

Translation Studies Today: Old Problems and New Challenges

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Abstract. The article presents a review of the key trends in modern Translation Studies (TS) made after thorough analysis of the most fundamental works written in various fields of TS. The review proves that not only the range of problems within TS is now more diversified, which is related to many changes in the nature of translation activity, but Translation Studies are an interdisciplinary science now and uses data from neighboring disciplines. Specific “turns” have occurred in Translation Studies, and new paradigms of translation investigation have emerged. The most important phenomena in Translation Studies include “cultural turn” and the so called “anthropocentric turn” that has given birth to communicative-functional approach to translation. This approach implies “plunging” into the communicative situation of translation, and its analysis aimed at realizing the goal of translation by the translator/interpreter. It allows a more precise formulation of tasks solved by translators in both traditional types of translation (literary translation, religious translation, interpreting) and relatively new kinds of translation activity (audiovisual translation, localization). The article proves that translation proper is the main element of any activity performed by translators while any translation activity implies cultural adaptation of the text to the perception of the source text audience. The principal feature of Translation Studies is being practice-oriented, and their focus on the study of objective laws of translation activity. It enables translation scholars to understand peculiarities of various types of translation and to realize the essence of translation as a human activity.

Key words: *Translation Studies, cultural turn, communicative-functional approach, audiovisual translation, localization*

Introduction

It is well known that translation studies acquired the status of a science in the second half of the 20th century. It was quite a natural phenomenon preconditioned, first and foremost, by the need to interpret the objectivity and peculiarities of translation activity that had changed dramatically and expanded its boundaries. It seems to be quite natural that the new science was created not from scratch but used a number of concepts that had appeared in previous epochs. Ideas that had emerged in translators’ minds in various countries and in various times paved the way to formulation and formalization of isolated views on translation in the form of an entity that eventually became a science. It is obvious that in previous periods the translators’ thinking was concerned with only two types of translation activity that had been dominant over centuries, specifically, religious translation, i.e. translation of sacred texts, and literary translation. It is not accidental that it was the literary approach to translation that became the first and the most dominant one in translation

studies, if the term “translation studies” is applicable to translation investigations in the pre-scientific period, so to speak. It was only in 1930s when researchers paid their attention to problems of specialized, non-literary translation, which was preconditioned by the extended international cooperation in the scientific and technical, military and diplomatic fields as well as by the need to train translators for the fields (Sdobnikov, Petrova 2006: 54—55). Linguists’ interest in the comparative synchronic study of languages contributed much to the emergence of the linguistic approach to translation. Edwin Gentzler argues that “...a more systematic approach to translation was needed, and the discipline with the theoretical and language tools necessary to address the problem was first provided by linguistics” (Gentzler 1990: 67). Translation scholars of the time were mostly interested in types of the correlation between the languages that clashed in the process of translation and that influenced the translation process and its results. It was a kind of a “turn” from literary studies to linguistics resulting in a confrontation of and even hostilities between the two approaches, at least in Russia. The fight ended with the general recognition of the fact that even in literary translation linguistic factors play significant role at the both stages of the translation process, i.e. in the source text interpretation and the target text production (Larin 1962: 3). Thus, a reconciliation took place. But it was just the initial period of the development of the science of translating. Further I shall consider the main events in the history of translation studies and in the history of translation activity to which TS is linked and which let the science acquire its present form and status. Further development of Translation Studies was marked by some important shifts, as Western scholars termed them (Snell-Hornby 2006). I shall mention only the most significant events that have predetermined the present state of Translation Studies, referring to more extensive literature on the matter (Gentzler 1990; Prunč 2007; Прунч 2015) for those who need more detailed information about the TS development. Proceeding from the premise that any turn implies a change of direction, of a motion vector, I, first, shall note the approach that served as the start point of the further development of the science of translating. Based on the logic of how things unfold, it is quite natural to presume that it was the linguistic approach that appeared at the early state of the TS formation. Briefly speaking, the main task set according to this approach was seen as finding conditions of establishing equivalence of the two texts as well as factors that contribute to or prevent it. It is not accidental that what is called linguistic approach in Russian Translation Studies is termed equivalence-oriented approach or equivalence paradigm (Gambier 2016a) in the West. With time, the limitations of this approach got to be realized. Ives Gambier argues that this approach “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” (Gambier 2016b: 889). TS could not stay in the grip of the linguistic approach for a long time, especially when the nature of translation activity itself was forcing scholars to consider the issues related to the impact of cultural factors on translation. Translation Studies dramatically changed when it was realized that in translation not only languages clash but cultures do as well. Alexander Shveizer claimed that in translation the clash of cultures happens both at the communicative level and at the level of the text (Shveizer 1988: 52). Talking about cultures scholars, at the same time, meant representatives of different cultures, i.e. people for whom translation is a means to ensure communication. Thus, the term “cross-cultural communication” became wide-spread. And in theoretical studies of translation a place that had used to be vacant got opened up — a place for humans. It was both a cultural and anthropocentric turn in translation. Extensive literature was devoted to the influence of culture on translation and the influence of translation on culture since 1980s (Bassnett, Lefevere 1998; Bassnett 2005; Cranmer 2015; Gentzler 2001; Hatim, Mason 2005; Katan 2009; Koskinen 2015;

