Chapter 2

History of Translation Studies

2.1 Introduction to Translation Studies

This chapter gives a brief introduction to the discipline of Translation Studies and also about the history, theory and practice of translation. It also discusses the strategies used by different scholars for translation of proverbs.

Translation Studies is a relatively new discipline, which deals with the study of translation. The study of translation as an academic subject began only in the last sixty years. Earlier translation was studied as a language-learning methodology or as part of contrastive linguistics courses. Starting from the beginning of 20th Century till early 1960s, grammar-translation method was adopted for teaching languages. But it lost popularity after other methods like communicative approach became famous in the 1970s. From the second half of 20th Century more scholars started doing a systematic analysis of translation and have come up with the theories of translation, which led to the emergence of the new discipline of Translation Studies.

As proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet (1959), equivalence is the strategy that is most appropriate to translate proverbs from one language into another. But in case there are no equivalents for the given proverbs of the SL in the TL, the translator has to choose paraphrase method or literal translation depending on its suitability going by the SL proverb and acceptability by the TL culture.

Theorists like Catford, Nida and Newmark have come up with the linguistic theories of translation. ‘Equivalence’ was central to these theories. Later equivalence went out of fashion, with the advent of German functional theories in the 1980s, wherein the ‘skopos’ or purpose has become central for translation.

Descriptive approach in translation, which had its origin in comparative literature and Russian formalism also came to fore in the 1980s. Gideon Toury was a proponent of this approach. Later Itamar Even Zohar along with Toury has come up with the polysystems theory. He pursued the idea of literary polysystem, wherein several genres and literatures,
both translated as well as original compete for dominance and the primary or central position in the literary polysystem.

Postcolonial translation theory emerged in the 1990s, which explores new perspectives on translation in relation to post-colonial societies. Scholars like Tejaswini Niranjana and Gayatri Spivak are proponents of this theory.

2.2 Review of Literature

George Steiner divides the literature on the theory, practice and history of translation into four periods. According to him the first period extends from the statements of Cicero and Horace on translation up to the publication of Alexander Fraser Tytler’s *Essay on the principles of Translation* in 1791. His second period runs up to the publication of Larbaud’s *Sous l’invocation de Saint Jerome* in 1946. The third period begins with the publication of the first papers on machine translation in the 1940s and the fourth period, coexisting with the third has its origins in the early 1960s.

In the West, from antiquity to the late nineteenth century, statements about translation theory fell into traditionally defined areas of thinking about language and culture: rhetoric, literary theory, philosophy. Theorists like Cicero and Horace (first century BCE) and St. Jerome (fourth century CE) discussed the practice of translation. Most frequently cited theorists include: Cicero, Horace, Quintilian, Jerome, Augustine, Dryden, Goethe, Schleiermacher, Arnold and Nietzsche. The distinction between ‘word-for-word’ (i.e. ‘literal’) and ‘sense-for-sense’ (i.e. ‘free’) translation goes back to Cicero and Jerome and later forms the basis of key writings on translation. Cicero outlined his approach to translation in *De optimo genere oratorum*, wherein he introduced his own translations of the speeches by the Greek orators Aeschines and Demosthenes:

> And I did not translate them as an interpreter, but as an orator, keeping the same ideas and forms, or as one might say, the ‘figures’ of thought, but in language which conforms to our usage. And in so doing I did not hold it necessary to render word for word, but I preserved the general style and force of the language,

In ancient Rome translation was subordinated to rhetoric and grammar. Roman education was bilingual, as students were taught Greek as well as Latin, and translation exercises were routinely implemented in language learning and literary study. ‘Word for word’ translation was practiced by the Romans because they would read the target texts (TTs) side by side with the Greek source texts (STs). Cicero argues that grammatical translation, which interprets the foreign text ‘word for word’, is not useful to the orator. Roman authors subjected Greek texts to various forms of translation and adaptation, and thus expressed their admiration for those Greek texts while aggressively rewriting them to create a distinctive Latin literature. This explains the Greek and Roman cultural rivalry and also the endeavor of the Romans to establish their supremacy. Horace, in his *Ars Poetica* (20 BCE), underlines the goal of producing an aesthetically pleasing and creative text in the TL and thereby advocates a rhetorical imitation of the source text. The disparagement of word-for-word translation by both Cicero and Horace had an influence on St. Jerome. He cites the authority of Cicero’s approach to justify his own Latin translation of the Greek Septuagint Old Testament. Defending himself against criticism of ‘incorrect’ translation, Jerome describes his strategy in the following terms:

Now I not only admit but freely announce that in translating from the Greek – except of course in the case of the Holy Scripture, where even the syntax contains a mystery – I render not word-for-word but sense-for-sense.


Although St. Jerome’s statement is usually regarded as the clearest expression of the ‘literal’ and ‘free’ poles in translation, the same type of concern seems to have occurred in the ancient translation traditions such as in China and Arab world. While discussing the history of Chinese translation of the Buddhist sutras from Sanskrit, Hung and Pollard use similar terms.

St. Jerome’s period (4th Century CE) marked a changing step in translation development. The translation of Bible remained subject to many conflicts later on for more than a thousand years. These conflicts were intensified with the coming of the Reformation in the 16th Century.
In *De doctrina Christiana* (428 AD), Augustine argues for the authoritative accuracy of the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures prepared in the third century BC. Based on the legend of how seventy Hellenistic Jews working independently, separated in different cells came up with the exact same translations, Augustine observes that the translation was inspired by the Holy Spirit and therefore many spoke with the mouth of one and concludes that “even though something is found in Hebrew versions different of what they have set down, I think we should cede to the divine dispensation by which they worked.” (Augustine 1958: 49)

Issues of ‘free’ and ‘literal’ translation were for over a thousand years in the Western society after St. Jerome bound up with the translation of Bible and other religious and philosophical texts. The Roman Catholic Church was pre-occupied with the ‘correct’ established meaning of the Bible to be transmitted. Any translation diverging from the accepted meaning was considered heretical and was censured or banned. Etienne Dolet, the French humanist, was burned at the stake for adding the phrase *rien du tout* (‘nothing at all’) in a passage about what existed after death in his translation of one of Plato’s dialogues, which was condemned by the theological faculty of Sorbonne University in 1546. The addition led to the charge of blasphemy, the assertion being that Dolet did not believe in immortality. He was executed for such a translation ‘error’.

Non-literal translation was used as a weapon against the Church by Martin Luther. He translated the New Testament in 1522 and later the Old Testament in 1534 into East Middle German dialect, which later took the form of standard German language. The Church criticized Luther for his translation of Paul’s words in Romans 3:28

Arbitramus hominem justificari ex fide absque operibus
Wir halten, daß der Mensch gerecht werde ohne des Gesetzes Werk, allein durch den Glauben.
[We hold, that man becomes rectified without the work of the law, only through belief.]

