



e-ISSN: 2630-6417

International Journal Of Social,  
Humanities And Administrative  
Sciences (JOSHAS JOURNAL)

Vol: 8  
Issue: 50  
Year: 2022  
pp  
319-323

Arrival  
02 December 2021  
Published  
27 March 2022

Article ID  
934  
Article Serial Number  
1

Doi Number  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.31589/JOSHAS.934>

How to Cite This Article  
Saridaki, E. (2022). "The Role Of  
The Translator As Ideological  
"Shaper" And "Mediator"",  
Journal Of Social, Humanities  
and Administrative Sciences,  
8(50):319-323.



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reviewed international journal.

## The Role Of The Translator As Ideological "Shaper" And "Mediator"

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### ABSTRACT

Translation like any linguistic activity shapes and is shaped by both individual and collective ideological beliefs. In Translation Studies, theoretical thought on the concept and the role of ideology has been neglected in relation to other domains of Humanistic Studies. The present study aims at exploring in depth the relation between translation and ideology and suggesting a theoretical model, that is Critical Discourse Analysis, as a tool for handling the ideologically loaded units of the original text (source text) in the translating process. To this end, a multidimensional theoretical approach to ideology has been adopted, investigating the relation of ideology to associated disciplines such as language, translation and ethics of translation. Furthermore, the paper focuses on the translation of media discourse given that this type of discourse bears a strong ideological loading. The main conclusion that has been drawn by the research is that any translation event is embedded in a sociocultural context bearing a certain ideology. Thus, the interpretation of the message the translator attempts to transmit depends to a large degree on the set of values and beliefs of the people involved in the translation event such as authors, translators and recipients of the translated product.

**Keywords:** ideological dimension of translation, ethics of translation, Critical Discourse Analysis, media discourse, techniques for translating ideological elements.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The complexity of the notion of ideology is widely accepted. In Humanistic Studies there have been different attitudes regarding the concept of ideology that could be summarized into two main trends: according to the first approach, ideology is considered as a system of symbolic representations, covering historical reality, legalizing power relations and the domination of one particular social class over the others. The above concept of ideology goes back to Marxism political thought where ideology concerns class interests serving political power. According to the second approach in which ideology is described in more neutral terms, ideology is defined as a structured system of ideas and attitudes covering every single aspect of reality. This is actually a sociologically-oriented approach according to which there can be no reality without any ideological elements while there has been no evaluation system regarding the correctness or not of each ideology. Van Dijk (2006: 729) describes ideology as "the foundation of the social representations shared by a social group", regulating how people perceive the world and what they regard as truth at a certain time at place.

The interconnectedness between language and ideology is undoubtful: Fairclough (1992) stresses that ideology is continually present in language, while Hodge and Kress (1993) believe that ideology presupposes a systematically organized representation of reality and every representation through language presupposes choice". Then, reality needs the linguistic system in order to be articulated and transmitted, and similarly every linguistic expression, no matter how neutral it is, contains a specific attitude of the world, that is ideological traits. Althusser (1984) acknowledges ideology's dominance by stressing that "there is no practice except by and in ideology". At this point, it should be stressed that, while every language system and consequently, every type of text, entails ideological elements, some types of text are most representative with respect to the ideological loading they contain such as political texts, religious texts and media discourse.

## 2. TRANSLATION AND IDEOLOGY

The close relationship between ideology and translation does not constitute recent phenomenon in the field of translation studies. Mason (2010: 86) presents ideology in the following terms: “the set of beliefs and values which inform an individual’s or institutions view of the world and assist their interpretation of events, facts and other aspects of experience”. Hatim and Ian Mason (1997) talk about the interactive relationship between ideology and translation distinguishing between ideology of translating and translation of ideology. In the first case, they refer to the translational orientation and the strategies to be used in the translating process, while in the second case they talk about translating ideologically sensitive texts such as political and religious texts.

Baumgarten differentiates between political and ideological strategies. Political translation strategies are those that are applied to the translation of texts dealing with political values and activities in an attempt to gain power. Ideological translation strategies, on the other hand, may be the result from unconscious mental dispositions and can be inferred according to Toury (1995) when one describes dominant translation norms that prevail certain periods of history.

According to Peter Fawcett in *Ideology and Translation* (Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies, 2001), deconstruction theory and cultural studies have brought to the foreground the issue of ideology and power relations in Translation Studies. This is the period of *Cultural Turn*, a term that was introduced by Mary Snell-Hornby in order to describe the theoretical movement that dominated in the 90’s of rejecting the linguistic approaches that prevailed until then, suggesting the integration of the cultural element in the study of literary translation. Among the issues the Cultural Turn brings into focus is feminism in translation, translation and colonialism as well as power and ideology relations in translation. Finally, the relationship between ideology and translation is also investigated in the collective volume *Apropos of Ideology. Translation Studies on Ideology. Ideologies in Translation Studies* (Maria Calzada Perez eds. 2003). Another significant work where texts with strong ideological orientation such as political texts and media discourse are analysed is *Political Discourse, Media and Translation* (Schaffner and Bassnett eds. 2010).

