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What Translation Studies Owe to Schleiermacher's Thought

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Abstract

This paper examines the enduring influence of James Holmes and Friedrich Schleiermacher on the field of translation studies. In the 19th century, translation evolved from loose adaptations toward a more serious commitment to preserving the completeness and authenticity of foreign texts. German preacher and theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher, in his seminal essay "On the Different Methods of Translating", offered groundbreaking ideas on the subject. His essay is considered foundational, particularly in light of James Holmes's 1972 article, "The Name and Nature of Translation Studies". Holmes's publication is credited with catalysing the emergence of two significant translation schools: the Manipulation School and the Functional School. Theorists within these schools have, consciously or unconsciously, drawn heavily upon Schleiermacher's insights.

The current study will delve into Holmes's legacy within translation studies, highlighting the key concepts from Schleiermacher's essay that shaped the theoretical landscape of translation. Specifically, it seeks to address the following inquiries:

How did Holmes's contribution usher in a new theoretical paradigm in translation?

What are the principal ideas from Schleiermacher's text that have influenced subsequent translation scholars?

What are the fundamental theories and principles of the Manipulation and Functional Schools, and how are they rooted in Schleiermacher's ideas?

Keywords: Translation Studies, Schleiermacher, Holmes, Manipulation school, Functional school

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1. Introduction

The prescriptive approach (Prescriptivism) in translation, which dictated how a translation should be based on fixed rules, ideals, of 'good translation', was the only manner adopted in the pre-translation studies era. The key characteristics and principles of this approach were: fidelity, faithfulness, Linguistic equivalence, word-for-word and sense-for-sense. And its key representatives were Etienne Dolet and Tytler Fraser.

Post-translation studies era signals a major shift away from its older, moving the realm from a purely scientific approach to a more humanistic, interconnected one. It is worth mentioning that the beginning of this era dates back to Homes' essay, first presented in 1972. Whereas, its first roots go back to Schleiermacher's essay.

During this phase, studies view translation as an active, transformative force that shapes the world. Their key question is: what does translation do in the world?

2. James Holmes' Legacy

2.1. A synoptic view on Holmes' tenets

Describing the previous theories as prolegomena to a general translation theory, 'James Holmes' (1988/ 1994), the American-Dutch poet and translation scholar, proposed a new name for the field and discussed its nature in the seminal lecture, "*The Name and Nature of Translation Studies*" (1972), which is widely considered the founding statement for the field of translation studies as a distinct academic discipline. Naming this new field was a crucial act for the discipline's identity, so he gave the field the standardized name 'Translation Studies' using a map which divided the field into two main branches: Pure (theoretical/ descriptive) and Applied.

The map was presented in a diagram form by Gideon Toury in his "*Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond*":

