

Nord's Documentary Versus Instrumental Translation: The Case of Hugo's *Demain, dès L'aube*

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Received: July 14, 2016 Accepted: July 30, 2016 Online Published: August 28, 2016

doi:10.5539/ells.v6n3p76 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ells.v6n3p76>

Abstract

Documentary and instrumental strategies were widely employed in translation works. The paper examined the application of documentary and instrumental strategies to the French poem *Demain, dès L'aube* by Victor Hugo (1802-1885). The author compared numbers of translation works from the academic and public field for the usage of the strategies by Nord (2005). The result indicated that while documentary translation was depicted as an overt version or report of a text in another language. On the other hands, instrumental translation was depicted as a form of communication that was autonomous from the source text (ST) and which might be appraised on how effectively it passed across an author's message (Chersterman, 2000). These distinctions were useful in the translation of the case text since they both indicated the understanding and consciousness of both cultural and linguistic accommodation during translation in order to pass across the original message intended by the author of the source text (Greenberg, 2003).

Keywords: documentary translation, Hugo, instrumental translation, Nord

1. Introduction

The objective of this essay is to examine and discuss the implications of Nord's distinction between documentary and instrumental translation. The case text used in the discussions made herein is the French poem *Demain, dès L'aube* by Victor Hugo (1802-1885). Nord (2005) makes a distinction between two types of translation namely documentary and instrumental translation. While documentary translation is depicted as an overt version or report of a text in another language, instrumental translation is depicted as a form of communication that is autonomous from the source text (ST). The distinction between these two techniques is important since it determines the effective in which a translated text passes across an author's intended message (Baker, 1992). As depicted in the translation of the case study poem using both techniques, effective forms of translations, are those which successfully bridge both the verbal and non-verbal gaps which obstruct effective communication between a sender and receiver in the communication process (Munday, 2001).

2. Case Study Poem: *Demain, dès L'aube* by Victor Hugo (1802-1885)

This poem is amongst the most popular masterpieces by Victor Hugo. In this poem, the author takes their audience for a walk in the countryside of Normandy; the destination of the journey by the persona in the poem is however not clear. While at first it appears that the journey is just a lover's date, as the poem unravels it becomes clear to the reader that the poet communicates a much deeper meaning based on the feelings he harbors in his heart. In fact, in this poem Victor Hugo is actually communicating one of the many dramatic experiences that he has gone through in life. Figure 1 showed the original language of the poem.

Demain, dès l'aube

Demain, dès l'aube, à l'heure où blanchit la campagne,
Je partirai. Vois-tu, je sais que tu m'attends.
J'irai par la forêt, j'irai par la montagne.
Je ne puis demeurer loin de toi plus longtemps.

Je marcherai les yeux fixés sur mes pensées,
Sans rien voir au dehors, sans entendre aucun bruit,
Seul, inconnu, le dos courbé, les mains croisées,
Triste, et le jour pour moi sera comme la nuit.

Je ne regarderai ni l'or du soir qui tombe,
Ni les voiles au loin descendant vers Harfleur,
Et quand j'arriverai, je mettrai sur ta tombe
Un bouquet de houx vert et de bruyère en fleur.

Figure 1. *Demain, dès, L'aube* by Hugo (1802-1885)

3. Nord's Documentary and Instrumental Translation

Based on the fact that the requirements and purposes for translation are diverse, it is not uncommon for different experts to formulate different definitions and types of translation. As already intimated in the introductory part of this essay, Nord (1991) differentiates between two main types of translation- documentary and instrumental translation.

3.1 Documentary Translation

In the description of documentary translation, Nord (1991) purports that this type of translation “serves as a document of a source culture communication between the author and the source text” recipient (p. 72). Examples of such types of translations include word-for-word translations in official certificates or commercial contracts and foreignizing; Gile (2009, p. 251) defines foreignizing as a strategy in the practice of translation which is aimed at retaining information from source texts through contravening the principles of the source language in order to retain the original meaning intended by the author of the source text. Munday (2001) agrees with Nord by asserting that while documentary translation may be perceived as a “foreignizing” translation instrumental translation may be perceived as “domesticating” form of translation (p. 81). Documentary translations commonly act as texts which reveal the original type of communication between the creator and recipient of a source text (Nord, 1997); all literal forms of translation may thus be categorized under documentary translation. It is however noteworthy that at times documentary translation may occur in extreme forms whereby the translation mirrors the lexical, syntactic and morphological characteristics of a source language framework as encountered in the original text (Nord, 2005). Such types of documentary translation are referred to as interlinear translations. In her descriptions of documentary translation Nord (1997) asserts that a translator undertaking a documentary translation may choose to focus on any of the characteristics which typify the different source text ranks. Consequently, a translator may choose to “push others into the background” (Nord, 2005, p. 80).

