

Actual problems of the translation

Savytska L. V.

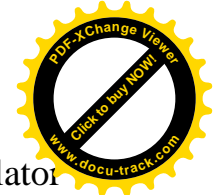
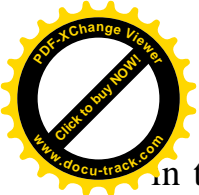
Associate Professor, PhD in Philology

Simon Kuznets Kharkiv National University of Economics

MODERN CHANGES IN TRANSLATION

Translation is an activity that has been eschewed for centuries – in terms of its need, the effort it requires and its professional status. The experience is not uniform; however, languages and societies have neither borne the silence in the same way or to the same degree nor at the same time. And although caution to generalize needs to be exercised, in many historical traditions and time periods translation has more often than not seemed to serve the powers that be, ostensibly beholden to established authorities, hidden away as if nonexistent and tucked in amid all kinds of routine exchanges – commercial, scientific and philosophical, to name but a few. Indeed, many sponsors, amateurs, self-translators (including scholars translating their own articles) and engineers within the language industry continue to consider translation as a mechanical process, a word-by-word substitution, a problem of dictionaries or simply an activity that accrues no apparent prestige and which can be handed off at any moment to a bilingual relative or colleague.

The popular assumption that a text to be translated is nothing more than a linear sequence of words or phrases no doubt explains why translation has long been considered as inferior, subordinate to the original. It testifies to the somewhat archaic perceptions of *translation* and *translator* by many who have inherited and continue to propagate common archetypes, perceiving language as static rather than dynamic, envisaging communication as a mere sequence of information packets rather than as interactions. Translators themselves have contributed to the eschewal of translation and to its abstention in professional circles over time. Often embodying and internalizing aspects of the subaltern in their work, they have been caught between the sacrificial idealism and calculating materialism of their activity, embracing the labor and servility of their always precarious vocation as if this practice required a certain predisposition toward docile self-effacement [6]. Metaphors of translation and images of the translator in the collective imagination are regularly reproduced in fiction, novels, films, and even

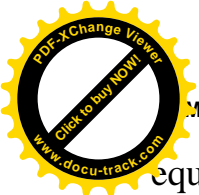


in the media [1]. They verge on the stereotypical and on clichés with the translator typically portrayed as a hardworking hermit and on the margins, as an impostor rather than a mediator.

The word *translation* seems to suffer from a bad reputation. It is often replaced by or competes with other terms, such as *localization*, *adaptation*, *versioning*, *transediting*, *language mediation*, and *transcreation*. Although this proliferation of labels does not take place in all languages and societies, the fact that they have surfaced and gained currency can hinder our comprehension and appreciation of the breadth and scope of the markets.

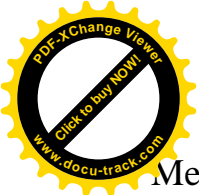
Translation suggests a labor of formal word-for-word transfer, a type of communication transpiring in a unidirectional conduit, evoking the image of the translator as a subservient worker. The field of translation studies has succeeded in deconstructing both the conventional definition and the image, and now embraces creativity, voice, interpretation, commitment, and an ethics of responsible subjectivity [7]. The long history of the term and its associated concepts around the globe continue to heavily influence the current and popular ideology of translation. The clash of paradigms – from a tradition based on religious texts and printed matter to digital culture – is only happening now. The hesitation to denominate what we do when we translate or transcreate, transedit, or localize is palpable. While emergent markets and technologies as well as changing communication needs, have resulted in different sectors using different labels for professional activities, many associations still rely on differentiating translation and translators through the foundational categories of literary and nonliterary (technical, commercial, medical, legal).

