The Major Turns In Translation Studies

Alzghoul, Musa A.[1] , **Alazzam, Tahani S.**[2] , **Allababneh, Abdelkarim**[3]

[1]*Department of English, Faculty of Arts, Al-Zaytoonah University of Jordan, Jordan.*
[2]*Independent Researcher, Amman, Jordan.*
[3]*Middle East University, Amman, Jordan.*

Abstract

The present paper examines the significant shifts/developments in Translation Studies since its emergence as a separate field of study in the early 1970s. The paper discusses the major shifts in the development of translation studies, such as descriptive translation ttudies, Polysystem theory, the cultural turn in translation studies, translation as rewriting, and translation and post-colonialism. It also discusses how these developments shaped later turns in translation studies.

Key words: translation studies, Polysystem theory, cultural turn, descriptive translation studies.

1. Introduction

Translation studies as an academic research field has witnessed massive changes and developments over the last few decades. The emergence of translation studies as a separate field of study, the emergence of Descriptive Translation Studies, and the shift to the more recent cultural turn in translation studies and the importance ascribed to these developments are among the most important developments. Translation had historically been viewed as a linguistic activity that was mainly practiced for purposes of communication. The focus of translation research during that period was on concepts like equivalence and fidelity.

James Holmes, in the early 1970s, was the first to suggest the term "translation studies" in his article "The Name and Nature of Translation studies." Later developments included the introduction of Even-Zohar's polysystem theory which simply views translated literature as belonging to the history, culture, and literature of the target culture. Polysystem theory contributed to the next major development in translation studies, i.e., Gideon Toury's Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond, which mainly calls for developing systematic descriptive translation theory instead of the isolated individual studies.

The more recent development was the introduction of what later came to be known as the cultural turn in translation studies. The major translation studies scholars who contributed to the introduction of the cultural turn in translation studies are Andre Lefevere and Susan Bassenett. Both Andre Lefevere and Susan Bassnett argued that translation is an autonomous discipline and not a branch of linguistics or comparative literature. Their work is concerned with the interaction between translation and culture, i.e., how culture facilitates or constrains translation.

1. The Emergence of Translation Studies

Although translation, both written and spoken, has played a vital role in human communication throughout history, the emergence of translation

studies as an autonomous field of study started as late as the second half of the twentieth century (Munday 2008: 10). Translation provided a vital means to carry out business between and facilitated access to scriptures and scientific texts from earlier civilizations, among many other essential roles in daily life activities. Translation studies as a separate field of study was first described by James Holmes's 1972 paper entitled 'The Name and Nature of Translation Studies .'For Edwin Gentzler (2001: 93), Holmes' paper makes up the "founding statement" for the discipline since it lays the scope and structure of the emerging field.

The most important aspect of Holmes's work is that it views translation as an 'empirical practice' in terms of considering translated texts in their cultural context. Holmes divides translation studies into three areas, namely: the descriptive branch, which concerns itself with describing translations as they appear and function in real-life situations. The second area is the theory area which concerns itself with setting principles to explain translations. The third area is the applied branch which concerns itself with using information from the previous two areas in the translation activity and translator training (Holmes 1988: 71-2).

The descriptive branch of Holmes' map developed into descriptive translation studies, which examine the product, the function, and the process. The following sections will highlight the developments that followed the emergence of translation studies and built up on the work of James Holmes.

2. Polysystem theory

Holmes's work was picked by other scholars in the field of translation studies as the field witnessed a surge in research since its emergence. Polysystem theory is one of the major theories of descriptive translation studies. Polysystem theory appeared in translation studies in the 1970s thanks to the work of Itamar Even-Zohar. His polysystem theory is based on ideas he borrowed from Russian Formalists like Roman Jakobson. Even-Zohar (1990: 11) defines polysystem as "a multiple system, a system of various systems which intersect with each other and partly overlap, using concurrently different options as one structured whole, whose members are interdependent." This means that literature, society, language, and culture are viewed as different systems instead of viewing them as "conglomerates (systems) of disparate elements (9).

