NECESSARY CHANGES IN TRANSLATION IDEOLOGY

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Abstract

Three major problems in modern translation ideology were identified and the researcher proposed changes necessary for advancements in the development of translation theories and translation technology. Traditionally, the development in translation theory has created a translation ideology that has focused on the faithfulness and the accuracy of target texts in representing the source texts, encouraging translators and interpreters to become neutral conduits in the language-transferring process. Based on related literature, Bakhtin’s Dialogic Model, and Speech Act Theory, I identified three problems in the current translation ideology: (a) an overemphasis on Conduit Model; (b) simplification on the roles of translators; and (c) Quixotism in finding the “best” translation. I suggested that the development of translation theories and ideologies should move toward the Dialogic Model suggested by Bakhtin, which emphasizes the co-construction of contexts and meanings of all participants involved in the communicative process. I proposed a normative approach, which focuses on the practice of translation and interpretation, in developing translation theories, and
discussed its implications for translation technology. By understanding the active roles translators and interpreters can play and do play and by recognizing the importance and the benefits of such phenomena, it is evident that the emphasis of translation technology should not be eliminating the presence of translators and interpreters or creating the “best” target text. Rather, a good translation program should involve translators and interpreters in the decision-making process of translation and interpretation, providing necessary information and contexts for translators and interpreters.

Necessary Changes in Modern Translation Ideology

What constitutes a good translation? This is a central question that translation theorists have spent hundreds (if not thousands) of years trying to answer. Often, it is assumed that the answer to this question will lead to an ultimate translation theory that holds valid regardless of the languages or texts involved. Nevertheless, in the foreseeable future, it is unlikely that anyone is able to come up with a universally agreed upon answer. Why is that? Translation is a complicated activity. Although it may seem like a translator is only transferring a text of one language to another language, a translator actually takes on many more responsibilities. He or she becomes a mediator of different cultures, different social norms, and different languages. A translator needs to be able to resolve any problems and challenges that arise from the exchange of these differences before he or she can present a final product of the target text.

Because translation theorists, including some very famous ones, have not been able to provide a universally satisfying answer to that question for hundreds of years, it does not seem sensible for me to suggest that I have the ultimate answer to it. Nevertheless, in this paper, I want to propose a different way to ask the question. This paper will start with a review of the history of translation theories in the western world, focusing particularly on the evolution of theoretical development and ideology. Because I believe that all translating and interpreting activities are interactive and dynamic activities

In this paper, translations should be treated as a generic term for both translations and interpretations. In most cases, translations and interpretations as well as translators and interpreters are interchangeable.
involving various participants\(^2\), I will use examples from both areas to support my arguments. Due to the fact that the development of interpreting studies has been heavily influenced by traditional translation theories and ideologies (Gentile, Ozolins, & Vsilakakos, 2000), I will not make specific efforts to distinguish the differences between interpreting studies and translation studies. This is not to say that translation and interpreting studies are the same. Nevertheless, I believe these two areas have much in common, and my arguments apply to both translation and interpreting studies.

I will explore three problems in modern translation ideology: (a) an overemphasis on the Conduit Model; (b) simplification on the roles of translators; and (c) Quixotism in finding the “best” translation. Then, using Bakhtin’s concepts of dialogism and the concepts of Speech Act Theory, I will reframe translation models and issues and explain the dilemmas of theory building in translation studies. Finally, I will propose a normative approach in studying translation theories and discuss its implications for translation technology.

**Historical Development of Translation Ideology**

Many researchers have traced the history and the roles of translation through the activities of translators and interpreters. For example, translators and interpreters were found to be involved in the invention of alphabets, the development of national languages, the emergence of national literatures, the dissemination of knowledge, the spread of religions, and the transmission of cultural values (Delisle & Woodsworth, 1995; Karttunen, 1994; Niranjana, 1992). These activities shaped the roles of translators and interpreters as well as the public’s expectation for their performance and their work (Hsieh, 2001b).

Unlike creative writers, whose work is judged as a complete product, translators are always bound by source texts and their work is never an isolated or independent product in itself. Translations are always compared against the source texts and, although there may be some recognition of translators’ freedom of interpretation or representation, there is no doubt that translations need to achieve certain equivalence to the source texts in order to legitimize their renderings as translations of a particular work rather than creative writings.

The first coherent theory of the concept of translators as conduits was proposed in the fourth century although it did not receive much publicity until the eighteenth century (Kelly, 1979). Starting from the eighteenth century, the development of translation ideology in the western world has centered on the concept of translators as conduits (Kelly, 1979). In fact, from the nineteenth century to the twentieth century, the majority of translation theorists emphasized the importance of translators as conduits (Newmark, 1981). From this tradition, two principles were of great importance: (a) translation was essentially copying; and (b) translators have no right to comment or interpret (Kelly, 1979, p. 35).

