Translation Studies

Prepared by Shaon Gharami, Lecturer, Department of English, UGV

Course Code: 0232-2401

Course Title: *Translation Studies*

Course Type: Core Course

Course Teacher: Shaon Gharami

Credit Value: 03

Total Marks: 150

Contact Hours: 42

Course Objectives:

- **Understand the fundamental theories and concepts** of translation studies, including linguistic, cultural, and functional approaches.

- **Develop practical translation skills** by working with different text types (literary, technical, legal, etc.) and language pairs.

- **Analyze the cultural and ethical challenges** in translation, including issues of power, ideology, and representation.

- **Apply critical thinking and problem-solving strategies** to evaluate translation quality and make informed decisions in the translation process.

Course Learning Outcomes: For a course on the *Translation Studies*, learning outcomes should reflect different levels of cognitive skills as per Bloom's Taxonomy. At the end of this course, students will be able to –

Course Learning Outcomes Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:	PLO 1	PLO2	PLO3	PLO4	PLO5
CLO 1- Identify major theoretical developments in translation studies, including key theoretical concepts and approaches	✓			✓	
CLO-2- Develop practical translation skills by using various theoretical perspectives and approaches in translation tasks		✓	✓		
CLO-3 – Critically assess translations, evaluating quality, equivalence, and cultural nuances	✓		✓	✓	
CLO-4 - Demonstrate an understanding of the global importance and function of translation in cultural exchange			✓		✓

Mapping Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) with the Teaching- Learning & Assessment Strategy :

CLOs	Teaching- Learning Strategy	Assessment Strategy
CLO 1- Identify major theoretical developments in translation studies, including key theoretical concepts and approaches	Lectures on translation theory, group discussions on historical developments in translation studies	Examinations, individual presentations on translation theories
CLO-2- Develop practical translation skills by using various theoretical perspectives and approaches in translation tasks	Practical translation exercises (textual and genre-based), reflective discussions on translation methods	Written translations, peer reviewed assignments, quizzes
CLO-3 – Critically assess translations, evaluating quality, equivalence, and cultural nuances	In-depth critical reading and evaluation of translations, with focus on accuracy and cultural adaptation	Critical essays, group discussions, peer reviews
CLO-4 - Demonstrate an understanding of the global importance and function of translation in cultural exchange	Lectures and case studies on global trends in translation, followed by inquiry-based activities on cross cultural translation	Research projects, assignments, group presentations on global translation practices

Specific Contents, Teaching-Learning Activities, and Assessment Strategy Mapping with Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs):

Week	Topic	Teaching-Learning Strategy	Assessment Strategy	Corresponding CLOs
1	✓ Overall discussion on Translation ✓ Definition and Types of translation	✓ Class lecture with Digital Equipment ✓ Lecture Sheet will be provided.	Class Attendance Class performance	CLO 1 CLO 2
2	✓ History of Translation Theory ✓ Problems of translating Prose, poetry and Drama ✓ Untranslatability	✓ Class lecture with Digital Equipment ✓ Lecture Sheet will be provided.	Class Attendance Feedback and Oral Test Quiz 1 (MCQ)	CLO2
3	✓ The Task of Translator by Walter Benjamin	✓ Class lecture with Digital Equipment ✓ Lecture Sheet will be provided	✓ Class Attendance ✓ Feedback and Oral Test	CLO 2
4	✓ The Task of Translator by Walter Benjamin	Class lecture with Digital Equipment Lecture Sheet will be provided	✓ Class Attendance ✓ Feedback and Oral Test ✓ (Assignment)	CLO 2
5	✓ The Task of Translator by Walter Benjamin	✓ Class lecture with Digital Equipment ✓ Lecture Sheet will be provided	✓ Class Attendance ✓ Feedback and Oral test	CLO 2 CLO 3

6	✓ **On Linguistic Aspects of Translation by Roman Jakobson**	✓ **Class lecture with Digital Equipment** ✓ **Lecture Sheet will be provided**	✓ **Class Attendance** ✓ **Class performance** ✓ **Feedback and Oral Test**	**CLO 3** **CLO 4** **CLO 5**
7	✓ *On Linguistic Aspects of Translation* by Roman Jakobson	✓ Class lecture using digital equipment & illustration on board ✓ Interactive discussion ✓ Note taking by the learners (If necessary) ✓ Lecture Sheet will be provided	Class Attendance Class performance Quiz 2 (Written Test) Feedback and Oral Test	CLO 3 CLO 4 CLO 5
8	✓ *On Linguistic Aspects of Translation* by Roman Jakobson	✓ Class lecture using digital equipment & illustration on board ✓ Interactive discussion ✓ Note taking by the learners (If necessary) ✓ Lecture Sheet will be provided	Class Attendance Feedback and Oral Test	CLO 3 CLO 4 CLO 5
9	✓ *On Linguistic Aspects of Translation* by Roman Jakobson	Class lecture with Digital Equipment Lecture Sheet will be provided	✓ Class Attendance ✓ Class performance ✓ Feedback and Oral Test ✓ (Assignment)	CLO 3 CLO 4 CLO 5
10	✓ "Invisibility" by Lawrence Venuti	Class lecture with Digital Equipment Lecture Sheet will be provided	✓ Class Attendance ✓ Feedback and Oral Test	CLO 3 CLO 4 CLO 5
11	✓ "Invisibility" by Lawrence Venuti	✓ Class lecture with Digital Equipment ✓ Lecture Sheet will be provided	✓ Class Attendance ✓ Feedback and Oral Test ✓ Quiz 3 (Presentation)	CLO 3 CLO 4 CLO 5

