

TRANSLATION STUDIES – A BROAD PERSPECTIVE

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I. INTRODUCTION

Translation studies as an academic discipline came to lime light in the 1980's. As a field of study translation studies mainly deals with the practice of the art of translation as well as the theorization of the act of translation. The act of translation involves the transference of the source language (SL) text to the target language (TL). It can be easily concluded that the act of translation is a multilingual affair. Apart from multilingualism, translation studies is interdisciplinary in nature because it establishes the relationship with other branches of study. For example, linguistics, cultural studies, philosophy and others. There is a basic distinction between the concept of translation and the discipline that is called Translation studies. Translation is an art that entails going through the process of translation from the part of the translator whereas translation studies is the analysis if the various methodological approaches associated with the art of translation.

The word translation cab be defined in number of ways and the reason behind this is that the both art and the act are variegated in nature. The term 'translation' can be referred to as – a broad topic area, the final product after the source language text has been transferred into target language text and finally, the process of translation adopted by the translator whiletransferring a particular text from source language to target language. Similarly, translation studies as an academic discipline polymorphic in nature. Various theoretical approaches of translation studies have intersected and dissected each other. Keeping the nature of polymorphism associated with translation studies in mind, the present paper aims to analyze the various theoretical approaches that have been formulated by several translation scholars across the planet. Since its inception in the late twentieth century, the various approaches that can be associated with translation studies are as follows:

Theories of equivalence. Functional theories of translation.

Linguistic – Based approached to Translation.Descriptive and Polysystem Theories.

Translation and Culture

The Hermeneutic approaches to Translation.

- 1. Theories of Equivalence:** The problem of equivalence between the source and the target text is one of the major factors of translation studies. The concept of equivalence is of primary importance for the scholars of translation because it is directly connected with the practicalities of translation. The term equivalence suggests the sameness that is shared by both the source and the target text. But it is the question of degree or to what extent that sameness existed is the reason why the theorization of the idea of equivalence becomes important.

Jean Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet argued that equivalence is a process in which the situation of the source text is replicated in the same manner in the target text but with different lexemes. Through this process, they suggest that the stylistic equivalence of both the source and target text can be maintained. Roman Jakobson, on the other hand, opines that there can be no exact equivalence between two different words in two different languages. Eugene Nida suggests that there are two types of equivalence – *the formal* and *the dynamic*. In case of *formal equivalence*, the target text resembles the source text in both form and content whereas in case of *dynamic equivalence*, the translator aims at transforming the message of the source text in the target text. However, Nida supported dynamic equivalence because he felt it was a more effective way of translation. Peter Newmark in his theorization of equivalence makes a formal distinction between *semantic* and *communicative* translation. By *semantic* translation, Newmark suggested the form of translation that concentrated more on the semantic aspects of the language and by *communicative* translation, Newmark suggested that the focus was more on the readers of the target text and the effect of translation upon them. Pym, like Jakobson, suggests that two languages can never be similar and hence the equivalence the translation scholars deal with is mostly an assumed equivalence. He distinguishes between *natural* equivalence and *directional* equivalence. Natural equivalence according to Pym exists before the act of translation itself and directional equivalence is the several translational strategies that the translator can choose freely in order to transmute the source text from the source language domain to target language domain.

- 2. Functional Theories of Translation:** The functional theories of translation first made its appearance in Germany during the period of 1970's and 80's. The aim of functional theory was to look after the functional and communicative aspect of translation. In order to make an analysis of the functional aspect of translation, the act of translation is invariably placed in the particular socio-cultural context in which it is translated. The central ideological aspect of the functional theories is *skopos*. The word *skopos* is a technical term associated with the discipline of translation studies which concentrates on the purpose of translation.

