Why is Philosophy Good for Translation Studies?

An Investigation of the Theoretical Assumptions Underlying Translation Studies[1]

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Abstract

As a research-based field, Translation Studies inevitably carries assumptions that are determined by its ontological, epistemological, and methodological positions towards the object of research, and thus shape its fundamental beliefs about the nature of translation and its methods of study. This article aims to identify these underlying assumptions in Translation Studies within the two dominant nodal discourses of "equivalence" and "norms" and emphasize the significance of a shift in the field's ontological, epistemological, and methodological perspectives, which led to a greater focus on cultural aspects. After briefly exploring the ontological and epistemological positions, this article delves into the key concepts within equivalence-dominated discourse and norm-dominated discourse in Translation Studies, specifically examining meaning, text, and translation, to uncover the fundamental theoretical assumptions associated with these discourses.

Keywords: epistemology, equivalence-dominated discourse, methodology, norm-dominated discourse, ontology, theoretical assumptions, translation studies

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1. Introduction

The research perspectives of Translation Studies (TS) were greatly transformed by the dominance of norm-oriented research. This shift expanded the scope of TS beyond the narrow focus on (inter)textual relations between source texts and target texts to encompass the correlation between texts and socio-cultural contexts (Hu, 2020). The cognitive aspects of translating, as a decision-making process, became embedded within the sociocultural and historical context of the translation event (Schäffner, 2010). This change also fostered a growing sociological interest in agents of translation, as well as issues of ideology, power, manipulation and responsibility (Chesterman, 2018). It considered the concept of translation as having no fixed identity, but relative, multiple identities, as they are always subject to different cultural-historical-literary contextual forces dependent upon the forces that govern the decision process at a particular time (Niranjana, 1992). It changed the definition of key terms, including translation. Translation was defined as a norm-governed behavior in a social, cultural, and historical situation. The question "what is translation?" was changed to "What exactly does translation mean in a given society?" (Lambert, 1995). Translation was conceived as a form of human behavior (a social practice), so the term norm now accounted for the socio-cultural dimension of translation (Karamitroglou, 2000). Translation was then seen as a complex transaction taking place in a communicative, socio-cultural context (Hermans, 1996). It involved elements of target cultural system (socio-literary norms) in the production of any translated text (Gentzler, 2001). Target language socio-cultural and historical constraints were considered the primary determinants of the translated message. It expanded the focus of Translation Studies from translation as product to a hierarchy of interrelated factors (constraints) that determine the translation product and, therefore, foregrounded the correlations and causal connections between linguistic features and sociocultural values (Chesterman, 2006).

Based on these observations, it is apparent that there are substantial differences between norm-oriented research and equivalence-oriented research perspectives. Crotty (2003) asserts that the rationale behind choosing and adhering to a particular research perspective is rooted in the assumptions about the nature of reality (ontology) and how one acquires knowledge (epistemology). In essence, scrutinizing the underlying research assumptions is essentially an inquiry into our theoretical perspective (Crotty, p. 2). As a research-based field, TS inevitably carries assumptions that are determined by its ontological and epistemological positions towards the object of research, and thus shape its fundamental beliefs about the nature of translation and its methods of study. This article aims to identify these underlying assumptions in TS within the two dominant nodal discourses of "equivalence" and "norms" and emphasize the significance of a shift in the field's ontological, epistemological, and methodological perspectives, which led to a greater focus on cultural aspects. After a brief examination of ontological and epistemological positions, this analysis delves into the key issues within equivalence-dominated discourse and norm-dominated discourse in TS. In particular, it explores concepts such as meaning, text, and translation to uncover the underlying theoretical assumptions associated with these discourses.

2. Theoretical Perspectives: Ontology and Epistemology

Two branches of philosophy, namely ontology and epistemology, play a significant role in shaping a researcher's assumptions towards the object of study. These branches of philosophy, which deal with the nature of reality and how one acquires knowledge, give rise to different theoretical perspectives, as will be discussed later in this paper. A theoretical perspective encompasses "a system of generalized views of the world," that shapes beliefs and guides research actions (Moon & Blackman, 2014, p. 4). It is "the philosophical stance informing the methodology and thus providing a context for the process and grounding its logic and criteria." (Crotty, 2003, p. 3). The significance of philosophical perspectives lies

