



TRANSLATION : TRANSNATIONALISM, IDEOLOGIES OR POWER ?

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Abstract

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Contemporary Translation Studies had flourished and developed along with the role of the translator who is considered as a mediator acting between cultures and civilisations. In this regard, it is crucial to analyse and study the translator's position when transposing the ideology of the source or the original. Although, he is supposed to be neutral and independent, the translator is a decision maker who is, willingly or unwillingly, influenced by the power of the publishing system when it comes to the translation of literary works. Although living in an era of globalisation which prone transnationalism, less diffused languages are deprived from their cultural implications at the expense of other languages during the process of translation. Translation cultural strategies need to intervene in order to find a compromise and to allow the interaction between cultures and civilisations alike.

1. Introduction

Translation allows the interaction between two distinct cultures through which each nation aspires to assert its identity, principles, civilisation and opinions in a context of exchange and mutual respect.

Contemporary studies approach towards translation has developed as long as language is regarded not only as a means of communication but rather a means of power to impose a certain culture and ideology upon others nations resulting in “the cultural turn” that Translation Studies have undergone. The task of the translator is not merely rendering the source meaning of a text yet he is a mediator between two different cultures in a context of differences between ethnicities, religions, traditions and customs, gender and changing societies.

We are living in the era of globalisation that is reflected in our daily life and consequently an ideology is imposed on us with our unconscious consent. The human’s ideals stand for transnationalism in order for nations to co-exist in harmony and respect of differences. Therefore, how can translation conciliate between societies in which the dominant culture pervades on those who want their beliefs, values and traditions to be respected? How did the translator moved from invisibility towards mediation and creation defending certain ideologies?

We will illustrate the way cultures interact in a context where a balance is hard to achieve among nations imposing their values and others seeking recognition through translation, the new means of power.

“Translation is always a shift, not between two languages but between two cultures or two encyclopedias. A translator must take into account rules that are not strictly linguistic but, broadly speaking, cultural”.

(Eco, 2001, p. 17)

2. Contemporary Translation Studies:

2.1 Traditional approach:

Traditional Translation Studies approached the activity of translating as a neutral mere linguistic activity through which the invisible translator should render the meaning as faithfully as possible from one language into another. Meanwhile, myriad scholars of different disciplines including; linguistics, literature, philosophy, history, ethnology, philosophy, sociology and many other interrelated sciences, undertook this enterprise either for the sake of theorising or defining the scope of linguistic maneuver and soon came to the conclusion that the translating endeavor requires far more than linguistic skills. Since the language in constant movement reflects people’s thoughts, feelings, and opinions but rather vehicles a peculiar culture of a peculiar nation which aspires to co-exist and communicate with all the other nations along human history, translation has seemingly flourished and Contemporary Translation Studies emerged to deal with what turn to be a cultural operation.

2.2. The “Cultural Turn”:

Modern Theories of Translation took what Mary Snell-Hornby named ‘**the cultural turn**’ as it moved from text to culture and politics centered concerns. (Snell-Hornby, 1990, p. 79)

The translator deals with words that carry cultural significance in a given sociopolitical context, acting as a mediator, he faces the dilemma of transposing a text charged with the culture and ideologies of the source depending on the genre of this corpus. As he translates culture, is he bound to adapt or keep the exotic elements of the source? How to make a balance between two cultures in respect of differences between ethnicities, religions, traditions and customs, gender and changing societies? As naturally influenced by the source or the target culture, will he choose to lose some cultural elements for the benefits of others? When an ideology pervades the text, is he supposed to transpose it? Will he turn what is explicit to implicit or vice-versa? These aforementioned issues include the changing standards and studies in Traductology.