Skopos theory of translation was introduced by Hans Josef Vermeer in 1978. It is a shift away from the existing theories of translation and instead emphasized more on the function of translation in a particular cultural context. The word *skopos* which is a Greek word means 'purpose'. According to Vermeer, a text should reflect and focus upon the cultural norms and values of the target readers. Choice of exact equivalent words that would match with the source text is not important here, but the aim and intention behind the translation of the source text deserves special importance. For example during the process of the translation of the instruction manual or an advertisement, the target audience and the impact of the translation on the target audience is more important rather than the choice of precise words to be exact equivalent with the source text. It has to be kept in mind that a source text is written with a particular purpose, similarly when a text gets translated there has to be an agenda behind the act of translation and in this case the target readership holds the central position. The *skopos* theory provides six basic directives for the act of translation. They are as follows:

- Firstly, a translation is determined by its *skopos* or function.
- Secondly, a translation is supposed to provide information to the readers of the target culture as the source text performs similar functions in the source culture.

- Thirdly, a translation must present all the information of the source text in a clear and distinct way.
- Fourthly, structural similarity of the target text with the source text is important and that needs to be maintained.
- Fifthly, all the above four rules should be followed by the translator in a hierarchical order and skopos rule should predominate.
- Finally, the element of coherence with the source text is also important.

Now these three rules are actually governed by the primary three rules of skopos theory. They are as follows:

- Skopos rule – function of the target text in target culture is most important.
- Coherent rule – target text must be meaningful to the target audience.
- Fidelity rule – target text should be relatable to the source text.

3. Linguistic Based Approaches to Translation: With the advent of the new linguistic based approaches to translation, the translators are more concerned with the context. Some of the major theorists included A.E. House (A Model for Translation Quality Assessment), Mona Baker (In Other Words: A Course Book on Translation) and Hatim and Mason (Discourse and the Translator and The Translator as Communicator). According to House there are two types of translation – overt and covert translation. In overt translation, the source language text preserves much of its source language status even in the target language community. Cases of overt translation present difficulties precisely because their status in the socio-cultural community necessitates major changes. On the other hand, a covert translation enjoys the status of an original text in the target culture. In covert translation, the target text in the target linguistic community plays the role equivalent to the source text in the source linguistic community.

Mona Baker also based her work on the linguistic based translational approaches. Baker gives importance to certain elements that projects the problems experienced by the translator in attaining equivalence. Some of the elements that Baker highlights are as follows:

- The word level
- Beyond the word
- The grammatical level
- Text level
- Pragmatic level.

The first two elements are related to the lexical feature of a word or the problem of equivalence between the source and the target text at the level of semantic and the problem for the translator to find exact words as no words can be exactly equivalent in two different cultures. Next at the grammatical level baker concentrates on certain grammatical elements like the number, or tense or the voice that can prove to be a hindrance in achieving equivalence between the source and the target text. At the pragmatic level Baker is concerned with the thematic cohesion with the target text but at the pragmatic level the ideas like implications, the co-operative principles or the conversational manners are important.

Hatim and Mason consider language as the central element in the process of translation. It is through language, the author of the source text can communicate with the reader of the target text and it is the translator who acts as the medium of communication. During this entire process of communication the social background of the source and the target text cannot be overlooked. Hatim and Mason explicates three features in which the manifestation of textual communication takes place. They are as follows:

- **Communicative dimensions** which is related to the dialect used in both the texts.
- **Pragmatic dimensions** that include elements like assumptions and implicatures. They also incorporate all the other pragmatic elements of the text.
- **Semiotic dimensions** include discourse or social practices that belong to a given community.

4. Descriptive and Polysystem Theories of Translation: Polysystem theory is one of the significant approaches to translation studies. It was introduced by Stammer Even-Zohar in the 1970's. His polysystem theory is based on the ideas of Roman Jakobson, the Russian Formalist. According to Zohar, the act of translation involves various systems like – literature, society, culture and languages and these systems overlap and intersect with each other. Though these system overlap but they retain their individual independence. According to Evan-Zohar, literary system is composed of six essential factors the producer, the consumer, institution, market, repertoire and product.

