

Towards the Development of an Exhaustive Translation Theory

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Abstract

Systematic studies on translation began only after its introduction as a separate discipline in the 1970s. The movements of the mid-twentieth century established translation theories like functional, post-colonial, and systems and proved relevance for translation works. Thus, a brief survey of translation theories that were developed and applied in the Western countries is significant, rational, and timely. In this context, the present paper focuses on the delineations of the translation theories developed in the West. Further, these theories have been included within applied linguistics and English language teaching courses. Since the wholistic expansion of all of them is impossible and unnecessary in such a small-scale study, this article presents a brief survey of only contemporary theories, which have been developed from the 1970s to the present date. A survey of these theories exhibits that none of them is exhaustive enough within itself and therefore, a new theory that is intelligible, practical and relevant is yet to be developed. The implication of this study in English language teaching is that the translation and the translation theories offer insights into the sensitivities of language and culture for language teachers while teaching.

Keywords: translation, third literature, source language, target language, theory

Introduction

Currently, translation has profusely been used in the globalized context of the world. The term translation is recognized differently in separate territories even though the denotations are similar. Since this article expounds the translation theories developed in the west, a quick glance of English and Nepali terms is needed. *Anuvaad* [saying again] in Nepali language and 'translation' in English are equivalent terms. The Nepali term has been borrowed from Sanskrit that is formed from the root *vad* [say, speak] by adding *a* or *ghn* suffix that makes *vaada* [saying]. Again adding *anu* [again] to *vaada* makes *anuvaad*. Etymologically, in this way, *anuvaad* means re-statement. *Anuvaad* is widely defined in Sanskrit as *praaptasya punah kathanam* or *gyaataarthasya pratipaadanam*, which means reproduction or restatement of what is already produced or stated. This saying is evidenced in Apte (2000) who has defined *anuvaad* as interpretive reproduction of already produced saying. In this way, in the Eastern perspective, translation has been defined based on temporal dimension. On the other hand, the term 'translation' has been derived

from Latin *translatus*, that is in the form *trans* + *latus* in which the former means ‘across’ and the latter ‘to carry’ (Gentzler, 2010). Thus, translation is to carry meaning of one language into another. The Western definition that is place/space-oriented and the Eastern definition that is time-oriented are similar to a convergent definition like “the transference of the messages, information, and the like expressed in one context and time in one language into another (Neupane, 2014, p. 200). Etymologically, thus, *anuvaad* and *translation* seem to be synonymous

Although translation from the perspective of practices and applications is very old, its establishment as a separate discipline Translation Studies marked the 1970s. Since then, new theorists and theoretical turns began to appear substantially. The turns of translation established its significance in language, literature, culture, science, technology, communication and others. In this connection, Dahal (2013) has asserted these reasons and uses for translating across languages: readers’ needs, translators’ interests and personal pleasure/satisfaction; and business or professional perspectives. To be specific, the importance of translation can be shown for transference of cultural heritage, proliferation of literary repertoire, a means of communication, a means of revitalization of language and culture, and a means of pedagogy.

The latter decades of the 20th century witnessed rapid development in the Translation Studies in terms of theories and practices. However, in the Nepali context, translation has been limited to the university curricula, translators’ personal interest and satisfaction, and some uses of professionalism/business. Translation as a teaching subject got entry into the Department of Linguistics, under Tribhuvan University only in 1998. Then, translation was included in the Department of English Education in 1999 and then in the M.Phil. programme in Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. Gradually, translation has been a teaching subject at different levels of Kathmandu University, Purbanchal University, and others. Many institutions and publishing houses like Nepal Academy, Society of Translators’ Nepal, Sajha Prakashan, Ratna Pustak Bhandar, and Oriental Publication are involved in bringing out translation works profusely now. Besides the university level and institutional attempts, numerous translators are also engaged in translating texts across languages. As a result, translation today has been a fertile ground for academic, professional and research practices. Yet, an original and context specific theory of translation is a great scarcity although some of the scholars who have worked in this direction include Bhattarai (1999), Kshetri (2011), Adhikari (2015), Neupane (2017) and others.