Translators as conduits remains a prevalent ideology of translation models and training programs in many different areas. For example,
1999) in Seattle, Washington, one of the leading programs in community interpreter training, views conduit role as the default role for medical interpreters. In an analysis of codes of ethics developed for medical interpreters from more than 20 institutions, Kaufert and Putsch (1997) concluded that many of the codes emphasize a mode of interpretation that calls for an objective and neutral role for interpreters. In the area of court interpreting, the ideology of translators as conduits is even more rigorously reinforced. Not only is such role ideology defined in legislation (Fenton, 1997), but any deviation of such role is sanctioned with "a citation for contempt, disciplinary action or any other sanction that may be imposed by law" (Washington Courts, 1989). In short, translators as conduits is a prevailing ideology in translation models, which often reflects the public's attitude and expectations for translators and interpreters. More importantly, such ideology reflects the public's and translators' pursuit of matching a source text with a target text (i.e., finding the equivalences between two languages).

The formation of this traditional ideology can be attributed to the historical roles and activities of translators and interpreters. Translators are by nature text oriented. Traditionally, the history of translating as a profession is intimately tied to the diffusion of written documents of legal, religious, cultural, and scientific importance and to the spread of literacy (Delisle & Woodsworth, 1995). Consequently, rather than treating translation as an activity in which translators can and do play multiple functions, these translators are source text oriented. The issues they emphasize are accuracy, translatability, information loss, and other linguistic features (Budick & Iser, 1996; Chang, 1998). On the other hand, because the development of interpreting is heavily intertwined with laws, international politics, and the justice system, the development of theories, professionalism, and codes of conduct in interpretation has been associated with neutrality, detachment, and faithfulness to the original utterances (Wadensjö, 1998). In addition, in professional settings, conference interpreters ("simultaneous interpreters") often work for one specific client (the speaker), interpreting simultaneously and unidirectionally in isolated booths. The context of an interpreter as a person or a participant of the communication becomes invisible. Simultaneous interpreters are now in some remote booths, producing "accurate" interpretations and functioning like "perfect interpreting machines." It is, therefore, understandable that the early development of interpreting research has focused on the cognitive process (e.g., Shreve & Diamond, 1997; Zelinsky-Wibbelt, 1993), internalized competence (e.g., Shreve, 1997), and linguistic transferring techniques (e.g., Kurz, 1992; Moser-Mercer, Lambert, Daro, & Williams, 1997; Schjoldager, 1993).

In short, the major two directions (i.e., theories developed by translators and simultaneous interpreters) in the development of translation studies have isolated translation and interpretation from concrete contexts. The final product of translation and interpretation is judged against abstract contexts, as "ideal" target texts from a monologic perspective (i.e., a target text is judged from the perspective of the source language and there exists a perfect translation to be achieved). Translation and interpretation are viewed as reproductions of the source text rather than as the product of a co-construction between the translators (or the interpreters), the writer (or the speaker), and the readers (or the audiences). In addition, because the source texts that are translated often are considered sacred or legally-bound, translators and interpreters are forced to make claims about their neutrality and credibility in order to legitimize their roles as well as the target texts they
provided. As a result, the two forces that have initiated the growth of translation studies have also, somehow, limited the potential of this field.

The traditional perspectives of translation studies are limiting in the sense that the ideologies we place upon translations and translators are very restrictive: Be faithful to the source texts; choose the correct vocabulary; be neutral in the process of translation. All these perspectives portray translators as information-transferring devices, conduits, simply rendering the meaning of the source text to the target text as if an ideal word, sentence, or meaning exists from which translators can choose. It is from this perspective that I see three problems in modern translation ideology.

Three Problems in Modern Translation Ideology

Starting from 1950s, professional linguists and translators have taken interest in translation theories at a time "when philosophy was substantially concerned with language and later when with the decline of Bloomfieldian or behaviorist (rather than structuralist) linguistics and rapid progress in applied linguistics, semantics was being (grotesquely) 'reinstated' within linguistics" (Newmark, 1981, p. 8). These researchers took a communicative approach in conceptualizing translation theories. Among them, Nida (1964) and later Newmark (1981) were influential in the recent development of modern translation theories. This trend is certainly refreshing and exhilarating in the recent development of modern translation ideologies. Nevertheless, it is important that translation researchers and theorists are aware that, overall, modern translation ideologies still face daunting challenges from the past.

Overemphasis on Conduit Model

As I have indicated, the translation ideology of translators as conduits has its historical roots. Because the roles of translators and interpreters have remained much the same, the ideology of translators as conduits is still prevalent. Because researchers (e.g., Chang, 1998; Koller, 1995) have noted the pervasiveness of the conduit model in translation and its problematic consequences (e.g., creating discrepancies between theory and practice of translation as well as a illusion of accuracy), I will focus my discussion here on translation ideologies of interpreters. When discussing the roles of court interpreters, Fenton (1997) stated:

The interpreter was here [in an Australian legal case] declared a conduit pipe, a mere machine, transmitting the message in one direction in one language and in the other direction in the other language, like an electrical instrument overcoming a long distance. Thus, the interpreter as a human being between the two parties was eliminated. The Australian case had followed an English precedent from the 1950s where the interpreters were likened to "mere ciphers," and an American case where the interpreters were "analogized to a modem" (Laster & Taylor, 1994: 112). The interpreter as a person was thus excluded, not meant to take an intelligent, thinking interest in the proceedings. (p. 30)

Even in healthcare settings, in which interpreters' roles are considered much more flexible, training programs of medical interpreters still view conduit as the default role for medical interpreters (Cross Cultural Health Care Program, 1999). Only when conflicts or problems (e.g., translated content may be harmful to the dignity or well-being of the patient) arise are the interpreters allowed to step out the limits of the conduit model. Therefore, it is safe to suggest that the conduit model is prevalent in modern translation ideology. However, is the conduit model a practical model to explain the practice of interpreters?