in their ability to expose the underlying assumptions researchers hold regarding their studies. By bringing these assumptions to the forefront, philosophical perspectives inform the decisions researchers make regarding the objectives, structure, approaches, and techniques employed in their research, as well as the analysis and interpretation of data. (Moon & Blackman, 2017).
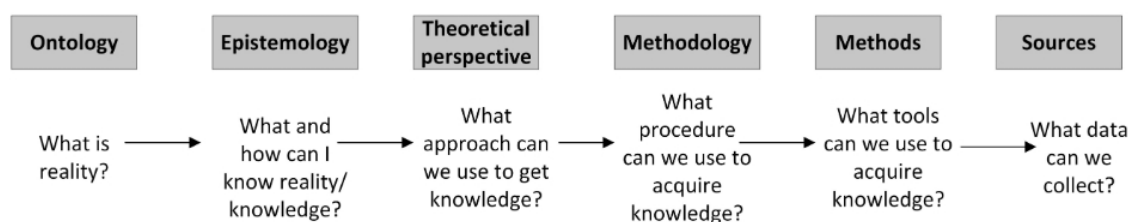

Figure 1. How ontology and epistemology shape our theoretical perspective (Patel, 2015)

2.1. Ontology

Ontology refers to the underlying beliefs about the nature of reality. It is the study of "being" and is concerned with "what is," i.e., the nature of existence and structure of reality as such (Crotty, 2003), or "what" it is possible to know about the world. Jupp (2006, p. 202) defines ontology as "a concept concerned with the existence of, and relationship between, different aspects of society such as social actors, cultural norms and social structures... Ontological issues are concerned with questions pertaining to the kinds of things that exist within society". Ontological assumptions about reality shape the way researchers view and study their research objects (Saunders et al., 2019). According to Moon and Blackman (2014, p. 4), the questions related to ontology involve: "What truth claims can a researcher make about reality? Who decides the legitimacy of what is real? How do researchers deal with different and conflicting ideas of reality?"

Many ontological positions exists (see table 1). However, realism and relativism are often used as a dichotomy to illustrate these different perspectives. As Moon and Blackman (2014) observe, realist ontology posits that one single objective reality exists that can be studied, understood, and experienced as "truth".

Realists believe in the existence of a real world independent of human experience. Relativist ontology, on the other hand, holds that reality is constructed within the human mind, such that no one true reality exists; instead, reality is perceived as relative to each individual's subjective experience within a particular time and place (Moon & Blackman, 2014).

The degree of confidence in defining the nature of reality differs within broad ontological positions. Moving from the realist ontology to the relativist ontology, it can be seen that the realist ontologies become more accommodating of the notion that, although a single reality exists, its nature is not static and can change as human understanding evolves (Moon and Blackman, 2014). Relativists, on the other hand, argue that reality exists within the mind, with each individual creating their own version. However, even within relativism, there are different positions. Some relativists believe that one shared reality can exist according to a particular position, but this reality can be different when considered from an alternative position. Some others argue that reality is mentally constructed by individuals. Realities are considered to be mutable due to their inherent susceptibility to historical and cultural influences, rather than being immutable truths of any sort. Moreover, varying interpretations of identical phenomena have surfaced and persist throughout different periods and locations (Crotty, 2003).

Understanding ontological positions is important in translation research, as it influences how researchers approach their object of study. Realists would seek to identify and define translators and their motivations assuming that decision-making processes around translation represent universal truths and predictable outcomes that can be established through scientific methods; therefore, they try to identify the generalizable properties of translation or characteristics of translators to infer causal relationships. In contrast, relativists ascribe a greater role to emotions, cultural background, social norms, and experience. They presume individuals make

decisions in complex, contextually dependent and potentially unpredictable ways. They would, for example, conduct a more detailed investigation of context, exploring who translates and what economic, political and social contexts shape the nature of translation activities. They anticipate multiple interpretations of translating that cannot be easily analyzed into discrete elements, embracing the complexity of the system rather than attempting to separate the object of research into its component parts. Relativist research typically attempts to uncover a translator's knowledge, values, and beliefs that frame how they view the world, and how they are affected by socio-cultural constrains that shape their translation and translating strategies.

2.2. Epistemology

Epistemology, in general, refers to the assumptions we make about the kind or nature of knowledge (Richards, 2003) and "how" it is possible to find out about the world (Snape & Spencer, 2003). Crotty (2003) describes epistemology as a way of looking at the world and making sense of it, involving knowledge, and necessarily embodying a certain understanding of what that knowledge entails. Epistemology deals with the "nature" of knowledge, its possibility (what knowledge is possible and can be attempted and what is not), and its scope and legitimacy. Epistemology is concerned with all aspects of validity, scope, and methods of acquiring knowledge. According to Moon and Blackman (2014, p. 5), the questions associated with the epistemological positions are: "What constitutes a knowledge claim? How knowledge can be produced or acquired? How the extent of its applicability can be determined?"