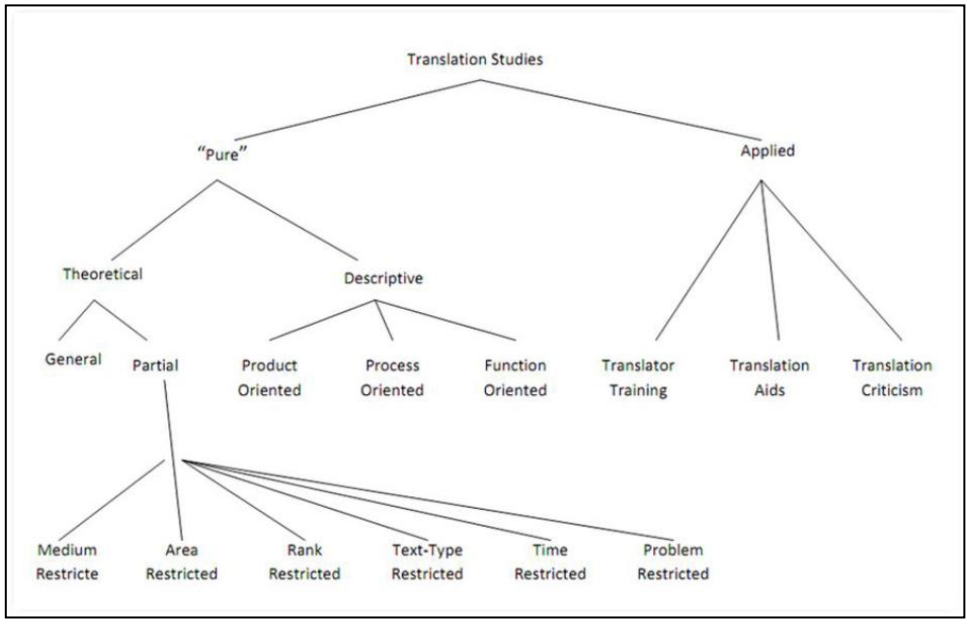


Fig.1 Holmes' Basic 'Map' of Translation Studies (Toury, 2012, p.4)

It should be noted that Toury neglected the subfield called 'Translation policy' which focuses on the societal role of translation, as criticized by Andrew Chesterman (2009).

Holmes' work came to highlight the cultural turn which views translation an act that is deeply embedded in power, history and cultural context. So, Hornby (2006) declared that during that period, the translation has truly witnessed a change of paradigm with the emergence of two schools: The Manipulation school which is interested in literary texts with writings in English on the one hand, and the functional school which is interested in pragmatic texts with writings mainly in German, on the other hand.

As clarified by Hornby (2006), the key words of this new perspective are: descriptive, target- oriented, functional and systemic, particularly as they are diametrically opposed to the dogmas on the translation of the time, which, as the domain of the translator training institutes, were essentially prescriptive, source- text oriented and linguistic.

2.2. Schools in translation

The division of translation studies has been characterized by the emergence of two schools: Manipulation School and Functional School.

2.2.1. The Manipulation School in translation

A. Brief Overview

The term "Manipulation" was popularized by Theo Hermans in his *The Manipulation of Literature: Studies in Literary Translation*, first published in 1985. The book was a collection of essays carried out by a group of scholars who are authors of unavoidable works in translating literature, such as: André Lefevere, Susan Bassnett, Gideon Toury.

Hermans (1985) mentioned that this new approach in dealing with literary translation was not viewed as a school, but rather as a group of scholars having in common some assumptions about an approach to literary translation which is descriptive, target-oriented, functional and systemic. Moreover, they are, all of them, interested in the different norms and constraints that guide the reception and the production of translations.

As discussed in Snell-Hornby (2006), 'Manipulation school' was given this name after one of the papers given by Low Countries group in a conference organized in 1987. Its core premise is that all translation involves a degree of manipulation of the source text to make it fit into the receiving culture and literature.

Hermans' (1985) work on the 'Manipulation School' of translation posited that the translation process is far from being a simple, direct transfer of meaning. Instead, it is characterized by multiple layers of interpretation, significantly shaped by the interplay of cultural, social, and political contexts. Acknowledging these intricate dimensions was crucial for appreciating translation as a sophisticated discipline demanding expertise, informed consciousness, and a commitment to ethical practice.

B. A synoptic view on key proponents of this School and their core tenets

As cited- above, among the key representatives of the Manipulation school, there are André Lefevere, Itamar Even- Zohar and Gideon Toury, Theo Hermans and José Lambert. These theorists have influential ideas on translating literature and their works are mandatory.

- **Itamar Even-Zohar: PS theory**

  The culture researcher Itamar Even-Zohar is the pioneer of the so-called Polysystem Theory which he developed in the 1970's. He (2012) claimed that it is crucial to deal with translated literature because the source texts are chosen based on the target literature, and the selection criteria are always consistent with the underlying systems of that literature. In addition, they incorporate particular norms, actions and policies which arise from their interactions with the other home co-systems.

  Thus, the key idea in Even- Zohar's theory is that the status of a literary work can change depending on its position within the overall system and the sociocultural context in which it exists. Consequently, Even- Zohar (2012) observed that a piece deemed peripheral in one setting might achieve a more central position in another. Furthermore, he argued that translated works engage with and exert influence upon the indigenous literature of a particular culture, thereby underscoring the substantial impact of translation in moulding literary conventions.

