

# ROUTLEDGE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF TRANSLATION STUDIES

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classes and of genres. The textual profile of the target text is determined by its function, and whether this is or is not similar to the textual profile of the source text can only be established through systematic translational analysis. The translator, as an expert communicator, is at the crucial centre of a long chain of communication from the original initiator to the ultimate receiver of a message, and is thus situated within the wider social context. The model takes account of the relationship between translator and client as well as the relationship between translator and original writer, and between translator and reader. The ethical responsibility of the translator is seen to derive from his or her status as an expert in the field of transcultural message transfer, because only translators with the requisite expertise can succeed in producing a functionally adequate text (professional profiles are discussed in Holz-Mänttari 1986: 363ff.). This has clear consequences for the training of translators.

Holz-Mänttari's main aim is to specify the factors that guide translational action, conceived as professional text production. An action is determined by its function and purpose, and its outcome, too, must be judged by these criteria. The purpose of the translational action process is to produce a **message transmitter** (*Botschaftsträger*) that can be utilized in superordinate configurations of actions (*Handlungsgefüge*) whose function is to guide and coordinate communicative, cooperative action (Holz-Mänttari 1984: 17).

In the process of translational action, texts act as **message-transmitter compounds** (*Botschaftsträger im Verbund*) of content (*Tektonik*), structured according to function and represented by formal elements (*Textur*). A source text is a text to which a translation initiator, a client, has assigned, primarily or secondarily, the function of serving as source material for translational action. A target text, to be used either by the translation initiator or by some other user, is the outcome of a translation expert's translational action.

The notion of function is central in two respects. On the one hand, it forces the translator to embed the product of translational action in a complex situation of human needs. On the other hand, it forces the translator to embed translational action in the social order, i.e. in a

society organized by a division of labour. The main roles in a translation process are played by one or more persons or institutions. The roles include the initiator, the commissioner, the text producer, the translator, the target-text 'applicator' and the receptor, and each role is highly complex.

The translator is the expert whose task it is to produce message transmitters for use in transcultural message transfer. To do this, the translator must, at a particular place and at a particular time, produce a particular product for a particular purpose. The translator's actions must be informed by suitable data, and must be carried out according to specifically negotiated conditions. Finally, the process must be completed by a deadline. Translational action therefore involves not only the translator as translation expert, but also the client/commissioner with whom the translator must negotiate cooperatively.

So, translation is embedded in the purposeful configuration of actions which is translational action, and this, in turn, is embedded in a hierarchy of complex actions and subordinate to the global aim of transcultural communication. Therefore, a definition of translation cannot be based purely on a configuration of elements such as UNIT OF TRANSLATION, source text, or genre. Rather, a theoretically sound definition of translational action must take account of all the elements involved in human communicative action across cultures; in particular, it must take into consideration the client's culture, the process of text production in its widest sense, and the concept of expert action.

Because cultures may have different conventions, transcultural text production may require substitution of elements of the source text by elements judged more appropriate to the function the target text is to serve. This function is determined by the purpose of the communicative action in which the text is to play a part as a message transmitter.

Text production is the purpose of translational action, and the texts produced will be used by clients as message transmitters in combination with others for transcultural message transfer. The purpose of the message transfer is the coordination of action-oriented, communicative cooperation. The purpose of a

the coordination is the direction of cooperation towards an overall aim. When communication is to take place transculturally, this aim can only be met if measures are taken to overcome cultural barriers. In other words, culture-specific circumstances predetermine to a great extent the text to be produced, and the measures taken to overcome cultural barriers constitute a significant part of expert action.

In establishing a **product specification** (*Produktspezifikation*), that is, a description of the properties and features required of the target text, text-external factors pertaining to the commissioning of the target text influence to a great extent the framework within which all the textual operations involved in translational action are to take place. These factors include the aim of the action, the mode in which it is to be realized, the fee to be paid and the deadline for delivery, all of which are negotiated with the client who has commissioned the action. The roles of all actors involved, the overall aim of the action, the purposes of individual actions within the configuration of actions in which the text to be produced will be used, the circumstances in which these actions will take place, and the functions of message transmitters are all subjected to careful analysis and evaluation.