Epistemology is important to Translation Studies because it influences how researchers frame their research in their attempt to discover knowledge. For example, Translation researchers may question whether human knowledge is an objective entity that can be identified with certainty, or if knowledge is influenced by values and subjectivity? The answer to this question will significantly influence how researchers conduct and interpret their research (Crotty 2003).

Various epistemological positions exists (see table 1). However, objectivism and subjectivism are commonly used as a dichotomy to illustrate these different positions. Objectivist epistemology assumes that reality exists independently, or outside, of the individual mind, and can be discovered objectively, and that "truth" is empirically verifiable, valid, generalizable, and independent of social thought and social conditions (Crotty, 2003). To sum up, objectivist researchers strive for detachment from their subjects, and keep their interests, values, or interpretation from influencing the generation of knowledge. They seek methods to test reality by collecting and analyzing evidence to explore assertions, support claims, and provide correspondence with the real world. Ultimately, objectivists posit that "people can rationally come to know the world as it really is; the facts of the world are essentially there for study" (Pratt, as cited in Moon and Blackman, 2014).

Subjectivist epistemology, on the other hand, rejects the idea of an objective truth waiting to be discovered. It holds that knowledge depends on individual perception and understanding of reality (see table 1). Thus, reality is seen as "pluralistic, i.e., reality can be expressed in a range of symbol and language systems, and plastic, i.e., reality is stretched and shaped to fit the purposes of individuals" (Moon and Blackman, 2014, p. 6). People impose meaning and value on the world and interpret it in a way that makes sense to them (Crotty 2003). Whereas the motto of objectivism might be *seeing is believing*, the motto of subjectivism might be *believing determines what is seen* (Pratt, as cited in Moon and Black, 2014). Subjectivism focuses on correspondence with the inner, rather than the outer, world and attempts to understand the knowledge, interests, purposes, and values of individuals; the meanings that constitute an action are as important as the action itself (Schwandt, as cited in Moon and Blackman, 2014). It rejects the idea of separability of subject and object, observer and observed, and mind and world, recognizing instead that perception is influenced by individuals' purpose and interest.

A hypothetical example of literary translation can illustrate these two different epistemological positions. Imagine researchers who hold different epistemological positions would seek to acquire knowledge about why people translate in different ways. An objectivist would focus on objective reality by studying the behavior of individuals and reducing the causes of translation behavior into a discrete set of (testable) ideas. The subjectivist, on the other hand, would focus on interpretation and seek to understand what translation means to different individuals, to determine how believable and widely held those meanings are, and how these meanings correspond and align with different levels of experience. The value of subjectivist research is in revealing how an individual's experience shapes their perception of the world. A subjectivist approach would likely explore emotion, values and worldviews. Subjectivist research, therefore, provides important insight into the factors that contribute to individual translation behavior.

The table below presents the key inquiries that arise within each assumption type, along with the responses provided by the two extremes viewpoints.

Table 1: Assumption types and central questions

Theoretical Assumptions			
Assumption type	**Questions**	**Two Extremes**	
		Realism	**Relativism**
Ontology	What is the nature of reality? What is the world like? What exists in the human world that we can acquire knowledge about?	Real	Nominal/decided by convention
		External	Socially constructed
		One true reality	Multiple realities
		Universalism	Relations
		Things	Processes
		Order	Chaos
Assumption type	**Questions**	**Two Extremes**	
		Objectivism	**Subjectivism**
Epistemology	How can we know what we know? What is considered acceptable knowledge? What constitutes good-quality data? What kinds of contribution to knowledge can be made? How do we create knowledge?	Assumptions of the natural sciences apply	Assumptions of the arts and humanities apply
		Facts	Opinions
		Numbers	Written, spoken and visual accounts
		Observable phenomena	Attributed meanings
		Law-like generalization	Individuals and contexts, specifics

2.3. Methodology

Methodology serves as a contextual framework for research, a coherent and logical scheme based on views, beliefs, and values that inform the decisions made by researchers (Kara, 2015). It comprises the theoretical analysis of the various methods and principles associated with a specific branch of knowledge.