Polysystem theory is particularly important to the field of translation studies because it focuses on the literary system. In this regard, Even-Zohar defines a literary system as:

The network of relations that is hypothesized to obtain between
a number of activities called literary, and consequently these
activities themselves observed via that network.
Or:
The complex of activities or any section thereof, for which systemic relations can be
hypothesized to support the option of considering them literary. (Even-Zohar 1990: 28)
Moreover, Even-Zohar maintains that the literary system encompasses six factors as follows: Producer(s), Consumer(s), Institution, Market, Repertoire, and Product. These factors show the important role played by other sociological and cultural aspects, including the writer and the market.

In Even-Zohar's view, understating such elements as systems will lead to uncovering laws governing different phenomena and simultaneously predicting hidden phenomena (ibid.:9-10). These systems interact together and are positioned on the basis of a 'dynamic hierarchy' that changes with the passage of time. In other words, the same literary type may occupy the highest or lowest strata depending on the surrounding conditions. An essential element of Even-Zohar's polysystem is the 'dynamic process of evolution,' which indicates that "the relations between innovatory and conservative systems are in a constant of flux and competition" (Munday 2008: 166).

Even-Zohar's polysytem theory has important implications for the field of translation studies, as obvious from his paper "The Position of Translated literature within the Literary Polysystem," in which he portrays translated literature as a separate system that holds different "relationships with original compositions"

(Venuti 2004: 137). Even-Zohar's theory accounts for the very problematic question of which works are selected for translation by stating that the principles which govern selection depend on the "situation governing the (home) polysystem: the texts are chosen according to their compatibility with the new approaches and the supposedly innovatory role they may assume within the target literature" (Even-Zohar 2004: 163). According to Even-Zohar theory, this situation can be witnessed in three cases as follows:

a) When a new literature is being established and seeks to borrow ready-made models from literature that is already well-established,

b) when a literature is peripheral or weak and borrows types that are not available in it from other hegemonic literatures.

c) "When there are turning points, crises, or literary vacuums in a literature" (ibid.:164). In this case, dynamics inside polysystem result in turning points. These are 'historical moments' when established models no longer appeal to younger generations. In such situations, translated literature may occupy a central position.

In all cases other than the three mentioned above, translated literature only occupies a peripheral position in the literary polysystem. When translated literature is viewed as peripheral literature, it does not impact "major processes and is modeled according to norms already conventionally established by an already dominant type in the target literature." (Even-Zohar 2012: 165).

Although Even-Zohar's polysystem theory has been hailed as a "comprehensive model to explain the relationship among various cultural systems as well as among the different sub-systems of any particular cultural system" (Codde 2003: 92), it has also been criticized by prominent scholars in translation studies. Edwin Gentzler (1993) listed both advantages and disadvantages of polysystem theory. The merits of polysystem theory, according to Gentzler, is that it advocates the idea that literature is not studied in isolation from other economic and social factors and that texts, by the same token, are not examined in isolation but in relation to other texts.

Gentzler's criticism of polysystem can be summarized as follows: a) overgeneralization based on limited case studies, b) applying irrelevant frameworks, c) focus is on a hypothetical model rather than on a real-life model, d) the question of how far the supposed scientific model is really objective (Gentzler 1993: 35). Furthermore, Jeremy Munday (2008) questions the applicability of Even-Zohar's polysystem theory to text-types other than the literary ones since "Even-Zohar restricts the application of the theory to literature. Regardless of these criticisms, polysystem theory has had an undeniable positive influence on translation studies.

3. Toury and Descriptive Translation Studies

Gideon Toury is another translation studies scholar whose work, like that of Even-Zohar, was a response to Holmes's call for "descriptive data and search for probabilistic laws of translation." (Venuti 2004: 138). Toury's focus was on developing a translation theory and called for developing a systematic descriptive branch of translation studies to "replace isolated free-standing studies that are commonplace." (Munday 2008: 169).

Toury (1995) states that what is needed in translation studies is a "systematic branch proceeding from clear assumptions and armed with a methodology and research techniques made as explicit as possible and justified with translation studies itself." (3). Toury put forward a methodology like the one he described above. This methodology views translations as 'target-oriented,' a view that he shares with Even-Zohar. This methodology also builds on Even-Zohar's polysystem theory.

