The Importance of the Translators in Our Society

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Abstract

Since, language acts as the representation of culture, every language presents distinctive human experiences and a unique signification of the world. It is also the medium of communication, so the translators promote the uniqueness on one hand, along with the international understanding among various cultures and languages on the other through the process of translation. So, the paper portrays that the role of translators is very challenging or difficult, and, the process of translation should not be treated as a mere mechanic task inferior to the source work. Translators offer truth and insight into the civilization. The paper emphasizes that literary translation is a new creation in the target language, just like the source text is a creation in the source language. Translation is a creation based on a previous text, whereas on the other hand, the creation of the original text is both free and unprecedented. As translation draws a line of deep connection with the socio-political and cultural dimensions of language, translators play various roles like explorer, ethnographer, historian, psychoanalyst, philosopher, guide, linguist and many more but these all roles are interrelated with each other.

Key Words: translation studies, role of the translators, language, translation theory, scope of translations.

Introduction

Besides being a citizen of a particular nation, we are also the members of the

world community and this gives us a greater identity. The global recognition demands us to

involve ourselves into the international affairs for dissolving the existing difficulties for the

amelioration of our world and 'language' plays the key role in this regard since communication,

realising and adapting the cultural otherness are the integral steps to evoke the notion of oneness.

'Language' is a system of conventional spoken, or written symbols by means of which human

beings, as members of a social group and participants in its culture, express themselves. Since,

every language represents a particular culture, the process of translation mainly conveys the idea

of interlingual communication or interaction between various social groups.

Translation: Definitions

Etymologically, the word "translation" comes from the Latin "*translatio*" which again comes

from the past participle, "*translatus*" of "*transferre*" ("*trans*", means "across" + "*ferre*", means

"to carry" or "to bring"). So, this means "to carry across" or "to bring across." The word

"Translation" has been defined from different perspectives by several critics, like, translation has

been defined as an "art" by Theodore Savory, it is a "craft" for Eric Jacobson, and it has been

classified as "science" by Eugene Nida. Nida justly explains, "Definitions of proper translating

are almost as numerous and varied as the persons who have undertaken to discuss the

subject. This diversity is in a sense quite understandable; for there are vast differences in the

materials translated, in the purpose of the publication, and in the needs of the prospective

audience" (161). Bell emphasized the definition of translation stated by French theorist, Dubious.

Dubious states, " Translation is the expression in another language (or the target language) of

what has been expressed in another, source language, preserving semantic and stylistic equivalences." in *Procedures and Strategies for the Translation of Culture*. Vladirnir Ivir states that, "Translation is a way of establishing contact between cultures. One might even claim that cultural contact as such presupposes translation and that the exchange of goods of material and spiritual culture is not possible without translation. The reason for this is the fact that language and culture are inextricably interwoven and that the integration of an element into a culture [. . .] cannot be said to have been achieved unless and until the linguistic expression of that element has been integrated into the language of that culture [...I translating means translating cultures, not languages"(1995:36)."Translation is the replacement of a representation of a text in one language by a representation of an equivalent text in a second language" (Hartmann & Strok 1972:713). Roman Jakobson elucidates about three types of interpretation -- 1. Intralingual translation or rewording, 2. Interlingual translation or translation proper and 3. Intersemiotic translation or transmutation. Nord discusses about two senses of translation: wide and narrow. "Translation is, in a narrow sense, any translational action where a source text is transferred into a target culture and language" (Nord, 2007: 141). According to Sager, translation should reflect the settings where the process of translation takes place (Sager 1994:293).

