

FROM THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSLATION STUDIES

Marcela Müllerová Shiflett

M.Ed., Faculty of Philosophy, Prešov University

Abstract: The article introduces an overview of the development of translation and the beginnings of translation studies, as well as a variety of theories, approaches and theoretical models that shaped the development of translation studies. The article follows the early translation theories and analyzes how these theories stood the test of progress within the discipline. Translation studies, as young a linguistic field as it may be, have gone through considerable changes. The necessity of this field in today's global world in the past decades has put the original views of translation under the microscope, having had to consider a lot more than simple equivalence of terms to satisfy the complex and ever-changing world of translation.

Keywords: translation studies, literal translation, equivalency, scopos theory, translation shifts.

1. INTRODUCTION

Translation is an activity that has been present in some form from the first contacts between cultures that did not share the same language. We can only guess how these early contacts transpired, but it is certain that the need for translation came immediately thereafter. The need for translation logically arises from the need for communication between two parties who speak different languages, regardless of the purpose of this communication. Even though the world has been inhabited by different cultures for thousands of years, the technological achievements of recent decades contributed to greater opportunities and consequently the necessary contacts between these cultures.

2. CATFORD AND HIS VIEW ON EQUIVALENCY

It is of interest to point out that the translation studies came to be relatively late. Although the translation activities have been around since ancient times, it was not until the 50s in the 20th century that brought out the need to translation studies aside as a separate and independent discipline. In many countries, the study of translation today is of certain status that involves conferences, journals, and university programs.

The concept of translation studies is considered from different points of view. According to Catford (1965: 20), the translation is "substitution of textual material in one language with equivalent material in another language". In addition to the maintenance of the linguistic level, this definition brings the concept of equivalence, which dominated the translation studies during the fifties and sixties of the twentieth century. The notion of equivalence concerns the relationship between the original text and its translation or "equivalence" without which the target text or translation could not be considered.

Catford defines and introduces translation shifts as a translation method. He describes the shifts as "departures from formal correspondence in the process of going from the SL to the TL" (1965:73). Catford argues that there are two main types of translation shifts, namely *level shifts*, where the SL item at one linguistic level (e.g. grammar) has a TL equivalent at a different level (e.g. lexis), and *category shifts* which are divided into four types:

International Journal of Novel Research in Interdisciplinary Studies

Vol. 3, Issue 6, pp: (66-68), Month: November – December 2016, Available at: www.noveltyjournals.com

Catford suggests that, “Category shifts are departures from formal correspondence in translation” (Catford, 1965: 76). It means that the shifts are related with formal correspondence and Catford also stated about this formal correspondence as follows:

A formal correspondence is any Target Language (TL) category which may be said to occupy as nearly as possible, the ‘same’ place in the economy of the Target Language (TL) as the given source language (SL) category occupies in the source language (SL). (Catford, 1965: 32). For instance, when the SL singular becomes a TL plural.

Catford was very much criticized for his linguistic theory of translation, mostly due to the fact that the translation process cannot simply be reduced to a linguistic exercise, as claimed by Catford, since there are also other factors, such as textual, cultural and situational aspects, which should be taken into consideration when translating.

3. SOCIAL COMPONENT IN TRANSLATION

Languages reflect the different realities, and these differences occur at morphological, lexical, and syntactic level, it can be assumed that it is very difficult or impossible to achieve equivalence at all language levels at the same time. The question, however, should not be what level of equivalence the translator can lose, but take into consideration the criteria on hand when deciding what would be acceptable or desirable translation. Purely linguistic level of looking at this concern certainly failed to give a satisfactory answer.

The social view-point to the study of translation was brought by Gideon Toury in his descriptive approach to translation studies in the second half of the twentieth century. It is advisable to recognize that the concept of equivalence and adequacy of outcomes or translation procedures differs from culture to culture and from one historic era to another. As Baker (1998: 164) says, “the translator performs function that defines the community and does so in ways that the community sees fit”. Toury points out that the main object of analysis in Translation Studies is not an individual translation, rather a coherent corpus of translated texts.

Finally, regarding the study of translational norms, Toury (1995: 65) suggests that norms are not directly seen (they are abstractions) and that only products are available, having two main sources from which to reconstruct the norms:

- 1) textual: the translated texts themselves, for all kinds of norms, as well as analytical inventories of translations [...] for various preliminary norms;
- 2) extratextual: semi-theoretical or critical formulations, such as prescriptive ‘theories’ of translation, statements made by translators, editors, publishers, and other persons involved in or connected with the activity, critical appraisals of individual translations, or the activity of a translator or ‘school’ of translators, and so forth.

4. FUNCTIONALIST APPROACH

At the same time, new horizons in translation studies opened with descriptive equivalence, particularly via Katharina Reiss and Hans Vermeer and their functionalist approach. In the early seventies, Reiss linked selection of translation methods to type text and its function. He divided texts by type: informative, expressive and operational. The primary purpose of informative texts, as their name suggests, is to inform readers. The expressive texts have an aesthetic component that is emphasized over the information. The style of the text itself is selected so that the product has emotional effect on the reader. According to Nord, in operational texts, the content and form are subordinate to appellative function, which is focused on the reaction that such a text should cause in readers (1997: 37-38; 40-44). All these features will affect the translation and the selection of translation methods and strategies.

5. THE SKOPOS THEORY

The focus on the function of the text resulted in the skopos theory. Vermeer sees translation as a form of action and considers that every action, including translation, should have a purpose. The skopos theory is based on that assumption. Vermeer (1987:29) as cited in Baker (2009) defines translation in the following way: “To translate means to produce a

International Journal of Novel Research in Interdisciplinary Studies

Vol. 3, Issue 6, pp: (66-68), Month: November – December 2016, Available at: www.noveltyjournals.com

text in a target setting for a target purpose and target addressees in target circumstances”. According to the skopos theory, the skopos (the purpose) is determined by the translator in negotiations with the commissioner of the translation. The key role is to be played by the recipient/user of the translation, as well. A translation of the same text can be approached in completely different ways, depending on the skopos and the specific requirements of the commissioner, i.e. recipient of the translation.

6. CONCLUSION

Many studies, theories, and approaches to translation methodology have been introduced. However, in the early beginnings of the translation studies, often the focus was only one-dimensional. With the need for translators to become the professionals who analyze the texts and do their best to produce an adequate translation for further interpretation by the target audience, the act of translation has become all but one-dimensional. Translation studies as the field of research on translation as a process and a product have benefitted from taking into consideration the audiences’ culture and expectations, as well as the type of text translated and the perspective of the translator. The translator’s knowledge of the target culture and his/her mastery of the field of the source text far exceeds pure linguistic point of view of translation. The specific theories mentioned above illustrate such progress. The field of translation studies in the global culture of today’s world is certainly going to develop further.

REFERENCES

- [1] Baker, Mona and Saldanha, Gabriela (ur.). 2009. Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation
- [2] Studies, 2nd Edition. Abingdon: Routledge.
- [3] Catford, John C. 1965. A Linguistic Theory of Translation: An Essay on Applied Linguistics.
- [4] London: Oxford University Press.
- [5] Nord, Christiane. 1997. Translating as a Purposeful Activity. Functionalist Approaches
- [6] Explained. Manchester: St Jerome.
- [7] Vermeer, Hans. 1987. “What Does It Mean to Translate?” Indian Journal of Applied Linguistics.
- [8] 13(2): 25–33.
- [9] Toury, Gideon. 1995. Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.