

Re-evaluation of the Translation Concept in the light of the principle of Invisibility in Translation

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Abstract

From a classical point of view which was dominant in 1950s, linguistic transfer from a language into another language is simply defined as “translation”. Some scholars however think that the use of only the concept of translation in this sense is not sufficient for the exact definition. As known, in order for the (inter lingual) translation action to take place, a bilateral relationship is always established between the source and the target text. But apart from the transfer of linguistic elements in the source text to the target setting, cultural elements are also conveyed into the target language. In connection the translator may sometimes adopt strategies such as adaptation, domestication, updating, or even generalization in the translation process rather than seeking for only direct translation. As for the use of such strategies as domestication, adaptation and so forth in the translation action, some questions may arise here: Is this action through the use of these mentioned strategies by the translator a translation or is it more than a translation? Should this action be called just a translation action, or should it be named differently because what is in the source text is transferred into the target language in a different respect by adopting above mentioned strategies? For example translator may also prefer to deviate a target text production from the source text intentionally thanks to these strategies. In this study, in the context of the hypothesis and these questions, we explain the concepts of the translator’s visibility and invisibility. In the light of the invisibility principle in translation by referring to Venuti’s *Translator's Invisibility* (1995) the concept of translation was re-discussed, the findings were supported with examples and alternative concepts were introduced to the concept of translation.

Keywords: Translation, translation action, visibility in translation, invisibility in translation, adaptation, domestication.

INTRODUCTION

It is “the interlingual translation” taking place among Roman Jakobson's¹ three types of translation, which comes to mind first in the traditional sense of translation. In interlingual translation, there is a target text

produced from a source text. In other words, the translator first accesses the source text and analyzes it for translation purposes and uses the codes of another language to re-express the message in the target language. From this definition, translation is

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¹ In his article called “On Linguistic Aspects of Translation”, Roman Jakobson divides the translation into three types: 1. Intralingual translation 2. Interlingual translation 3. Intersemiotic translation (Jakobson, 1959).

considered to be a purely linguistic transfer. However, it is no longer sufficient to implement a purely equivalence approach, which is discussed in the concept of a linguistic turn prevalent during a particular period of time in the translation process in order to create a translated text with a high level of reception aesthetics and a high level of functionality. The translation action is not anymore only a linguistic activity, and in the translation process, the translator should consider the expectations and wishes of the target audience as well as the linguistic transfer especially with the arrival of culture and function oriented approaches to translation.

In addition at the beginning of the translation process, it is not only necessary for the translator to analyze the linguistic codes in the source language, but also to recognize the source culture so much as to know the reasons for the selection of these words by the original author. The translator also should not be foreign to his / her own culture in order to increase the reception capacity of the target readers during the translation process. In other words, as stated by Vermeer, the translator should be a cultural expert as well as a linguistic expertise in the act of translation (Vermeer, 1984)

Especially since the 1980s, when the translation was considered not only as a linguistic but also a cultural activity, the definition / concept of classical translation was re-examined and target-oriented approaches such as functional translation theories emerged. The linguistic paradigms of translation studies, along with the

transition from a linguistic turn to cultural turn, have also been replaced by cultural paradigms, which are a sign of moving to a new era within TS (see Tosun, 2001, cf. Munday, 2016). As a result of culture-oriented approaches and increased functionality in translation, translators have become more flexible in the translation process and it has become possible for the translators to make their own free decisions while translating the text for a certain purpose, which in return has increased their status even more as an expert.