12	*The Politics of Translation* by G. C. Spivak	✓ **Class lecture with Digital Equipment** ✓ **Lecture Sheet will be provided**	✓ **Class Attendance** ✓ **Class performance** ✓ **Feedback and Oral Test**	**CLO 3** **CLO 4** **CLO 5**
13	*The Politics of Translation* by G. C. Spivak	✓ Class lecture using digital equipment & illustration on board ✓ Interactive discussion ✓ Note taking by the learners (If necessary) ✓ Lecture Sheet will be provided	Class Attendance Class performance Quiz 2 (Written Test) Feedback and Oral Test	CLO 3 CLO 4 CLO 5
14	*The Politics of Translation* by G. C. Spivak	✓ Class lecture using digital equipment & illustration on board ✓ Interactive discussion ✓ Note taking by the learners (If necessary) ✓ Lecture Sheet will be provided	Class Attendance Feedback and Oral Test	CLO 3 CLO 4 CLO 5
15	Fakrul Alam's Translation of Jibananda Das (Selections)	Class lecture with Digital Equipment Lecture Sheet will be provided	✓ Class Attendance ✓ Class performance ✓ Feedback and Oral Test ✓ (Assignment)	CLO 3 CLO 4 CLO 5
	Rabindranath Tagore: Gitanjali (Selections)	Class lecture with Digital Equipment Lecture Sheet will be provided	✓ Class Attendance ✓ Feedback and Oral Test	CLO 3 CLO 4 CLO 5
17	Shamsur Rahman: Robert Frost (Selections from Shamsur Rahman's Translation)	✓ Class lecture with Digital Equipment ✓ Lecture Sheet will be provided	✓ Class Attendance ✓ Feedback and Oral Test ✓ Quiz 3 (Presentation)	CLO 3 CLO 4 CLO 5

ASSESSMENT PATTERN

Assignment & Presentation:

Students will be assigned topics or case studies to work on at home and submit by the specified due date, with no late submissions accepted. Alternatively, students may be required to deliver a PowerPoint presentation in class. Presentations should be clear, well-organized, visually engaging, and effectively communicate research findings. Students should be prepared to answer questions and engage in discussions, enhancing their understanding of the material and developing public speaking skills.

Quizzes:

Three Quiz Tests will be taken during the semester. No makeup quiz test will be taken. Students are strongly recommended not to miss that test.

Viva-Voce:

At the end of the semester, the students must appear before a board of faculty from their course, who will assess them on topics they have covered. The department may invite external faculty to evaluate the students.

TOTAL MARKS
PER CREDIT 50 MARKS

3 Credits Course	150 Marks
2 Credits Course	100 Marks
CIE	60%
SEE	40%

ASSESSMENT PATTERN

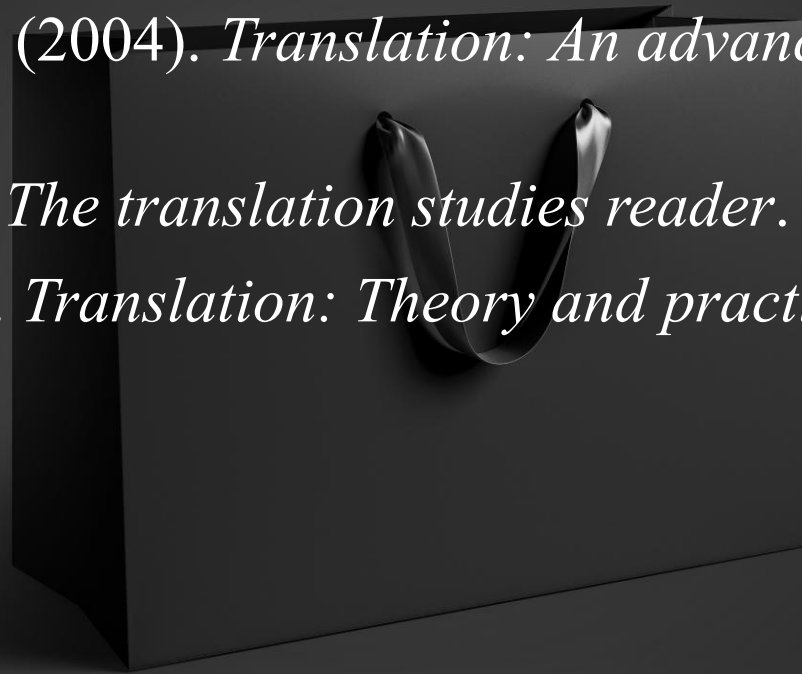**CIE-** Continuous Internal Evaluation (90 Marks- 60%)

Bloom's Category Marks (outs of 45)	Test (45)	Assignments (15)	Quizzes (15)	External Participation in Curricular/Co-Curricular Activities (30)
Remember	10		05	Attendance: 15 Viva-Voce: 15
Understand	10	05		
Apply	05	10		
Analyze	10			
Evaluate	05			
Create	05		10	

10

SEE- Semester End Examination (60 Marks-40%)

Bloom's Category	Tests
Remember	15
Understand	15
Apply	10
Analyze	10
Evaluate	5
Create	5

Recommended Books

➢ Bassnett, S. (2002). *Translation studies: An introduction* (3rd ed.). Routledge.

➢ Hatim, B., & Munday, J. (2004). *Translation: An advanced resource book.* Routledge.

➢ Venuti, L. (Ed.). (2004). *The translation studies reader*. Routledge.

➢ Zaman, N. (Ed.). (2004). *Translation: Theory and practice*. Academic Press and Publishers Limited.

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Week 1

Definition and Types of Translation

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➢ Translation is a complex and multifaceted process that involves transferring meaning from one language (the *source language*) to another (the *target language*) while preserving content, style, and intent.

➢ "I see translation as the attempt to produce a text so transparent that it does not seem to be translated. A good translation is like a pane of glass. You only notice that it's there when there are little imperfections – scratches, bubbles. Ideally, there shouldn't be any. It should never call attention to itself."

(Norman Shapiro)

➢ "Translation is a form. To comprehend it as a form, one must go back to the original, for the laws governing the translation lie within the original, contained in the issue of its translatability."

(Walter Benjamin)

Definition and types of Translation

➢ Some translations aim at very close formal and semantic correspondence but are generously supplied with notes and commentary. Many are not so much concerned with giving information as with creating in the reader something of the same mood as was conveyed by the original.

➢ Differences in translations can generally be accounted for by three basic factors in translating:

(1) the nature of the message,

(2) the purpose or purposes of the author and, by proxy, of the translator, and

(3) the type of audience.

(Eugene Nida)

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Definition and Types of Translation

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Eugene Nida, a prominent linguist and translation theorist, classified translation into two main types based on the approach and purpose of the translation.

Formal Equivalence (Literal Translation)
- ✓Focuses on maintaining the **form and structure** of the source text as closely as possible.
- ✓Prioritizes word-for-word or phrase-for-phrase accuracy.
- ✓Often used in **legal, scientific, or religious texts** where precision is crucial.
- ✓Example: Translating biblical passages while preserving original grammatical structures.