Nida 1973; 1993; 1996; Toury 1984). It is obvious that the notion of cultural turn is a very complex and multidimensional one, and in this respect is similar to the notion of culture itself. It could not but influenced the character of the science of translating which started to investigate various aspects of cultural manifestations and differences between cultures apparent in various types of translation. The fact is confirmed by the topics of the articles of the present issue of the journal discussing mechanisms of cross-cultural communication that must be taken into account by translators and studied by translation scholars. I believe that functionalist approach to translation (I call it communicative-functional approach) traces its origin to the works by Eugene Nida (Nida 1964; Nida, Taber 1969), authors of scopos theory Katharina Reiss and Hans Vermeer (Reiß, Vermeer 1984; 2013) and scholars of Leipzig school of translation (Jäger 1975; Kade 1981; Neubert 1973). However, if we take into account that the communicative-functional approach is based on the assumption that the translator's task is to perceive the global meaning of the ST and to reproduce it in the target text, we can say that the list of precursors of this approach includes Cicero, St. Jerome and even Peter the Great (see, e.g., Fedorov 1983: 41). Among Russian translation scholars we should mention Zinaida Lvovskaya (Lvovskaya 2008) who paid special attention to rendering meaning for a definite audience (Sdobnikov 2017). Nowadays the communicative-functional approach dictates that any translation event must be viewed in the context of a certain communicative situation with due account of the translation goal, needs and expectations of real or probable TT recipients (consumers), and the way the TT will be used by the text consumers in their substantive activity. In some cases it is important to take into account the communicative intention of the ST sender and the communicative effect produced by the ST on its recipients. I say "in some cases" because the equality of communicative effects produced by the ST and the TT is not always necessary and often is utterly impossible. For example, a translation of a speech initially addressed to the ST audience can hardly have the same effect on another audience. This statement contradicts the traditional views according to which translation is a process with the objective to reproduce the communicative effect of the source text (Shveizer 1988: 75). Since the analysis of the communicative situation in which translation is made is an indispensable condition of realizing translation brief by the translator (Nord 2005: 9— 10), it is required to classify such communicative situations. The classification I have developed includes two types of communicative situations: those in which translation is planned initially, i.e. at the time the ST is created, and those in which translation is not initially planned. Each of these types is further subdivided on the basis of different criteria: in the first case it is the form of interaction of interlocutors (a presentation, a round table, an interview, a guided tour, etc.), in the second case it is the personality of the translation commissioner (Sdobnikov 2011; Sdobnikov 2015). I state that the parameters of a communicative situation determine the translation goal and are instrumental in choosing the translation strategy that conforms to the situation; translation strategy is defined as a general program of performing translation activity with due account of the parameters of the communicative situation (Sdobnikov 2011: 1450). Thus, the communicative-functional approach implies plunging — both in theory and practice — into a certain communicative situation, realizing the parameters of this situation and the tasks that must be solved by the translator. This approach is of special importance for professional training of translators and interpreters because it allows to get rid of the false vision of translation as a transformation of one text into another, as a philological game, and to implant the idea in would-be translators' minds that translation is an activity aimed at satisfying the needs of people by producing a text in the target language on the basis of the source text. This conviction will be typical of future generations of translators if the communicative-functional approach becomes their ruling ideology. Translation Studies continue to pay special attention to problems discussion of which began many centuries ago. The list of these problems includes issues of literary translation

