



University Centre of Abdelhafid Bousouf - Mila
2022-2023 Semestre 3

English 2nd Year (G: 4,5 & 6)

– Lesson 02 –

A Brief History of Translation Theory



Image

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Literatures and Foreign Languages	Foreign Languages	2 nd Year	English Language

Lesson's Objectives : By the the end of this lesson, students will be able to answer questions like :

- When and where did translation theory appear ?
- What kind of translation theory was suggested ? and
- Why translation theory was/is needed ?

1. Translation Theory (the beginning) :

A. In the West :

The first translation theory is believed to be a commentary by the Roman lawyer, statesman and translator **Marcus Tilluis Cicero** in the (1st century BC). When he translated speeches from Greek to Latin, he states :

And I did not translate them as an **interpreter**, but as an **orator**, keeping the same ideas and forms, or as one might say, the ‘figures’ of thought, but in language which conforms to our usage. And in so doing, I did not hold it necessary to render word for word, but I preserved the general style and force of the language.

(Cicero 46 BCE/1960 CE: 364 cited in Munday 2008)

Based on this commentary, St. Jerome introduced later in the 4th century what is called « sense-for-sense » translation, and advocated its usage especially when translating non-religious texts. He made his statement as follows :

Now I not only admit but freely announce that in translating from the Greek – except of course in the case of the Holy Scripture, where even the syntax contains a mystery – I render not word-for-word, but sense-for-sense.

(St. Jerome 395 CE/1997: 25 cited in Munday 2008)

Now you know that two methods had been suggested, which are Word-for-word and Sense-for-sense i.e. Literal vs. Free. You are going to know was there any translation theory in the Arab history ?

B. In the Arabic history :

The golden age of translation was during the Abbasid era (750-1250 AC). Translators were divided into two groups. A group who used to take Greek or Roman texts and translate them by following their word order, whereas the second group used to read these foreign texts and understand them very well, then, translate their meanings with a standard arabic style¹.

“Al-Safadī (printed in Khalūsī 1982: 4; also discussed in Baker 1998: 321) stated that there were two methods of translation during alMa’mun’s reign: 1) word by word; and 2) transferring the whole meaning of the sentence into mind. The first method was adopted by Yūhana Ibn al-Batrīq, Ibn Nā’ima al-Himsī, and others who would look up the meaning of each Greek word to find its equivalent in Arabic and then moved on to the following word until they had the whole text translated. Hunayn Ibn Ishāq and al-Jawāhirī adopted the second method wherein they set down the transferred materials in fluent Arabic without violating the majesty of the TL.”²

The next point is about the development of translation theory in the west, starting from how a translator should translate to how a translator may apply some techniques to provide good translations.

2. The Development of Translation Theory in the West :

Much discussion has been taken around how to translate texts especially a holy text, and make it accessible to a large number of people to convert them to Judaism or Christianity. However later discussions tried to make translation more systematic by proposing techniques, procedures and strategies to make translation possible in many ways. Below are some suggestions of scholars, linguists and great translators.

A. Dryden, Tytler and Dolet between (1500 and late 1700) :

- John Dryden : A theologian and a translator from Latin into English suggested three ways of translating³ :
 - ✓ Metaphrase (rendering word by word and line by line)
 - ✓ Paraphrase (the translator keeps an eye on the author rendering his sense only)
 - ✓ Imitation (the translator experiences a bit of freedom)
- Alexander Fraser Tytler : A Scottish lawyer, a historian and a writer who provided three principles of how to translate⁴ :
 - ✓ the contents and/or ideas of the ST should be transferred completely into the TT;
 - ✓ the style and manner of the ST should be retained in the TL; and
 - ✓ the translation should have all the ease of the original composition
- Etienne Dolet : A French humanist and translator from Latin into French suggested 5 principles of how to translate well⁵ :
 - ✓ the translator must understand perfectly the content and intention of the author ;
 - ✓ the translator should have an excellent command in both languages: SL and TL;
 - ✓ the translator should avoid *word-for-word* renderings;
 - ✓ the translator should avoid the uncommon use of archaic words and expressions, but rather should focus on the common usage of the language; and
 - ✓ the translator should devote their attention to the rhetorical devices.

B. F. Schleiermacher 1813 :

He is a German theologian, philosopher and translator between German and French. He wrote a prolific essay entitled as « *On the Different Methods of Translating* » in which he provided this statement :

Either the translator leaves the writer in peace as much as possible and moves the reader toward him; or he leaves the reader in peace as much as possible and moves the writer toward him.

