

Ethnic and Societal Hindrances in Translation: An Analysis

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Abstract:

"Translation is not a matter of words only: it is a matter of making intelligible whole culture"

-Anthony Burgess

To make translation successful, it is necessary to overcome several obstacles, some of which are social and cultural in nature. There are societal and cultural distinctions not only between nations but also among them. In the most majority of instances, we come across a nation that possesses various social and cultural diversity. Because of these disparities, effective translation is hampered in some way or another. This is because different languages give rise to distinct ideas of the world around them. This article looks at myriad challenges that a translator comes across while translating a work due to the influence of social and ethnic elements. Taking up these hindrances in the beginning of the discussion will also act as a means of averting them later.

Keywords: Hindrances, Translation, Culture, Social, Discrepancy

Introduction

Because every individual is born into a preexisting culture, culture exerts a tremendous amount of power over humans because it is the very basis of their existence. Indigenous culture defines and shapes a person's perspective on every aspect of life, which is unique to their community or nation. This is the reason why "the way of life of a people, including their attitudes, values, beliefs, arts, sciences, modes of perception, and habits of thought and activity" is considered to be "the definition of culture" (Blackburn, 2009).

There is presence of social elements in a culture, and as a result, every culture accounts for and considers the social facets and the day-to-day activities of its people. In the beginning, the atmosphere of a group of people is what gives rise to the cultural practices that are carried out. As a consequence of this, there must necessarily be a social habitat given that there is a society. As a result of this, social attributes create awareness amongst people regarding their way of life. This fact is supported by the opinions of Durkheim, which are as follows:

There are ways of acting, thinking, and feeling that exist outside of a person's awareness. This can be true of both what we do and what we think. Not only are these ways of responding and thinking outside of the person, but they also have a persuasive and coercive power that allows them to force themselves on the person whether or not the person wants this to happen (Durkheim, 1973).

The terms 'social' and 'cultural' are interlinked to each other in the sense that cultural activities are relevant as social significance. As a result, translation emerges as an instrument that is both useful and significant in social contexts. If this is the case, then from a cultural point of view, how might it be used to affect social behavior? What kinds of effects might social and cultural aspects have on the quality of a translation? How might

issues like these be resolved, and what are some other ways that the consequences can be mitigated? These are some of the problems that will hopefully be addressed and solved by the end of this study. But before we get into that, let's start by elaborating on some key concepts.

Why Should One Translate?

The field of Translation is a specialist academic field which is charged with the obligation of ensuring that translated words and texts retain the exact same meaning as the ones they were translated from. Linguists and theorists will almost certainly be involved in this endeavor, either at the same time or at different times. According to Bell's observations, however, it does not appear that there is a great deal of collaboration between these two:

Almost all translation theorists haven't made much systematic use of the techniques and ideas of modern linguistics (the linguistics of the last twenty years or so), and linguists have been at best neutral about the idea of a theory of translation and at worst actively against it(Bell, 1991).

This divisiveness has not helped translation progress, which is problematic given that the purpose of translation is "the transformation of a text originally written in one language into an equivalent text in a different language while retaining, as much as possible, the message's content and the formal features and functional roles of the original text" (an informal definition that will be much modified.)(Bell, 1991).

Therefore, translation is an endeavor that strives for mastery; it seeks exactitude; it seeks competence; and it seeks perfection of some kind, without which it will not be considered translation. Possibly, this is one of the reasons why Ukpong views it as "... the live wire in complex human-social relationship... the go between two huddles or barrier to communication."(D.E.Ukpong, 2016) Even if the term "translation" can refer to a number of different things, Munday provides us with an all-encompassing viewpoint on the topic when he states that:

"It may relate to the topic area, the finished product (the material that has been translated), or the procedure itself (the act of producing the translation, or otherwise known as translating). A written text (referred to as the source text or ST) that was originally composed in one verbal language (referred to as the source language or SL) is transformed by a translator into a written text (referred to as the target text or TT) that is composed in a different verbal language (referred to as the target language or TL) during the process of translating between two distinct written languages" (Munday, 2001).We are now able to grasp the "why" of translation as a result of Munday's contribution, which relates to what constitutes translation. The maintenance of original form of words and texts after being subjected to some sort of linguistic transformation is the primary objective of translation, making it one of the most compelling arguments in favor of its significance. This may not be an easy task to do, unless specific variables are considered; thus, the field of studies related to translation is still developing, providing new techniques and ways of fruitful translation, particularly in light of the complex society we live in today. However, before we continue this line of inquiry, let's first investigate the nature of the social and cultural factors that come into play.

