et al. 1991; Shlesinger 1991; de Jongh 1992; Brown 1993; Laster and Taylor 1994; Robinson 1994; Edwards 1995; Morris 1995; Colin and Morris 1996; Brennan and Brown 1997; Hale 1997; Hertog 2002; Hale 2004.

MUHAMMAD Y. GAMAL

Cultural translation

The term 'cultural translation' is used in many different contexts and senses. In some of these it is a metaphor that radically questions translation's traditional parameters, but a somewhat narrower use of the term refers to those practices of LITERARY TRANSLATION that mediate cultural difference, or try to convey extensive cultural background, or set out to represent another culture via translation. In this sense, 'cultural translation' is counterposed to a 'linguistic' or 'grammatical' translation that is limited in scope to the sentences on the page. It raises complex technical issues: how to deal with features like dialect and heteroglossia, literary allusions, culturally specific items such as food or architecture, or further-reaching differences in the assumed contextual knowledge that surrounds the text and gives it meaning (see STRATEGIES). Questions like these feed long-standing disputes on the most effective – and most ethical – ways to render the cultural difference of the text (see ETHICS), leaning more towards naturalization or more towards exoticization, with the attendant dangers of ideologically appropriating the source culture or creating a spurious sense of absolute distance from it (Carbonell 1996). In this context, 'cultural translation' does not usually denote a particular kind of translation strategy, but rather a *perspective* on translations that focuses on their emergence and impact as components in the ideological traffic between language groups (see IDEOLOGY).

Anthropological 'translation of cultures'

More elaborated uses of the term 'cultural translation' have been developed in the discipline of cultural anthropology, which is faced with questions of translation on a variety of levels. In the most practical sense, anthropological fieldwork usually involves extensive interlingual translation, whether by anthropologists themselves or by their interpreters (Rubel and Rosman 2003:4). As linguistically challenged outsiders trying to understand what is going on, fieldworkers may encounter cultural difference in a very immediate and even painful way: 'participant observation obliges its practitioners to experience, at a bodily as well as intellectual level, the vicissitudes of translation' (Clifford 1983:119). Secondly, when the fieldworker's multidimensional, orally mediated experiences are reworked into linear written text, this is not simply a matter of interlingual, or even intersemiotic, translation, but also a translation between cultural contexts. Since anthropologists assume that language and culture filter our experiences of the world to a very great extent, evidently it will be difficult to grasp and convey experiences that take place within a different system of filters, outside our own frames of reference. The degree to which speakers of different languages can share a common ground of understanding, and communication can proceed in the face of potential incommensurability or

untranslatability between viewpoints, has been explored by Feleppa (1988), Needham (1972) and Tambiah (1990); see TRANSLATABILITY.

Alongside these epistemological worries, ethnography involves writing down the complex worlds of other people's meaning in a way that is intelligible in the receiving language. How much use of transferred source-language terms is required in that process, how much contextualization, how much approximation to target-culture genres and narrative forms are questions that are hotly debated in the literature. Like the literary 'cultural translator', the ethnographer has to reconcile respect for the specificity of the 'native point of view' with the desire to create a text comprehensible to the target readership. As Crapanzano puts it, the ethnographer like the translator 'must render the foreign familiar and preserve its very foreignness at one and the same time' (1986:52). In ethnographic practice the balance between these goals varies. Much debate has focused on the twin dangers of, on the one hand, an 'orientalizing' translation style associated with hierarchical representations of other cultures as

primitive and inferior to a normative 'western' civilization, and, on the other, an 'appropriative' style that downplays the distinctiveness of other world views and claims universal validity for what may in fact be domestic categories of thought (see Pálsson 1993 for an interesting discussion of these points).