Luther was heavily criticized by the Church for the addition of the word ‘allein’ (alone/only), because there was no equivalent Latin word (e.g. *sola*) in the ST.
The charge was that the German implies that the individual’s belief is sufficient for a good life, making ‘the work of the law’ (i.e. the religious law) redundant. But Luther maintained that he was translating into ‘pure, clear German’, where *allein* would be used for emphasis. He rejects word-for-word translation strategy like St, Jerome, since it would be unable to convey the same meaning as the ST using this strategy. He gives an example from Mathew 12:34

*Ex abundantia cordis os loquitur*

The English King James version translates this literally as:

*Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*

Luther translates this with a common German proverb:

*Wes der Herz voll ist, des geht der Mund über*

It means ‘to speak straight from the heart’.

While translating Luther’s emphasis was on the TL and the TT readers. His famous quote extolling the language of the people puts light on this:

> You must ask the mother at home, the children in the street, the ordinary man in the market [sic] and look at their mouths, how they speak, and translate that way; then they’ll understand and see that you’re speaking to them in German.

In her *Early Theories of Translation*, Flora Amos views the history of the theory of translation as “by no means a record of easily distinguishable, orderly progression.” (Amos 1920/73:x). She opines that theory of translation was generally unconnected, as most of the practitioners of translation, who have written broad series of prefaces and comments about their translations, have often ignored, or were ignorant of, most of what had been written before.

While looking in detail at the history of translation theory, Kelly calls the terms ‘fidelity’, ‘spirit’ and ‘truth’ as ‘inextricably tangled’. Initially Horace dismissed the concept of ‘fidelity’ as literal word-for-word translation. ‘Fidelity’ came to be identified with faithfulness to the meaning rather than the words of the author only at the end of seventeenth century. Similarly Kelly describes ‘spirit’ as having two meanings: the Latin word *spiritus* denotes creative energy or inspiration, proper to literature, but St. Augustine used it to mean the Holy Spirit and St. Jerome used it in both senses. As regards St. Augustine, ‘spirit’ and
‘truth’ (*veritas*) were intertwined, with ‘truth’ having the sense of ‘content’. For St. Jerome, the authentic Hebrew text meant the ‘truth’ to which he returned in his Vulgate translation. Kelly opines that it was only in the twelfth century that ‘truth’ was fully equated with ‘content’.

In his preface to *Pindaric Odes* (1640), Cowley attacks poetry that is ‘converted faithfully and word for word into French or Italian prose’ (Cowley 1640, cited in Amos 1920/73: 149). He proposes a very free method of translation and calls it imitation. Another English poet and translator, John Dryden, reduces all translation to three categories in his preface to the translation of *Ovid’s Epistles* in 1680:

1. ‘metaphrase’: ‘word by word and line by line translation, which corresponds to literal translation
2. ‘paraphrase’: ‘translation with latitude, where the author is kept in view by the translator, so as never to be lost, but his words are not so strictly followed as his sense’. This involves changing whole phrases and more or less corresponds to faithful or sense-for-sense translation.
3. ‘imitation’: ‘forsaking’ both words and sense. This corresponds to Cowley’s very free translation and is more or less adaptation.

Dryden rejects imitation. In his view, it allows the translator to become more visible, but does ‘the greatest wrong . . . to the memory and reputation of the dead (Dryden 1680/1992:20). He prefers paraphrase and advises that metaphrase and imitation be avoided.

Etienne Dolet set out five principles in order of importance in his 1540 manuscript *La maniere de bien traduire d’une langue en aultre* (‘The way of translating well from one language into another’ Dolet 1540/1997) as follows:

1. The translator must perfectly understand the sense and material of the original author, although he [sic] should feel free to clarify obscurities.
2. The translator should have a perfect knowledge of both SL and TL, so as not to lessen the majesty of the language.
3. The translator should avoid word-for-word renderings.
4. The translator should avoid Latinate and unusual forms.
5. The translator should assemble and liaise words eloquently to avoid clumsiness.
In his ‘Essay on the principles of translation’ (1797), Tytler defines a ‘good translation’ in TL-reader-oriented-terms as against Dryden’s author-oriented description as follows:

That in which the merit of the original work is so completely transfused into another language as to be as distinctly apprehended, and as strongly felt, by a native of the country to which that language belongs as it is by those who speak the language of the original work.

(Tytler 1797: 14, cited in Munday 2001:21)

Further Tytler has three general ‘laws’ or ‘rules’ for translation. He ranks his laws in order of comparative importance.

1. The translation should have a complete transcript of the ideas of the original work.
2. The style and manner of the writing should be of the same character with that of the original.
3. The translation should have all the ease of the original composition.

The German theologian and translator, Friedrich Schleiermacher, wrote a highly influential treatise on translation, Über die verschiedenen Methoden des Übersetzens (‘On the different methods of translating’) in 1813. He translated the collected works of Plato into German. He is recognized as the founder of modern Protestant theology and of modern hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is a Romantic approach to interpretation, based not on absolute truth but on the individual’s inner feeling and understanding. His treatise has contributed a lot to translation theory for the following reasons:

1. He was the first person to consistently distinguish the activity of translating from that of interpreting.
2. He differentiated between true translation – the rendering of artistic texts and texts having to do with the natural sciences, and mechanical translation – the transposition of pragmatic texts. In doing so, he set different qualitative standards by which to judge practitioners of the two types of translation.
3. He saw mankind as existing in a dialectic relationship between linguistic freedom and linguistic commitment. (This is a modification of von Humboldt’s thesis that the way a person thinks depends on his language)
4. He, with his hermeneutic view of translation and the problems it involved, tried to answer the question asked by Goethe at the beginning of that same year: should a translator be subservient to the original, or should the original be subservient to the translation?

(Wilss, Wolfram 1982, 31)

Schleiermacher’s treatise, which he delivered before the Royal Academy of Sciences in Berlin on June 24, 1813:

“The interpreter performs his duties in the world of business, the translator proper primarily in the field of science and art. If you find my definitions arbitrary, since interpreting is generally understood to be more the oral and translation more the written form, they are to be excused in this case, not only because the terms conveniently meet present needs, but even more so because there is not all that great a difference between the two. The written word is suited to art and science, since it alone can enable their works to endure; to interpret what is produced by science or art from mouth to mouth would be as useless as it would seem to be impossible. For business, on the other hand, writing is only a mechanical means (Italics added by author); the oral transaction is here the original, and any written interpretation is actually only a record of what has transpired orally.

