




Actor-Network Theory: A Sociotechnical Approach to Study Translation

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Abstract

- To introduce ANT as a complementary tool of analysis of translation product and process in the socio-technical context, along with other sociological approaches to translation;
- To make translation researches more objective and analytical;
- To avoid viewing translation as one-level representative production or process;
- To view translation production/ process as a network of involved actors (i.e., humans and nonhumans).

Introduction

Origin:

- ANT was first developed in the 1980s at “the Centre for the Sociology of Innovation in France” as a new social theory engaging with science and technology studies (Callon 1986; Latour 1988, 2005; Law 1986).

Terminology:

- **Network** denotes to-be-discovered connections between involved entities (or **Actors**, either humans or nonhumans) that take part in the process of innovation (here, the process of translation).

E.g., A TT is not a product of a single translator, but a network effect which is socially connected.

Importance:

- “It is utterly impossible to understand what holds society together without **reinjecting in its fabric the facts** manufactured by the natural and social sciences, as well as the **artefacts** designed by engineers” (Latour 1996:3).
- **Social and Natural entities** also need to be factored in when “reassembling the social” (Latour 2005: 8).

Point of departure:

- Not **the Universal social/natural laws**, but “irreducible, incommensurable, unconnected **localities**, which sometimes end into provisionally commensurable connections”.

ANT, a sociology of associations:

- No network is taken for granted in advance. Instead, associations being generated by movements among actors are traced and studied.
- Actors are **semiotic, material, and active**. They can be

Humans: Publishers, translators, clients, revisers, project managers, subject-matter experts, literary agents, readers, subsidizing agencies, critics;

Non-humans: Text processors, online research tools, translation memories, management tools and interpreting equipment.

E.g., An ANT inspired researcher does not view a Kurdish translation of an English novel only as a rendering of a foreign text by a bilingual/ bicultural translator. **The researcher considers all movements (cognitive, technological, sociological) and their associations concerning the process and/ or product of the translation.**

ANT is both ...

1. **An ontological proposition:** To trace the actors, their displacements, and the emergence and development of the network
2. **A methodology** (i.e., an ethnographic fieldwork): To assemble exhaustive accounts of how scientific (arte)facts and processes of innovation emerge through participant observation of science in laboratories, complemented with interviews and the analysis of textual accounts.

Stages of Translation in Terms of ANT

Four stages of building/changing the network of translation:

1. **Problematization**: the **problem** is defined by **the actors** who speak on behalf of other network actors (agents) to **formulate the idea of solving** the problem via mobilizing the actors;
2. **Interessement**: to get the actors to do something (**a role** that is assigned to each one in the research program) by showing them how the program can work to their benefit;
3. **Enrolment**: the actors accept the roles they have been assigned;
4. **Mobilization**: the spokespersons of the enrolled communities can speak and act on behalf of others as allies, without disagreement.

ANT Methodology in Translation Studies

Its potential **complementarity** between and Bourdieu's social theory (Buzelin 2005);

Its **applicability** to publishing houses, translation and localization agencies, hospitals, courts, schools and refugee camps, and to the work of freelance as well as in-house translators; leading to

- ❑ more scope for examining individual agency and interpersonal dynamics;
- ❑ more tolerance of unpredictability and coincidence, especially in relation to understanding processes of importation of foreign literary texts;
- ❑ better description and understanding of socio-technical systems.

Potential Applications of ANT in TS

ANT has become a complementary part of Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS) in which the process, product, and function of translation are described within the pertinent socio-technological context.

E.g.,

- Constructivist Teaching Translation
- Translational action and Skopos theory
- Translation norms
- Translation Quality Assessment, and Translation Criticism
- Cognitive Study of Translation Process
- Translation History
- Translation and Activism

**THANK
YOU**