Different Roles Of A Translator

Despite all these significant factors, traditionally, translation has been treated as a mechanic task, which is devoid of inspiration, originality and creativity. Accordingly, the translated text has been placed in a position lower than the original text. "...the translator's activity has been related to evil and blasphemy, to indecency and transgression" (Arrojo, 1995:21). In today's world, the activity of a translator is still underestimated. They are often lebelled as "manipulators." Baker

has lebelled translators as "traitors" in his *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Translation Studies*. The role of translators is deliberately related to the process of translation, what it involves to become an actual translator requires to be stated. Translators are the instruments for transferring messages or informations from one language to the other, while preserving the underlying cultural and discoursal ideas, ethics and values (Azabdaftary, 1996). The process of translation includes primary communication between the author and the translator, and the secondary metacommunication between the translator and his/her readers and on the basis of this argument, the language of the translation is referred to as "metalanguage" by Hatim and Mason in *Discourse and the Translator*. The text which is composed from another text is a "metatext" according to Popovic. A translator's role is to create such circumstances under which the source language author and the target language reader can interact with each other (Lotfipour, 1997). "A translator should have "...knowledge and skills that are common to all communicators, but...in two languages at least" (Bell, 1991:36). Koller describes translation as a "text-processing activity" and simultaneously highlights the significance of 'equivalence'. According to him, "Translation can be understood as the result of a text-processing activity, by means of which a source-language text is transposed into a target-language text.. Between the resulting text in L2 (the target-language text) and the source text L1 (the source-language text) there exists a relationship which can be designated as translational, or equivalence relation" (Koller, 1995: 196). As a mediator and communicator, the translator intervenes into various cultures and reproduces the original text of another language, and of another cultural dimensions, human experiences and ideology. Aristotle declared, "Speech is the representation of the experiences of the mind" in his *On Interpretation*. "Ideology, a term I shall define generally as an ensemble of social representations, values and beliefs that are realized in lived experience and in the last

instance serve the interests of a definite class" (Venuti, 1995:186). Translation can also be defined as "cultural textualisation" as the translation is a transference and communication between traditions and texts. Wolfs argues that translation studies and anthropological studies are dealing with the same issues on the basis of "translating between cultures". M. Wolf has pointed out, "there is an overlap between translation and ethnography, if one thinks of both of these disciplines as an act of representation or rather textualisation of something observed" (1995:123). Therefore the translator can be at the same time an ethnographer who explores and describes linguistic phenomena, which exist in a particular setting of a community. As the ethnographer translates the symbols of tradition, in the same way the translator translates the symbols of a language. Like, ethnography is not unambiguous in nature, translation is not a neutral process. The interpretation of the text and it's translation completely depend upon the translator's individual values, his/her socio-economic and political ideology, perspective towards reality and the vast internal dictionary. Thus, translation stops being just rewriting and starts including manipulation. Venuti suggests in his *The Translator's Invisibility* that in order to make the translators visible, they have to be invisible.The concept of "abusive fidelity" formulated by Philip Lewis is a theorization which acknowledges the abusive, equivocal relationship between the translation and the original text. Anjana Tiwari has indicated that the seemingly infidel nature can be an attempt to assert the contemporaneity of the translated text in her essay "Translation or Transcreation". "Contemporary studies on translation are aware of the need to examine in depth the relationship between the production of knowledge in a given culture, and its transmission, relocation and reinterpretation in the target culture" (Alvarez & Vidal, 1996:2). In the present global-village, in the age of mass-communication and informations, no two languages, or cultures are equal in nature, they exist in unequal relations. Thus, translation takes place in the

these unequal settings. In their preface to the book *Women Writing in India: 600 B.C to the Resent. Volume II: The Twentieth Century* (1993), Tharu and Lalitha explain that translation happens where two, invariably unequal worlds make a collision. It does not intend that cultures are homogeneous and compartmentalized. Sherry Simon says, " The idea of culture as an envelope which securely binds all the members of a national community within the same coherence of meaning today belongs to the realm of myth. The great migrations of post-colonialism have produced a new socio-demographic situation: all western nations now have increasingly mixed populations. The ease and rapidity of global communication have created an international mass culture, which competes and interacts with local forms" (Simon, Gender 152-153). Taft's 1981 definition of cultural mediator (as cited in "Katan 1999/2004", p.17) is incorporated into the translation studies to create a point in favour of the translators as mediators: "a person who facilitates communication, understanding and action between persons or groups who differ with respect to language and culture. The role of the mediator is performed by interpreting the expressions, intentions, perceptions and expectations of each cultural group to the other, that is, by establishing and balancing the communication between them. "This fact also shows that translation has a great historical significance . When a translator is getting involved into the process translation, he/she has to place his/her translation within the framework of time, in terms of linguistics such as contemporary grammatical structures, up-to-date terms and of course in terms of cultural and social structures. For example, a translator would work differently if he/she were translating in a country with a specific linguistic regime or a country not very familiar with technological advances. Philippe Laku-Lambart says, "We should consider the fact that all European languages are being translated into English. This in itself means something: not that the national languages will become extinct, but translating into English and American

