

**REVIEW**

HOUSE, Juliane. *Translation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, 122pp.

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**Keywords:** Communication; linguistics; translation.

Translation has attracted a diverse amount of perspectives through which it has been examined, discussed and theorized. Such perspectives are related to well established disciplines as literary theory, comparative studies, linguistics, history, philosophy and others in humanities and social science fields. Even with the rise of translation studies, a discipline in which translation is the central object of study, translation is still approached with the help of other disciplines. This fact comes from the nature of translation: it is both a linguistic and a cultural process. Thus, translation studies is mostly an interdisciplinary area.

*Translation*, by Juliane House, is thought to be an introduction to language study on the topic of translation to students of linguistics and also to people who are simply interested in it. Possibly, as the book intends to reach broader readership, it opens the discussion further than the linguistic perspective. It describes some recent contributions to the field, basically the ones that focus on cultural and ideological features in the study of translation. In this view, translation is an intercultural means of communication mediated by a context of situation. This implies the recognition that difference, rather than similarity, controls and influences translation processes. Also in this perspective, the notion of a stable meaning has been challenged and dismantled. These new approaches to the study of translation are reviewed and keywords such as polysystem (the network of literary and extra-literary systems within society) and skopos (study with focus on the purpose of the translated text) are mentioned without reference to its main theorists.

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Nevertheless, it is interesting to observe the considerable space House uses to discuss this new perspective, which seems to contradict her own points of views.

One of the main problems pointed out by House in recent studies has been the diminished role of original texts, which leads to reducing the importance of its linguistic form and meaning. Also problematic, according to House, is the controversy over equivalence. This notion has been widely criticized because it suggests, in the sense that was formulated by J. C. Catford and Eugene Nida, that meaning could be safely transferred from original text to its translation, as if the original text was a stable, fixed object. House argues that equivalence is a term that refers to different types of instances. Here, the author makes a useful overview on the question of equivalence. She starts illustrating the term from Catford and Nida's perspective, observing that equivalence can only be a relative term.

After that, House enumerates the various types of equivalence: denotative, connotative, text-normative, pragmatic and formal-aesthetic. She emphasizes that all of these types cannot be achieved in any particular case. So, it becomes a matter of choice by the translator. On the other hand, this fact seems to be of no use to the author when she objects to accepting a focus on the target context of translation. House's traditional and conservative view on translation becomes clearer when she claims that defining the limits of equivalence is necessary to distinguish between a text that is a translation and one that is some sort of adaptation or version of the original. It is a refusal to see, for example, film adaptations as translation. By extension, it apparently contradicts her acceptance of seeing transmutations as intersemiotic translation when she comments on kinds of translation in chapter one.

It also follows in chapter one some basic distinctions: between interpreting and translation, between human and machine translation and between translation as a linguistic act and translation as intercultural communication. In chapter two, House presents some of the perspectives on the area, departing from contrastive linguistics and its focus on original text; then, the focus on interpretation and its limitations is pointed out; and finally, the so-called cultural, ideological and literary perspective and its limitations are presented. At this chapter,

the author clarifies that linguistic perspectives on translation, focused on the original text, have widened their scope to embrace functional and pragmatic views of language.

The notion of equivalence is the main theme in chapter three. At this point, the author proposes a framework for analyzing translations. She suggests considering concepts from sociolinguistics, such as field, tenor and mode, which characterizes a register (a segment of language in use). To examine the relationship of a text with its cultural context and tradition, House proposes the notion of genre in such analysis. As we mentioned above, linguistics approach to translation have enlarged their scope and have also conceded that sociocultural aspects are of great importance to understand the movement of texts. This fact is emphasized in the distinction between overt and covert translation. The former is an attempt to leave the original sociocultural frame as intact as possible in the translation. This type of translation is used to reproduce historical speeches, and to make addressees aware of the fact that the text was not made for them. By contrast, the latter kind seeks to hide the original features of the text. It functions and operates in accordance with the discourse world of the target culture. Covert translation is used for translating advertisements, for example.

In chapter four, some views on evaluating translations are displayed. It starts with impressionistic and subjective views, regarded by the author as futile, confusing and out-dated. Then, response-based behavioural views claim that a translation is good when its effect on recipients is the same as the original had. House thinks that, although these views present more reliable and verifiable criteria, they are problematic because of the number of imponderable variables involved. Next, the author demonstrates some postmodernist and deconstructionist approaches known as target-text related views. In such approaches, the lack of reference to the source text is seen as a misleading drawback, one that prevents the analyst from knowing whether he or she is dealing with a translation or with an original text. House reinforces throughout her text that both source and target texts have to be taken into account in evaluating translations. It seems to be an opposition to target-text oriented approaches. In fact, House's assumptions seem to be quite reasonable and sound, if one is not

familiar with discussions aroused by scholars who propose the study of translation focusing on the target sociocultural frame. It is known that most supporters of a focus on target culture consider the possibility of a return to source text to establish shifts and, more importantly, to discover what such shifts mean. Obviously, the introductory nature of the book and House's own perspective limit what could be a more complete state of affairs on the subject.

House comments on the pedagogical uses of translation in chapter five. This area is controversial as well, once translation has been subjected to cyclical perceptions on its use for teaching and learning a foreign language. House divides this part of the book between arguments for and arguments against translation in foreign language teaching. The author describes briefly the establishment of grammar-translation method and the subsequent banishment of translation with direct and audiolingual methods. It is interesting to observe that, as House puts it, currently, there is a tendency to consider learners' mother tongue a resourceful instrument for teaching. This comes from the principle that linking new knowledge with what learners already know contributes to the process of bilingualization. In this sense, translation plays an active role.

Final chapter six examines current issues, precisely, translation as intercultural communication. House points out the shift in translation studies from a linguistic to a cultural orientation. She attributes this change to a general trend in social sciences and humanities. A trend that brought postmodernist, post-colonial, feminist and other "socioculturally and politically motivated schools of thought" agendas to the center of academic discussions. This movement is also known as *cultural turn*. Corpus translation and its promising and useful methods are explained. Even in this area, which, according to House, is more appropriate than "introspections" to provide reliable data, it is necessary to take context into account in order to prevent distortions. With corpus translation, it is advisable to use other approaches as support, such as introspection, observation, textual and ethnographic analysis and linguistic interpretation.

Translation in the context of globalization ends the book. This last topic is discussed in the face of a worldwide translation industry. In

this context, even with English as the world's dominant lingua franca, news agencies, such as BBC, broadcasts in over 40 different languages. Translators are challenged to provide materials which encompass linguistic and cultural features in extremely short time. Curiously, localization has also placed translation at the center of global economy. House explains that localization is the process of making one product available to many people and the strategy is to localize it by translating it. Also known as *glocalization*, this process has generated an explosion of demand for translation.

House's book serves as an interesting and clear introduction to translation, mainly considering the still relevant contributions made by linguistics. It is important to recognize the author's effort to reconcile linguistics and sociocultural approaches to the study of translation. The book might also be of interest for those who use English as a working tool, from teachers to translators. However, due to the large scope of translation, the book turns out to be rather incomplete.