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TRANSLATION AS REINTERPRETATION THROUGH THE TRANSLATOR'S COGNITIVE ACTIVITY

Translation has traditionally been understood as the transfer of meaning from one language to another. However, contemporary translation studies increasingly conceptualize translation not as a mechanical transfer but as a complex interpretive act. In this perspective, translation is better described as reinterpretation, shaped by the translator's cognitive activity, including perception, decision-making, and contextual analysis.

This approach challenges earlier equivalence-based models and emphasizes the active role of the translator as a meaning-maker rather than a passive mediator. As noted in modern translation theory, translation involves not only linguistic substitution but also interpretation, evaluation, and reconstruction of meaning (Munday, 2012, 45-52; Gutt, 2000, 23-30).

The idea that translation is inherently interpretive has deep roots in translation theory. Hermeneutic approaches, particularly those associated with George Steiner, emphasize that translation involves understanding, interpretation, and reformulation of meaning (Steiner, 1975, 296-303).

From this perspective, the source text does not contain a fixed meaning that can be transferred unchanged. Instead, meaning emerges through interpretation. Each translator reconstructs the text based on their linguistic competence, cultural knowledge, and contextual awareness.

Similarly, Eugene Nida highlights the importance of the receptor's response, arguing that translation should aim at producing an equivalent effect rather than a literal correspondence (Nida, 1964, 159-175). This shift from form to effect implicitly acknowledges the interpretive nature of translation.

Thus, translation can be understood as a process of reinterpretation in which the translator actively negotiates meaning between languages and cultures.

Translation is fundamentally a *cognitive activity* involving multiple mental processes. These include comprehension of the source text, problem-solving, decision-making, and production of the target text. Research in cognitive translation studies demonstrates that translators constantly make strategic decisions, often under conditions of ambiguity and uncertainty (Alves & Gonçalves, 2015, 109-126; Halverson, 2017, 9-46).

One key aspect of cognitive activity is the segmentation of text into units of meaning. Translators do not process texts linearly but rather interpret chunks of information, restructuring them according to the norms of the target language.

Moreover, cognitive effort varies depending on text difficulty, cultural distance, and the translator's expertise. Studies using think-aloud protocols and eye-tracking methods show that professional translators engage in deeper interpretive processing compared to novices (Tirkkonen-Condit, 1989, 73-85). Therefore, translation is not simply linguistic substitution but a cognitively demanding process that involves continuous reinterpretation.

A central component of the translator's cognitive activity is *decision-making*. Translation has been described as a series of choices, where the translator evaluates multiple possible solutions and selects the most appropriate one (Levy, 1967, 148-152). These decisions are influenced by various factors, including: linguistic constraints, cultural context, communicative purpose, target audience. For example, when encountering ambiguity in the source text, the translator must interpret the intended meaning and choose how to render it. This process inevitably involves subjectivity.

Lawrence Venuti argues that the translator is an active text producer whose choices shape the final text, even if this role is often made invisible in traditional translation

practices (Venuti, 1995, 1-24). Thus, the translator's cognitive activity directly determines how the source text is reinterpreted and represented in the target language.

Another crucial aspect of reinterpretation is the role of *context*. Meaning is not inherent in words alone but emerges through context, including cultural, situational, and textual factors. According to relevance theory, translation involves interpreting the intended meaning based on contextual assumptions and cognitive relevance (Gutt, 2000, 23-30).

This means that translators must reconstruct not only the linguistic content but also the communicative intention behind the text. In doing so, they often adapt or modify elements of the source text to ensure comprehension and relevance for the target audience. For instance, cultural references may require explanation, adaptation, or substitution, depending on the audience's background knowledge. Such decisions further illustrate that translation is a process of reinterpretation rather than direct transfer.

While translation involves individual cognitive activity, it is also influenced by *social and cultural norms*. Gideon Toury emphasizes that translation is governed by norms that shape translators' decisions and behavior (Toury, 1995, 53-69). These norms operate at different levels, including: textual conventions, genre expectations, cultural standards. As a result, the translator's cognitive activity is not entirely free but constrained by external factors. However, even within these constraints, translators exercise interpretive agency. This interplay between individual cognition and social norms highlights the complexity of translation as reinterpretation.

The recognition of translation as reinterpretation leads to a reconceptualization of the translator's role. Rather than being a neutral intermediary, the translator becomes a co-author who participates in *meaning construction*. Modern translation theory increasingly acknowledges this active role. Translators are seen as agents who shape texts, influence reception, and contribute to cultural exchange (Venuti, 2000, 12-20).

This perspective also explains why different translations of the same text can vary significantly. Each version reflects a different interpretation shaped by the translator's cognitive activity, cultural background, and strategic choices.

Thus, translation is not a single definitive product but a range of possible reinterpretations.

In conclusion, translation can be understood as a process of reinterpretation driven by the translator's cognitive activity. Rather than transferring fixed meanings, translators actively construct meaning through interpretation, decision-making, and contextual analysis. Cognitive processes such as comprehension, segmentation, and problem-solving play a central role in shaping the translation. At the same time, these processes are influenced by cultural norms and communicative goals. Recognizing translation as reinterpretation allows for a deeper understanding of the translator's role as an active participant in meaning-making. This perspective not only reflects the complexity of translation practice but also highlights the intellectual and creative nature of the translator's work.

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