If the literary system is analysed with the essential factors in mind, it would be easier to discover the underneath laws that lead to the act of translation. According to a translated text may occupy a primary or a secondary position in the target culture and its position is directly or indirectly governed by the six essential factors mentioned above. He mentions three situations where the translated text occupies the central position. They are as follows:

- When a new literature looks at the older and established versions of literature to get ready made models.
- When a weak literature borrows materials from other hegemonic literature. When a smaller nation is dominated by larger nations, this can happen.
- When there is a vacuum in literary history and the established literary forms are considered outdated, then it is easier to look towards the foreign models of literature.

There is another model of translation where the translated text takes the secondary position. It has no major influence on the target system and it maintains the conventional norms and patterns of the target system. But it has to be kept in mind that the secondary position is the conventional pattern of the translated text.

The position occupied by the translated literature in the poly system actually determines the strategy for translation. The translators do not follow the target textmodels and one way or the other they break the conventions and they produce a target text, which is closely linked with the literary conventions of the source text. On the other hand, if it is secondary, translators tend to use the patterns that exists in the target text literary models and the text that are translated are a kind of replica of the cultural facades of the target culture.

The name Gideon Toury is associated with Descriptive translation studies. Toury put forward a methodology of translation that is mostly target culture oriented. This is actually a continuation of Even-Zohar's poly system theory of translation. His methodology is comprised of three basic phenomenon. They are as follows:

- The position of the text that is translated need to be evaluated in the target culture system.
- A detailed textual analysis of the source text and target text is needed and this will actually help in identifying the major shifts in the target text from the source text.
- The patterns of writing in the source text and the patterns of translation evident in the target text needs proper analysis.

These three methodologies actually helps a translation scholar to identify the patterns and ways of translation, in order to formulate a comprehensive methodology of translation. The notion of translational norms have also been put forward by Toury. These norms are sociological in nature and these norms are absolutely culture oriented. According to Toury, an individual when born in a particular socio-cultural environment acquire these norms through learning and education and the patterns of behavior he or she is supposed to follow in that particular environment. Similarly, in case of translation, the translator also need to know the norms in which they are translating. Toury considers that the art of translation is guided by these socio-cultural norms. These norms according to Toury, can be identified in two ways – by analyzing the features of the text that is translated as well as the comments made by the reviewers or the translators about the book. There are three kinds of norms, according to Toury. They are as follows:

- **Initial norm:** It is related to the choice made by the translator to remain committed to the norms of the source text and if the norms of the source text is followed, then it can be said to be a case of *true translation*. If the target culture norms are followed, then it can be said to be an *acceptable translation*.
 - **Primary norm:** It suggests the policies of translation. Translation policies refers to the factors that seems to have a detrimental effect on the selection of the text that is to be translated from a particular source language or culture.
 - **Operational Norm:** It involves two types of norms – material norms and textual linguistic norms. Material norms concerned with the completeness of the source text. It analyses the elements of the source text that is omitted or the parts that have been added in the target text. The *textual-linguistic norm* is concerned with the language or phrases of the target culture that is to be used in the process of translation.
5. **Translation and Culture:** There are three major areas where translation studies have intersected with cultural studies. They are translation as rewriting, translation and post colonialism and translation and gender. The term translation and rewriting was first introduced by Andre Lefevere. At the beginning he used the term 'refraction' but later he changed it into 'rewriting'. According to Lefevere, there are certain factors that controls the acceptance or rejection of translation. These factors include power, ideology, manipulation, etc... People in the position of power decides on the texts that are to be translated and they are the ones who have the control over the consumption of such literary activities among the readers. Lefevere here is mostly concerned with the literary translations and there are two factors that controls literary translations. They are;

- **Professionals:** Includes translators, academics or critics and they are the direct product of the dominant ideological forces and thus they also controls the act of translation.
- **Patronage:** In case of patronage there are three elements according to Lefevere which combine with each other in the process of translation. The three elements include;
 - Ideological component that is determined by the selection of the text.
 - Economic component refers to the payment made to the translators and these payments are mostly made by the patrons.
 - Status component which characterized by the fact that the acceptance of the patronage involves through the process of taking memberships in certain groups.