Compared to other types of interpreters, court interpreters are more well-regulated, often requiring professional training, certification, and passing exams for interpreting skills and competence (Mikkelsen & Mintz, 407)
In addition, due to their roles, functions, and influences, they are more strictly bound by the conduit model. Traditionally, when interpreters step out of the roles of conduits, their performance is considered a mistake and is attributed to their unprofessional behavior. Nevertheless, a close examination of the practice of court interpreters suggests that court interpreters often systematically deviated from the roles of conduits.

Berk-Seligson (1987, 1988, 1989, 1999) conducted a series of empirical studies on court interpreting that have led to several conclusions. First, in judicial proceedings where court interpreters were at work, the coercive force of leading questions systematically tended to be weakened by interpreters. Second, Spanish-English court interpreters systematically altered the nature of Spanish testimony in the course of rendering it in English. Their systematic alternation methods included (a) using polite forms of address, hedges, particles, and uncontracted forms; (b) inserting linguistic material perceived to be "understood" in or underlying utterances; and (c) rephrasing already interpreted talk. Third, interpreters were influential in affecting the changes in text registers, which could shape listeners' perceptions. The jurors who had heard the polite interpretation found a Spanish-speaking witness significantly more convincing, competent, intelligent, and trustworthy than did those who had heard the same witness when the testimony was interpreted without politeness markers. Other researchers have observed similar results as well (e.g., Hale, 1999; Hale & Gibbons, 1999; Rigney, 1999).

The discrepancies between the ideology and the practice of translators and interpreters have presented researchers with an important opportunity to re-examine and re-conceptualize the necessary changes in the theory building of translation and interpreting studies. If a model that is the traditional model for training of interpreters fails to describe the practice of professional

interpreters, we should no longer attribute the deviations from conduit roles as mistakes or incompetence of translators and interpreters. Rather, we need to consider if the conduit model is realistic or even acceptable. In essence, the fundamental problem of putting emphasis on the conduit model forces researchers as well as translators to oversimplify the roles of translators and the complexity of translation as an activity.

Simplification of the Roles of Translators

Translators and interpreters are not passive participants in the communicative processes. When a translator is involved in a communicative event, it is inevitable for the translator to mediate the differences between cultures, languages, and participants. In reality, translators are active participants in defining the contexts of communicative events; they not only decide what is said and what should be heard but also decide the roles and influences of each participant. To better explain this concept, I would like to draw upon Bakhtin’s concept of the dialogic model.

The foremost concept proposed by Bakhtin (1934-1935/1981) is the dialogic organization of language. Bakhtin’s concept of dialogic organization of language suggests that translators and interpreters cannot follow the conduit model of communication described in traditional translation studies, in which translators and interpreters are required to maintain neutrality, to be faithful to the speaker’s intention, and to pursue ideal translations. The conduit model implies a monologic assumption: Language use is regarded from the perspective of the speaker. This assumption is problematic (Wadensjö, 1998; Wertsch, 1991) because communication is always a co-creation of all the parties involved, including the speaker, the audience, and the interpreter. Interpreters, therefore, are not a mere conduit for two parties who do not speak the same language but mediators that have the power to and always influence the process of communication.
From Bakhtin’s perspective, interpreters cannot be unobtrusive participants in the communication that has been conceptualized in traditional translation theories, but instead are active participants who are constantly co-defining the meaning of utterances, situation, and the status of the participants. Bakhtin’s concept of reported speech can explain this. “Reported speech is the mechanism whereby one voice (the ‘reporting voice’) reports the utterance of another [voice] (‘the reported voice’)” (Wertsch, 1991, p. 80). A simple decision about what type of speech genre to use in the reported voice (i.e., the translation or interpretation) is consequential to the contexts of the communication. For example, an interpretation of the utterance of “I want to leave!” can be reported in several speech genres: (a) “I want to leave!”; (b) He said, “I want to leave!”; and (c) He said angrily that he wanted to leave here. These three interpretations can all be understood as carrying the “same” information in the communication, but the constructions of the communicative contexts invoked by these three interpretations would be very different. For Bakhtin, the choice of genre is not only a simple choice of how one wants to convey his or her message but also a choice of how one wants the message (and himself or herself) to be perceived.

The type of format or genre used implies how a message is conceptualized and determines how a message will be perceived. With different genres, a message with the same information creates different contexts. Bakhtin was interested in the multivoiceness demonstrated through utterance (c) (i.e., “He said angrily that he wanted to leave here”) because the voice that produced the reported utterance specifies the referent and the voice that produced the reporting utterance provides the particular way of identifying the referent (Wertsch, 1980). In another words, utterance (c) shows how the speaker perceives the relationship of the participants. However, from the perspective of translation studies, the multivoiceness demonstrated through utterances (a) and (b) are no less interesting than that of utterance (c). From Bakhtin’s perspective, utterance (b) has the tendency to maintain the integrity and authenticity of the reported utterance while striving to make a boundary between the reported and reporting voices (Wertsch, 1980). The multivoiceness in utterance (b) and (c) is clear. How about utterance (a)? Does it still contain the multivoiceness suggested in Bakhtin’s dialogic model?