Definition and Types of Translation

Dynamic Equivalence (Functional Equivalence)
- Emphasizes **naturalness and readability** in the target language.
- Aims to reproduce the **meaning and effect** of the source text rather than its form.
- Adapts idioms, cultural references, and syntax to suit the target audience.
- Example: Translating a novel in a way that feels natural to readers, even if some words are changed for clarity.
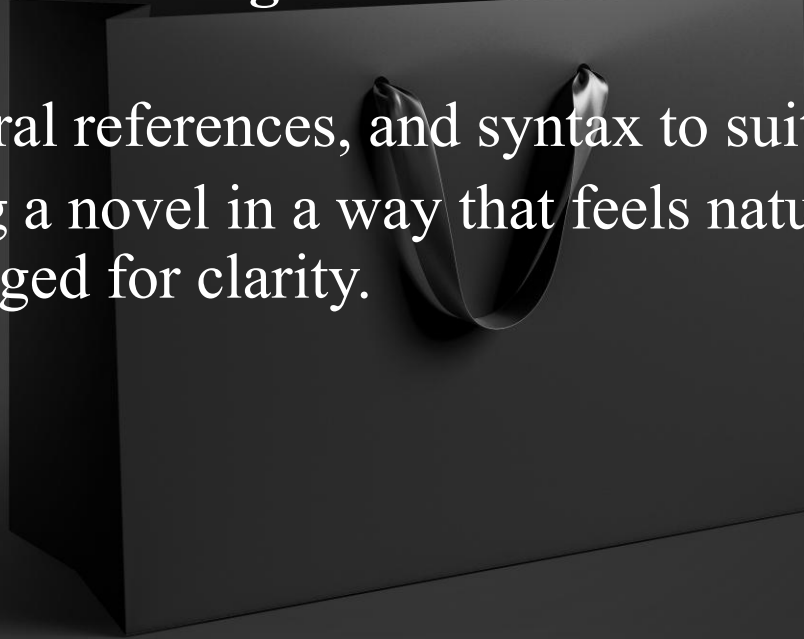
Definition and Types of Translation

According to **Roman Jakobson**

➢In his influential essay *On Linguistic Aspects of Translation* (1959), Jakobson identified:

1. **Intralingual Translation** (Rewording)
   - Translation within the same language.
   - E.g., paraphrasing a complex text in simpler terms.
2. **Interlingual Translation** (Translation Proper)
   - Translation between two different languages.
   - This is what is commonly understood as "translation."
3. **Intersemiotic Translation** (Transmutation)
   - Translation from verbal signs to non-verbal systems.
   - E.g., turning a poem into a painting or film.

Definition and types of Translation

According to Peter Newmark:

Newmark proposed several translation methods, grouped under two general orientations:

➤ **Source-Oriented Translation Methods:**
  i. **Word-for-Word Translation**
  ii. **Literal Translation**
  iii. **Faithful Translation**
  iv. **Semantic Translation**

➤ **Target-Oriented Translation Methods:**
  i. **Adaptation**
  ii. **Free Translation**
  iii. **Idiomatic Translation**
  iv. **Communicative Translation**

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History of Translation Theory
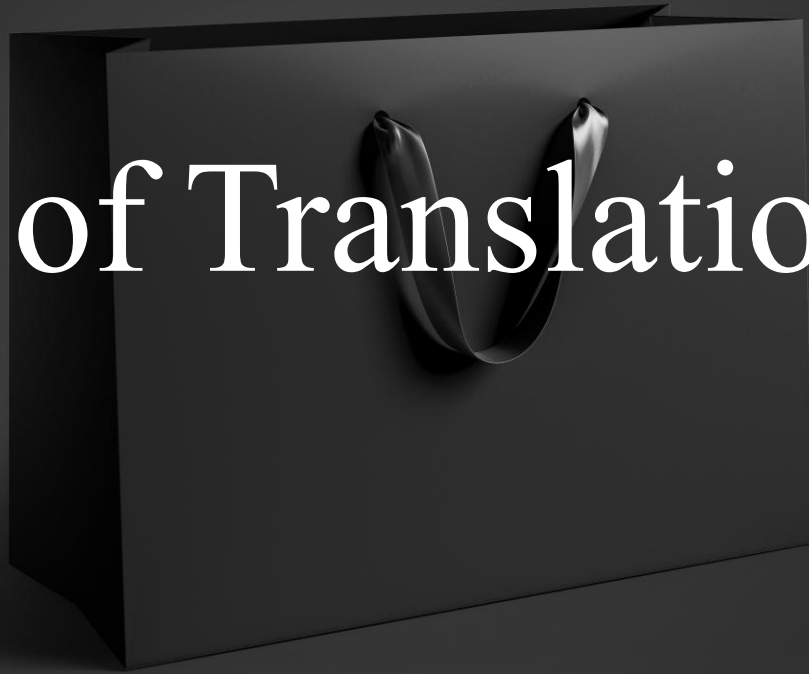
The history of **translation theory** spans thousands of years, evolving alongside linguistic, cultural, and philosophical developments. Below is a broad overview of key periods and figures in translation theory:

Ancient World (Pre-5th Century CE):

➢**Early Translation Practices**:
- The **Egyptians** and **Sumerians** translated religious and administrative texts.
- The **Septuagint** (3rd–2nd century BCE): The Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek, marking one of the first major translation projects.

➢**Roman Contributions**:
- **Cicero** (106–43 BCE) and **Horace** (65–8 BCE) debated whether to translate **word-for-word (literal)** or **sense-for-sense (free)**.
- **St. Jerome** (347–420 CE), translator of the Latin **Vulgate Bible**, famously advocated for sense-for-sense translation but adjusted based on context.

Medieval and Early Modern Period (5th–17th Century)

Religious Dominance in Translation:
- The **Qur'an** was translated into Persian and other languages, though with theological debates over fidelity.
- **Christian Scholasticism**: Translations of Greek philosophy (Aristotle, Plato) into Latin and Arabic (e.g., by **Ibn Sina** and **Averroes**).

Renaissance Humanism:
- **Martin Luther** (1483–1546) translated the Bible into German, emphasizing **natural language** over rigid literalism.
- **Étienne Dolet** (1509–1546) outlined early translation principles, stressing clarity and idiomatic expression.

Enlightenment & Early Modern Theories (17th–19th Century)

Rationalist Approaches:

- **John Dryden** (1631–1700) categorized translation into **metaphrase (literal), paraphrase (loose), and imitation (creative)**.
- **Alexander Fraser Tytler** (1747–1814) proposed three **laws of translation**: fidelity to meaning, style equivalence, and naturalness.