A linguist and a translation scholar Levy (1967) has already stated that the translator represents the decision-making mechanism in the translation process. The translator can however sometimes exaggerate this flexibility with new approaches in the translation process, as sometimes the goal of translation can be to produce a text much more different from the source text. In doing so, translators use translation strategies and methods such as adaptation, domestication, actualization, omission, reduction etc. in the translation process. At this point, a question comes to the mind: Is it possible for the translator to be flexible in the translation process and to translate the source text written with a different emotion into a completely different emotion universe and to create a target text in this way? Is it more accurate to say that what translators do is just more than just translate in the sense of the above mentioned definition of translation, or can we find another concept instead of this definition of translation? "²

² For example, Can Yücel, while adding the 66th sonnet of Shakespeare's sonnets to Turkish language,

produced a text that is the same in terms of meaning but different in style by referring to strategies such as

In this study, the concepts of visibility and invisibility of the translator mentioned in the work of Venuti's *Translator's Invisibility* (1995) in the light of the hypothesis and questions in the study have been highlighted and the concept of translation has been re-discussed in the light of the principle of invisibility in translation and the findings were supported with examples and alternative concepts to the concept of translation to prevent the idea that it is only a linguistic activity have been put forward.

Re-evaluation of translation in the light of the principle of invisibility

German scholar Friedrich Schleiermacher, who was accepted as the first translation scholar, used the concepts of interpreter (German: *dolmetscher*) and translator (German: *Übersetzer*) for the first time in his article named "Über die Verschiedenen Methoden des Übersetzens" written in German at the beginning of the 19th century. He mentioned two translation strategies known as domestication (German: *Einbürgern*) and foreignization (German: *verfremden*). Schleiermacher states that a translator can be said to use foreignization strategy if he/she chooses to take the reader

to the writer in the process of translating. But we can also mention domestication strategy in the translation process if the translator chooses to bring the writer to the reader. According to Schleiermacher domestication as a translation strategy can be employed in daily /commercial texts where interpretation is mostly required. But as for the translation of scientific and artistic texts, he advocates the strategy of foreignization by being influenced by the opinions of the Romantic movement (see Munday, 2016; Odacıoğlu, 2015; Gürçağlar Tahir, 2011: 109-111).

In addition according to Venuti, who have later re-discussed the translation strategies such as domestication and foreignization based on Schleiermacher's views, the translator may choose to be visible or invisible in the translated text due to several ideological, cultural and economic reasons. What are the situations in which the translator prefers to be visible or invisible³ in the translation activity, and under what circumstances do these situations occur? (cf. Venuti, 1995: 1). Based on these questions, it will first be emphasized when the translator prefers to be visible. If the translator prefers to be visible in translation, then fluency in translation may not be of importance in the target text and several

adaptation and domestication while preserving Shakespeare's message in the target text. Shakespeare's original sonnet does not include "Yemen". However, Can Yücel translated "And captive good attending captain ill" as "değil mi ki kötüler kadı olmuş Yemen'e"(villains became muslim judges to Yemen, didn't they? if translated literally in Turkish) and expressed himself as an explainer in Turkish ("Türkçe söyleyen") instead of describing himself as a translator (<https://www.antoloji.com/sone-66-siiri/>).

³ In the translation proposed by Venuti, the concepts of visibility and invisibility have been revisited by Levy with different concepts. Levy *Umění překladau* ("The Art of Translation") divides translation approaches into illusionist and anti-illusionist approaches. In the illusionary approach, the translated text is read as if it were the original text. In other words, one does not feel that it is a translation. However in the anti-illusionist approach, it is obvious that the text is a translation and does not give the feeling that it is the original text (http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?pid=S0103-40142012000300004&script=sci_arttext&tlng=en)

footnotes and end notes may be used in the translated text in many parts so that the reader can understand that the text is a translation. It should be stated here that there are many reasons underlying this. The first one of these reasons is that the translator who prefers to be visible, ensures that a different foreign culture is received by the target reader, so that what is happening in the outside world can be realized in this way for the target setting or that thought can be acquired by the target audience by maintaining the foreignness of a disturbing thought available in the source text. The second reason can be that the translator may prefer to adhere to strict linguistic rules by adopting the classical definition of translation in 1950s. There also other reasons leading to this. But regardless of the reasons why the translator chooses to be visible in the translation process, he/she chooses to stand in favor of the source text by adopting visibility in a way. Therefore it can be said that the translator focuses on the foreignization translation strategy in the translation process (see Venuti, 1995; Venuti, 1998) in doing so. For example, excessive loyalty to a source text and translating the expressions as they are represent some examples of visibility in translation⁴.