First, some variations of utterance (a), such as “I want to head off” or “I wish to leave,” may also invoke different contexts of communication. To simply assume that the interpreter can always find the word, the sentence, and the meaning that are perfectly equivalent to the source text in all perspectives is, at best, wishful thinking. Even in the case that the equivalent target text does exist, we have to understand that while utterance (a) may seem like a direct linguistic interpretation without invoking the existence of the interpreter, an interpretation of (a) actually situated the interpreter as a non-person. As Goffman (1959) noted, “those who play this role [non-person] are present during the interaction but in some respects do not take the role either of performer or of audience, nor do they pretend to be what they are not” (p. 151). This may seem like the traditionally proposed roles for translators and interpreters because an interpreter seems to be most faithful to the source text by adopting a non-person status. However, it is important to point out that even with the same linguistic features, utterance (a) spoken first by the speaker and after by the interpreter are still two different utterances. For the interpreter, the reporting voice in the utterance established the interpreter’s status as a non-person and, thus, defined the contexts of the communicative process. Different voices are still invoked in utterance (a). By situating oneself as a non-person, the interpreter is able to use this status as a defense (Goffman, 1959), claiming neutrality and faithfulness while – in
realities — changing the communication contexts. Therefore, non-person should not be understood as a passive presence in the communication but an active role that is involved in the co-construction of the contexts of communication.

Because a translator can translate a single sentence in different ways, each of which creates different contexts and meanings that not only define the sentences but also the participants and environments, an essential issue in translation studies inevitably become salient — “Which one is the best translation?” Unfortunately, this question implicitly suggests the existence of the best translation. It is often thought that the answer to this question defines what should be taught to enthusiastic newcomers in the field of translation and interpretation. However, personally, I believe that this question falls into the trap of the oversimplification of the roles of translators. In order to fully appreciate the complexity of the roles of translators and translation activities, the question should be, “Is there really the best translation?”

Quixotism in Finding the “Best” Translation

As I discussed earlier, the historical development of translation ideology and the emphasis on the conduit model have proposed very specific criteria for evaluating the quality of translations, which centered on the accuracy and faithfulness of the translated work. Nevertheless, Bakhtin’s dialogic model demonstrates that in communicative processes, translators and interpreters inevitably influence the meanings and the contexts of the communication. In other words, no translations can be exactly the same as the originals. On the other hand, there is no doubt that translators try to achieve certain equivalence between the source texts and their translations in order to legitimize their work as translations. Then, what kind of equivalence should be the most important to be achieved?

Speech Act Theory, proposed by Austin (1962/1975) and Searle (1969), is a theory that puts individuals’ use of language in contexts, explaining how language is used to ‘do’ things and providing theoretical constructs for the functions of language. Austin and Searle proposed that language users use the locutionary forces (i.e., the particular force of the literal meaning of the utterance), illocution forces (i.e., the meaning of an utterance), and perlocutionary effects (i.e., the consequences of an utterance) of a particular utterance or text to serve certain functions. Some translation models are based on translators’ and researchers’ beliefs about the functions of translations (e.g., translation as creation, translation as transmission, and translation as communication) (Kelly, 1979; Newmark, 1981). In these models, translators’ choice of translation styles and strategies are based on their understanding (or even conviction) of the nature and functions of translations (i.e., what translations should be and what translations should do). In fact, a close look of the objects of equivalence of different translation theories suggests that these theorists were actually struggling with the

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3 Levinson (1983, p. 236) summarized Austin’s definitions of three basic senses of speech acts as follows: (a) locutionary act: the utterance of a sentence with determinant sense and reference; (b) illocutionary act: the making of a statement, offer, promise, etc. in uttering a sentence, by virtue of the conventional force associated with it (or with its explicit performative paraphrase); and (c) perlocutionary acts: the bringing about of effects of the audience by means of uttering the sentence, such effects being special to the circumstances of utterance.
equivalences of the different forces (i.e., locutionary act, illocutionary act, and perlocutionary act) proposed in Speech Act Theory.

For example, due to its great attention on the preciseness of words, the model of translation as transmission (e.g., literal translation) defines translation as a communicative activity to produce equivalent locutionary acts in the target texts. The model of translation as communication (e.g., Nida’s concept of Dynamic Equivalence and Newmark’s concept of Communicative Translation) seeks to achieve equivalent illocutionary forces (and, perhaps implicitly, perlocutionary acts) in the target texts. Finally, in the model of translation as creation (e.g., free translation), the pursuit of equivalent creative energy, linguistically and artistically, of the authors of the source texts seeks to achieve the equivalence of perlocutionary effects.

Equivalence of locutionary forces. With the recent development in translation theories focusing on the communicative nature of translations, it may seem almost unreasonable, sometimes even preposterous, to suggest the value (or even the importance) of seeking the equivalence of locutionary forces. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that translators’ efforts to create the equivalence of locutionary forces often led to major revolutions of language use in target texts and target cultures.