2.4. The Relationship between ontology, epistemology, methodology

The ontological position of the researcher can influence the nature of the research itself; the epistemological position can serve to validate the legitimacy of different types of knowledge; the methodological perspective can shape the researcher's choice of methods and affect interpretation, communication, and application of the research findings.
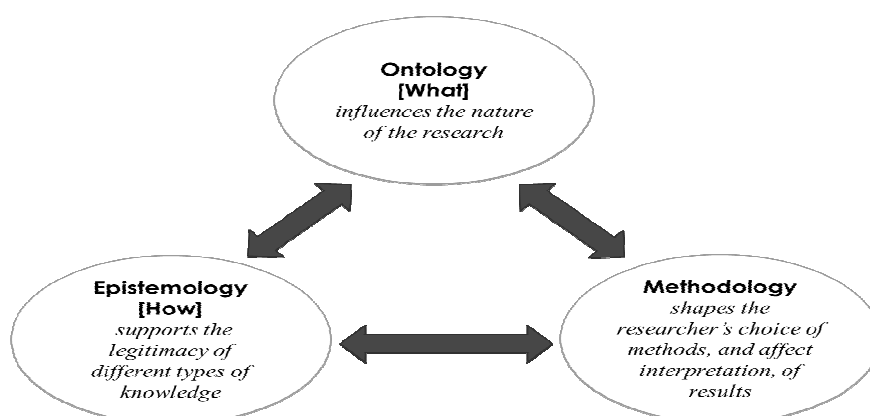
Figure 1: The Relationship between ontology, epistemology, and methodology

2.5. Theoretical perspective

Theoretical perspectives represent a system of values to which individuals adhere (Moon and Blackman, 2014). These perspectives play a vital role in the field of Translation Studies as a research field, as they shed light on the underlying assumptions that researchers bring to their investigations (Crotty 2003). Thus, theoretical perspectives can be regarded as a framework of assumptions that structure the overall approach to research.

These theoretical assumptions are underpinned by ontological and epistemological orientations, influencing how researchers create knowledge and derive meaning from their data. The theoretical perspectives of researchers have a profound impact on various aspects of the research process, including the choice of the object of study, purpose, design, methodology, and methods of research as well as data analysis and interpretation (Moon and Blackman, 2014).

Numerous generalized theoretical perspectives exist, some of which can also be viewed as, and interchanged with, epistemological or ontological positions. For example, positivism serves as both an epistemological position and a theoretical perspective that adopts an objectivist standpoint, asserting that accurate and true knowledge can only be attained through the scientific method (Crotty 2003). According to positivism, valid knowledge is driven solely from objective empirical observations experienced through the senses and carried out according to the scientific method (Crotty 2003). Similarly, postpositivism is an epistemological position and a theoretical perspective that also upholds an objectivist stance, but recognizes that humans can never know reality perfectly. From postpositivist perspective, scientists should strive to falsify, rather than verify, their theories or laws (Crotty 2003).

Table 2: Social science research guide consisting of ontology, epistemology, and theoretical perspectives (Moon & Blackman, 2017)

1.0 Ontology: What exists in the human world that we can acquire knowledge about?				
Realism one reality exists			Relativism Multiple realities exists	
1.1 Naïve Realism Reality can be understood using appropriate methods	1.2 Structural Realism Reality is described by scientific theory, but its underlying nature remains uncertainty	1.3 Critical Realism Reality captured by broad critical examination	1.4 Bounded Relativism Mental constructions of reality are equal in space and time within boundaries (cultural, moral, cognitive,..)	1.5 Relativism Realities exist as multiple, intangible mental constructions; no reality beyond subjects
2.0 Epistemology: How do we create knowledge?				
2.1 Objectivism Meaning exists within an object: an objective reality exists in an object independent of the subject		2.2 Constructionism Meaning created from interplay between the subject and object: subject constructs reality of object		2.3 Subjectivism Meaning exists within the subject: subject imposes meaning on an object
3.0 Theoretical perspective: What is the philosophical orientation of the researcher that guides their action/research? Knowledge acquisition is deductive, value-free, generalizable ⟷ Knowledge acquisition is inductive, value-laden, contextually unique Application: to predict				
3.1 Positivism Natural science methods (posit, observe, derive logical truths) can be applied to the social sciences				
3.2 Post-positivism Multiple methods are necessary to identify a valid belief because all methods are imperfect				
3.3 Structuralism: The source of meaning comes from the formal structure found in language and can apply to all aspects of human culture Application: to understand				
	3.4 (Social) Constructivism: Meaning making of reality is an activity of the individual mind			
	3.5 Interpretivism: Natural science methods cannot apply to social sciences; Interpretations of reality are culturally derived and historically situated			
3.5.a Hermeneutics Hidden meaning (of language) exists in texts, practices, events and situations, beneath apparent ones	3.5b Phenomenology The essence of human experience of phenomena is only understood when the researcher separates their own experiences		3.5c Symbolic Interactionism The researcher must take the position of those researched (interaction) by sharing language and other tools (symbols)	
Application: to emancipate or liberate	3.6 Critical theory: Research and theory should be used to change situations (focuses on power relations, critiques assumptions and evolves)			
	3.6a Emancipatory The subjects of social inquiry should be empowered	3.6b Advocacy of Participatory Politics and political agendas should be accounted for	3.6c Feminism The world is patriarchal and the culture it inherits is masculine	
Application: to deconstruct	3.7 Post-structuralism: Different languages and discourses divide the world and give it meaning			
	3.8 Post-modernism: Truth claims are socially constructed to serve interests of particular groups; methods are equally distrusted; might not be possible to arrive at any conclusive definition of reality			
Application: Any or all				
3.9 Pragmatism: All necessary approaches should be used to understand research problems				

