

# New Frontiers in English Translation Research: Multimodal, Multilingual, and Cultural Contexts

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## Abstract

Focusing on multimodal, multilingual, and cross-cultural settings, this research looked into the latest trends in the field of English translation studies. The research strategy included a thorough literature evaluation, with 40 articles selected that were all written within the recent decade. According to the results, translation has progressed beyond only textual means, expanding to include other senses as well. Challenges associated with interpreting minority languages and code-switching were highlighted as part of an investigation on multilingualism and translation. The importance of translation as a multilingual practice for bridging language barriers and facilitating localization was underlined. The study suggested investigating the trends, applications, and effects of technology in greater depth. Strategies for bridging cultural divides in intercultural communication were proposed, as well as research into machine translation in multimodal settings.

**Keywords:** *New Frontiers, English Translation, Multimodal, Multilingual Cultural Contexts*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Translation's role in facilitating mutual understanding and social cohesion between cultures has always been crucial (Brannen et al., 2017). With increasing globalization and cultural diversity, the need for accurate and reliable translation to bridge linguistic, cultural, and social divides has never been greater. Translation goes beyond simply fulfilling linguistic criteria since it encompasses complex procedures of interpreting, negotiating, adapting, and communicating within specific cultural and contextual frameworks (Boria et al., 2020). Because of its fluidity and complexity, translation necessitates interdisciplinary study and practice. The scope of this systematic literature review on English translation encompasses multimodal, multilingual, and cross-cultural areas of study. The review outlines major topics, methods, and challenges in contemporary translation studies and explores their theoretical, practical, and scholarly implications. The significance of multilingualism, including translation from minority languages, code switching, and translation as a multilingual practice, is also discussed. It also investigates the effects of cultural factors including globalization, localization, and intercultural communication on the study of English translation.

Translation studies have a long and varied history that reflects shifting social, cultural, and linguistic circumstances. Scholars and philosophers have debated translation's theoretical and practical ramifications since antiquity. Translation studies did not become an academic subject with its own theoretical frameworks, research techniques, and institutional structures until the 20th century. Translation studies began with Eugene Nida's functionalist approach to translation, which stressed understanding a text's communicative purpose and adapting it to the target culture and audience (Oyali, 2015). George Steiner, Roman Jakobson, and Lawrence Venuti also explored translation's linguistic, cultural, and political aspects, advancing translation studies. New theories and methodologies that stressed social, cultural, and

ideological variables shaped translation practices expanded the discipline in the 1980s and 1990s.

### 1.1 Recent Translation Studies

Translation studies has moved toward a more holistic, multidisciplinary approach that acknowledges multimodal, multilingual, and cultural contexts in recent years. This shift reflects an increasing awareness of the multifaceted and dynamic character of translation as a type of intercultural communication that entails more than just translating meaning (Boria et al., 2020). Translation encompasses numerous modalities, languages, and cultural practices that influence text interpretation and reception. Multimodal translation, which involves text, picture, sound, and video, is a major trend in translation studies today (Remael et al., 2016). Multimodal translation demands translators examine a text's visual and audio features, which can express meaning in different ways and interact with each other. Translational semiotics, which blends semiotic theory with translation theory to study multimodal meaning-making processes in translation, is one such theory. Multilingualism, which emphasizes that translation incorporates numerous languages and language variations that affect each other, is another key development in translation studies. Multilingual translators must negotiate meaning across linguistic and cultural boundaries and adjust texts to the demands and expectations of diverse language communities (Gambier, 2016). Translanguaging, which recognizes that language boundaries are porous and that speakers and translators use multiple linguistic resources to communicate and create meaning, has emerged as a new theory and practice for multilingual translation.

Another major change in translation studies is the growing emphasis on cultural contexts, which recognizes that translation is not a neutral or transparent process but a situated and context-bound activity shaped by social, historical, and political factors that affect text production and reception (Kim & Zhu, 2019). Translators must examine the source and target texts' cultural norms, attitudes, and beliefs and manage cultural gaps and disparities during cultural translation. The cultural turn in translation studies emphasizes the importance of cultural elements in affecting translation processes and outcomes.

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

A wide range of settings, including multimodal, multilingual, and cultural contexts, have been included in English translation research in recent years, going beyond the classic text-based translation model (Doerr, 2017). English translation studies are now at new boundaries as a result of this growth, which is perpetually reshaping the discipline. These new tendencies and their effects on the area of English translation studies are the focus of this comprehensive assessment of the literature. Multimodal translation, which includes the translation of both text-based and non-textual aspects, is the first substantial advancement in English translation research (O'Hagan & Ashworth, 2016). The need for specialized translation tools and methods as well as the potential for improved accessibility and effectiveness in the translation of complex, multimedia content have both been identified as opportunities and challenges in this field of study (Hua et al., 2018). Multimodal translation has become even more important as a result of the growing use of technology in media and communication.

