

A Synoptical State of Art in Translation Research



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Abstract

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The field of Translation Research is a discipline that involves an investigation into various aspects of translation including translation theory, translational practices, and the use of translation technology. This subject has a history dating back to earlier societies but it has experienced significant progress and growth in recent decades. This can be attributed to the increasing demand for translation services and advancements in technology. The present study provides a comprehensive overview of the debated topics in the field of translation studies.

وضعیت موجود پژوهش ترجمه

حوزه پژوهش ترجمه رشته‌ای است که شامل بررسی جنبه‌های مختلف ترجمه از جمله نظریه ترجمه، شیوه‌های ترجمه و استفاده از فناوری ترجمه می‌شود. این موضوع سابقه‌ای به جوامع پیشین دارد اما در دهه‌های اخیر پیشرفت و رشد چشمگیری داشته است. این را می‌توان به افزایش تقاضا برای خدمات ترجمه و پیشرفت در فناوری نسبت داد. پژوهش حاضر مرور مختصر و جامع موضوعات مورد بحث در حوزه مطالعات ترجمه را ارائه می‌کند.

واژگان کلیدی: جهانی شدن، ترجمه ماشینی، شیوه‌های ترجمه، تحقیق ترجمه، نظریه‌های ترجمه

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Introduction

Translation Theories

Theoretical perspectives on translation can be dichotomized into two principal groupings: descriptive and prescriptive, as identified by Gentzler (2001). Descriptive theories endeavor to furnish a precise portrayal of the actual process of translation production, while prescriptive theories endeavor to furnish normative directives for the ideal manner in which translations ought to be produced. Several prominent theories on translation have been proposed, including the theory of equivalence, the source-oriented approach, the target-oriented approach, and the Skopos Theory.

The theory of equivalence, also known as the equivalence theory, states that the main goal of translation is to produce an equivalent effect in the target language as the source text produces. This theory was developed by many scholars, including Eugene Nida and Mary Snell-Hornby (Nida, 1964; Snell-Hornby, 1988).

The source-oriented approach focuses on the source text and aims to maintain the original message, meaning, and style of the source text as much as possible. The source-oriented approach was developed by a number of German translators and theorists in the 20th century, including Walter Benjamin and Ernst Robert Curtius (Benjamin, 1923; Curtius, 1953).

The target-oriented approach focuses on the target audience and the target culture and aims to ensure that the translated text is culturally and linguistically appropriate for the target audience. This approach was developed by scholars such as Hans J. Vermeer and Susan Bassnett (Vermeer, 1978; Bassnett, 1980s).

The Skopos Theory is a functionalist theory of translation that was also developed by the German translator and theorist Hans J. Vermeer. The theory argues that the main goal of translation is to fulfill the purpose, or skopos, of the target text. This means that the translator must consider the intended audience, context, and purpose of the target text to produce an effective translation (Vermeer, 1978).

The cultural turn theory is a recent development in translation studies that focuses on the cultural aspects of translation, including the impact of translation on cultural identity and the role of translation in the cultural exchange between different societies. This theory was developed by scholars such as Lawrence Venuti and André Lefevere (Venuti, 1995; Lefevere, 1992).

There have also been a number of recent developments in the field of translation studies. Here are a few examples:

Postcolonial Translation Studies examines the role of translation in the colonization and decolonization of societies, as well as the power dynamics that shape the translation process. This approach is concerned with how translation has been used to assert or challenge colonial power, as well as the impact of translation on the representation and preservation of cultural identities. Scholars who have contributed to the development of this area of study include Susan Bassnett, André Lefevere, and Emily Apter (Bassnett, 1998; Lefevere, 1992; Apter, 2006).

New Materialist Translation Studies is a relatively new area of study that focuses on the material aspects of translation, including the materiality of texts and the physical and technological conditions that shape the translation process. This approach emphasizes the importance of considering the material aspects of translation in understanding how meaning is produced and transmitted across cultures and languages. Scholars who have contributed to the development of this area of study include Ian Buchanan, Mireille Rosello, and Maria Tymoczko (Buchanan, 2014; Rosello, 2018; Tymoczko, 2007).