“On every level of the translation process, it can be shown that, if linguistic considerations enter into conflict with considerations of an ideological and/or poetological nature, the latter tend to win out” (Lefevere, 2017, p. 30)

3. Patronage in the Literary System:

3.1. Powers:

In the scope of the cultural move, *Translation, History and Culture* by Lefevere and Bassnett constitutes a major work in the 90's which shed light on new parameters encountered in translation mainly; "patronage", "refractions" and "ideologies". (Lefevere, 2017, p. 9) The innovative view involves the power exercised in the cultural production including translation; researchers call their peers not to focus solely on dealing with the text and its socio-historical context but to analyse those institutions of influence in the translation production. Translation takes a minor place in the literary system dominated by powerful entities aiming to either conform, advocate or rebel against dominant ideologies and cultures;

Lefevere describes this system as controlled by three main factors namely; (Munday, 2001, p. 128)

- **Professionals within the literary system** including critics, reviewers and teachers and even translators who define the poetics and ideology of the translated text.
- **Patronage outside the literary system** referring to influential people (e.g. Elizabeth I in Shakespeare's England) and institutions (e.g. academic journals and educational establishments) that shape the fate of a literary work, it encompasses three elements;
 1. The ideological component: not confined to the political, it reflects strong convictions and ideas that individuals or groups need to assert and which constraints the subject as well as its representation in both the source and target languages;
 2. The economic component: involves the payments of writers and translators known as royalty payments and translator's fees;
 3. The status component: the writer/translator who benefits from the payment is supposed to meet the patrons' expectations.
- **The dominant poetics** comprising literary devices and the concept role of literature.

3.2. Dominating Languages & Translation:

In almost the same context, Venuti describes translation patterns since World War II which indicates the over domination of English language cultures for English has become the most translated language worldwide.

UNESCO statistics of the late 80's indicate that half of the global translation output was from English whereas the languages of developing countries ranked extremely low: for 1987 UNESCO reports 479 translations in Arabic, 216 from Chinese, 89 from Bengali, 14 from Korean and 8 from Indonesian in comparison to more than 32000 volumes from English. Translation is marginalised in Anglo-American cultures since foreign texts attract little interest from publishers who minimise the translation costs and are reluctant to grant copyright or share of the royalties to the translator. (Venuti, 1998, p. 160)

This data testifies of the power of the literary system allowing the ever domination of a given culture and ideology upon the other nations; the translator, in this arena, acts as an agent or a mediator who has to adopt the relevant strategies likely to serve the ideology and politics of the powerful or the powerless.

3.3. Literary Production, Translation and Publishing:

The Budapest Observatory conducted in December 2012 a survey from selected European publishers involved in publishing translated literature regarding the process of choosing and financing translations as well as their relationship with translators and translation funding agencies. 80 publishers from 22 different countries participated to the survey as shown in table 1.

Table 1. European Publishers of Translated Literature

European country	Number of publishers	European country	Number of publishers
Bulgaria	4	Macedonia	4
Croatia	4	Netherland	2
Czech Republic	3	Norway	1
Denmark	1	Portugal	1
Finland	1	Romania	1
France	5	Serbia	5
Germany	5	Slovenia	5
Iceland	1	Spain	8
Ireland	1	Switzerland	2
Italy	3	Turkey	7
Latvia	3	United Kingdom	13

Source: Budapest Observatory, 2012, p 05

The United Kingdom was best represented with 13 publishers, followed by Spain (8) and Turkey (7). Four countries responded from 5 publishers each. The low level of response from publishers based in German-speaking countries, France and Spain was particularly unsatisfactory.

