

Translation and Writing

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Introduction

Translation is a modern science, which plays an important role in transmitting different sciences, civilizations, histories and cultures from one nation to the others. Attempts to translate other people's major works have been interested translators throughout recorded history. The needs for brilliant and qualified translators have given birth to modern schools, faculties and higher institutes, where students study the translation theories and principles scientifically. Translation is not restricted to a particular field; rather it includes all humans' interests and activities: literature, researches, sacred texts, films, famous people's speeches, sciences etc...

Translation and language

We can view translation as the process of creation of text in a target language (T.Lge), which conveys the same meaning as a given piece of text in the source language (S.Lge). Translation is an attempt to fulfil an act of communication between two linguistic and cultural communities. The difference between languages is fundamentally the "raison d'être" of translation. The translator should have an ability of deep comprehension of a source text (S.T) and effectively produce in a target text (T.T). There is no doubt that deep differences exist between languages; that what gives a clear idea of the complex operations the translators have to carry out. One may guess how wide and how subtle their linguistic knowledge should be. These involve solving problems, making decisions and taking responsibilities. This concerns both knowledge of the foreign language as well as the native language. As unexpected as it may seem, the native language should not be taken for granted. Arabic, for instance, is considered, to a large extent, the Algerian students' native language, and which is significantly different to the Classical. This is why students of translation should know the MT better than does a writer. Marcel Brion (1927) wrote in his "cahier du sud" in Mounin (1976):

“C’est dans sa propre langue que le traducteur trouve le plus de difficultés”

« It is his own language that the translator has the most of difficulty »

André Gide (1931 :19) in his Lettre à André Thérive said :

« Un bon traducteur doit bien savoir la langue de l’auteur qu’il traduit, mais aussi mieux encore la sienne propre, et j’entends par là : non point être capable de l’écrire correctement mais en connaître les subtilités, les souplesses, les ressources cachées. »

« A good translator should know the language of the author he translates well, but he should know his own even better. I mean not only being able to write correctly, but also knowing its subtleties, its hidden resources.”

Writing

Writing is a vital skill. Gaining confidence and skills in writing can open up opportunities at work and empower learners to take an important role as citizens within the community. Writing provides a strong means of self-expression that promotes further learning. It is a complex process, which allows writers to explore thoughts and make them visible, concrete and available for reflection. It is a powerful instrument of thinking because it provides learners with a way of gaining control over their thoughts. White in David Nunan states:

“Writing is not a natural activity. All physically and mentally normal people learn to speak a language. Yet not all people have to be taught how to write. This is a crucial difference between the spoken and written forms to language. There are other important differences as well. Writing, unlike speech, is displaced in time. Indeed, this must be one reason why writing originally evolved since it makes possible the transmission of a message from one place to another. Written messages can be received, stored and referred back to at any time.”

(1981:2)

Most writing researchers confess that writing comprehensibly is much difficult than speak it. It is an extremely complex cognitive activity through which the writer has to demonstrate particular control of a number of variables simultaneously- sentence structure, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation. Spoken and written languages are somewhat like fashion. They are a matter of style. T.S Eliot once said that if we spoke as we write, we should find no one to listen, and if

we wrote as we speak, we should find no one to read. The spoken and the written language should not be too near, as they must not be too far apart.

Writing Difficulties

Teaching writing is often difficult and complex, for it requires mastery of grammar, vocabulary and other writing devices. Moreover, teaching it is different teaching speech in a number of items. The difficulty is quite remarkable if the learners' first language employs different writing system. The second is at the structural stage; but the real difficulty associated with writing is to be traced to the communication stage and culture, because we cannot say that writing is written speech. Beyond all, writing is a rare activity, for most people do little or no writing at all; those who do so are as parts of their professional activities like lawyers, translators, journalists and educators.

Teaching writing allows foreign language learners to acquire the abilities and skills needed to convey messages in written texts. The writing difficulties may be at the level of other writing skills like the treatment of the topic, the content, thinking creatively and develop ideas in a coherent manner. Beside that, it also involves the judgment skill and the ability to select, organize order all information and write appropriately for given purposes. Writing takes different forms and serves different functions.

“Writing is a complex activity. It is of a fundamental importance to teaching, to personal development and achievement into the educational system. As teachers we need to strive continually to find the best ways to help our pupils find fulfillment as writers.”

(John Harris, 1993: 122)

Writing is, then, important but difficult to acquire, a communication skill, which is essential in today's information society. The level of difficulty is significantly higher when a foreign language is involved. Differences in the language structures, the manner of expressing thoughts, writing styles and other culturally varying factors greatly affect the writing of foreign language learner. Writing also encourages thinking for it allows learners to explore their thoughts and make them visible and concrete. When ideas are written down, they can be examined, reconsidered, rearranged, omitted and/or changed.

Translation and Writing

There is no doubt that writing as a productive skill plays an important role in any translation. Since translation happens in a context and implies the transposition of a S.T into a T.T, this must fulfill the same constraints of an original text written in the target text (Askoy 2001).

The translator should have a deep knowledge on both source and target writing systems, which enables him/her to decode a message properly. He/she should also be familiar with similar and different use and usage of punctuation marks. Writing is important just as important as reading is; for the former helps to express the ideas of the (S.Lge) and the latter to understand the whole message. It is worth reminding that writing is not a series of words on a page, but a series of ideas organized in sentences fixed in a writing system. Each language organizes the words in different form and length. Nevertheless, not everything is difference in languages; there are, at least, three common elements – agreement, coherence and cohesion-. If a text lacks one of these three elements the reader will have problem to understand it, and this will give the translator a big challenge to do his/her job.

Conventionally, it is stated that translators should meet three requirements:

- 1-Familiarity with the source language
- 2-Familiarity with the target language
- 3-Familiarity with the subject matter to do the job successfully

The translator discovers the meaning behind the forms in the source language; he/she translates ideas instead of words, sentences and/or structures doing his/her best to produce the same meaning in the target language using the target language forms and structures. Larson(1984) said that what changes is the forms and the code and what should remain is the meaning and the message. Quite often, we can recognize three approaches of translation:

- 1-Translation at the level of word (word for word):
- 2- Translation at the level of sentence
- 3-Translation at the level of concept

The first approach is effective for translating phrases or names like U.K, U.N or Ministry of Education. It is problematic, however, at the level of sentence due to differences in syntax in different languages . For the last approach, things are

more complex, the translation unit is neither the word nor is it the sentence; rather it is the concept. The best example is the translation of idioms and proverbs. E.g., (Christmas comes once a year – une fois n'est pas coutumes It rains cats and dogs- I am all ears to you-) Instead of translating these idioms and proverbs word for word, they can be translated into equivalent concepts in the target language to convey the same meaning and produce the same effect on the reader.

On the hand, Newmark (1988) has suggested communicative and semantic approaches to produce an effect as close as possible to that of the source language. Semantic translation is accurate but may not communicate well. Whereas communicative translation communicates well, but may not very precise. As far as the translation process, Newmak (1988: 144) said that there are three basic translation processes:

- 1-The interpretation and analysis of the S.T
- 2-The translation procedure (choosing equivalents for words and sentences in the T Lge
- 3-The reformulation of the text according to the writer's intention, the reader's expectation, the appropriate norms of the T.Lge, etc...

To conclude we should know that a translator is also a writer because he/she represents a piece of meaningful writing devoting all skills and knowledge so that the intended audience will read and understand the message with any ambiguity. Moreover, a vague document with long sentences and too many subordinate clauses or with a dependence on the passive voice is more likely to be misunderstood by readers and translators alike.

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