

Translation: A Cultural-Specific Experience

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Abstract

Translation is a fundamental human activity to transfer knowledge across cultures widely separated in time and space. Without Translation, even the most erudite readers would have limited acquaintance with other cultures, literature has always been instrumental in preserving the civilization ethos and values; Translation helps propagate these cultural values. Translation practice offers rich data for psycholinguistics and stimulating possibilities for creative writers. In the post second world war scenario there was an urgency and explosion of theories which catered to the understanding of a new world order spanning from the geo-political to geo-economical. In this context, multiculturalism is the focal point of a new world discourse. Understanding of diverse cultures and interpretation of the general ethos makes us believe that humanity in all climes and at all times has passed on a legacy of common values and ethics. Translation studies are of paramount scope to unravel the seeds of central axiom which binds together civilization of antiquity with the present world order. It will be unwise to canonize our texts without taking a holistic approach of how cultures interact and recreate new chapters of human excellence. Translation is not merely and an inter-linguistic process, it is more complex than replacing source language with target language. Translations are never produced in a cultural or political vacuum and cannot be isolated from the context in which the texts are embedded. Every beginner of Translation studies is beset with multiple difficulties while Translation a piece of art. So, this paper will be dealing with basics of Translation, its evolution and process. This paper will also discuss the importance of Translation in the present age on the global level and how it is a cultural specific. It will throw some light on the Translation studies in Comparative Literature. This paper will also discuss Translation in literary terms.

Keywords: Translation, Cultural, Ethos, Target Language, Comparative Literature, Evolution, Canonize, Holistic, Source Language.

Introduction

Translation is the process of translating words or text from one language into another. it is the communication of the meaning of a source-language text by means of an equivalent target-language text. Literary Translation consists of the translation of poetry, plays, literary books, literary texts, as well as songs, rhymes, literary articles, fiction novels, novels, short stories, poems, etc. we have been heard from long time that 'Translate the language, translate their culture'. Every beginner of Translation studies is beset with multiple difficulties while translation a piece of art. The translator is troubled with question like- should a translator stick to the language or the parole? Whether to be faithful to the original or not? Whether to translate on a literary level or a metaphoric level? Whether to go with translation or trans-creation? What makes a religious text and its

translation problematic? In addition to this, there are linguistic, semantic and cultural barriers that a translator encounters. The other problematic area of how translation of poetry is different from a piece of prose needs to be addressed. These questions are vital to understand the basis of translation study.

Origin and Purpose

The increasingly global and multicultural world in which we live has rendered Translation more and more important both as an actual, material practice and as a cultural phenomenon to be critically analyzed. The relative increase in human contact across linguistic-cultural boundaries (be they regional, national, continental, etc.) that has occurred in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries has generated, in turn, an increased need for communication across boundaries. This augmented need for cross-linguistic translation does not necessarily imply that the world is a more benign and communicative place. Indeed, periods marked by spiked political and cultural antagonism and tension between geo-linguistic entities, that following more translation from one language into other languages particularly into English, and the reverse. As air travel and the internet have widened the actual and virtual traveler's ambit far beyond the "European tour" of the nineteenth-century aristocrat, who might have the time and means to learn the major (western) European languages, translation has become increasingly necessary.

National and Global Demand

Despite the equivalence suggested by bilingual dictionaries, it is common knowledge that people do not say precisely the same things in different languages. Facial and corporeal gestures differ. Often colors are not designated similarly in unrelated languages. The social functions of the various meals of the day may be wildly dissimilar in various parts of the world. And when one combines infinitely multiplied commonplace terms such as these with the difficulties presented in interpreting such abstract notions as political sovereignty and individual identity from one language to another, one begins to glimpse both the difficulty and the vital interest of translating across languages.

Comparative Literature and Translation Studies

Since the 1980s, Translation as practice and as theory has become central to Comparative Literature. Traditionally, this was not the case: the discipline, founded largely in the United States by post-war European emigres, devoted itself almost exclusively to the European languages and demanded that all texts be read in the original language. But as the canon has expanded to include many non-European literatures, including various creole and hybrid literatures and oratures, scholars have acknowledged the necessity of using translations in research as well as in teaching. Whereas it used to be the case that most major African literary works could be read in either French or English, such is not the case of writers such as Ngugi wa'Thiongo, whose African language writings also require translation. Along with the practical turn to translation in Comparative Literature, we also notice, not surprisingly, the critical and theoretical assessment of translation in the context of globalization, multiculturalism, cultural hybridity, post-colonial theory, and an emphasis on interdisciplinary approaches. With its interest in crossing the borders between languages, cultures, and national literatures, Comparative Literature is implicitly committed to assessing theoretically the function and value of "Translation" in the widest sense of the term.

