

TRANSLATION AS A CULTURAL PHENOMENON

Course Overview and Key Topics

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1. INTRODUCTION TO TRANSLATION STUDIES

- Translation is not just linguistic but also cultural – it mediates between languages, traditions, worldviews, and power structures.
- Culture, Gender, and Ideology Shape Translation – translators make choices that reflect or challenge societal norms, including gender roles and representation.
- Domestication vs. Foreignization – should a translation adapt a text to local culture or preserve its foreign elements?
- Power, Gender, and Ideology in Translation – translations can reinforce or subvert colonial, patriarchal, or political narratives.
- Gender and the Translator's Visibility – feminist translation theory challenges the traditional invisibility of the translator, foregrounding gendered perspectives.
- Translation as a Political and Social Act – it can give voice to marginalized communities, challenge gender bias in language, or manipulate meaning for ideological purposes.
- Retranslation and Cultural Change – different translations of the same text reflect shifts in language, gender norms, and social attitudes over time.

TRANSLATION AND RACISM

1. Orientalism and Its Impact on Translation

- Explain **Edward Said's concept of Orientalism** and how it relates to the translation of *The Thousand and One Nights*.
- Discuss how Western translators have contributed to **mythologizing and distorting the Orient**.

2. The Role of Racism in Translation

- Analyze how **racial stereotypes** are reflected in different translations of *The Thousand and One Nights*.
- Discuss specific **racialized descriptions** in Burton's translation and their impact on Western readers.

3. The Representation of Women in *The Thousand and One Nights*

- How does Scheherazade's **role change in different translations?**
- Discuss the **stereotypes of Eastern women** presented in Western translations.

4. The Fidelity and Creativity of Translators

- What does the phrase "**translators as beautiful infidels**" mean?
- Should a translator have the right to **rewrite and modify** a text? Why or why not?

5. The Evolution of Translations of *The Thousand and One Nights*

- Why is Burton's translation considered the most **controversial**?
- Discuss how **literary vs. colonial perspectives** influenced different translations.

Translation as a Tool of Cultural Power

- How has the West used translation to **control and shape** perceptions of the East?
- Discuss the idea that **the translator is not just a mediator but also an author.**
- How did *The Thousand and One Nights* contribute to the **European fascination with the Orient?**

3. TRANSLATION AND GENDER

- Feminist translation can include **reinterpretation, rewording, and highlighting gender inequalities.**
- Traditional translation theory often promotes **translator invisibility**, but feminist translators **embrace their presence** in the text.
- **"The feminist translator flaunts her signature in the text"** (Simon).
- Many languages use **gendered structures** (e.g., grammatical gender in French and Spanish), forcing translators to **navigate ideological choices.**
- Translators must decide whether to **retain, modify, or challenge** these gendered elements.
- **"Translation is not simply transferring words but engaging with a text's ideological implications"** (Simon).

- Feminist Translation Theory: How do feminist translators challenge patriarchal language?
- The Visibility of the Translator: Should translators remain "invisible," or should they embrace their interpretive role?
- Eroticism in Translation: How do translators handle gendered and eroticized content in literary texts?
- Western Feminisms and Translation Studies: How have feminist scholars influenced translation theory? "Les Belles Infidèles" Debate: Discuss the metaphor of translation as either "beautiful" or "faithful."

4. CHILDREN'S LITERATURE TRANSLATION

- Adapting cultural references, maintaining simplicity and clarity while keeping the narrative engaging for young readers.
- Translating literature for children involves simplifying language while maintaining cultural context and narrative style.
- It emphasizes clarity and the retention of humor, tone, and intent to resonate with a younger audience.
- The image of the child and the translation
- The implied child reader

- The Translator's Role in Children's Literature: Should translators remain invisible, or should they actively shape the text?
- Domestication vs. Foreignization: Which approach is better when translating for children? Provide examples.
- Cultural Adaptation in Children's Literature: How do translators handle cultural references in children's books?
- The Implied Child Reader: How does the translator's perception of the target audience influence translation choices?
- Neutralization vs. Exotization: Should cultural differences be preserved or adapted in children's literature?

