Chapter-II
Translation Theories
Chapter-2

Translation Theories

2.1 Introduction

The ability to learn and use a language is the prerogative of human beings. The existence of many languages in currency has made the process of translation obligatory. If the Source language and the Receptor language are the same or some dialects of the same language, the translation can be called 'Intralingual translation'. For instance the translation may be a simplification of a complex text or a paraphrase or even elaboration. As it involves only one language we can hardly call it translation.

Translation, what we generally mean by, involves two languages. The verbal signs of a text in one language are replaced by the verbal signs in some other language. As soon as two speakers of different languages need to converse, translation is necessary.

Before the invention and diffusion of writing and printing, translation was instantaneous and oral, persons professionally specialized in such work were called interpreters. The task of the translation is same whether the material is oral or written. But the translation between written texts allows more time for stylistic adjustment and technical expertise.

These adjustments pertain to the literary and semantic conflicts. The problems and conflicts do arise because languages do not operate in isolation but with in and as part of culture, and cultures differ from each other in various ways. More over the structure and grammar of languages also differ in many ways. If the structure and culture of the two languages is more similar, the task of the translator would be easier. Ranga Rao rightly compares the process with electrical energy. "Translation is transmission, of creative energy. Like the more mundane electrical energy, the longer the distance over
which it is transmitted, the greater the scope of loss." (263) From Telugu it is easier to translate in to Tamil or Kannada. But it becomes more difficult to do so in to English, which is structurally and culturally far different. This leads to more transmission losses. Even between the languages of communities whose cultures are closely related, there may not be exact equivalence between the items of their vocabularies. Since translation involves languages, the analysis and the description of translation process must draw up on a theory of language- a general linguistic theory.

Translation theory's main concern is to determine appropriate translation methods for the widest possible range of texts or text-categories. Further it provides a frame work of principles, restricted rules and hints for translating texts and criticizing translations, a background for problem-solving. (Newmark. Approaches to Translation 19)

Besides the great increase in the volume of literary translations, attempts were made to formulate a theory of translation. But there is no single theory that can provide a translator with rules of thumb. And the very absence of such a theory strengthens argument that translation is not merely a mechanical enterprise but a creative one. The goal of translation is to establish a relationship of equivalence between the source and the target texts (that is to say to ensure that both texts communicate the same message), while taking into account a number of constraints. These constraints include context the rules of grammar of the source language, its writing conventions, its idioms and the like.
2.2 Theories of Translation:

2.2.1 Ancient Theories:

A number of scholars and literary figures like Cicero, Horace, Quintilian, Plinay, Longinus, Petrarch, Terence and Aulus Gellius had made profound comments on the process of translation.

Cicero considers the translation activity a difficult task, "If I render word for word, the result would sound uncouth and if compelled by necessity I alter any thing in the order of wording, I shall seem to have departed from the function of a translator"
(Susan Bassnett-Mc Guire, Translation Studies, 51-52)

Cicero (55 BC) first championed sense for sense against words and said a translator must be either an interpreter or a rhetorician. The classical essays are those of St. Jerome(400), Luther (1530), Dryden (1684)- all favouring colloquial and natural renderings.

Tytler wrote a the first significant book on translation in 1790, stating that 'a good translation is one in which the merit of the original work is so completely transfused into another language as to be as distinctly apprehended and as strongly felt by a native of the country to which that language belongs as it is by those who speak the language of the original work. (Newmark- Approaches to Translation 4)
2.2.2 Early theories of Translation:

The French humanist Etinne Dolet (1509-46) is considered to be the first formulator of theory of translation. In his work titled 'La maniere de bien trauire d'une langue en autrhe' (How to translate well from one language into another) published in 1540 he had offered five principles to be followed by the translators:

i) The translator has to understand fully the sense and meaning of the original author, although he is at liberty to clarify obscurities.

ii) The translator should possess perfect knowledge of both SL and TL.

iii) The translator should avoid word for word renderings.

iv) The translator should use the words that are in common use.

v) The translator should choose and order words appropriately to produce the correct tone.

John Dryden (1631-1700), in his Preface to Ovid's Epistles (1680) tackled the problems of translation and he formulated three basic types of translation.

i) **Metaphrase**: translating a work word by word and line by line from one language to another.

ii) **Paraphrase**: it is a translation of sense for sense where the author's words are not so strictly followed.

iii) **Imitation**: this forsakes both 'word for word' and 'sense for sense' translation. It corresponds to adaptation. Here the translator is free to abandon the text wherever he feels like.
Goethe (1813) stated that translation is impossible, essential and important.

Benjamin (1923) stated that translation goes beyond enriching the language and culture of a country which it contributes to, beyond renewing and maturing the life of the original text, beyond expressing and analysing the most intimate relationships of languages with each other and becomes a way of entry into a universal language.

(Newmark- *Approaches of Translation* 18)

2.2.3 Theories in Twentieth century:

There are many theorists and translators who attempted to analyse the process of translation. Here four major theories of translation of 1) JC Catford 2) Nida and 3) Newmark 4) Roger Bell are examined.

