

Translation Process

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In general, translation, as a process or product, is envisaged as a linguistic activity. However, scholars divide translation theories into two main categories: **literary theories**, and **linguistic theories**,

Literary translation theories

Literary translation theories conceive translation as an art, and “view translation as an activity, which is essential for a comparative study of literature” and lack the objectivity.

In this regard, Delisle (1982: 48) argues that literary translation theories “**have tried to justify their own concept of the art of translation rather than trying, through studies and empirical data, to deduce general hypotheses and rules, hence their effort is unscientific**” (Chakhachiro 2011: 79).

Literary translation theories

Linguistic translation theories, however, see translation as a scientific activity, seeking more objective criteria for translation studies, by using various linguistic theories as well as empirical data to deduce general hypotheses and claims. According to Nida (1976: 69), linguistic translation theories “are based on a comparison of linguistic structures of source and receptor texts rather than on comparison of literary genres and stylistic features”. Chakhachiro (2011: 79) holds that linguistic theories of translation can be classified into: **prescriptive, evaluative and descriptive**. He elaborates while **prescriptive studies “advise translators on how a translation should be done [and] evaluative studies review translation that has taken place, [...] descriptive studies are based on observation and empirical data” (ibid).**

Literary translation theories

The analysis of the translation process entails a great deal of complexity. It is constrained by intrinsic difficulties inherent in studies, which aim at tapping into any kind of cognitive processing: it is not amenable to direct observation. Further, the difficulties related to the investigation of the translation process are magnified by the different phases through which the process unfolds and by the complexity of the interwoven abilities and forms of specialized knowledge which play an integral part in it.

Translating as a linguistic activity – a linguistic approach

Linguistic theories see translation as a question of replacing the linguistic units of the ST with equivalent TL units without reference to factors, such as context (be it a context of situation and/or a cultural context) or co-text in which those linguistic units used (cf. Catford 1965). The proponent figures of the linguistic theories are E. Nida, Taber, and Catford

Translating as a linguistic activity – a linguistic approach

Nida (ibid: 66), being influenced by the American linguist Noam Chomsky (1957) who stresses that the deep structures of language do not change, but what changes is only the surface structure, introduces the concept of **‘kernel sentences’**. By kernel sentences, Nida means the **minimal structures in a language “from which all other structures are developed by permutations, replacements, additions, and deletions”** (ibid: 68). He further states that in the actual act of translation, in order to determine the overall meaning adequately, translators need to focus on the deep structure, rather than just adhering to the meaning in terms of the surface structure, hence the importance of transferring the deep structure as an **important factor in the translation process.**