The following table (adapted from Moon & Blackman, 2014) provides examples of research questions and their associated assumptions within the context of our hypothetical case of literary translation. It illustrates the various research approaches that can be adopted based on different theoretical perspectives concerning the system being studied.

Theoretical perspective	Research question	Researcher's assumption
Structuralism	What is the purpose of the (social) structural relationships in this community (e.g., social classes, governments) and how do they influence translation practices?	Once I can understand the systematic structure (through understanding objects, concepts, ideas, and words as they relate to one another) of social classes and relationships, I can generalize the knowledge and apply it to all aspects of human culture (in space and time).
Constructivism	What currently motivates individuals in this community to translate?	I know that each individual defines and frames problems in their own way, and these differences must be understood to evaluate the system.
Hermeneutics	Why do individuals not stop translating when they said they would?	I can interpret the (hidden) meanings of a text or event from the perspective of the author or participant within its social and historical context.
Phenomenology	Why do people translate?	I believe researchers can put their own systems of meaning (of reality) aside and interpret the immediate personal experience of a phenomenon and thus give rise to a new, refreshed, or richer meaning of the phenomenon.
Symbolic interactionism	How do different individuals' descriptions, definitions, and metaphors of the texts affect translation outcomes in this community?	I believe that the meaning of objects arises out of social interaction (language) between people and that people interact with and interpret objects on the basis of the meanings those objects have. People are conscious of their role in interaction (thought) and can change their behavior.
Emancipatory	How can we ensure that the community shares in the benefits of translation or alternatives to translation?	I want to create a mutual interdependence between the research participants and to transform structures that exploit people.
Advocacy or participatory	How can we garner support and develop effective governance structures to enable sustainable livelihoods in community?	I want to collaborate with the people in the system, rather than conduct research on them, to create an agenda for active change or political reform.
Feminism	Does examining translations from a feminist perspective offer alternative understandings of the dynamics and power relations among and between the stakeholders?	I believe translating is a masculine activity and reflects a patriarchal world and culture. Exploring translation solely from a traditional scientific (i.e., non-feminist) perspective limits opportunities to understand behavior and create change.
Poststructuralism	What are the narrative structures within this system that describe how a translation debate has arisen in this historical context?	I need to understand not only what the system appears to be, but also how it emerges from the history and culture of the people that comprise the system. In understanding the history and culture, I can come to understand whether or not what I have learned about this system can be applied to other systems.
Postmodernism	Why is it assumed that translation is a problem?	I am skeptical of approaches to generating knowledge and want to scrutinize, contest, deconstruct, and make visible the (invisible) origins, assumptions, and effects of meaning.

Table 3: Research questions and their associated assumptions as they apply to the hypothetical case of literary translation under different theoretical perspectives

3. Turns and Shift of Theoretical Assumptions in TS

An examination of the theoretical positions of linguistic approaches in the 1960s and 1970s alongside the descriptive and cultural approaches in the 1980s and 1990s reveals a significant shift in the ontological and epistemological positions. This shift highlights that the "turn" in TS research during the 1980s and 1990s involved a shift in ontological and epistemological perspectives from a principally essentialist, positivist, and prescriptive theoretical position to a principally relativist, postpositivist, and descriptive theoretical position. As discussed by Amiri & Farahzad (2021), this shift was primarily influenced by the introduction of new theories into the field of TS and replacement of the existing dominant discourses within the field with new ones.