### 2.1. Multimodal Translation

Recent years have seen a rise in interest in the relatively new field of multimodal translation research. The phrase "multimodal" describes the multiple forms of communication that are employed in different sorts of texts, such as pictures, sounds, and gestures in addition

to written or spoken words (Hafner, 2014). Modern society is filled with multimodal texts, such as social media posts, video games, and virtual reality experiences. These texts call for a different set of translation abilities than traditional text-based translation. The need for specialized translation tools and methods is one of the difficulties with multimodal translation. In the case of movies, TV shows, and video games, audiovisual translation (AVT), a subfield of multimodal translation, focuses on translating these media (Dressman, 2019). Dubbing, subtitling, and audio description are three AVT procedures that demand different knowledge and approaches than text-based translation. Aside from that, using specialist software tools is necessary to translate spatial features like maps and diagrams (Alonso-Pérez & Sánchez-Requena, 2018). Information loss or distortion is another issue with multimodal translation. Non-verbal components of multimodal texts, including voice intonation or facial expressions, have the power to transmit crucial meanings that can be missed in translation (Zhang & Feng, 2021). As a result, translators need to be aware of the many semiotic systems utilized in multimodal texts in order to modify their translation procedures. The translation of multimodal texts also necessitates close cooperation between translators and other experts, such as designers, audio engineers, and video editors, in order to produce a successful and accurate result (Đorđević & Stamenković, 2022). Multimodal translation presents many potential for translators and translation scholars despite these obstacles. According to Mulloy et al.(2014), using multimedia in translation, for instance, can increase accessibility and engagement for a larger range of consumers, including people who have hearing or visual impairments. Additionally, in a globalized society where various cultures and languages coexist, multimodal translation can improve the effectiveness and quality of communication (Belda-Medina, 2021). There is a need for more investigation of the particular difficulties and potential related to multimodal translation in various situations, which is a topic of continuing research.

## 2.2 Multilingualism

The importance of multilingualism in English translation studies is another noteworthy development. The ability to speak and use multiple languages is referred to as multilingualism, and it has gained importance in the area of translation studies. A higher need for translation between different languages and cultures, including translation from minority languages, code switching, and translation as a multilingual practice, has arisen as a result of increased globalization and migration (Grutman, 2019). A crucial topic of research in multilingualism is translation from minority languages. The translation of materials from minority languages can aid in the preservation and promotion of these languages because they are frequently underrepresented in popular culture and media (Prina et al., 2019). Translation scholars are paying more attention to the difficulties and possibilities of translating from minority languages, including the need for specialized translation techniques and the potential for introducing fresh linguistic and cultural perspectives to the target language.

### 2.2.1 Code Switching

Code switching is another aspect within the context of multilingualism. The term "code switching" pertains to the act of changing between various languages or language variations within a solitary text or conversation, as per Green (2018). The phenomenon of code switching is prevalent in societies with multiple languages, and it poses distinctive difficulties for translators. It is imperative for translators to possess the ability to recognize and interpret various languages or dialects present in a given text. Additionally, they should possess knowledge of the cultural and linguistic subtleties that may be linked to each language or dialect, as stated by (Doerr, 2017). Code switching can provide prospects for creativity and

innovation in translation. Translators may utilize code switching to generate fresh meanings or associations in the target text, as stated by Baker (2018). The practice of translation in multiple languages pertains to the utilization of translation as a method for language acquisition and preservation, as stated by (O'Hagan & Ashworth, 2016). This approach considers translation to be not just a means of communication, but also a means of advancing multilingualism and preserving language diversity. The practice of translation as a multilingual activity can manifest in various ways, such as translation exercises in language instruction, translation services for community groups, and translation for individual or artistic objectives (Pym, 2014). This methodology possesses the capability to foster multilingualism and intercultural comprehension, and it is a subject of increasing significance in the domain of translation studies.

### 2.3 Cultural Contexts (English-Chinese Context)

Cultural factors play a crucial role in English-Chinese translation, significantly influencing how texts are rendered and received in the target culture. The process of translation is not merely a matter of linguistic transfer; it involves a complex interplay of cultural elements that shape the meaning and reception of translated texts (House, 2016). This article explores the impact of cultural contexts, such as globalization, localization, and intercultural communication, on English-Chinese translation, examining specific examples to illustrate their influence.