Some objections to 'translation of cultures'

These debates are not always formulated explicitly in terms of translation, but as Asad explains in an influential 1986 essay, the phrase 'translation of cultures' is a conventional metaphor in anthropological theory. Gaining ground from the 1950s, especially in British functionalist anthropology, the 'translation of cultures' approach saw its task as searching for the internal coherence that other people's thinking and practices have in their own context, then re-creating that coherence in the terms of Western academia. Asad's critical discussion of the metaphor shows that in the 'translation of cultures' perspective, the ethnographer-translator assumes authority to extract the underlying meanings of what the 'natives' say and do, as opposed to the sayers and doers themselves determining what they mean. As a result, the 'cultural translator' takes on authorship and the position of knowing better than the 'cultural text' itself, which is relegated to the status of an unknowing provider of source material for interpretation. This imbalance of power arises from political inequality between source and target languages, and itself feeds into dominant 'knowledge' about colonized societies. Thus 'the process of "cultural translation" is inevitably enmeshed in conditions of power – professional, national, international' (1986:162). Although Asad does not reject the viability of cultural translation as a whole, he insists that it must always be approached through awareness of the 'asymmetrical tendencies and pressures in the languages of dominated and dominant societies' (ibid.: 164).

Asad thus challenges the model of cultural translation which assigns to a dominating target language the authority to survey the source culture and detect intentions hidden to its members. But the idea of cultures as being text-like, and thus susceptible to 'translation' in the first place, has also been questioned. The textualizing approach of interpretive anthropology was set out by Clifford Geertz in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973), which takes a hermeneutic view of cultures as complex webs of meaning capable of being 'read'. Much influenced by Geertz, the critics often labelled as 'Writing Culture' (after the title of Clifford and Marcus's ground-breaking 1986 collection) focus on ethnographic descriptions themselves as texts – 'fictions' that conventionally make use of particular tropes and genres and that have served to reinforce hegemonic relationships between anthropologizers and anthropologized. The concept of translation is frequently employed by these critics, who are interested in the power of texts to form and re-form dominant knowledge (see also Clifford 1997). However, their detractors argue that culture should not necessarily be viewed as system or language, let alone as text, but perhaps rather as historically contingent conversation and interaction (Pálsson 1993). Additionally, *Writing Culture*'s focus on textuality has been accused of sidestepping the concrete political practices which far more powerfully determine the relationships between cultures (Abu-Lughod 1991).

A more fundamental criticism of the concept of 'cultural translation' questions the very existence of 'cultures'. The many anthropological critiques of the notion of cultures, usefully presented by Brightman (1995), show how it can falsely construct human communities as being homogeneous, monolithic, essentially unchanging, and clearly bounded by national or other borders. As the *Writing Culture* critics pointed out, cultural descriptions based on this conception participated in constructing the alleged 'primitivism' of non-western peoples by representing them as radically separate and sealed off from the describing western societies. For example, the history of contact, especially the violent contact of colonialism, was repressed in classic ethnographies so as to present the quintessential ethnographic 'culture' as pure, primordial and untouched by outside influences. The notion of discrete cultures, then, provided the dubious framework for the ethnographic description and guided what could be seen and said about the people being 'translated'.

Intersections, internal conflict, mixing and historical change had no place in such a model of the ideal 'cultural unit'; these features were attributed to target-language societies alone. A similar argument is made by Niranjana (1992) for the case of India: translation in both the textual and the more metaphorical senses helped to construct an essentialized and ahistorical 'Indian culture' that could be conveniently inserted into a position of inferiority *vis-à-vis* the British colonial power.

Cultural translation as processes of hybrid identification

In view of these thorough-going attacks on the model of cultures as distinct languages that can be translated into other languages, 'cultural translation' too is undermined, at least as a model of *inter*-'cultural' translation between boundaried, quasi-national entities. Here a related but more figurative and far-reaching use of the term 'cultural translation' comes to the fore: the notion, common in POSTCOLONIAL studies, that translation is less a procedure to which cultures can be subjected than itself the very fabric of culture. In this case, 'translation' is not meant as interlingual transfer but metaphorically, as the alteration of colonizing discourses by the discourses of the colonized and vice versa. For Bhabha, the resulting 'hybridity' in language and cultural identity means culture is both 'transnational and translational' (1994a: 5) – constituted via 'translation' as exchange and ADAPTATION, especially through the phenomenon of migration (see MOBILITY; GLOBALIZATION). In this view, translation is not an interchange between discrete wholes but a process of mixing and mutual contamination, and not a movement from 'source' to 'target' but located in a 'third space' beyond both, where 'conflicts arising from cultural difference and the different social discourses involved in those conflicts are negotiated' (Wolf 2002:190).