Translation and Interpreting in a Globalizing World is a growing area of study that examines the impact of globalization on the translation and interpreting professions, as well as how translation and interpreting facilitate and challenge globalization. This approach recognizes the centrality of translation and interpreting in shaping global communication and exchange and considers the implications of this for cultural, political, and economic relationships between different countries and regions. Scholars who have contributed to the development of this area of study include Rainer Schulte, Gunilla Anderman, and Minhua Liu (Schulte, 2013; Anderman, 2008; Liu, 2019).

These are just a few examples of recent developments and new theories in the field of translation studies. The field continues to evolve and grow, reflecting the changing nature of our multilingual and interconnected world.

Universal Theory of Translation

Translation Studies is a field lacking a universally comprehensive theoretical framework that can encompass all pertinent issues. The process of translation constitutes a multifaceted endeavor,

encompassing diverse realms including linguistic, cultural, literary, and socio-cultural spheres. To cope with the inherent complexities of translation, a multitude of theories and approaches have been propounded to tackle each of these facets holistically. Various theoretical frameworks have been proposed in the field of translation studies, with some emphasizing linguistic aspects such as equivalence and translation strategies, and others emphasizing cultural factors such as the impact of translation on the formation of cultural identity. Certain theoretical perspectives emphasize literary elements, such as the correlation between translated works and their original counterparts, whereas others prioritize the societal dimension, which involves the link between translation and its influence on authority.

Furthermore, the discipline of Translation Studies is in a state of perpetual evolution, with novel theories and methodologies emerging to tackle novel or developing concerns within this domain. Contrary to positing a universal theory, it is more precise to assert that Translation Studies constitute a domain that comprises a plethora of theories and methodologies, with each strand catering to distinct facets of the intricacies implicated in the translation process. The amalgamation of diverse theories and methodologies can yield a more holistic comprehension of translation and its multifaceted aspects. The combination of theories and approaches in Translation Studies holds significant potential for enhancing the comprehensiveness of understanding in the domain of translation. The following are several illustrations:

Translation Studies involves a plethora of theories and methodologies that examine various facets of the process of translating. Certain theories center on linguistic components, such as the concepts of equivalence and translation strategies, while others center on cultural facets, such as the function of translation in the construction and portrayal of cultural identity. Certain translation theories also examine the literary and sociocultural dimensions (Gentzler, 2001).

As the discipline of Translation Studies undergoes continuous development, novel theories and approaches are advanced to tackle modern and evolving concerns. It is improbable for a universal theory encompassing all facets of Translation Studies to manifest. However, the amalgamation of multiple theories and methodologies could garner a more all-encompassing perception of translation (Baker, 2018).

The integration of various linguistic theories can facilitate a more sophisticated comprehension of how translators navigate the dual demands of equivalence and the target audience and context.

The amalgamation of equivalence theories and translation strategy theories can provide a comprehensive comprehension of the balancing act in question (Nida, 1964; Toury, 1995).

The integration of cultural and literary theorems facilitates a more comprehensive apprehension of the cultural and literary facets of the translation process. In scholarly discourse, the integration of theories concerning translation's role in shaping cultural identity with those exploring the dynamics between translated works and their source texts could lead to a more comprehensive understanding of how translation shapes both cultural identity and literary heritage (Bassnett, 2002; Lefevere, 1992).

The integration of social and political theories has the potential to offer a more comprehensive comprehension of the social and political facets implicated in the translation context. The integration of theories regarding the correlation between translation and power, in tandem with theories on the function of translation within intercultural dialogue, can provide insight into how the act of translation can both strengthen and subvert power dynamics, while concurrently promoting intercultural communication. Such theories have been espoused by scholars such as Venuti (1995) and Cronin (2003).

Through the integration of diverse theoretical frameworks and analytical methodologies, the discipline of Translation Studies can facilitate a more nuanced and all-encompassing comprehension of the intricate and multi-dimensional nature of the translation process. The congruence of pairs is contingent upon the contextual factors and their respective applications. According to Munday (2012), certain applications may share similarities while others may diverge significantly depending on their distinct objectives and goals.

