

## Translation: Western Tradition

### Descriptive and Systemic, Cultural studies, Philosophical and hermeneutic and other approaches

This essay will deal with the development in the field of Translation Studies from 1970s till the present. It will describe different approaches apart from the linguistics- based, functionalist and discursive approaches, which have been discussed in another essay. It is important to discuss the development in the field of Translation studies while tracing the tradition in translation because Translation Studies includes the analysis of key texts, enabling students to develop an awareness of the problems of understanding and interpretation. It also involves the development of the analytical, practical, evaluative, aesthetic, and expository skills required in dealing with translation problems. Finally, it includes the development of research skills, practical translation skills, and the ability to develop expertise for managing complex linguistic and cultural issues involved in translation.

#### **Descriptive and Systemic approach in Translation Studies:**

- Three studies can be categorized under this umbrella: **Polysystem theory**, **Descriptive studies** and the **Manipulation School**
- All authors engaged in these areas aim at describing the role of translated literature within the literary polysystem - that is, its position within the cultural system of the target language, how it interacts with the literature written in the target language and with the other cultural systems and artistic manifestations of the target polysystem etc.
- The **Polysystem theory** appeared in the seventies. It derives its postulates from literary theory and the main interest lies in translated literature, which is seen as a system that operates within the literary, social and historical system of the target culture. Two of the main exponents of the polysystem theory are Even-Zohar (1978 and 1990) and Hermans (1999). These authors examine the position of translated literature as a whole within the literary and historical system of the target language.
- A direct descendant of the Polysystem approach is what may be called the **Descriptive translation studies**. Toury is its main representative and he takes the hypotheses developed by Even-Zohar (1978) as his starting point and then searches for a methodology for analyzing translations. The framework for his analysis is oriented

towards the TT and combines linguistic comparison of the ST and TT with the study of the cultural framework of the TT. His aim is to identify the patterns of behaviour behind translation and to reconstruct the norms at work during the translation process. The ultimate aim is to discover laws or regularities governing translation that can be of use to future translators and researchers.

- **The Manipulation School** is another approach which uses a number of concepts as essential: polysystem, manipulation, power and rewriting. Translation is understood as part of a socio-cultural context – a polysystem – in which ideology (another key concept from the point of view of manipulation) is undoubtedly present and in which the production of texts and the possible manipulations are largely determined by power relationships.
- Authors like Lambert and Van Gorp (1985), are members of the Manipulation School, who take the descriptive approaches as their basis to look for a way to compare the ST and the TT literary systems. In an attempt to achieve this, they propose a systematic scheme that avoids superficial and intuitive commentaries.

### **Cultural studies**

- Translation studies have been influenced by culture studies in three important areas: translation and rewriting, translation and gender, and translation and postcolonialism
- Bassnett and Lefevere (1990) were pioneers in the study of the interrelations between translation and culture, on the way in which culture impacts and constraints translation; Another important figure is Lefevere (1992) who oriented his study essentially towards power relationships and the dominant ideology in certain works of literature.
- The postcolonialist approach studies the manifestations of positions of power in the translations of colonised peoples and the role translations play in shaping literature in colonised countries.
- Gender-studies approach aims to make the feminine component in translation visible and analyses the strategies that can be used to achieve this aim.
- Another line of research that deals with cultural difference and the interface between the source culture and the foreign culture has been carried about by Venuti in his seminal work *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (1995). This approach is based on the study of how translation strategies are determined by the cultural differences

between the ST and TT, the dominant ideology and the dominant discourse. The author seeks to analyse, among other issues, the attitudes towards translation, the role played by translation or the role of a certain editorial policy. The key concepts in the theories of Venuti are those of the visibility/invisibility of the translator and the notions of foreignisation/ domestication.

### **Philosophical and hermeneutic approach**

- This approach includes writers whose theories about translation are based on philosophical considerations. The most significant among them are - Pound (1929), Steiner (1975) and the deconstructionists.
- Steiner has adopted the hermeneutic (concerning interpretation) approach ( in his work *After Babel, Aspects of Language and Translation*, 1975) and has described the philosophical and intellectual workings of the translator's mind. He does not consider translation as a science because according to him its categories are not systematic. He defines it as a "hermeneutic motion" consisting of four movements: Initiative trust, aggression, incorporation, and compensation.
- Ezra Pound's conception of translation is very experimental and creative. He focuses on the expressive qualities of language. The author proposes the idea of capturing the "energy of the language", in the form, rhythm, sound, clarity etc.
- Finally, based on the post-structuralist movements, the deconstruction school has also analysed translation. It has advocated new ways of looking at translation, and has questioned many preconceived ideas, especially related to the stability of the meaning and of the sign.

**Some of the most recent contributions, over the last few decades, to Translation Studies include the appearance of Corpus studies and the Cognitive approaches.**

### **Corpus studies :**

- Some of the most notable works on corpus studies are by Baker (1993, 1995, 1996), Laviosa (1998) or Olohan (2004). These authors base their approach on the application of corpus linguistics to translation. The aim of corpus linguistics is essentially that of analyzing large amounts of digitized texts.

### **The cognitive approaches:**

- The cognitive approaches focus their attention on the mental process involved during translation; that is, they are interested in translation as a cognitive activity.
- Such approaches include:
  - a) Studies that focus on the analysis of the translation process: They are
    - ❖ the interpretative theory of the ESIT (École Supérieure d'Interprètes et des Traducteurs), also known as the school of sense, bases its work on the observation of the translation process. Translating is conceived as an interpretive process consisting of three phases: comprehension, deverbilisation and re-expression.
    - ❖ the psycholinguistic model put forward by Bell (1991) in *Translation and Translating* (1991), who also deals with the translation process. This author's description rests more heavily upon psycholinguistic postulates than on observation. For Bell, the translating process is an interactive process that is performed in two phases – analysis and synthesis – involving three main aspects, namely, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic.
    - ❖ the sociological and psycholinguistic model developed by Kiraly (1995)
    - ❖ translation as decision-making cognitive behaviour, developed by Willis who sees translation as decision-making cognitive behaviour
  - b) On the other hand, there are the studies that centre on translation competence, such as the holistic model by PACTE or Kelly (2002, 2005). Some of the most notable works in this group include those of Schäffner and Adab. These works assume that translation competence provides the translator with the capacity to perform the cognitive (related to the process of understanding) operations needed to carry out the translation process.

#### **The Integrating and Interdisciplinary approaches:**

- Lately most translation scholars have adopted an integrating approach in Translation Studies. This integrating approach is generally characterized by the inclusion of both linguistic and literary concepts in the different analytical models. Many of these integrating approaches are also interdisciplinary in nature. Bassnett (1980) and Snell-Hornby (1988) have pioneered this trend.

**Thus translation, which was considered to be a sub-branch of linguistics gradually developed into an inter-disciplinary field of study, and in the last three decades of the 20th century Translation Studies**

started functioning as an autonomous branch of study. Today, in this age of globalization, the scope of translation is immense. It stretches from our immediate environment to every sphere of life. The significance and relevance of translation in our daily life is multidimensional and extensive. It is visualized as a socio-cultural bridge between communities and countries. In this new age interacting and remaining connected with people of other socio-cultural communities has become almost a necessity, both in respect to one's country as well as countries across the world. In this backdrop, translation has acquired an increasing importance and satisfies individual, societal and national needs.

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