These contexts show the need of a brief survey of the translation theories that can pave a way forward to develop a theory-practice interface. This development can thus give a proper shape to the translation practices and theoretical attempts done so far.

Aiming to present a glimpse of translation theories used so far, this article vertically and horizontally extends from functional theories to the present developments mainly in terms of features, trends and limitations. In this way, this paper is delimited within the perimeters of about four decades of theory developments in the Translation Studies. Further limitation of this article is that it does not touch upon the facts of digital translation.

Methodology

Since the aim is to review the existing translation theories, this study employs document analysis method that requires the in-depth analysis and interpretation of the available documents within the domain selected (Bell, 1999, as cited in Al-Jardani, 2012, & Krippendorff, 2013). For the assessment of the translation theories since 1971, the fundamental documents for this article have been extracted from the sources like Nida (1981), Bhattarai (1999), Venuti (2004a, 2004b, 2008, 2011), Bhattarai (2007), Munday (2008), Gentzler (2010), Kshetry (2011), Adhikari (2015), and Neupane (2017). These secondary sources were selected using convenient sampling procedure. The deliberations and discussions are based on the five criteria of labelling the theories like functional, systems, deconstruction, postcolonial, and source language culture oriented.

Discussion of the Results

The inception of translation theories was seen in Cicero (48 BC) and Horace (21 BC), whose theory was clarified by Saint Jerome (395 AD) as a binary distinction between word-for-word versus sense-for-sense translation (Newmark, 1981). This is evidenced from the survey of the history of translation in China, which marked the Chinese translations of Buddhist treatises in Sanskrit (Kshetry, 2011). Then, Martin Luther, William Tyndale, Étienne Dolet, John Dryden, Alexander Fraser Tytler and others followed sense translation as a translation technique. Later on, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Fredrich Schleiermacher, Wilhelm von Humbolt, Walter Benjamin, Franz Rosenberg, and others prepared foundations for translation theories, of which, Schleiermacher's theory, influenced much (Snail-Hornby, 2006). These theories, for Newmark (1981), are from "prelinguistic period" (p. 8). The theories developed in the period could not be substantiated.

Systematic and scientific theories began to make their debut only after the mid-twentieth centuries. The theories developed in the period are categorized as linguistic theories, which appear to be centered on the theories of Jakobson (1959/2004), Levy (1976/2004), Nida (1964), Catford (1965), Koller (1979), Newmark (1981, 1988), Chesterman (1989), Gutt (1991/2004), Bassnett (2002), Munday (2008), Baker (2011, 2018) and so on and so forth (Venuti, 2004a, 2008; Gentzler, 2010; Schäffner, 2011). These theorists consider translation process as a linguistic activity and translation as a skill or a science. They take translation both as a process and a product. Under translation as a process, cognitive processes like think-aloud and immediate retrospection were developed. These developments settled translation as a psycholinguistic field. These linguistic and scientific theories were criticized for their limitations. They were reliant on the mathematical concept of equivalence, indifferent to literary translations, highly source-oriented, fixed and narrow models, exclusion of cultural component, denial of dynamic aspect of language, and prescriptive-natured (Mollanazar, 2001, as cited in Neupane, 2017). To fulfill these gaps, new theories appeared.

Of the linguistic theories, the pragmatic turn of the 1970s established Translation Studies as a separate discipline; and cultural turn after the 1970s prepared the basic profile for the new discipline (Munday, 2008). The latter movement was mainly from Germany, England, Israel, Finland and Brazil. The turn of England and other English speaking countries raised systems theory, and the pioneers of this theory were: Itamar Ivan-Zohar, Gideon Toury, and Theo Hermans (Adhikari, 2015). On the other hand, Germany

and other German speaking countries gave birth to the functional theories. Both of the theories, which are culture-oriented, are expounded and discussed in the following sections.

