

**Narrative Mode and Fiction**  
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**Lecture - 60**  
**Future of Fictional Writing - IV**

Good morning and welcome back to the lecture series on narrative mode and fiction. We are discussing today our module 12, which is future of fictional writing. So when we talk about reading in translation, we understand the professional associations of literary translators, like the translator's association or TA, and the American Literary Translator's Association such as ALTA operate with basically two objectives.

One is that the translator should have his or her name mentioned in any journalistic or scholarly review of the work that he or she has translated, and two- the publisher of a translation should feature the translator's name prominently on or near the cover of the book. (refer time: 01:20)

So from here, we go on to ask a very vital question, is a literary translation a special kind of text? Should reading a literary translation feel different from reading a non-translated literary work? So in stylistic approaches to translation, Jean Boase-Beier notes that a translated literary text is neither fully documentary nor instrumental, and in fact, it derives its instrumentality by virtue of it being a documentary.

In stylistic approaches to translation, Jean Boase-Beier notes that a translated literary text is neither fully documentary nor instrumental, and in fact, it derives its instrumentality by virtue of it being documentary. Understanding translation in fiction as a blend becomes important.

So a blend is a creative cognitive structure consisting of two or more mental spaces, which results in the formation of a dynamic new entity, which is made up of some of the elements of its input spaces, as well as its own unique properties. So this is how blend has been defined by Boase-Beier. (refer time: 02:47)

So a translation in the form of a blend becomes a distinct type of a text that demands a special kind of reading. It enjoys dual authorship, because each translation has at least one author and at least one translator. It starts life in one or more specific source cultures, and later finds itself in a new receiving culture or sometimes in multiple cultures. In the process of rewriting the language, the translator facilitates a linguistic

encounter between the sociocultural aspects of the two languages that are involved in translation. (refer time: 03:35)

Andrew Chesterman views Translation Studies as a branch of memetics. In other words, memetics in other words, is the study of memes or units of culture that reproduce themselves. Chesterman argues that translation is a process in which (to quote him), "mutation or modification is normal, not exceptional" (unquote).

Mutation that occurs as the source text is copied leads to a new kind of text, right, a mutated version of the original text, one that resembles the source and yet introduces its own variation, its own, you know understanding of the original or the source. So hence, translation is a special kind of text, a blended or hybrid entity that is connected in a unique way to a preceding text.

A translated text has multiple voices and undergoes a process of mutation or transformation. Therefore, the experience of reading a translation always differs from that of reading a non-translated text. (refer time: 05:03)

In recent years, several translation theorists and practitioners have formulated guidelines for aiding readers in their approach to translated texts. The nature and detail of the guidelines vary, however, according to the audience. Readers of translations may act as book reviewers, whose task is to deliver some sort of judgment or recommendation.

Such recommendation may or may not lead the reader of the review to purchase the book. Reviews, especially when they are written by amateurs, do not have any finality and could simply convey one's own perspective. So readers of translations may also be university students that are learning to write literary criticism, and they are required to find a way of approaching a foreign text that features a dual authorial voice. (refer time: 06:04)

Such students are apprenticed to negotiate the relationship of foreign texts with more familiar domestic literature. And then finally, there is the general reader who may or may not be aware that the book that he or she is reading is a translated version, and who may or may not have deliberately sought out a translated text. (refer time: 06:31)

David Damrosch in his work, *How to Read World Literature* that came out in 2009, suggests university students about how to approach literary translations. Carol Maier and Françoise Massardier Kenney's *Reading in Translation: Issues and Practice* that came out in 2010 offer advice to the instructor that is teaching literature in translation, regarding how to select an appropriate translation for a university course.

This process of selection could include case studies of reading national literature in translation. Lawrence Venuti's *How to Read a Translation*, published in 2004, is aimed at the general reader and it provides a set of guidelines regarding the general rules of translation. (refer time: 07:31)

It is important to appreciate the formal features of the translation and not just read for meaning. One should also pay attention to the language. A reader of a translated work should be open to linguistic variations and not simply expecting translations to be written only in the current standard dialect.

While reading a translation one should pay attention to the connotations and cultural references in the text and read them as a significant element of the text. One should also understand untranslatability or translation barriers in culturally specific contexts. (refer time: 08:14)

The introductory essay written by a translator acts as a statement of the interpretation that has guided the translation and that contributes to what is unique about this particular version of translation. The reader should not take one translation as representative of an entire foreign literature and start comparing it to translations of other works from the same language. This may not lead to a better understanding in any case.

Venuti warns the reader not to expect smooth prose. Rather, the reader should be aware of the translator's presence, both in the language of the text and in paratexts, which also relates to the issues that concern World literature. (refer time: 09:10)

Barrier of translation includes the inevitable decontextualization that occurs when we remove a text from its source language and culture. The first step in approaching a translation is to realize that it is a translation and not an original, and assess it with that understanding. The purpose of reading inevitably shapes our assessment of a translated text. Reviewers commonly judge the text.

Students and scholars read in order to academically critique the work and seek textual evidence for supporting a particular interpretation. And then the general reader may read without any agenda, without any purpose or maybe with any number of purposes in mind. So the purpose of reading, which shapes our assessment of the work is very much there.