3.2 Instrumental Translation

According to Nord (2005) instrumental translation acts as an autonomous apparatus through which messages may be transmitted in a new process of communication in a target culture. The objective of instrumental translation is thus to communicate without making the recipient aware of having read or hear a different form of text that was previously used in a different communication context (Chesterman, 2000). Chesterman is useful in this sentence since he acknowledges it is fundamental for translators to always “specify” the kinds of translations

that they have in mind as well as the goals they intend to achieve in their translation endeavors (p. 47). Examples of instrumental translation include function-changing or function-preserving translations. According to Chesterman (1997) “function preserving” translations are those which maintain the function of the source text despite breaking language norms (p. 142). Function changing translations, on the other hand, are those which are characterized by unintended transformations in function (Chesterman, 1997). It is noteworthy that instrumental translations are commonly created in autonomous forms from the original texts (Baker, 1992). Instrumental translations are thus formed in a manner which makes it almost impossible for the target audience to recognize them as original texts which have been re-written in a desired target language (Nord, 1997). Translators are thus tasked with the duty of adapting the text to the cultural values and norms as well as text genres and tenor which typify the target language or audience in order to ensure that readers are unaware of the fact that the text they are reading is actually a translation (Nord, 1997).

According to Nord (2005) instrumental translation may be further segmented into three types; the first is that which is characterized by the target text fulfilling a similar function, or serving the same purpose as the source text. In such cases, the translation is referred to as “equifunctional translation”, for example that which typifies business communication (p. 81). A second type of instrumental translation is the heterofunctional type; this form of translation occurs when the purpose of a source text is not easily recognized by the receiver of the target text and the translator has to adapt it as long as they do not interfere with the aim of the sender and they are in tandem with the functions of the source text (Nord, 1997). The third of instrumental translation identified by Nord (2005) is “homologous translation” (p. 81). This form of translation, which is commonly used in the translation of poetic texts, is aimed at attaining similar impacts through the replication of the source text’s function in the literary circumstances of the target culture (Schjoldager, 2008).

It is noteworthy that according to Nord (1997) the requirement for culture compatibility between the source and target texts implies that instrumental translation can only be deemed legitimate when the purpose of the sender or source author is not entirely aimed at source culture audience but may also be consumed members of a target culture. If this goal cannot be attained, then the translation must be ascertained to be fulfilling a documentary function (Gambier & Doorslaer, 2009).

4. Translation of Case Text and Implications of Nord’s Classification

In order to depict the differences between documentary and instrumental translation, it is important to translate the case poem using both forms of translation. In translating this text it is worth noting that while the French culture to which Victor Hugo belongs is the source culture (SC), English speaking audiences comprise the target culture (TC).

4.1 Instrumental Translation of *Demain, dès L’aube*

As indicated in stanza one of the poem below, instrumental translation of the poem does not endeavor to remain as similar as possible to original French text; on the contrary, the objective is to ensure that the meaning intended by the author of the source text remains clear in the target culture in this case is the English culture. Moreover, the instrumental translation of the poem is remarkably successful in maintaining the rhyme scheme in the original poem without causing any dramatic changes in intended meaning.

Table 1. Instrumental translation of stanza 1

Target Text
At dawn tomorrow, when the plains grown bright, I’ll go. You wait for me: I know you do. I’ll cross the woods; I’ll cross the mountain-height. No longer can I keep away from you (Greenberg, 2003).

The rhyme in the first and third lines of the first stanza of the original text (*campagne/ montagne*) correspond to the rhyme scheme in the first and third lines of the first stanza of the target text (*bright/ height*). In similar manner, the rhyme scheme in the second and fourth lines of both the source and target texts correspond, that is, (*m’attends/ longtemps*) and (*do/ you*). The only difference that stands out and may attract the attention of the reader between the original text and the translated text is the ordering of the words in the different lines of the stanza. As indicated in Table 2 below, the rhyme is maintained throughout the poem.