5. TRANSLATION SERIES

- **Retranslation** refers to translating a text that has already been translated before.
- It can take different forms:
 - Retranslating a text **directly from the original**.
 - Translating a **previous translation** instead of the original.
 - **Back-translating** a text from a translation back into the original language.
 - **Intralingual translation**, which involves adapting a text within the same language.
- Understanding thematic continuity and how translation projects are maintained over multiple texts.
- Translation is the mirror which not only reflects but also generates light” G. Steiner
- Re-translation consists of translating a text which has previously been translated

THEORIES OF RETRANSLATION

1. Antoine Berman – Retranslation as Correction

- First translations tend to simplify or domesticate texts to make them more accessible.
- Later retranslations attempt to be more faithful to the original.
- Key Concept: "Foreignness" – Berman argues that retranslations should retain the foreign elements of the source text rather than adapting them.

2. Lawrence Venuti – Domestication vs. Foreignization

- Domestication: Adapting a text to the target culture, making it more familiar.
- Foreignization: Retaining the unique elements of the source culture.
- Retranslations often shift between these strategies, with earlier translations domesticating texts and later versions restoring foreignness.

3. Postcolonial Theory and Retranslation can help decolonize literature by restoring marginalized voices.

- Example: Indigenous stories originally translated through a colonial lens may be retranslated to reflect the original perspective.

- Berman's Retranslation Hypothesis: Do later translations always stay closer to the original? Discuss with examples.
- Venuti's Domestication vs. Foreignization: How do these strategies impact retranslation?
- Postcolonial Perspectives on Retranslation: How can retranslation decolonize literature?
- Fairy Tale Retranslation: How do retranslations of fairy tales differ depending on their intended audience?
- Angela Carter's Fairy Tale Retranslations: How do her feminist reinterpretations differ from earlier versions?

7. POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURE AS TRANSLATION

- **Post-colonial literature** responds to the experience of **colonization and its aftermath**, addressing themes such as **identity, resistance, hybridity, and language as a tool of both domination and liberation**.
- **Translation plays a key role** in bringing marginalized voices to global audiences while preserving cultural identity and resisting Eurocentric interpretations.
- Exploring how postcolonial literature often acts as a translation of native experiences for a global audience.
- The role of translation in shaping postcolonial discourse and reclaiming voices in postcolonial narratives.

1. Identity and Belonging

1. Post-colonial texts explore **cultural hybridity**, the tension between **local traditions and Western influences**, and the search for a **reclaimed identity**.

2. Power and Resistance

1. Literature **challenges colonial ideologies**, reclaiming **historical narratives** erased by imperial rule.

3. Language as a Tool of Oppression and Liberation

1. Colonizers imposed their languages, often erasing indigenous linguistic traditions.
2. Post-colonial writers **reclaim language**, sometimes blending native dialects with the colonizer's language to subvert its power.

4. The Role of Translation in Post-Colonial Discourse

1. **Translation spreads post-colonial voices globally**, but it can also distort meaning through **Eurocentric adaptations**.
2. **Challenges in translation:**
 1. **Translating culturally specific terms and metaphors.**
 2. **Decolonizing translation** by restoring the "foreignness" of texts rather than domesticating them.

Major Theorists in Post-Colonial Translation

1. Edward Said – *Orientalism*

1. Western colonial powers created **stereotypical representations of the East**, shaping global perceptions.
2. Post-colonial writers and translators challenge these misconceptions.

2. Homi Bhabha – *Cultural Hybridity and Translation*

1. Translation is a "**third space**" where cultural interactions create new identities.
2. "**We are translated men**" – Rushdie's phrase emphasizes how colonial subjects exist between cultures.

3. Gayatri Spivak – *Can the Subaltern Speak?*

1. Translation must **preserve the voice of the marginalized** rather than imposing dominant narratives.

- How does post-colonial literature challenge colonial narratives?
- How does language function as both a tool of oppression and a means of liberation in post-colonial texts?
- Explain Salman Rushdie's concept of "chutnification" in post-colonial writing.
- How does post-colonial translation differ from traditional translation practices?
- What are the challenges of translating culturally specific elements in post-colonial texts?

BIBLIOGRAPHY & FURTHER READING FOR TRANSLATION STUDIES IN A CULTURAL CONTEXT

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