(Schleiermacher; Tr. Bernofsky 1813; cited in Venuti 2012:49)

The first line would refer to his translation method: **Alienating** (making translation look strange)

The second line would refer to his translation method: **Naturalizing** (making translation look smooth)

C. J. P. Vinay and J. Darbelnet 1958 :

They are both French linguists who devoted a book to a linguistic study of French and English. They entitled it as « *Comparative Stylistic of French and English* », in which they came up with 7 procedures of translating mainly at the sentence level. They suggested 03 direct procedures and 04 oblique procedures⁶. As shown in the table below :

Direct Translation Procedures	Oblique Translation Procedures
Borrowing	Transposition
Calque	Modulation
Literal translation	Equivalence
	Adaptation

Whereas direct procedures help translators to overcome simple problems of translation, oblique procedures help translators to avoid literalism and make translation possible and stylistically acceptable.

e.g. : - هؤلاء الوزراء لهم اليد العليا في إصدار القرارات

Literal translation : Those ministers have the high hand in making decisions.

Equivalence : Those ministers have the last word in decision-making.

Modulation : Decision making is only for those ministers. (the point of view is changed completely but the meaning is preserved)

- In this example we saw that literal translation can not solve the problem of meaning that's why we used equivalence and modulation to solve such problem.

e.g. : رّ نفسك - سابقى هنا ريثما تحض

Literal translation : I will stay here until you prepare yourself. (correct but stylistically unacceptable)

Equivalence : it's not an idiomatic expression.

Modulation : Get ready ! We will leave together. (changing the view from a declarative to an order)

Transposition : I will stay here as long as you are getting yourself ready. (only changing the grammatical structure)

Also : I'm here at the time when you are getting ready.

D. Eugene Nida 1964 :

He is an American theologian, linguist and translator of the Bible from Greek into one of the Canadian languages known as *Inuktitut*. Based on his translation work he wrote a book entitled as « Toward a Science of Translating » in which he discussed two types of equivalence. One is formal and the second is Dynamic⁷.

- Formal equivalence : means translating with attention to both form and content.
- Dynamic equivalence : means translating with no attention to form but with attention to 'the equivalent effect' i.e. keeping the same content.

e.g. : He do not like to be under the weather.

Formal : هو لا يحب أن يكون في جو غير لطيف

Dynamic : إنه لا يحبذ الاكتئاب

e.g. : خيرها في غيرها

Formal equivalence : A better one in other time.

Dynamic equivalence : Better luck next time.

More examples :

Dynamic equivalence	Formal equivalence	الأمثال العربية
A moneyless man goes fast through the market.	The eyes see but the hands can not reach.	العين بصيرة واليد قصيرة.
From small beginning comes great things	A journey of a thousand miles starts with one step.	رحلة الألف ميل تبدأ بخطوة.
Add fuel to fire.	Add wetness to the mud.	يزيد الطين بلة.
Know something like the back of your hand.	The people of Makah Know their streets best.	أهل مكة أدرى بشعابها.
A friend in need is a friend indeed.	A true friend is for the time of trouble.	الصديق وقت الضيق.
It's all his fault yet he pretends to be the victim.	He hit me and cried he raced me to complain.	ضربني وبكي وسبقتي واشتكي.
It is no skin off my nose.	I have neither a male nor a female camel in it.	لا ناقه لي فيها ولا جمل.
Better luck next time.	A better one in other time.	خيرها في غيرها.

The following theorists are going to be explained in the following lessons. We are going to see more techniques, methods and strategies of translation.

E. John C. Catford 1965 :

F. Peter Newmark 1988 :

G. Lawrence Venuti 1995 :

'As far as translation theory is concerned, I believe nothing can be done randomly and everything is systematic. As we speak we do mean something by what we are saying. Even nonsense words that we throw are expressions of a situation that we experience this experience is what we call a theory'

A. D.

¹ See, *Translation Theories Exemplified from Cicero to Pierre Bourdieu*, Ali Almannan, Sayab Books LTD, London, 2013

² See, *Introducing Translation Studies*, Jeremy Munday, 2nd ed., Routledge, London & New York 2008

³ See, *Translation Theories Exemplified from Cicero to Pierre Bourdieu*, Ali Almannan, Sayab Books LTD, London, 2013

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ See, *Introducing Translation Studies*, Jeremy Munday, 2nd ed., Routledge, London & New York 2008

⁷ See, *Toward a science of translating*, Eugene Nida, 1st ed., E. J. Brill, Netherlands, 1964.