… But where does the significant difference lie, the difference which becomes clear to all even in borderline cases but is the most glaring in extreme cases? Someone in the business world deals largely with visible things, or at least with things which are determined as precisely as possible; all transactions have to a certain extent an arithmetic or geometric character; numbers and measurement are a constant help. Even those concepts which, as the ancients used to say, encompass both more and less and are designated by a progression of words which fluctuate in terms of use and disuse in everyday life are subject to laws and habit and soon become fixed in use as individual words. Unless the speaker intentionally effects hidden ambiguities for the purpose of deceit or errs for lack of thinking, anyone who knows the subject and the language should have no problem understanding him. Only
insignificant variations will occur in each case in use of the language. Similarly, there can seldom be any doubt as to what expression in one language will correspond to what expression in another language, any doubt, that is, which cannot be resolved in short order. To execute a transfer in this field is thus almost solely a mechanical business (Italics added by author), which anyone having a moderate knowledge of two languages can perform and where there is little difference between bad and good, provided obvious mistakes are avoided. If the products of art and science are to be transplanted from one language to another, however, two forces come into play which change the relationship completely. If a word in one language corresponded exactly to a word in another language and expressed the same concept on the same scale, if their inflections represented the same relationships and their conjunctions were indistinguishable, so that the languages actually differed only in the way they sounded, then all translation in the field of art and science would be as purely mechanical (Italics added by author) as that in the business world, insofar as imparting knowledge of the content of a speech or written work was concerned. Then one could say of any translation that, except for the effects produced by sound and intonation, it placed the foreign reader in exactly the same relationship to the author and his work as that enjoyed by the native.

The second reason that translation proper (Italics added by author) is quite a different undertaking than mere interpreting is the following: Whenever speech is not wholly bound by visually perceptible objects or external facts, and whenever expressing them is not the only thing speech has to do, when, that is to say, the speaker is thinking more or less independently and wants only to express himself, then the speaker will have a dual relationship with his language; his speech will only be understood correctly to the extent that this relationship is perceived correctly. Every person is, on the one hand, in the power of the language he speaks; he and everything he thinks are but a product of the same. Anything outside its boundaries cannot be thought by him with full determination; the shaping of his concepts, the way and the extent to which they may be linked to one another, are preprogrammed by the language in which he is born and raised; his intellect and imagination
are bound by it. On the other hand, however, any free-thinking, intellectually independent person creates his language. How else would it have changed and grown from its primitive beginnings to its consummate development in science and art? … But the translator proper, who wants to truly bring together two completely separated persons, his writer and his reader, and who wants to help the latter understand and enjoy the former as correctly and completely as possible without making it necessary for him to step outside his native tongue, what course is he to follow? In my opinion, he can take one of two approaches. The translator can either leave the writer in peace as much as possible and bring the reader to him or he can leave the reader in peace as much as possible and bring the writer to him. The two approaches are so totally different from one another that one or the other must be followed as strictly as possible; any mixing will necessarily produce a highly unreliable result, and the writer and reader might miss each other altogether. The difference between the two methods and their opposing natures are immediately apparent. In the first case, you see, the translator tries to let his own work substitute for the reader’s lacking comprehension of the *original language* (Italics added by author). He tries to impart to the reader the same image, the same impression he gained from his knowledge of the original language of the work, such as it is. He thus tries to transport him to its location, which, in all reality, is foreign to him. If, however, the translation is intended to make the Roman author, for example, speak as a German would have spoken and written to a German, the translation does not so much merely bring the author to meet the translation, since even to him he will speak Latin rather than German, but rather moves him directly into the world of the German readers and changes him into one of their own; this precisely, is the second case.

(EUDISED, in: Der Übersetzer, 1969: 39ff)

Schleiermacher’s influence has been enormous. His remark to provide a qualitative ranking of texts to be translated is of special importance for translation theory. This becomes more prominent in Reiss’s text typology. Venuti has taken up the ‘alienating’ and ‘naturalizing’ opposites as ‘foreignization’ and ‘domestication’. The description of the hermeneutics of
translation is apparent in George Steiner’s ‘hermeneutic motion’ and the vision of a ‘language of translation’ is pursued by Walter Benjamin.

At the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of nineteenth century, Germany developed into a center of thought on translation theory. Schleiermacher and von Humboldt may be given credit for this. During the same time there was a great upsurge in the business of practical translation. Personalities like Johann Heinrich Voss, Ludwig Tieck, August Wilhelm Schlegel, Christoph Martin Wieland, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Friedrich von Schiller were associated with it. There is a consensus that the early 19th century German theorists have proved to be important precursors of modern translation studies, even for the English-speaking community. The main trends in translation theory during this period are rooted in German literary and philosophical traditions, in Romanticism, hermeneutics and existential phenomenology.

Equivalence went out of fashion. German-language Skopostheorie made it even more unfashionable by arguing that since “functional consistency” (the closest thing they had to equivalence) was no more than one of many possible requirements, translation usually requires transformations of a rather more radical kind. For those theorists, equivalence became quite a small thing, a special case. At almost the same time, however, other theorists were dismantling equivalence in precisely the opposite way.

For this second very broad group, for what Gideon Toury would eventually construct as “Descriptive Translation Studies,” equivalence was a feature of all translations, simply because they were thought to be translations, no matter what their linguistic or aesthetic quality (cf. Toury 1980: 63-70). That changed everything. If equivalence was suddenly everywhere in translations, or almost, it could no longer be used to support any linguistics that would help people create it, nor could the concept directly serve the prescriptive training of translators. Translation Studies was thus moved into a realm that was relatively unprotected by any parent discipline; it had to become its own discipline. The descriptive approach emphasized the need to carry out research on translation, mostly research of the kind done in structuralist literary studies, rather than expound principles and opinions. The theories associated with the research were thus positioned problematically out of touch with the growing number of training institutions; they were in an institutional context quite different from that of Skopostheorie.
Theorists like Vermeer (1986) and Nord (1991) are the pioneers of Skopos or Functionalist theory. As in DTS approach, the functionalist approach is target oriented. The focus is on the function of texts and their translations. Functionalist theorists emphasize the importance of text analysis before embarking on translation. They view translation as a form of inter-cultural communication. Nord (1991:9) asserts that the function of the target text is not arrived at automatically from an analysis of the source text. It is defined by the purpose of the inter-cultural communication. In other words, there must be a purpose for translating the text: what is that that the translator or the initiator wants to communicate to the target audience.

According to the functional view of translation, equivalence between source text (ST) and target text (TT) is regarded as being sub-ordinate to all possible translation scopes, not as the only option or translation principle. The skopos of the translation is its goal or purpose and it is determined by the function, which the target text is intended to fulfill (Nord, 1991:24). The text function is determined by the situation in which the text serves as an instrument of communication.

Paul Kußmaul and Hönig perceive the process of translation as decision making and problem solving. According to them the purpose of communication determines the decisions to be made on the different levels of the language, i.e. text, sentence, word. This is the main point of their theory.