Amiri and Farahzad (2021) posit that the two dominant discourse of "equivalence" and "norms" gradually underwent a radical transformation in TS. Previously considered as mere objects of study, they have now become hypothetical constructs utilized to explore various translation phenomena. Equivalence-oriented approaches have historically focused on the linguistic aspects of translation, delving into the essence of translation in connection to language. These approaches extensively investigate linguistic asymmetries present at the translation interface, the language-specific characteristics of meaning impacting translation, and the overall dynamics of communication and its interplay with the constraints of translation. Consequently, these approaches tend to define the boundaries of the linguistic aspects involved in the translator's endeavor. However, norm-oriented approaches primarily concentrate on investigating the intertexts and contexts, and examine the connections between translated texts and literary traditions, as well as the relationships between translations and their cultural, social, and historical environments.
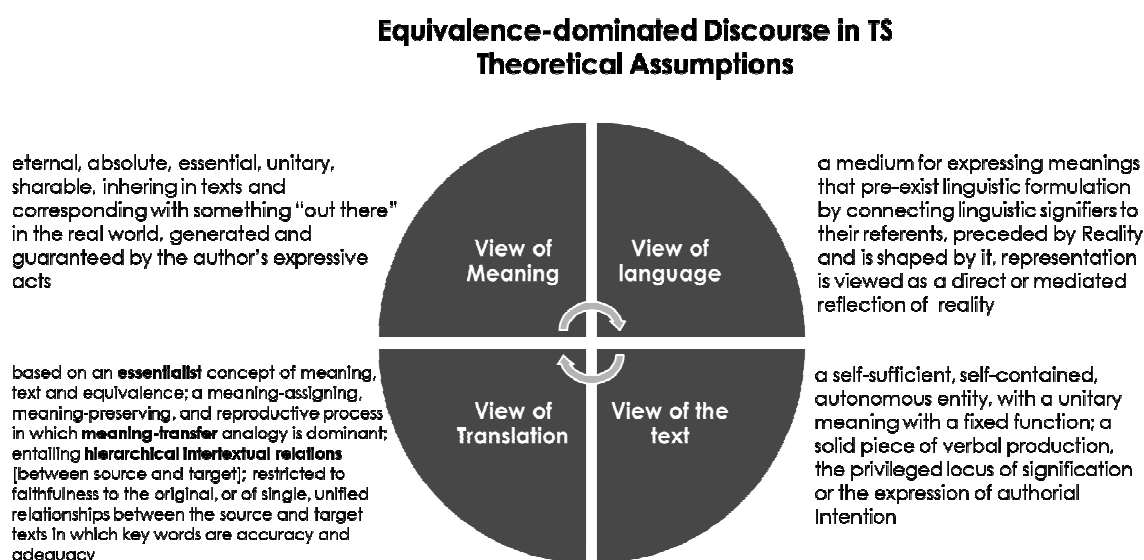
To uncover the theoretical stances of the two dominant approaches to research in TS, the key concepts of meaning, text, and translation within the frameworks of equivalence and norms that prevailed under the dominant discourses at the time will be briefly explored.

3.1. Equivalence-dominated Discourse in TS: Theoretical Assumptions

Assuming that objective reality, one true reality, and universalism are the key concepts underlying realism, we can assert that the equivalence-dominated position toward meaning, text, and translation is essentially realist. The realist position generally focuses on the objective existence of meaning within texts and the potential for accurate translation. Realists often emphasize the idea that texts carry meaning that exists independently of individual interpretations, and that this meaning can be accurately conveyed through translation. They may view translation as a process of capturing and conveying the original meaning of a text as faithfully as possible, recognizing that variations in language and culture can present challenges but aiming for an accurate representation of the original message. They argue that language is a tool for representing reality and that translators should strive to convey the original meaning of a text as accurately as possible without introducing personal biases or interpretations. Overall, realists tend to approach meaning, text, and translation from a perspective that emphasizes the objective existence and communicable nature of meaning.

According to this perspective, meaning is perceived as residing within the textual structure (Sakellariou, 2014). It is often regarded as eternal, absolute and essential, unitary in nature, and capable of being shared among competent readers (Locke, 2004). Meaning inheres in texts and corresponds with something "out there" in the real world, a tangible reality beyond the text itself. It is believed to be created through the expressive acts of the author and guaranteed by their intention (Sakellariou, 2014). Text is viewed as a self-sufficient, self-contained, autonomous entity. It is understood as a textual entity with a unitary meaning, and a fixed function. It is a solid piece of verbal production (Farahzad, 2021) serving as the privileged locus of signification and the expression of authorial intention. Translation is approached from an essentialist concept of meaning, text and equivalence. It is perceived as an essentially reproductive process of assigning and preserving

meaning, a process in which meaning-transfer analogy is dominant. It entails hierarchical intertextual relations between source and target (Sakellariou, 2020), restricted to faithfulness to the original, or of single, unified relationship between the source and target texts in which key words are accuracy and adequacy.