  To sum up, Lambert (1995) highlighted that the Polysystem (PS) theory uniquely positioned translation within the wider scope of cultural inquiry and acknowledges the inherent diversity among cultures. Furthermore, contributions of both Even-Zohar and Toury extended significantly beyond a restrictive, rule-based perspective. Indeed, the establishment of Translation Studies as a recognized academic field owes a substantial debt to the foundational principles of PS.

  Notably, there is a fluctuation in the names given to this new perspective: model, theory, approach. But, as mentioned by Lambert (1995), being more than one single theory which contributes in developing other hypotheses and theories with collective publications, certain colleagues call it a 'School'.

- **Gideon Toury: Translation and Normativity**

  Stimulated by Even- Zohar's "*Introduction to a theory of Literary Translation*" (1971), Holmes' "*Translated!: Papers on Literary Translation and Translation Studies*" (1988), and Jiří Levý's "*The Art of Translation"* (1963), Toury (2012) viewed translation as a norm- governed activity. He defined Norms as (2012, p. 63): "the translation of general values or ideas shared by a community- as to what would count as right or wrong, adequate or inadequate- into performance

'instructions' appropriate for and applicable to concrete situations." Specifying that these norms are part of what certain scholars called a tool kit of habits and skills that guide translators choosing the strategy ensuring social and cultural order.

Considering the realm of translation as a scientific discipline in -the making, Toury (1985) justified the need for Descriptive studies as an essential means to test, reject and improve a fundamental theory.

- **André Lefevere and Susan Bassnett: Rewriting theory, new paradigm in translation "Cultural Turn"**

André Lefevere's 2017 work, *"Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literature Fame,"* stands as a foundational text within the field, exploring the translator's impact on the reception of literary works. Lefevere's central argument elaborates on the translator's function by examining the three primary forces that shape "rewritings": ideology, patronage, and poetics.

In the preface of his "*Translation, History, Culture"* (1992), Lefevere summarized his new perspective defining translation as: "a rewriting of an original text. All rewritings, whatever their intention, reflect a certain ideology and a poetics and as such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way."

As a double-edged sword, he (1992) argued that rewriting can contribute positively to the introduction of new knowledge and ideas; notwithstanding, it may also hinder innovation.

Constructing Cultures: Essays on Literary Translation (1998), co-authored by Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere, brings together a series of essays that reflect the authors' shared engagement with comparative literature and literary and cultural history. As Gentzler (1998) observed, Bassnett and Lefevere played a significant role in promoting the "cultural turn" in translation studies by encouraging the field to draw on insights from cultural studies. Through *Constructing Cultures*, they emphasized the reciprocal relationship between the two disciplines, advocating for a closer integration of translation studies and cultural studies.

- **José Lambert: Lambert and Van Gorp Model**

Cooperating with Hendrik van Gorp, José lambert authored "*On describing translations"* which is one of the articles published in Theo Hermans' seminal book The Manipulation of Literature in1985. They (1985) presented the scheme of their perspective declaring that they base it on the parameters of translational phenomena that have been developed by both Even -Zohar and Toury. The scheme is presented as follows:

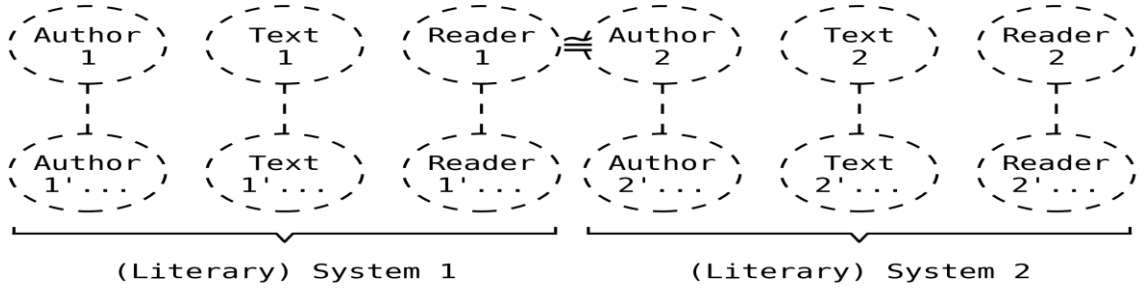


Fig.2 Hypothetical scheme for describing translations (Lambert, 1985, p.43)

The model, as explained by Lambert (1985), distinguishes the source system (Author 1, Text 1, Reader 1) from the target system (Author 2, Text 2, Reader 2), emphasizing that both exist within broader social and cultural contexts. It also notes that all elements are dynamic and interconnected. The relationship between the source and target texts is not fixed but depends on the translator's choices, which are influenced by the dominant norms of the target system.