The translator is ideally bicultural, that is s/he has a perfect command of both the language cultures s/he is engaged with. As the target text producer, s/he adopts somebody else’s intention, viz. the original author or the initiator of the translation, to produce a communicative instrument for the target culture. In the translation process, however, s/he is not expected to falsify the intentions of the author of the source text. S/he is committed to the source text (ST) as well as the target text (TT). The basic principle of functionalism is the orientation towards the function of the target text. Nord (1991:73) maintains that it is only by analyzing the ST function that the translator can decide which TT functions will be “compatible with the given text”.

For the translator to be able to analyze the function of the ST, s/he must first analyze the text comprehensively to ensure that the ST has been fully and correctly understood (Nord,
This idea is in line with the Variational approach designed by Hewson and Martin (1991), which emphasizes the importance of reading and understanding the source text before actually starting the translation process. Their theory is concerned with the production of variation range or homologies in the target language culture corresponding to the reconstituted range framing the ST. They define translation as “the individually and inter-culturally motivated choice according to TL socio-cultural norms of a TT by a mediator among sets of homologically related paraphrastic options” (1991:33). They agree with Nord that the translator occupies a central position between the cultures of the languages involved, the ST being the input for the transformational process.

The Variational Approach also specifies that the translator must be competent in the languages s/he is working with. Competency is defined as being able to read, interpret, analyze, compare and convert cultural systems. The process of reading and interpreting is culture bound and is carried out in the light of the TL and the forthcoming translation. The translator’s competency, therefore, helps in decoding the source text and selecting suitable homologies or variants when translating. Because all texts are in some way culture specific, the translator has to look at the general type of discourse to which the text belongs. This has an influence in the consideration of textual strategies operating within the text.

The fact that translation is an act of communication and that it is function-oriented, is also emphasized by Gutt (1991) in his explanation of relevance theory. He describes translation in terms of a general theory of human communication suggesting that translation is an instance of interpretive use and that it seeks to resemble its original. The translation, therefore, is supposed to link the communicative intention of the translator to the intended interpretation of the original text. Gutt also mentions that translation is constrained by the principle of relevance with regard to what it is intended to convey and how that should be expressed. He argues that translation should be expressed such that it “yields the intended interpretation without putting the audience to unnecessary processing effort” (Venuti, 2000:377). It should, therefore, be noted that the interpretation of a text is always relevance determined and context dependent.

The translator, as the communicator, generally chooses to translate a text in a manner that calls for the least processing effort that will make it possible for the target audience to understand the communicative intent.
Another school of thought, which emerged in the 1980s, was one related to postcolonial theories of translation. Theorists working in this area argue that translation is (need to be) controlled to a degree by the source culture. Their argument stems from the fact that during the colonial era translation was controlled by the source culture, the colonizer. Postcolonial studies reveal that translation was controlled by the colonizer. The translations were used to control and ‘educate’ and generally shape colonized populations in the past (Robinson: 1997). The empire used a domesticating strategy in translation as a tool to translate texts in(to) their own terms. To counter this, the colonized used foreignising methods of translation to “retain and assert difference and diversity: by adhering to the source text. (Robinson, 1997:109)

It is from this perspective that the notion of foreignisation arose as a decolonizing tool and as a tool to undermine the empire. Robinson also asserts that “a foreignising translation owes a stronger loyalty to a stabilized or an objectified source language” (1997:112). Venuti as cited by Munday (2001:147) refers to this form of translation as

‘resistancy’ – a non-fluent or estranging translation style designed to make visible the presence of the translator by highlighting the foreign identity of the ST and protecting it from the ideological dominance of the target culture.

He maintains that foreignisation entails choosing a foreign text and developing a translation method along lines which are excluded by dominant cultural values in the target language. He also mentions the fact that a foreignising text adheres to the ST structure and syntax, calques and archaic structures.

The Israeli scholar Itamar Even-Zohar developed the Polysystems theory in the 1970s borrowing ideas from the Russian Formalists of the 1920s. Polysystems theory views a literary work not in isolation but as a part of literary system. Thus it views literature as a part of the social, cultural, literary and historical framework and the key concept is that of the system, in which there is ongoing dynamic of ‘mutation’ and struggle for the primary position in the literary canon. This theory advocates the investigation of the position of the translated literature as a whole in the historical and literary systems of the target culture. It emphasizes that translated literature operates as a system in two ways:
1. In the way the TL selects works for translation
2. In the way translation norms, behavior and policies are influenced by other co-systems.

Shuttelworth and Cowie defined the concept polysystem as follows”

The polysystem is conceived as a heterogeneous, hierarchized conglomerate (or system) of systems which interact to bring about an ongoing, dynamic process of evolution within the polysystem as a whole.

The hierarchy referred to is the positioning and interaction at a given historical moment of the different strata of the polysystem. If an innovative literary type occupies the higher position, then the conservative types are likely to occupy the lower strata. Else if the conservative types occupy the top position, then innovation and renewal are likely to occupy the lower strata. Otherwise a period of stagnation occurs (Even-Zohar 1978: 120).

The relations between innovatory and conservative systems are in a constant state of flux and competition indicating that this dynamic process of evolution is vital to the polysystem. The position of the translated literature is not fixed because of the flux. It may either occupy a primary or secondary position in the polysystem.

Even-Zohar gives three major cases when translated literature occupies the primary position:

1. When a ‘young’ literature is being established and looks initially to ‘older’ literatures for ready-made models
2. When a literature is ‘peripheral’ or ‘weak’ and imports those literary types which it is lacking. This can happen when a smaller nation is dominated by the culture of a larger one.
3. When there is a critical turning point in literary history at which established models are no longer considered sufficient, or when there is a vacuum in the literature of the country. Where no types hold sway, it is easier for foreign models to assume primacy.

Otherwise if the translated literature assumes a secondary position, then it represents a peripheral system within the polysystem. It has no major influence over the central system and even becomes a conservative element, preserving conventional forms and conforming to the literary norms of the target system.

Gideon Toury reassessed the polysystems approach and he advocated that it is logical to make the target system the object of study, since a translation is designed to fill a need in the target culture. In order to study the way in which translation norms are formulated and how
they operate, he emphasizes the need to establish patterns of regularity of translational behavior. Though his views were not accepted by many scholars, they were widely respected.

2.3 Translation Theory and Translation of Proverbs

Different scholars have approached translation studies from different points of view. Theorists like Catford viewed translation as a purely linguistic phenomenon. He did not consider other extra-linguistic factors that influence translation process. His focus was on linguistic equivalence. It was regarded as a necessary condition for translation. Nida (in Venuti, 2000:129) distinguishes between two types of equivalences: formal and dynamic. Formal equivalence focuses on the message itself in both form and content. This means that the message of the target text (TT) should match as closely as possible with the original message, i.e. message of the source text (ST). Dynamic equivalence on the other hand is based on the principle of equivalent effect. That is the relationship between the receiver and the message should aim at being the same as that between the original receiver and the source language message. The notion of dynamic equivalence implies that Nida does not simply view translation as a linguistic phenomenon, but considers other factors that are involved as well.