Toury's methodology encompasses three phases that include a "description of the product and a wider sociocultural system" (Munday 2008: 170) as listed below:

1) Consider the position of the translated text within the target culture system and evaluate its significance or acceptability.

2) Carry out a textual analysis of the source text and the target text with the aim of identifying relationships between coupled

pairs in the two texts. This will result in identifying the shifts that were made in the process of translation and whether these shifts were obligatory or non-obligatory.

3) Try to conclude the patterns identified in the two texts. This will help in reconstructing the translation process for the language pair in question.

The goal of Toury's work is to arrive at laws or norms governing the process of translation. This methodology helps in achieving this goal because the three phases mentioned above can be repeated with many other texts in the same language pair to incorporate a wider range of texts grouped by author, genre, or period. This will help in concluding norms for the language pair concerned as well as translation studies in general.

Munday (2008) states that the second phase in Toury's methodology is among the most controversial areas in translation studies. The controversy concerns which coupled pairs should be compared and the type of relationship between these pairs. Toury (1995: 85) indicates that it is the role of translation theory to provide the tools by means which to decide on the segments (pairs) and the relationship between them. According to Munday (2008: 171), "linguistic translation theory is far from reaching a consensus as to what that apparatus should be." This, of course, is one of the criticisms that are leveled against Toury's methodology.

3.1 **Toury's Norms**

Toury seeks to identify patterns in 'translational behavior' so that he can make generalizations concerning how decisions are made in translation. This will help him to 'reconstruct' the norms that were already operated so that he can put forward hypotheses for future translation projects to test them. For this purpose, Toury (1995: 55) defines norms as follows:

The translation of general values or ideas shared by a community- as to what

is right or wrong, adequate or inadequate – into performance instructions

appropriate and applicable to particular situations. (Toury 1995: 55)

These norms are constraints of sociocultural nature that pertain to a certain culture at a certain time. According to Toury, individuals acquire these norms through education and socialization. This way, they learn which behaviors are acceptable in certain situations. With regard to translation studies, translation students may be taught these norms by their professors, or otherwise, they can be put together in a textbook or other forms of teaching materials.

Toury thinks of translation as an activity regulated by norms and that norms "determine the equivalence manifested in cultural translation" (Toury 1995: 61). This understanding of norms is in line with Mona Baker's (2009: 190) definition of norms as "options that translators in a given sociocultural context select on a regular basis." Toury seeks to identify these norms by analyzing translations. He (Toury 1995: 174) maintains that norms that are prevalent in a text can be concluded from two sources, namely: the analysis of translations to reveal "regularities of behavior" (ibid.:55) and through statements made by translators, publishers, and reviewers about norms. However, Toury does not take these statements for granted and prefers to disregard them. He states that these people may provide incomplete or biased statements.

Importantly, Toury distinguishes between three kinds of norms, each of which operates at a different stage of the translation process. These three norms are the initial norm, the preliminary norms, and the operational norms (Toury 1995: 56 -9).

1. The initial norm is concerned with the general choices made by translators with regard to committing themselves to the norms of the source text or with the norms of the target culture. If the norms of the source text prevail, the translation will be adequate.
   If the case is the other way around, i.e., if the target culture norms are prevalent, then the translation is acceptable.

2. Preliminary norms encompass translation policy and the directness of translation. According to Toury, translation policy is concerned with factors that determine which texts are selected to be translated from a

certain language, culture, or time (Munday 2008: 174). As for the directness of translation, this refers to whether the text is translated from one language into another directly or through a proxy or intermediate language. What is at stake for study here are the languages involved and whether the target culture tolerates this practice.

3. Operational norms are concerned with the introduction of the translation in the target culture and its linguistic material. Operational norms also encompass two types of norms, i.e., material norms and textual-linguistic norms. Martricial norms are concerned with the completeness of the target text. What is at stake for research here is whether parts of the source text are omitted or displaced or whether new passages are added. The other type of operational norm is textual-linguistic norms which determine which linguistic material, i.e., lexical items or phrases of the target language, will be employed in the product of the translation process (Toury 1995: 85).