As experts in translational action, translators are responsible for carrying out a **commission** in such a way that a functionally appropriate text is produced. They are responsible for deciding whether, when and how a translation can be realized. Whether a commission can be realized depends on the circumstances of the target culture, and the translator must negotiate with the client in order to establish what kind of optimal translation can be guaranteed, given a specific set of circumstances. The translational text operations are based on analytical, synthetic, evaluative and creative actions that take account of the ultimate purpose of the text to be produced and of aspects of different cultures in order that the distances between them may be overcome.

Holz-Mänttari's concept of translational action is considered relevant for all types of translation and the theory is held to provide guidelines for every decision to be taken by the translator. Translational action is initiated externally, and its conditions are, at least

partly, determined by purposes and aims that are peculiar to each individual case of translation.

See also:

COMMUNICATIVE/FUNCTIONAL APPROACHES; SKOPOS THEORY.

#### Further reading

Holz-Mänttari 1984, 1986, 1988, 1992; Newmark 1991b; Nord 1988, 1991a, 1997.

CHRISTINA SCHÄFFNER

## Adaptation

Adaptation may be understood as a set of translative operations which result in a text that is not accepted as a translation but is nevertheless recognized as representing a source text of about the same length. As such, the term may embrace numerous vague notions such as imitation, rewriting, and so on. Strictly speaking, the concept of adaptation requires recognition of translation as non-adaptation, as a somehow more constrained mode of transfer. For this reason, the history of adaptation is parasitic on historical concepts of translation.

The initial divide between adaptation and translation might be dated from CICERO and HORACE (see LATIN TRADITION), both of whom referred to the *interpres* (translator) as working word-for-word and distinguished this method from what they saw as freer but entirely legitimate results of transfer operations. The different interpretations given to the Horatian verse, *Nec verbum verbo curabis reddere fidus interpres* ('and you will not render word-for-word [like a] faithful translator') – irrespective of whether they were for or against the word-for-word precept – effectively reproduced the logic by which adaptations could be recognized.

The golden age of adaptation was in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the epoch of the *belles infidèles*, which started in France and then spread to the rest of the world (see FRENCH TRADITION). The very free translations carried out during this period were justified in terms of the need for foreign texts

to be adapted to the tastes and habits of the target culture, regardless of the damage done to the original. The nineteenth century witnessed a reaction to this 'infidelity' (see GERMAN TRADITION), but adaptations continued to predominate in the theatre. In the twentieth century, the proliferation of technical, scientific and commercial documents has given rise to a preference for transparency in translation, with an emphasis on efficient communication; this could be seen as licensing a form of adaptation which involves rewriting a text for a new readership.

Generally speaking, historians and scholars of translation take a negative view of adaptation, dismissing the phenomenon as distortion, falsification or censorship, but it is rare to find clear definitions of the terminology used in discussing this controversial concept.

### Main definitions

It is possible to classify definitions of adaptation under specific themes (translation technique, genre, metalanguage, faithfulness), though inevitably these definitions tend to overlap.

As a **translation technique**, adaptation can be defined in a technical and objective way. The best-known definition is that of Vinay and Darbelnet (1958), who list adaptation as their seventh translation procedure: adaptation is a procedure which can be used whenever the context referred to in the original text does not exist in the culture of the target text, thereby necessitating some form of re-creation. This widely accepted definition views adaptation as a procedure employed to achieve an equivalence of situations wherever cultural mismatches are encountered.