Hence a conclusion may be drawn that Lefevere's idea of translation as rewriting is based on power equations and ideological manifestations.

In Translation and Post colonialism, the equation of power holds the central dominating influence as well. Tejaswini Niranjana in her book, *Siting Translation: History, Post-Structuralism and Colonial Context* considers literary translation as a product of the hegemonic discourse of the colonial authoritative power. In her work she highlights how translation of regional literature in English language portray the natives as typical oriental stereotypes. She directly links postcolonial translational practices with the imbalanced power relationship that exists between the colonizer and the colonized.

Finally, the emergence and development of feminist translation theory incorporates fresh lease of life to the discipline of translation studies. It provides new theoretical foundation to analyse the act of translation from a different perspective altogether. The feminist approach to translation actually analyses the role of fidelity to the original text that is to be translated. For feminist translation, the fidelity or faithfulness is directed towards the project of writing – a project that includes both the writer and the translator. Flowtow identifies three translation strategies which are commonly used by feminist translators. They are:

- **Preface and Footnotes:** it is a kind of strategy used by the translators that comes to their aid in expressing the intention of the author as well the strategies of translation they have undertaken. Footnotes are used by the translators to express their hidden ideologies.
 - **Supplementing:** It is a process which actually helps the translators to compensate the differences that exists between two languages. But the feminist translators use supplement to express the distinction of sex found in the original text.
 - **Hijacking:** It is considered to be the most controversial of all the strategies used by feminist scholars. The feminist translators actually manipulate with the original text and they use hijacking methods to change the semantic attributes of words and sentences in order to represent their feminist consciousness.
6. **Hermeneutic Approaches to Translation:** In *After Babel*, George Steiner influenced by the hermeneutic approach to translation, categorises the act of translation into four different groups. This categorization is known as hermeneutic motion. It involves four stages. They are

- **Trust:** It is the first approach to the hermeneutic motion of translation. Steiner explains the concept of trust as a work that can be trusted because it has some sort of substance and the work is serious. It also suggests that the work has something that is actually worth translating. But the academic community is divided in their opinions regarding the concept of trust. The concept of trust can be seen as trusting the text or trusting the translatability as well.
- **Aggression:** The second step to Steiner's model is aggression. In this step, the translator aggressively takes over the foreign text with a view to translate it along with all the cultural nuances of the source text.
- **Incorporation:** The third step involves incorporation. It refers to the act of incorporating the meaning and ideas of the source language to the target language. In order to translate, the translator needed to merge and assimilate several source language elements into target language.
- **Compensation:** The fourth element according to Steiner is compensation. In the third step the translator incorporates the meaning and form of the source text into target language but during the process some of the essential features of the source language may be lost in translation and as a result the readers of the target text cannot fully appreciate all the elements of the source text. Hence the translator strives to maintain a balance between the source text and the target text. Through the act of compensation, the translator makes attempts to compensate the untranslatable aspects of the source text.

II. CONCLUSION

In conclusion it can be said that the art that came to existence as a secondary component to the original writings is no way can be designated a secondary status today. The amount of progress the art of translation and theorization have made in the last few decades is almost incomparable. It is translation that reoriented our ideas about the purpose of translation as well as the linguistic element associated with the art of translation. The translators who have always been seen as a second grade citizen are now placed in equal ground with the authors of the original texts. It is evident from the above discussion that new school of thoughts have developed with the passage of time starting from the theories of Equivalence to the Hermeneutic approaches to translation studies. Apart from these two other fields related to translation are gaining momentum which have not been discussed here are corpus studies and cognitive approaches. The former deals with translation of the large amount of digitized text from the perspective of language and the cognitive approach analyses the mental process that seems to continue in the mind of the translator while embarking on a project of translation.

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