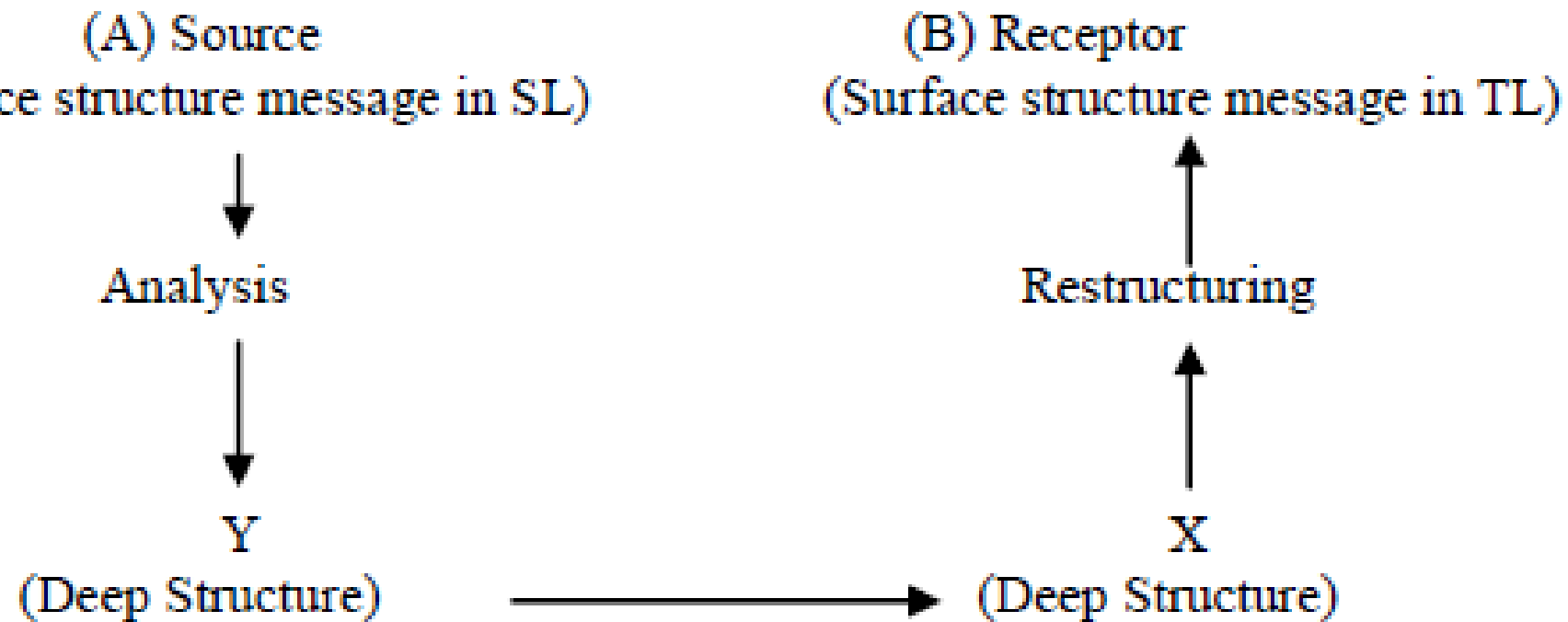
Translating as a linguistic activity – a linguistic approach

Translation process, according to Nida takes a U-shaped movement, starting from the surface structure of the source text down to its deep structure, 'kernel sentence', which is transferred into a kernel sentence in the TL, which, by addition, deletion, modification and other strategies results in the surface structure. In other words, the surface structure of the ST is decoded first to the basic elements of the deep structure, then transferred into the target language and, finally, encoded semantically and stylistically into the surface structure of the TT.

Translating as a linguistic activity – a linguistic approach

It is both scientifically and practically more efficient (1) to reduce the source text to its structurally simplest and most semantically evident kernels, (2) to transfer the meaning from source language to receptor language on a structurally simple level, and (3) to generate the stylistically and semantically equivalent expression in the receptor language (ibid: 68).

Translating as a linguistic activity – a linguistic approach



Translating as a linguistic activity – a linguistic approach

A year later, Catford (1965: 48) in his oft-cited book '*A Linguistic Theory of Translation*' describes the translation process differently. For him, the analysis or description of the translation process should make use of categories set up for the analysis and description of language. In his description of the translation process, Catford (1965: 48) rejects the idea of transference on the grounds that "in transference, there is an implantation of SL meanings into the TL text". **He believes that in the process of translation "there is a substitution of TL meanings for SL meanings, not transference of SL meaning into TL" (ibid).**

Translating as a linguistic activity – a linguistic approach

As there are differences between the interfacing languages, the process of substituting implies that there should be a 'shift'. By shift, he means “the departures from formal correspondence in the process of going from the Source Text to the Target Text” (p. 37). A formal correspondent refers to “any TL category (unit, class, element of structure, etc.) which can be said to occupy, as nearly as possible, the 'same' place in the 'economy' of the TL as the given SL category occupies in SL . In order for the ST and TT to be equivalent, they have to share situational features; hence their similar function in a given context.