The translated genre included mainly Fiction. For 26 publishers, it represents more than 75 % of translations. Only 7 publishers specialise in non-fiction and it comprises 50 % of their translations. Regarding Poetry, considered as highly challenging in translation, there are 5 presses which venture to publish regularly over 1000 copies of their translated poetry books. (Budapst Observatory, 2012, pp. 6-8)

Choosing a title to translate is as critical as choosing a work to publish. The next question in the survey asked about publishers' methods of choosing foreign titles for translation. The responses revealed that reading the original work is clearly the preferred method in comparison with translators' suggestions which are followed to a lesser degree implying the minor role of the translator in the literary system. However, UK

publishers are clearly inclined to listen to national literature organisations' recommendations in comparison with their 'Latin' colleagues. They read sample translations more than anyone else, too. (Observatory, 2012, p. 10)

The next set of questions inquired about difficulties experienced with source languages. Publishers named up to three languages in response to the question "With which less diffused languages did you meet the greatest difficulties in publishing a translation?" The list is led by Russian, and 18 other languages were mentioned at least three times including Arabic which comes at the seventh position. (Observatory, 2012, p. 12) These difficulties arise either from the linguistic or the literary background

On the other hand, when being asked about the register of languages with which publishers met the least difficulty in publishing a translation. Interestingly, publishers found it easier to highlight good experiences than problems. Among 21 languages, Dutch takes the eminent position as the publishers reported having experienced "no problem" with the languages in comparison with Arabic, Hebrew and Slovene (Observatory, 2012, p. 12) holding the last positions in the list due to the fact that finding a reliable translator proved to be extremely problematic.

This survey depicts clearly an improvement in acknowledging translators and in their relationship with publishers, and is particularly valuable in giving an indication of how publishers select titles to be translated and the type of difficulties they face regarding what they consider as less widely spoken or less diffused languages. Furthermore, it reveals incentives in helping translation funding bodies and influential agencies in their future policy deliberations regarding the original work and its translation. In this context, it is also clear that publishers would appreciate assistance with full costs of translation, which would make the publishing of a translated title more commercially viable for them.

4. Translation Strategies:

4.1. Translation as Rewriting:

"Because it is a human activity, translation necessarily involves power" (Gentzler, 2002, p.

191)

Translation activity has taken, through history, many forms involving rewriting and adapting with respect to the idea that society is a system which comprises categories and norms in need to be followed along the translation process, with the intention of influencing and accommodating the audience according to the ideology and poetics of that society.

A blatant rewriting of the original is *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyám* رباعيات عمر خیام by the translator Edward Fitzgerald, in order to respond to the expectations of the nineteenth century Western literary audience (Davis), Fitzgerald took liberties in paraphrasing the verses of the Iranian poet and was credited for being unfaithful in order to give a better version of the original, the translator commented on his work :

“ It is an amusement for me to take what Liberties I like with these Persians who (as I think) are not Poets enough to frighten one from such excursions, and who really do want a little Art to shape them”.

Fitzgerald’s translation gave birth to a total new version; he even allowed himself additional verses not included in the original. As according to Lefevere, for Western translators, translating from Greek and Latin has always been considered very prestigious; however, languages such as Persian have been treated differently. (Lefevere, 2017, p. 57)

This is a clear example of domesticating since the translator may intervene in the original, willingly or unintentionally, and domesticates the source at the expense of jeopardizing the foreign cultural elements of the original work.

Domestication and Foreignisation are the two major strategies developed in Cultural Translation Studies , Venuti considers Domestication as dominating Anglo-American Translation culture which depicts power imbalance between nations in the frame of the post-colonial theory, the translator, who is supposed to be a mediator between two different cultures, perpetuates the image of the dominant culture by depriving the text from the foreign compounds that defines its identity and essence, he paves the way to the Western target reader by bringing him the text although he sacrifices the

cultural and historical elements of the text. (Munday, 2001, p. 146)

4.2. Domestication

	SL (Source Language)	TL (Target Language)
Ex1.	Ferdowsi	The Hower of Iran
Ex2.	Lugouqiao (卢沟桥)	the Marco Polo Bridge

The aforementioned two examples explain the translation strategy “Domestication” and its clear impact on both the source and the target cultures.

In example 1 (Alizadeh, 2011, p. 261), “Ferdowsi”, regarded as the greatest poet in the Persian language, is rendered “The Hower of Iran” and although Homer and Ferdowsi are two great epic poets, no cultural identity should be replaced by another.

