TRANSLATING AS A PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITY
Functionalist Approaches Explained

目 的 性 行 为
—— 析功能翻译理论

Christiane Nord

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出 版 说 明

　　近年来,国内翻译研究取得了很大进展,有关翻译研究的丛书也出了多套。不过,长期以来,国内引进的原版翻译著作匮乏,不少研究都是根据二手资料;另外,学习翻译专业的研究生人数越来越多,这种状况若继续存在,将十分不利于学科的发展和翻译人才的培养。鉴于此,上海外语教育出版社约请了多名国内翻译研究著名学者分别开列出最值得引进的国外翻译研究论著的书目,并对这些书目进行整理、排序,最终确定了准备引进的正式书单。该丛书涉及的论著时间跨度大,既有经典,也有新论;内容的覆盖面也相当广泛,既有翻译本体的研究,也有跨学科的研究。这套丛书的引进将会满足翻译专业研究生教学原版参考书和翻译理论研究的需要。

　　上海外语教育出版社谨以此丛书献给我国的翻译学界。

"国外翻译研究丛书"专家委员会

借 鉴 和 创 造

（代序）

　　上海外语教育出版社从成立以来一直是我国外语教育最优秀的后勤部和侦调部。因为它不但为我国各个层次（尤其本科与研究生层次）的外语教育提供了多种高水平的教材、教参和工具书，而且还出版了多学科、多语种和多系列的中文版和外文版的学术著作，比如"现代语言学丛书"、"牛津应用语言学丛书"、"美国文学史论译丛"、"外国文学史丛书"、"剑桥文学指南丛书"、"当代英语语言学丛书"以及列入国家及教育部规划的人文社科重点项目的外国语言文学、文化等方面的图书等。为了适应我国现代化建设和教育改革的需要，还出版了一批国际金融、对外贸易、涉外保险、国际经济法、国际新闻和管理科学等方面的教材与专著。这些著作在外语的学科建设与学术研究以及复合型人才培养等方面都在发挥着强有力的侦察、调研和指导作用。这是外语界有口皆碑的。

　　随着中外文化交流的纵深发展以及我国现代化建设对人才的需求，对比语言学和翻译学近些年来在我国有了较快的发展，最突出的证据就是①外语类硕士博士点上研究对比与翻译方向的学生在逐年迅速增多，而且我们的高校已经有了翻译学院和翻译系（当然还太少）。②外语专业的学生考中文、法律等其他人文社科专业的硕士、博士以及反方向的走向已经起步。这种跨学科的人才已成为人才资源竞争的最主要对象，因此发展趋势定会看好。上海外语教育出版社为适应这种高层次人才培养和新学科

建设的需要,不但积极出版国内关于对比研究和翻译研究的专著和论文集,最近又推出了原版"国外翻译研究丛书",这套丛书时间跨度从古代到现代,所选书目皆为译学发展史上有里程碑作用的名家名著,堪称译学经典。他们计划分批出版,以满足读者的需求。

这套丛书的出版首先可以解决国内翻译教学原版参考书多年匮乏的困难,真可以说是我国翻译教学与理论研究的及时雨。我想学习和关心这个学科的师生和其他人士定会对这套书的引进为之欢呼,为之祝贺。

这套丛书的价值还在于能大大促进我国翻译学科建设的发展。译学学科的发展依赖于研究者在三个方面的深入研究和结合。一是对本国译学的继承性研究;二是对外国译学的借鉴性研究;三是对翻译实践和翻译教学中新问题的探索性研究。只有这三者研究深入并结合好了,才可能从经验与技巧逐步升华为具有科学性的译学理论。这三个方面的研究,改革开放以来,在我国已取得了很显著的成就,这是有目共睹的。翻译学在我国已于20世纪80年代末有了独立学科的初级形态,90年代又有了新的发展,对学科的独立性以及理论体系的结构与功能有了更多的探讨。依照学科建设的规律和研究现状,我们尚需在上述三个方面加大研究力度,而这套丛书就是借鉴性研究的主要资源。从这个角度讲,这套丛书的引进也是我国文化基本建设的重要工程之一。

在新的世纪,文化(包括各类科学技术)会多方面快速深入人类的日常生活,各国之间的交流会空前深广,因此翻译的功能会逐步扩大,实用性翻译人才的需求量定会空前增加。这就要求我们除了做好高层次研究型人才的培养以外,还应十分重视实用性人才的培养和应用译学的研究。我想出版社一定会关注和引导译学建设的理论研究与应用的发展趋势。

