A PROCESS-ORIENTED APPROACH TO TRANSLATION TYPOLOGY

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Abstract. This paper explores the concept of translation typology, the categorization of different translation approaches. While acknowledging existing models based on text types and purposes, the argument presented here emphasizes the need for a process-oriented typology. Such a typology would focus on how languages and cultures are conveyed during translation, rather than what is being conveyed. The paper outlines the limitations of existing models and proposes a set of foundational principles for a new typology, including a process-oriented approach, invariant criteria for differentiation, clear applicability guidelines, and a framework for interdisciplinary collaboration.

Keywords. Translation typology, translation studies, process-oriented translation, interdisciplinary approaches, translation criteria

1. Introduction

The history of translatology as an academic discipline doesn't align chronologically with any specific translating traditions or with the act of translating itself, which dates back to the dawn of human communication. Translatology emerged relatively recently, in the early 1970s, whereas in the 1950s and 1960s, it was considered a subset of applied linguistics. Throughout its brief existence, translatology has been shaped, influenced, and enriched by numerous neighboring or seemingly disparate disciplines. Today, as

translatology has become established as a traditional humanistic discipline and has found its place in the curricula of many faculties worldwide, there is skepticism among scholars about whether to maintain its diversity. Some advocate for translatology to become an independent discipline, while others argue that interdisciplinary approaches are essential for its continuous enrichment and vitality. Translatology naturally intersects with other disciplines, but this doesn't mean uncritically adopting concepts from them simply due to tradition. The main argument of this paper is that translatology requires a solid theoretical foundation to guide its interactions with other disciplines. Once such a foundation is established, the parameters of its engagement with other fields will become clear. The issue of translation typology is crucial in this context, as it exemplifies the interdisciplinary nature of translatology. Typology not only addresses core theoretical concerns within translatology but also serves as a reference point for its interaction with other disciplines. This paper aims to reconsider translation typologies by exploring traditional and contemporary models and addressing theoretical challenges. It proposes criteria for a typology grounded in translation studies while defining the space for contributions from other disciplines. Ultimately, the goal is to affirm the interdisciplinary nature of translatology, not merely through its theoretical underpinnings but as a result of its practical application.

2. Methods (Analytical approach)

This analysis will explore the concept of translation typology through the following methods:

1. **Review of Existing Models:** We will examine prominent models of translation typology, including word-sense distinctions (e.g., literal vs. dynamic equivalence), foreignization vs. domestication approaches, and multidimensional models based on text types (e.g., Reiss/Vermeer, Sager).

2. **Critical Evaluation:** We will critically evaluate these models, highlighting their strengths and limitations. The focus will be on how well they align with the proposed principles of a process-oriented typology.

3. **Theoretical Foundations:** We will explore relevant theoretical concepts from translation studies, such as equivalence, purpose, and the role of the translator. This will help establish a foundation for the proposed typology.

4. **Developing New Principles:** Drawing on the analysis of existing models and theoretical foundations, we will propose a set of core principles for a new, process-oriented typology of translation.

By employing this approach, we aim to:

- Demonstrate the need for a typology that emphasizes the translation process itself.

- Identify limitations in existing models based on text types or purposes.

- Propose a framework for a new typology that adheres to the established principles.

3. Results and Discussions

Throughout history, the earliest categorization of translation types revolved around the distinction between "word-for-word" and "sense-for-sense" translation. This dichotomy can be traced back to Cicero's work "De optimo genere oratorum," where translation "ut interpres" (word-for-word) was contrasted with translation "ut orator" (sense-for-sense). This binary concept persisted through the centuries, from Luther's "Sendbrief vom Dolmetschen" in 1530 to Nida's concept of "formal" versus "dynamic" equivalence in 1964, and Catford's differentiation between "literal" and "free" translation in 1965. This distinction has sparked lively debates among scholars over time, resulting in various perspectives, all leading to the same differentiation.

According to Chesterman, the most recent iteration of this distinction is between "semantic" and "communicative" translation, as introduced by

Newmark in 1981. In this framework, "semantic translation is more literal and closer to the original," while "communicative translation is freer, prioritizing the effectiveness of the message being communicated." However, Nord's distinction between "documentary" and "instrumental" translation, proposed in 1988 and 1997, appears to be the latest contribution to the word-sense opposition. In Nord's framework, documentary translation involves a word-for-word approach, while instrumental translation focuses on functionally-oriented rendering. In both cases, the choice of translation type is determined by the translation commission (Übersetzungsauftrag). Nord emphasizes that it is precisely this reliance on the translation commission that distinguishes her framework from similar distinctions.