Often, the layperson will think of translation in the equivalence paradigm, or the quest to convey identical meanings. The implied aim is to achieve a text in the target language that is “of equal value” [4], as if retranslation was never needed. Strong assumptions underlie such an approach of an implicit framework of the communication model, where a message is transferred from one language to another and the tropes of border and bridge work powerfully. It assumes, for instance, that two languages “do or can express the same values” [4]. But a word or concept may connote different meanings in another language or may be absent altogether, so the relationship between the two languages is not necessarily symmetrical. Two words may also refer to the same object and this would not necessarily convey the intended meaning of the original text. Adequacy, fidelity, and loyalty to the source text may result in a text that is not easily comprehensible in the target language. The implicit assumptions of the



equivalence paradigm usually compel people to criticize a translation because certain words have not been replaced. Thus, the famous set phrase: “Traduttore traditore.” This focus on the lexical similarity of texts, however, is misguided. It does not allow one to consider, describe and explain the translation decisions and the translated output. The distinction between what is manifest (literal, direct, surface level) and what is latent (implicit, connotative, underlying) misreads the process of translation and relegates the translator’s act of interpreting the content to a task of relative obscurity. Despite decades of academic and professional translation research, the traditional parameters configuring the equivalence paradigm persist. It has for a long time not only helped identify translation and its ethics of neutrality but guided pedagogies. When scholars translate survey questionnaires and journalists transfer news, when foreign businesses discuss contracts and viewers watch subtitled TV programs or when language teachers use back-translation, they all rely heavily on the equivalence paradigm – language differences are considered errors, distortions in meaning. This default paradigm most certainly has its historical reasons, deriving in part from the way foreign languages were traditionally taught (calling for a kind of automated correspondence) and in part from the printed media (an essentialist view on meaning transfer was easily framed within the paradigm of book; the same page could be reproduced and could be compared word-for-word in different languages. That was not possible with codex and is not possible with digital texts.) Viewed from this perspective, translators are nonexistent; they are passive agents, with no voice, no empathy, no subjectivity, no reflexivity, no interpreting skill, no intercultural awareness, and no qualifications.

Within translation studies, however, the equivalence paradigm has been contested. Since the 1980s, translation theories and conceptual frameworks have shifted to include and prioritize a more contextualized and socioculturally oriented conception of the translation process. Translation has been reframed as a form of intercultural interaction. It is not languages that is translated but rather texts that are socially and culturally situated. Within this cultural turn in translation studies, several perspectives in particular have contributed to the critique of the long-standing equivalence paradigm: descriptive translation studies [8]; the *Skopos* theory [5]; and cultural politics [9], among others. Translation is thus viewed as a process of recontextualization as a purposeful action. Translators consider and balance diverse factors during the translation process to achieve a communicative purpose, and their translations materialize as functionally adequate in the target culture. The entire decision-making process is bound to considerations that involve the client end receiver.

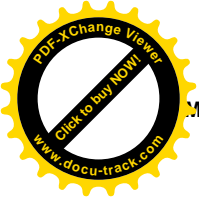


Meaning is no longer considered a mere invariant in the source text but rather as culturally embedded, with a need to be interpreted. Translation becomes not just a lexical hurdle to overcome but the result of connections between text, context, and myriad agents. The word *translation* nowadays covers a broad spectrum of possible definitions.

“Going digital” for almost three decades translation processes and translators were jolted by the new work and social environments, facilitated by technologies. Research in media and translation, meanwhile, had been carried out on a separate track. In 1995 in conjunction with the 100-year anniversary of the cinema saw a turning point for audiovisual translation (AVT) followed later by translation in newspapers and news agencies. We will now turn to consider the particular characteristics of these digital and media backdrops in relation to translation.

Communication, information, and computer technologies have introduced certain changes in attitudes and representation with regard to translation. These changes may well induce a significant break not only in translation practice but in the discourses about translation. Above all, the degree of computerization permeating all aspects of the translation work environment has risen. Software is used for creating translation memories, aligning texts, managing terminology, checking spelling and grammar, accessing and searching electronic corpuses, and carrying out machine translation. Differently combined technologies also exist, such as those integrating translation memories, terminology bases, and proposed machine translation results. Equally important are the changing social relations. Experiences are shared thanks to discussion lists and forums, blogs, and social media and networking sites such as LinkedIn and YouTube.

From the use of microcomputers that exponentially facilitate data sharing and the creation of local networks, we have now moved to a kind of dematerialized computing (cloud computing) that lifts all the worries and burdens of management, maintenance and reconfiguration of work tools from the translator’s shoulders. This rapid evolution is not inconsequential for the practice of translation, nor on the organization of its practice and surely not on its supply [2, 3]. Shared resources accessible in real time are now dynamic; costs are reduced; management is shortened; work is shared. Dematerialization favors simplification and productivity. On the other hand, it also creates a certain dependence on Internet connections and poses problems concerning security and confidentiality breaches.