Romanticism & Cultural Turn:

- **Friedrich Schleiermacher** (1768–1834) argued for **foreignization** (keeping the source text's "foreign" feel) vs. **domestication** (adapting to the target culture).

20th Century: Structuralism & Linguistics

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Linguistic Theories:

- **Roman Jakobson** (1959) classified translation into **intralingual, interlingual, and intersemiotic**.
- **Eugene Nida** (1960s) introduced **dynamic equivalence** (natural effect) vs. **formal equivalence** (literal).
- **Peter Newmark** (1980s) distinguished between **semantic translation** (close to original) and **communicative translation** (reader-focused).

Poststructuralist & Cultural Theories:

- **Walter Benjamin** (1923) saw translation as an independent work that reveals the "pure language" behind texts.
- **George Steiner** (1975) proposed a **hermeneutic approach** (interpretation as key to translation).

Contemporary Theories (Late 20th–21st Century)

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Functionalist Theories:
- **Katharina Reiss & Hans Vermeer** (1980s) introduced **Skopos Theory**, where translation's purpose determines its form.
- **Christiane Nord** (1990s) emphasized **loyalty** between translator, source, and target audience.

Postcolonial & Feminist Approaches:
- **Lawrence Venuti** (1990s) revived **foreignization** to resist cultural domination.
- **Gayatri Spivak & Sherry Simon** explored how translation shapes gender and power dynamics.

Cognitive & Technological Shifts:
- **Machine Translation (MT)** and **neural networks** (e.g., Google Translate) have sparked debates on human vs. AI translation.
- **Corpus-Based Translation Studies** analyze large text databases for patterns.

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Prose Translation

➢Prose (novels, short stories, essays) is generally easier to translate than poetry or drama, but challenges include:

1. Cultural Nuances – Idioms, jokes, and culturally specific references may lack direct equivalents.

2. Style & Tone – The translator must preserve the author's voice (e.g., Hemingway's simplicity vs. Dickens' verbosity).

3. Wordplay & Puns – Difficult to replicate if tied to the source language (e.g., James Joyce's Finnegans Wake).

4. Length & Detail – Descriptive passages may need adaptation to suit the target language's natural flow.

Challenges of Translating Poetry, Prose and Drama

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Poetry Translation

➢Poetry is the most challenging due to its reliance on form, sound, and rhythm:

1. **Meter & Rhyme** – Fixed forms (sonnets, haikus) require creative solutions when the target language has different syllabic patterns.
2. **Sound Devices** – Alliteration, assonance, and onomatopoeia may not translate directly.
3. **Imagery & Metaphor** – Cultural differences can alter interpretations (e.g., a "nightingale" may not evoke the same emotions in all languages).
4. **Compression & Ambiguity** – Poetic brevity and multiple meanings are hard to retain.
5. **Sacrifices** – Often, translators must choose between preserving meaning or musicality (e.g., Robert Frost said poetry is "what gets lost in translation").

# Challenges of Translating Poetry, Prose and Drama

Drama Translation

Drama must work both as literature and performance, adding extra layers of difficulty:

1. **Dialogue Naturalness** – Lines must sound authentic when spoken, not just read.
2. **Pacing & Rhythm** – Comic timing, pauses, and dramatic tension must be maintained.
3. **Cultural Adaptation** – Some references may need localization for the audience (e.g., Shakespeare's puns updated in modern adaptations).
4. **Stage Directions & Subtext** – Non-verbal cues and implied meanings must be clear.
5. **Verse Drama** – Plays written in verse (e.g., *Hamlet*, Greek tragedies) combine the challenges of poetry and drama.

Common Issues Across All Genres (Poetry, Prose and Drama)

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➢ **Untranslatability** – Some words/concepts have no direct equivalent.

➢ **Linguistic Differences** – Syntax, grammar, and word order vary across languages.

➢ **Authorial Intent vs. Reader Reception** – Balancing fidelity to the original with readability for a new audience.
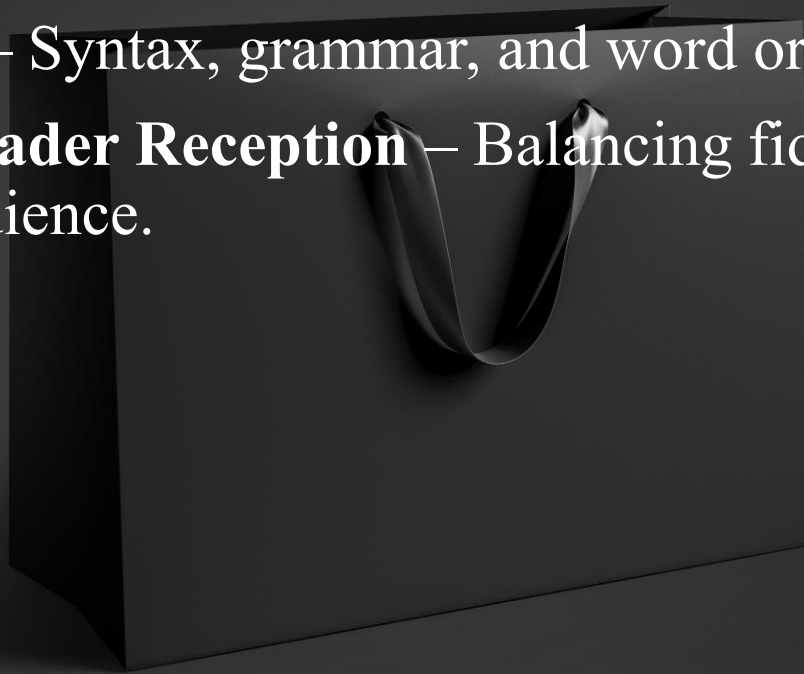
Each Genre Demands Different Strategies

➢ Prose prioritizes meaning and flow.

➢ Poetry requires creativity to balance form and content.

