of attention is on particular texts (and especially if these are of a so-called literary quality), the underlying theory of translation is generally best regarded as philological. If, however, the focus of attention is on the correspondences in language form and content, that is, on the structural differences between the source and receptor languages, the corresponding theory may be regarded as linguistic. Finally, if the focus is on translation as a part of an actual communication process, the most appropriate designation for the related theories is sociolinguistic. In actual practice, of course, there is a considerable degree of overlap both in the formulation of principles and in the corresponding recommendations on procedures.

### The Philological Theories of Translation

The philological theories of translation have been concerned primarily with so-called literary texts. These are regarded as being sufficiently important to warrant special study and as having a sufficiently complex history (both in their development and in their subsequent interpretation) to require attention to the circumstances of production and transmission, if the form and content are to be adequately understood and appreciated, and if their translation is to be satisfactorily carried out.

The philological theories of translation are, of course, based on a philological approach to literary analysis. They simply go one step further; in place of treating the form in which the text was first composed, they deal with corresponding structures in the source and receptor languages and attempt to evaluate their equivalences.

In view of the significance of literary texts for the philological theories of translation, one can readily understand how and why problems of equivalence of literary genres between source and receptor languages become so important. Moreover the mere existence of similar genres in the source and receptor languages is not the primary consideration. The more important issue is the functional correspondence of such genres. Philological theories of translation are normally concerned with all kinds of stylistic features and rhetorical devices. A number of scholars are increasingly interested in many of the larger structural units of discourse, in terms of hierarchical structures, dependency relations, and semantic interpretations.

In certain respects the philological approach to translation may also be said to deal with deep structures. For example, it is not enough for the philologist to describe the principal episodes of a narrative. It is more important to understand these in terms of their underlying structures. In another sense philological analysis must deal with the deep structure of symbolic levels.

In the first half of the XX century practically all attempts to formulate theories of translation were based essentially on philological comparisons of texts. Traditional lists of rules for translators are all based on fundamentally philological viewpoints. Belloc's insightful treatment of translation represents this philological approach [2], and the volume *Quality in Translation* [4], containing the papers of the Third International Congress of the International Federation of Translators, is likewise essentially philological in outlook. Even the book *On Translation* [3] is largely philological in orientation. Fedorov protested strongly against the domination of philology and its methodology in translation theory, with the result that many people began to recognize the necessity of a more linguistic orientation for translation theory and practice [8; 9]. Fedorov's proposals, however, did not please the linguists, for in general they felt that he had not gone far enough, nor did his suggestions find favor with the philologists, for they insisted that he had departed too radically from proven tradition. Levy's work [6](1969) marks a decisive step in the direction of introducing sound linguistic principles into a theory of literary translating.

#### Linguistic Theories of Translation

Linguistic theories of translation are based on a comparison of the linguistic structures of source and receptor texts rather than on a comparison of literary genres and stylistic features. The development of these theories can be attributed to two principal factors: (1) the application of the rapidly expanding science of linguistics to several different areas of intellectual activity, for example, language learning, cognitive anthropology, semiotics, and the teaching of skills in translating and interpreting, and (2) machine translation.

The fact that linguists have been able to provide a number of important insights into the nature of meaning (an area traditionally reserved for philosophers and logicians) has helped to stimulate interest in a linguistic approach to translational Problems. The works of Hjelmlev, Greimas, Pottier (1970), and Coseriu, have been especially important in this respect [13; 11; 22: 609-613; 6: 53-63; 7: 2-18].

Machine translating has provided an especially important motivation for basing translation procedures on linguistic analyses and for a rigorous description of the related structures of source and receptor languages. It was quite impossible to instruct a machine how to translate even simple texts unless the programming was based on detailed linguistic analyses and descriptions. The work of Yngve [31: 20-22; 32: 59-65; 33: 25-41], Tosh [27: 96-116], and Oettinger [21: 240-267] are all clearly linguistic in orientation, and the later summaries of successes and failures, for example, Wilss [30: 33-47] and Gross [12: 40-48], only make sense in terms of the linguistic framework in which attempts at machine translation were undertaken.

The principal differences between various linguistic theories of translation lie in the extent to which the focus is on surface structures or corresponding deep structures. Theories based on surface-structure comparisons involve the use of more-or-less elaborate sets of rules for matching roughly corresponding structures. All such rules may be regarded as formulations of interlingual paraphrase, without attempting to relate such paraphrases to particular types of deep structure.