and religious translation covered, by the way, in some articles published in this issue. It might seem that everything that can be said about these problems has already been said, and there is nothing to add. But it is not the case. The thing is that the development of Translation Studies must be viewed as spiral movement: at each new cycle translation scholars embrace new aspects of eternal problems, their approaches to solving translation problems change, they approach the problems with a fresh perspective. Undoubtedly, it is the communicative-functional approach that is the basic and most promising approach to translation, which seems to be a very innovative fact, especially in relation to translating sacred texts. In particular, this approach is congruent to the task of ensuring a specific communicative effect on the recipients of a translated version of the Bible and taking into account the mission that must be performed by translations of the Holy Scripture in the target culture in a certain epoch (see, for example, the article by G. Khukhuni, I. Valuitseva and A. Osipova). I am happy with the fact that the communicative-functional approach is used as the theoretical framework that allows to make investigation of eternal (and new) problems of Translation Studies closer to the reality of the translation activity performed in the interests of specific ST recipients in specific situations. The brief overview of Translation Studies today will be completed with consideration of new fields, trends and topics that became topical over the last two or three decades. Certainly, it is hard to list all specific issues that are of great interest to translation scholars within the limited space of this review. The most important thing is that Translation Studies have already proved that it is practice-oriented; all innovations in Translation Theory are predetermined by changes in the translation activity's character. A sketchily overview of the most significant changes and their role in diversifying Translation Studies agenda is given below. It seems that the development of Interpretation Theory is not a recent achievement. But we should take into consideration that the initial stage of the development of science of translating only left us with some landmark books that laid the foundations of Interpretation Theory and mapped out the ways of investigating interpretation as an activity (Minyar-Beloruhev 1969; 1980; Chernov 1987; Shiryayev 1979). The research used the purely linguistic (or text-oriented) approach that was dominant that time. Now translation scholars focus not only on describing the mechanisms of consecutive and simultaneous interpreting but on investigating psycholinguistic and neurophysiological processes that underpin the mechanisms (Moser-Mercer 1978; Moser-Mercer et al. 1998). The most innovative, even striking trend in simultaneous interpreting is the so called "solo" simultaneous made individually, i.e. without a partner. Some empirical research is carried out in field, though no fundamental works on the issue have been written so far. The wider use of audiovisual translation (AVT), i.e. translation of movies, cartoons, video presentations, computer games, applications to smartphones, etc., could not but attracted attention of translation scholars (Gorshkova 2006; 2017; Matasov 2009; Malyonova 2017; Chaume 2016; Díaz Cintas 2009; Gambier 2008). Many of them treat AVT as an independent activity distinct from interpreting and translation (Kozulyaev 2013). This field embraces two spheres of research. First, it is investigation of specific peculiarities of AVT as a translation activity and its technologies, such as overvoice, dubbing, subtitling (Gottlieb 2009; Pettit 2009). Second, it is investigation of particular problems faced by translators in the AVT process, mostly, in film translation (translation of movie titles, puns, metaphors, etc.). It is encouraging that scholars decline the textoriented approach in investigating the specific translation problems (Malyonova 2017: 40—41) and use the communicative-functional approach, or polydisciplinary approach, to be more exact (Malyonova 2017). The fact is confirmed by the articles of Olga Leontovich, N. Shchurik and V. Gorshkova published in the present issue. The vision of AVT as an individual translation activity is based on taking into account its polysemiotic character (Kozulyaev 2013; Malyonova 2017; Díaz Cintas 2009), which implies that AVT must be studied both as a type of intersemiotic translation and as a

method of producing a specific communicative effect on a specific audience. Obvious “technologizing” of the translation process, the usage of translation in creating such products as computer games, mobile applications, interfaces of websites, etc., have resulted in the differentiation of translation proper and the so called localization in practical activities and in emergence of new paradigms in translation theory (Gambier 2016a; 2016b). For example, Anthony Pym argues that IT are not just additional tools but systems that “...are altering the very nature of the translator’s cognitive activity, social relations, and professional standing” (Pym 2011). Localization must satisfy the need to modify the functions and features of the applications in such a way that they would fulfill the requirements and demands of local consumers (Gambier 2016b: 890). It is defined as “the process of modifying products or services to account for differences in distinct markets” (LISA 2003: 13). Localization of a product for another cultural environment implies addressing three types of issues — linguistic, cultural and technical. Adaptation of accounting software to comply with local generally accepted accounting principles in the target culture is just one example of cultural issues (Ibid.). Redesign and re-engineering of software to support local languages and content is a technical issue. Thus, localization is closely related to translation but is more extensive, and implies some technical operations necessary to adapt the text to the needs of consumers in another culture. I do not think that opposing localization to translation proper is fully justified. Unfortunately, it is a trend both in the translation theory and translation business. Some managers of translation agencies view translation as transformation of one text into another, replacement of signs (words) of one language by signs of another. At the same time, localization is presented as a process in which significant cultural (pragmatic) adaptation of the text to the reality of the target culture is made (Fridge). It is stated that no cultural adaptation is performed in the process of translation proper (Ibid.). Certainly, it is not the case. We know pretty well that any translation implies cultural adaptation (Komissarov 1990: 211—215), especially translation of publicistic, literary, advertising materials and even specialized texts. Therefore, localization is distinct from translation proper in the use of certain technical tools needed to create a product in conformity with the requirements of a local market. Moreover, I can conclude that Translation Studies are expected to define precisely the place and role of translation in the localization process and the place of localization in the general structure of translation activities.

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