Equivalence-dominated Discourse in TS
Theoretical Assumptions

eternal, absolute, essential, unitary, sharable, inhering in texts and corresponding with something "out there" in the real world, generated and guaranteed by the author's expressive acts

View of Meaning

View of language

a medium for expressing meanings that pre-exist linguistic formulation by connecting linguistic signifiers to their referents, preceded by Reality and is shaped by it, representation is viewed as a direct or mediated reflection of reality

based on an **essentialist** concept of meaning, text and equivalence; a meaning-assigning, meaning-preserving, and reproductive process in which **meaning-transfer** analogy is dominant; entailing **hierarchical intertextual relations** [between source and target]; restricted to faithfulness to the original, or of single, unified relationships between the source and target texts in which key words are accuracy and adequacy

View of Translation

View of the text

a self-sufficient, self-contained, autonomous entity, with a unitary meaning with a fixed function; a solid piece of verbal production, the privileged locus of signification or the expression of authorial intention

Principally essentialist (realist), positivist, and prescriptive with text analysis as the dominant method of inquiry into the hierarchical (inter)textual relationships

Figure 2: Equivalence-dominated discourse in TS, theoretical assumptions

3.2. Norm-dominated Discourse in TS Theoretical Assumptions

Assuming that socially constructed reality, multiple realities, and relativeness are the key concepts underlying relativism, we can assert that the norm-dominated position toward meaning, text, and translation is essentially relativist. From a relativist perspective, meaning, text, and translation are approached in a manner that accounts for the diverse cultural, historical, and contextual influences that shape their interpretation. Relativism suggests that meanings are not absolute or fixed, but rather contingent upon specific cultural and individual contexts. The interpretation of meaning is influenced by social, historical, and linguistic factors, as well as the subjective experiences and perspectives of individuals within their respective cultural

frameworks. Relativists emphasize the significance of understanding meanings within their specific cultural and historical contexts, and they acknowledge the diversity of interpretations that may arise across different cultures and societies. Relativism holds that texts are embedded within particular cultural, historical, and social contexts, and their meanings and interpretations are shaped by these contexts. Relativists view texts as products of specific cultural and historical conditions, and they emphasize the need to approach texts with an awareness of the cultural and historical factors that inform their creation and reception. Additionally, relativism encourages the consideration of multiple perspectives and interpretations when engaging with textual material. It acknowledges that translation involves more than just linguistic conversion—it also requires an understanding of the cultural and contextual underpinnings of the source and target languages. Relativists recognize the challenges of accurately conveying culturally specific meanings and nuances across different languages and cultural frameworks. They emphasize the importance of considering the cultural and historical contexts in which texts are situated when translating them, and they value the contributions of translators who are sensitive to these contextual elements.
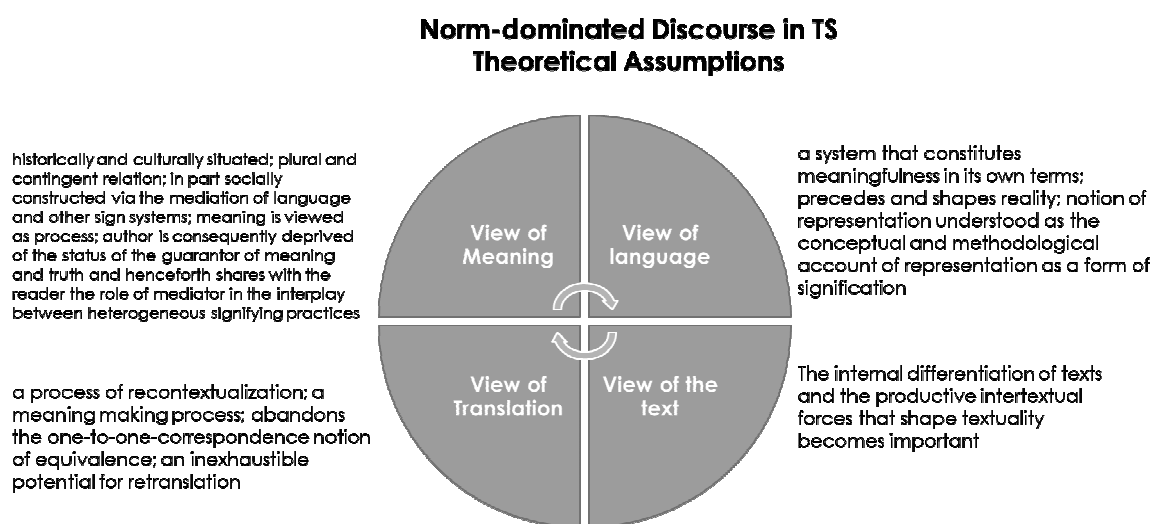
According to this perspective, meaning is viewed as historically and culturally situated. It is socially constructed via the mediation of language and other sign systems, so it is seen as an ongoing process (Locke, 2004). It is regarded as a plural and contingent relation (Venuti, 2008). Consequently, the author no longer holds the exclusive status of the guarantor of meaning and truth, and henceforth shares with the reader the role of mediator in the interplay between heterogeneous signifying practices (Sakellariou, 2014). The recognition of internal differentiation of texts and the productive intertextual forces that shape textuality becomes important, leading to the view that texts are inherently unstable (Sakellariou, 2020). The linguistic features of texts are no longer the central issue, but their function. The text is viewed as embedded within a specific situational context, which is itself