Advantages

Despite all the advantages that the Internet has brought about, language still remains a challenge for businesses to reach a larger audience. Though English is perceived as a global language of business communication, many countries still prefer to converse in their local tongue. Translation has helped bridge this divide to a large extent by bringing diverse groups of linguistically and culturally different people together, enabling them to communicate effectively. It can reach a wider audience, commerce, travel, tourism and can understand the cultural identities and differences. Translation widens the vocabulary, discipline the mind, enhance the knowledge and helps in knowing the history.

Literary Translation

Style is the essential characteristic of every piece of writing, the outcome of the writer's personality and his emotions at the moment; a single paragraph can't be put together without revealing to some degree the personality of the author. Every writer has a literary style and his style is reflected in his writing. Some authors say that a translation should reflect the style of the original text while others say that a translation should possess the style of the translator.

A good translator should have a thorough knowledge of the source and target languages, be able to identify with the author of the book or poem, understand his culture and country, and employ a good method for translating literary texts.

The literary translator has to take into account the beauty of the text, its style, the lexical, grammatical and phonological features. Some of these may not be the same in the target language. For example, in the Arabic language there is no "you," which may be fundamental for a good translation. The aim of the translator is that the quality of the translation be the same as the original text without leaving out any of the content.

In general, in literary translation we translate messages, not meanings. The text must be seen as an integral and coherent piece of work.

For example, if we are translating from Kashmiri or Hindi into English or vice versa, we must take into account that the two realities are very different, their cultures have sometimes opposite views on certain matters, as well as on scientific and technological development. So the search for equivalent words is more complex.

When this is the case, the translator must find words in his own language that express almost with the same fidelity the meaning of some words of the original language, for example, those related to cultural characteristics, cooking skills or abilities of that particular culture.

Some ideas or characteristics are not even known or practised in the other culture. The practice of literary translation has changed as a matter of globalisation, texts have become more exotic, and these translations should contribute to a better and more correct understanding of the source culture of a country.

Translation of Poetry

In poetry, Form is as essential to preserve as contents. If the Form is not preserved, then neither is the poetry. Susan Bassnett-McGuire says: “The degree to which the translator reproduces the form, metre, rhythm, tone, register, etc. of the SOURCE LANGUAGE text, will be as much determined by the TARGET LANGUAGE system and will also depend on the function of the translation. One of the more difficult things to translate is poetry. It is essential to maintain the flavor of the original text.”

A good translation discovers the “dynamics” of poetry, if not necessarily its “mechanics” (Kopp, 1998). As Newmark says, “Translation of poetry is an acid test showing the challenging nature of translating.” In the translation of poetry, puns, allusions, analogies, alliterations, figures of speech, and metaphors are always common.

Translation of Plays

Most of the plays that go into a theatre are translations. Words in the theatre are to be “recited”, to be said on a stage, and that means a series of restrictions or general conditions to be taken into account: the year it was said and written, the style, the language, etc. The translator should say aloud the words that he is translating for a play, to hear how they sound on stage. One thing is to read, and another is to “say” something. A text can be well translated in a book, but sound awful on stage. The work of the translator does not end when the work is given to be performed. It is advisable for the translator to work with the director and the actors to resolve problems when the text is put on stage. It is important to take into account the words used at the time the play takes place as well as the audience to which it is directed. For example, a translator from Spain will use the word “cojín” for cushion, while an Argentine translator will use “almohadón.” So, the translator should work until the play is put on stage. That is the best recommendation for the translation of plays.

Conclusion

We conclude that Translation is to be approached differently than interpretation. It is not only about more stringent requirements, but above all, it is about the process of translation, in which all the factors that determine the choice of the translated equivalent must be taken into account.

The main aim of this paper is to introduce the readers to basic concepts of translation studies. Because of the rapid growth in the area, particularly over the last decade, difficult decisions have had to be taken regarding the selection of material. It has been decided, for reasons of space and consistency of approach, to focus on written translation rather than oral translation known as interpretation.

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