

Translator's Devils: Real and Pseudo Problems in Translation



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Abstract

The concept of nation without borders is gaining popularity, it may not be on account of spread of territory or spatial limit towards the sky, at mental level and people have been speedily moving with a high frequency rate across different corners of the world and by doing so spaces have been reduced may it be physical spaces or mental spaces and the languages(s) which these globally moving people can control is limited to their own persona but through their movements they carry transnational flux in form of scientific progress, cultural and literal heritage. Several territories of the world are literally converging fast but to make such culturally enriched imaging of various nations known to us is the way of translations which would be discussed, analysed, evaluated and researched from different points of views. No doubt this process of translation fulfils its very purpose of trans acquainting very well but in so many cases it may become devilish in the hands of translator himself which is to be avoided, reduced, nullified by the positive role of translator himself and the present research paper focuses on such issues.

Keywords: Equivalences, Functions, Harnessing, Hermeneutics, Communicativity, Reconstitution, Receptivity, Interpretation, Misinterpretation, Ambiguity, Emasculation, Skewing, Scrupulous, Rendering.

Introduction

During the present phase of on going time wherein fashions, designs, technology, demeanours, science, culture are becoming important we have to be well informed of what is latest and what had been the cases in the past time. In order to be updated with all these aspects referred above, the translations help us a lot. Studies in translation have become a new academic field at national and international levels. Courses on translations are also being offered for certificate, diploma, degree levels in colleges and universities. The process of translation is yet to develop fully and it is yet to bloom with its full features and characteristics so an effort has been made to focus on certain guidelines or characteristic features of this process so that translation establishes itself in this fast changing world academically, socially, economically and culturally.

Review of Literature

Stock of translated literature was available even in the times of Latin poet Horace who asserted that a translator should avoid word for word rendering. Of course, the stock of translated literature went on accumulating but questions were raised regarding its quality and reliability so extra care and attention was needed for translated literature. Readers sometimes blame the translator guilty or his process or the text itself for its peculiar aspect of untranslatability but in the modern times translated literature is gaining importance for its functional role that it performs. Besides this how translated literature could be made more identical to the original making use of linguistics and the other points of consideration which a translator thinks important while translating the literature given to him.

Aims of The Study

The aims of the study in this research paper is to discuss and find out contemporary sense of translatability and problems of this process and to make young professional translators aware of these problems.

Human beings have divided the world into different parts which are known as different countries. We come across varieties of different literatures, languages and cultures in the different countries of the world. If the literature and the language of one country is to be carried over to the other country of the world, translation becomes an essential means to do the same. Our modern age is the age of science, mental-spaces, physical-spaces, technology, computer, internet and enriched culture. There is an

exponential increase in the scientific and technological knowledge which is to be conveyed to different countries and colonies where different languages are spoken and read. The conveying of this literal, scientific knowledge and information can be done only through the translated correspondence and by no other means. Since last fifty years, the process of translation speeded up otherwise in the past it was mainly one way means of communication between prominent men of letters, philosophers, scientists and their few educated readers abroad. At that time, the wider aspects of translation were ignored but now on account of its increasing importance it has established itself as a new discipline.

A translator should have full command over the source language and the target language. He should be well versed with the historic background and the literary tradition of the both of the languages. He should be a good interpreter and a good rhetorician. His translation should be able to make the same impact upon his reader which the original piece of literature would have made upon the original readers. Success of any translation to a great extent depends upon the translator's abilities. Experts are called upon a given situation of translatability because they are needed and because they are regarded as experts. It is usually assumed, reasonably enough, that such people know what the issue is all about. They are thus consulted and their views are listened to. Being experts, they are trusted to know more about their particular field than outsiders. A translator has to be a good judge of writing. He must assess not only the literary quality but the moral seriousness of a text also. A translator should have a deep study of logics and philosophy so that he may avoid ambiguity in the original text if any. A translator's craft lies in his ability to command an exceptionally large vocabulary in the source language and the target language. The basic operations through which a translator has to undergo are comprehension, interpretation, thinking over and formulation. If a translator successfully deals with these operations, he writes very well in the target language. Before beginning any translation, a translator should know basic information about his readers say for example who are his readers. What is their educational background? Where the translated version is to be placed whether in a magazine or in a newspaper or in a text book. Such information helps the translator to decide the degree of formality at various levels such as official, social or colloquial.