For example, although Chinese literature itself experienced a dramatic change in its style from classical Chinese to vernacular Chinese in the early 20th century, many genres were created as a result of translations. By introducing western novels, Lin Shu (林纾), a major translator of the early 1900s, changed the traditional formats and genres of the Chinese Zhanghui novel (章回小說) (in which each chapter is headed by a couplet giving the gist of its content) and enriched the types of the genres in Chinese literature (Guo, 1998). Another distinct example is the translation of poetry (Tang, 1999). Traditionally, Chinese poems are strictly restricted in the numbers of words in a line (typically 5 or 7 words) and the numbers of lines in a poem (typically 4 or 8 lines). Other types of Chinese poems are restricted in numbers, lengths, and rhymes of the words and sentences as well. English poems do not share the same characteristics. By following the forms of English poems, Chinese translators inevitably needed to create a new type of poetry, the so-called Xinshi (新詩; New Poem in Chinese), which was completely new for Chinese people. When Xinshi was first published, many Chinese intellects argued that those translations not only lost the spirit of poems but also killed the beauty of Chinese language (Tang, 1999). In short, Xinshi was unacceptable. Nevertheless, later in the 1920s, with the Movements of Vernacular Chinese (白話文運動), poets adopted Xinshi as a genre of literature (Pi, 1997). As a result, Xinshi became an official genre in Chinese literature and the mainstream format of contemporary poems.

When translators put emphasis on locutionary forces of source texts, their translations disrupt the norms of the target texts and target cultures. Nevertheless, a translator may be motivated to adopt such translation strategies (Hsieh, 2001a). For example, in the early twentieth century, some well-known Chinese litterateurs, such as Lu Xun (魯迅) and Qu Qiubai (瞿秋白), believed that Chinese language lacks the necessary precision for people to think and talk “to the point” (Lu, 1931/1980; Wang, 1995). Through translation, western grammar and terminologies can be introduced to the public and, thus, solve the inefficiency that is embedded in Chinese language. Lu (1931/1980) stated that although, in the process of introducing the grammar, some literary works may be difficult to read or seem awkward, this process would ultimately broaden the scope of Chinese grammar and Chinese language.

The model of translation as transmission, in its strictest form, seeks a complete literal translation. However, as Nabokov (1975, p. x) admitted, such
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emphasis risks the loss of “elegance, euphony, clarity, good taste, modern usage, and even grammar” of the target texts. When a translator gives priority to the equivalence of locutionary forces of source texts, he or she challenges the existing language ideologies of the target culture and presents the need for the unusual form of target language use. It is important to remember that a translation cannot exist without support from its publisher and its readers. For a translation to be published, a publisher needs to see the marketability of such translation; in other words, the publisher must believe that such a translation is needed by the public. Therefore, the audience of target texts must be motivated to accept such norm-incompliant use of target languages for translation that follow the model of translation as transmission to survive (Hsieh, 2001a).

Equivalence of illocutionary forces. On the other hand, translators who emphasize the equivalence of illocutionary forces are not at risk of producing unusual or out-of-ordinary use of target languages, which are in turn more likely to be rejected by audience of the target language. In fact, translators following the model of translation as communication often stress their efforts to adjust their translations in response to the particular audience of their target texts. However, the pursuit of equivalence of illocutionary forces in translations, a cross-cultural communication by nature, can be tricky at times.

Newmark (1981) pointed out several types of texts that translators may not be able to render in a manner that achieve equivalent illocutionary effects, allowing the audience of target texts to experience the same effects that perceived by the audience of source texts. Overall, Newmark was concerned about the specific situations in which the audience of the target texts is unlikely or unable to perceive the illocutionary forces of the source texts. However, I think the challenges to the model of translation as communication may come from more ordinary situations. Due to the fact that languages are open and adaptive systems and language users are creative and flexible users of language, the audience of target texts may be able to recognize and understand norms in other languages. However, the ability to understand a speech act of the source culture does not equal to application of the same norms (e.g., preference for strategies) in performing that particular speech act in the target culture. Several researchers have indicated such problems in translations. Hatim (1997) noted that English and Arabic speakers have different preferences of three types of argumentation (i.e., the balance counter-argument, through-argumentation, explicit concessive argument) although these three types of arguments are all understandable and are used in both languages. For example, the balance counter-argument (i.e., thesis-opposition-substantiation-conclusion) was the most preferred type of

4 The types of texts are: (a) a non-literary text that describes, qualifies, or makes use of a peculiarity of the source language; (b) a non-literary text relating to an aspect of the culture familiar to the reader of source text but not to readers of the target texts; and (c) an artistic work with a strong local flavor which also may be rooted in a particular historical period. In addition, in some other instances (e.g., creative work that is completed by authors for their own relief), equivalent effect may not be relevant at all (Newmark, 1981).
argument for English speakers and the least preferred type of argument for Arabic speakers.

In a study of apologies, Suszczyńska (1999) demonstrated that although different types of apology all exist in English, Hungarian, and Polish, individuals who speak different languages have different preferences in the types of apology. Suszczyńska analyzed the discourse strategies of English, Hungarian, and Polish speakers in hypothetical situations requiring an apology (e.g., when an individual bumps into a lady in a department store). Whereas an English prototypical form of apology is “Oh, I’m so sorry! Are you all right? Let me help you with your things;” a generic Hungarian apology is “Please, don’t be angry. I was very clumsy. Come, I will help you pick up the packages. Haven’t you got hurt? I hope it’s not serious;” and a generic Polish apology would be “I’m very sorry, Madam. I didn’t notice you. I will pick your packages right away. What about your leg? Should I perhaps take you home?” Although an English speaking audience could understand the illocutionary forces of apology in Hungarian and Polish, the illocutionary forces of these utterances, when translated into English, were nonetheless socially awkward. On the other hand, Hungarian and Polish speakers were often unsatisfied with the “weak” apologies in English.

