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6 Contemporary Translation Theories

The six main translation theories are: **sociological, communicational, hermeneutic, linguistic, literary and semiotic.**

Let's focus on theory! It makes sense for a [translation agency's](#) blog to venture into the drylands of translation theory. Right? There are six main approaches within contemporary translation theory: sociolinguistic; communicative; hermeneutic; linguistic; literary; and semiotic. Are you ready?

1. The sociolinguistic approach

According to the sociolinguistic approach to translation, the social context defines what is and what is not translatable and what is or what is not acceptable through selection, filtering and even censorship. According to this perspective, a translator is necessarily the product of his or her society: our own sociocultural background is present in everything we translate. This approach was developed by the School of Tel Aviv and by linguists and professors such as Annie Brisset, Even Zohar, and Guideon Toury.

2. The communicative approach

This theory is referred to as interpretive. Scholars Danica Seleskovitch and Marianne Lederer developed what they called the "theory of sense," based chiefly on the experience of conference interpreting. According to this perspective, meaning must be translated, not language. Language is nothing more than a vehicle for the message and can even be an obstacle to understanding. This explains why it is always better to deverbilize (instead of transcoding) when we translate.

3. The hermeneutic approach

The hermeneutic approach is mainly based on George Steiner's research. Steiner believed of any human communication as a translation. His book *After Babel* shows that translation is not a science but rather an "exact art": a true translator should be capable of becoming a writer in order to capture what the author of the original text "means to say."

4. The linguistic approach

Linguists such as Vinay, Darbelnet, Austin, Vegliante, or Mounin, interested in language text, structuralism, and pragmatics, also examined the process of translating. From this perspective, any translation –whether it is a [marketing translation](#), a [medical translation](#), a [legal translation](#) or another type of text– should be considered from the point of view of its fundamental units, that is the word, the syntagm, and the sentence.

5. The literary approach

The literary approach does not consider that a translation is a linguistic endeavor but instead a literary one. Language has an "energy" revealed through words that the result of experiencing a culture. This charge is what gives it strength and ultimately, meaning: this is what the translation-writer should translate.

6. The semiotic approach

Semiotics is the study of signs and signification. A meaning is the result of a collaboration between a sign, an object, and an interpreter. Thus, from the perspective of semiotics, translation is thought of as a way of interpreting texts in which encyclopedic content varies and each sociocultural context is unique.

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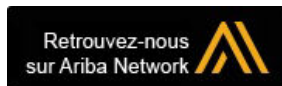
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