Adaptation is sometimes regarded as a form of translation which is characteristic of particular genres, most notably drama. Indeed, it is in relation to DRAMA TRANSLATION that adaptation has been most frequently studied. Brisset (1986: 10) views adaptation as a 'reterritorialization' of the original work and an 'annexation' in the name of the audience of the new version. Santoyo (1989: 104) similarly defines adaptation as a form of 'naturalizing' the play for a new milieu, the aim being to achieve the same effect that the work originally had, but with an audience from a different cultural background.

Adaptation is also associated with the genres of advertising and SUBTITLING. The emphasis here is on preserving the character and function of the original text, in preference to preserving the form or even the semantic meaning, especially where acoustic and/or visual factors have to be taken into account. Other genres, such as children's literature, require the re-creation of the message according to the sociolinguistic needs of a different readership (Puurtinen 1995). The main features of this type of adaptation are the use of summarizing techniques, paraphrase and omission.

Adaptation is, perhaps, most easily justified when the original text is of a **metalinguistic** nature, that is, when the subject matter of the text is language itself. This is especially so with didactic works on language generally, or on specific languages. Newmark (1981) points out that in these cases the adaptation has to be based on the translator's judgement about his/her readers' knowledge. Coseriu (1977) argues that this kind of adaptation gives precedence to the function over the form, with a view to producing the same effect as the original text. However, while such writers start from the principle that nothing is untranslatable, others like Berman (1985) claim that the adaptation of metalanguage is an unnecessary form of exoticism.

Definitions of adaptation reflect widely varying views about the concept *vis-à-vis* the issue of remaining 'faithful' to the original text. Some argue that adaptation is necessary precisely in order to keep the message intact (at least on the global level), while others see it as a betrayal of the original author. For the former, the refusal to adapt confines the reader to an artificial world of 'foreignness'; for the latter, adaptation is tantamount to the destruction and violation of the original text. Even those who recognize the need for adaptation in certain circumstances are obliged to admit that, if remaining faithful to the text is a *sine qua non* of translation, then there is a point at which adaptation ceases to be translation at all.

### Modes, conditions and restrictions

By comparing adaptations with the texts on which they are based, it is possible to elaborate

a provisional list of the ways (or modes) in which adaptations are carried out, the motivations (or conditions) for the decision to adapt, and the limitations (or restrictions) on the work of the adapter.

In terms of **mode** of adaptation, the procedures used by the adapter can be classified as follows:

- ◆ *transcription of the original*: word-for-word reproduction of part of the text in the original language, usually accompanied by a literal translation
- ◆ *omission*: the elimination or reduction of part of the text
- ◆ *expansion*: making explicit information that is implicit in the original, either in the main body or in footnotes or a glossary
- ◆ *exoticism*: the substitution of stretches of slang, dialect, nonsense words, etc. in the original text by rough equivalents in the target language (sometimes marked by italics or underlining)
- ◆ *updating*: the replacement of outdated or obscure information by modern equivalents
- ◆ *situational equivalence*: the insertion of a more familiar context than the one used in the original
- ◆ *creation*: a more global replacement of the original text with a text that preserves only the essential message/ideas/functions of the original.

The most common factors (i.e. **conditions**) which cause translators to resort to adaptation are:

- ◆ *cross-code breakdown*: where there are simply no lexical equivalents in the target language (especially common in the case of translating metalanguage)
- ◆ *situational inadequacy*: where the context referred to in the original text does not exist in the target culture
- ◆ *genre switching*: a change from one discourse type to another (e.g. from adult to children's literature) often entails a global re-creation of the original text
- ◆ *disruption of the communication process*: the emergence of a new epoch or approach or the need to address a different type of readership often requires modifications in style, content or presentation.

These conditions (which in practice may exist simultaneously) can lead to two major types of adaptation: **local adaptation**, caused by problems arising from the original text itself and limited to certain parts of it (as in the first two conditions), and **global adaptation**, which is determined by factors outside the original text and which involves a more wide-ranging revision.