Translating as a hermeneutic motion – a hermeneutic approach

Hermeneutics is a term derived from the Greek verb '*hermeneuein*', i.e. '*to interpret*'. It refers to the methods and processes involved in interpreting texts with a view to figuring out the meaning of a text, i.e. to understand the text. The proponents of this approach hold that texts are distant in time and culture; therefore, interpretive methods, according to the hermeneutic approach, lay emphasis on how understanding the meaning of the text is influenced by these factors. Further, the interpreter tries to interpret textual meaning from an inside point of view (cf. Almann 2013b).

Translating as a hermeneutic motion – a hermeneutic approach

The importance of the hermeneutic approach lies in the fact that there is no translation without understanding and interpreting– the initial steps in any kind of translation. Misunderstanding or inappropriate interpretation inevitably results in inadequate translations, if not absolutely wrong translations. However, such an understanding/ interpreting is subjective, relying on the interpreter's inner feeling and intuition (cf. Munday 2008, 2009; Almann 2013b).

Translating as a hermeneutic motion – a hermeneutic approach

Originally, hermeneutics only referred to the interpretation of the Bible. However, the more modern use of the approach can be traced back to the German Romantics Schleiermacher (1768–1834) and Dilthey (1833–1911). Schleiermacher argues that the processes of understanding include empathy as well as intuitive linguistic analysis. He believes that understanding is not merely the decoding of encoded information, and interpretation is built upon understanding—understanding/interpreting has a grammatical as well as psychological moment.

Translating as a hermeneutic motion – a hermeneutic approach

- 1 – the grammatical thrust places the text within a particular literature (or language) and reciprocally uses the text to redefine the character of that literature (language); and
- 2 – the psychological thrust is more naïve and linear. In it, the interpreter reconstructs and explicates the subject's motives and implicit assumptions.

As such, a successful interpreter, according to Schleiermacher, is an interpreter who is able to understand the author better than the author understood himself/herself because the interpretation highlights hidden motives and strategies.

Translating as a hermeneutic motion – a hermeneutic approach

Although the hermeneutic approach owes its origins to Schleiermacher, Dilthey and Heidegger, it is George Steiner's oft-cited book *After Babel* (1975) which is considered the key advance of the hermeneutics of translation (cf. Munday 2008: 163). In his book *After Babel* (1975/1998: 312–319), **Steiner describes the process of translation as a fourfold 'hermeneutic motion', comprising four stages, namely:**

1 – initiative trust where the translator needs to trust and believe that s/he will find something in the ST that can be understood and translated. For Steiner (p.313), nonsense rhymes and the like “are untranslatable because they are lexically non-communicative”.

Translating as a hermeneutic motion – a hermeneutic approach

2– **aggression** where the translator “invades, extracts, and brings home”, i.e. s/he penetrates the original text, elicits meaning and takes it away. (p. 314).

3– **incorporation** where the translator brings the extracted meaning in the second stage to the TL. As there are differences between the interfacing languages, the TT is either

a. **domesticated** by paying special attention to the linguistic and stylistic norms of the TL, thus taking its place in the TL canon, or

b. **marginalized** by giving full consideration to the ST, thus importing its foreignness into the target culture.

Translating as a hermeneutic motion – a hermeneutic approach

4– **compensation** where the translator, after interpreting and appropriating the ST meaning, tries to make up for the lost elements during the nexus of translation. Steiner “understands the upholding of the equality in status between an ST and its TT, which becomes necessary after a translator has interpreted and appropriated the ST meaning, leaving behind an ST which has lost something. Only when this loss has been compensated is the translation process complete” (Munday 2009: 194–195).

Translating as a hermeneutic motion – a hermeneutic approach

Steiner's influence can be seen on modern theorists, such as Lawrence Venuti (1995). Like Steiner, Venuti lays emphasis on importing the foreignness of the ST into the target culture. For Venuti, a good translation should reflect the foreignness of the ST and let the target reader be more open to cultural differences. This can be achieved through a true process of intercultural understanding for a true globalization of cultures rather than a tool for reinforcing existing representations and images of one culture about the other.

The End