The scheme presented a theoretical framework for translation analysis that serves as a heuristic tool rather than a fixed theory. It examines the translation process, textual features, reception, and sociocultural context, emphasizing that each case requires a context-specific approach. The central concern is equivalence, assessing whether a translation is more target-oriented (acceptable) or source-oriented (adequate). Since translations usually combine both approaches, they are shaped by dominant norms and strategic choices. Translation analysis therefore seeks to identify these priorities at both macro and micro levels, taking into account linguistic, literary, cultural, moral, religious, and other contextual factors.

2.2.2. Functional School

- **Brief Overview**

The functional school of translation, which emerged in Germany during the 1970s, emphasizes the communicative purpose, target audience, and real-world function of translated texts. According to Nord (2018), every translation should have a clearly defined purpose, which guides the translator's decisions and influences the way the translation is produced. The translator must therefore analyse the cultural and situational contexts of both the source and target audiences, as they are confronted with various choices that can ultimately shape the final translation product.

- **A synoptic view on key proponents of this School and their core tenets**

Within the field of translation studies, several functional theories have emerged, including Skopos theory, pioneered by Hans Vermeer and Katharina Reiss, and Actional theory, attributed to Justa Holz-Mänttäri. Skopos theory, a functionalist perspective put forth by German linguist Hans Vermeer in the 1970s, emphasized

the intended purpose of a translation. This approach necessitated consideration of the cultural and situational factors surrounding the target text's use, which in turn informed the selection of suitable translation strategies. As noted by Wholf (2015), Vermeer was a foundational figure in drawing attention to the cultural dimensions of translation and integrating the concept of cultural contingency into his theoretical framework.

- In his theory which was later developed by Katharina Reiss ideas, Vermeer gave new names for the agents of the translation process: the translated text is called *translat* or *translatum*, the receiver of the translation is called the client, and the translated text is called Product. Thus, to meet the client's needs, Neubert (1992) argued that the translator should overcome the obstacle of the source text 'foreignness'.

- **Schleiermacher's legacy to translation studies: (1768-1834)**

  The assertion of translation as an independent academic field can be traced back to the early 19th century, with Friedrich Schleiermacher, a prominent German theologian, philosopher, and preacher, being a key proponent, as noted by Hornby (2006). Schleiermacher, whom Lefevere (1977) categorizes among the "masters" of the field, significantly advanced translation studies with his 1813 treatise, *"On the different methods of translating."* His work extended beyond prescriptive guidelines, delving into the profound cultural and philosophical obligations inherent in the translator's role.

  This seminal text, as mentioned by many scholars such as Anthony Pym, has become a locus classicus for much thought on translation, because many ideas discussed in Holmes' essay and further theories (as we will see later) go back to Schleiermacher's *On the different methods of translating.*

  Schleiermacher discussed many ideas on the process and the nature of translation that form the bedrock of modern translation theories. He (2012) largely discussed two areas of translation: Genuine translation and Mere Interpreting; focusing on mode (spoken vs written), text type and goal, to make a clear distinction between the two areas.

  In modern theory, we see his ideas being adopted and applied to keep pace with the times.

- **Lederer and Seleskovitch's Interpretive Theory**

  The Interpretive theory (also called theory of Sense) was developed, in 1970s, by Marianne Lederer in collaboration with Danica Seleskovitch at the Ecole Supérieure d'Interprètes et de Traducteurs in Paris.

  Lederer (2003) discussed the interpretive model that relies on tripartite process: understanding, deverbalizing and re-expressing the sense of a text, not just a word-for-word conversion.

Lederer (2003) drew a clear distinction between oral and written translation, based on Edmond Cary's conclusion that written texts do not readily reveal their meaning, unlike spoken words.