As a local procedure, adaptation may be applied to isolated parts of the text in order to deal with specific differences between the language or culture of the source text and that of the target text. In this case, the use of adaptation as a technique will have a limited effect on the text as a whole, provided the overall coherence of the source text is preserved. This type of adaptation is temporary and localized; it does not represent an all-embracing approach to the translation task. Local, or as Farghal (1993: 257) calls it, 'intrinsic' adaptation is essentially a translation procedure which is guided by principles of effectiveness and efficiency and seeks to achieve a balance between what is to be transformed and highlighted and what is to be left unchanged.

As a global procedure, adaptation may be applied to the text as a whole. The decision to carry out a global adaptation may be taken by the translator him/herself or may be imposed by external forces (for example, a publisher's editorial policy). In either case, global adaptation constitutes a general strategy which aims to reconstruct the purpose, function or impact of the original text. The intervention of the translator is systematic and s/he may sacrifice formal elements and even semantic meaning in order to reproduce the function of the original.

As in the case of translation, adaptation is carried out under certain **restrictions**, the most obvious of which are:

- ◆ *the knowledge and expectations of the target reader*: the adapter has to evaluate the extent to which the content of the original text constitutes new or shared information for the potential audience
- ◆ *the target language*: the adapter must find an appropriate match in the target language for the discourse style of the original text and look for coherence of adapting modes

- ♦ *the meaning and purpose(s) of the original and target texts*

### Theoretical boundaries between adaptation and translation

Some scholars prefer not to use the term 'adaptation' at all, believing that the concept of translation can be stretched to cover all types of transformation as long as the main function of the activity is preserved. Others view the two concepts as representing essentially different practices. Michel Gameau, Quebec poet and translator, coined the term *tradaptation* to express the close relationship between the two activities (Delisle 1986). The very few scholars who have attempted a serious analysis of the phenomenon of adaptation and its relation to translation insist on the tenuous nature of the borderline which separates the two concepts.

The controversy surrounding the supposed opposition between adaptation and translation is often fuelled by ideological issues. This becomes evident when one considers the heated debates that have raged over the translation of the Bible ever since the first versions began to appear. It is this apparent lack of objectivity about the adaptation process that has prompted Gambier (1992: 424) to warn against what he calls the 'fetishization' of the original text. After all, it is often argued that a successful translation is one that looks or sounds like an original piece of work, which would seem to imply that the translator is expected to intervene actively (i.e. adapt) to ensure that this ideal is achieved.

The study of adaptation encourages the theorist to look beyond purely linguistic issues and helps shed light on the role of the translator as mediator, as a creative participant in a process of verbal communication. Relevance, rather than accuracy, becomes the key word, and this entails a careful analysis of three major concepts in translation theory: meaning, purpose (or function, or *skopos*: see *SKOPOS THEORY*) and intention. We could say that translation – or what is traditionally understood by the term translation – stays basically at the level of meaning, adaptation seeks to transmit the purpose of the original text, and exegesis attempts to spell out the intentions of the author. This kind of analysis will inevitably

lead translation studies to consider the inferential communication pattern (Sperber and Wilson 1986), rather than the traditional code model, as the most appropriate frame of reference for the discipline (see *COMMUNICATIVE/FUNCTIONAL APPROACHES*).

Adaptation has always been defined in relation to something else – a specific style, linguistic conventions or a communication model. The emergence of translation studies as an independent discipline now enables us to study adaptation in its own terms, as both a local and a global procedure. It is imperative that we acknowledge adaptation as a type of creative process which seeks to restore the balance of communication that is often disrupted by traditional forms of translation. Only by treating it as a legitimate strategy can we begin to understand the motivation for using it and to appreciate the relationship between it and other forms of conventional translation.

#### Further reading

Bastin 1996; Brisset 1990; Delisle 1986; Donaire et al. 1991; Farghal 1993; Foz 1988; Gailliard 1988; Gambier 1992; Merino 1992; Nord 1991a; Santoyo 1989.

