Bulletin of the *Transilvania* University of Braşov • Vol. 3 (52) – 2010
Series IV: Philology and Cultural Studies

TRANSCENDING TRANSLATION BOUNDARIES AND LIMITATIONS

Laura SASU*

Abstract: *This paper dwells upon the basic issues concerning the definition of translation as a process subjected to several, serious limitations. It briefly outlines the currently obsolete approach deeming some communicational acts as impossible to translate, while simultaneously providing theoretical arguments as well as practical incentives for transcending the so-called limitations towards perceiving any communicational act as susceptible to effective, efficient, accurate translation into any target language hereby attempting to clearly establish the coordinates for the translation methodology and practice.*

Keywords: *translation limitations, translation impossibility, message equivalence, communicational acts.*

1. Introduction

Translating means rendering a message by different words and by means of a different language in a different language, the possibility of such activity being implied by the possibility of rendering a message by different words in the same language. Hence, any definition and interpretation disregarding this postulate of bilingual synonymy is unacceptable, as can be easily noticed with linguistics theoreticians who, unable themselves to translate and entirely against applied linguistics, claim translation is at times impossible. It is this paper's aim to disqualify the rather harsh and certainly incorrect term "impossible" in its use as an attribute for the term "translation", now - in the 21st century especially because of the increasing trends of internationalisation, globalisation, whereas an increased necessity for communication results hereby merely as a logical consequence. Impossible? Now, that international statistics record an impressive and constantly increasing number of translations of the various types of materials worldwide?

The theoretical possibility of translation is scientifically confirmed by the universality of linguistic categories: all languages consist of a number of more or less universal categories. Languages differ in the manner of applying and combining these categories, and it is not unimportant to keep track of these differences when translating.

"However, if there are differences between the thinking processes of speakers of different languages these should be attributed to cultural and education gaps rather than to language differences" (Carroll 195).

Given the objective existence of translations, there is an urgent demand for a new translation methodology and theory as a domain subordinated to applied

* Foreign Language Department, *Transilvania* University of Braşov.

BDD-A20219 © 2010 Transilvania University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 00:55:07 UTC)

linguistics, intended to erase or at least to shift the boundaries and limitations so far set by translation theorists regarding the recently emerging terminology, linguistic comprehension and cultural barriers that may result in communication failure in most situations.

All these are to be subdued by means of terminology and translation theory and practice, starting at the premises that translation may be a straightforward or complex but not a possible or impossible endeavour.

Many deeply rooted cultural, communicational, and linguistic differences in all terminologies exist, despite of the ever expanding tendencies towards standardisations, nevertheless it is the task of the translator, and the translating activity in general, to exclude this communicational hindrance by providing a good translation, that is by rendering into the target language at highest fidelity attainable the contents of an idea as well as the logical and the emotional structure of the original in the source language.

2. Scope, Aim and Purpose of Translation Endeavours

For a strict outline of the function and purpose as well as of the practical application scope of translation (be it into one or parallel into multiple languages), it is of utmost importance to clearly emphasise the ultimate goal of translation from a functional point of view, namely that the communication rendered in the target language should have the same effect upon the receiving party as that of the original, whereas by means of language discipline it should not be identifiable as a translation, therefore it should be rendered as similar as possible to the natural means of expressing the idea in the target language, of course without causing hereby any substantial amendment or alteration to the idea nucleus of the original. All evolution undergone by humanity along its history can be, in a wider perspective, traced back to one single fundamental principle - communication. Currently all evolution undergone by humanity along its recent history can be, in focussed perspective, traced back to a second fundamental principle - international communication – that is ultimately nothing else but translation. Translation has become the key medium of communication in modern age and can not be simply ignored by slothful approaches such as dismissing the possibility of translation on linguistic grounds. There is no such thing and there should be no such thing tolerated in modern applied linguistics and translation studies.

3. Philosophical and Mathematical Interferences with Functional Translation Theories

Relating to one of the current trends in this field, the essence of translation triggers indeed “interpretations of the core as different as those regarding the essence of language itself” (Guttingen 37), however, it can not and should not be limited to the binary polarity of mathematics: possible or impossible as thinkers such as Martha Nussbaum, Michel Foulcault or Jean- Luc Nancy attempted to coin “its relation to the perpetual interplay of possibility and impossibility”(Tuedio 5).

There should be further options left for digressive solutions in any translation act; there should be a rather analogue approach with a multitude of values in between the 1s and 0s of translation, values such as approximately, roughly, predominantly versus the currently obsolete digital approach of translation

BDD-A20219 © 2010 Transilvania University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 00:55:07 UTC)

theory of just two values expressed in two digits 1 or 0, possible versus impossible, exact versus inexact.