- **E. Reiss's Text Typology Theory**

  According to Newmark (1981), Katarina Reïss has adopted Karl Bühler's functional model of language, which was later adapted and expanded by Roman Jakobson. In this approach, language performs different functions (referential function, emotive/expressive function, and conative function) depending on the communicative purpose. A translator's method depends partly on their understanding of how language functions. Bühler's and Jakobson's functional theory provides a useful framework for deciding what aspects of a text should be preserved in translation.

- **George Steiner's Hermeneutic Translation Theory**

  Schleiermacher saw translation as an extension of the art of understanding. He (2012) argued that a translation must be based on a deep artful understanding of both the language and psychology of the author. Considering translation as deeply connected to hermeneutics (theory of interpretation), Schleiermacher (2012) believed that translation isn't just about words, but about bridging different worldviews. That is the key idea of George Steiner.

  American translation theorist and writer, George Steiner is known by many contributions to translation studies, especially his theory being centred on the hermeneutic motion.

  In his "*After Babel*, which is viewed a cornerstone of the hermeneutic school, Steiner argued that translation is an act of understanding rather than just linguistic transfer (1975, p. 302): "Where it surpasses the original, the real translation infers that the source-text possesses potentialities, elemental reserves as yet unrealized by itself. This is Schleiermacher's notion of a hermeneutic which 'knows better than the author did."

  On the basis of Schleiermacher's idea, Steiner (1975) proposed a fourfold model: Trust, Aggression, Incorporation and Restitution (Compensation).

2.2.3. Foreignizing Strategies

Schleiermacher (2012) distinguished two primary strategies for translating texts of art: either moving the reader toward the author (foreignizing approach) or moving the author toward the reader (domesticating approach).

Embracing the foreignizing approach, Schleiermacher (2012) saw that translation is the appropriate way to enrich and expand the German language and to build the German literature. Accordingly, the translator is asked to immerse himself in the source language and acquire a deep knowledge of the entire historical life of the people.

Thus, this idea is taken up by French translator Antoine Berman in his "*L'Épreuve de l'Étranger*" as an ethical consideration. He (1984) believed that the bad translation is the work which erases the otherness of the source text.

In his "The Translator's Invisibility" (1995), as a political strategy against Anglophone dominance. Lawrence Venuti advocated for a foreignizing approach that makes the work of translation visible to the reader. being the first to call the two roads proposed by Schleiermacher: "foreignization" and "domestication".

2.2.4. Machine translation

According to Arnold et al. (1994), the initial impetus for machine translation originated with both Warren Weaver and Andrew D. Booth, who sought to address the challenge of translating a vast volume of textual material. The advent of the 2000s witnessed a significant transformation in the field of translation, driven by technological progress and often termed the "Power Turn" or "Technological Turn." This paradigm shift involves an examination of how digital technologies, including machine translation, localization, and translation memory systems, have reshaped professional workflows. Consequently, the resulting translated output is now the collaborative creation of both human translators and automated systems.

The discourse among translation theorists and academics has frequently encompassed the subject of machine translation, acknowledging its diverse methodologies and applications. As Aloui (2025) posited, Machine-aided translation (MAT) or computer-assisted translation (CAT) entails the utilization of computational tools by human translators to streamline particular phases of the translation workflow, with the ultimate accountability for the entire undertaking resting with the human expert. In contrast, machine translation (MT) denotes the complete automation of text translation by computer systems, requiring little to no human input.

The advent of this novel translation approach is widely regarded as a paradigm shift, necessitating that translators acquire new competencies to achieve proficient outcomes. While numerous skills have been extensively explored by translation theorists and scholars in their published works, Penet et al. (2026) identified the foundational competencies as linguistic knowledge, translation proficiency, and cultural acumen. Although these skills are not novel, having been fundamental to human translation historically, Penet et al. (2026) emphasized their amplified importance in light of the advancements in Generative Artificial Intelligence.

Xu (2024) argued that the rapid growth of machine translation (MT) has driven the adoption of automated quality assessment methods, which offer greater scalability and efficiency than traditional manual evaluation. Recent research has focused on data augmentation and innovative evaluation frameworks to improve assessment accuracy.