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杨自俭

青岛海洋大学六三居室

2001 年 3 月 28 日

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出 版 前 言

  功能派翻译理论 20 世纪 70 年代产生于德国。它的形成大体经历了三个阶段。首先,凯瑟林娜·赖斯(Katharina Reiss)在她 1971 年出版的《翻译批评的可能性与限制》(*Possibilities and Limitations in Translation Criticism*)一书中提出了功能派理论思想的雏形。一方面她依然坚持以原作为中心的等值理论,并指出理想的译文应该从概念性的内容、语言形式和交际功能上与原文对等。她称这种翻译为综合性交际翻译(integral communicative performance)。另一方面,在实践中赖斯发现有些等值是不可能实现,而且有时也是不该追求的。翻译应该有具体的翻译要求(translation brief)。有时因特殊需要,要求译文与原文具有不同的功能。在这种情况下,赖斯认为译者应该优先考虑译文的功能特征而不是对等原则。此后,赖斯的学生汉斯·威密尔(Hans Vermeer)摆脱以原语为中心的等值论的束缚,创立了功能派的奠基理论:翻译的目的论(Skopostheory)。威密尔认为单靠语言学是解决不了翻译的问题的。他根据行为学的理论提出翻译是一种人类的行为活动,而且还是一种有目的的行为活动。翻译时,译者根据客户或委托人的要求,结合翻译的目的和译文读者的特殊情况,从原作所提供的多源信息中进行选择性的翻译。威密尔还特别强调因为行为发生的环境置于文化背景之中,不同文化又具有不同的风俗习惯和价值观,因此翻译也并非一对一的语言转换活动。在威密尔的"目的论"的基础上,贾斯塔·赫兹·曼塔利(Justa Holz Manttari)进一步发展了功能派翻译理论。她用信息传递(message trans-mitters)来指文本、图片、声音、肢体语言等各种各样的跨文化

转换,视翻译为一项为实现特定目的的复杂活动。她的理论强调翻译过程的行为、参与者的角色和翻译过程发生的环境三个方面。总之,以"目的论"为代表的功能派试图把翻译从原语的奴役中解放出来,从译入者的新视角来诠释翻译活动,因而给德国翻译理论界带来了一场新的革命。

克里斯蒂安·诺德(Christiane Nord)是德国马格德堡理工大学应用语言学和翻译学教授,是德国功能派翻译理论的主要倡导者之一。在诸多德国功能派学者中,她首次用英文全面系统地整理归纳了功能派的各种学术思想,用简单易懂的语言和丰富的实例阐述了功能派复杂的学术理论和术语。在本书中她讲述了功能派的形成过程、基本思想和针对功能派翻译理论的不足提出的翻译的忠诚原则。书中还提及该理论在译者培训、文学翻译、口译中的应用以及对译者翻译道德观念的影响。由于作者有着丰富的翻译理论知识和翻译教学经验,她提出的翻译的纵向单位(vertical unit)和翻译前译者应该善于发现、找出翻译中将遇到的问题等翻译教学思想都极有建树。她谈到的文学作品的开放特征对文学翻译的影响以及功能派翻译理论在文学翻译中的应用也很有新意。此外,诺德在本书中还详细举例说明了德国功能派翻译理论自形成以来受到的各种批评,并对于这些批评中提出的问题一一作了解答。最后她展望了功能派翻译理论的发展前景。

克里斯蒂安·诺德已出版数本有关翻译工作者培训理论和方法方面的重要著作。本书是她的又一力作。在英语国家和地区,她最著名的著作是 1991 年出版的《翻译的语篇分析》(*Text Analysis in Translation*)。我们把本书介绍给广大翻译工作者、研究人员和大专院校英语专业本科生、研究生以及其他英语爱好者,相信它对于我国翻译的理论研究和教学实践定会有所启发和帮助。

Translation Theories Explained

Translation Theories Explained is a series designed to respond to the profound plurality of contemporary translation studies. There are many problems to be solved, many possible approaches that can be drawn from neighbouring disciplines, and several strong language-bound traditions plagued by the paradoxical fact that some of the key theoretical texts have yet to be translated.

Recognizing this plurality as both a strength and a potential shortcoming, the series provides a format where different approaches can be compared, their virtues assessed, and mutual blind spots overcome. There will also be scope for introductions to specific areas of translation practice. Students and scholars may thus gain comprehensive awareness of the work being done beyond local or endemic frames.

Most volumes in the series place a general approach within its historical context, giving examples to illustrate the main ideas, summarizing the most significant debates and opening perspectives for future work. The authors have been selected not only because of their command of a particular approach but also in view of their openness to alternatives and their willingness to discuss criticisms. In every respect the emphasis is on explaining the essential points as clearly and as concisely as possible, using numerous examples and providing glossaries of the main technical terms.

The series should prove particularly useful to students dealing with translation theories for the first time, to teachers seeking to stimulate critical reflection, and to scholars looking for a succinct overview of the field's present and future.