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*Translated from Spanish by Mark Gregson*

## Analytical philosophy and translation

The phenomenon of translation, and especially the notion of indeterminacy, have become important focal points for discussion in the philosophy of language during the second half of the twentieth century. Major participants in the debate include Willard van Orman Quine and Donald Davidson; a representative sample of work by other philosophers can be found in Guenther and Guenther-Reutter (1978). See also Haas (1962), Stich (1972) and Schick (1972).

Quine's position was originally presented in the philosophical literature in Quine (1957–8),

but had, by the following year (Quine 1959), found its way into literature devoted to translation (Brower 1959). Here, it engendered such consternation among some scholars that it was found necessary to exclude logicians and 'metalinguists' from at least one conference 'for the sake of good conversation and self-confidence' (Arrowsmith and Shattuck 1961: Foreword). However, Quine's suggestion that translation is radically indeterminate continues to excite some writers on translation, for instance Benjamin (1989), Hjort (1990), Malmkjær (1993) and George Steiner (1975/1992) – not surprisingly, in view of its potential consequences for our enterprise.

According to Quine (1959: 171), 'it is only relative to an in large part arbitrary manual of translation that most foreign sentences may be said to share the meaning of English sentences, and then only in a very parochial sense of meaning, viz., use-in-English'. Since 1960, a great deal of writing on translation theory and practice has in fact concentrated on use, rather than meaning. Of course, this trend is partly inspired by the development of the discipline of *PRAGMATICS*. However, it is also influenced by the increasing despair felt by many translation scholars at the apparent inability of philosophers and linguists alike to provide anything approaching a satisfactory theory of meaning (see, for example, George Steiner 1975/1992: 294). In fact, it is to highlight the problems involved in providing a theory of meaning that Quine avails himself of the example of translation.

Quine's position is most fully elaborated in Chapter II of *Word and Object* (Quine 1960), where he explains that he is concerned with **radical translation**: 'translation of the language of a hitherto untouched people' (ibid.: 28). This is clearly not the kind of translation which concerns most translators or interpreters in the course of their everyday activities; it resembles more closely the activities of field linguists. However, the example of radical translation is used because it is held to be the most extreme form of translation, the form in which the problems involved in any act of linguistic communication stand out most clearly. Moreover, as Davidson (1973/1984: 125) puts it

The problem of interpretation is domestic as well as foreign: it surfaces for speakers of the same language in the form of the question, how can it be determined that the language is the same? Speakers of the same language can go on the assumption that for them the same expressions are to be interpreted in the same way, but this does not indicate what justifies the assumption.

Philosophers of language are engaged in providing this justification, and they use the example of translation to highlight the difficulties involved in their task.

This is not to say that the philosophical debate on translation is of no relevance to translation scholars. For if, as the philosophers' treatment suggests, translation differs only in degree and not in kind from non-translational forms of linguistic interaction, then the results of the philosophical investigation of meaning will be equally relevant to both.

In fact, several philosophical perspectives on meaning have exerted influences on translation scholars. Most of the perspectives have, since around 1960, been 'pragmatic': they address questions of language use and function in context. But pragmatic theories, without exception, take for granted an underlying truth-conditional semantics in which the relationship between language and the world is explicated in terms of notions like truth and reference. It is in discussions in this paradigm that the example of translation is employed, and any disturbance it creates there is a disturbance of the very basis on which pragmatic theories are built.

What is at issue in truth-conditional semantics is not what many people refer to in a non-philosophical sense (Lyons 1977: 176) as **connotative meaning**: the different associations and emotions which expressions may evoke in language users. What is at issue is, rather, the basic meaning of expressions on which we assume we can all rely in establishing agreement about basic facts such as whether or not a particular animal is a rabbit or a dog, or whether a particular substance is chalk or cheese. Without agreement at this basic level, we could not proceed to more emotively oriented discussions about the