Functional Theories

In the 1970s and 1980s, functional theories emerged in Germany as a reaction to the linguistic-based theories that had gap in the analysis of culture. To fulfill the gap, functional (and communication) theories made their debut based on the action and communication theories. This is justified by Schäffner's (2011) remarks, "The theories reflect a paradigm shift from linguistic approaches [...] firmly situated within to framework of applied and comparative linguistics to a more functionally and socio-culturally oriented concept of translation" (p.116). Thus, these theories subsume both the language and culture in translation; and are target language-centered (Gentzler, 2010). These theories are mainly of five types which are discussed in the succeeding sections.

Text type theory. The pioneer of text type theory was Katharina Reiss (1971/2004) who developed this theory in the 1970s based on the concept of equivalence, Bühler's functions of language, and pragmatics turn in translation. Equivalence, unlike in the linguistic theorists, is searched in the text, which are classified into four types such as informative, expressive, operative and audio-medial. Translation strategies are determined based on the types of text. For example, simple prose and interpretation is used for informative, and manipulation is used for operative texts.

The limitations of this theory include the determination of only a limited categories of the texts, exclusion of phatic communion, inability to specify typical techniques for the types of texts, and indifferent to the translators' role, objective and socio-cultural needs (Munday, 2008). To address these issues, other functional theories were developed.

Integrated theory. Since Reiss (1971/2004) could not present the clear framework of text types, Snell-Hornby (1988, 1995), the forerunner of integrated theory, presented a single analytical framework that subsumes all the text types. Her integrative framework presents three types of translations such as literary, general language, and special language. Further, literary translation includes translations of films, poems, children's literature; general language translation involves translations of magazines, advertisements; and special translation subsumes translations of legal, financial, scientific and technical texts. Thus, her model is inclusive of cultural history, literary study, socio-cultural study, technical subjects, informative texts, and so on. However, this theory was criticized for lacking clear-cut demarcations among the texts and for lacking ascertainment of the aims of translation.

Skopos theory. To overcome the problem of lack of ascertaining aims of translation, Hans Vermeer (1978, 1987) propounded skopos theory, which assumes that translation is not a process of transcoding but a specific form of human action, determined by its purpose (skopos) (as cited in Schäffner, 2011). Thus, translation is an action based on purpose/use. In this way, skopos theory (being skopos, a Greek work that means aim or use) is based on action theory. In this theory, a translator is an agent who performs an action of translation with an aim. Thus, skopos theory equates translation as a human action.

Extended version of the skopos theory appeared in Reiss and Vermeer (1984) who have presented

the following six underlying rules:

- A translatum (or TT) is determined by its skopos;
- A TT is an offer of information in a target culture and TL concerning an offer of information in a source culture and SL;
- A TT does not initiate an offer of information in a clearly reversible way;
- A TT must be internally coherent;
- A TT must be coherent with the ST; and
- The five rules above stand in hierarchical order, with the skopos rule predominating (as cited in Munday, 2008, p. 80).

All these six rules are skopos oriented. The main point to understand appears to be the advocacy of faithful translation that is referred by 'fidelity rule' and the fine-tuned texture of the translated version that is referred by 'coherence rule'. Thus, skopos theory tries to maintain balance between the source text (ST) and the target text (TT).

This theory was criticized for these drawbacks: (a) not all actions have an aim; and (b) not every translation can be assigned a purpose, an intention (Vermeer, 1989/2004). The theorist tried to save her face by offering counter-criticism. However, she could not properly give satisfactory account on intercultural communicability that is lacking in skopos theory.

Theory of translatorial action. To overcome the gap of intercultural communicability, Holz-Mänttari (1984) introduced the theory of translatorial/translational action which viewed translation as purpose-driven, outcome-oriented human interaction, and a process of intercultural communication (Munday, 2008, & Schäffner, 2011). This theory, in this way, draws heavily on the communication theory and the action theory. As a professional acting, translation involves experts, clients and participants as actors. In the production of TT, actors, like an initiator, a commissioner, a ST producer, a TT producer, TT users, TT receivers, play different roles in the action of TT production. The key actors are ST author, TT producer (translator) and the recipients of the TT.

