

Translation Dynamics: From Duality to Integration

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Abstract: The field of translation unfolds as a complex narrative, weaving together triumphs and tribulations, often overshadowed by instances of rejection. Translation, as an act, has undergone significant evolution, transcending mere language transfer. Modern perspectives emphasize the imperative integration of the source language author, text, translator, and recipient of the target language text, seamlessly interwoven. This integration hinges on the translator's utilization of various competencies and methodologies to acquire, retain, and effectively apply information. To navigate the intricacies of translation, scholars have devised numerous strategies and procedures to dissect the points at which translation shifts occur. Despite the diversity of approaches and the resulting terminological confusion, the field remains dynamic and ever-evolving. The quest for a universal theory of translation persists, marking an ongoing journey in this complex and multifaceted realm.

Keywords: Translation; Translation methods; Translation procedures

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1. Introduction

The narrative of translation unfolds as a complex tapestry woven with alternating episodes of triumph and sorrow, punctuated by moments of repudiation. While some translators have been generously rewarded, others paid the ultimate price for translations they might never have considered twice.

In 1546, Étienne Dolet reportedly inserted three words into his translation of one of Plato's dialogues: "And when you have died, death will also not be able to do anything, since you will be *nothing at all*"^[1]. The theological faculty of Sorbonne interpreted these three words as a blasphemous renunciation of soul immortality and sentenced him to death by burning at the stake. Nevertheless, such extreme consequences are exceptions rather than the rule. In the grander scheme of things, disregard tends to prevail.

2. Translation: Duality Dialectics

When it comes to translation, Maurice Blanchot asserted, "One either says of it that it does not read like a translation, or one marvels at just how identical it is with its original, how it is truly one and the same work; in

both cases, something essential gets lost”^[2]. Such statements, among others, allude to the duality of *free* and *literal* translation, a topic that continues to ignite heated debates in academic circles.

More recently, the discourse on *free* and *literal* translation has expanded beyond the boundaries of the text. Wolfram Wilss suggested that the longstanding issue of source language or target language-related translation has disappeared, giving way to a fresh perspective on the objective of translation, namely the achievement of a functional integration of the source language author, the source language text, the translator, and the target text recipient^[3]. According to Riitta Jääskeläinen, the responsibility lies with the translator to make wise decisions regarding the most effective ways to deliver the message as faithfully as intended by the original text’s author^[4]. In pursuit of this objective, the translator employs a sequence of skills and a defined set of processes that facilitate the acquisition, retention, and/or application of information. The chosen approach can thus be defined as a conscious arrangement for solving specific translation problems within a tangible task or as a potentially conscious scheme for handling difficulties encountered when translating a text or any segment thereof.

Translators may encounter challenges during the translation process, either due to a particularly intricate unit or a deficit in knowledge or skill. It stands to reason that the categories used to analyze translations make room for the study of how translation works. These categories are allied to text, context, and process, all of which fit into what Jääskeläinen termed *product-related strategies*, denoting the choice of a source text and the adoption of a translation approach, and *process-related strategies*, referring to the steps taken to achieve the goals established by the translating situation^[4].

Considering the intricate nature of translation, attempts at a general theory applicable to every possible translation situation have been of little avail. Various concepts have gained currency, with the same category expressed by different names, and dissimilar classifications overlapping to varying extents. In a nutshell, terminological confusion has given rise to a “theoretical Babel.” Many scholars have devised their own classifications, which, whether expressly or not, overlap with others due to addressing the same reality from different perspectives. The following discussion sheds light on prominent approaches that tackled the issue of meaning change, specifically in terms of manipulation, in translation.

3. Towards integration

Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet are commonly believed to be the first to have introduced the concept of translation procedures, the aggregate of instruments engaged when commuting between two different languages. They pledged to “follow the way our mind works consciously and subconsciously when it moves from one language to another and record its progress” (page 10)^[5]. Along the way, they aimed to examine the principles of translation through concrete examples, intending to develop practical methods for translation. However, they fell short of their own expectations, confining themselves to a purely contrastive level where decontextualized units of translation are analyzed, while other equally significant factors are ignored.

According to Vinay and Darbelnet, virtually any text elicits an impressive array of possible renderings, contingent on how translators evaluate their proposed solutions. The two scholars developed a comprehensive classification of translation procedures, emphasizing a systematic exploration of both the text and its suggested translation, rather than casually referring to challenges as “treason”^[5]. They outlined two types of translation procedures: direct translation procedures and oblique translation procedures.

3.1. Direct translation procedures

These procedures are invoked when translators encounter gaps in the target language that need filling to achieve

the same stylistic effect without disrupting the syntactic order of the original text ^[5]. There are three direct translation procedures, namely:

- (1) Borrowing: Regarded as “the simplest of all translation methods” (page 31) ^[5], it involves transferring a word or phrase directly to the target language, usually with the intent to bridge a conceptual gap or preserve the flavor of the source culture.
- (2) Calque: Described as “a special kind of borrowing” (page 32) ^[5], it entails a language adopting an expression form and literally rendering each of its components. This process gives rise to either a lexical calque, which observes the syntactic structure of the target language while introducing a new mode of expression, or a structural calque, which inaugurates the use of new construction in the target language.
- (3) Literal translation: Also known as word-for-word translation, this is most common when translating between sister languages. It denotes the direct rendering of “a source text into a grammatically and idiomatically appropriate target text” (page 33) ^[5].