## 3. ETHICS AND IDEOLOGY

The ideological role of the translator is closely related to the notion of ethics in translation and the translator’s ethical behaviour. Dictionaries define “ethics” as systems of values that determine the “rightness and correctness” of our action. In the absence of a universal definition of “correctness” partial views are expressed in people’s attitudes about what they consider to be “correct” that are articulated in discourse, that is the language of social practice.

Then an ethics of translation is what is considered to be the morally “correct” manner in which the translator reproduces the original text. Traditionally, the translator’s ethical behaviour has been considered as “fidelity” towards the original and the author. Nabokov (2004: 12) stresses that the translator’s only duty is to reproduce with accuracy the text, and nothing but the text. There has certainly been some disagreement regarding what exactly it is in the text the translator should be faithful to. Schleiermacher (2002: 29) makes the distinction between “reader-to-author” and “author-to-reader” approaches to translation. In the first approach, translators feel their ethical duty is to bring the target audience close to the culture of the original text, respecting and maintaining the foreign elements of the original. In the second case, the translator feels his ethical duty is to create a translated text that seems like it was originally written in the target language and culture, bringing the author of the original text to the norms of the target culture and recipients.

Furthermore, according to the traditional view, ethical translators must accept that the texts they are asked to translate are not their own. In this respect, they must strive for “invisibility” which means that they must be ideologically neutral ensuring that they neither add or subtract anything in the original text. As it can be seen in the draft “Code of Professional Practice” found on the website of the Fédération Internationale des Traducteurs translators are asked to suppress their own opinion: “translators and interpreters shall carry out their work with complete impartiality and express any personal or political opinions in the course of the work”. However, the fact that translators are asked to decide whether to orient themselves towards the original or the target text implies by itself a certain ideological position.

Into the 20st century theorists began to pose the ethics of translation in a way that differs from the traditional one. Although ethics of translation is still discussed in the conventional terms of “fidelity” and “visibility” that means neutrality in the ideological approach of the text, Translation Studies adopts a critical attitude toward the demands imposed traditionally upon translators. Instead of the demand on the part of the society for translators to reproduce the text they are assigned to in a neutral manner, there has been an increasing emphasis since the later part of the 20st

century on the ideological intervention of translators and the “difference” they will inevitably produce through their personal ideological beliefs and attitudes.

Vermeer in the Skopos theory of translation, suggests that translators focus on what the translated text will be used for, that is the Skopos (purpose) of translation, that will be guiding the translator’s actions and strategies. Considering the fact that the two texts, the original (source text) and its translation (target text) may have different function and purpose, they may differ one another, something that used to be considered unethical according to the traditional view of what is ethical in translation.

The most important reworking of the notion of ethics came from postmodern philosophy and particularly from Jacques Derrida’s deconstruction theory, promoting a radical reconsideration of the traditional concept of ethics of translation. According to postmodern thought, the meaning of a text does not reside inside it but it is attributed via the act of interpretation. If translators accept the fact that the meaning of a text is always transformed via the process of interpretation, their ideological role changes by becoming “visible” in society, as they leave their personal traits in the text through the translation decisions they take. By becoming ideologically visible, they assume a more responsible role in society and they start reflecting realistically upon the relationship between the source and target text, as well as the relationship between the source and target culture. They must still take into account a number of rules and conventions in the translating process, however, they must evaluate and challenge them first, that is, assume an ideological role. Venuti introduces the “ethics of difference” (1999) addressing the question of how power influences what is considered to be “correct meaning and translation” and how translation serves as a tool of exercising either dominance or activism.

Into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there is more and more interest in considering ethics in a way that moves away from the traditional terms of “accuracy” and “fidelity” and towards a more complex approach that reconsiders the translator’s subjectivity and his role as ideological shaper in Translation Studies. Although there is no consensus in Translation Studies of what is the ethical duty of translators, Wyke believes that translators should participate in making their fundamental role more visible to society which often views the translator’s role with contempt or finds it hard to realize that translation does not merely transmit information but, most importantly, creates culture and civilization.

## **4. CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

### **4.1. Introduction**

The interaction between language and ideology has been the subject of study by language sciences, the social and political sciences as well as the pedagogical sciences since the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In our attempt to clarify the term “ideology” it is essential to describe a sociolinguistic model known as Critical Discourse Analysis that is used as a theoretical tool for locating the ideological elements of the original text (the source text) and evaluating the methodological approach to be adopted in the process of translating. Critical Discourse Analysis is an interdisciplinary approach that has accepted strong influence by various disciplines such as textlinguistics, anthropology, philosophy, literary studies, sociolinguistics, applied linguistics as well as pragmatics. It does not study language as a system but as a social phenomenon aiming to the understanding and finally to the demystification of power and ideology relations that exist in each form of written and oral communication. As van Dijk mentions (2005: 352), Critical Discourse Analysis came as a reaction to the dominating and formalistic theories that prevailed in the 60’s and 70’s worldwide.

### **4.2. Basic theoretical principles of Critical Discourse Analysis**

By the term “discourse” we mean both the oral and written expressions of language in their social context. Critical Discourse Analysis sees language as a form of social practice that is defined by social parameters. As a socially - oriented activity, discourse produces or regenerates power relations among social classes, ethnic and cultural groups and different genders.