4. Necessity for Standardisation in Functional Translation Theory and Methodology

Each text, subjected to translation contains communicative patterns, resulting form that specific culture that differ therefore from one community to another. The communicative challenge of translating is that of rendering a solution to the above mentioned difference between the source language and the target language. Translating may be thus defined as a "bilingual communicative act" (Reiss 120), not a purely linguistic operation, in a restrictive sense of a language activity, but a complex communication operation, in the extended sense of a cultural activity.

"With translations, it is not solely about language phenomena, a translation is rather a cultural, and hereinafter a language transfer process." (Reiss and Vermeer 122) It becomes obvious that successful, flexible translation methods imply the effort of translating on a new, adapted pattern, to the extent that provides the conditions to arouse interest and involvement in an active manner stimulating creativity and resourcefulness as well as emphasizing the translating activity as one method of actually bringing theory closer to practice.

At this point some general notes on text typology are necessary. The criteria of devising a theoretical text typology are quite different: the differentiation criteria regard pragmatics, speaking act theory, communication theory. They are to be taken into consideration as well as the attempt of combining text-internal and text-external components. The purpose of such activity is not at all to describe particular texts, but to examine general textual conditions, such as syntactic, semantic and pragmatic text dimensions, text extension, text delimitation, and text coherence.

Factors particularly relevant for translation purposes are those regarding text and language functions, consisting in a translation oriented classification into several groups, such as meaning emphasis of a text (which can be identified in many texts like technical texts, comments, reports etc.), form emphasis of a text (such as there can be identified in expression text types as novels, poetry, drama) and operational emphasis (which can be identified within several text types such as sermons, propaganda, commercials, pamphlets, or satire). Therefore, the correct establishing of a text function proves to be of paramount relevance to the translator, since his basic purpose is to preserve it while translating the accurate and constant text function in order to produce an effective communication bridge by translating.

Hence, the two basic types of translations were coined as comprising the following gradation of translation types: semantic and communicative translation.

The distinction between the two main categories originates in the difficulties posed by the translation process in point of source language and target language emphasis, whereas the former is a personal and individual translation following the thought process of the author, while the latter, a social translation concentrating on the message and the main force of the text.

Any other aspect-related issues, perfect dictionary equivalence of the separate composite parts, extension, sentence structure, choice of words, choice of language structures become unimportant, and are completely subordinate to the above mentioned fundamental aim of translation activity namely its absolute effect oriented character and purpose. The

BDD-A20219 © 2010 Transilvania University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 00:55:07 UTC)

feedback criteria and instruments can be successfully placed in the translator's own hands as the latter critically tests, assess, evaluates, and analyzes his own performance by the effect the translation product has - should have - or fails to have upon the receiving party in the need to separate unusable unreliable work from reliable useful translations.

5. Conclusion on Translation Dynamics in Point of Recommended Theoretical Provisions and Existing Practice

We, the current generation in the world of ever expanding internationalisation and of globalisation, need to and do believe in the possibility of translation and our option favours the best possible manner of rendering of the core ideas of any trans-linguistic message into any target language, hereby coining the translator's labour results as equal in value to the original – that is not better and not worse and bearing the exact persuasive features as the original. Why should a translation be convincing if the original fails to be so?

Hence the one and single formula recommendable to the translator might be: the translator needs to express the core message exactly as the author would have, if the latter's native language had been that of the translator.

That may indeed often be a rather difficult, challenging or time-consuming endeavour, but not subject to a question such as whether it is possible or impossible to translate. The existing and perpetually emerging language and culture barriers, that can result in failure of comprehension and communication are to be subdued by means of translation.

Friedrich Nietzsche's words: "We are searching for words; maybe we are also searching for ears. But who are we anyway? (Tuedio 13) - should cast the way to further thought upon the nature, scope, purpose, and progress of translation studies whereas none of the existing practical and pragmatic necessities for such activities should be minimized or disregarded.

References

1. Carroll, John. "Language and Psychology". In: *Lingustics,* USA, 1969.
2. Guttingen, Fritz. *Zielsprache: Theorie und Technik des Ubersetzens.* Zürich: Manesse Verlag, 1963.
3. Muller, Bernd Dietrich. *Interkulturelle Wirtschaftskommunication.* 2nd ed. Munchen: Iudicium Verlag, 1993.
4. Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Gay Science* 346, tr. Richard Polt: Hacket, 1995.
5. Reiss, Katharina and Vermeer, Hans. *Grundlegung einer allgemeinen Translationstheorie.* 2nd ed. Tubingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1991.
6. Stolze, Radegundis. *Grundlagen der Textubersetzung*. Heidelberg: Julius Gross Verlag, 1982.
7. Tuedio, James A. *Boundaries in Translation at the Margins of Liminal Excess: Calibrating the Voice of Empire to the Ear of Resistance.* Department of Philosophy and Modern Languages, CSU Stanislaus, Turlock CA 95382.

BDD-A20219 © 2010 Transilvania University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 00:55:07 UTC)