The main achievement of this theory is that it keeps translation within socio-cultural context. However, this theory was criticized for using complex jargons and for failing to include cultural differences in detail.

Translation-oriented text analysis. Unlike other functional theories that focus on TT features, Nord (1988, 1997, 2005) introduced translation-oriented text analysis theory that focuses on the analysis of ST features. In this theory, a translator at first should analyze the features of the source text. Then only, s/he should transfer its contents into the target language. In this way, the production should have equivalent effect on TT readers as source text would have on ST readers. This view echoes Newmark's (1981) dynamic equivalence. For the analysis of ST features, Nord (1988) has classified two types of translations such as documentary and instrumental. The former emphasizes literary translations and is SL-oriented communicative translations (Munday, 2008). Thus, this theory balances both the SL and TL orientations. However, this theory was criticized for being inappropriate to translate literary texts in general.

These five types of functional theories demonstrate shifts from static linguistic to dynamic

functional/communicative translations. The latter theories are mainly concerned to the purposes of translations and are suitable for pragmatic, informative, and scientific texts. However, they are criticized for their inappropriateness for translating other types of texts like literary genres (Garzone, 2000, as cited in Neupane, 2017).

Systems Theories

Systems theories, like functional theories were developed in the 1970s as a reaction to the static and prescriptive linguistic approaches. The functional theories were criticized for their inappropriateness for literary translations. This recess was fulfilled by the systems theories, which was fruitful mainly for translating literary texts. There are two types of this theory such as polysystem and manipulation. The former assumes translated literature as a joint system of target culture in terms of social, literary and historical systems. Whereas the latter presumes that ST is manipulated within TT.

Polysystem theory. Israeli translation theorist, Itamar Even-Zohar propounded polysystem theory based on the Russian literary theorists. The term ‘polysystem’ implies the integration of literary systems in translated literature (Gentzler, 2010). This theory postulates that literature is an integral part of social, cultural, and historical contexts and therefore, literary system is wholistic form of all other sub-systems that include translated literature. For Ivan-Zohar (1978/revised 1990), translation can occupy the primary position in these conditions: (a) young literature, (b) novice/under-developed literature, and (c) dissatisfaction with traditional writing (as cited in Venuti, 2004).

Like the other theories, polystem theory has been criticized. In the Gentzler’s (2010) views, its brighter sides include its target-orientation, study of translation within the cultural and literary systems, get rid of the ambiguous term of equivalence; and the darker sides incorporate the adoption of 1920s Russian model unquestionably, lack of its own model, development of a theory without adequate research works.

Later on, Ivan-Zohar’s (1978) model was tested by Gideon Toury, a Tel Aviv scholar and improved it. Thus, it can also be called Zohar-Toury model (Neupane, 2017), that comprises the network of correlated systems (i.e. literary and extra-literary).

The target text orientation was criticized and the next approach (i.e. manipulation approach) tried to address this issue.

Manipulation theory. Because of the influence of Even Zohar and Gideon Toury’s theory, several meetings and conferences were held in Belgium, Israel, and the Netherlands and the papers presented in those conferences were edited and published in 1985 by Theo Hermans (Munday, 2008). The team is known as the Manipulation School or Group which regards literature a dynamic and complex system; and literary translation as descriptive, target-oriented, functional, and systematic. Thus, a translation implies manipulation of the ST to ensure social acceptance within the target culture. This theory shifts translation from skill to art and from equivalence to manipulation. Therefore, a translator is a re-writer/manipulator who rewrites the ST to fit into the target language community. To fit ST to TL community, manipulation is done that includes elaboration, normalization, explanation, addition, alteration, and omission strategies. For the description of translations, Lambert and Van Gorp (1985/2006) recommend this four-step plan:

preliminary data, macro level, micro level, and systematic context (as cited in Munday, 2008). Thus, the manipulation theory follows a stepwise procedure of translation.