Contrastive linguistics, as represented, for example, in *Papers in Contrastive Linguistics*, edited by Nickel [18], has a number of obviously important implications for any theories of translation based on surface structures, although contrastive linguistics is also concerned with deep-structure contrasts.

Saumjan [24] and Apresjan [1] strongly advocate a so-called two-level approach to language structure, which is similar to the distinctions between surface and deep structures, except for the fact that they would eliminate any ordering in the deep structure. The advantage of such an approach would conceivably be greater formal abstraction and thus a more neutral semantic base, which could then serve as an important theoretical link for both mechanical and nonmechanical translation.

A number of linguists have discussed the relevance of deep structure for translation theory. Vernay [28: 105-116] has indicated the significance of a completely abstract semantic deep struc-

ture that could theoretically consist of a set of semantic universal and could thus presumably reduce to a minimum the problems of transfer. Walmsley [29: 185-199] has advocated the use of transformational theory in the teaching of translation techniques, and Scharlau [25: 48-63] has illustrated the ways in which a transformational approach to anaphoric usage can have considerable relevance for translation. Rabbe's treatment of deep structures in terms of contrastive linguistics has emphasized the application of generative-transformational grammar to translation problems [23: 59-74].

The concept of underlying structures is especially important for both the theory and the practice of translation. The reasons for this are (1) on the kernel or subkernel levels the syntactic structures of various languages are much more alike (basic underlying sentence structures can probably be reduced to ten or so, whereas the variety of surface structures is relatively numerous); (2) one can more readily identify the semantic structures of subsurface levels and thus be in a position to determine more accurately the extent of equivalence and the need for supplementation or redistribution of semantic components; and (3) on the deeper levels of structure one can more easily determine the symbolic relations and their hermeneutical implications. It is, of course, the surface structures that must point to the deep-structure relations, but it is the analysis of the deep structure that greatly facilitates a comparison of structures and relations.

The standard theory of generative-transformational grammar has tended to neglect the semantics of lexical structures or to apply to lexical structures the same structural methods as were found to be applicable to syntactic units. The binary tree-diagrams of Katz and Fodor [15: 170-210] have simply not proven adequate. The most serviceable device for describing the semantic structures of lexical units is a matrix, but, theoretically, one should have a multidimensional matrix in order to describe all the componential features and their interrelations.

Some of the inadequacies of the standard theory have been supplemented by generative semanticists, but although the emphasis on the primacy of the semantic structure is important, the techniques for dealing with the relating deep and surface structures are rather amorphous. Rather than moving directly from deep structures to surface structures, it seems better to recognize the validity of several subsurface levels, and for the translator the kernel or near-kernel level is a highly structural feature.

For the translator both the standard theory and the generative semanticist theory involve certain important limitations. In the first place, synonymy is defined too often only in terms of propositional equivalence. But the fact that two expressions propositionally equivalent does not mean that they are synonymous in meaning. Propositional logic is simply not adequate to deal with a number of aspects of meaning, especially connotations, focus, emphasis, and foregrounding-backgrounding.

In the second place, the standard theory and generative semantics depend too much on the ideal speaker and hearer. There are no such ideal individuals, and the translator must be concerned with the various types of limitations actual speakers and hearers have.

In the third place, transformationalists tend to deal with linguistic facts apart from actual contexts. Many of the early discussions about grammaticality were in error because phrases extracted from real contexts. Language cannot be discussed as though verbal communication occurs in a cultural vacuum.

#### Sociolinguistic Theories of Translation

Dissatisfaction with a strictly linguistic approach to translation is evidenced in Nida's [19] relating translation to communication theory, rather than to a specific linguistic theory. The use of a communication model resulted from obvious practical anthropological interests and reflected a concern for the role of the receptors in the translation process. Because of the crucial role of the decoders of any discourse, the term target and the phrase target language were dropped in favor of receptor and receptor language.

Catford's theory of translation [5], although primarily linguistic and related to surface structure equivalences, nevertheless moves in the direction of the context of communication in its emphasis on differences of dialects and registers.

Sociolinguistic theories of translation should not be understood as neglecting linguistic structure. Rather, they lift the linguistic structures to a higher level of relevance, where these can be

viewed in terms of their function in communication. The translator can and must be aware of such factors as irony, hyperbole, and litotes, which are frequently not signaled by linguistic signs but by incongruence with the communication context. That is to say, the interpretation of certain expressions depends on the extralinguistic context of the utterance.