In example 2 (Sanning, 2010, p. 127), the **Lugouqiao** (卢沟桥) historic bridge situated in Beijing is transposed as the **Marco Polo Bridge** since the Western audience is more familiar with the name that was mentioned in *Marco Polo's book of travels*, the exotic element of the source disappeared to suit the targeted culture.

4.3. Foreignisation

	SL (Source Language)	TL (Target Language)
Ex1.	حلوة باللغة الإيرانية	Halva

	SL (Source Language)	TL (Target Language)
Ex.2	يسر زائر هذه البلدة (تلمسان) كثيرا لحسن ضيافة وطيبة أهالها كما يتذوق أطباقهم من المأكولات والحلويات " كالمختر" و "المحمر" و "المقروط" و"الكعك" وغيرها" (بن-عامر، 2007/2006	

TL (Target Language) « The visitor will be extremely pleased by the

hospitality and gentleness the inhabitants of Tlemcen, he will be lucky to taste their typical dishes especially “El Mehamer”, “El Mekhater” and their traditional cakes including “Kaak” and “Mekrout” as well .» (Ramdani, 2018, p143)

In Example 1 (Alizadeh, 2011, p. 262), “Halva” was kept in the target language instead of using for instance “Iranian Sweet” since in Iran, *halva* (Persian: "حلوا") usually refers to a related confection made from wheat flour and butter which is usually served at funerals and other formal ceremonies.

In Example 2, we rather rendered the typical dishes and sweets of Tlemcen using the foreignisation strategy in order to preserve the exotic elements of the source culture and call for the attention of the reader.

The Foreignisation strategy brings the target reader to translation, the translator attracts the reader to discover the new and the unknown in the source text.

To sum up, the foreignising strategy advantages include revealing the cultural and historical factors of the source text, disseminating the culture and customs of the original, and showing the equality between languages and cultures. However, disadvantages include neglecting the reader’s attention and understanding.

4.3. Domestication Vs. Foreignization = Neutralising

The neutralising strategy; elaborated by He Sanning, does not simply mean a mixture of domesticating and foreignising strategies. (Sanning, 2010, p. 131) It refers to the act and process of constantly modulating the translator’s own awareness of what is being translated to satisfy the reader’s needs and to achieve correlative equivalents between the source text and the target text.

Sanning illustrates the new strategy as follows:

Example. (Sanning, 2010, p. 131)

SL 北京故宫耗时14年，整个工程于1420年结束。

The construction of the Forbidden City took 14 years, and was finished in 1420

TL
1st option The construction of the Forbidden City took 14 years, and was finished in 1420, 14 years before Shakespeare was born.

TL
2nd option The construction of the Forbidden City took 14 years, and was finished in 1420, 72 years before Christopher Columbus discovered the New World.

Sanning argued that the English reader may not be impressed if the aforementioned example is directly translated. It is suitable to use the neutralising strategy as suggested in version 1 and version 2.

In both versions, the first half takes into account the culture-specific architecture and accurately provides the basic information of the original. The second half is meant to the target reader, The English for the 1st version and the American for the 2nd version; and it provides him with additional familiar information for further understanding.

The Neutralising strategy offers a good compromise between the source and the target languages/cultures, it vehicles accurately the source information and keeps the exotic elements of the source. Moreover, familiar elements are added to facilitate the reader comprehension. This reflects the sensitive role of the translator who is a mediator trying to transpose faithfully the message and to make a balance between cultures.

5. The conclusion:

Because words means power, languages and translation alike vehicle different ideologies including all geographical, historical, cultural and religious parameters. In this regard, the translator is, consciously or unconsciously, driven into multiple choices and acts as a mediator between divergent cultures which converge in the sense that they aspire to assert their values, principles and languages in respect of differences that

empower and enrich all the civilisations of the world.

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