conditioned by its sociocultural background. Similarly, the text is not a static and isolated linguistic fragment, but rather as dependent on its reception by the reader, and is inextricably linked to the extra-linguistic situation in which it is embedded. It is, therefore, "part of a world-continuum" (Snell-Hornby, 2006, p. 52). Text is thus relativized. A text is never totally autonomous; the text is always already involved in a multitude of relationships with other elements of other systems. Texts are not studied as entities in themselves but rather "for what they can reveal with respect to choices, the process which gave rise to them, i.e. the *choices* made by the translators and *constraints* under which these choices were made" (Toury, as cited in Karamitroglou, 2000, p. 13). Translation is no longer viewed as a mere textual activity based solely on the linguistic features of the source text. Instead, it is perceived as deeply embedded in and influenced by the context of its production within the target culture. It is conceived of as a process of recontextualization (Farahzad, 2008). Translation is considered to be dependent on its function as a text "implanted" in the target culture, offering the choice of either preserving the original function of the source text, or adapting it to meet the specific needs of the target culture (Snell-Hornby, 2006). The one-to-one-correspondence notion of equivalence is abandoned, acknowledging the inexhaustible potential for retranslation (Sakellariou, 2020). Translation is understood as "one of the many forms in which works of literature are 'rewritten,' and is one of many 'rewritings'" (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1990).

This position toward meaning, text, and translation is essentially relativist. The relativist position toward meaning, text, and translation tends to emphasize subjective interpretation and cultural context. Relativists often argue that meaning is not fixed or universal, but rather shaped by individual perspectives and cultural frameworks. They view texts as open to multiple valid interpretations, with meaning being contingent on the context and background of the reader or translator. In the field of translation, relativists may advocate for a focus on conveying the essence of

the original text within the cultural and linguistic framework of the target audience rather than aiming for a strict, word-for-word equivalence. Overall, the relativist position tends to prioritize the importance of cultural and contextual factors in shaping meaning and the interpretive process.

Norm-dominated Discourse in TS
Theoretical Assumptions

historically and culturally situated; plural and contingent relation; in part socially constructed via the mediation of language and other sign systems; meaning is viewed as process; author is consequently deprived of the status of the guarantor of meaning and truth and henceforth shares with the reader the role of mediator in the interplay between heterogeneous signifying practices

a system that constitutes meaningfulness in its own terms; precedes and shapes reality; notion of representation understood as the conceptual and methodological account of representation as a form of signification

View of Meaning

View of language

View of Translation

View of the text

a process of recontextualization; a meaning making process; abandons the one-to-one-correspondence notion of equivalence; an inexhaustible potential for retranslation

The internal differentiation of texts and the productive intertextual forces that shape textuality becomes important

Principally anti-essentialist (relativist), postpositivist, constructivist, descriptive and empirical with case studies as the dominant method of inquiry into the relationships of texts and contexts

Figure 3: Norm-dominated discourse in TS, theoretical assumptions

4. Conclusion

Drawing from the categorization presented here, the theoretical assumptions of the equivalence-dominated approaches and norms-dominated approaches can be briefly summed up as follows: The equivalence-dominated discourses in Translation Studies are primarily grounded in a realist (essentialist) perspective, adopting a positivist, and prescriptive stance, with text analysis as the dominant method of inquiry into the hierarchical (inter)textual relationships. The norm-dominated discourses in Translation Studies are primarily grounded in a relativist (anti-essentialist) perspective, adopting a postpositivist, descriptive and empirical stance, with case studies as the dominant method of inquiry into the relationships of texts and contexts.

These shifts indicate that the "object of research" has changed and the horizon has expanded to encompass new areas of research. This was possible only

when the theoretical assumptions within the field of TS underwent substantial transformation.

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