Universals of Translation

The universals of translation refer to a set of principles that describe basic features common to all translations, regardless of the languages involved. These universals were first proposed by Eugene Nida and later expanded upon by other scholars, including Katharina Reiss, Hans Vermeer, Christiane Nord, and Mary Snell-Hornby (Nida, 1964; Reiss & Vermeer, 1984; Nord, 1991; Snell-Hornby, 1988).

There are three main universals of translation:

Semantic universals refer to the modes by which signification is communicated across multiple linguistic systems. This encompasses the utilization of equivalents, opposites, and additional forms of semiotic associations. The consideration of semantic universals is of significance for translators during the translation process. This is primarily because these universals aid in guaranteeing that the intended meaning of the source text is precisely rendered in the target language (House, 2015).

Pragmatic universals pertain to the distinct manners by which language serves as a medium of communication across various cultures. Nonverbal communication pertains to the implementation of bodily movements, vocal inflections and various other nonverbal cues. Pragmatic universals are a salient factor for translators to contemplate, given their potential to impact the efficacy of the translation in effectively conveying the intended message to the intended audience (Katan, 2004).

Textual universals refer to how textual compositions are structured and arranged across various vernaculars. The implementation of appropriate formatting techniques, such as paragraph structuring, section headings, and other textual attributes, is a vital aspect of academic writing. The consideration of textual universals is crucial for translators concerning their potential impact on the readability and comprehension of the translated text in the target language, as posited by Baker (1992).

While it is important for translators to take these universals into account to ensure the accuracy and effectiveness of the translation, it is also important to recognize that there may be certain cultural or linguistic nuances that cannot be fully translated. In these cases, translators may need to adapt the translation to ensure that it is effective in the target culture (Venuti, 2008).

In essence, comprehension and implementation of the universal principles of translation can facilitate the precise transference of the intended message from the source language to the target language. Translators are required to maintain cognizance of the constraints of translation and demonstrate readiness to modify their translations as deemed necessary to guarantee their efficacy in the intended culture.

Translation Practices

Translation practices pertain to the tangible procedures entailed in the act of translating texts, encompassing the sequential actions taken, the tools and resources utilized, as well as the strategies and techniques employed. The area of Translation Studies has extensively investigated numerous themes concerning the practices of translation, encompassing translator education, evaluation of

translation excellence, and the influence of novel technologies on the process of translation (Gambier & van Doorslaer, 2016).

Translation technology, which encompasses both computer-aided translation (CAT) tools and machine translation (MT) systems, has significantly contributed to the advancement of the discipline of translation research. Machine translation (MT) has been the focal point of profound research endeavors concerning both the enhancement of its accuracy and fluency and the ethical and legal predicaments associated with its utilization in professional domains (Bowker & Cronin, 2009).

Over the past few years, there has been a discernible trend towards interdisciplinary engagement within the domain of translation research. Scholars hailing from diverse academic disciplines such as linguistics, computer science, cognitive psychology, and cultural studies have lent their expertise to the development of novel theories and practices in this field (O'Hagan & Mangiron, 2013). The intrinsic interdisciplinary quality of translation research has facilitated a more all-encompassing comprehension of the process of translation, as well as the multifarious ramifications it may engender across varying lines of inquiry.

Furthermore, the domain of translation research has achieved widespread global attention, as scholars from diverse geographical regions join forces to investigate the cultural, social, and political ramifications of translation (Tymoczko & Gentzler, 2002). The present collaborative effort conducted on a global scale has resulted in an increased recognition of the wide-ranging interpretation methodologies and their socio-cultural milieu. Furthermore, it has yielded a profound comprehension of the translation's effect on global correspondence and intercultural associations.

The field of Translation Studies has extensively examined various subject matters concerning translation practices, such as the influence of technology on the translation procedure, training of translators, and evaluation of translation quality. The interdisciplinary and global dimensions of translation research have contributed to a holistic comprehension of the translation process and its ramifications in diverse disciplinary domains and cultural settings.

