

LINGUISTICS and TRANSLATION

- Translation may be defined as the transfer of a text from the source language into a text in the target language, the objective being a perfect equivalence of meaning between the two texts.
- For majority of the thinkers and writers Translation is a literary craft and in this approach the aims and results are more important than the linguistic operations. In contrast linguists and grammarians have paid attention to the analysis of semantic and grammatical operations.
- Translation was drawn into a more scientific era by the works of the American linguist Eugene Nida, drawing upon the concepts proposed by Chomsky.
- The working definitions of Translation may be situated between two extremes, called ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’.
- Traditionally Translation was the process of replacement of a text written in a source language by a text written in a target language, the objective being a maximum equivalence of meaning.
- The modern definition of Translation incorporates the following views:
 - ❖ The process of transfer of a message expressed in a source language into a message expressed in a target language, with maximization of the equivalence of one of the several levels of *content* of the message, that is, referential (information for its own sake; e.g. organization notes), expressive (centred on the sender of the message), conative (centred on the recipient), phatic (centred on the communication, e.g., courtesies), poetic (centred on the form, e.g. poetry)
 - ❖ The interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language. (Jakobson)
- The most important contribution of Linguistics to Translation is the analysis equivalence, and some objective justification for the translator’s intuitions.
- The early period of Translation studies, which Newmark calls the pre-linguistic period of translation, centred around the key notions of literal and free approaches deriving from the opposite views of ‘word-to-word’ and ‘sense-to-sense’ translating.

- This debate over ‘literal’ and ‘free’ translation went on up to the second half of the twentieth century when the need for more systematic analysis of translation became apparent, and the only discipline which could offer adequate theoretical and lingual frameworks for handling the above mentioned dichotomies, was Linguistics.
- Translation theory in was dominated by the fundamental issue of translatability. The main concern of scholars in the field of Philosophy, literary criticism, and linguistics was whether translation can reconcile the differences that separate language and cultures .
- In this regard, Roman Jakobson (1959) believed that any comparison of two languages implies the examination of their mutual translatability. In his paper ‘On Linguistic Aspects of Translation’ he mentions three kinds of translation- (i) Intralingual translation or rewording: an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language; (ii) Interlingual translation or translation proper: interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language; and (iii) Intersemiotic translation or transmutation: interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of non-verbal sign system. He states that in interlingual translation there is ordinarily no full equivalence between code-units, or words, while messages may serve as adequate interpretations of alien code-units (words) or messages.
- Jakobson is of the view that translation from one language into another involves two equivalent messages in two different codes, and substitutes messages in one language not for different code-units or words but for entire messages in some other language. He says that all cognitive experience and its classification is conveyable in any existing language, and whenever there is deficiency then terminology may be qualified and amplified by using loan words or loan- translation, neologisms or semantic shifts and even by circumlocutions.
- Jakobson believes that ‘Any comparison of two languages implies an examination of their mutual translatability; widespread practice of interlingual communication, particularly translating activities, must be kept under constant scrutiny by linguistic science.’ He makes a strong advocacy for differential bilingual dictionaries and differential bilingual grammars

which define what unifies and what differentiates the two languages in their selection and delimitation of grammatical concepts.

- Apart from dealing with the notions of equivalence, meaning, and translatability, Jakobson also examines language function by means of analyzing speech events. He enumerates different functions for language: referential, emotive, conative, phatic, metalingual, and poetic.
- The emergence of two co-extensive grammatical theories changed the direction of translation study: Chomsky's significantly: *Syntactic Structure* (1957) and *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (1965). *Generative transformational grammar* with its legitimacy in linguistics legalized Nida's scientific work in the field of translation. Nida's theory of translation developed from his practical work on words, from 1940s, when he was translating the Bible.
- In the early 1960s, when a systematic, theory-based approach to many disciplines, including linguistics, was prominent, translation theory developed dramatically with the work of Nida, who was aware of the lack of systematic-oriented approach in translation.
- Nida attempted to legitimize his own methodology by adopting some of the current theoretical notions in linguistics (notably Chomsky's linguistics), anthropology, and at the same time from semantics and pragmatics, to move translation into a more scientific era. These ideas formed the basis of his *Toward a Science of Translating* (Nida, 1964) and *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (Nida & Taber, 1969). As the title of the first book suggests, it sees translation as a science that could be analyzed systematically, and one of its aims is the redefinition of principles through which the accuracy in translation and judgment about accurate translation can be achieved.
- Nida developed an "analysing-transferring -reconstructing" pattern. He rejected the "free" versus "literal" debate in favour of the concept of "formal" and "dynamic" equivalence—

a concept that shifts the emphasis to the target audience, to make reading and understanding of the Bible easier for people with no knowledge of it.