When the translator however chooses to be invisible in the process of translating, the feeling that the text is a translation does not occur in the reader. In other words, the target reader reads the text by considering that the text is the original, i.e. the source text itself.

⁴ It's like translating the word "hot dog" into Turkish as "sosisli ekmek" by preserving its (foreign) originality.

For this reason, the translated text does not include footnotes and endnotes, and the translation of the text is also fluent. In translation, the translator avoids word-for-word translation or simply linguistic transfer due to the principle of invisibility. By taking advantage of the translation strategies such as adaptation, domestication etc. with the principle of invisibility in the translation process., the translators creates an atmosphere as if the target text were written in the original language (see Venuti, 1995; Venuti, 1998).

The strategies of adaptation and domestication based on the invisibility of the translator are mostly applied in fairy tales, fantasy fiction, lyrics and film names. For example, the film called "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind" with Jim Carrey and Kate Winslet starring, is a verse of Alexander Pope's poem 'Eloisa to Abelard'. However, when the film title is translated into Turkish word-for-word, a long and dysfunctional translation occurs. Therefore, this film was adapted to the vision for the Turkish audience under the name of "Sil Baştan"⁵ in Turkish. Similarly, in a colloquium organized in London in the summer of 2015, the topic of music translation was discussed among interpreters, translators, and translator scholars. In this colloquium Turkish Translation Scholar Sebnem Susam Saraeva made a study on how the songs of Turkish singer Tarkan were received abroad and stated that Tarkan's love songs could be transformed into a folk dance in a wedding

⁵ <https://www.timeturk.com/tr/2010/03/06/film-adlari-turkceye-neden-farkli-cevirilir.html>

for example in Indian culture, and at this point whether this was a translation, domestication or adaptation was opened to discussion among scholars and translators/interpreters.

Translators/interpreters or translation scholars in these examples benefited from the invisibility principle put forward by Venuti and therefore extended the classical definition of translation dominant in 1950s.

In line with the explanations above, it can also be said to support our hypothesis that translators or academics interpret the sense of the source text for different reasons and purposes (like ideological, cultural, social, economic) in the light of the principle of invisibility in translation according to Venuti's point of view and they therefore use translation strategies such as adaptation and domestication etc to this end. Is it possible to say here that there is an inter-lingual translation when translators change the source text's emotion during the translation process for the target audience? Is this kind of a text a translation? Or is it more than a translation?. We believe this is not a linguistic translation process but a cultural translation, an intercultural translation or a cultural transfer. It is perhaps an acculturation of the target setting through translation. Or this is perhaps to explain a linguistic element differently in another language (see Can Yucel above), it is an adaptation or domestication perhaps. Or as Lefevere says, this might be a rewriting. Therefore, when adaptation, domestication,

invisibility in translation come into question, it is insufficient to explain the translation process only with the concept of translation due to the fact that it can also be associated with its classical definition.

CONCLUSION

In this study, the concept of translation was re-evaluated in the light of the invisibility principle by Venuti, and it was inferred that what translators do as a translation work cannot be only explained with the concept of translation in terms of its classical definition and when a cultural transfer besides the linguistic transfer and the exchange of emotions between two languages become involved in the process. Because there are different factors playing a role in the process of translating other than this concept of translation. In addition, when a target text completely different from the source text appears, various suggestions can be proposed instead of accepting this text as a mere translation particularly because of its classical definition. Proposals might be cultural transfer, acculturation of target setting through translation, adaptation, domestication, rewriting, re-expression, re-telling etc. At this point the translator also may be called under different names: the cultural mediator, the cultural expert, the rewriter, the re-explainer, the translator as the cultural transmitter and the translator as the cultural expert.

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