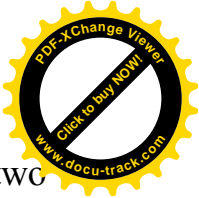
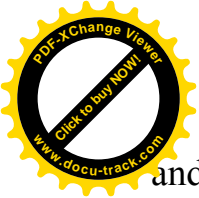


The ongoing changes in translation practice in the digital world are not confined to professional translation and localization activities. Myriad types of users have emerged. One prominent example is the use of machine translation by general users everywhere. Programs available on the Web for free allow users to upload content and to obtain a gist, with no overriding concern for quality. Human intervention can be limited, even nonexistent. If users are bilingual or multilingual, they can now provide their feedback to the proposed results and attempt to improve the performance of the machine translation in their respective language pairs and directions.

A second kind of general user with more specific attributes includes those who have no professional training but who manage or are fluent in languages other than their mother tongue. They tend to associate for specific reasons, or rally around projects where they contribute their linguistic and cultural knowledge. They carry out such activities as fan translation, fan subbing, fan dubbing, and scan-trans on deliberately chosen mangos, animated films, and video games.

A third type of user-translator participates in projects that are less fan motivated but clearly project centered. Often referred to as participatory or collective translation (with implied crowd sourcing), they translate and/or localize software, websites, articles, reports, literary texts, and interviews. For this collective, unpaid effort, volunteer and anonymous (or sometimes not) participants rely on their linguistic competence and translate and revise whatever and whenever they feel motivated to do so, until the entire project is complete. They can translate thanks to such tools as Traduwiki, Wikitranslate, and Google Translate. Social media or sociodigital networks (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.) take advantage of this collective will to translate to become more accessible to sectors of the population they may never have envisioned originally. These entities, above and beyond performing as social media, do, however, make a profit and are on the stock exchange. Crowd sourcing (i.e., a translation task offered up to an undefined group of volunteer translators) has sparked a great deal of concern with regard to the people involved, its ethics and the very concept of what translation is how it comes about and how it is perceived.

Finally, much collaborative translation work (as a team) continues to be carried out by a mix of professional working and professionally trained (but not necessarily working) translators. They share resources; can work on the same document or content from diverse locations; and share activities of translation, research, terminology management, revision, and proofreading. Dematerialized computer resources are available and at the common disposal of all. Translation jobs or projects may be bid on

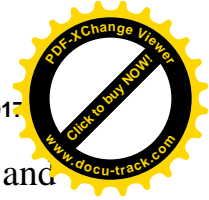
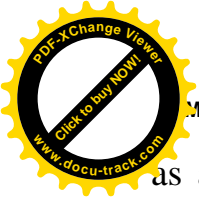


and qualifications and requirements posted (Proz and Translator's Café are two examples). Volunteer networked translation can also be carried out by professionals (that is, those who have been trained for translation and/or have experience in translation) for example, through networks such as Babel, Translators without Borders, and the Rosetta Foundation. These activist translators work for a specific cause and respond to the needs expressed by nongovernmental organizations and other associations.

The schema provided above are helpful for designating the diverse translating groups that have emerged within a digital environment. For collaborative, volunteer-networked activist group and open-source community translation projects, professionally trained translators are also willing participants. Through the network, they share problems as well as tools and solutions, effectively putting an end to individualism or the romanticized translator image. Reconfigured by technologies, their socioprofessional enterprise materializes to meet the challenges of outsourcing, competition, job insecurity, online bidding, international requests for proposals, and so on. For the general users and fan-based collectives, on the other hand, the link is primarily technological. Common interests link their efforts and technologies enable them to carry out work on a site, a network or a product. These online communities are limited in breadth and scope. Tying all these groups together, however, is a common thread of momentum that is shifted in the direction of the user-translator as actor, as the producer of content. The evolution of translation practice in the digital world is thus not only technical but economic and social.