Another important feature is its critical dimension, aiming not simply to analyze language in order to describe phenomena but, mostly, to awaken speakers by revealing to them the secret aspects of power and hegemony and gradually change society itself (Wodak & Meyer, 2001). Critical Discourse Analysis aims to demonstrate the social inequalities that are legalized by the use of expressions of the everyday language so that speakers realise the ideological schemata that are hidden behind these expressions. Its main concern is to investigate the linguistic structures that are used for reproducing power relations and social domination. Under these circumstances, terms such as “power”, “ideology”, “social class”. “hegemony” and “domination” are systematically examined irrespective of each theoretician’s orientation.

Critical Discourse Analysis is based on van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach according to which text analysis is suggested to be done in the following levels: firstly, analysis at macrostructural level in order to detect the various topics the text negotiates. Then the analysis is focused on microstructural level and the partial meanings of the text, especially the suggestive ones. At the next level, specific linguistic categories are analysed with emphasis to word order, syntactic structures, semantic choices e.t.c. At the last level, the analysis is centered on the context, that is the social, historic, politico-ideological conditions of the analysed discourse production.

Lastly, Critical Discourse Analysis attempts to highlight the interactive relationship between ideology, either conscious or subconscious, and the linguistic realisations, by investigating the expressive means, communication conditions and the historic moment that something is said or written.

In brief, the basic theoretical principles of Critical Discourse Analysis are the following:

- ✓ It is concerned with social problems
- ✓ Discourse constitutes an essential component both of society and civilization
- ✓ Discourse poses an effect on ideology
- ✓ Discourse possesses a historical dimension
- ✓ The relationship between text and society is indisputable
- ✓ Discourse analysis has hermeneutical and explanatory character
- ✓ Discourse is a form of social action

## 5. CASE STUDY: TRANSLATING MEDIA DISCOURSE

Media discourse by no means is considered to be "a simple articulation of words resulting in accuracy and consistency" (Charaudeau, 1988) owing to the multifunctionalism of media texts, meaning that beyond their informative function they are characterized by the operative function, as well. Therefore, a piece of news is expressed in completely different ways depending on the ideological beliefs of each journalist, the socio-historical framework, readers' expectations and other significant factors. Among language mechanisms that journalists apply is metaphorical language use, emotionally loaded words, suggestive discourse, alternation between colloquial and formal discourse e.t.c.

In recent years, Translation Studies more and more focuses its interest on news translation given the fact that each piece of news worldwide reaches local readers through the translation channel. However, according to Bielsa (2005: 2005) the important role of translation in the news production and transmission remains in the background, making the translation act invisible and creating the impression that information circulates unchangeable among different linguistic and cultural communities. However, in reality, information rarely remains unchangeable. According to Baker's research (2006), translation quite often differentiates the sequence of events' narration and each journalist description of a political event constitutes a form of contextualization that means transforming textual elements.

The concept of contextualization has been used by Schaffner and Bassnett (2010) in order to describe the transformations that are conducted in the process of transmitting a journalist text from one linguistic code to another. The term is used by Critical Discourse Analysis in order to describe the way in which social practices are articulated in discourse. Van Leeuwen and Wodak (1999: 96) mention that contextualization activates a process of transformation that is categorized in four types: deletion, rearrangement, substitution and addition.

In deletion, certain information of the message of the original text is omitted in the translated text. In rearrangement, emphasis is transposed over other point of the message. In the case of substitution, certain linguistic means are used such as nomination, metonymy, personalization in order to substitute some linguistic units of the original message or to describe an event. Finally, in addition there is introduction of comments by the translator who acts as the constructor of the new message, that either reinforce a certain attitude or degrade it.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The subject of the present paper has been the role of ideology in the translating process and the role of the translator as ideological "shaper" and "transmitter". The main goal is to sensitize readers on the status of ideology in the translating phenomenon as well as the methodological approaches to be adopted by the translator regarding the ideological loading of the text. The conclusions that have been drawn could be summarized as follows:

- ✓ Language is closely related to ideology and each linguistic expression, even the most ideologically innocent, can undertake an ideological dimension under certain communication circumstances.



- ✓ Critical Discourse Analysis provides a useful theoretical tool for locating the ideological loading both of the original as well as of the translated text, revealing its conscious and subconscious realizations.
- ✓ Critical Discourse Analysis studies discourse at microstructural and macrostructural level, as well as in relation to the particular socio-political conditions.
- ✓ The interaction between ideology and translation has been studied by various translation approaches having different subject of study (post-colonial approach, feminist approach, socio-cognitive approach e.t.c)
- ✓ In translating media, the main approaches that prevail are the following a: a. maintenance of the ideological loading of the original text, b. extinction of the ideological loading of the original text, c. strengthening of the ideological loading of the original text.
- ✓ The main factors taken into account in translating the ideological elements of a text are determined by extralinguistic factors such as the author's and the translator's ideological beliefs, readers' preferences, the political and historical conditions e.t.c.

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