2.2.3.1 J.C. Catford:

He was one of the prominent scholars of translation studies during the second half of the twentieth century. He published *A Theory of Translation* (1965) in which he classifies translation into categories. He developed his theory on Halliday's 'scale and category' model of linguistic analysis. According to him 'Translation is the replacement of textual material in one language by equivalent textual material in another language.'

In translation there is a substitution of TL meanings for SL meanings; not transference of the SL meanings into TL. In transference there is an implantation
of SL meanings into the TL text. These two processes must be clearly differentiated in any theory of translation.

(J.C. Catford, *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*, 48)

The word 'text' as used by Catford implies a complex structure composed of different kinds of materials—grammatical, lexical, phonological and graphological components.

Depending on the extent, level and ranks of translation, Catford divides translation into the following broad types of categories.

**i) Extent of translation:** Full vs. Partial Translation

**Full Translation:** In this translation, the whole of a given text is submitted to the translation process i.e., every unit of meaningful part of the source language text is replaced by equivalent textual Receptor language material.

**Partial Translation:** In this translation some part or parts of the source language text are left untranslated. They are simply transferred to TL text. The reason to do so may be either the translator thinks that they are 'untranslatable' or to introduce 'local colour' into the TL text.

**ii) Levels of Translation:** Total vs. restricted translation

**Total translation:** translation in which all levels of the source language texts are replaced by TL material is called 'total translation' or 'translation' as the word generally used. In this type the source language grammar and lexis are replaced by equivalent receptor language grammar or lexis. This itself entails the replacement of the source
language phonology / graphology by the receptor language phonology / graphology but this replacement is not by equivalent receptor language items.

Restricted translation: This translation is the replacement of the source language textual material by equivalent receptor language textual material, at only one level, that is at the level of phonology or graphology or grammar or lexis.

iii) Rank Translation:

'Rank-bound' and 'Unbounded' translations

Rank-bound translation: In this translation the selection of receptor language equivalents is deliberately confined to 'one rank' in the hierarchy of grammatical units. It may be at the rank of word or group of words or sentence. A rank bound translation in which the rank of translation is the unit word is called the word for word translation.

A rank bound translation in which the rank of translation is the unit group is called the 'literal' translation. It may also start from a word-for-word translation and change structures at the rank even of the unit clause. The changes are done in conformity with receptor language grammar. But in one respect it is also a word-for-word translation i.e., to use the highest (unconditional) probability lexical equivalent for each lexical item.

Rank unbounded Translation: This translation is not confined to any one rank. Some times equivalences are set up between units larger than the sentence. It is characterized by lexical adaptation to receptor language's collocational and idiomatic requirements.
A translator may opt for any one of the above three types. Some times he may combine all the three in different proportions. It is determined by the nature of the work to be translated and the readers it is meant for.

Catford's theory of translation is text oriented and it ignores some vital aspects of the translation processes - the aim of the translator, the translator's attitude toward the SL text and its writer, the intended reader, and the type of material that is being translated. His theory also ignores the implications of discourse levels above the sentence-level that are important for a theory of translation, in particular for a theory of literary translation. This vital aspect is included in the theory of translation put forward by Nida.

2.2.3.2 Nida, Eugene A (1969):

Nida attempted to move translation to the modern scientific era from the often stagnant and sterile literal vs. free translation debate by bringing in the science of language into translation. He developed a theory of translation in his paper 'Science of Translation' (Language, 1969) based on the theories of Halliday and Fillmore. Nida's theory moves form a purely syntax oriented semantic theory of translation to a pragmatic one that accounts for the implied meanings. In his theory of meaning he makes a distinction between i) Referential (denotative) and ii) emotive (connotative) meanings. His theory of translation is a methodological, scientific and discourse based theory. And it is based on the transformational insights about the surface structures and
deep structures. His theory seems more apt than Catford's, where the language is used not only for informative expressive function but also in its imperative function.

A translator's main task is first to comprehend the meaning of a source language text and then to transfer and restructure the same meaning in Receptor Language. Nida defines translation as a process of 'reproducing in the Receptor Language the closest natural equivalent of the message of the Source Language, first in terms of meaning, second in terms of style.'

According to Nida, Translation comprises three stages.

i) Analysis:

The surface structure of the Source language text is analysed in terms of sentential and supra-sentential features.

Sentential features include the grammatical relations between the constituent parts of source language and referential meanings of the semantic units.