In these instances, a translation of an argumentation or an apology, as a speech act, of a source language as a speech act can be understood by the audience of a target language because it shares the same illocutionary forces in the target culture. Nevertheless, while different strategies of a particular speech act (e.g., apology) may exist in different languages, it is likely that they do not carry the same connotations (e.g., certain types of apology may be stronger, more sincere, less face-threatening, or more context-fitting than others) in different languages. Of course, one can suggest that the differences of the connotations would lead to differences in illocutionary forces of the utterances in question. Translators can still adjust their translation according to the differences in illocutionary forces as a result of the different connotations. However, translators following the model of translation as communication face the challenge that they may not be aware of or have enough data and research to validate the subtle differences of connotations that differentiate different strategies of a specific speech act.

In summary, Newmark (1981) has discussed particular situations in which the model of translation as communication may not be applicable or relevant. However, I have demonstrated that this should not be a concern of particular situations but of language use in general. Languages are open and adaptive systems, and language users are creative and flexible users of language. This is why hybrid texts or loanwords can survive in a foreign language system. People “get” it. However, “getting” it does not mean that these speech acts are understood with the implicit cultural, linguistic, and social connotations that are associated with it in source languages. In fact, individuals may understand a particular speech act but attribute different connotations to it (Suszczynska, 1999). In these situations, translators, as any language users, may not be fully aware of the minute differences and, thus, are unable to live up to the potential of the model of translation as communication.

Equivalence of perlocutionary effects. One of the most obvious challenges of the equivalence of perlocutionary effects is that, compared to the two other linguistic forces, perlocutionary effect is essentially a non-linguistic act (Coulthard, 1985). But how can a non-linguistic act be incorporated into the equation of translation models? Personally, I think this is the dilemma many theorists of the model of translation as communication have faced. In his book on translation theories, Newmark (1981) often pointed out the fact that although a communicative translation aims to
have a brand new territory (see also Séguinot, 1995). For example, globalization means that the needs for translations of technical manuals and software localizations are unprecedented. The purpose of these texts are neither to allow the audience to appreciate the beauty of the source texts nor to admire the creativity of the authors. Rather, these texts serve informative functions and aim to allow their audiences to conduct their activities more effectively. As a result, in these types of translation, the locutionary forces and illocutionary forces are less relevant and perlocutionary effects take priority in the translating process.

What are the challenges for translations that seek equivalence of perlocutionary effects? The most serious problem is the definitions we (i.e., language users) impose on translations and the leniency that the audience of the target language is willing to give to translations that seek equivalence of perlocutionary effects. When a translation takes the model of translation as creation, should it be considered a “translation” at all? In its essence and in its structure, a translation that seeks equivalence of perlocutionary effect is more likely to be a rewrite. Indeed, all translations are some sort of rewrites of the source texts (after all, a translation is written in a different language); however, at least readers can be sure that flavors of the source texts are present. A translation that seeks equivalence of perlocutionary effects may have nothing to do with the source text at all, except that it shares the same perlocutionary effects (e.g., informing audiences). How these translations can be legitimatized as translations (as oppose to rewrites or paraphrases) will be the main challenge of translations following the model of translation as creation.

Summary. In this section, I used Speech Act Theory to demonstrate that because there are different types of equivalences in language functions, translation theorists have developed different types of translation strategies
that serve different needs and reflect their convictions about what the “best” translation is. It is important to point out that I am not claiming that these three types of equivalence are independent from each other. Indeed, a translation is always a combination of creativity and information that serves communicative functions, and the success of speech acts often rely on the coordination of locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. Nevertheless, Speech Act Theory points out an issue that is often neglected in translation studies—translations are the products of specific contexts and the quality of each translation should be judged under the particular contexts that are applicable to them. In other words, there should not be specific rules or components that define what good translations are. Rather, to truly understand and appreciate a good translation, the key is to understand how a translation was understood, produced, and evaluated in particular contexts.

Necessary Changes in modern translation ideology

A Normative Approach to Theory-Building

Traditionally, translation theories are situated in a dichotomized environment and are often made to appear exclusive to each other (e.g., free vs. literal translation; dynamic vs. formal equivalence; communicative vs. semantic translation). Nevertheless, few translators, even strong proponents of a particular type of translation theory, have been to observe the guidelines of one translation theory to extreme. The fact is that these translation models have overlapping territories (e.g., to a certain extent, a communicative translation is also semantic and vice versa.). Ignoring these overlapping territories does not improve the development of translation theories.

In this paper, I do not want to stop after stating that different translation models emphasize different types of equivalence and, thus, would develop and require different types of translation strategies. In addition, I do not want to simply claim that different texts require different types of translation models in order to be good translations. Instead, I want to propose a normative approach to the understanding of all types of equivalences in translation theories and practice. By recognizing the dialogic model in interpreter-mediated communication and by recognizing translators as active participants in the communicative process, the researchers in translation studies can have good opportunities to move forward in translation studies. I am not suggesting that translators and interpreters no longer need to pursue accuracy, neutrality, or faithfulness to the source text and other traditional criteria that have been valued in translation theories. However, I do see a normative approach as a turning point for researchers to stop upholding standards that only exist in theory but never in practice.