Globalization has brought about increased interactions between English-speaking and Chinese-speaking communities, resulting in a growing demand for accurate and culturally sensitive translations (Li Rasmussen & Hope, 2021). In the business domain, multinational companies seeking to expand their presence in the Chinese market require translations of various materials, including marketing materials, product descriptions, and websites. Translators undertaking such projects must navigate the cultural nuances and preferences of the target Chinese audience to effectively convey the intended brand message. By understanding the cultural subtleties, translators can ensure that the translated content resonates with the target audience, facilitating successful communication and engagement.

Localization, another critical aspect of English-Chinese translation, involves adapting translations to align with specific cultural, linguistic, and market preferences (Sulaiman & Wilson, 2019). Localization goes beyond the mere translation of text; it encompasses a broader process of adaptation that takes into account cultural norms and user expectations. For instance, in software translation, localization not only involves translating the text but also adjusting the layout, icons, and images to conform to Chinese cultural norms and enhance user experience. This attention to cultural adaptation ensures that the translated software is well-received and accepted in the Chinese market.

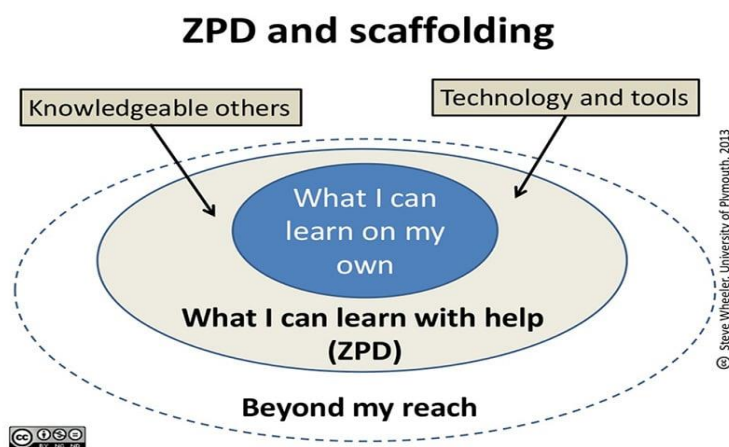
Intercultural communication plays a vital role in English-Chinese translation, particularly when dealing with idiomatic expressions and cultural references (Chen, 2019). Translating idioms requires careful consideration of equivalent expressions that carry similar meaning and cultural connotations. For instance, the English idiom "walking on thin ice" conveys the notion of being in a risky or dangerous situation. When translated into Chinese, it becomes "如履薄冰" (rú lǚ bó bīng), which captures the essence of the idiom in the target language. Translators must possess not only language proficiency but also deep cultural knowledge to accurately convey the intended meaning while maintaining cultural relevance (Ducar & Schocket, 2018).

The linguistic and structural differences between English and Chinese pose unique challenges in translation (Venuti, 2021). Name translation provides a notable example of these challenges. English names typically follow the given name followed by the family name format, while Chinese names follow the family name followed by the given name format. When translating names from English to Chinese, translators need to adapt the order to conform to the Chinese naming convention. For example, the English name "John Smith" would be translated into Chinese as "史约翰" (Shǐ Yuēhàn). This linguistic adjustment ensures that the translated names adhere to the cultural norms and conventions of the target language.

Ethical considerations are also crucial in English-Chinese translation (Li, 2007). Translators must accurately represent the cultural and social contexts of both the source and target languages while avoiding stereotypes and cultural appropriation. When translating literature or media content, translators need to ensure that they preserve the cultural integrity of the source material. This entails avoiding distorting or misrepresenting cultural elements and ensuring that the translated work respects the cultural sensitivities of the target audience

## 2.4 Theoretical Framework

Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory from the early 20th century provides a useful framework for exploring the intersections of translation studies, multimodality, and multilingualism. According to this theory, social environments play a role in mediating and influencing human cognition and learning processes. As depicted by figure 1, Vygotsky underlined the relevance of collaborative learning, scaffolding, and the Zone of Proximal Growth (ZPD) in cognitive growth and emphasized the significance of the social and cultural circumstances in which learning occurs (Yousef & Mahameed, 2022).



The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is a major idea in sociocultural theory, denoting the gap between an individual learner's capabilities and those they can achieve with guidance from an expert. According to Vygotsky, learners can function within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) with the help and support of an expert. Applying the ZPD idea to the study of translation can shed light on the significance of cooperation and dialogue between translators and other linguists (Esteban-Guitart, 2018). To improve translation quality and get a deeper appreciation for the target language and culture, translators are best served by staying within their zones of proximal development (ZPDs).

