

THE EMERGENCE OF CULTURAL TRANSLATION THEORY AND ITS ROLE AS A NEW PARADIGM IN TRANSLATION STUDIES

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Abstract

Translation studies today represent a comprehensive theoretical discipline interconnected with linguistics, literary studies, cultural studies, psycholinguistics, and philosophy. The discipline not only focuses on linguistic equivalence but also explores semantic, aesthetic, and cultural layers within texts. These aspects are central to the emergence of the "cultural translation" theory, which transcends simple language transfer by emphasizing cultural and contextual transformation. This article aims to explore the development of the cultural translation paradigm as a transformative shift in translation theory. It analyzes foundational works by scholars such as Homi Bhabha, Susan Bassnett, Gayatri Spivak, Toshihiko Izutsu, and Boaventura de Sousa Santos, while also engaging with regional perspectives. The study provides insights into the philosophical, ideological, and methodological implications of cultural translation, particularly in translating Sufi texts and spiritually rich content.

Keywords: cultural translation, translation theory, Sufi literature, hybridity, identity, third space, metaphysical meaning, ethical translation, intercultural communication, epistemic bridge.

Annotatsiya

Ushbu maqolada tarjima nazariyasidagi “madaniy tarjima” tushunchasining shakllanishi, asosiy nazariy manbalari va zamonaviy tarjimashunoslikdagi o‘rni keng yoritiladi. Maqolada tarjima jarayoni madaniyatlararo, mafkuraviy va ruhiy kontekstlarda amalga oshadigan murakkab muloqot sifatida talqin qilinadi. Ayniqsa, tasavvuf adabiyotining tarjimasida madaniy konnotatsiyalar, ruhiy ma’nolar va semantik qatlamlarning uzatilishi muhim deb baholanadi. Maqolada Homi Bhabha, Susan Bassnett, Gayatri Spivak, Toshihiko Izutsu va Boaventura de Sousa Santos

kabi olimlarning qarashlari asosida madaniy tarjima paradigmasining metodologik va falsafiy jihatlarini tahlil etiladi.

Kalit soʻzlar: madaniy tarjima, tarjima nazariyasi, tasavvuf adabiyoti, gibridlik, identitet, uchinchi makon, semantik tafsir, tarjima etikasi, epistemik koʻprik.

Аннотация

Статья посвящена исследованию становления и развития теории «культурного перевода» как новой парадигмы в переводоведении. Автор рассматривает перевод как сложный межкультурный процесс, включающий в себя не только языковую передачу, но и интерпретацию мировоззрения, идентичности и символических значений. Особое внимание уделяется переводу суфийской литературы, где культурные и духовные концепты требуют глубокой интерпретации. В статье анализируются идеи Хоми Бхабхи, Сьюзан Басснетт, Гаятри Спивак, Тосихико Идзуцу и Боавентуры де Соузы Сантуша, что позволяет осмыслить культурный перевод как эпистемологический и этический инструмент в глобализованном мире.

Ключевые слова: культурный перевод, теория перевода, суфийская литература, гибридность, идентичность, третье пространство, семантическая адаптация, этика перевода, межкультурный диалог.

Introduction

Historically, translation was largely approached through the lens of linguistics, focusing on equivalence, fidelity, and formal accuracy. Early models of translation emphasized word-for-word and sense-for-sense distinctions, favoring linguistic precision over contextual richness. However, by the mid-to-late 20th century, the limits of linguistic models became evident, especially when translating texts with complex cultural, historical, and philosophical content. Scholars began to question the adequacy of linguistic transfer to capture the deeper meanings embedded in sacred texts, literature, and oral traditions. In response, the notion of cultural translation emerged - originally from anthropology, but later fully incorporated into translation theory. Cultural translation posits that translating between languages also entails navigating between worldviews, ideologies, identities, and symbolic systems. It seeks to preserve not just the form of a message but the sociocultural essence from which that message arises. This shift has given rise to a new paradigm within

translation studies - one that sees the translator not as a technician, but as an interpreter of meaning, culture, and power.

Materials and Methods

This research employs a qualitative methodological framework, rooted in interdisciplinary textual analysis. The primary sources include seminal theoretical works: Homi K. Bhabha’s “The Location of Culture” (1994), where he defines cultural translation as negotiation in the ‘third space’; Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere’s “Translation, History and Culture” (1990), which presents the idea of the cultural turn in translation; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (1988), which raises ethical concerns in translation; Toshihiko Izutsu’s “Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur’an” (2002), which applies semantic field theory to mystical texts; and Boaventura de Sousa Santos’ work on epistemological pluralism. These texts are analyzed through intertextual interpretation, conceptual synthesis, and discourse analysis to identify theoretical convergences. Additionally, national scholars like I. Gofurov and O. Mo‘minov offer regional perspectives, particularly regarding the translation of culturally bound terms in Uzbek literature. Comparative analysis is employed to juxtapose Western and Eastern approaches to cultural translation, especially in religious and spiritual contexts.

Results

The findings of this study suggest that cultural translation fundamentally redefines the role and function of translation as a socio-cultural act. Rather than perceiving translation as a unidirectional linguistic exercise, cultural translation conceptualizes it as a multidimensional process that engages with context, culture, ideology, and identity. Homi Bhabha’s idea of the “third space” highlights translation as a site of cultural hybridity, where meanings are constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed. Bassnett and Lefevere emphasize that texts are always embedded in socio-political frameworks, requiring translation to be a negotiation of cultural signs. Spivak warns of the dangers of appropriation, emphasizing the translator’s ethical duty to preserve the voice of the subaltern rather than adapting it to dominant paradigms. Izutsu provides a model for metaphysical translation, suggesting that the translator must inhabit the worldview of the original to faithfully convey its intent. The application of these ideas is especially visible in the translation of Sufi literature,

where terms like “fano,” “ishq,” and “haqiqat” are not merely linguistic units but spiritual signifiers. Their translation requires an understanding of the ontological and emotional depths they represent within Islamic mysticism.

Discussion

Cultural translation theory provides a necessary corrective to earlier models that treated language as a neutral conduit. In doing so, it challenges foundational assumptions in both translation studies and intercultural communication. One of the major contributions of this theory is its insistence on contextuality and interpretative agency. Translators are no longer invisible mediators but active cultural agents whose choices shape the reception of a text. For example, in translating Sufi poetry, the metaphor of the “wine cup” might be rendered literally - but in a secular context, it could evoke hedonism rather than divine ecstasy. The translator must thus choose between formal equivalence and cultural resonance. Similarly, concepts like “zuhd” (ascetic detachment) carry different connotations across cultures and must be adapted accordingly. Boaventura de Sousa Santos further enriches this conversation by proposing that translation is an “epistemic bridge” between knowledge systems. This implies that translation is not just between languages, but between epistemologies - between the West and the Global South, between modern science and indigenous wisdom, between dominant and marginal voices. In this context, translation becomes an act of resistance, reclaiming suppressed narratives and fostering intercultural dialogue.

Conclusion

The emergence of cultural translation theory marks a transformative evolution in translation studies. It expands the domain from linguistic transfer to cultural negotiation, ethical responsibility, and identity preservation. This is especially critical in translating spiritually and culturally dense texts, where literal renderings often fail to convey the original depth. Cultural translation equips the translator with conceptual tools to navigate these complexities, viewing translation not merely as a textual activity but as a form of intercultural dialogue, philosophical interpretation, and epistemic engagement. By embracing cultural translation, scholars and practitioners alike can foster more nuanced, ethical, and culturally responsive modes of understanding across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

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