Anthony Pym
Series Editor

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Introduction

Translating as a purposeful activity... isn't that stating the obvious? Aren't all human activities aimed at some purpose or other? What does it mean to say that translating (which here will always include interpreting unless stated otherwise) is a purposeful activity?

The title is not meant to tell you something you didn't know before; it's simply stating the aspects of translating that will be focused on in this book. The main title is evaluative rather than referential in function (these terms will be explained in chapter 4); the referential part is the subtitle 'Functionalist Approaches Explained'. This book thus explains functionalist approaches to translation. 'Functionalist' means focusing on the function or functions of texts and translations. Functionalism is a broad term for various theories that approach translation in this way, although what we will call *Skopostheorie* has played a major role in the development of this trend; a number of scholars subscribe to functionalism and draw inspiration from *Skopostheorie* without calling themselves anything like 'skopists'. We shall thus be looking at functionalism as a broad approach, trying to distinguish between its parts wherever possible and necessary.

Our title emphasizes that translating is an activity. This means that a theory of translation can be embedded in a theory of human action or activity. The parameters of action theory may help to explain some aspects of translation.

Human actions or activities are carried out by 'agents', individuals playing roles. When playing the role of senders in communication, people have communicative purposes that they try to put into practice by means of texts. Communicative purposes are aimed at other people who are playing the role of receivers. Communication takes place through a medium and in situations that are limited in time and place. Each specific situation determines what and how people communicate, and it is changed by people communicating. Situations are not universal but are embedded in a cultural habitat, which in turn conditions the situation. Language is thus to be regarded as part of culture. And communication is conditioned by the constraints of the situation-in-culture.

Example: If you ask a policeman for a particular street in Jakarta, he will give you an elaborate and very detailed description, even though he doesn't have the faintest idea where that particular street is. He just cannot say Sorry, I don't know , because that would mean losing face.

In translation, senders and receivers belong to different cultural groups in that they speak different languages. Non-verbal forms of behaviour may be different as well. Senders and receivers thus need help from someone who is familiar with both languages (and cultures) and who is willing to play the role of translator or intermediary between them. In professional settings, translators don't normally act on their own account; they are asked to intervene by either the sender or the receiver, or perhaps by a third person. From an observer's point of view, this third party will be playing the role of 'commissioner' or 'initiator'; from the translator's point of view, they will be the 'client' or 'customer'. Initiators may have communicative purposes of their own or they may share those of either the sender or the receiver. Translating thus involves aiming at a particular communicative purpose that may or may not be identical with the one that other participants have in mind.

Example: Suppose you are in Jakarta and you want to know how to find a particular street. You don't speak Indonesian; the policeman doesn't speak your language. So you ask your Indonesian friend to speak for you. Your friend turns to the policeman and after listening to his elaborate explanations where to turn right behind the next bus-stop, left at the level crossing, and then right again opposite the filling-station, she tells you, He doesn't know the way, we should ask someone else. (Your friend is familiar with the culture-specific non-verbal or verbal markers giving away the policeman's ignorance.) Or she tells you, 'You have to turn right behind the next bus-stop, left at the level crossing, and then right again opposite the filling-station, and there you will be in the street you are looking for'. (She interprets the policeman's behaviour as that of somebody who really knows the way.) In both cases your friend has clearly interpreted the policeman's utterance in situation-in-culture; she has translated the *function*, not the wording.

Although functionalist approaches draw on practical experience of the translation profession, they are not just descriptive; they do not merely describe what can be observed in the process of translation or the results of this process. As we will see later on, functionalism makes use of descriptive methods (for example, parallel text analysis) to locate and compare the communicative norms and conventions valid in various culture communities. Since functionalist approaches have been developed mainly within university translator-training institutions, they are normative or evaluative to the extent that they include the evaluation of translations with regard to their functionality in a given situation-in-culture; future professional translators must be trained not only to produce 'good' (that is, functional) translations

satisfying their customers' needs, but also to find good arguments to defend their products against unjustified criticism from clients and users. For example, your Indonesian friend might be reproached for not having told you exactly what the policeman said, since you have seen the policeman pointing in some direction and using many more words than would have been necessary just to say 'I don't know!'. What concepts should your Indonesian translator use to defend her decision?

This short introduction into the functionalist view of translation has already touched on the main aspects to be presented in the book. After a brief historical overview of how *Skopostheorie* and the general function-oriented concepts came into being (chapter 1) we will look at the main ideas of functionalist approaches. The agents and conditions of translational action will be explained and defined (chapter 2). The next step will be an analysis of the basic concepts of *Skopostheorie*, such as '*Skopos*'/'purpose', 'function', 'culture', 'equivalence/ adequacy' and 'text-type' (chapter 3). Then we will look at how the approach is applied in the training of professional translators, dealing with text functions, a functional typology of translations, norms and conventions in functional translation, a categorization of translation problems, functional translation units and some aspects of evaluation (chapter 4). Since some critics claim this model is not suited to the translation of literary texts, a further chapter will look more closely at functionalism in literary translation (chapter 5). The last chapter in this 'main ideas' part of the book will deal with functionalism in simultaneous interpreting (chapter 6).