Schleiermacher's seminal work is widely regarded as a pivotal moment in the evolution of translation studies. As Hornby (2006) noted, his theoretical contributions presaged key

concepts later associated with machine translation, such as the utilization of symbolic or mathematical signs.

3. Conclusion

In essence, Schleiermacher recontextualized translation, elevating it beyond a mere linguistic exercise to a profound hermeneutic endeavour. His aim was to prevent misinterpretation by meticulously reconstructing the author's original intent, treating the source text as a sacred artifact. This approach necessitated a foreignizing strategy, allowing readers to intimately engage with the unique cognitive and expressive world of the original author. Importantly, Schleiermacher underscored the translator's pivotal role in discerning the most suitable approach, a decision later termed strategy, between foreignization and domestication. He argued that by embracing foreignization, translators actively contribute to the mutual enrichment of both languages and cultures.

Schleiermacher's theoretical contributions significantly impacted the landscape of translation studies, both in theory and practice. His work instigated a paradigm shift, moving the central question of translation away from simple accuracy towards more complex inquiries that have since shaped various turns in the field. These include:

The Cultural Turn (late 1980s-1990s): This perspective shifted the focus to the cultural implications of translation, asking about the specific cultural work a translated text performs for its new readership.

The Ideological Turn (late 20th century): This turn transformed translation into a critical act, prompting an examination of the vested interests that a translation serves and the realities it either obscures or constructs.

The Social Turn (Activist Turn) (late 1990s-early 2000s): Emphasizing human agency and social dynamics, this turn redirected attention from texts to the individuals and social environments that influence translation. It sought to understand how social contexts, power structures, and human networks actively shape and delimit the creation, reception, and function of translated works.

The Power Turn (Technological Turn): This development focused on the potential of machine translation to enhance efficiency, aiming to explore how technology could supplant human translators.

Given its inherently multidisciplinary nature, translation must continuously adapt to advancements across various fields. Consequently, the evolution of translation studies, marked by these successive 'turns,' is an ongoing and limitless process.

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to acknowledge the valuable intellectual contributions of scholars and researchers whose pioneering works have shaped the theoretical foundations of Translation Studies. Particular appreciation is extended to the academic contributions of Friedrich Schleiermacher, James S. Holmes, and subsequent translation theorists whose perspectives have informed the critical discussions developed in this study. Their scholarly

contributions have provided an essential foundation for examining the historical evolution and contemporary theoretical orientations of the discipline.

Ethical approval

Ethical approval was not required for this study, as it is based exclusively on a theoretical examination and critical analysis of previously published scholarly literature. The research did not involve human participants, experimental procedures, personal data collection, or animal subjects. All consulted academic sources have been acknowledged through appropriate citations and bibliographic references.

Authors' Contributions

Abdelhafid Taibi and **Hassina Louaer** jointly contributed to the conceptualization and theoretical development of this study. Both authors participated in reviewing the relevant scholarly literature, examining Schleiermacher's intellectual legacy, and analysing its relationship with contemporary translation theories and approaches. They collaboratively contributed to manuscript preparation, critical revision, and the development of the final conclusions. Both authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript and accept responsibility for its scholarly content.

Disclosure statement

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About the authors

Abdelhafid Taibi is affiliated with Mohamed Lamine Debaghine Setif 2 University, Algeria. In the present study, his scholarly work addresses the historical and theoretical foundations of Translation Studies, with particular attention to Friedrich Schleiermacher's intellectual legacy and its relevance to contemporary approaches to translation.

Hassina Louaer is affiliated with Mohamed Lamine Debaghine Setif 2 University, Algeria. Her contribution to the present research focuses on the examination of major theoretical perspectives in Translation Studies, particularly the relationships between classical translation thought, functional approaches, and culturally oriented theories of translation.

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Data Availability Statement

No original empirical datasets were generated or analysed during this study. The research is based on a critical examination and synthesis of previously published academic literature concerning the historical development of Translation Studies and the theoretical contributions of Friedrich Schleiermacher and subsequent scholars. All bibliographic sources supporting the arguments and interpretations presented in this article are identified in the reference list. Consequently, no additional research datasets are associated with this publication.

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