A translator should have sufficient knowledge of the text linguistics, i.e. cohesion, coherence, discourse analysis, foregrounding, proforms etc. So many times, specially in poetry, the poets foreground, i.e. they omit verbs, subject, object, pronoun which are to be discovered by the translator himself by considering the previous or subsequent poetic lines. It is the duty of the translator to visualize the text linguistically. He should know what has been foregrounded, what is needed ?, where it is needed and if he is incapable of doing that, and when the poetic lines mystify him and he fails to translate and communicate, he should go for extra study of the

cultural roots of the textual material in the source language. He can switch over to the option of foot notes. Regarding inclusion of foot notes in translated versions Lawrence Venuti comments " I want such foot notes and the absolutely literal sense, with no emasculation and no padding-I want such sense and such notes for all the poetry in other tongues" (98). No doubt, text linguistics becomes a prominent point of consideration for the translator in literal translations, but some translator consider text linguistics as a minor and less important point saying that the sentence is the basic unit of translation. They should know that as capable translators they just can't put aside text linguistics or they just can't do away with it.

Technical translations are concerned with the content. It would be better if the translator of technical translation belongs to the technical field. If there is an error or some information has been misrepresented in the original text, translator should correct the same because the function of technical translation is informativity which must not be miscarried. The technical translations are representational.

Literal translations are the most difficult and challenging. These translations demand considerable imaginativity and intuitivity from the translator. In such translations, the translator should catch and then retain the pace and flavour of the original. The literal translations become difficult because literary text is interwoven with the author's literary style, images, imagery, symbolism, figure of speech and while translating the translator has to shoulder the responsibility of reflecting the same without loss of meaning. Highly literal texts are bound to be poorer and simpler in their translated versions and some times they become mere interpretations of the original despite of the fact that the translator tries his level best to provide a real touch of the original to his readers. No doubt there are certain changes bound to occur in the translated version. Regarding such changes Mona Baker writes "A certain amount of loss, addition or skewing of meaning is often unavoidable in translation; language system tends to be too different to produce exact replicas in most cases"(69)

Allusions peculiar to the source language culture become a headache for the translator. Such peculiar allusions are unlikely to be understood by his readers. It is better to omit such allusions rather than reproducing them in the target language. If quotations are included in the source language then they should be rendered more literally in the target language.

For a translator, his educational degrees, practical experience in his field of translating and his own occupation means a lot say for instance Peter New Mark had been a Professor of Translation in the University of Surrey (U.K.), South East of England but generally what we notice is that is not often seen in the profession of teaching translations. Other translators are occasionally attached to the process of translating professionally. No doubt such a combination of education with professional involvement provides extra quality to the translated works. As soon as a text is decided for translation, the choice should also be made carefully for a selection of

translator depending upon the type of the text-fiction, non-fiction, poetic, religious, didactic etc. If such a care is not taken, the translated work would be full of misinterpretations and distortions in meaning. It is all because of incompetency of a translator and on the other hand if the original writer becomes poor somewhere in literary genre, it comes to the part of translator to maintain quality. Regarding this responsibility Peter New Mark states "A translator must respect good writing scrupulously by accounting for its language, structures philosophical or fictional. If the writing is poor, it is normally his duty to improve it whether it is technical or a routine" (06)