Supra sentential features include the connotative value of the syntactic structures i.e., the evaluation of the syntactic and semantic features of style.

ii) Transfer:

The analysed material is transferred in the mind of the translator from source language kernel (deep) structures to receptor language deep structures.

iii) Restructuring: The transferred material is restructured in order to make the final message fully acceptable in the receptor language.
Nida's theory of translation can be diagrammatically represented thus:

Thus according to Nida, analysis of a text in the source language include not only the syntactic relation between linguistic units or denotative (referential) meaning, but also emotive (connotative) values of the formal structure of the communication. And the emotive response to the thematic content of communication is usually excluded as outside the realm of linguistics. He also states that this level of the analysis cannot be limited to the level of discourse. The main shortcoming in Nida's theory is that it is oriented exclusively towards Bible translation.
2.2.3.3 Newmark, Peter:

The move towards the view of language as communication led to an interest in the notion of semantic / pragmatic meaning and the notion of discourse and discourse analysis in linguistics. And Newmark's theory of translation is discourse and receptor oriented. According Nida Newmark's major contribution "...is in a detailed treatment of semantic vs. communicative translating in which semantic translation focuses primarily upon the semantic content of the source text and communicative translation focuses essentially up on the comprehension and response of receptors. " (Newmark, 1981)

Newmark's main contribution to general translation theory is the concept of communicative and semantic translation. The features of semantic and communicative translation are furnished in a table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semantic Translation</th>
<th>Communicative translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  Author centered</td>
<td>Reader centered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  Pursues author's thought process related to thought</td>
<td>Pursues author's intention related to speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  Concerned with author as individual</td>
<td>Adapts and makes the thought and cultural content of original more accessible to reader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  Semantic- and syntactic – oriented. Length of sentences, position and integrity of clauses, Word position etc preserved whenever possible.</td>
<td>Effect oriented. Formal features or original sacrificed more readily.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faithful, more literal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Informative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Usually more awkward, more detailed, more complex, but briefer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Personal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Source language biased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Over translated: More concentrated and more specific than original</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>More powerful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Always inferior to the original because of loss of meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Out of time and local place-eternal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Wide and universal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Inaccuracy is always wrong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>The translator has no right to improve or to correct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Mistakes in the original should (and must) be pointed out only in footnote.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Target: a ‘true’ version, i.e. an exact statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Unit of translating: tends to words, collocations and clauses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Applicable to all writings with original expressiveness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Basically the work of translating is an art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Usually the work of one translator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Conforms to the ‘relativist’ position of cultural relativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Newmark- *About Translation*. 11)
Newmark flatly rejects the proposition that translation is a science and he insists on treating ‘the basic propositions of translation in terms of a theory of communication which has a wide range of discourse and related problems. He deals with the problems of figurative language and proposes a number of suggestions as to how they can be handled.

He makes a distinction between semantic and pragmatic meanings of a unit i.e., the difference between the answers to these questions, “what does the unit mean?” and “what does he mean by that unit?” Thus the major contribution of Newmark is in a detailed treatment of semantics vs. communicative translating. His theory is based on Buhler concept of function of language.

Text continuum (adapted from Buhler)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expressive</td>
<td>Informative</td>
<td>Vocative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(or self-expression,</td>
<td>(or cognitive, denotative,</td>
<td>(or social injunctive,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>creative, subjective)</td>
<td>represental, intellectual,</td>
<td>emotive, rhetorical,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>referential, descriptive,</td>
<td>affective, dynamic, directive,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>objective)</td>
<td>connotative, seductive,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For poems etc.</td>
<td>For technical reports</td>
<td>operative, suggestive,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>imperative, persuasive,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>rhetorical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(pragmatic) (stylistic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>For advertisements etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Newmark. *Aspects of translation*)
Translation Level
X- Referential
Y- Textual
Z- Subjective

The difference between literary and non-literary translation may be classified, according to Newmark with the help of the above diagram that is adopted from Buhler. In non-literary translation the information function B will be dominant and is identical with the translator’s X where as in a literary text, the expressive function is the most important in the text and translator’s Z is more influential while translating literary texts. The crucial point in Newmark’s theory is the proposition of different methods of translation processes based on different kinds of texts that are to be translated. He also makes it clear that no two kinds of translations can be put in to watertight compartments. The difference is only in the function that dominates the rest.

2.2.3.4 Roger T. Bell:

Roger T. Bell in his ‘Translation and Translating: Theory and Practice’ (1991) lists out the knowledge and skills that are required for a translator. He also analyses the process of translation and offers a model of Translation process. The translator must, as a communicator, possess the knowledge and skills that are common to all communicators.
Bell envisages a translator expert system containing the kinds of knowledge and skills in essence two basic components viz.

i) A knowledge base and ii) An inference mechanism.

i) A knowledge base consisting of:

a) Source language knowledge; the syntactic rule systems of the code, its lexicon and semantics and its text-creating systems.

b) Target language knowledge: equivalent to that in the source language.

c) Text type knowledge

d) Contrastive knowledge of each of the above;

ii) An inference mechanism which permits:

a) The decoding of texts, i.e. reading and comprehending source language texts

b) The encoding of texts i.e. writing target language texts, e.g. a writer's assistant system which helps with the writing.

He considers translation as the phenomenon of human information processing and suggests an outline model of translation process. The process is modelled as a cascaded and interactive process with three main stages viz. syntactic, semantic and pragmatic processing.