Bassnet-McGuire (1980:26) is of the opinion that the principle of equivalent effect can lead to “dubious conclusions although it has enjoyed popularity in certain cultures.” She argues that equivalence should not be approached as a search for sameness since sameness cannot exist even between synonyms of the same language. Jacobson (in Venuti, 2000:114) shares the same idea when he purports that on the level of interlingual translation there is no full equivalence between code-units. He also mentions the fact that it is difficult to remain faithful to the original when translating because of the difference in grammatical categories in different languages. Kenny (in Baker, 1998:78) maintains equivalence is deficient because it is restricted to the word level and it assumes that language systems can be equated with concrete realization in a text. All these theorists agree on the viewpoint that equivalence between two languages can never be achieved.

Translation theorists then moved away from the notion of viewing translation as a purely linguistic phenomenon. They viewed translation as “less an interlinguistic process and more as an intracultural activity” (Gentzler, 1993:186). While talking about the developments in translation studies between 1980s and 1990s, Edwin Gentzler writes:
The two most important shifts in theoretical developments in translation theory over the past two decades have been (1) the shift from source-oriented theories to target-oriented theories and (2) the shift to include cultural factors as well as linguistic elements in the translation training models. Those advocating functionalist approaches have been pioneers in both areas. (Gentzler, 2001: 70)

Robinson (1997) acknowledges descriptive translation studies scholars (DTS) like Even Zohar, Toury, Lefevere and others who argued that the translation process involved elements of subjectivity and that socio-cultural conditions also had to be considered in the process of translation. Scholars like Vermeer and Zlateva (in Bassnet and Lefevere 1990) concur with DTS scholars in viewing translation as primarily a cross-cultural transfer. Vermeer (in Venuti 2000) states that language is seen as an intrinsic part of culture. For instance, one of their principal assumptions is that translation is always controlled by target culture, unlike theorists before them who maintain that translation is controlled by the source system. They believe that belief structures, social value systems, literary and linguistic conventions, moral norms and political experiences of the target culture always shape translations (Robinson, 1997:233). In other words, translation involves language and culture systems because culture is embedded in a language.

DTS scholars aimed to observe and describe how translations were done rather than to prescribe how they should be done. They redefined equivalence as a descriptive notion which reflected the relation of equivalence that actually exists between the source text and its translation (Toury 1995). DTS theorists examine a corpus of actual texts and their translations and then attempt to determine which norms and constraints operate on these texts in a specific culture and at a specific historic movement.

Toury (1995) suggests three different approaches to descriptive translation studies: product-oriented, function oriented and process-oriented. A product-oriented approach deals with the description of existing translations either in the same or different target system. A function-oriented approach establishes the function of the text within the target cultural system. The process-oriented approach looks more psychoanalytically at the translations, trying to establish what was happening in the mind of the translator during the translation process.
As regards translation of proverbs a lot has been researched into and written. In his paper "Translating English proverbs into Persian: A case of comparative linguistics" in 2006 Bahman Gorjian opines that the translator faces figurative language in the translation of proverbs, which makes him arrive at the meaning through inferential strategies to match the proverb in source language (SL) and target language (TL) by means of: (1) exact equivalence, (2) near equivalence, and (3) literal meaning.

According to him exact equivalence refers to linguistic and discourse similarities in SL/TL; a near equivalence refers to linguistic differences but discourse similarities and literal translation of proverbs refers to the literal meaning of proverbs in TL which is rendered to a non-proverbial simple sentence in TL. He states that the latter strategy may be applied when the translator faces the problem of finding exact or near equivalent proverbs in TL. He presents a three-fold strategy to find proverbial equivalent in TL.

He opines that a three-fold strategy helps the translator focus on the hierarchical strategies through which the translator starts from the first strategy and if there is/are no exact equivalent(s), s/he shifts to the second strategy (i.e., near proverbial equivalents); and again if there is/are no near equivalents, the translator tries to comprehend and interpret the message of the proverb and render the proverb message in to TL literally. He states that the third strategy can be manipulated for the last resort and it should not be applied before trying the earlier translation strategies.

He opines that there could be three versions based on these three strategies as follows:

1. Strong version: If there is an exact proverbial equivalent in the TL which matches with the proverb in the SL. In other words, there are shared lexical, semantic and conceptual properties existing in both SL and TL.
2. Moderate version: If there is a partial equivalent of the SL proverb in the TL. In other words, there are no shared lexical and semantic properties existing in the TL; however, there is a shared concept between the proverbial equivalents in SL and TL. Therefore, the translator gets the concept of the proverb and tries to find a proverb which is as close as possible in the TL (i.e., this is called near equivalence).
3. Weak version: If there is no proverbial equivalent of the SL proverb in the TL. In other words, there are no shared lexical, semantic and conceptual properties in the
equivalents existing in the TL. In this case, the translator tries to comprehend and interpret the meaning of the proverb in SL and reproduce the message in the form of a simple statement.

Mollanazar (2001: 54) emphasized that proverbs cannot be translated word-for-word and they may sometimes have no natural figurative equivalents in TL. Thus, he proposed two strategies in translating proverbs:

a) Some similar proverbs can be found in the two languages with more or less similar form, vocabulary and meaning and;
b) Many proverbs may be found in the two languages which have similar meanings and can be applied in the same contexts, but they have different form and vocabulary.

Beekman and Callow (in Gorjian, 2006) suggested three ways to translate a proverb which are as follows:

1. The words following the proverb could be introduced as the meaning of the proverb;
2. It can be replaced with an equivalent local proverb; and
3. Its non-figurative meaning could be stated straightforwardly.

Duff (in Gorjian, 2006) cited that "idiomatic expressions are notoriously untranslatable. These include similes, metaphors, proverbs and sayings (as good as jargon, slang, and colloquialisms)." Duff also noted that if these expressions have no equivalents in TL, the translator may approach to TL equivalents as follows:

1. Literal translation,
2. Original word in inverted commas,
3. Close equivalents, and

Finally, Duff (ibid) emphasized that if there is no appropriate proverbial equivalent in TL, the translator should not force it into the translation.
Nida (1985) noted that proverbs are special metaphoric expressions and the translator should know the proverbial concepts in SL/TL regarding their similarities and differences.

Baker (1992:65) has proposed four strategies for the translation of idioms and fixed expressions including proverbs which are as follows:

1. Using an idiom of similar meaning and form of SL.

This strategy involves using an idiom or expression in the target language which has a similar meaning to that of the source idiom and which consists of similar lexical items.