However, Toury (1995: 67) reminds us that "a translator's behavior cannot be expected to be fully systematic." There are different reasons that will cause a translator's behavior to vary from one translation project to another. As mentioned above, Toury seeks to identify norms with the aim of formulating 'probabilistic laws' of translation with the hope of establishing 'universals of translation.'

The discussion above shows the importance of Toury's work in the field of translation studies. Toury's work has been praised by different scholars of translation studies for the important impact his work has had on translation studies. Edwin Gentzler (2001: 131) mentions four aspects as follows:

1) The abandonment of one-to-one notions of correspondence as well as the possibility of literary/linguistic equivalence (unless by accident);
2) The involvement of literary tendencies with the target cultural system in the production of any translated text;
3) The destabilization of the notion of an original message with a fixed identity;

4) The integration of both the original text and the translated text in the semiotic web of intersecting cultural systems.

However, Toury's work has received some criticism at different levels. Toury's model is criticized by Munday (2008: 178) on the grounds that it is "not fully objective or replicable." Other criticisms come from Theo Hermans (1999), who questions some of the elements of Toury's methodology. Herman refers to Toury's bias towards the notion of equivalence as well as the confusion resulting from the use of the terms 'adequate' and 'acceptable' because of their evaluative usage in other fields (Hermans 1999: 77). On another occasion, Hermans comments on Toury's norms as being "abstract and only traceable in Toury's method by examining the results of the often subconscious behavior that is supposedly governed by them (ibid.: 92).

The following section will focus on translation as a cultural transfer. The areas I will be examining are those that developed out of the systems theories I discussed above.

4. The Cultural Turn in Translation Studies

Another important development in the field of translation studies is the cultural turn. Mary Snell-Hornby (1990) was the first to put forward this name to refer to the "move from translation as text to translation as culture and politics." Munday (2008:192). This term was soon picked up by Susan Bassnett and Andre Lefevere to refer to the cultural move witnessed in translation studies. Their book Translation, History, and Culture (1990) mark the beginning of the cultural turn in translation studies. Cultural studies have influenced translation studies in many areas. The paper focuses on two areas only because of the limitations of space. The researcher decided to focus on these two areas because they are related to his research project. These two areas are translation as rewriting and translation and post-colonialism.

5.1 Translation as rewriting

The first scholar to use the term translation as rewriting was Andre Lefevere. Theo Hermans (2004) states that Lefevere views translation as a

"particular mode of a broader practice" (Hermans 2004: 125). In the beginning, Lefevere used the term 'refraction' to refer to this mode, but he later adopted the term 'rewriting.' Lefevere also had his own ideas about systems and the position of rewritings (translations) in these systems.

Lefevere is concerned with the examination of factors that control the reception, acceptance, or rejection when it comes to translations of literary texts. These factors encompass "issues such as power, ideology, institution, and manipulation (Lefervere 1992: 2). For Lefevere, people who occupy power positions are the ones who rewrite literature and control the consumption of such rewritten literature among the public readers. Rewritings are motivated/constrained by ideological or poetological factors. Although rewriting influences translation among other fields of study like historiography and criticism, he only focuses on translation (Lefevere 2004: 9).

Lefevere's focus is particularly on literary translation. For him, two factors control the field of literary translation, namely 'professionals' working within the literary system and who decide in part the prevalent poetics. These professionals include translators, academics, critics, and reviewers who, in addition to influencing the poetics, sometimes influence the ideology that controls the translated text. The second factor is 'patronage' from outside the literary system, which decides the ideology. Patrons can motivate/constrain the dissemination of literature, whether original or translated. Patrons can be powerful individuals, groups of people, and institutions. (Munday 2008: 194-5).

Patronage, according to Lefevere, has three elements, and these elements can interact in different combinations. However, Lefevere (1992: 16-17) distinguishes these elements as follows:

1) The ideological component constrains the selection of the subject and how it is presented. Lefevere's definition of ideological is not synonymous with political.

2) The economic component refers to payments made to writers and rewriters. These payments are typically made by patrons.