Furthermore, the sociocultural approach emphasizes the significance of cultural background while studying translation. This idea proposes that the meaning of words and



expressions can only be completely grasped when placed in their cultural context. According to scholars of translation, this means that translators need not just be proficient in the target language but also know a great deal about the culture from which the source language was derived. Translators who have this cultural awareness are better able to convey the nuanced meaning of a piece and make sure it works in its target culture (Kardiansyah & Salam, 2020). The study of translation also benefits from the incorporation of multimodality and multilingualism since these factors broaden the channels via which meaning may be communicated and understood. Sociocultural theory emphasizes how a variety of social and cultural factors influence multimodal and multilingual communication's meaning. This necessitates that translators take into account the many modes and languages utilized in the original communication and be cognizant of the environment in which it took place.

### 3.0 METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this review was to learn about recent developments in the study of translation into English. Finding and selecting the most reliable scholarly publications, books, and other materials was essential. Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar were among the sources used in the investigation. The researcher conducted this search using the following key phrases: "multimodal translation," "multilingual translation," "cultural context," "translation theory," and "translation studies."

To be included in this annotated bibliography, the source material used were those published in English within the last ten years (2011-2023) and investigate novel aspects of English translation research, such as the use of multiple modalities, the use of multiple languages, or the use of different cultural contexts. Journals whose articles mostly consisted of translated text were not considered. In the initial search, more than 5,000 papers were located. The first stage of screening was looking at article titles and abstracts. It was then necessary to read the remaining articles in their entirety. The final sample consisted of 40 articles that met the criteria. The information was analyzed using a content-based approach. Reading the papers in depth helped in grasping the essential concepts. The topics were then coded so that connections and patterns could be found between them. The data was then synthesized and organized thematically.

### 4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Translation research has evolved beyond traditional text-based translation, and new frontiers have emerged. In this section, the study will discuss the key findings from the literature review on multimodal, multilingual, and cultural contexts in translation studies and their implications for theory, methodology, and practice.

#### 4.1 Multimodal Translation

The increasing use of technology and digital media has expanded the scope of translation beyond linguistic and textual elements to include visual, auditory, and spatial components. This trend has given rise to multimodal translation, which refers to the translation of multiple modes or channels of communication, such as images, sounds, and text. According to O'Halloran et al. (2016) multimodal translation involves "translating meaning from one semiotic mode to another, using verbal and nonverbal sign systems to convey information" (p. 3). Multimodal translation presents new challenges and opportunities for translation theory, methodology, and practice. One of the main challenges is the need for translators to have expertise in multiple

semiotic systems, including language, visual design, and audio production. This requires a multidisciplinary approach to translation, which involves collaboration between translators, designers, and audiovisual producers (Munday, 2016). Multimodal translation involves translating not only written or spoken words but also visual, auditory, and spatial elements.

#### **4.1.1 Visual Translation**

Images, movies, and animations are just some of the visual elements that can be translated. Visual aspects are very context dependent and a thorough understanding of the target culture is essential for their accurate translation. Decisions concerning the amount of faithfulness to the original and the need for adaptation to the target culture must be made during the translation of visual aspects. When translating visual elements, it is important to consider the cultural context in which they will be used (Gambier, 2016).

#### **4.1.2 Auditory Translation**

Speeches, conversations, and sound effects are just few of the types of audio that can be translated via an auditory translation. The translation of audio aspects involves knowledge of the cultural context and the usage of proper register and tone, as these elements are often intertwined with visual ones. When doing an auditory translation, it is essential to take into account not only the linguistic but also the cultural variations between the two languages as reported by (Rodrigues, 2018). Localization techniques, such as adopting a certain accent or dialect for a specific audience, may be employed in this regard.

#### **4.1.3 Spatial Translation**

Spatial translation involves translating elements that have a spatial dimension, such as maps, diagrams, and charts. The translation of spatial elements requires an understanding of the conventions and symbols used in the source and target cultures. The translator must also take into account the level of detail required in the target text and adapt the spatial elements accordingly. In addition, the translator must also consider the limitations of the medium in which the spatial elements are presented. For example, a map that is clear and readable in the original language may require significant adaptation for a smaller screen on a mobile (O'Hagan & Ashworth, 2016; O'Halloran et al., 2016).

On the other hand, multimodal translation also offers new opportunities for creativity and innovation in translation. It allows translators to engage with a wider range of cultural and linguistic expressions and to create more engaging and effective translations that cater to the needs and preferences of different audiences (Prieto-Velasco & Fuentes-Luque, 2016). Multimodal translation has also led to the emergence of new types of translation, such as audio description, subtitling for the deaf and hard-of-hearing, and video game localization, which require specialized skills and knowledge.