In Speech Act Theory, locutionary forces, illocutionary forces, and perlocutionary effects are not exclusive of each other. In actual practice, language users do not distinguish these elements when speaking or writing. Therefore, why do translators feel compelled to prioritize these different acts and stick to their prioritization of these acts when translating? Perhaps it is because translators are well aware of the complexity of a translation and feel that by prioritizing the functions of a text, they will be able to have a coherent and consistent method for translating a text. However, by doing so, translators are confronted by the challenges and dilemmas that result from their decision. More importantly, treating the equivalences of locutionary forces, illocutionary forces, and perlocutionary effects as competing constructs rather than an integrated system is misleading and inappropriate. Simply put, this is not the way languages are used or understood. A translation theory that is based on the emphasis on a particular type of equivalence is bound to encounter certain situations or types of texts for
which their emphasis is irrelevant, inappropriate, or unacceptable. To develop a universal translation theory that cuts across all text types and all languages, theorists cannot see these acts as competing constructs but as an interconnected system. By doing so, translation theorists may bypass an endless and messy debate in translation studies (i.e., what constitutes a good translation?) and start to deal with much more interesting issues that are relevant to translators' choice of translation models and translation strategies. In other words, I believe that the fundamental question should be “What makes individuals evaluate a translation good?”

These translation models and translation strategies were available for translators and language users all along (even if they were not labeled as such). Then, why would there be differences in preferences for particular translation models (i.e. a specific type of equivalence) at different periods of time? What are the variables that motivated translators, publishers, and audiences to prefer a certain type of translation model? For example, several researchers have explored the role of power in influencing and reflecting the production of translation, target language users’ preferences, and the phenomena of cultural values and language use in general (Bassnett, 1997; Burrell, 1995; Fawcett, 1997; Hsieh, 2000; Wolf, 1997). Compared to a dominant group, a marginalized group would be more willing to accept a more out of place/ strange/ unusual text hoping to learn something new or something that they are not familiar with that could increase their power and knowledge (Hsieh, 2000). Therefore, it is more likely to see translations that seek the equivalence of locutionary forces in a less dominant group, language, and culture. On the other hand, a dominant group or culture is motivated to prefer the equivalence of illocutionary forces or perlocutionary forces. By eliminating or not introducing the otherness of foreign texts – in other words, by domesticateing source texts – the target language group not only reduces the risk of compromising their own language ideologies and values but also creates an illusion of other languages and cultures conforming to their cultures and values (Hsieh, 2001b).

Questions of normative approaches do not seek to reveal the “truth” of what constitutes a good translation. Rather, these questions seek to understand and explain the circumstances that make translators and audiences of the target texts believe that a particular translation is good (i.e., “What makes individuals evaluate a translation good?”). By examining the practices of translators and audiences, researchers may be able to develop a more practical translation theory that provides insights about what good translations are, why they are considered good, and how translations can become better. For example, if interpreters are active participants in the communicative process, what are the strategies that can guarantee a certain degree of accuracy, neutrality, or faithfulness to the source text? In official settings (e.g., courtroom or hospitals), how should the interpreted text be treated and how should the roles of interpreters be perceived? How should the interpreters mark the voices they render in their interpretation, and is there a preferred and effective way of marking for the audience of the translation? How do translators negotiate and mediate the types of equivalence in practice? What are the variables (e.g., social distance, directness, and friendliness) that influence language users’ evaluation of the forces and effects of speech acts? What happens when individuals of two different languages use different variables in evaluating the same speech act? How does (or should) a translator respond to such differences? When a translation gives priority to a specific type of equivalence, what are its impacts on the target texts, the target audiences, the target language, and the target culture? What motivates translators and audiences of the target texts to emphasize one type of equivalence rather than the other? These questions...
directly deal with the practices of translators and audience as well as the influences of translation.

Traditionally, translation theorists tended to use a top-down method in theory building; they first conceptualized a theory, followed by translating and interpreting methods and examples. They told translators what good translations should be and how translations should be done. However, as I pointed out, the preferences and emphases of translation models are neither static nor universal. Perhaps there are no exact or universal standards to measure what good translations should be. Instead, there may be a set of variables that influence individuals’ judgments about the production, understanding, and evaluation of what good translations are. I have proposed a normative approach to investigate this issue. This is a bottom-up approach. By investigating the phenomena and impacts associated with different types of translation models, with different emphases of equivalences and with different types of translation practice, we may be able to truly understand the potential and power of translations.

Implications of Translation Technology

I have focused the entire paper on the theoretical discussion of what translation ideology has been, what translation practices are, and what the future development of translation studies should be. These issues are crucial to the research and development of translation technology. With the development of computer science and information technology, as a translator and interpreter, I am often asked, “When will computers replace you guys? Aren’t you afraid that you will lose your jobs to computers?” After all, with the recent development in translation programs and dictation programs, translators and interpreters do not seem as irreplaceable as before.