Translators are made to have a shadowy existence or pseudo existence. As it has been observed in so many countries of the world like European countries including united states of America. Translators are given ambiguous and unfavourable legal status both in the process of copyright acts & legal laws and even the economic contractual arrangements. The laws in great Britain and the U.S.A. define translation as adaptations or derivative works. Even the copy right act of translated version of a text is vested in the interest of the original author who decisively controls the publication of the translated work. Translators offer their services for economic exploitation as they are given their fee per pages of the original work or per thousand words of the original texts. Expressing this economic helplessness of translator Lawrence Venuti Writes "A typical first printing for a literary translation published by a trade press is approximately 5000 copies (less for a university press) so that even with the trend towards contracts offering royalties, the translator is unlikely to see any income beyond the advances, very few translations become best sellers, very few are likely to be reprinted whether in paper back or hard cover"(12) No doubt a translator takes a lot of pain and devotes too much of his time involves his heart and mind in the process of translation but he has to remain hidden or has to bear his shadowy existence painfully.

No doubt even the best translators are questioned and they are charged with misinterpretation of the original text. Great translators like John Dryden, Matthew Arnold were literally attached to their translations of Homer but after all the translated play should be playable and a poem should be readable. If critics criticize, they should come up to improve translation rather than tarnishing the image of a translator. Keeping in mind evaluation of translation Susan Bassnett writes "The problem of evaluation in translation is intimately connected with the previously discussed problems of low status of translation which enables critics to make pronouncements about translated from a position of assumed superiority." (20)

Next, we take up translation theory. Actually speaking it is neither a theory nor a science. It is a translation label or a reservoir of knowledge which helps us in the process of translating. The main concern of this theory is to decide appropriate translation method for a wide range of texts. This theory demonstrates the possible translation

procedures and various arguments for and against the use of one translation process rather than another in a particular context. The translation theory is concern with choices and decisions not with the mechanism of either the source language or the target language. The translation theory attempts to provide some insight into the relation between thought, meaning and language; the individual, universal and cultural aspects of a language. The translation theory attempts to provide points of agreement on common translation problems. We should note that problems related with translation arise out of the practical experience so they should be quoted with the examples of originals and their translations. Most of the problems related with translation finally resolve into the problem how to write well in the target language. Translators face the problem of not finding the appropriate word in the target language conveying the same meaning. In such cases, he has to satisfy himself with the word conveying approximate meaning. Unpopular and out dated abbreviations and short forms in the source language pose a problem before a translator. The translator can neither use these outdated short forms as such in the target language nor he can find out their meaning from encyclopaedia or from a general knowledge book. The only way out to tackle such problem is to contact the author, if it is possible, to know what the unpopular short form means. Otherwise such problems remain unsolved. For his translating problems, the translators were not much helped by the dictionaries around twenty to thirty years before but now ample number of specific dictionaries are available from a number of publishers say for example besides dictionary subject wise dictionaries of Physics, Economics, Commerce, Computer Science and Internet, Psychology, Nursing and so on are available. All these dictionaries of wide range and very deep subject matter have eased the problem and tension of a translator which otherwise would have become translator's devils.

John Dryden (1631-1700) neo-classical poet, critic and playwright in his important preface to Ovid's Epistles (1680), tackles the problems of translations by formulating three basic types: (a) Paraphrasing- Translation for sense (b) Metaphors- Translating an author's work word by word and line by line (c) Imitation- Translation where the translator can abandon the text of the original as he feels fit. The translators should pay attention to John Dryden's basic formulas for translation as the case may be in case they face any problem.

Conclusion

Before I end, I conclude that translation is an important issue in the modern age as the scientific, economic and literal achievements of one country are to be transmitted into the different parts of the world where different languages are spoken. A translator has to know his own language, its subject and the linguistic background and we expect from him the same competence in the target language also. His success lies in his choosing an appropriate method by visualizing the type of the text he has undertaken to translate. These days subject wise dictionaries which

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have come up in the market help the translator a lot to resolve their problems or to remove their devils from their way of translations. The world can be too much with us through translations.

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