➢ Drama needs performability and oral clarity.
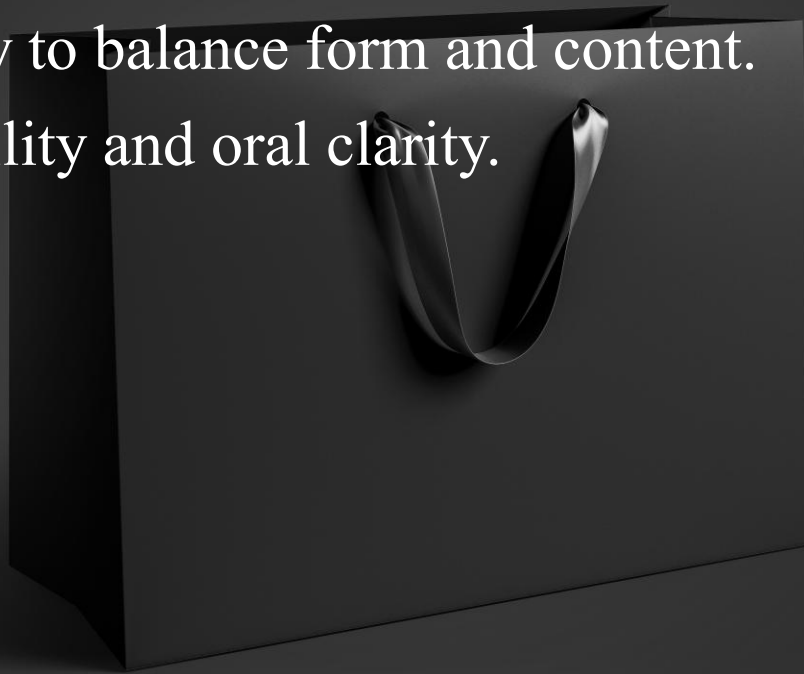
Untranslatability

➤ The concept of **"untranslatability"** refers to words, phrases, or expressions in one language that have no direct equivalent in another language, making them difficult or impossible to translate accurately.

➤ This phenomenon exists between **Bangla (Bengali)** and **English** due to cultural, linguistic, and contextual differences.

For Example:

• **আদুরে (Aadure)** – Affectionate behavior, often used for someone who is pampered or loved dearly (no single English equivalent).

• **ঝালমুড়ি (Jhalmuri)** – A specific spicy street snack; the term carries cultural significance beyond just "spicy puffed rice."

• **বিরহ (Biroho)** – A deep sense of longing or melancholy, often romantic; similar to "yearning" but more poetic.

Untranslatability

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Examples:

- **গজল (Ghazal)** – A poetic/musical form; translating it as "lyric poem" loses its cultural essence.

- **হ্যাংলাপনা (Hyanglapana)** – A mix of mischief, playfulness, and naughtiness (often used for kids).
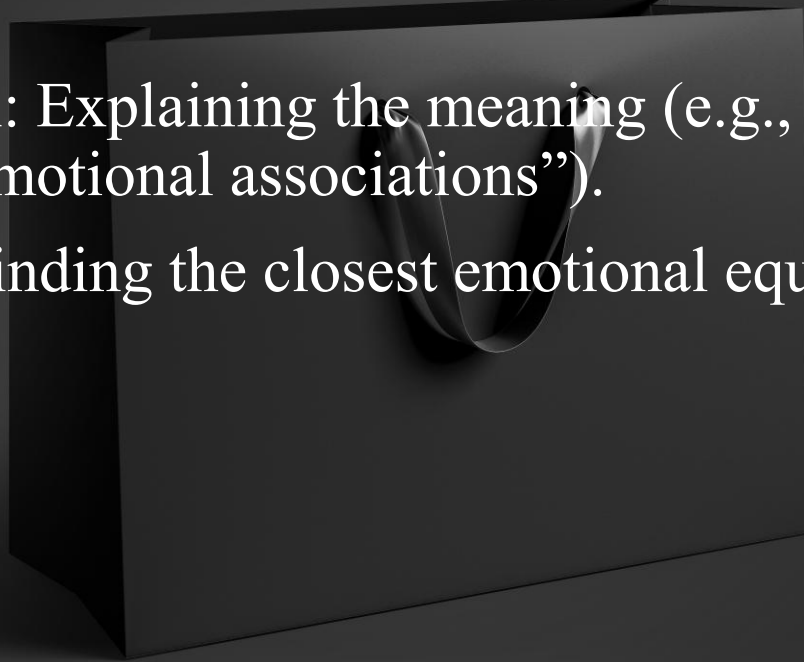
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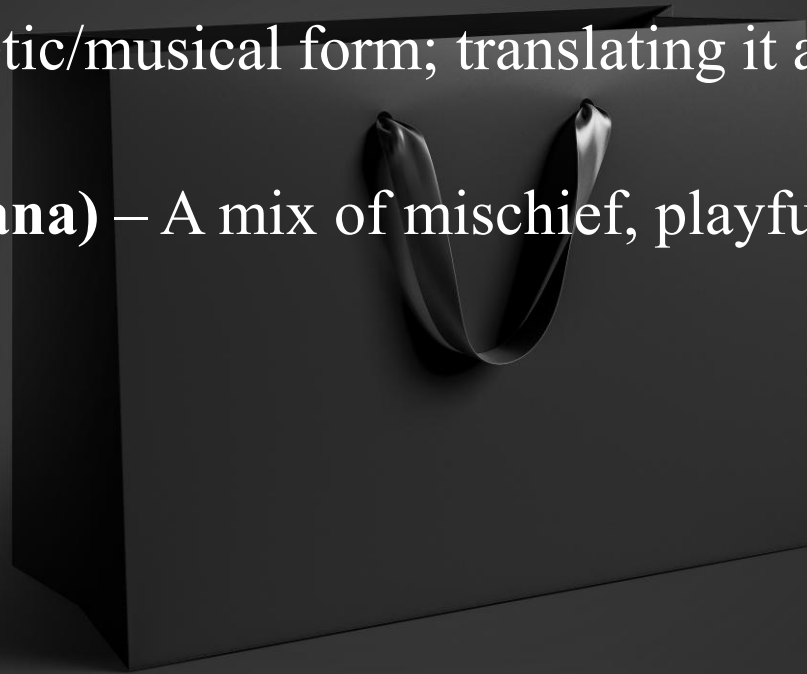
Reasons for Untranslatability:

- **Cultural Context**: Some words are tied to traditions (e.g., **"puja"** means worship but implies a whole festival culture).

- **Linguistic Nuance**: Bangla has many emotion-laden words (e.g., **"প্রাণ (Pran)"** means "life" but also "deep love").

