



THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF TRANSLATION STUDIES: CORE ISSUES AND CONTEMPORARY INTERPRETATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation chapter explores the theoretical foundations of translation studies by critically examining its core concepts and ongoing debates. The chapter focuses on fundamental issues such as the definition of translation, the classification of translation types, the notion of equivalence, the problem of translatability, and the explanatory limits of existing translation theories. Translation is conceptualized as a multidimensional cognitive and communicative activity shaped by linguistic structures, cultural norms, pragmatic intentions, and contextual constraints. Employing qualitative theoretical analysis, the chapter synthesizes classical linguistic theories with functionalist and descriptive approaches in translation studies. The findings suggest that no single theoretical framework can adequately account for the complexity of translation processes. Absolute equivalence between source and target texts is theoretically unattainable; however, functional adequacy can be achieved through context-sensitive interpretative strategies. The chapter argues that translation competence extends beyond linguistic knowledge to include cultural literacy and pragmatic awareness. By integrating insights from linguistics, cultural studies, and translation theory, this chapter provides a conceptual foundation for further empirical investigation within the dissertation and contributes to the development of a flexible and interdisciplinary understanding of translation.

Introduction

Translation studies have evolved into an independent interdisciplinary field that investigates the mechanisms of meaning transfer between languages and cultures. In academic discourse, translation is no longer perceived as a mechanical substitution of linguistic units but as an interpretative process embedded within socio-cultural contexts. Theoretical reflection on translation is essential for understanding how texts function across

linguistic boundaries and how translators negotiate meaning under various constraints. This chapter establishes the conceptual framework necessary for analyzing translation as a scholarly object of inquiry.

Methods

The methodological approach adopted in this chapter is qualitative and theoretical in nature. A critical review of seminal and contemporary scholarly works in translation studies was conducted to identify dominant theoretical paradigms and unresolved conceptual tensions. The analysis draws upon linguistic, functionalist, and descriptive traditions, emphasizing comparative interpretation rather than descriptive repetition. Key theoretical constructs were systematically examined and reformulated to ensure conceptual coherence and academic originality. This method allows the study to transcend surface-level summaries and instead generate an integrated theoretical synthesis suitable for doctoral-level research.

Results

The theoretical analysis demonstrates that translation cannot be reduced to a single operational definition. Instead, it emerges as a context-dependent activity influenced by textual purpose, audience expectations, and cultural conventions. The results indicate that equivalence functions as a relative and dynamic concept rather than a fixed criterion. While linguistic equivalence is often unattainable due to systemic differences between languages, communicative and functional equivalence remains achievable. The study further reveals that claims of absolute untranslatability are largely theoretical abstractions, as translators employ compensatory strategies to overcome linguistic and cultural gaps.

Discussion

The discussion highlights the limitations of prescriptive translation theories that seek universal applicability. Translation practice consistently demonstrates variability that cannot be fully captured by rigid theoretical models. Functionalist and descriptive approaches offer greater explanatory potential by prioritizing purpose, context, and reception. The translator's role is reconceptualized as that of an interpretative agent who actively negotiates meaning. This perspective underscores the necessity of integrating cultural competence and pragmatic awareness into models of translation competence. The findings support an interdisciplinary orientation that aligns translation studies with cognitive and cultural research paradigms.

Conclusion

This chapter confirms that translation theory provides indispensable conceptual tools while remaining inherently incomplete. Translation is both theoretically complex and practically indispensable. The chapter establishes a theoretical foundation that informs subsequent empirical sections of the dissertation and supports the argument for flexible, context-sensitive translation models. Future research within this dissertation builds upon these foundations to examine translation phenomena in applied contexts..

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