2. Using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form of SL idiom.

This strategy involves using an idiom or expression in the target language which has a similar meaning to that of the source idiom, but which consists of different lexical items.

3. Translation by paraphrase

Translators use this strategy when a matching idiom cannot be found in the target language or when it seems inappropriate to use idiomatic language in the target text because of differences in the stylistic preferences of the source and target language.

4. Translation by omission

An idiom or a phrase can be omitted in the target text if there is no close match or its meaning cannot be easily paraphrased. Sometimes it is omitted only for stylistic purposes.

In his paper titled “Analyzing and Utilizing Receptor Language Proverbs in Translation” in 2003 Pete Unseth of the Graduate Institute of Applied Linguistics and SIL International opines that translating proverbs is unusually complex and exegeting proverbs is challenging and then finding or creating appropriate artistic forms in the receptor language is a special problem. He says that proverbs are often the shortest poems in a language, so translators, who think of translating proverbs, should think of their task as translating poetry.

He also adds that often Bible translators find themselves telling people “Meaning is more important than form.” But with proverbs, the form is part of the meaning; that is, to try to
translate the ‘meaning’ of a proverb without translating into the form of a proverb is to translate only part of the meaning of a proverb. For proverbs, the form is part of the meaning.

He suggests a three-phase plan for translating Biblical proverbs:

1. To collect a number of proverbs in the receptor language. (Around 200)
2. To analyze the techniques used by the receptor language in forming these proverbs.
3. To practice deliberately applying these techniques in translating non-Biblical proverbs, then later Biblical proverbs.

He says the first step is not complicated. The second step, analyzing the techniques used by the receptor language in forming proverbs, requires an open, curious mind. There is a set of artistic devices that are commonly used in most languages, including rhyme, alliteration, meter, assonance. The third step is more challenging – casting the meaning of the source language proverb into a form in the receptor language that uses some of the receptor language’s typical proverb structures.

In her article in the journal “Language in India” in September 2009, A. Boologa Rambai highlights linguistic features like allusion, alliteration, parallelism, rhyme, hyperbole, paradox, metaphor, simile, rhythmic phrasing, personification and balanced opposition and parallelism found in the comparison of Tamil and Telugu proverbs. She quotes the following examples to explain the above features. I do not agree with some of the examples of the Telugu proverbs quoted by her. My comments / corrections have been added at the end of each example.

1. Allusion: Allusion means the “reference”
   
   Example given for allusion in Tamil:
   
   Puthusukky vaNNaan kaDusukku veLuttaan
   
   “At first the dhobi washes the clothes very neatly and sincerely”
   
   She opines that the proverb in the above example describes the nature of one particular caste “Dhobi” and it becomes the reference.

   Example given for allusion in Telugu:
   
   Mundu occina cevvulukkanna venakka occina kommulu meelu
“The late coming horns are better than the first coming ears”

Here the author says that the parts of the body are compared and concluded. The comparison becomes the reference. But in the Telugu proverb the last word “meelu”, given by the author is not correct. It is “vaaDi”. Hence the literal translation of the Telugu proverb reads as “The late coming horns are sharper than the first coming ears”

2. Alliteration: Alliteration means the first letter is same in all the occurrences.

   Example given for alliteration in Tamil:
   
   Cettaal teriyum ceTTi vaaZhvu
   
   “One can know the character of Vaishya after his death”

   In the above example the author explains that the first letter ‘ce’ is repeatedly coming in the proverb.

   Example given for alliteration in Telugu:
   
   atta sommu alludi daanam
   
   “The mother-in-law’s property was given by the son-in-law as alms.”

   In this example the author says that the first letter ‘a’ is repeatedly coming in the proverb. The correct form of the Telugu proverb quoted in the above example is “atta sommu alludu dhaarapoosaDu”.

3. Parallelism: Parallelism means some communicational information is conveyed by using the proverbs.

   Example given or parallelism in Tamil:
   
   Aataayam illaamal ceTTi aattak kaTTi uuTTu eRaikka maaTTaan
   
   “The Cetty caste people don’t do anything without any profit.”

   Example given for parallelism in Telugu:
   
   Laabham leenidee ceTTi varadakku pooDu
   
   “The Chetty caste people don’t do anything without any profit.”

The author says that the meanings conveyed in both Tamil and Telugu proverbs are the same, but the words used by them are different. She says that in Tamil the word “aaRu” (River) is
used and in Telugu the word “varada” (flood) is used. I think the examples given by the author are not appropriate in this case.

4. Rhythm: Rhythm means the words are occurring in rhythmic way.
   Example given for rhythm in Tamil:
   Arasan evvazhi kuDikal avvazhi
   “The people follow the way of (the model set by) the King.”
   Example given for rhythm in Telugu:
   Yadaa raajaa tadaa prajaa
   “The people are following the king’s way.”

5. Hyperbole: Hyperbole means the exaggerated statement not meant to be taken literally.
   Example given for hyperbole in Tamil:
   Kataikku kaal uNTaa? Unka appanukku vaal uNTa?
   “Does the story have the leg? And your father has tail?
   Example given for Hyperbole in Telugu:
   Kata kancikki manamu inTikki
   “The story will go to kanchi and we will go to house.”

Here the author states that the above examples of hyperbole give exaggerated meaning, but they were not meant to be taken literally. But I do not see any hyperbole in the Telugu proverb.

6. Paradox: Paradox means seemingly absurd or contradictory statement of a person or thing having contradictory qualities.
   Example given for paradox in Tamil:
   Puyalukkup pin amaiti
   “There is peace after a strong storm.”
   Example given for paradox in Telugu:
   Tufaan occee mundu nisabdam
   “There is peace before a storm.”
The author opines that in the above examples the prepositions used in Tamil and Telugu are opposite to one another. In Tamil, the preposition ‘pin’ (after) is used and in Telugu, the preposition ‘mundu’ (before) is used. Here I do not see any paradox in the Telugu proverb quoted by the author.

7. Simile: Simile means the comparison with the comparative marker.

Example for simile in Tamil:

Cuuriyanaip paarttu nay kuraittatu poola
“By seeing the sun the dog barks.”

Example for simile in Telugu:

Kondanu cuusi kukka moriginaTTu
“By seeing the mountain the dog barks”

In the above examples, the author says that the Tamil proverb uses the habitual noun “Cuuriyan” and the Telugu proverb uses the static noun “mountain.” But the examples quoted by the author do not show any simile.

8. Metaphor: Metaphor is an application of a name or descriptive term or phrase to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable.

Example for metaphor in Tamil:

viiTTilee puli veLiyilee puunai
“In the house he is a tiger and outside he is a cat”

Example for simile in Telugu:

inTiloo puli veediloo pilli
“In the house he is a tiger and in the street he is a cat”

The author says that in the Tamil proverb the whole space (“broad space”) is mentioned and in the Telugu proverb “veedi” (street) is mentioned.