- Formal equivalence is correspondence between linguistic units independent of any idea of content. Dynamic equivalence is characterized by Nida as ‘the closest natural equivalent to the source language message.
- Nida’s linguistic theory moves towards the fields of semantics and pragmatics, which leads him to develop the following model for analysis of meaning: (1) hierarchical structure: which differentiates series of words according to their level (super ordinate and hyponym), such as hyponyms “brother” or “sister” and the super ordinate “sibling”; (2) componential analysis: which identifies and discriminates specific features of a range of related words, e.g., “brother” in Afro-American talk does not necessarily refer to make relation born of the same parents; and (3) semantic structure analysis where the connotative and denotative meanings of homonyms are identical, e.g., “bat” the animal and the piece of sporting .
- The emphasis of structural approach to translation changed towards the end of the 1950s and early 1960s with the work of Canadian linguists Jean Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet. They approached French-English translation from the field of comparative stylistics and provided a theoretical basis for a variety of translation methods. They further developed the concept of examining linguistic changes that take place between the Source Text and the Target Text during translation.
- By noting differences between the languages, Vinay and Darbelnet identified different translation strategies and procedures in the subsequent years. Two such strategies were direct and oblique translation, comprising seven procedures: borrowing, calque, literal, transposition, modulation, equivalence, and adaptation.
- The translation methods of Vinay and Darbelnet in some ways reduce the differences related to language and culture to empiricist semantics (that is, approaching matters of meaning in the empirical spirit of natural science). They also encouraged the translator to think of meaning as a cultural construction and to see a close connection between “linguistic procedures” and “metalinguistic information”.(Metalinguistic: relationship between language and other cultural factors in society)

- In his famous book *A Linguistic Theory of Translation* (1965) J. C. Catford states that any theory of translation must draw upon a theory of language; and since translation has to deal with language, the analysis and description of translation –process must draw upon a general linguistic theory.
- Catford makes an important distinction between formal equivalence and textual correspondence. Translation classification depicted by Catford can be summarized as: full versus partial, total versus restricted translation. Later on he considers two kinds of shift: level shifts and category shifts. The latter covers structural, class, unit, and intersystem shifts. Catford's book is an important attempt to apply to translation the advances made in the field of linguistics in a systematic fashion.
- Other writings on translation shift in the 1960s was introduced by Levy. He carried out experiments showing that pragmatic translation involves a “gradual semantic shifting” that translators choose from a number of possible solutions. Modern translators, he asserts, apply the “minimax strategy”. He also synthesizes psycholinguistics, semantics, structural anthropology, literary criticism, and game theory in his approach.
- Georges Mounin (1963) acknowledges the great contribution that development of linguistic studies have brought in the field of translation. He believes that linguistics demonstrates that translation is a dialectic process that can be accomplished with relative success.
- Mounin(1963) acknowledges the great benefits that advances in linguistics have brought to translation studies. Mounin feels that it is because of developments in contemporary linguistics that we can (and must) accept that: (1) personal experience in its uniqueness is untranslatable; (2) in theory the base units of any two languages (e.g. phonemes, monemes, etc.) are not always comparable; (3) communication is possible when account is taken of the respective situations of speaker and hearer, or author and translator. In other words, Mounin believes that linguistics demonstrates that translation is a dialectic process that can be accomplished with relative success
- Very soon linguists became interested in the study of discourse analysis. However, an overall and systematic study of text, which could be was useful for translation studies, came out in the year 1981 by the authors de Beaugrande and Dressler, called *Introduction to Text*

Linguistics. Yet textual approaches to translation studies did not develop as fast as text linguistics did.