The above delineations show that systems theory could not be applicable for non-literary translations. In the name of manipulation, the implied meaning of ST can be lost. To overcome the drawbacks of functional and systems theories, a radical theory, that is to say deconstructionism could be implemented in the field of translation. It is noteworthy that deconstruction theory broke the walls of binary divisions (for example, form vs. content, word-for-word vs. sense-for-sense translation, SL oriented vs. TL-oriented theories, and so on).

Deconstruction Theory

The theories delineated above are either SL-oriented or TL-oriented. They, in one way or the other, were entrapped around the concept of the ambiguous term ‘equivalence’. Breaking all these barriers, French scholar, Jacques Derrida’s deconstruction theory was used to liberate translation from the traditional binary divisions.

The foundation of deconstruction theory was on the philosophical tenets of Benjamin (1923), Pound (1929), and Steiner (1975) (Munday, 2008). Benjamin’s (1923) concept of transparency in translation, Pound’s (1929) experimentalism, and Steiner’s (1975) hermeneutic approach are the basis of Derrida’s theory (Neupane, 2017). These views created the third space of translation and the notion of literature-three in the post-structural context. Therefore, there was advocacy of literature-three, being first of the target language and the second of the source language. Basing on Heidegger (1927), Foucault (1977), and Derrida (1982, 1988), the deconstruction theory claims that no text is original because the so-called original writing like translation is translation of any other discourse/s (for example, non-verbal sources). Thus, translation is rewriting, re-construction, re-interpretation, or deconstruction process (Bhattarai, 2007). The more one reads the source text; the more the meanings and translations are created. This implies that no translation is final as there are numerous possibilities of rewriting the source texts. Each new reading breaks the older interpretations and creates the newer ones. In Derrida’s (1982, 1985) words, translation is a “lively operator of *différance* as a necessary process that distorts original meaning” (as cited in Gentzler, 2010, p.162). This implies that there are two processes in translation. The first is to defer the old reading and the next is to differ the meaning from the older ones. In this way, deconstructionist theorists liberated translation from the traditional logocentric and binary concepts and established translation in its separate existence. Translation, thus, is regarded as a process of extending, enlarging, or making languages grow externally.

Post-colonial Theory

Raising the cultural issues in translation, the above mentioned theories showed shifts in the postulations of translations. On this foundation, postcolonial theory made its debut raising two crucial issues: (a) how blatant power differentials, particularly in the age of European colonialism, have influenced the practice of translation, and (b) how translation might contribute to exposing challenging, and decolonizing the legacy of colonialism (Hui, 2011, as cited in Neupane, 2017). In this way, the authors and translators use translation as a strategy of resistance. It means, the pre-colonizers were protested by the

pre-colonized authors and translators. Thus, mainly, postcolonial theory resisted the history of powerful pre-colonizers and studied power imbalance between the colonized and the colonizer (Munday, 2008). This theory follows the system of analyzing translation keeping history and culture together. This turn includes mainly Brazilian movement of cannibalism, Indian movements, and Euro-centric conflicts, which are delineated in the subsequent paragraphs.

Of these movements, cannibalism is related to the Brazilian history of colonialism and a means of liberating translation from the shackles of European cultural values and assumptions (Snail-Hornby, 2006). Began in Brazil in the 1920s, it was an anthropological movement for the political protest to the colonizers and for bringing indigenous people in the mainstream of the nation. Therefore, the main goal of cannibalism was to cannibalize the colonizers and to nourish the Brazilian culture.

From the 1960s to the early 1980s, Augusto de Campos and Haroldo de Campos used the term metaphorically to develop a translation model as a cannibalistic theory of translation and concede, “Creative translation is parricidal dis-memory [...]. Translation is transfusion of blood [...] of the translator’s nourishment of the target culture”. Thus, translation is regarded as a recreation, parallel creation, or reproduction of donor language and culture to fit into the receiver language and culture. In this way, cannibalistic theory of the translation advocates for the translator’s visibility and transparency in the translated text.

