IDEOLOGY, TECHNOLOGY, AND TRANSLATION: SHAPING THE FIELD OF TRANSLATION STUDIES

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Introduction

Translation studies have undergone remarkable transformation, evolving from a narrow linguistic discipline to an interdisciplinary field that engages with cultural, ideological, and technological dimensions. Central to this evolution are two influential factors: ideology and technology. Ideology shapes the values, power relations, and choices embedded in translation processes, while technology revolutionizes how translation is performed, taught, and theorized. This essay examines the impact of ideology and technology on the shaping of translation studies, arguing that a critical understanding of their interaction is essential to comprehending the field's current state and future directions.
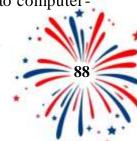
Ideology and Translation

Translation is inherently ideological. It is not simply a linguistic transfer from a source language to a target language but a socially and politically situated act that reflects and reproduces power structures. Venuti (1995) highlights how dominant cultures promote "domestication," a strategy where translations conform to the target culture's norms, thereby marginalizing the foreignness of the source text. This process conceals the translator's presence and ideology, rendering translation an "invisible" act that reinforces hegemonic discourses.

Lefevere (1992) conceptualizes translation as "rewriting" under ideological and institutional constraints, where translations serve the interests of dominant powers—whether political, cultural, or commercial. For example, colonial translations often facilitated imperial agendas by portraying colonized cultures through a lens of otherness or inferiority (Bassnett & Trivedi, 1999). More recently, postcolonial translation studies have highlighted translation's potential as a site of resistance and cultural negotiation.

The ideology inherent in translation extends beyond texts to the translator's role. Translators act as mediators and gatekeepers, whose decisions are influenced by personal, institutional, and socio-political factors. Thus, ideology influences not only what is translated but also how, why, and for whom, shaping the entire translation process and its outcomes (Munday, 2016).

Technology and Translation

Technological advancements have profoundly reshaped translation practice and research. Early translation technology, including dictionaries and glossaries, evolved into computer-

assisted translation (CAT) tools such as translation memory systems, which improve productivity and consistency by storing previous translations for reuse (O'Brien, 2012).

More transformative is the rise of machine translation (MT), particularly neural machine translation (NMT) systems. These AI-driven technologies produce increasingly fluent and contextually accurate translations, challenging traditional human translation roles (Bahdanau, Cho, & Bengio, 2015). Services like Google Translate and DeepL have democratized access to multilingual content, altering both public expectations and professional practices in translation.

The incorporation of technology has also broadened translation studies to include localization, audiovisual translation, and crowdsourcing, facilitated by digital platforms (Pym, 2013). This expansion necessitates new theoretical frameworks and pedagogical approaches to prepare translators for a technologically integrated environment.

Intersecting Ideology and Technology

Technology itself is not neutral; it reflects and reproduces existing ideological frameworks. The development of MT favors dominant languages, reinforcing linguistic hierarchies and digital divides. Smaller languages often lack technological support, marginalizing them in global digital communication (Koehn, 2020).

Moreover, AI systems can inherit biases present in their training data, potentially perpetuating stereotypes and social inequalities in translations (Caliskan, Bryson, & Narayanan, 2017). This raises ethical concerns regarding transparency, fairness, and inclusivity in translation technology development.

Conversely, technology can empower marginalized groups by facilitating grassroots translation projects and preserving endangered languages (Cronin, 2013). Digital platforms enable wider participation in translation activities, challenging traditional gatekeeping and promoting cultural diversity.

A critical and interdisciplinary approach is necessary to address these ideological implications of translation technology. Translation studies must engage with computer science, ethics, and sociolinguistics to foster inclusive, equitable technological advancements.

Conclusion

Ideology and technology are intertwined forces that have shaped and continue to shape the field of translation studies. Ideological analysis reveals translation as a socially embedded, power-laden practice, while technology transforms how translation is conducted and studied. Understanding their dynamic interaction is crucial for advancing translation studies in the digital age.

Future research should aim to develop translation technologies that support linguistic diversity and cultural sensitivity, while maintaining critical awareness of ideological influences. Through this, translation studies can contribute to more just and inclusive intercultural communication in a globalized world.

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