Social and Cultural Blend:

The terms "social" and "cultural" are inextricably linked; whenever we refer to the word

"social," we consider the society as a whole. The term is frequently differentiated from "person" in this context. Whereas the term, "cultural" refers to the entirety of the manner of life practised by people. According to the Longman Encyclopedia, then, culture is defined as, "The collection of meanings, values, morals, modes of thinking, patterns of behavior, idioms of thought, of speech, and ways of life, etc., that identify a particular nation-state, group, or social category and are unique to that nation-state, group, or social category" (The Longman Encyclopedia, 1989).

As a result, culture is comprehensive, as it touches upon the core fabric of what it is to be human. Additionally, it is dynamic, which means it is subject to change. Culture is not the only factor that can influence an individual's behaviour; migration, scientific and technological breakthroughs, and similar factors can also have an effect. Changes in people's worldviews can occasionally result in cultural transformations.

Within the context of a culture, social interactions are carried out, which ultimately results in social activities. Interaction with other individuals, often known as social activities, is of the utmost significance. There are also actions in which the agent is a plurality, a "we" as opposed to a "I"; it is appealing to restrict this latter classification to an aggregate of individual acts, but this type of reduction or decomposition is not typically attainable. There are also actions in which the object of the action is a plurality, a "we" rather than a "I". The human being is a social animal that interacts with other members of his species in groups. The culture that shapes social relations and activities contributes to the complexity that exists in the society in which man lives.

A society can be defined as any group of people who regularly interact with one another, regardless of the surroundings. Because it is only in a society that communication can take place, which necessitates the use of language; moreover, it is only in a society that transactions can take place, in which commodities and services are exchanged for other goods and services; ultimately, this necessitates the use of money. Money; and of etiquette standards and penalties for infractions, which are governed by the law and need its existence. As a result, "we have a collection of structures, or, to put it another way, individuals tied to one another in intricate webs of relationship." And this, my friend, is what we mean when we talk about a society (Blackburn, 2009).

The Social and Cultural Aspect of Translation

Since translation is done by people, and people are social and cultural creatures, translation must have a social and cultural aspect. People talk and write, so language is a way to communicate that was made by people to help them get along with each other and live together. To do this, you need to know how to use language well. This means not only being able to understand right away an unlimited number of completely new sentences, but also being able to spot sentences that don't make sense and sometimes putting your own meaning on them. Chomsky believes that this is the most important thing that any important theory of language must address:

"When the time is right, a mature speaker can make up a new sentence in his language, and other speakers can understand it right away, even though it is also new to them. As both speakers and listeners, we spend most of our time with new sentences" (Chomsky, 1964).

If a translator or interpreter wants to be good at his or her job, he or she can't hide from the details of language mastery. He or she must keep up with good knowledge of the language in question, including its semantics, syntax, and cultural aspects. At the level of cross-

cultural translation, it's important to pay more attention to cultural differences and how they affect how language is used to find the truth. This is where words like idioms, proverbs, collocations, riddles, and so on come into play, so that a word could be used in a way that has nothing to do with what it means in another language. In this case, should the translator be happy with how close or equal the words are? Under cultural equivalent, Newmark argues that "cultural equivalents are typically inaccurate, but they are a shorthand, have emotional force, are useful for immediate effect on the receptor, for example in the theatre or cinema (subtitling or dubbing), and they transport the readership uncritically into the TL culture" (Translation, 2001).

As a result of the amount of linguistic knowledge that must be uncovered, the social/cultural dimension of translation poses a challenge to the competency and competence of translators. This is because "translation involves not only two languages, but also a cultural exchange" (Sándor Hervey, 2002). Since it has been demonstrated that translation has a social/cultural perspective, it becomes a *sine qua non* that this social/cultural dimension be examined and contextualized appropriately. This will make it easier to eliminate the obstacles that may impede proper translation; this will be our next emphasis.

Eliminating Social and Cultural Obstacles to Translation:

Since the phrases or documents to be translated are placed or nested in a culture with social value, the translator must have enough understanding of the culture whose language he/she wishes to work in. Given that language is a tremendously complicated phenomena produced by incredibly complex humans, Shastri's remark is quite enlightening.