3.2. Oblique translation procedures

Concerning oblique translation procedures, Vinay and Darbelnet posited that occasional structural or metalinguistic discrepancies might hinder the rendering of certain stylistic effects into the target language without disrupting the syntactic or lexical construction. In such cases, more complex methods could afford translators strict control over the reliability of their work. These oblique translation procedures, numbering four, include, but are not limited to:

- (1) Transposition: Operates at the grammatical level and involves the replacement of a word class while consistently maintaining the same message as the source text (page 36) ^[5]. This procedure may be either obligatory or optional, depending on the situation.
- (2) Modulation: Defined by Gérard Hardin and Cynthia Picot as “a change in point of view that allows the expression of the same phenomenon in a different way” ^[6]. It is contingent on syntactic and metalinguistic considerations (page 246) ^[5]. Like transposition, modulation may be either obligatory or optional, but unlike transposition, the difference between the two poles is a matter of degree (page 37) ^[5].
- (3) Equivalence: Invokes cases in which languages depict the same situation in thoroughly distinct structural and stylistic methods (page 38) ^[5]. This procedure is often repeated in translating proverbs and idioms on account of their very culture-specific nature.
- (4) Adaptation: Aptly named “the extreme limit of translation” (page 39) ^[5], it is often employed when the target culture is unfamiliar with the situation referred to by the source language message. In such cases, the source text undergoes formal and substantial changes to create an equivalent situation while adhering to the rules of the target language and culture.

The following seven translation procedures may be supplemented with other procedures:

- (1) Compensation: Occurs when a nuance defies symmetrical transfer; that is, being placed at the same point as in the original text and is therefore moved to another point in the target phrase or sentence to maintain the overall tone (page 341) ^[5].
- (2) Concentration versus dissolution: Concentration happens when an expression from the source text is translated into a shorter number of words in the target text. Conversely, dissolution takes place when an expression from the source text is rendered in more words than in the original text ^[5].
- (3) Amplification versus economy: Amplification occurs when the target language deploys more signifiers to bridge syntactic or lexical gaps and convey the same meaning, whereas economy is the

opposite and is typically a matter of structure (page 339) ^[5].

- (4) Reinforcement versus condensation: These are variations of amplification and economy. They are used when some grammatical elements from the source language require reinforcement or condensation in the target language (page 339) ^[5].
- (5) Explicitation versus implicitation: Explicitation is a stylistic translation method consisting of bringing out what lies in darkness in the source text, aiming to elucidate it based on the context or situation. Implicitation, however, applies in reverse (page 342) ^[5].
- (6) Generalization versus particularization: Generalization involves translating a specific term into a more global equivalent, whereas particularization stands on the other extreme (page 343) ^[5].
- (7) Inversion: Denotes the alteration of the word order or phrase structure in a sentence or paragraph so that it reads naturally in the target language (page 225) ^[5].

Despite its deficiencies, Vinay and Darbelnet's approach exerted considerable influence on scholars such as Peter Newmark, who adopted the same concept as a methodological basis for his studies. However, he distinguished between translation methods, referring to the strategies applied to the entirety of the text, and translation procedures, denoting those applied to specific elements within the text ^[7]. Eventually, Eugene A. Nida introduced the concept of techniques of adjustment, meaning all the operations involved in the "production of correct equivalents" ^[8].

According to the perspective of Eugene Nida and Charles Taber, valiant efforts had been expended on making translations preserve the form and content of the source language, but they were all doomed to abject failure ^[9]. In these circumstances, structural adjustments become a necessity. According to Nida, translators should decide on the closest natural equivalent. When the corresponding forms in the source and receptor languages are compared afterward, it would be noticed that they conveniently fit into modifications described as additions, subtractions, and alterations ^[8]:

- (1) Additions: Several types of additions may be involved in the process of translating. The most common and important of which are "filling out elliptical expressions; obligatory specification; additions required because of grammatical restructuring; amplification from implicit to explicit status ... and categories of the receptor language which do not exist in the source language" (page 227) ^[8].
- (2) Subtractions: Nida asserted that subtractions, though fewer in number and variety than additions, are of paramount importance in the process of adjustment. They encompass, among other things, "repetitions; specification of reference; conjunctions ... and formulae" (page 231) ^[8].
- (3) Alterations: Nida believed that "the entire text must be subjected to a series of changes ... some of them relatively radical" (page 233) ^[8]. Alterations can be tackled under the following headings: categories, word classes, order, clause and sentence structures, semantic problems involving single words, and semantic problems involving exocentric expressions ^[8].

4. Conclusion

The realm of translation unfolds as a multifaceted journey marked by both triumphs and setbacks, often carrying profound consequences. From its origins as a simple transference of linguistic symbols, translation has surpassed traditional boundaries. Contemporary paradigms emphasize the crucial need for a seamless fusion of the source language author, the source text, the translator, and the recipient of the target language text. This integration is facilitated by a series of competencies and methods employed by translators to acquire, store, and wield information effectively.

In grappling with the intricacies of translation, scholars have devised various strategies and procedures, all converging toward uncovering where shifts in translation occur. Despite the diverse approaches and the ensuing conceptual perplexity they may evoke, the field remains dynamic and ever-evolving. The challenges of formulating a general theory applicable to all translation situations persist. The evolving discourse on translation increasingly reveals that it is not merely a linguistic endeavor but a complex interplay of cultural, social, and cognitive factors. Therefore, it falls upon translators to adapt and judiciously apply their skills, making informed decisions to ensure that the essence of the original text is conveyed as faithfully as possible.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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