Table 2. Instrumental translation of stanza 2

Target Text
I'll walk along with eyes fixed on my mind-
The world around I'll neither hear no see-
Alone, unknown, hands crossed, and back inclined;
And day and night will be alike to me (Greenberg, 2003).

4.2 Documentary Translation of *Demain, dès L'aube*

As indicated by Nord (2005), documentary translation of the poem offers a literal or word for word depiction of an original text. An appropriate or applicable documentary translation of the poem would be one which endeavors to remain as close as possible to the original French version; in translating the poem using the documentary technique, however, it is crucial that the poetry is replaced by prose. The consequence of this is that the meaning originally intended by the sender may be compromised. This is depicted below in the translation of stanza three of the poem, as shown on Table 3.

Table 3. Documentary translation of stanza 3

Target Text
I will not look at gold from the evening falls,
Neither the distant sails going down towards Harfleur,
And when I arrive, I will put on your tomb
A bouquet of green holly and flowering heather (Greenberg, 2003).

As indicated in the documentary translation of stanza three of the poem, it is undisputable that little or no effort is exerted in modifying the source text in order to ensure that it corresponds to the context and culture of English audiences for whom the translated text is intended. On the contrary, and as depicted by Nord (1991), greater effort in documentary is placed on features such as the word arrangement, grammatical structures and “local color” of the source text (p. 73). Unlike instrumental translation where effort is exerted in adapting the text to the cultural values and norms as well as text genres and tenor which typify the target language, documentary translation remains as close as possible to the original text, such rigidity will in most times bring about a change in meaning. In order to indicate such changes in meaning due to the type of translation used, the table below depicts a comparison of the target texts when both instrumental and documentary translations are used on the third stanza of the case poem, as shown on Table 4 below.

Table 4. Comparison of instrumental and documentary translation of stanza 3

Instrumental Translation	Documentary Translation
I will not look at gold from the evening falls,	I'll see neither the gold of evening gloom
Nor the sails off to Harfleur far away;	Neither the distant sails going down towards Harfleur,
And when I come, I'll place upon your tomb	And when I arrive, I will put on your tomb
Some flowering heather and a holly spray (Greenberg, 2003).	A bouquet of green holly and flowering heather (Greenberg, 2003).

It is noteworthy that in her categorization of translation as either documentary or instrumental, Nord (1997) appreciates the importance of three main concepts. First is the significance of text analysis. Nord argues that there are a variety of intratextual factors which may be used to examine a source text. The most important are content, non-verbal elements, subject matter, presuppositions, sentence structure, composition and lexic (Gambier & Doorslaer, 2009). These authors are cited instead of Nord because in addition to echoing Nord's sentiments regarding the evaluation of source texts during translation processes, they also acknowledge the variations that exist between conceptualization and use of non-verbal elements in translation processes. The French equivalent of /see/ is /voir/, the equivalent of /look/ is /regarder/; it is thus technically correct to translate /Je ne regarderai/ as /I will not look/. In instrumental translation it is paramount to engage for the translator to ensure that the target text engages target audience in a communicative action based on the intended meaning of the source text's author (Toury, 1995). Toury (1995) is cited here because he carried out an investigative study on the theory of translation which enabled him to formulate the term “translation norms” to be followed in translation processes (p. 37); one such norm is that communication is amongst the most important elements to

consider in any translation exercise. There is a notable difference between *see* and *look*. While *see* depicts that something has come to or across an individual's eyes, *look* implies that something has not only come to an individual's eyes, but the individual has also paid attention to it. *I'll see neither the gold of evening gloom* is thus more effective translation than *I will not look at gold from the evening falls* in passing across the intended meaning of the author since they verify to their loved one that although they will neither see, nor pay attention to anything on their way since, as stated in the first line of stanza two of the poem, the persona's thoughts are *fixed on their mind* and they are eager to reach their loved ones.