- **Idiomatic Expressions**: Phrases like **"ঘুম কাতুরে (Ghom kature)"** (sleepyhead) are easy in Bangla but need explanation in English.

Solutions for Translating Untranslatable Words:

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- **Loanwords**: Adopting the original word (e.g., using **"adda"** in English for casual chat sessions).

- **Descriptive Translation**: Explaining the meaning (e.g., "বর্ষা **(Borsha)"** → "monsoon season with emotional associations").

- **Cultural Adaptation**: Finding the closest emotional equivalent.

Invisibility by Lawrence Venuti

Invisibility: The Regime of Fluency

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A translated text, whether prose or poetry, fiction or nonfiction, is judged acceptable by most publishers, reviewers and readers when it reads fluently, when the absence of any linguistic or stylistic peculiarities makes it seem transparent, giving the appearance that it reflects the foreign writer's personality or intention or the essential meaning of the foreign text – the appearance, in other words, that the translation is not in fact a translation, but the "original."

(Lawrence Venuti)

Invisibility: The Regime of Fluency

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1. **Translator's Invisibility**: The term describes the translator's marginalized role in contemporary British and American cultures, where their work goes unnoticed.

2. **Two Key Phenomena of Invisibility**:
    *   **Illusionistic Effect**: The translator manipulates the target language (English) to create a smooth, fluent text that appears natural.
    *   **Reading & Evaluation Practices**: Translations are judged acceptable when they read fluently, without visible signs of being translated, making them seem like the "original."

3. **Fluency as the Standard**: Publishers, reviewers, and readers prefer translations that are linguistically smooth, syntactically continuous, and stylistically "transparent," giving the illusion that the text directly reflects the foreign writer's intention.

Invisibility: The Regime of Fluency

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4. Role of Readers: Readers contribute to this invisibility by focusing on meaning, attributing stylistic choices to the foreign author, and rejecting language that disrupts seamless reading.

5. Concealment of Translational Labor: The illusion of transparency hides the translator's interventions and the complex conditions under which translation occurs.

6. Paradox of Visibility: The more fluent the translation, the more invisible the translator becomes, while the foreign writer or text appears more prominent.

How Economic and Cultural Forces Shape Invisible Translation

1. **Characteristics of Fluent Translation** – A fluent translation uses:
   - Current, modern English (not archaic or overly specialized).
   - Standard language (avoiding colloquialisms, slang, or foreign imprints like "pidgin").
   - Consistent national variants (avoiding Britishisms in American translations and vice versa).
   - Smooth, idiomatic syntax (not overly "faithful" to the foreign text's structure).
   - Rhythmic flow and semantic clarity (no awkwardness or abruptness).

The Fluency Imperative: How Economic and Cultural Forces Shape Invisible Translation

2. Domestication Over Foreignness – Fluent translations prioritize familiarity, making the text seem natural and unobstructed, masking its foreign origins.

3. Illusion of Transparency – The translator's work becomes "invisible," creating the illusion that the text is original rather than mediated.

4. Broader Cultural & Economic Influences – The preference for fluency reflects trends in other forms of writing (scientific, technical, advertising), where instrumental language and immediate intelligibility are valued for economic efficiency.

5. Economic Enforcement of Fluency – As noted by Charles Bernstein, fluency is economically incentivized(motivate or encourage someone to do something), setting strict limits on stylistic deviation in professional writing.

Smoothness Over Style*: How Economic and Historical Forces Standardize Language

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1. **Economic Constraints on Writing** – Most paid writing (outside of advertising) enforces "authoritative plain styles," limiting linguistic freedom. This reflects not just stylistic preference but **social governance**—people must conform to workplace or familial language norms, even if rebellion is possible within limits.

2. **Historical Authority of "Plain Styles"** – Over centuries, English developed uniform spelling, grammar, and an ideology favoring **non-idiosyncratic, smooth, and transparent language**, discouraging attention to language itself (e.g., avoiding awkwardness or stylistic opacity).

Smoothness Over Style: How Economic and Historical Forces Standardize Language

3. Dominance of Realism & Transparent Prose – In contemporary Anglo-American literature:

- **Fiction** favors **neutral, "invisible" prose** (readers look *through* words to the story, unlike Sterne's self-conscious style).
- **Poetry** avoids overt rhyme/alliteration, using meter mainly to signal "poetry" rather than for stylistic richness.

4. Language as an Instrument – The push for clarity and fluency aligns with broader cultural demands for **immediate intelligibility**, suppressing linguistic experimentation in mainstream writing.

The Imperialism of Invisibility: How Fluent Translation Masks Cultural Domination

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- **Invisibility as a Problem:** The translator's "invisibility" is not a natural state but a successful **mystification** and **concealment** of the power dynamics and cultural hierarchies at work in English-language translation.

- **The Mechanism: Fluent Translation:** This invisibility is created by an **illusionism** fostered by "fluent" translating. This style uses a **transparent, familiar English discourse** that erases any trace of the foreign text's foreignness.

- **Domestication of Foreign Texts:** The primary effect is a **domestication** of foreign texts. The translation process rewrites them to make them conform to Anglo-American cultural and linguistic norms, selecting only those texts that are amenable to this treatment.

The Imperialism of Invisibility: How Fluent Translation Masks Cultural Domination

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- **Consequences for Translators:** The illusion of transparency **effaces the translator's work**, which in turn contributes to their **low cultural status** and **economic exploitation** (being poorly paid and seldom recognized), despite their work being indispensable.

- **Consequences for Culture:** This practice enacts a form of **cultural imperialism**:
  - ✓ It creates a **"trade imbalance"** that decreases the "cultural capital" of foreign values in English.
  - ✓ It limits the number of foreign texts translated and subjects those that are translated to a **domesticating revision**.
  - ✓ It fosters a **complacence** towards other cultures that is **imperialistic abroad** and **xenophobic at home**.

The Imperialism of Invisibility: How Fluent Translation Masks Cultural Domination

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- **Purpose of the Concept:** The concept of "invisibility" is itself a **cultural critique** and a **diagnosis** from the translator's standpoint, intended to oppose the very situation it describes.