I recognize the fact that translation programs are extremely helpful to translators. In fact, at times, I am grateful that some professional programs for translators have made my job much easier by keeping consistency in my work. Nevertheless, to believe that a software program alone can produce a quality translation is not only dangerous but also inappropriate. The idea that a software program alone can produce a quality translation implicitly suggests that there is only one corresponding target text and translators are only transferring the texts from one language to another.

As I have demonstrated, translations are contextually situated and translators take on various responsibilities and complicated tasks. Although the underlying message may be the same, the minute differences in translators’ choice of genres and word choice as well as the preferences of the target culture and target language users would have very different consequences on how the translations would be understood and evaluated. More importantly, these variables (i.e., translators’ choice of genres and words, the preferences of target culture and target language users) are not static. Rather, they are dynamic influences that always interact with many other constructs (e.g., the personal agenda of the translator, the purpose of the translation, the cultural values of the target culture, the power of the target culture). It is unlikely that a software program can reflect the complex interactions of these constructs and variables.

A good translation requires a translator’s profound understanding of the complex interactions of these constructs and variables. A good translation, in fact, should be much more than a translated text. It carries a translator’s belief and passion about what is important to the individuals of the target culture. The debates between Liang Qichou (梁启超) and Lu Xun (鲁迅) about translation strategies and ideologies are not simple arguments between translators. Despite the drastic differences between their beliefs, Liang and Lu meticulously evaluated the challenges of Chinese culture, the beauty of Chinese language, and the needs of Chinese people. These debates reflected
the struggles of two eminent scholars’ fundamental thinking about
the future of Chinese culture and Chinese people. It is unthinkable that any
translation programs would ever replicate anything that resembles such
sparks between two intellectuals, who are deeply immersed in their culture
and profoundly concerned over the future of Chinese people.

It is important to remember that a translator’s understanding of his
role is often more a linguistic transferring machine. Liang and Lu provide
excellent examples about what translators are and what they aspire to be.
Such attitude remains much the same even in today. For example, Lucifer
Chu (朱學恒), translator of *The Lord of Rings*, donated a significant portion
of his royalties (NT$ 7.5 million) to establish the Foundation of Fantasy
Culture and Art, believing that it is his mission to provide a fertile ground for
the future development of a new genre (Fantasy) in Chinese language and
literature (Li, 2002). It is exactly the translators’ aspirations that have
repeatedly demonstrated the impossibilities of a total replacement of
translators with software programs.

Although I have adamantly proposed that translation theorists should
not focus their attention on the question, “what constitutes a good
translation,” I am not suggesting that there are no good translations. Rather, I
am saying that a good translation is a situated text that obtains its reputation
of “good” by resonating an appreciation and reflection of the needs and
values of its translator and its audiences. It is evident that the emphasis of
translation technology should not be the elimination of the presence of
translators or interpreters or the creation of the “best” target text. After all,
the diversity of text types, language functions, and cultural preferences makes
it almost inconceivable that translators and interpreters can be replaced. A
good translation program should involve translators and interpreters in the
decision-making process of translation and interpretation, and
should provide necessary information and contexts for translators and
interpreters.

I believe that the improvement of translation technology has led
translators and interpreters to be held against higher standards. When
translations and interpretations are no longer seen as simple linguistic
transformations, translators and interpreters are expected to have profound
understanding of different cultures and languages. A good translation is not
only determined by the linguistic abilities of translators and interpreters but
also by the abilities of translators and interpreters to understand and to
appreciate the variety of contexts (e.g., the personal agenda of the translator,
the purpose of the translation, the cultural values of the target culture, and
preferences and needs of the target audiences) in which the particular text is
situated. Essentially, the latter is far more important than the former, for this
is exactly the reason why good translators and interpreters are never
replaceable.
References


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現代翻譯理念面臨之挑戰

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摘要

本文探討現代翻譯理念的三項問題，並依據相關語言理論建議未來翻譯理念及翻譯科技應有的發展方向。翻譯理念的沿革使得現代翻譯理念強調譯文需要忠實、精確呈現原文，鼓勵譯者在語言轉換過程中扮演中介角色，擔任語言轉換中的「傳聲筒」(conduit)。本文作者依據相關文獻、語用理論(Speech Act Theory)及 Bakhtin 的互動詮釋理論(Dialogic Model)指出現代翻譯理念的三項問題：(一) 過分強調「傳聲筒」理論(Conduit Model)；(二) 過分簡化譯者角色；(三) 盲目追尋「完美」翻譯。Bakhtin 的互動詮釋理論強調傳播過程中所有情境、語意皆受到所有參與者(包括譯者)的影響。因此在翻譯過程中，譯者不再是傳統翻譯理論所認定的被動的「傳聲筒」角色，而是影響譯文情境、語意的重要角色；語用理論則明白指出人們解讀語言不僅單靠其字面意義，也依賴其情境、語意的判斷。因此，現代翻譯理念所反映譯者的多重角色和功能納入考量，並據此發展相關翻譯理論。此一發展對未來翻譯科技有重要影響；簡言之，未來翻譯科技的發展重點不應在於消除譯者的角色，希冀透過機器達成「完美」翻譯，而應將譯者定義為翻譯過程中的決策者。良好的翻譯軟體需要提供譯者充足資訊及相關情境，幫助譯者做出良好判斷，但最終，譯文的「人性」只能夠透過譯者顯現。