Translation Research as a Dynamic Field

Translation research is a constantly progressing and engaging domain that has exerted a noteworthy influence on our comprehension of the process and repercussions of translation (Pym, 2010). The domain of translation services persists in its growth and expansion impelled by technological advancements and rising worldwide requisite. The field of translation research has been significantly impacted by technological advancements, particularly in the domains of computer-aided translation and machine translation. Researchers are actively engaged in exploring novel methodologies to enhance their efficacy and ascertain their seamless integration within the translation process (Garcia, 2019).

The realm of Translation research is observing a gradual shift towards interdisciplinary approaches, wherein academicians hailing from linguistics, computer science, cognitive psychology, and cultural studies, amongst several others, are working in unison to delve deeper into multiple aspects of translation (Biel, 2020). The current shift towards a wider and eclectic spectrum of translation perspectives has yielded significant contributions to the field, resulting in novel insights and innovative practices.

The domain of translation research is currently expanding its geographical horizons, as scholars hailing from various countries collaborate in the investigation of the ramifications of translation in cultural, social, and political contexts (Katan, 2019). The aforementioned circumstance has resulted in a heightened recognition of the multifarious utilizations of translation and the numerous obstacles it encounters, alongside novel methodologies to tackle these impediments.

The surge in the need for translation services, principally attributed to globalization and technological advancements, has resulted in heightened attention toward research in the field of translation (Incalcaterra McLoughlin & Pagani, 2018). Scholars are currently endeavoring to enhance translation methodologies and technologies, while simultaneously striving to gain a deeper comprehension of the cultural and linguistic ramifications inherent in the act of translation.

The field of translation research is in a constant state of development as emerging theories and practices are constructed while preexisting ones undergo refinement (Toury, 2012). The dynamic nature of the field of translation ensures that it remains pertinent and adaptable to the shifting requirements of both the translation industry and society at large.

Challenges Facing Translation Research

The challenges faced in translation research can include the following:

Quality assessment: Ensuring the quality of translations is a major challenge in the field of translation research. Researchers are working to develop new methods for evaluating the accuracy, fluency, and cultural appropriateness of translations, as well as to understand the factors that influence translation quality (House & Blum-Kulka, 2013).

Integrating technology: The integration of translation technology, such as computer-aided translation and machine translation, into translation processes is a complex and ongoing challenge. Researchers are working to develop new methods for improving the performance of these technologies, as well as to address ethical and legal issues associated with their use (Gambier & van Doorslaer, 2016).

Cultural and linguistic diversity: Translation research is becoming increasingly global in scope, and as a result, researchers are facing the challenge of addressing the diversity of cultures and languages in the world. This includes exploring the cultural and linguistic implications of translation, as well as developing translation processes that are inclusive and culturally sensitive (Pym, 2010).

Multilingual data management: The growing volume of multilingual data, particularly on the internet, presents a major challenge for translation research. Researchers are working to develop new methods for managing and processing this data, as well as to improve the quality and reliability of machine translation systems (O'Brien & Schäler, 2010).

Balancing cultural and linguistic accuracy: Translation research must balance the need for cultural and linguistic accuracy with the practical considerations of time, cost, and resources. This requires researchers to develop new methods for improving translation processes and technologies, as well as to explore new approaches to translation that are more efficient and effective (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 2014).

Ethical and legal issues: Translation research also involves exploring the ethical and legal implications of translation, including issues related to intellectual property, privacy, and the use of machine translation in professional settings. Researchers are working to develop new approaches to addressing these issues, as well as to raise awareness of the importance of ethical and legal considerations in the field of translation (Cronin, 2013).

In brief, the field of translation research is confronted with several obstacles, encompassing the assessment of translation quality, the incorporation of technology, the consideration of cultural and linguistic diversities, the administration of multilingual data, the attainment of correctness in culture and language, and the examination of ethical and legal predicaments. The effective resolution of these obstacles necessitates a continuous pursuit of research and innovation within the domain of translation coupled with collaborative efforts across diverse fields and cultures.

Development of New Approaches

Forecasting the novel methodologies that will surface in the domain of translation research is a formidable task; however, certain prospective avenues of advancement have been recognized. There is a high probability that scholars will persist in enhancing the efficiency and precision of machine translation systems through the creation of more sophisticated algorithms and the integration of supplementary data sources and knowledge (Koehn, 2017).