Productivity, accessibility, quality, and collaborative networking have all become more tightly intertwined. Some tools seem to resonate regressively, implying a return to the old concept of translation that is a word-based and a formal, mechanical, countable transfer. The line-by-line translations of European Union directives, produced with the constrained aid of translation memories, the practice of live subtitling, or the subtitles of fans, all tend to stick to the source and become verbatim, with no regard for such matters as the effects on reception and on reading. These changes in the conditions and pace of work can ultimately demotivate translators, who become dispossessed of all power, forced to always be online and beholden to the tool imposed by the client.

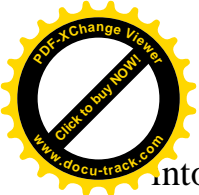
Eschewed for so long, translation does not generate the same enthusiasm or enjoy the same prestige that music, photography, journalism, and cinema have on the Web, with millions of amateurs ready to promote the products they are passionate about



as a pastime. Nevertheless, certain parallels can be drawn between translators and journalists, who have likewise been confronted with computerization and an influx of amateurs. They work with written and oral forms and have a sociocultural responsibility that goes beyond the immediacy of the statements produced. They require abilities to document properly and conduct terminological research. They need to be able to establish relationships with other experts. The communicational efficiency of media professionals could be a useful lesson for translators, and the translators' concern for quality and precision could serve to assist media professionals increasingly being asked to sight translate to synthesize their texts more effectively. In both cases, acquiring skills is more important than gaining knowledge that is rapidly rendered obsolete, and where autonomous decision making and the ability to self-evaluate are essential. Finally, both professions are confronted with ICTs and all the transformations they imply within production workflows and in the distribution channels of information. As in journalism, the means and tools users have at their disposal today are making translation desirable and feasible.

The fears generated by ICTs and changing work conditions seem to be shared among journalists and translators alike. Both professions seem to be forced to question their very norms and ethics. Nonprofessionals and amateurs, who have long been disparaged by professional milieus, would seem to have their revenge. Often marginalized and caricaturized, amateurs are pushing the limits of certain professions and redefining their parameters and missions. Whether rebuffed under a form of liberalism or praised for animating certain practices, they reflect in part the profound mutations induced by the presence of ICTs. And yet a kind of mystification with regard to words such as *community* exists, as if all members were equally competent and strategic with the same ability to interpret. The ideology of empowerment can lead one to believe that all amateurs are equally autonomous, reactive, thoughtful, and masters of their domains.

The platforms, technical protocols, media, sociotechnical contexts and digital world within which translation practices are currently organized reflect a conflation of the structured and structuring dynamics that motivate production and consumption of multimedia, multimodal content. The desire to translate, to communicate through translation is enhanced by computing and ICT. The paradigm of equivalence, analytically viable for static texts and delimited territories and as if the translation event was the fact of the only translator is challenged by the dynamic and fluctuating content that passes fluidly from one production-consumption scenario to another, transformed



into linguistic versions culturally amenable and relevant to users increasingly fluent in the language of technologies. The proliferation of terms designating the linguistic-cultural transformations for which the word *translation* would once have sufficed is indicative not only of a conceptual disruption but of the communication value being added to the nodes of a burgeoning global network.

References

1. Gambier Y. Recent developments and challenges in audiovisual research / C. Delia, H. Christina, & B. Chiara Between text and image: Updated research in screen translation. – Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2008. – P. 11–33.
2. Mossop B. Has computerization changed translation? – Meta. – 2006. – № 51(4). – P. 787–792.
3. Perrino S. User-generated translation: The future of translation in a Web 2.0 environment // Journal of Translation. – 2009. – № 12. – [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: http://www.jostrans.org/issue12/art_perrino.php.
4. Pym A. Natural and directional equivalence in theories of translation / Y. Gambier & L. Van Doorslaer The metalanguage of translation. – Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2009. – P. 81–104.
5. Reiss K. & Vermeer H. Towards a general theory of translational action: Skopos theory explained (C. Nord, Trans.). – Manchester: St Jerome, 2013. – Original work published in German, 1984.
6. Simeoni D. The pivotal status of the translator's habitus. – Target. – 1998. – № 10(1). – P. 1–39.
7. Sun S. Rethinking translation studies. – Translation Spaces. – 2014. – № 3. – P. 167–191.
8. Toury G. Descriptive translation studies and beyond. – Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1995/2012.
9. Venuti L. The translator's invisibility: A history of translation. – Abingdon: Routledge, 1995/2008.