3) The status component takes many forms. For example, the acceptance of patronage involves the membership in certain groups and accepting 'their lifestyles.'

Moreover, patronage controlling a literary system can be either differentiated or undifferentiated. If three components mentioned above, i.e., the ideological, the economic, and the status components, are provided by the same patron, then the patronage is undifferentiated. Patronage is differentiated, however, when economic success is divorced from ideological influences and does not necessarily involve status (ibid.: 17).

The examination of how poetics, ideology, and translation interact with each other makes Lefevere conclude that, during the translation process, if linguistic considerations conflict with ideological ones, it is the ideological considerations that win. Ideology here, according to Lefevere, refers to either the translator's ideology or the one imposed on him by his/her patron. Poetics refers to the poetics prevalent in the target culture. It is obvious then that the combination of ideology and poetics determine the translation policy for any translation project and what solutions are deemed suitable for certain problems (Munday 2008: 197).

To sum up this section, Andre Lefevere built up on systems theories and put forward his method, which he called translation rewriting. He examined power differentials and the ideology manifested through patronage and poetics exercised in the literary and cultural systems that control literary translation (Munday 2008: 2013).

5.2 Translation and post-colonialism
As we have seen in the previous section, the process of translation involves power relations. It is power relations that make up the intersection where translation studies and post-colonial theory meet. Post-colonial translation theory is a sequel to the cultural turn in translation studies.

Among the most influential scholars who engaged with post-colonial translation theory is Tejaswini Niranjana, whose book Siting Translation: History, Post-structuralism, and Colonial Context (1992) describes literary translation as one of the sites that" inform the hegemonic apparatuses that belong to the ideological structure of colonial rule" (Niranjana

1992: 33). Her work highlights how translation into English of literature from former colonies portrays a stereotypical image of the East. She actually links translation directly to imbalanced power relations exercised as a colonial practice when she states that "[t]ranslation as a practice shapes, and takes shape within, the asymmetrical relations of power that operate under colonialism." (Niranjana 1992: 2).

Post-colonial translation theory also attracted scholars concerned with feminist issues like Gayatri Spivak, whose work addresses the issue of translating feminist writing from outside Europe into English. For Spivak, these translations erase the identity of individuals and cultures who are on the weaker side of the power relations. She maintains that this kind of erasure happens when "the literature of the Third World gets translated into a sort of with-it translatese" (Spivak 2004: 371-2). In this case, according to Spivak, different voices will be standardized.

Munday (2008) states that the work of Spivak indicates how cultural studies, and post-colonialism in particular, highlighted issues of translation and colonization. This leads to the argument that translation played an important role in the process of colonizing less hegemonic countries and spreading stereotypical images of the colonized people.

These colonial and post-colonial practices of translation led Bassnett and Trivedi (1999) to refer to the history of translation as "[t]his shameful history of translation that is now being exposed led to some extreme reactions." (Bassnett and Trivedi 1999: 5). These reactions included people who called for restrictions on translations into European languages. These people saw the translation of texts into 'dominant linguistic and cultural systems as the perpetuation of colonization (Abushihab, 2020).

5. Conclusion

Developments in the field of translation studies were introduced in response to the interdisciplinary nature of the field and out of the need for a full understanding of the constantly changing patterns of cultural interaction (Bassnett, 2007).

These developments started with the introduction of systems theories of the 1970s that were developed by Itamar Even-Zohar and Gideon Toury, who built their work on the theories of Russian Formalists. Their work had important implications for the field of translation studies in terms of moving the field from the prescriptive linguistics oriented to becoming an autonomous descriptive discipline.

Andre Lefevere questioned the wide acceptability of descriptive translation studies and challenged the idea that neutrality was attributed to translation. His idea was that translation is not only about language or about the 'mechanical conversion' from language into another term, but as a process of transfer, i.e., the focus shifted from texts to culture (Lefervere, 2004).

In view of this survey and based on the understanding of translation as a cultural product resulting from the interaction of people from different cultures under different social, political, and cultural circumstances, the researchers thinks that we will continue to see developments and changes in the field of translation studies in response to the ever-changing nature of our world.

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