

81:929 Мандеј Ц.(047.53)
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■ “THE TRANSLATOR IS NOT JUST AN INNOCENT MEDIATOR”

MIRJANA DANIČIĆ¹
SANDRA JOSIPOVIĆ²

University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology,
English Department,
Belgrade, Serbia

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

The following interview with Professor Jeremy Munday from Leeds University took place in November 2015 during his working visit to the International Burch University in Sarajevo where he held two seminars on translation studies. The first seminar entitled “Identifying critical points of translator’s decision-making through appraisal theory” explained the cornerstones of appraisal theory, whereas the second seminar was on “Legitimate translation variation: What remains constant in translation, and why?”.

Professor Jeremy Munday teaches the courses in Translation Theory in a Spanish-English Context, Spanish-English Translation, Methods and Approaches to Translation and Interpreting at the Faculty of Arts, the University of Leeds. He collaborates in teaching and research with the Centre for Translation Studies and co-supervises many students working on translation into Spanish, Italian, Arabic, Thai and Malay. He does research supervision at postgraduate level in the following fields: Translation studies and translation theory, Discourse and text analysis of translation, Cognitive and corpus-based translation studies, Translation and ideology, the translation of Latin American writing and politics, the history of translators in the twentieth century.

Professor Munday defines the Translation studies as “the new academic discipline related to the study of the theory and phenomena of translation. By its nature it is multilingual and also interdisciplinary, encompassing languages, linguistics, communication studies, philosophy and a range of types of cultural studies.” (Munday 2001: 1) His view of translation is reflected in research interests encompassing translation studies, including stylistics, discourse and text analysis in translation; systemic functional linguistics (especially evaluation and appraisal theory); ideology in the translation of literary and political works and speeches, with special reference to

1 Kontakt podaci (Email): mirjanadanagic@gmail.com

2 Kontakt podaci (Email): sandrajosipovic@gmail.com

Spain and Latin America; corpus-based translation studies including contrastive studies of lexical patterns and semantic prosody; cognitive translation studies; the history of literary translators in the twentieth century.

His work is at the same time both ground-breaking and accessible because he has first-hand knowledge of the translation practice and the workings of the publishing industry since he himself is a qualified and experienced translator from Spanish and French into English and he offers practical and to-the-point solutions to some problems in translation. His works also encompass both translation theory and give a thorough theoretical basis to students and researchers and professional translators. His writing is very much relevant to those who want to study translation solely at academic level, as well as to the practicing translators, as he approaches the phenomena of translation from different aspects. It is instrumental for translators who specialize either in literary or non-literary translation. In his book *Introducing Translation Studies: Theories and applications* (2001), he covers a variety of texts which may represent a challenge to translators: the Bible, *Beowulf*, the fiction of Garcia Marquez and Proust, the translations of Harry Potter, EU and UNESCO documents, a travel brochure etc. By offering different theoretical approaches to translation from the translation theory before the 19th century to the systems theories and different contemporary models applied to illustrative texts, Professor Munday's goal is to encourage the readers to find their own way to understand and deal with some specific issues related to translation. (Munday 2001: 1)

In the Introduction to his other major publication *Translation: An advance resource book* (2004) co-authored with Basil Hatim, Professor Munday emphasizes the literary and commercial importance of translation in the modern, globalized world and the fact that the study of translation has developed to a huge extent, partially because it is closely intertwined with other disciplines including postcolonialism. He stipulates that he writes for those readers who wish to be knowledgeable both in the theory and practice of translation. (Munday & Hatim 2004: XVII)

In his book *Evaluation in translation: Critical points of translator decision-making* (2012), Professor Munday investigates deep into translator's intervention and subjective evaluation within the theoretical model known as appraisal theory (Martin and White 2005).

The origins of appraisal theory date back to late 1980s when it was developed by functional linguists in Australia who were investigating, among other things, essay-writing among secondary-school students where the students tended to give personal rather than analytical responses, as well as variation in style in journalistic discourse, which was mapped according to different voices and evaluative phenomena. (Munday 2012: 22)

The appraisal theory is designed to describe different components of a speaker's **attitude**, the strength of that attitude (**graduation**) and the ways that the speaker aligns him/herself with the receiver (**engagement**). Appraisal theory relates to the **interpersonal function** of language that deals with the relationship between the writer and the reader. (Munday 2012: 2) In this interview, Professor Munday shares his views on translation seen as a form of this kind of mediation or intervention between the two parties.

THE INTERVIEW

Q: We have heard a lot this morning about the advantages of appraisal theory in the modern world of translation studies, but could you tell us something about what would be its disadvantages over other contemporary theories?