Cultural translation in this sense offers a dissolution of some key categories of translation studies: the notion of separate 'source' and 'target' language-cultures and indeed binary or dualistic models in general. Rather than being clear-cut *locations* of coherent identity, argues Doris Bachmann-Medick, cultures are *processes* of translation, constantly shifting, multiplying and diversifying; the idea of cultural translation can 'act as an anti-essentialist and anti-holistic metaphor that aims to uncover counter-discourses, discursive forms and resistant actions within a culture, heterogeneous discursive spaces within a society' and enable 'a dynamic concept of culture as a practice of negotiating cultural differences, and of cultural overlap, syncretism and creolization' (2006:37).

Although this kind of approach does not specifically rule out the meaning of 'translation' as an interlingual practice, clearly it is interested in much wider senses of translation than the movement from language one to language two. The danger here, in Trivedi's view (2005), is that the notion of 'cultural translation' might drastically undervalue the linguistic difference and co-existence upon which translation in the more traditional sense relies. Trivedi accuses Bhabha of marginalizing bilingualism and translation as specifically interlingual practices, the precondition for polylingual cultural diversity. He calls for translation studies to insist on the centrality of translation's polylingual aspect

and to refute the generalization of 'cultural translation' into an umbrella term for all aspects of MOBILITY and diasporic life.

Trivedi's criticism might be extended to uses of the translation metaphor in anthropological and cultural studies which exclude or do not address language difference, thus potentially presenting a false sense of monolingualism to western audiences. Metaphorical usage could at worst hollow out the word 'translation', not just into something that need not necessarily include more than one language but into something that primarily *does not* include more than one language – a factor, instead, of shifts and layering within globally dominant English without the need for bilingual translation to take place. As Bachmann-Medick (2006) hints, in a nightmare scenario 'cultural translation' could mean the adaptation of everything to the dominant idiom of western capitalism, thus destroying difference or relegating it to unheard margins of global society. For critics such as Trivedi, the challenge to translation studies is thus to reassert the crucial role of translation in all its senses within interdisciplinary debates on cultural difference and GLOBALIZATION.

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See also:

Further reading

Geertz 1973; Asad 1986; Clifford and Marcus 1986; Feleppa 1988; Niranjana 1992; Pálsson 1993; Bhabha 1994b; Brightman 1995; Sturge 1997; Wolf 2002; Rubel and Rosman 2003; Trivedi 2005; Bachmann-Medick 2006; Sturge 2007.

KATE STURGE

Culture

Until the birth of anthropology, culture referred exclusively to the humanist ideal of what was considered 'civilized' in a developed society. Since then, a second meaning of culture as the way of life of a people has become influential. With the development of disciplines such as cultural studies, a third meaning has emerged which attempts to identify political or ideological reasons for specific cultural behaviour (see Katan 1999/2004:29). Hence, depending on the definition adopted, culture may be formally learnt, unconsciously shared, or be a site of conflict. To complicate matters further, anthropologists themselves now seriously question 'the old idea of "a people" possessing "a shared culture"' (Erikson and Nielson 2001:162).

In translation studies, theorists and practitioners are equally divided over the meaning and importance of culture, though most would tacitly accept that there is some form of 'cultural filter' (House 2002:100) involved in the translation process

Culture as a system of frames

We can clarify the apparently contradictory definitions of culture by presenting them as hierarchical frames or levels, each one (to some extent) embedded within larger frames. This hierarchy is based on the Theory of Types (Bateson 1972), which allows for each of the competing types of culture (i.e. definitions) to be valid for translation, albeit within their own level. In an extensive treatment of culture in the context of translation and interpreting, Katan (1999/2004:26) proposes a definition of culture as a shared 'model of the world', a hierarchical system of congruent and interrelated beliefs, values and strategies which can guide action and interaction, depending on cognitive context; '[e]ach aspect of culture is linked in a [fluid] system to form a unifying context of culture'. The levels themselves are based on Edward T. Hall's popular anthropological *iceberg model*, the 'Triad of Culture' (1959/1990), which serves to introduce one dimension of the system, dividing aspects of culture into what is visible (above the waterline), semi-visible and invisible (Figure 1). The frames below

the water line are progressively more hidden but also progressively closer to our unquestioned assumptions about the world and our own (cultural) identities. A further, sociological, dimension may be described as operating on the iceberg itself. The levels also reflect the various ways in which we learn culture: technically, through explicit instruction; formally, through trial-and-error modelling; and informally, through the unconscious inculcation of principles and world views.

