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OVERVIEW OF MAJOR TRANSLATION THEORIES

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Abstract:

This paper explores various translation theories and models, focusing on the concept of equivalence and functional approaches in translation studies. It begins with Eugene Nida's classification of equivalence into formal and dynamic types, highlighting the debate surrounding the subjective nature of dynamic equivalence. Werner Koller's five types of equivalence expand on Nida's work, offering a more nuanced categorization. The contributions of Vinay and Darbelnet, as well as J.C. Catford, are also examined, particularly their structural and linguistic approaches to translation. The study further discusses the emergence of functional theories, beginning with Katharina Reiss's text typology, Hans Vermeer's Skopos Theory, and Christiane Nord's loyalty-based model. The discussion extends to discourse and register analysis, with key insights from Juliane House, Mona Baker, and Basil Hatim & Ian Mason, emphasizing context, cultural aspects, and translation assessment methodologies. By analyzing these varied perspectives, this paper provides a comprehensive understanding of translation theory's evolution, its methodological shifts, and the ongoing debate between linguistic and functional approaches in achieving effective translation.

Key words: Translation, theories, Catford, linguistics, functional approach, translation shift etc

In 1964, Nida published his work *Towards the Science of Translating* in which he classifies equivalence into two types: formal and dynamic. Formal Equivalence, according to Nida, "focuses attention on the message itself, in both form and content" with the aim of matching the message in the TL with that of the SL (129). On the other hand, dynamic equivalence does not aim at strictly replicating the form and content of the source message but seeks to produce the same relationship between the target receptor and the TT as the source receptor has with the original message (Nida 129).

A clear distinction can be made between the two types based on their varying emphasis on

the source and target culture. Munday highlights that although Nida's work was significant in its own right for the time, many translation theorists criticized him for the huge subjectivity in his model primarily in relation to the notion of the equivalent effect in his concept of dynamic equivalence (43).

After Nida, in 1979, Werner Koller from Germany also came up with his detailed model of equivalence in which he, unlike Nida, divided it into five types: denotative, connotative, text-normative, pragmatic and formal. These five types provide a holistic view of equivalence which is the ideal case in the creation of any TT. Denotative and connotative equivalence deal accordingly with the transfer of denotative and connotative meanings in the text. Formal equivalence emphasizes the recreation of formal and stylistic features while pragmatic equivalence specifically takes into account contextual and culture-specific concerns (Munday 47-48).

As the five types focus on different aspects of the translation, the translator would essentially require a preference for one over the other in the translation process. The preference according to Koller could be made by considering the dominant function of the source message (Pym 283). His work although more nuanced and wider in its categorization, can still be seen as an extension of the work of Nida and was later reconsidered and re-evaluated by many theorists who focussed on the concept of equivalence.

In the middle of the twentieth century, several translation models distinguished themselves with their methodology that focussed primarily on transferring the linguistic aspects of the STs. This by necessity entailed a lack of concern toward the extra-linguistic elements of the STs, a feature for which they were often criticized by other academics in the field. The following sub-sections highlight the two most influential models of Vinay and Darbelnet and J.C Catford. In 1958, full names Vinay and Darbelnet proposed two approaches towards translation: 'direct' and 'oblique' translation. The strategy of direct translation covers three procedures within it namely 'borrowing', 'calque' and 'literal translation' while the procedures like 'transposition,' 'modulation,' 'equivalence' and 'adaptation' are reserved for oblique translation.

After the contributions of Vinay and Darbelnet, Catford proposed a complex linguistic model of translation primarily based on the research of Halliday in which he distinguishes between two concepts namely 'formal correspondence' and 'textual equivalence.' The former deals with the equivalence in grammatical and linguistic aspects while the latter concerns itself with the context or occasion-specific equivalence (Munday 60).

Catford used the word 'shifts' for the discrepancies in the translation process and measured them in relation to the deviations from formal correspondence while categorizing them into two types: level and category shifts. Level Shifts occur "when a SL item at one linguistic level has a TL translation equivalent at a different level" (Catford 141). "Category shifts are departures from formal correspondence in translation" and can be further categorized into the following four types (143).

1) Structural Shifts: These shifts, can occur at multiple ranks and represent the variation in the grammatical structures in translation.

2) Class shifts: These shifts denote the variations occurring in various parts of speech in an SL-to-TL transfer.

3) Unit shift: These shifts depict any variations within ranks when the SL linguistic units like words, phrases etc. have to be transferred at a different rank in translation.

4) Intra-system shifts: These are only possible in the case of corresponding SL and TL systems and particularly when the specific translation case doesn't correspond in the system of TL (Catford 145-146).