### **4.2 Multilingualism in Translation**

Multilingualism plays a critical role in translation studies, as it affects how translators approach and execute translation tasks. Translation is often seen as a process of bridging linguistic and cultural gaps between different languages and cultures. This contention is in tandem with NLLB Team et al.(2022) who cited that multilingualism enables translators to navigate these gaps more effectively and to develop a more nuanced understanding of the cultural and linguistic differences between source and target languages. One area of multilingualism in translation studies that has gained attention in recent years is translation from minority languages. Translation from minority languages involves translating texts from

languages that are spoken by smaller communities or groups within a larger linguistic and cultural context. This presents unique challenges for translators, as they must balance the preservation of linguistic and cultural heritage with the need to make the translation accessible and relevant to a broader audience (Baker, 2014). Another aspect of multilingualism in translation studies is code switching, which refers to the practice of alternating between two or more languages or language varieties in the same discourse. Code switching is prevalent in multilingual societies and can be found in various forms of communication, including literature, media, and everyday speech. Code switching was found to present challenges for translators, as they must decide whether to maintain or translate the original code-switching and how to convey its meaning and cultural significance in the target language (Huertas & Pinar Sanz, 2015).

### 4.3 Translation as a Multilingual Practice

Translation is not only a product but also a process that involves the interaction of multiple languages and cultures. The literature indicates that translation as a multilingual practice emphasizes the role of translation in promoting intercultural dialogue and understanding between different linguistic and cultural groups. As globalization has increased the need for cross-cultural communication, the importance of understanding cultural differences and importance of translation has become more apparent (Hao et al., 2018). Localizing content for specific cultures has become essential, as cultural norms and values can significantly affect the reception and interpretation of translated material. In the context of English translation studies, localization has become a critical area of research, as it involves adapting content to suit the target audience's cultural norms, values, and expectations. This findings agree with Pyae (2018) who depicted that localization involves more than just translating words as it requires a deep understanding of the target culture's beliefs, customs, and attitudes.

Intercultural communication is another factor that affects English translation studies. Translation involves not only transferring meaning from one language to another but also navigating cultural differences and understanding the impact of cultural context on meaning. Intercultural communication has been a crucial area of research in translation studies, focusing on how cultural differences affect communication, negotiation, and conflict resolution. In the context of English translation studies, intercultural communication has become a critical area of research, as it involves understanding the challenges of communicating effectively across cultures and adapting to different cultural contexts.

The emerging trends in English translation research highlight the need for new approaches and methodologies to tackle the challenges posed by multimodal, multilingual, and cultural contexts. This finding occurs with Yahiaoui et al. (2020) who postulates that one promising approach is that of trans creation, which involves creating new content in the target language that captures the essence of the source material while adapting it to suit the target audience's cultural norms, values, and expectations. Trans creation goes beyond traditional translation, as it involves not only transferring meaning but also creating new content that resonates with the target audience.

Another approach that shows promise is that of collaborative translation, which involves collaboration between translators, subject matter experts, and target audience representatives. Collaborative translation is particularly relevant in the context of multimodal and multilingual



translation, as it involves working together to create content that is not only accurate but also culturally relevant and engaging.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study of English translation now includes not only textual translation but also translation in other media and across languages and cultures. The important findings and developing trends in these cutting-edge areas of translation studies have been brought to light by this comprehensive literature review. The advantages and disadvantages of multimodal translation were discussed, with the review focusing on the translation of visual, aural, and spatial elements. Translation from minority languages, code switching, and translation as a multilingual practice were also explored as they relate to the field of translation studies. It also looked at how factors like globalization, localization, and intercultural communication have affected studies of English translation. This literature study has shown the importance of combining theoretical, methodological, and practical concerns in translation studies. Based on the results, it is clear that more investigation into the nuances of multimodal, multilingual, and cultural translation is needed, as well as the development of novel techniques to tackling these issues.

## 6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the findings and discussions presented, it is recommended that future studies in English translation research should continue to explore the emerging trends of multimodal translation, multilingualism, and cultural contexts. More emphasis should be given to the practical application of these trends in translation theory, methodology, and practice. Researchers should also consider investigating the impact of technological advancements on translation studies, including the use of machine translation and artificial intelligence. Additionally, research could explore the potential of interdisciplinary approaches to translation studies, incorporating fields such as psychology, anthropology, and sociology.

## 7.0 SUGGESTED AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Two suggested areas for further research are:

- i. The exploration of the effectiveness of machine translation in multimodal translation contexts and its impact on the role of human translators.
- ii. The investigation of the impact of cultural factors on translation practices and the development of effective strategies to bridge cultural gaps in intercultural communication

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