- **Goal of the Book:** The ultimate motive is to **make the translator visible** to resist and change current translation practices and theory. The first step is to create a theoretical basis for reading translations **as translations** (not as transparent originals) to **demystify transparency** and see it as a specific discursive effect.
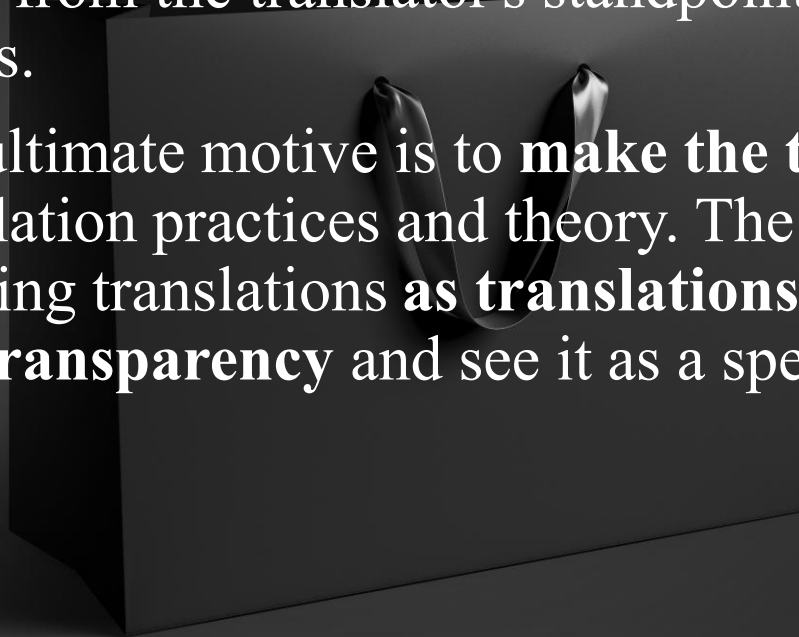
The Violence of Translation

The Violence of Translation: Interpretation, Domestication, and the Illusion of Equivalence

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- **Translation as Interpretive Replacement:** Translation is not a direct transfer of meaning but a process where the chain of signifiers (words, sounds, structures) of the foreign text is replaced by a new chain in the translating language, based on the translator's interpretation.

- **The Instability of Meaning:** Meaning is not a stable, original essence within a text. It is an effect produced by the differences and relations between signifiers within a vast, intertextual network (following Derrida). It is always "differential and deferred."

- **Texts are Derivative and Unstable:** Both the original foreign text and the translation are made from pre-existing linguistic and cultural materials that neither the author nor the translator fully controls. These materials destabilize the text's signification and can exceed or conflict with authorial intent.

-

The Violence of Translation: Interpretation, Domestication, and the Illusion of Equivalence

- **Meaning is Plural and Contingent:** A foreign text contains multiple semantic possibilities. Any single translation can only provisionally fix one version of these possibilities, based on the translator's cultural assumptions, interpretive choices, and the specific social and historical context.

- **Rejection of Mathematical Equivalence:** A translation cannot be judged by concepts of semantic equivalence or one-to-one correspondence because meaning is not a fixed, unified entity.

- **Historical Determination of Standards:** Concepts like "fidelity," "freedom," and even "accuracy" in translation are not absolute; they are historically and culturally determined categories. What counts as a "mistranslation" can vary and may even become culturally significant.
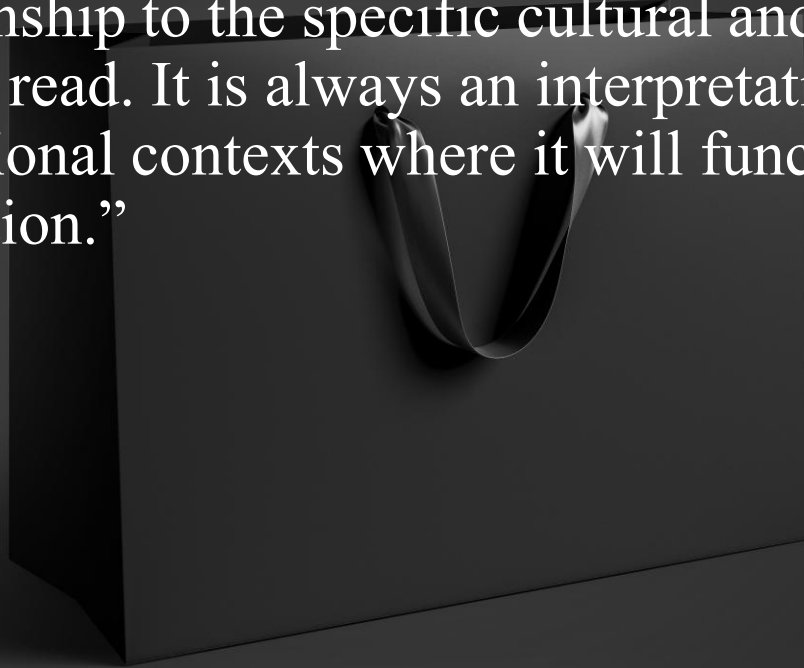
The Violence of Translation: Interpretation, Domestication, and the Illusion of Equivalence

- **The Inevitable Violence of Translation:** The fundamental purpose of translation is a violent act. It involves reconstituting the foreign text according to the values, beliefs, and hierarchies of the receiving culture. This process:

  1. **Damages the original:** It forces the elimination and disarrangement of the foreign text's signifying chain (e.g., its sound, rhythm, graphic features).
  2. **Domesticates the foreign:** Differences in the original are reduced, excluded, or replaced by possibilities specific to the translating language. The foreign text is made intelligible and familiar to the target reader.
  3. **Serves Cultural Appropriation:** This domestication risk is especially high in projects that consciously use translation to appropriate foreign cultures for domestic economic, political, or cultural agendas.

The Violence of Translation: Interpretation, Domestication, and the Illusion of Equivalence

- **Translation is a Situated Act:** The viability and nature of a translation are determined by its relationship to the specific cultural and social conditions under which it is produced and read. It is always an interpretation limited by its target audience and the institutional contexts where it will function. It is not simply "untroubled communication."

The Translator's Choice: Foreignizing vs. Domesticating and the Politics of Cultural Violence

Prepared by Shaon Gharami, Lecturer, Department of English, UGV

- **Domestic Impact of Translation:** The "violence" of translation affects the receiving (home) culture as much as the foreign one. It is a powerful force that shapes domestic literary canons, conceptual paradigms, and professional practices (e.g., in law, psychiatry, physics).

- **Translation as Cultural-Political Practice:** Translation is not a neutral act. It is a **cultural political practice** because its social affiliations and effects—from the choice of text to its discursive strategy, publication, and reception—can either affirm or transgress the dominant values and institutional limits of the receiving culture.