Furthermore, there exists a potential prospect for the amalgamation of both human and machine translation services, prioritizing the advancement of integrated systems that maximize the respective advantages of both methodologies to generate translations of superior quality (O'Brien, 2018). Research in the field of translation may also investigate alternative methods for cultural and linguistic adaptation, with a particular emphasis on facilitating translation processes that are more comprehensive and culturally mindful, in recognition of the heterogeneous multiplicity of cultures and languages in existence worldwide (González-Díaz & Martín de León, 2017).

The increasing prevalence of multimedia and multi-modal communication presents an opportunity for scholars to investigate novel techniques for translating non-textual content such as audio and visual components, and to devise strategies for incorporating these modes of communication into established translation procedures (Neves & Almeida, 2021). A possible avenue for advancement rests in the formation of interactive and adaptable translation systems capable of accommodating user input and feedback, assimilating knowledge from past translations, and conforming to evolving circumstances (Domingo et al., 2020).

The discipline of translation research has the potential to tackle emerging ethical and legal challenges, particularly within the sphere of growing machine translation implementation and the incorporation of translation technology into professional environments (Hutchins, 2020).

As a final word, the study of translation comprises diverse theoretical frameworks, methodologies, and advancements aimed at comprehending and enhancing the process of rendering a text from one language to another. Translation research encompasses various fields of inquiry, specifically encompassing studies related to translation theory, machine translation, translation quality assessment, translation and cognition, translation and society, and translation pedagogy. The discipline of Translation Quality Assessment (TQA) carries significant significance due to its role in evaluating the appropriateness of translations for their envisioned purpose, as well as promoting intercultural communication and comprehension. As advancements in technology and methodologies emerge, the realm of translation research is anticipated to undergo further development and amplification.

Conclusion

Translation research encompasses a broad range of theories, approaches, and developments that aim to understand and improve the process of translating text from one language to another. Here is a brief overview of some key areas within translation research:

Translation Theories: These are frameworks for understanding and explaining the process of translation, and include linguistic, cultural, and literary theories. Some of the most well-known theories include equivalence theory, skopos theory, and cultural turn theory.

Machine Translation: This area focuses on developing algorithms and systems that can automatically translate text from one language to another. Machine translation has made significant progress in recent years, but it is still considered to be a challenging task due to the complexity of human language and the need for context-specific knowledge.

Translation Quality Assessment: Translation quality assessment (TQA) is a field of study that focuses on evaluating the quality of translations, whether produced by human translators or machine translation systems. The goal of TQA is to determine how well a translation meets the standards of fluency, adequacy, and accuracy, which are considered the key components of translation quality.

Fluency: refers to the naturalness and smoothness of the language in the target text, and whether the text reads like it was originally written in the target language.

Adequacy refers to the extent to which the meaning of the source text has been preserved in the target text. This includes not only the meaning of individual words but also the overall meaning of the text as a whole, including cultural references and idioms.

Accuracy refers to the level of precision and correctness in the target text, including spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

There are various methods and tools used in TQA, including human evaluation, computer-based evaluation, and combination methods. Human evaluation typically involves professional translators who assess the quality of a translation based on their expertise in the source and target languages. The computer-based evaluation uses algorithms and machine learning techniques to assess the quality of translations.

TQA is an important field because it helps ensure that translations are of high quality and suitable for their intended purposes, whether it be for legal, scientific, or commercial purposes. By improving the quality of translations, TQA helps facilitate cross-cultural communication and understanding.

Translation and Cognition: This area explores the mental processes involved in translation and how they impact the final translation product—researchers in this field study topics such as bilingualism, translation memory, and translation strategy.

Translation and Society: This area looks at the social, political, and cultural implications of translation, including the role of translation in language planning, language policies, and the dissemination of cultural and scientific knowledge.

Translation Pedagogy: This area focuses on the teaching and learning of translation, and includes topics such as translation methodologies, translation training, and translation assessment. In terms of future developments, translation research is likely to continue to evolve and expand as new technologies and methods become available. In particular, machine translation is expected to become more advanced and sophisticated, while researchers in the field of translation and society will continue to examine the role of translation in shaping global communication and cultural exchange.

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