The extent to which a translator should intervene (i.e. interpret and manipulate rather than operate a purely linguistic transfer) will be in accordance with our beliefs about which frame(s) most influence translation. Translation scholars tend to focus on the more hidden levels, while practitioners are more concerned with what is visible on the surface.

Technical culture: civilization

The first cultural frame is at the tip of the iceberg and coincides with the humanist concept of culture. The focus is on the text, dressed (adapting Newmark 1995:80) in its best civilized clothes of a particular culture. At this 'Technical' level, language signs have a clear WYSIWYG (What-You-See-Is-What-You-Get) referential function, and any associated hidden values are 'universal'. The task of the translator at this level is to transfer the terms and concepts in the source text abroad with minimum loss (from literature and philosophical ideas to software

Figure 1: Adapted from Brake *et al.* (1995:39; Katan 1999/2004:43)

manuals), so that 'what you see' in the source text is equivalent to 'what you see' in the target text. As long as the two cultures 'have reached a comparable degree of development', some have argued, there is no reason why meaning, reader response and uptake should not be 'universal' (see, for example, Seleskovitch, in Newmark 1988:6, and Wilss 1982:48). This is what Newmark (1981:184–5) calls 'the cultural value' of translation, and indeed the bylaws of the International Federation of Translators (n.d.) similarly assume that the value of translation is that it 'assists in the spreading of culture throughout the world'. The chapter headings in *Translators through History* (Delisle and Woodsworth 1995) give us an idea of what is involved at this level: the invention of alphabets and the writing of dictionaries; the development of national languages and literatures, and the spread of religions and cultural values. Depending on the asymmetries of power, spreading the new terms and concepts might be perceived as enlightenment, 'the white man's burden', an affront, the wielding of hegemony or a much-valued addition to intellectual debate. However, the main concern of translators intervening at this level is the text itself and the translation of 'culture-bound' terms, or 'culturemes' – defined as formalized, socially and juridically embedded phenomena that exist in a particular form or function in only one of the two cultures being compared (Vermeer 1983a: 8; Nord 1997:34). These culturemes, or 'cultural categories' in Newmark's terms (1988:9 5), cover a wide array of semantic fields: from geography and traditions to institutions and technologies. Since Vinay and Darbelnet (1958), various scholars have offered a plethora of STRATEGIES to compensate for lack of EQUIVALENCE at this level (see Kwieciński 2001 for a useful summary).

Formal culture: functionalist, appropriate practices

Hall's second, 'Formal', level of culture derives from the anthropological definition, focusing on what is normal or appropriate (rather than what is civilized). Hans Vermeer's definition of culture, accepted by many translators as 'the standard', belongs to this level: 'Culture consists of everything one needs to know, master and feel, in order to assess where members of a society are behaving acceptably or deviantly in their various roles' (translated in Snell-Hornby 2006:55).

Culture here is a predictable pattern of shared practices which guide actual (technical level) language use, for example culture-specific genre preferences, protopypes and schemata, or even simply 'good style'; see, for example, Clyne (1991), Ventola (2000) and Candlin and Gotti (2004). What is judged as good translation practice is also guided by culturally-specific translation NORMS, rules and conventions, including, among other things: which texts are accepted for translation; the type of translation and compensation strategies to employ; and the criteria by which a translation is judged (Chesterman 1993; Toury 1995). Intervention at this level focuses on the skopos of the translation and on tailoring the translation to the expectations of receivers in the target culture. In practice, however, it is often project managers and 'cultural interpreters' within the language industry who ultimately mediate Formal culture, leaving 'the translator' with the Technical, 'lingua' part of 'linguaculture' (Agar 1994).