Catford's theory broadened the scope of machine translation due to its sophisticated and heavy reliance on linguistics (Munday 61). The central criticism against his work and linguistic theories, in general, came from their lack of regard for contextual and pragmatic factors that lie outside the linguistic domain but are highly significant for an effective translation.

Even though the foundations of the functional approach to translation can be traced back to the discussions of Cicero and early Biblical scholars and translators, the modern functional frameworks originated mainly from Germany with the work of a series of translational scholars starting with Katharina Reiss. In the following sub-sections, three significant models of translation theorists named Katharina Reiss, Hans Vermeer and Christiana Nord have been highlighted.

Katharina Reiss has contributed significantly to modern translation theories, especially, in relation to the functional outlook of viewing the translation process which she first presented in her book *Possibilities and Limits of Translation Criticism* in 1971 in Germany. Munday highlights that at the core of her theory was Reiss's division of texts, based on their language distinctions and purpose into four types: 'informative,' 'expressive,' 'operative' and 'audiomedial' (72). Informative text primarily aims to deliver facts and information. For example; a lecture, an encyclopaedia etc. An 'expressive' text, on the other hand, has an aesthetic and a creative aspect to offer to the reader which primarily adds to its value. For example; poems, novels and plays etc. The third type named 'operative' text aims to persuade the receiver toward a specific goal or action. For example; a sermon or an electoral speech. An 'audiomedial' text can, however, diversely communicate any of the above three aspects but in audio, visual or other possible mediums. For example; films and photographs (Munday 72- 73).

Reiss further states that the above-mentioned text types must be translated based on their primary functions with the exception of hybrid type's STs, in which the message should be transferred bearing the overriding function of the ST (Oyali 53). Despite being a significant contribution to the field the theory was criticized by certain scholars and translators for the oversimplification in the division of the text types and also for disregarding the apparent loss possible while transferring the overriding function in the hybridized text types (Munday 75).

Hans Vermeer, a German scholar, proposed the Skopos Theory which turned out to be one of the most influential functional approaches with its name derived from the Greek word 'skopos' denoting 'purpose.' The theory was presented in a book containing two parts, the first containing the description and principles of the theory itself which was written by Vermeer and the second containing Reiß's integration of her own typological approach to it.

Vermeer sets up several rules for the different aspects of the translation process, with the central one stating that "a translational action is a function of its skopos" (Reiß and Vermeer 94). The skopos itself, essentially, can't be known without the recipient and is thus variably dependent on the target audience. After the purpose of translation is decided, Vermeer argues for the systematic creation of the TT with required stylistic and linguistic changes to suit the expectation of target readers. In relation to the translated product, this framework validates the success only if the recipients view it as coherent in terms of the language and the overall sense. The central goal of translational action is attaining coherence at different levels which is directly a function of the translator's comprehension of the ST (Nord 32).

The theory lucidly prefers the target culture and readers for achieving coherent understandable communication in the translation process and thus, with this assertion, radically shifts the focus away from the prevalent notion of 'equivalence' toward the functional compatibility in translation. The most obvious criticism received by this theory was its disregard for the importance of the ST and the linguistic aspects within the text and also for the control, it assigns to the translator (Nord 109). Christiana Nord, a German scholar, is well known for her books: *Text Analysis in Translation* (1988) and *Translation as a Purposeful Activity* (1997) in the field of functional translation. In *Text Analysis in Translation*, she builds on the text division of Reiss by dividing the translations into two types namely documentary and instrumental.

Documentary translations aim "at producing in the target language a kind of document of (certain aspects of) a communicative interaction in which a source culture sender communicates with a source culture audience via the source text under source culture conditions" (Nord 47).

Instrumental translations, on the other hand, focus on the function or aim of translation and can be further categorized into three types: 'equifunctional,' 'heterofunctional' and 'homologous' translation. In equifunctional translation, the function of TT matches the function that was intended for the ST to serve its audience. Heterofunctional translation is the opposite of the former type wherein the TT's function differs from the ST. Homologous translation, however, differs from the two types as it is used when there is a match found in the literary status of both ST and TT in their respective culture corpora (Nord 50-52).

Building on the above-mentioned types of translation, Nord in her book, *Translating as a Purposeful Activity*, also mentions the three integral aspects of function-centred translation training. The first aspect deals with the role of the translation brief which serves as an essential guide throughout the translation process. She highlights the role of a close and vigilant ST's analysis which saves the translation from several inaccuracies at different levels. The third main aspect includes a list of translation problems in a hierarchical fashion which Nord herself divides into four types: pragmatic, cultural, linguistic, or text-specific. Further, in relation to this hierarchy, she advocates for a top-down approach which places the pragmatic problems at the top (Nord 60-68).