9. Rhythmic phrasing: Rhythmic phrasing means one complete phrase is repeated in one particular proverb.

Example for rhythmic phrasing in Tamil:

Yaanai varum pinnee maNi oosai varum munne
“The elephant comes behind, but the bell sound comes before.”

Example for rhythmic phrasing in Telugu:
chadhuveevaaDi kanna caakari vaadu minna

“The dhobi is better than the educated person.”

The correct form of the Telugu proverb quoted in this example is “chadhukunna vaaDi kannaa caakali vaadu meelu”

10. Personification: Personification means the non-human things are represented as human.

Example for personification in Tamil:
aDi utavuvatu poola aNNan tambi utava maaTTaan

“Beating is more powerful than the brother’s help”

Example for personification in Telugu:
Debbee guru

“The best teacher is the beating.”

Here the author opines that the Tamil and Telugu proverbs give the same meaning and personify ‘beating’ as human.

11. Balanced opposition and parallelism: In this construction both opposition and parallelism are used simultaneously.

Example in Tamil:
paTikkiRatu raamaayaNam iTikkiRatu raamar koil

“Reading Ramayana, but destroying Ram’s temple.”

Example in Telugu:
Ceppedi sriranga niithulu dureedi dommari guDiselalloo

“Telling the morals of Sri Ranga, but destroying poor people’s huts.”

The author says that in the Tamil proverb, the Ramayana and Ram’s temple are correlated, but in the Telugu proverbs the morals of Rama and the huts of poor people are correlated. The correct form of the Telugu proverb quoted in this example is “ceppevi sriranga niithulu
dureevi dommari guDiselu” and the literal translation of this proverb is “Telling the morals of Sri Ranga, but forcing one'way into the huts of the dommari caste people (=for prostitution).”

Vinay and Darbelnet (1995: 342) believed that the TL equivalents should "replicate the same situation as in the original, whilst using completely different wording." This approach can be used to maintain the stylistic impact of the SL text in the TL text. According to them, an equivalent is the ideal method when the translator has to deal with proverbs, idioms, clichés, nominal or adjectival phrases and the onomatopoeia of animal sounds.

Budaraju Radha Krishna in his book Anuvaada paathaalu opines that it is very difficult to theorize the methods of translation. Several people, who theorized the methods of translation, do not agree with each other. He quotes some of the mutually contradicting opinions about translations to say that there are no general theories of translation.

As regards the difficulties in translating idioms and proverbs, he says that the main difficulties a translator encounters is in finding equivalents to the source language proverbs in the target language, which have the same social and cultural values that are similar to the target audience.

In his paper titled “Cross-Cultural Link in Translation” [retrieved in February 2011 from www. arabization.org.ma] Hassan Ghazala opines that the problem of translating cultural items has been overstated by many. He tries to trace the cultural correspondence in translating from English into Arabic or from Arabic into English, with the aim of demonstrating that there is more to the similarities than to the differences among different cultures in translation. His article covers, among other things, cultural equivalence and correspondence, cultural aspects of metaphors, collocations, proverbs, calques, religious terms and technological terms, social/administrative political terms.

He defines cultural equivalence as the translation of a cultural term in the SL into another similar one in the TL, which performs the same function of that of the SL. In other words, the cultural equivalence is the translation of the function of the cultural term like, for instance,
the translation of “Electricity Board” into Arabic as “Al-muassasa al-amma lil-kahrubaa”; or “majlis ash-shab” into English as “Parliament/House of Commons”; or “good afternoon” into Arabic as “masaul-khayri”; or “as-salamu alaykum” into English as “hello” etc. Cultural correspondence on the other hand, is the absolute identification of a SL cultural item with another in the TL, both in function and description, such as translation “ministry” into Arabic as “wizara”; “prime minister” as “raees wuzaraa” or more literally as “al wazeer al-awwal”. His concentration in the paper is on the search for a possible cultural correspondence, absolute, or at least close.

Some of his examples regarding absolute and close correspondence in the translation of English proverbs into Arabic are as follows:

Proverbs: absolute correspondence

1. English: like father like son
   Arabic: man shabaha abahuma zalam / al-waladu sirru abeehi / al-waladu nuskhaton min abeehi

2. English: do not put off your duty till tomorrow.
   Arabic: la tu’ajje amala l-yawmi ila l-ghad

3. English: all that glitters isn’t gold.
   Arabic: ma kullu ma yalma’d thahaban

4. English: need is the mother of invention.
   Arabic: al-hajatu ummu l-ikhtira’i

5. English: money is the root of all evils.
   Arabic: al-malu masdaru/aslu sh-shuroori kulliha

6. English: love is blind.
   Arabic: al-hubbu a’ma

7. English: as you sow so will you reap
   Arabic: kama tazra’u tahsudu

8. English: man is known by the company he keeps.
9. English: too many cooks spoil the broth
Arabic: kathratu t-tabbakheena tusidu / tahruqu t-tabkhati/t-tahyi

Proverbs: close correspondence

1. English: out of sight out of mind
Arabic: ba’eedon ani I-ayni ba’eedon ani L-kalb.

2. English: carrying coals to Newcastle
Arabic: kahamili t-tamri ila l-basra

3. English: forbidden fruit is sweet
Arabic: kullu mamnoon’en marghoob

4. English: blood is thicker than water
Arabic: ad-damu la yaseeru ma’an

5. English: a bird in hand is worth two in the bush
Arabic: ‘usfooron fi L-yadi khayron min asharaten ala sh-shajara

6. English: a friend in need is a friend indeed
Arabic: as-sadeequ waqta d-deeqi

7. English: better to be safe than sorry
Arabic: as-salamatu wala n-nadama

Christa Frey, Annelies Herzog, Arthur Michel and Ruth Schütze in their book “Deutsche Sprichwörter für Ausländer” (English translation: German proverbs for foreigners) have given explanations for 275 German proverbs by creating situational contexts.

Anneliese Müller-Hegemann and Luise Otto in their book “Das kleine Sprichwörterbuch” have classified German proverbs under 30 heads like honesty and dishonesty, thriftiness and hard work, health and illness, friendship and guests, etc.
M.W. Carr in his book “A collection of Telugu proverbs” has translated and explained the Telugu proverbs in English with illustrations. He has translated around 2700 Telugu proverbs and 488 Sanskrit proverbs. He has also quoted around 1000 European proverbs in the illustration of Telugu and Sanskrit proverbs. Following is the list of the few European proverbs quoted by him:

A bashful dog never fattens.
A chip of the old block.
A friend in need is a friend indeed.
Beggars must not be choosers.
Birds of a feather flock together.
Don’t buy a pig in the poke.
Every man is a fool or a physician at forty.
Fish follow the bait.
Foster a raven and it will peck out your eyes.
Give a rogue an inch and he will take an ell.
He laughs at scars who never felt a wound.
It is hard to please everyone.
Look before you leap.
Milk the cow, but don’t pull off the udder.
No one sees his own faults.
One grain of pepper is worth a cart load of hail.
Rich people are everywhere at home.
Strike while the iron is hot
Take care of the pence, the punds will take care of themselves.
When the cat’s away, the mice play.
C. Vedavathi in her book “Saameta” has classified Telugu proverbs under various heads like woman, marriage, son-in-law, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, husband, children, relatives, money, hunger and food, diseases and medication, death, karma and fate, and God and rituals and explained them with illustrations.