(refer time: 10:11)

When we read a text like a literary critic or scholarly.. or for scholarly purposes rather than to make a value judgment or for pleasure like the genuine reader, then we are either

looking for information or for evidence that supports a particular argument or props up/bolsters a theory.

However, translated textuality is complicated, and constructing any argument using evidence from a translated text without, you know, any way of access, without having any way of accessing the original is less straightforward than constructing an argument using evidence from a text that was originally composed in the language in which it is being read and interpreted.

To put it simply, I mean, translated textuality is a bit removed from the original. So drawing any conclusion, you know, or making an argument based only on the translated text without having any access to the original could be somewhat secondhand and experience would never be the same when one is reading, you know, and the experience would never be the same when compared to reading of the original work, the original work, you know, which is read in the language in which it is written.

So the experience will never be the same when compared to reading the original work that is composed in the language in which it is being read. (refer time: 12:02)

When reading in translation for scholarly purposes, the reader should keep in mind that the text in the reader's hands has come from another place, another culture and another language and has been made accessible through the agency of the translator. The translator that is not quite transparent, but offers his or her own resistance or opacity.

So the experience, like I was saying, becomes a little displaced or removed from the original. It could be called as a second hand experience. The translated text has multiple authors, one that has written the work in the first place and then the other that has translated it. So meaning always undergoes some amount of transformation during the translation process, which will inevitably bring with it some transformations, some new challenges, some resistances and a little bit of opacity to the original text. (refer time: 13:07)

It will be important to demonstrate this awareness of the nature of the translated text, when using material from it, in order to construct an argument particularly at the micro-linguistic level. So when we are garnering an argument or a thesis based on our reading of a translated work, it is important to mention that we have not been able to access the original.

If an argument hinges.. if an argument hinges on one word, consultation with a different translation may reveal that this word is no longer present, that it has been compensated

for something else in the text with a different word, different phrase or structure, or that its signifying power is now altogether absent.

If an argument hinges on one particular word, consultation with a different translation may reveal that this word is no longer present, that it has been compensated for elsewhere in the text with a different word, a different phrase or structure, or that its signifying power is now altogether absent.

So if I am building my thesis based on this particular sentence or word that is available in translation, I may also want to consult other translated versions and see how this particular sentence has been framed by another translator, because the argument itself might crumble, might fall apart and seem all too spurious if the word itself is displaced from the original, the translated word that is, the translated word is displaced from the original.

So a character's attitude might be more concrete or more ambiguous in a particular translator's voice, and could also be affected by the differences in cultural norms between source and target cultures. How it was written, and how I, coming with my own cultural baggage, perceive it and translate it.

There could be a gap between the two and the reader kind of suffers this gap, enjoys this gap, there is so much to explore between, you know in this gap that lies between the original work and the translated version. (refer time: 16:02)

Textual evidence from a translation needs to be used with greater sensitivity, and where multiple translations are available, it will always be beneficial to draw not on one, but several of them. This is not to say that one cannot construct an argument on the basis of a translated text.

Critical points in the translation, which become apparent from a comparative analysis of different translations of the same text, suggests the critical points in the source text itself and are likely to be central to its interpretation. So when we see that some critical points can be grasped across all different translated versions, we understand that these points were indeed there in the original too.

And these critical points that stay even in the course of translation, even in the course of you know a work.. a work journeying from one place and one culture to another, from one language to another, even then these you know points stay. So it suggests that we could draw on these critical points to structure any kind of argument.

When we see certain critical points are present in all the different versions of translation, it goes on to say or suggest that these critical points were present in the source text and

we could structure an argument based on these points. These points are at the heart of the text's interpretation. (refer time: 18:04)

Translations can be wrong in the sense that they contain errors. Whether or not one chooses to view these errors as motivated, voluntary, conscious and worthy of analysis depends on one's knowledge of the material facts of the translation in question. Under what circumstances was the translation done? Does the translator have a sufficient grasp of the subject matter?

This question draws on the explanatory powers of psychoanalysis and interpretation of the text. It would be fair to say that a translation can have great literary merit and still contain certain errors. Both could be possible, a great work of translation that bears some of those conspicuous mistakes or errors. However, once the number and severity of errors reach a critical mass, the literary merit of a text will definitely suffer. (refer time: 19:14)

One must assume, however, that the vast majority of professional literary translators have more than adequate competence in both the source and the target languages. And so these translators will deliver their task relatively well. Thus the success of a translated text, rather than being a matter of accuracy, has more to do with its success as a particularly complex type of literary work or literary text in its own right, rather than in terms of its relationship to its source or the original text.

So, to put simply, the translated text becomes a literary text in its own right. And it should not always stand on the edifice of or on the scaffolding of the, or against the scaffolding of the original or the source. It could exist in its own, it could live its own life as a text and have its own experience of readers, right?

So in assessing a translation then, particularly in a situation where various versions of a source text are available for comparative analysis, one should not be asking which is the best translation or even if a translation is a good one, but rather, how this translated literary text derives its meaning, where it comes from, what are the, you know, material realities of the translator, right?

With this, we come to the end of the last lecture of our last module, and I thank you all for attending my lecture series. Thank you so much, and I hope to see you all again. Thank you.