Informal culture: cognitive systems

Hall calls his third level of culture 'Informal' or 'Out-of-awareness', because it is not normally accessible to the conscious brain for metacognitive comment. At this level, there are no formal guides to practice but instead unquestioned core values and beliefs, or stories about self and the world. As such, one's culture, inculcated for example though family, school and the media, becomes a relatively fixed internal representation of reality, Bourdieu's *habitus* (see SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACHES), which then both guides and constrains one's orientation in the real world. Psychological anthropology defines culture in terms of a *Weltanschauung*, a shared model, map or view of the perceivable world (Korzybski 1933/1958); 'mental programming' (Hofstede 1980/2001); 'the form of things that people have in their mind' (Goodenough 1957/1964:36) and which orients individual and community ways of doing things. These are 'core, primary ethical values' (Chesterman 1997:149) or 'transcendental values' (Walter Fisher, in Baker 2006a) that guide Formal culture choices. The hierarchy of preferred value orientations is seen as the result of a community response to universal human needs or problems (Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck 1961), such as relations to time, and between the individual and the group. With their coining of the term 'cultural turn', Lefevere and Bassnett (1990:1; see also Bassnett 1980/2002) were among the first to popularize the view that translation is a bicultural practice requiring 'mindshifting' (Taft 1981:53) from one linguacultural model of the world to another, and mediating (or compensating) skills to deal with the inevitable refraction between one reality and another. Linguacultures have been studied through, for example, the

description of their 'cultural grammar' (Duranti 1997:27; Goodenough 2003:5), defined by Wierzbicka (1996:527) as 'a set of subconscious rules that shape a people's ways of thinking, feeling, speaking, and interacting'. Her emic 'cultural scripts' (e.g. Wierzbicka 2003, 2006) provide strong linguistic evidence for the need to translate at the informal level. For a more etic approach based on orientations, see, for example, de Mooij (2004) and Katan (2006); see also Manca (2008) for a corpus-driven perspective.

Outside the iceberg: power relations

Sociologists and scholars of cultural studies tend to focus on the influence that culture exercises on society and institutions in terms of prevailing ideologies. Culture here is seen as the result of the 'pressures that social structures apply to social action' (Jenks 1993:25). These pressures mould, manipulate or conflict with the individual but shared models of the world discussed above.

Two other fundamental differences distinguish this approach from the traditional anthropological model. First, individuals (and texts) cannot be assigned to 'a culture' in this view. Instead they have many cultural provenances, are variously privileged or suppressed from different perspectives, and will negotiate a position within a set of complex cultural systems that are constantly jockeying for power. Within translation studies, scholars drawing on POLYSYSTEM theory (Even-Zohar 1990), POSTCOLONIAL theory (Bassnett and Trivedi 1999) and narrative theory (Baker 2006a) all share this assumption. Secondly, the system of culture itself is constantly subject to questioning (as is the idea of cultural relativity). At this level, translators intervene between competing (and unequal) systems of power, no longer to facilitate but to participate in constructing the world, acknowledging that texts (and they themselves) are carriers of ideologies (Hatim and Mason 1997:147). The decision to translate Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1988) or *Did Six Million Really Die?* (Harwood 1977) are clear cases in point. The translator at this level is no longer a detached mediator but is conscious of being 'an ethical agent of social change' (Tymoczko 2003:181), or 'an activist' involved in renarrating the world (Baker 2006b). In a similar vein, Venuti's preference for foreignizing strategies 'stems partly from a political agenda … an opposition to the global hegemony of English' (Venuti 1998b: 10), a hegemony that communicates and normalizes specific (e.g. capitalist, colonial) cultural values. Intervention at this level clearly raises many ethical questions (see ETHICS); on a practical level the difficulty of unsettling the third level of culture (Informal or Out-of-awareness) means that only a fine line separates a successful translation which resists generic conventions to introduce a new way of writing or way of thinking and an unread translation; as Baker (2006a: 98) puts it, 'even breaches of canonical storylines have to be effected within circumscribed, normative plots [i.e. Formal culture] if they are to be intelligible at all'.

Ultimately, culture has to be understood not only as a set of levels or frames but as an integrated system, in a constant state of flux, through which textual signals are negotiated and reinterpreted according to context and individual stance.

See also:

CULTURAL TRANSLATION; ETHICS; GLOBALIZATION; IDEOLOGY; NORMS; SEMIOTICS; TRANSLATABILITY.

Further reading

Hall 1959/1990; Bassnett 1980/2002; Jenks 1993; Duranti 1997; Katan 1999/2004; House 2002; Snell-Hornby 2006.

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