Although some critical reactions to functionalism will be mentioned as we look at the main ideas, the main criticisms will be bundled together and discussed systematically in chapter 7. Being involved in functional translation teaching myself, my own attitude toward this approach will probably show through, despite all attempts at objectivity. So as not to hide anything, my personal version of functionalism will be presented quite briefly (chapter 8) before dealing with the current trends and future perspectives in functionalist theory (chapter 9).

The book concludes with a list of references including a commented bibliography of the main functionalist texts.

1. Historical Overview

The following pages describe the development of modern functionalism in translation studies. Of course, since functionalism didn't suddenly appear overnight, a brief description of early functionalist views of translation is needed in order to sketch the situation from which the more recent theories and methodologies emerged. We will then outline the landmarks of what is now often referred to as the 'German School' of functionalist translation theory: Katharina Reiss and functionalist translation criticism, Hans J. Vermeer's *Skopostheorie* and its extensions, Justa Holz-Mänttäri's theory of translational action, and a number of works oriented toward the use of functionalist methodology in translator training. The basic concepts of translational action and *Skopostheorie* will be analyzed in detail later on; this chapter is merely designed to give a chronological overview of authors and works.

Early Views

Functional approaches to translation were not invented in the twentieth century. Throughout history we find translators – mainly literary or Bible translators – observing that different situations call for different renderings. However, 'translation proper' is frequently associated with word-for-word fidelity to the source text, even though the result may not be considered appropriate for the intended purpose. Cicero (106-43 B.C.) described the dilemma as follows:

> If I render word for word, the result will sound uncouth, and if compelled by necessity I alter anything in the order or wording, I shall seem to have departed from the function of a translator. (*De optimo genere oratorum* v.14)

Many Bible translators have felt that the process of translating should involve both procedures: a faithful reproduction of formal source-text qualities in one situation and an adjustment to the target audience in another. Jerome (348-420) and Martin Luther (1483-1546) held the view that there are passages in the Bible where the translator must reproduce "even the word-order" (St. Jerome, *Letter to Pammachius*) or keep "to the letter" (Luther, *Circular Letter on Translation*, 1530); in other passages they believed it was more important "to render the sense" (St. Jerome) or to adjust the text to the target audience's needs and expectations.

In a similar vein, Eugene A. Nida (1964) distinguishes between formal

and dynamic equivalence in translation, 'formal equivalence' referring to a faithful reproduction of source-text form elements and 'dynamic equivalence' denoting equivalence of extralinguistic communicative effect:

> A translation of dynamic equivalence aims at complete naturalness of expression, and tries to relate the receptor to modes of behavior relevant within the context of his own culture; it does not insist that he understand the cultural patterns of the source-language context in order to comprehend the message. (Nida 1964:159)

In 'A Framework for the Analysis and Evaluation of Theories of Translation' (1976), Nida places special emphasis on the purpose of the translation, on the roles of both the translator and the receivers, and on the cultural implications of the translation process:

> When the question of the superiority of one translation over another is raised, the answer should be looked for in the answer to another question, 'Best for whom?'. The relative adequacy of different translations of the same text can only be determined in terms of the extent to which each translation successfully fulfills the purpose for which it was intended. In other words, the relative validity of each translation is seen in the degree to which the receptors are able to respond to its message (in terms of both form and content) in comparison with (1) what the original author evidently intended would be the response of the original audience and (2) how that audience did, in fact, respond. The responses can, of course, never be identical, for interlingual communication always implies some differences in cultural setting, with accompanying diversities in value systems, conceptual presuppositions, and historical antecedents. (1976:64f)

Nida calls his approach 'sociolinguistic'. However, when trying to apply it to translation in general, he suggests a three-stage model of the translation process. In this model, source-text surface elements (grammar, meaning, connotations) are analyzed as linguistic kernel or near-kernel structures that can be transferred to the target language and restructured to form target-language surface elements (cf. Nida 1976:75, also Nida and Taber 1969: 202f). This basically linguistic approach, whose similarity with Noam Chomsky's theory of syntax and generative grammar (1957, 1965) is not accidental, had more influence on the development of translation theory in Europe during the 1960s and 1970s than did the idea of dynamic equivalence.

A general focus on straight linguistics rather than dynamic functionalism is reflected in the importance Nida's work has been given in recent