JM: Disadvantages are its complexity. It is very difficult to categorize, but you probably know it is designed for study of monolingual texts to prove literacy in Australian schools. It has been used in history textbooks and used in journalism, so it's a bit unwieldy, a bit clumsy. I think there are relatively few changes on the level of attitude in translation unless you're working with a very contested content or between cultures which are very divergent. We can make an example of *very old* which could be pejorative in some cultures, but very positive in others.

What I found is that the most interesting areas are graduation and engagement where the intensity of the relationship between the writer and the reader may vary in translation.

Q: This morning you have said that the translator is not just an innocent mediator.

JM: Yes.

Q: Would you define a role of translator nowadays as a mediator or, perhaps, a facilitator?

JM: I think that most of translators and interpreters are set out to be either mediators or facilitators who are to transmit a message from a source context to a target context. I've been slightly provocative with the statement.

Q: In a fast-changing world where the languages do not develop at the same speed as events, what do you think the role of translator or an interpreter is?

JM: Interpreters' main focus is on producing a coherent text although there could be in a consecutive interpreting business context that may be aligned with one party over another, or maybe they are employed by one party and so they could feel an inevitable allegiance to that party and in some cases they could work in favour of that party even though ethically they should be neutral.

Q: And what happens when all the blame for miscommunication between two parties, or an ill-chosen expression, or simply incorrect information produced by the speaker falls on the interpreter? What would be your advice to interpreters – how to deal with this kind of professional burden?

JM: I suppose it's an inevitable burden for the diplomatic interpreter. It is convenient for a politician to blame a different mediator. For many heads of state or leading diplomats it is an advantage to go through with interpreters, it gives them a chance to think, react, to question, to screen or filter, it gives them thinking time. So, what could an interpreter do? It may cause more problems to react than not to. Well, it depends on the confidentiality as well. It's an unfortunate circumstance for the interpreter. The problem is if they react, they probably won't get the job again. I think we ought to try to raise awareness amongst the public of the role of the interpreters and the difficulties which they face. We should be more tolerant of errors by interpreters anyways. We need to raise awareness of the fact that the interpreter is not simply repeating words of the source, he is involved in a very stressful and complicated cognitive process.

Q: What should a translator do when, in this fast-changing world, the events outpace the words and there is a discrepancy between the fast-changing events in the world on the one hand and the language which sometimes cannot follow this pace on the other – the words are sometimes just not there to follow events?

JM: It would be interesting to study the evolution of equivalents in target languages. I've mentioned a few examples this morning like *bleeding-edge technology* – what does a translator do? The translator is inevitably going to produce a standardized translation, it would be very risky to produce a complete neologism in this content.

Q: Especially in the languages like Serbian, or we think Bosnian, which are conservative when it comes to word-formation. They develop of course, but not at the same pace as English. What to do then?

JM: I think it would be very interesting to research more widely what happens or how it is produced in English to begin with. The creativity of the production in English is tolerated. Coming across the terms such as *bleeding-edge*, a reader cannot immediately understand what the connotation is and the evolution from *cutting edge*, but it takes some time and some repetition to further become stabilized and accepted in the language. I suppose English has a slight advantage over some other languages since it doesn't have an Academy of the language controlling what is acceptable or not. There are words in Spanish that Spanish Academy seems to fix and polish, it took years to accept the word *Internet*.

Q: But, we guess the speaker is the one to decide. Do you personally use the word *bleeding-edge*?

JM: Being myself, no, I don't. But then ten or twenty years ago I probably didn't use *cutting-edge*.

Q: Let's move now to the studies of literary translation and some specific issues. What to do with the grammatically incorrect structures and errors used intentionally in the source text?

JM: The translator should first determine what the function is: perhaps to indicate an uneducated speaker and to try to find some way of recreating that in the target language by also producing some incorrectness or linguistic signals of uneducatedness. Same problem may occur with dialect of course, probably it is even more difficult with dialects because they are geographically recognizable and identifiable.

Q: The aim is to preserve faithfulness to the original text?

JM: Look at the function: If the function is to indicate that the speaker has made an error because they don't have the education to understand or to make a correct selection, you are going to have to reproduce that in the target language.

Q: What is the latest research you have been doing in translation studies?

JM: I'm continuing work on the interpersonal function. A paper has just come out entitled "Special Issue of Discourse Analysis" on engagement and graduation. In the other area, I am looking at the use of literary archives. The paper on Silken should be published in the early 2016. In the future work, I want to work on discourse analysis of interpreting in the European Parliament. As for literary translation, we have a project to set up a database of interviews with literary translators and a database of archive holdings in the UK, but it depends on funding.

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