- **The Translator's Agency:** Despite being determined by many factors (linguistic, cultural, economic, ideological), the literary translator **always exercises a choice** regarding the "degree and direction" of the violence inherent in translation.

The Translator's Choice: Foreignizing vs. Domesticating and the Politics of Cultural Violence

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- **The Fundamental Choice (Schleiermacher's Dichotomy):** This choice is fundamentally between two methods:
    i. **Domesticating Translation:** Leaves the reader "in peace" by assimilating the foreign text entirely into the values and fluency of the receiving culture. This is an **ethnocentric reduction** that brings the author back home.
    ii. **Foreignizing Translation:** Leaves the author "in peace" by disrupting the receiving culture's norms to preserve the foreign text's linguistic and cultural differences. This is an **ethnodeviant** practice that sends the reader abroad.

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- **Foreignizing as an Ethical and Political Intervention:**
  i. It is not about transparently representing a foreign "essence" but about **strategically constructing** a disruptive reading experience within the receiving culture.
  ii. It is presented as a **highly desirable ethical stance** to restrain the ethnocentric violence of translation.
  iii. In English, it can be a form of **resistance** against cultural narcissism, imperialism, and unequal global exchanges, promoting democratic geopolitical relations.

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- **Historical and Cultural Specificity:** The theory of foreignizing is specific to certain historical moments (e.g., German Romanticism, French Poststructuralism) and is a **reaction against dominant domesticating traditions**, such as those long prevalent in British and American cultures.

- **Critique of Fluency and Transparency (Nida as an example):** Fluent, domesticating translation creates an **illusion of transparency** that masks its own partiality and interpretive violence. It presents itself as a "true equivalence" while actively excluding difference and inscribing the foreign text with English-language values. This is a form of **ethnocentric violence**.

The Domestication of Faith: A Critique of Nida's Dynamic Equivalence

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- **Definition of Dynamic Equivalence:** Nida's theory aims for "complete naturalness of expression," seeking to relate the reader to the text through modes of behavior relevant to their own culture. The goal is to elicit a response from the new reader that is "similar" to that of the original audience.

- **Fluency as Domestication:** The theory prioritizes a **fluent and transparent** style in the translating language. This requires replacing unfamiliar foreign linguistic and cultural features with recognizable domestic ones, which is an act of **domestication**.

- **The Illusion of Transparency and Similar Response:** The text argues that this fluency **imposes English-language values** on every foreign text. It masks a fundamental disjunction between the original and the translation, making the possibility of a truly "similar" response questionable.

The Domestication of Faith: A Critique of Nida's Dynamic Equivalence

- **An Interested Interpretation, Not Neutral Communication:** Despite Nida's claim that this method is "accurate," the passage contends it is not a neutral exchange. It is an **interested interpretation** that appropriates the foreign text to serve the receiving culture's values, all while veiling this act under the illusion of transparent communication.

- **Rooted in a Universalist Humanism:** Nida's theory is explicitly grounded in a belief in a universal human essence that transcends cultural and linguistic differences. This assumes a common basis for communication.

- **Motivation by Evangelical Mission:** Nida's work is fundamentally motivated by the needs of **Bible translation and Christian evangelism**. The translator's role is linked to that of a missionary, aiming to "identify with the people" to make the biblical message relevant.

The Domestication of Faith: A Critique of Nida's Dynamic Equivalence

- **Exclusionary and Elitist Undercurrents:** Despite its democratic, universalist claims, the theory promotes exclusionary values:
    i. It promotes a **specific Christian doctrinal understanding** of the Bible.
    ii. It insists on using **"standard" language** and avoids substandard or vulgar wording, thereby excluding minority dialects and constituencies within the receiving culture.
    iii. The communication is controlled by and for a specific receptor group, serving a particular purpose (evangelism).

Beyond the Binary: Foreignizing Translation as an Ethical and Experimental Practice

- **Foreignizing as a Conscious Agenda:** Advocating for foreignizing translation is not a neutral act; it is itself a **cultural-political agenda**. Its purpose is to resist dominant receiving-culture values and to signify the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text.

- **"Abusive Fidelity" and Experimentalism:** The concept of **"abusive fidelity"** (Philip Lewis) is key. It involves creating a translation that:
  - i. Acknowledges its inherently "abusive" relationship to the original.
  - ii. Eschews fluent strategies to instead imitate the foreign text's own features that resist dominant values.
  - iii. Focuses on the play of signifiers (phonological, syntactical, discursive structures) rather than just conceptual meaning.
  - iv. Values **experimentation** and tampers with standard usage to match the original's complexity.

Beyond the Binary: Foreignizing Translation as an Ethical and Experimental Practice

- **Reinventing Fluency, Not Abandoning It:** The goal is not to create unreadable "translationese" but to **expand the definition of readability**. Fluency is historically and culturally variable; foreignizing translation seeks to reinvent it in innovative ways to create "new conditions of readability."

- **Rejection of a Simple Binary:** The terms "domestication" and "foreignization" are **not simple opposites** of "fluent" vs. "resistant" or "literal" vs. "free."
  i. **Domestication/Foreignization** describe **ethical attitudes and effects** toward the foreign text and culture.
  ii. **Fluency/Resistancy** describe **discursive features** related to a reader's cognitive processing.

Beyond the Binary: Foreignizing Translation as an Ethical and Experimental Practice

- **Contextual and Contingent Definitions:** The meaning and application of these terms are **culturally variable and historically contingent**. Their significance for any translation project must be interpreted through archival research and textual analysis, and is always open to challenge.

- **Universal Application and Double Interrogation:** Foreignizing is a strategy applicable to any language, not just English. It does not provide pure access to the foreign but **constructs an image of the foreign** that questions the receiving culture by drawing on its **marginal, nonstandard, residual, or emergent** materials. It is a "doubly interrogative" practice that simultaneously constructs an image of the foreign culture and a subject position for the receiving reader.

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A Guard Against Cultural Complacency: Foreignizing translation is presented as a crucial practice for **cultural self-criticism**. Without it, any culture (whether hegemonic or subordinate) can lapse into exclusionary complacency, nationalism, or fundamentalism, as historical examples from Ireland and Quebec demonstrate. It serves to enrich cultures while subjecting them to ongoing interrogation.

Thank You

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