Another closely related distinction is the one between "foreignizing" and "domesticating" translation, which also operates on a binary model. Historically, the domesticating approach was favored by the Romans, aiming for a freer translation to produce an outcome that reads as if it were an original work. In contrast, the foreignizing approach, advocated by Schleiermacher in the 19th century, favors a more literal translation to ensure that the original word enriches the target culture or audience. However, the explicit connection between the domesticating type and free (i.e., sense-for-sense) translation, or between the foreignizing type and literal (i.e., word-for-word) translation, has not always been stated.

Recent discussions on this matter include House's distinctions in 1977 between "overt" and "covert" translation, where overt corresponds to the foreignizing type and covert to the domesticating one. Additionally, distinctions have been made between "direct" and "indirect" translation by Gutt in 1991.

Beyond binary models, there have been numerous classifications containing more than two types. Among the most discussed in translation theory are multidimensional models, which are object-oriented rather than process-oriented. While process-oriented models focus on the method of translation,

object-oriented models classify translation based on the texts themselves. This criterion ultimately reflects text type or genre and is strongly influenced by text linguistics and stylistics. Reiss and Vermeer argue that the method of translation depends on both the type of text and the purpose it serves. Different types of texts, as suggested by Reiss, are examined in conjunction with their purpose, resulting in various types of translation.

Folkart (1989:20) proposes an approach based on reversibility, which entails the possibility of achieving a text identical to the original through back-translation. This approach categorizes outcomes into four different types: the first type, mathematical texts, exhibits the highest reversibility; the second and third types, technical and constrained texts, respectively, demonstrate medium reversibility; and the fourth type, general and literary texts, shows the lowest reversibility.

Sager (1998:70) expands on this by considering a broader range of criteria. These criteria include the presence or absence of situational antecedents in the target culture, the familiarity of the target language text type in the target culture, the purpose of the translation, the relative status of the source and target texts, the reader's awareness or lack thereof that the target text is a translation, and the presence or absence of standardized solutions.

The bibliography on text-type oriented classifications of translation is extensive, as seen in works such as Trosborg (1997) and Snell-Hornby et al. (1999:205). These models have significantly influenced the contemporary understanding of translation types, particularly in the curricula of translation institutes worldwide, where translation is taught across distinct modules focusing on literary, technical, economic, or legal translation.

Schreiber (1999:152) presents yet another approach, delineating three distinct types of translation. Firstly, "text translations" (Textübersetzungen) prioritize text-internal consistencies and strive for a balance between "cultural foreignization" and "interlingual domestication." Conversely, "situational

translations" (Umfeldübersetzungen) emphasize text-external consistencies such as original textual meaning, cultural function, or effect. In contrast, the third type involves intentional alterations and is termed "interlingual revision" (interlinguale Bearbeitung). Schreiber outlines specific procedures for each of these three types.

Chesterman (2000:54) introduces the latest suggestion regarding multidimensional models. He discusses a comprehensive set of criteria and variables, including equivalence, target language, translator, and situational variables. These factors contribute to the delineation of various translation types, fostering improved communication between translators and their clients. Chesterman suggests that these translation types can be best examined within the framework of the sociology of translation.

The premise of this paper asserts that a typology of translation should adopt a process-oriented approach. While acknowledging the significance of the object of translation, the primary goal of such a typology is to elucidate how languages and cultures are conveyed, rather than what is being conveyed. This stance is necessitated by the observation that object-oriented methodologies, such as multidimensional models based on text types, do not inherently imply procedural distinctions. For instance, distinctions between "technical" and "economic" translation, or between "original" and "literary" translation, may lack clear justifications due to the substantial similarities among these types (e.g., terminology, formal characteristics, background knowledge management). Given that a typology primarily involves differentiation, it follows logically that criteria such as type and function, as proposed by models like Reiss/Vermeer (1984), Nord (1988), and Sager (1998), may not be suitable for classifying translation, as even texts with different functions may exhibit similar translation processes.

Another significant issue arises with typologies solely based on the purpose of translation. In such cases, theory must address the matter of choice, whether

by the translation commissioner or the translator themselves. The question of whether the function of translation remains constant depends on various factors such as the situation and personal preferences. However, I argue that a typology requires invariant differentiation criteria rather than criteria subject to choose or preference. A typology grounded in purpose, which must be determined prior to translation, excludes the translation process from classification efforts. Therefore, approaches based on text types or genres may be somewhat limited, as they focus solely on the source and target texts or on criteria inherent to these texts rather than on the translation process itself.