Like in Brazil, a movement in Indian subcontinent was led by Niranjana (1992), Spivak (1992), Bhaba (1994), and Dingwaney (1995) (Neupane, 2017). Of them, Nirjana (1992) believes that translation of the Eastern culture by the Western scholars result in the wrong recognition of the East due to mistranslations. So, she calls for retranslation of the pillars of the eastern civilization like *Shakuntal*, *Dharmashastra*, *Gitagovinda*, *Manu Smriti* and others. Likewise, Spivak (1992) has presented her triangular views of feminism, post-colonialism in her renowned essay *Politics of Translation* (1993, as cited in Venuti, 2004a). Likewise, these two scholars, Bhabha (1994) and Dingwaney (1995), have added the concepts of third space of translation and third literature, represented by translated literature (Munday, 2008). These translation theorists’ views prove that translation constructs cultural hybridity and thus, makes its own space in literature.

Besides these non-Eurocentric turns, a movement raised voice against colonialism from within Europe. Of the many, Cronin (1996) has raised voice for the establishment of Irish existence for which translation can play a vital role (Venuti, 2004a).

In this way, postcolonial theory of translation establishes a vital position of translation (that is the third space), translator’s visibility, and brings the voices of the oppressed (here, the colonized) out in the mainstream.

SL Culture-Oriented Theory

Revolving within the circumference of the deconstructionists and the post-colonialists’ theory of translation, Lawrence Venuti (2004b) launched SL culture-oriented theory, which has been well-developed in his well-read books like *The Translator’s Invisibility* (2008) and *The Scandals of Translation* (2011).

Venuti's theory is based on Schleiermacher's (1813) distinction between domestication and foreignization. The former is target culture-oriented whereas the latter is source culture-oriented. Of them, Venuti favoured the latter. For him, both the source and the translated texts are derivatives. This view echoes deconstruction theory of translation. He is dissatisfied with the manipulation and collapse of source culture within the target culture and thus claims for the reversal process. He claims that the readers of the translated text should be aware of the source culture. A translation of a text is a reading of a translator; the more a reader reads the more translations s/he can produce. Thus, a source text should be left open for the readers and for maintaining this situation a translator should clearly express his/her aims and motives of translation and strategies applied for translating texts. The readers of the translated text should not discard the hidden meanings (that is to say, implicatures) of the cultural references. In this way, this theory claims that the translators should bring the authors to the readers. This theory, thus, appears useful for the aesthetic interpretation of the translated literature but not so much relevant for translating pragmatic texts (or informative texts). Further, this theory can be applied for developing and disseminating the undeveloped, marginalized, and young/novice languages and cultures as it relies on linguistic and cultural diversities. Despite this benefit, the translated text may lose readability, intelligibility, and fluency.

Conclusion and Implications

Translation in English and *anuvaaad* in Nepali are equivalent terms. Both of them refer to the meaningful reproduction of the texts across languages. Although translation practices were old, disciplinary studies commenced only in the 1970s. Then, Translation Studies, as a separate discipline, has received numerous theories contributed by the translation thinkers, theorists, and scholars. Now, it has been taught at the university level classes and many translators have been translating texts across the languages for the proliferation of the world literature and intercultural communication. Multilingual, multicultural, multi-ethnic, multiracial and multidimensional contexts of the world has triggered the significance of translation. In this context, numerous theorists have furthered their views, opinions, thoughts, feelings, and experiences, which provide foundations to build an exhaustive theory. The survey of the theories developed so far in the West lead the translators to follow the following pathways for better translation:

- The translators and the readers of the translated texts should be aware and vigilant to the language, literature, culture, history and allusions of both the source and target texts.
- Any translation should not be taken for granted as a final version because re-reading of the text may result in the reproduction of a newer translation.
- There should be harmony between the theories and practices. The former guidelines the latter and the latter provides baselines for constructing a theory.
- Translated text needs to be both intelligible and fluent. For this, a translator should keep an eye to all the facets of translation like source text, target text, author's, readers, languages, cultures, and so on.
- For the development of translation in the space of third literature, relevant theories should be developed and disseminated.

Thus, translators and translation theorists need to develop, apply, and adapt the theories, which are appropriate in their own contexts and which substantiate the recent developments in the field of translation.

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