- In Eighties and Nineties some new, more sophisticated descriptive studies, were carried out by translation scholars, who had training in linguistics such as Roger Bell. They mainly focused on the exploration of what really happens during translation and not on what should happen or what can happen. It started with the idea that meaning is diffuse, it is not located in a word or in a grammatical category, but instead it emerges in different ways, which cross the boundaries of word, phrase, clause, sentence and even text. They also found meaning to be unstable, and also culturally constructed, so that all language use can be understood as mediated (culturally, ideologically and cognitively). This means that language, either generally or in translation came to be viewed as intimately connected with the social and cultural context in which it is created and used.
- This new view of language and of meaning brought various practical implications with it. One of them was a new approach to meaning, in which linguistics and linguistically oriented studies of translation started to analyze meaning from a broader perspective slowly moving outwards from the word to sentence, then to structures above the sentence, to the text and in the end to the text as a cultural phenomenon, which represented the values that a culture gives to certain practices and concepts. The second was the role of ideology. Once they accepted that all language use was mediated, the role of ideology in translation became emphasized; ideology not only in terms of the conflict between source text and target text ideologies, but also in terms of the translator's and other participants' own ideological and personal stakes in the communication.
- A good example of the influence of ideology on the translator is the work of Mason, *Discourse, Ideology and Translation* (1992). Here, he shows how the source text and the target text express two different ideologies
- The relationship of linguistics towards translation studies can thus be twofold: we can apply linguistic findings to the practice of translation, and we can create a linguistic theory of translation. In the first instance, a branch of linguistics like sociolinguistics can tell us something about the connection of language with the social situation and this something can then be applied in the act of translating.. In the second instance, we do not apply linguistic theory to parts of the text which we are translating, but we apply it to the whole

concept of translation. The translator focuses the translation on the target text receiver, who is different from the source text receiver in language, culture, world knowledge and text expectations, therefore he adapts the source language text to a different social group with what Marián Kabát, for the sake of terminological comparability, call its “natiolect”. Both of these instances can be found in many writings on linguistics and translation studies. Many authors list the main parts of a linguistic theory and then show what it can do to elements in the translation process. The most famous example of the second instance is Catford’s linguistic theory of translation (1965). He describes translation in terms of Halliday’s rank-scale grammar.

- Moreover, because of advances in new technologies, today we can also incorporate into Translation Studies the contribution of corpus linguistics, which allows both theorists and translators analyses of large amounts of electronic texts.
- In spite of all this, the relevance of linguistics to translation has also been critiqued, or worse, neglected. In recent years lot of the new literature on translation presumes that there are two orientations in the study of translation and that there is a clear-cut divide between them The first of these approaches is highly informed in linguistics and mostly referred to as the “linguistically oriented”. The second one is mainly based on cultural studies and literary theory and is known as the “cultural” approach.
- The reason for this gap could be as following:
 - ❖ In Structural linguistics morphology and syntax constitute the main areas of analysis, and largely exclude the problem of meaning, which was either ignored or else dealt with purely in terms of the distribution of lexical items. Meaning was, therefore, the weak point in language study but since meaning is at the very heart of the translator’s work this created a gap between linguistics and translation studies.
 - ❖ In addition, linguistic description was in general limited to single language systems. For the translator, every problem involved two language systems, a statement of the distribution of an item in one language is of no particular value to the translator.

- However, structuralist theories of language were, nevertheless, influential in translation theory and there were some serious attempts to apply structuralist notions to translation problems . Some are mentioned below:
 - ❖ As a result of Catford’s work with its emphasis on contextual meaning and the social context of situation in which language activity takes place, translation theory becomes a branch of contrastive linguistics, and translation problems become a matter of the non-correspondence of certain formal categories in different languages. This has led to an investigation of “equivalence probability”: “an attempt to arrive at a statistical calculation of the degree of probability that a given Source Language (SL) category will, in any given text, be rendered by an equivalent Target Language (TL) category
 - ❖ According to Nida, the non-correspondence of grammatical and lexical categories is the main source of information loss and gain in translation. The influence of contrastive structural linguistics has made itself felt in translation teaching methodology. Nida went as far as to suggest that the activity of translating involved: (1) breaking down the SL text into its underlying representation or semantic ‘kernels’; (2) transfer of meaning from SL to TL ‘on a structurally simple level’, and (3) generation of ‘stylistically and semantically equivalent expression in the TL.
- Besides this, the concept of “communicative competence”. is directly relevant to translation studies. Hatim and Mason have pointed out, that “the translator’s communicative competence is attuned to what is communicatively appropriate in both SL and TL communities and individual acts of translation may be evaluated in terms of their appropriateness to the context of their use”.
- Moreover, the scope of linguistics has widened beyond the confines of the individual sentence. Text linguistics attempts to account for the form of texts in terms of their users. If we accept that meaning is something that is negotiated between producers and receivers of texts, it follows that the translator, as a special kind of text user, intervenes in this process of negotiation, to relay it across linguistic and cultural boundaries. In doing so, the translator is necessarily handling such matters as intended meaning, implied meaning,

presupposed meaning, all on the basis of the evidence which the text supplies. The areas of sociolinguistics, pragmatics and discourse linguistics are all areas of study which are useful to this process.

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