Folkart's approach, as outlined in 1989, utilizes the concept of reversibility, wherein the extent of reversibility hinges on specific attributes of the source text, such as its technical complexity or cultural nuances. Although this approach also leads to a categorization of translation types based on text types, its implications offer valuable insights for the model proposed below.

Schreiber's model, presented in 1999, reiterates the issue of choice discussed earlier. The third type, interlingual revision, heavily relies on deliberate decisions regarding changes in translation. Consequently, the translation process takes a secondary role in this aspect of classification, while the other two types appear to involve crucial criteria like "cultural foreignization" and "cultural domestication," aligning with the process-oriented binary models previously discussed. If we interpret "foreignization" as implying a "word-for-word" translation and "domestication" as suggesting a "sense-for-sense" approach, then the binary approaches essentially boil down to a word-sense dichotomy.

The primary challenge posed by this dichotomy pertains to determining the extent to which each type should be applied in a given text, or in other words, the degree of literalness. This issue has been widely acknowledged and extensively debated within contemporary translation theory. Despite the common assertion in translation theory about the need to maintain a balance

between fidelity to the source and readability in the target text, there remains insufficient explanation regarding the appropriate application of each type in a text.

To justify the application of each type, scholars have turned to related disciplines such as theoretical linguistics, cultural studies, intercultural communication, and even psychology. However, this has often resulted in conflicting interpretations of translation. While this diversity of perspectives is beneficial, there is a need to establish common ground where differing viewpoints can converge within a clearly defined framework of interdisciplinarity, without risking contentious debates. Indeed, the absence of a universally accepted definition of translation underscores the complexity of this endeavor.

The preceding discussion leads to the formulation of the following foundational principles for a translation typology. In essence, a translation typology should:

- differentiate various types based on a process-oriented approach rather than focusing solely on the characteristics of the source and target texts;

- rely on invariant criteria for differentiation, unaffected by individual preferences or choices of the translator or commissioner;

- clearly delineate the circumstances in which each specific type is applicable;

- establish a robust framework for collaboration with related disciplines.

In the forthcoming model, an endeavor will be made to devise a classification criterion and a set of types that align with the aforementioned principles.

4. Conclusion

The concept of translation typology, the categorization of different translation approaches, serves as a vital roadmap within the vast landscape of translation studies. This paper has advocated for a paradigm shift, urging a move

away from existing typologies heavily reliant on text types or purposes. Instead, we propose a process-oriented typology that delves deeper, focusing on how translators bridge the intricate gap between languages and cultures. This shift prioritizes understanding the "how" of translation, the very methods and strategies translators utilize to navigate the complexities of conveying meaning across linguistic and cultural boundaries, rather than simply the "what" – the content itself.

Our analysis has critically examined prominent existing models. We explored the well-established word-sense dichotomy (literal vs. dynamic equivalence), the foreignization vs. domestication approaches, and the multidimensional models based on text types (e.g., Reiss/Vermeer, Sager). While these models offer valuable insights and have undoubtedly shaped the field, they often face limitations. Some lack clear differentiation criteria, relying on subjective choices made during the translation process. Others struggle to address the spectrum of possibilities that lie between literal and free translation, leaving translators with limited guidance.

To address these shortcomings, we have proposed a set of core principles for a new typology. This novel typology would be:

Process-oriented: This approach prioritizes understanding the methods and strategies translators employ to achieve the desired outcome in the target text. It delves into the decision-making process, the translator's toolkit, and the various techniques used to navigate cultural nuances and linguistic challenges.

Grounded in invariant criteria: Unlike existing models that may be swayed by individual preferences or choices, this typology would rely on objective criteria. These criteria would be inherent to the translation process itself, offering a more consistent and reliable framework for categorization.

Clearly applicable: The new typology would not simply categorize different approaches but also provide practical guidance. It would offer

translators insights into when to utilize specific approaches based on the unique demands of the source text, target audience, and the overall translation purpose.

Open to interdisciplinary collaboration: Translation, by its very nature, fosters a bridge between cultures and disciplines. This typology would embrace collaboration with related fields such as theoretical linguistics, cultural studies, and intercultural communication. By drawing insights from these disciplines, the typology can be enriched and continuously refined.

Developing such a process-oriented typology is an ongoing endeavor that requires further research and theoretical exploration. However, by establishing a new framework, we can move towards a more comprehensive understanding of how translators navigate the complexities of their craft. This will ultimately benefit both translation theory and practice. On the theoretical level, it will lead to a more nuanced understanding of the translation process itself. In practical terms, it will empower translators with a richer toolkit and a clearer understanding of when to utilize specific approaches. Ultimately, this will lead to more informed choices, fostering a deeper appreciation for the artistry and critical thinking skills that lie at the heart of successful translation.

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