Nord uniquely adds the concept of 'loyalty' with which she ensures a higher level of bilateral commitment of the translator to both the source and the target text sides. This notion serves as a significant addition to the skopos theory view as it stifles any transgressing attempts by the translator in preferring functionality to an exaggerated degree (125-126).

The discourse and register analysis approaches can be distinctly marked for their emphasis on translation training and assessment by examining "patterns of the language across texts" and considering "the relationship between language and the social and cultural context in which it is used" (Munday and Zhang 1). The most significant of these approaches have been highly influenced by the Hallidayan model for linguistic analysis which they employ and associate with the extra-linguistic and cultural factors for creating translation methodology for specific texts. In this section, the most significant translation models of influential theorists like Juliana House, Mona Baker and Basil Hatim and Ian Mason have been mentioned.

The translation assessment approach of Juliana House, although having some similarities with the functional approaches mentioned previously differ significantly from them in their contrastive analysis of ST and TT instead of focusing primarily on the TT's function. House published her original model of translation quality assessment in 1977 which she revised twice on account of the changes and new developments in various knowledge sciences, once in 1997 and then recently in 2014. For the overview presented in this research, only the latest version of the model published in her book *Translation Quality Assessment: Past and Present* has been mentioned.

She bases her theory on the register analysis of Halliday and has maintained its usage even in the updated models. House argues that the translation has to be rendered based on an analysis of the source text and unlike the functional theories, she believes equivalence to be at the core of translation quality assessment (House 21). She distinguishes between the following two types of translations that can possibly create a TT: 'overt' and 'covert.'

An overt translation is a "TT which does not purport to be an original" (Munday 93). House argues that this text is linked in some aspects to the SL's culture and can either be a text tied to a past historical situation or a timeless text with a general message while also being grounded in the source culture at the same time. As this text is starkly related to the source culture, a direct transfer is not possible and the second-level function should be the marking point. A covert translation, on the other hand, refers to TTs that are overtly not treated as translations in the target culture because of the disjointed links with their respective STs (House 55- 56). For the assessment of the translations, she employs Hallidayan's distinctions of 'field,' 'mode,' and 'tenor,' a distinction that facilitates the analysis of the message, communicator relationships and mediums.

According to House, an analysis of the field is followed by a list of how it is justified in the

ST using linguistics, syntax and theme etc. In the next element of tenor, the person assessing the translation takes notes of relationships between participants, the background of the ST's author and their role in the creation of the discourse in the ST. In the final element of register analysis, s/he observes the medium for which the text is intended and marks the aspects of language which shape the existence of that medium (House 127-133).

After the analysis, House proposes that the same elements and dimensions need to be checked in the register of the TT and then the 'differences' which she called 'mismatches' in her previous model are to be marked (Anari and Varmazyari 30).

A note on the differences in the genres is also to be taken under consideration and once the differences are obtained in different elements of register and in the genre, a quality statement is made by listing down all the errors in these dimensions. In this new integrated model, with the addition of the previous years' research done in contrastive pragmatics, she has also considered the aspect of rapid changes in the world, the advent of technology and its effect on language (House 97,134).

Mona Baker, a professor at the University of Manchester, published her translation coursebook named *In Other Words* in 1992 with its most recent edition appearing in 2018. In the book, she focuses on translation training with a model of equivalence that is materialized at various levels. Unlike the prevailing top-down approach of the time, for the sake of simplicity, she navigates from words to phrases to complex clauses with the inclusion of contextual considerations at every level. When talking about the notion of equivalence, it is worth pointing out that Baker uses the term for convenience and not because of a specific 'theoretical status' that it may hold (5). She clearly accepts the relative nature of the term and the connotations it may carry along with its dependence on multiple linguistic and extra- linguistic factors. In a practical analysis of a translation, the equivalence according to Baker can be aimed and examined at the following six levels.

The study of translation theories and models reveals the dynamic and evolving nature of translation as both a linguistic and cultural practice. The shift from early linguistic models, such as Nida's formal and dynamic equivalence and Koller's five types of equivalence, to functionalist approaches like Skopos Theory and Nord's loyalty principle, demonstrates the increasing emphasis on communicative intent and cultural adaptation. Additionally, discourse and register analysis, as explored by House, Baker, Hatim, and Mason, highlights the role of pragmatics and textual coherence in translation. These varied perspectives illustrate that translation is not merely a process of linguistic substitution but a complex act of negotiation between meaning, culture, and purpose. As translation studies continue to evolve, integrating interdisciplinary approaches will further enhance our understanding of translation's role in global communication.

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