

Handout (1)

Attempts to define translation

“Translation is an operation performed on languages: a process of substituting a text in one language for a text in another” (*consequently, Catford concludes that*) “The theory of translation is concerned with a certain type of relation between languages and is consequently a branch of comparative linguistics.”

(Catford 1964:20)

“Translation means ‘recodification’. Hence, a theory of translation is a set of propositions about how, why, when, where ... coded elements are rendered into other codes. As such, translation is nothing short of an essential problem of semiosis: it is the problem of transfer of codes.”

(Frawley 1984:160)

“There is no meaning apart from the code. The fact that the semiotic element *table* is significant in English is attributable to its systematic relations to other semiotic elements in the English language, not the horizontal wooden object arbitrarily labeled *table*.”

(Frawley 1984:164)

“To translate B means to produce a text in a target setting for a target purpose and target addressees in target circumstances.”

(Vermeer 1987:29)

“[translation is] a process by which the chain of signifiers that constitutes the source-language text is replaced by a chain of signifiers in the target language which the translator provides on the strength of an interpretation.”

(Venuti 1995:17)

References

- Catford, J. C. (1964) *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*, London: Oxford University Press.
- Frawley, W. (1984) ‘Prolegomenon to a Theory of Translation’, in Frawley, W. (ed.) *Translation: Literary, Linguistic, and Philosophical Perspectives*, London & Toronto: Associated University Presses, 159-175.
- Venuti, L. (1995) *The Translator’s Invisibility*, London & New York: Routledge.
- Vermeer, H. (1987) ‘What does it mean to translate?’, in Toury, G. (ed.) *Translation Across Cultures*, New Delhi: Bahri Publications, 25-33.