

## **Title: Translation: A Pragmatic Issue**

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### **Abstract:**

There has been an upsurge attention of translation in its theoretical, historical, didactic and professional dimensions. Whatever translation is, it seems to involve a number of levels of analysis such as semiotic, linguistic, textual, lexical, social, sociological, cultural and psychological aspects. All of which consideration should be driven to.

One of the most crucial questions worth raising whether explicitly or implicitly is whether there is an equal translation at linguistic, semantic or psychological levels, expressed from an 'original' text through a different text. Hence, the present paper attempts at reflecting on translation as a pragmatic issue endeavoring to explain translation procedure, process and product from the point of view of what is (potentially) done by the original author in or by the text.

### **Key-words:**

Translation, Pragmatic issue, original text, context-based translation.

### **Introduction**

One of the fascinating research areas in foreign language teaching has recently been the interplay that may arise between the necessity to teach a foreign language and the introduction of cultural components of the target linguistic variety. However, a number of researchers have recently questioned some of the basic assumptions about cultural attributes and how they may lead to misunderstandings and thus, conflictual situations.

This paper, thus, tries to highlight the significance of fostering cultural pragmatic universals in a foreign language classroom rather than underlining cultural discrepancies. This is believed to better supply an implicit and covert introduction of cultural content to EFL learners, fundamentally embedded in constructs and models that more appropriately represent our classroom and social interactions to encourage mutual respect. Notwithstanding existing translation research and calls for general theories and systems to find out satisfactory explanations about the translation process (Baker, 1993: 248), it seems that most research on translation continues to deal with the same problems about aspects of translation, including comparisons of brief texts with their originals. Most of these studies may rely on intuitive feedback on the actual 'readability' of a particular translation or on academic investigations of contrastive structural linguistic studies. Hickey (1998)

However, among the challenging tasks of translators is the consideration of the pragmatic issue

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within translation. Therefore, the present paper attempts at shedding light on the pragmatic issue to translation approaches, asking the following question:

Why pragmatic translations of instances of language use can be challenging?

Pragmatic approaches endeavor to explain translation procedure, process and product from the point of view of what is done by the original author in or by the text Hickey (1998). For example, if an original text tries to inform and entertain the reader, the translation is expected not only to inform and entertain but also to do so in a manner similar to the original text, i.e., it will have to express equivalent and not diverse information to the reader at all levels.

### **The Pragmatic Role of 'Translation'**

The notion of translation is an umbrella term which falls under the interpretive use of language, i.e., its role is to repeat carefully what someone else said or wrote in another language. It is similar to quoting or speech reporting in intra-linguistic use with the exception that unlike quoting, which occurs within the same language, original text and translation belong to different languages.

Any translation should be first and foremost pragmatic since pragmatics and translation share common features. For instance, while pragmatics has been recognized by Morris (1938) as a division of semiotics (the relation of sign to user), translation is a

kind of semiotic interpretation. In this sense, Jakobson (2000) defines translation as an interpretation of verbal signs by other verbal signs in a different language. Besides, Levy stresses that “[as] all semiotic processes, translation has its PRAGMATIC DIMENSION as well” (2000: 156).

Within a pragmatic translation, the original message is retained. However, transferring the message of the original is not enough, it seems worthy for translators to find out an equivalent figure of speech in the target cultural linguistic community maintaining the meaning of the original message as much as possible. Accordingly, a pragmatic translation is supposed to keep the sense and the cultural bounds of the original message.

Henceforth, in order to reconcile the dilemma of faithfulness–beauty contrast Lewis (2000: 268) suggests that "a good translation should be a double interpretation, faithful both to language/message of the original and to the message-orienting cast of its own language".. In other terms, Newmark (1988) recommends other solutions. He argues that:

Conventional metaphors and saying...should always be conventionally translated...but unusual metaphors and comparisons should be reduced to their sense if the text has a mainly informative function (Newmark 1988: 15 cited in Gutt 1991: 388)

From another pragmatic aspect of translation, one needs to be cognizant about the context of the target

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source text. As it has been suggested by a number of translators, the same utterance may have opposite interpretations, depending on the context in which it is processed. This means that the speaker-intended interpretation of a message is highly context-dependent. Henceforth, it seems important to deduce that any change of context may result a change in the whole meaning of an utterance, this is why 'quoting someone out of context' needs to be considered as a serious matter. Unfortunately, though the rule is quite clear, I believe there are still a number of gaps between translation of the text and the context in which the target audience belong with its a specific cultural background, i.e., Translation out of context. This is a shared idea with Schleiermacher (1838: 47, as translated in Wilss, 1982: 33): "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"

'Bringing the reader to the original text' would match requiring him to process the translation in the context of the original, the translator, in this way may transport the reader to its location, which in all reality, is foreign to him' (Schleiermacher, 1838: 219, as translated in Wilss, 1982: 33). By contrast, 'bringing the writer to the reader' would match adapting the text to the context of the target readers.

Therefore, it may be helpful for the translator to realise that not all the problems encountered in translating a text are problems specific to translation. Undeniably, it appears that any translated text is likely to

be transferred from its original context to a different one even if there exist no change of language involved.

From another standpoint, Wierzbicka called for “pragmatic equivalence” (1991: 12-13) which was also referred to as functional equivalence by Gutt (1991). These approaches guarantee a better communication between the translator and the reader. Presumably, in an attempt to preserve the original effect of translation, the following example may illustrate this notion:

"which is translated into English as رجل الدين يدعو للصلاة "

"The clergyman is calling for prayer." Therefore, pragmatic equivalence seems to be an important element to successful translation.

Presumably, in an attempt to preserve the original effect of translation, Consider the following example:

■ فطَافَ عَلَيْهَا طَائِفٌ مِّن رَّبِّكَ وَهُمْ نَائِمُونَ فَأَصْبَحَتْ كَالصَّرِيمِ

■ The pen, (verse 19-20)

“Then there came on the garden a visitation from your Lord which swept away all around, while they were asleep. So the garden became, by the morning, like a dark and **desolate spot**.

■ الصَّرِيمِ can be translated as:

■ a) pitch dark night (Al-Fara’)

■ b) black ashes (Ibn Abbass)

■ c) the morning when it is stripped from night (Al-Akhfash)

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- d) cut-down crop (Al-Thawry and Ibn Quttaiba)
- E) desolate spot (Abdullah Yusuf)

And here lies the pragmatic failure of translating verses. The translators of the noble verse have adopted an exegetical point of view. They differ in their interpretation of "الصريم". This is because of the multifaceted nature of the lexeme. Thus, pragmatic translation problems result from the contrast between ST situation and the TT communicative situation. Culture-bound terms, references to place and time, proper names, addresses specifications are examples of this type

### **Conclusions**

In a nut shell, I believe that translation itself is primarily a pragmatic notion, used to designate the kind of communication planned by the communicator. Second, one of the main obstacles faced by the translator is again summarized in a pragmatic issue; the fact there is a translation difference, not only at the level of language, but also at the level of context. The translator in such a situation needs to be aware of it in order to moderate the degree of its effects on correct and appropriate solutions.

Both pragmatics and translation are communicative in nature, i.e. using sentences appropriately to achieve communication (Widdowson 1979). Many translation scholars such as Bell (1991: 8) and Simon (1996: 9) consider translation as an act of communication (decoding, transmitting and encoding) and translators as participants in communication.

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Moreover, both pragmatics and translation utilize a functional view of language.

It is hoped that a better understanding of these pragmatic problems will enable translators to increase the likelihood of success in their work



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