In addition to this, the instrumental translation of the third line of the last stanza of the poem *And when I come, I'll place upon your tomb* is more effective in passing across the intended meaning of the author rather than the documentary translation of the same line *And when I arrive, I will put on your tomb*. The main reason for this assertion is that the term *arrive* is overly formal in comparison to *come*. Since the persona is addressing a person they dearly love, an informal term is more effective in passing across the intended meaning of the author of the source text (Toury, 1995).

The second aspect highlighted by Nord is the significant function fulfilled by the translation commission, also referred to as translation brief. Nord (1997) argues that the translation commission has the responsibility of specifying certain elements of the communication process for both source and target texts. These factors, which are commonly external to the text, include the sender, medium of communication, motive of writing source text and translating it, intended use of texts and the time and venue that the text is received (Gambier & Doorslaer, 2009). The third implication of Nord's binary classification of translation is in regard to the functional hierarchy or difficulties faced in the process of translation. Before embarking on any process of translation it is fundamental for translators to set up a functional hierarchy whereby they deal with four common problems encountered during translation processes (Baker, 1992). Firstly, translators must determine the function of the translation process, that is, whether the translated text will be instrumental or documentary in nature (Nord, 1997). Secondly, the translator must redress issues inherent to texts at lower linguistic levels, that is, the source text analysis process. Thirdly, a translator must distinguish the aspects which must be adapted in order to suit the situation of the target text addressee (Schjoldager, 2008). Lastly, a translation exercise will rarely be effective unless a translator can determine their style of translation, which is either source culture or target culture (Nord, 1991).

In similar manner to Nord, Trosborg (1997) asserts that the homologous type of instrumental translation is the most suitable for translations of poems such as the case study poem. As indicated in its name, the objective of homologous translation is to attain a similar effect through the replication of the function that the source text has in its source culture in the target culture literary context (Trosborg, 1997). As intimated in the early sections of the essay, and in tandem to Nord's notions, the instrumental translation of the poem offered herein is successful since the reader is unaware that they are actually reading a translation; the main reason for the reader's unawareness is that the source text has been adapted to the norms and conventions of the target context (Nord, 1997).

It is interesting that there are other translation experts who have attempted to classify translation in a binary form in similar manner to Nord. According to Newmark (1981), for example, translation may be categorized as either communication or semantic translation. While semantic translation is overly literal, with emphasis on meaning and as close to the original text as possible, communicative translation is less rigid and it places preeminence on the effectiveness of the message being communicated. According to Chesterman (2000), however, a major shortcoming of the categorizations of translation made by Newmark (1981) is that they fail to explain clearly how phenomena such as freedom, literalness or closeness to the original text may be determined. This shortcoming does not apply to Nord's notion because Nord's technique allows for both an overt version (report) of a text in another language and a form of communication that is autonomous from the source text (Nord, 1997). Chesterman further argues that while semantic translation is best for high status texts such as legal and religious texts, communicative translation is most suitable for texts such as manuals, advertisements and product descriptions.

Another translation expert who attempted to classify translation into binary types is House (1977); according to House, there are two types of translation namely overt and covert translation. House (1977) posits that while overt translations refer to those which are straight forward and obvious due to their close associations with the original text, covert translations are those which target readers are not expected to recognize as translations due to their tendency to be natural target language (Gambier & Doorslaer, 2009). House (1977) classifies texts such as newspapers and advertisements under covert category of translation and texts such as sermons and poems under overt translations.

5. Conclusion

This essay has utilized the epic poem *Demain, dès L'aube* by Victor Hugo to examine in detail the binary classification of translation by Nord and the implications that it has for translation and translated text. From the discussions made herein it is clear that there are several distinctions between documentary and instrumental translation (Nord, 1997). While documentary translation is depicted as an overt version or report of a text in another language, instrumental translation is depicted as a form of communication that is autonomous from the source text (ST) and which may be appraised on how effectively it passes across an author's message (Chersterman, 2000). These distinctions are useful in the translation of the case text since they both indicate and support the importance a robust understanding and consciousness of both cultural and linguistic accommodation during translation in order to pass across the original message intended by the author of the source text (Greenberg, 2003). The poem is supportive of this assertion since the discussion herein reveals that in order to attain a similar effect through the replication of the function that the source text has in its source culture in the target culture literary context, it is vital to use instrumental translation rather than documentary. Although it is autonomous from the source text, instrumental translation ensures that the original meanings intended by the author are communicated successfully.

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