Chapter 8

The Strata of Subcultural Translation: Sources of Fragmentation in Globalizing Societies

Mohammad Ali Kharmandar
Islamic Azad University, Shiraz Branch, Iran

ABSTRACT

This study proposes a new understanding of cultural evolution through translations embedded in subcultures. The underlying argument is that translation does not evenly and equally affect all social strata in a given culture, but there are selective (inclusive and exclusive) mechanisms that diversify a culture into several usually competing sub-groups. Evolution through translation takes place in parallel and very different sub-streams as subcultures. To make this understanding possible, however, some taken-for-granted notions should be revisited in translation studies (TS) and some gaps should be filled before subcultural translation can be framed. This study proposes an analytic whole in which a momentum of change in history leads to a reacquisition of disposition in cultural subjects, ultimately shaping a form of capital realized as semiotic/lingual translation. To explain this process, Foucault’s historical discontinuity, Ricoeur’s narrative identity, and Bourdieu’s capital are incorporated.

INTRODUCTION

The discourse of “culture and translation” has incorporated a considerable number of theoretical and practical studies. Although the first major movement, called “the cultural turn” (back in 1980s), was concerned with literary analysis and theory, newer trends have been showing an extensive thematic tendency toward sociology. The sociological stream of culture and translation studies (TS) is characterized by novel theoretical foundations and usually empirical approaches. Yet, despite this promising outline, there are still gaps to be filled in the sociological line of TS. Most sociologically oriented theories of culture and translation, contrary to the postmodern atmosphere, seem to have taken for granted modernist notions, such as nation-state, the epistemology of society, and even unified national culture.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-2832-6.ch008

Copyright © 2018, IGI Global. Copying or distributing in print or electronic forms without written permission of IGI Global is prohibited.
Novel methods of research into culture and translation need to concentrate on the ways globalizing cultures are undergoing fragmentation. The digital revolution and unprecedented migratory movements worldwide have brought about a situation in which cultures can no longer be regarded as endogenously united wholes. Along with cross-cultural communication facilitators, there are stratifying forces, such as nation-state policy, skeptical thinkers, and individuals’ lifestyle/taste, that divert, impede or resist the axiological content transferred across cultures. This condition involves overriding implications for the burgeoning sociology of culture and translation, although the theoretical/practical apparatus that this field of studies suggests has to be revisited and further expanded.

One of the areas of social research into culture has focused on the notion of “subculture”, which appears to be underdeveloped in TS. A new theoretical construct founded upon subcultural research could situate the important issues mentioned above (e.g. the postmodern condition of fragmented cultures) in translation theory. To accomplish this, the contributions of and criticisms on the sociological approach to culture in translation should be scrutinized. For instance, although scholars concerned with the sociology of translation admit that the formation of cultural capital is not “ahistorical”, there are, as far as the literature shows in TS, no coherent historical theories that can explain capital formation, especially in a fragmented (subcultural) space. Similarly, although globalizing subcultures have intensified cultural diversity and difference, one must acknowledge that difference does not represent cultural essentialism but a progressive, narrative formation.

The purpose of this study is to propose the notion of “subcultural translation” as a novel and potentially fruitful way of investigating sub-groups and spaces formed as a result of semiotic/lingual translation (or any of its perceived derivatives). The study argues that cultural evolution through translation is accomplished when subcultures with specific motives and interests are shaped within a society. A culture is not a monolithic whole but a composite of several, parallel lines which favor a particular type of translation. The study primarily explores the background of subcultural theory including its traditional and postmodern variants and then examines the contributions in the culture and translation literature. Next, to construct subcultural translation with a view to the theoretical assets/gaps, the study incorporates Foucault’s notion of historical discontinuity, Ricoeur’s narrative identity, and Bourdieu’s notion of capital. Finally, four modes of subcultural translation are suggested in (post)modern conditions of Iran (leftist intelligentsia, ethnic localization, diasporic literature, film subtitling), through a content analysis which relies on research in history, sociology, demography, visual arts and TS.

BACKGROUND OF SUBCULTURAL THEORY

Before the notion of subcultural translation can be conceptualized in this study, an overview of studies concerned with subcultures is presented here. The major issues addressed are attitudes toward subcultures, their possible sources of gaining capital, and their traditional typology. Subcultures have been defined in very different and in some cases relatively contradictory ways (Nwalozie, 2015, p. 2). In their early configurations, studies concerned with subcultures relied on abnormal/criminal psychology. Research into subcultural deviancy has covered a wide range of real crimes that may appear in diverse forms (e.g. electronic crimes) (Holt, 2007, p. 172). Yet, a recurrent emphasis on the possible threats of subcultures could encourage people in a society to internalize negative views about such communities. As a result of negative approaches, subculture, in its early stages of theoretical development, was used to refer to “lower, subordinate, or deviant status of social groups” (Nwalozie, 2015, p. 2).
Related Content

Feminist Jurisprudence in India with Reference to Individual Freedom of Women vis-a-vis State’s Duty to Protect Them
www.igi-global.com/article/feminist-jurisprudence-in-india-with-reference-to-individual-freedom-of-women-vis-a-vis-states-duty-to-protect-them/120714?camid=4v1a

Indigenous Food Preservation and Management of Postharvest Losses among the Akan of Ghana
Kofi Quan-Baffour (2017). Handbook of Research on Social, Cultural, and Educational Considerations of Indigenous Knowledge in Developing Countries (pp. 334-345).

Recursive Inter-Ethnic Violence and the Failure of Development Communication in Africa
Charles Chiedu Okigbo (2016). Impact of Communication and the Media on Ethnic Conflict (pp. 77-88).
www.igi-global.com/chapter/recursive-inter-ethnic-violence-and-the-failure-of-development-communication-in-africa/142311?camid=4v1a

Performing Arts for Effective Civic Engagement: Developing Creative Civically Engaged Student Leaders
www.igi-global.com/article/performing-arts-for-effective-civic-engagement/122441?camid=4v1a

17 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the product’s webpage:
www.igi-global.com/chapter/the-strata-of-subcultural-translation/190012?camid=4v1