English will obviously have an effect on history" (Laku-Lambart, 1997). Again, according to Baker "What translators have had to say about their art / craft / science; how translations have been evaluated at different periods; what kinds of recommendations translators have made, or how translation has been taught;and this discourse is related to other discourses of the same period" (Baker, 2005:101). Benjamin says in his *Translation and the nature of Philosophy. A New Theory of Words* written in the year of 1989 that the analysis of historical episodes involves the process of translation since it is concerned with the re-expression of what is past in the present language."Translation implies that we have capacity to enter into the mind, the world, and the culture of the speakers or writers and we can express their thought in a manner that is not only parallel to the original, but also acceptable to the target language" (A. Duff). In the translator's introduction to Freud's *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, Anthea Bell writes, "Translators are always trying to get inside the minds of the authors on whom they are working" (Bell 2001: xliii). It means, to reflect the essence of the author's original text, the translator must go through the process of psychoanalysis to know the author's psyche, persona and his surroundings. George Steiner again stresses upon the psychological and intellectual functioning of the mind of translators. Every translator have to lead their thought process philosophically while struggling to choose the best interpretations from various possible ones. "...the translators will always reconnect us, the readers, scolars and critics, with the function of the word as an isolated phenomenon and as a means of building a contexual situation of meanings and emotions...the translator's first and foremost concern, then must be continuous involvement in experiencing and defining the boundaries of meanings and associations surrounding each word" (Biguenet & Scchulte). Anthony Pym terms the question of "translation as an example for philosophy" (2007: 25). Like Philosophy, concepts and theories of translation stumbles between

two unappealing extremes. At one extreme, translation is conceived of literal identity of meaning; at the other, it is completely impossible. Derrida agrees to this point. "The translator cannot be the author of the SL text, but as the author of the TL text has a clear moral responsibility to the TL readers" (Bassnett 2002:30). Newmark has said in his *The Traslator's Handbook* that the role of translator is important because they are committed to serve the "truth" in the society on 1989.For Derrida, deconstruction and translation are entwined and while translating, the notion of "*différance*" inevitably comes to the light. "Deconstruction challenges limits of language, writing and reading by pointing out how the definitions of the very terms used to discuss concepts set boundaries for the specific theories they describe. Derrida uses translation to raise questions regarding the nature of language and to suggest that in the process of translating, one can come as close as possible to that elusive notion or experience of differance which underlies their approach." (Gentzler, 1993:145). A translator decodes the meaning from the source language and reconstruct it in the target language. Derrida says in his *Des Tours de Babel*, "every translator is in a position to speak about translation" (1995:184). Dryden and Tytler wrote theoretical aspects of translation. Matthew Arnold delivered his famous lecture on translating Homer. So, the translators play the role of theorists. Moreover, since every word of one language may or may not have a corresponding or equivalent word in the other language, linguistic study or philology becomes an integral part for the purpose of translation. Meetham and Hudson state that translation is the process of replacement of a text in one language by a replacement of an equivalent text in another language in their work named as *Enclycopedia of Linguistics, Information and Control*.

Conclusion

As the importance of the translator in our society was analysed above along with his/her function, what can be drawn as a conclusion is the fact that the different roles of a translator determine his/her responsibilities towards the language, literature, culture and civilization.

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