The sociolinguistic approach to translation also makes it possible to incorporate the results of philological research. The linguist as such is not concerned with identifying the author, audience, and circumstances of a particular utterance. All that concerns him as a linguist is the fact that a particular utterance is a satisfactory reflection of the speaker's language competence. The sociolinguist is much concerned about the author, the historical backgrounds of the text, the circumstances involved in producing the text, and the history of the interpretation of the text, for all these elements figure in the social setting of the communication. This does not mean that a linguist may not also be a sociolinguist, nor that a linguist cannot also be a philologist, but the methods and framework of analysis differ, and these divergent viewpoints must be kept in mind if one is to undertake a thorough analysis of the various aspects of any communication act.

In terms of a sociolinguistic theory of translation, the translator is compelled to take language performance as serious as language competence. Because an ideal speaker-hearer does not exist among the receptors of any translation, adjustments must be made to the norm of the prospective audience. The responses of receptors must be in terms of actual patterns of response to similar types of texts, and not in terms of what might be regarded as a judicial or legal norm, that is, how people ought to respond. Furthermore, the existing receptor expectancies must be carefully calculated, because such dispositions are important determinatives of reaction. What makes the situation somewhat more complex is that within any group of receptors there are certain decision makers whose influence is much greater than that of others, and their response to a translation cannot be judged even on the basis of how the average person is likely to respond to the text in question. In many instances the more crucial factor is the judgment of those who dictate the canons of acceptability. In a sense, therefore, receptor reaction must be judged on the basis of the social structure of the receptor group—one more crucial reason why only a sociolinguistic approach to translation is ultimately valid.

The fact that patterns of human behavior are constantly subject to change means that literary taste and judgment with respect to types of translating also change. There is, therefore, no permanent set of criteria for judging the acceptability of a translation, but change also implies fluctuation in judgment. Accordingly, one must expect that over a period of time not only will the attitudes of many people change with respect to a translation, but the same individual may react to a particular translation in different ways at different times, depending on his own emotional state or needs.

In sociolinguistic theories of translation the basic model is communication. This was first used by Nida [19] and then by Nida and Taber [20], but it has also been extensively employed and developed by Kade [14: 3-20] and Neubert [17: 21-33], who have found it especially appropriate to their linguistic and sociopolitical views. Thieberger [26: 75-84] has also insisted on the relevance of the communication model. The fundamental reason for the use of the communication model is that translation always involves interlingual communication, and this communication is based on the use of a code, namely, language. The basic structure of language as a code and the implication of this for translating have been clearly summarized by Fourquet [10: 64-69].

What is ultimately needed for translating is a well-formulated, comprehensive theory of translation that can take into account all the related factors. Because translating always involves communication within the context of interpersonal relations, the model for such activity must be a communication model, and the principles must be primarily sociolinguistic in the broad sense of the term. As such, translating becomes a part of the even broader field of anthropological semiotics. Within the structure of a unified theory of translation it would be possible to deal with all the factors that are involved in and influence the nature of translation. These could be assigned their proper roles and their significance for the process of translating could be properly weighted on a number of sliding scales, depending in several cases on the extralinguistic factors involved.

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#### ВІДОМОСТІ ПРО АВТОРА

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## **ФАКТОРИ ЗМЕНШЕННЯ РІВНЮ ЕКВІВАЛЕНТНОСТІ В ХУДОЖНЬОМУ ПЕРЕКЛАДІ (НА МАТЕРІАЛІ ПРОЗИ ДЖ.ФАУЛЗА)**

**Олена ПАВЛЕНКО (Маріуполь, Україна)**

*Статтю присвячено осмисленню категорій вертикального контексту першоджерела. Наголошується, що неадекватне їх відтворення зменшує рівень еквівалентності художнього перекладу.*

*The article deals with vertical context categories comprehension in the original text. Their inadequate identification lessens the level of equivalents in artistic translation.*

Сучасна наука надає визначального значення дослідженню еквівалентного перекладу, що передбачає не тільки зіставлення оригіналу і відповідника, осмислення процесу перекладання, а й ряду інших проблем, пов'язаних, наприклад, з ідеєю принципової перекладності (Ф.Флора), характером імпліцитної інформації, зафіксованої у мові (І.Гюббенет), вивченням «естетичного комплексу» художнього твору (О.Лосєв).

Новітні підходи до вивчення перекладу окреслюються в межах розуміння його як «особливого прошарку» художніх творів у літературі-реципієнті (Д.Дюришин, П.Топер), що мають свої типологічні властивості й закони функціонування, пов'язані подвійною джерельністю виникнення на перетині культур.