T.V. Ramanarasaiah in his book “Telugu Saametalu -- Oka Savimarshaka Parishiilanamu” (English translation: A critical study of Telugu proverbs) has made a critical study of Telugu proverbs taken from ancient Telugu literature like Andhra Maha Bharatamu, Aamukta Maalyada, Manu Charitramu, Vemana Shatakamu, Telugu folklore literature and from modern Telugu literature. He classified proverbs taken from ancient Telugu literature into different heads like kinship, caste divisions, different trades, education and culture, etc. As regards proverbs taken from Telugu folklore literature he made classification under heads like children, festivals, women, labour, love, humour, suffering, etc. Proverbs taken from ancient Telugu literature were more in number compared to the proverbs taken from Telugu folklore literature. He has taken proverb-like verses from Andhra Maha Bharatamu, Aamukta Maalyada, Manu Charitramu and Vemana Shatakamu and made a critical of them apart from studying regular folklore proverbs.

Jung-hun Ahn, Jung-ho Lee and Alok K. Roy in their research project “A comparative study of the Hindi and Korean proverbs” in 1991-92 studied the linguistic aspects, social aspects and the presence of common proverbs in Korean and Hindi. They opined that the linguistic comparison of the proverbs in the two languages revealed a lot of similarities in nature, style and structure. They found that the proverbs followed a similar pattern of parallels, alliteration and rhyme. However, they were many proverbs in both the languages that do not follow any of the above patterns and which are freer in their style or structure. As regards the social context, they found that the proverbs in the two languages revealed lot of differences in terms of social taboos, standard of decency, attitude towards money and materialism. But the proverbs showed a lot of similarity in the perception of the problem of poverty. They found that the Hindi proverbs dealt with the caste character, caste profession and caste dignity, while the Korean proverbs dealt with power, status and social dignity. Some differences in the awareness about sexism or position of the women in the society were noted. A lot of other areas could not be explored into as the scope of the project was not comprehensive.
Kusuma K. Murthy in her book ‘saametalaku neeti kathalu’ relates proverbs to selected moral stories. She has selected around 116 stories from Panchatantra and other moral stories and relates two to five characters in the stories to each story. Her target audience is children. She opines that the animal characters in the stories talking as human beings will make a good impact on the children with their morals and thus help them in becoming good citizens. She adds that several stories can be related to each proverb and each story can be related to several proverbs. She tries to link the concept of the proverbs to the context of the story and vice versa. Some of her stories include ‘The Hare and the Tortoise’; ‘Monkey and the Crocodile’; ‘The Fox and the Crane’ etc.

2.4 Conclusion

In the West the process of translation started with the translation of Bible. In the beginning the Bible translators were supposed to adopt literal translation, i.e. word-for-word. Those who have tried to translate a bit freely, like Etienne Dolet, were burnt at stake. The Roman Catholic Church was pre-occupied with the ‘correct’ established meaning of the Bible to be transmitted. Any translation diverging from the accepted meaning was considered heretical and was censured or banned. Even St. Jerome stated that in translation of the texts from Greek he adopted sense-for-sense translation, except for the Bible. Martin Luther rejected word-for-word translation. He used non-literal translation as a weapon against the Church. He translated the New Testament in 1522 and later the Old Testament in 1534 into East Middle German dialect, which later took the form of standard German language. He was heavily criticized by the Church for the addition of the word ‘allein’ (alone/only), because there was no equivalent Latin word (e.g. sola) in the ST. But Luther maintained that he was translating into ‘pure, clear German’, where allein would be used for emphasis.

At the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of nineteenth century, Germany developed into a center of thought on translation theory. Schleiermacher and von Humboldt may be given credit for this. Personalities like Johann Heinrich Voss, Ludwig Tieck, August Wilhelm Schlegel, Christoph Martin Wieland, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Friedrich von Schiller were associated with it. There is a consensus that the early 19th century German theorists have proved to be important precursors of modern translation studies, even for the English-speaking community. The main trends in translation theory during this period are rooted in German literary and philosophical traditions, in Romanticism, hermeneutics and existential phenomenology.
Gradually equivalence went out of fashion. German-language Skopostheorie made it even more unfashionable by arguing that since “functional consistency” (the closest thing they had to equivalence) was no more than one of many possible requirements, translation usually requires transformations of a rather more radical kind. For those theorists, equivalence became quite a small thing, a special case. According to the functional view of translation, equivalence between source text (ST) and target text (TT) is regarded as being sub-ordinate to all possible translation scopes, not as the only option or translation principle.

As regards translation of proverbs, Bahman Gorjian states that if for a given proverb in the SL there is/are no exact equivalent(s) in the TL, the translator may go for a near proverbial equivalent(s); and again if there is/are no near equivalents, the translator may try to comprehend and interpret the message of the proverb and render the proverb message in to TL literally.

Mollanazar says that some similar proverbs can be found in the two languages with more or less similar form, vocabulary and meaning and also many proverbs having different form and vocabulary may be found in the two languages which have similar meanings and can be applied in the same contexts.

Beekman and Callow say that a proverb may be translated either by the words following the proverb, which serve as the meaning of the proverb or it can be replaced with an equivalent local proverb or its non-figurative meaning could be stated straight forwardly.

Duff suggests ‘literal translation’, putting the ‘original word in inverted commas’, ‘close equivalents’ and ‘non-idiomatic translation’ as different strategies for translating proverbs. But he also says that if there is no appropriate proverbial equivalent in TL, the translator should not force it into the translation.

Nida opines that proverbs are special metaphoric expressions and the translator should know the proverbial concepts in SL/TL regarding their similarities and differences.
Baker proposes four strategies for the translation of idioms and fixed expressions including proverbs:

1. Using an idiom of similar meaning and form of SL.
2. Using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form of SL idiom.
3. Translation by paraphrase
4. Translation by omission

The above strategies may be summarized into three different strategies – literal translation, close or partial equivalent/conceptual equivalent strategy and paraphrase strategy. Since cultural issues are involved in the translation of proverbs, the next chapter deals with the cultural issues in translation.