"It is intricate on all levels, including sounds, words, semantics, and pragmatics. Due to the writers' creative licence, the use of idioms, metaphors, proverbs, and the highly stylized language of literature enhances complexity. In addition, the author works under the spell of inspiration, which the translator must manufacture. Therefore, translating is more difficult than writing the original" (Shastri, 2011).

It is essential to emphasise the fundamental themes addressed by Shastri, such as poetic licence, inspiration spells, and artificial creation. Obviously, every author has partial or complete freedom to construct castles with words; this is known as poetic licence. This licence permits the unrestricted use of idioms, metaphors, and other figurative language. This licence can also be combined with his own inspiration. The difficulty is in having to read the mind of the author or writer.

As Shakespeare stated, the only option available to the translator is to artificially create or close gaps, as "there is no art to know the mind's architecture in the face." In this way, translation becomes significantly more difficult than writing from scratch.

Hervey and Higgins discovered that there are actually more cultural concerns in translation and questioned whether it should be compromised or compensated. The authors chose the term "cultural transposition" (Sándor Hervey, 2002) as an umbrella word for the many

degrees of departure from literal translation that one may resist while moving the contents of a source text into the context of a target culture. In other words, the various types of cultural adaptation they described are alternatives to a fully SL-based literal translation. They held the view:

“Any degree of cultural transposition necessitates the selection of traits indigenous to the TL and the target culture over those with origins in the source culture. The goal is to reduce 'foreign' (i.e., SL-specific) elements in the TT, thereby naturalising it inside the TL and its cultural context”(Sándor Hervey, 2002). Should names, such as place-names and proper names, be carried over intact from the ST to the TT, or should they be modified to comply to the phonic/graphic standards of the TL? The first alternative is equivalent to literal translation, which is less extreme: here, conversional/conventional techniques are utilised to modify the phonic/graphic shape of a ST name so that it more closely matches TL pronunciation and spelling patterns. This is the conventional technique to handle Chinese names in English writings. But as Hervey and Higgins point out, "how a name is transliterated may be totally up to the translator if there is no established precedent for transcribing the name in issue, or it may be necessary to follow a standard transliteration established by earlier translators" (Sándor Hervey, 2002).

A second option for translating names is cultural transplantation, which represents the highest level of cultural transposition. SL names are replaced with indigenous TL names that are not their literal equivalents but have cultural meanings similar to those of the SL names. Cultural translation carries with it the possibility of danger. What should one keep in mind while translating names if this is the case? Hervey and Higgins provide the following recommendation:

“Therefore, when translating names, one must be mindful of three factors: first, the available alternatives for translating a given name; second, the ramifications of selecting a particular option; and third, the linguistic context. thirdly, the ramifications of selecting between exoticism, transliteration, and cultural transplantation”(Sándor Hervey, 2002).

We have only observed the cultural aspect of names (place- names and proper names). In addition to names, the dilemma can also be applied to other cultural difficulties; however, the difficulty will remain. Consequently, it becomes evident that translation is laden with compromise. And according to Hervey and Higgins, "compromise in translation entails reconciling oneself with the fact that, while one would wish to do complete justice to the "richness" of the source text, one's final translation will invariably suffer from various translation losses" (Sándor Hervey, 2002).

These losses appear to be sacrificed on the altar of unambiguous meaning in prose, or metrical and phonic effects in verse. But the question that continues to clamour for a response is: "Is this compromise itself not evidence of the translator's incompetence? The translator may be successful in eliminating the social/cultural barrier to translation, but has he increased his efficacy, efficiency, or professionalism? These will be the focal point of our analysis.

Analysis:

Translation involves compromise, which is one of the most significant obstacles translators will have to overcome. Regardless of the justification, such a compromise just reveals a deficiency. There may also be arguments advanced in support of a compromise, one of which being that we cannot have a perfect translation. If translation cannot be perfect, by what criterion will "enough" be determined? What characteristics define a good translation? Newmark recommends, "When addressing social culture, one must differentiate between denotative and connotative translation issues" (Translation, 2001). He differentiates cultural language from universal and personal language further. According to him, there are no issues with translating universals. Typically, issues arise from the cultural description of the universal referent. Thus, according to Culler, "If language were simply a name for a collection of universal notions, it would be simple to translate between languages... If languages were like this, learning a new language would be much simpler than it is currently" (Culler).

There is typically a translation issue with idiolect, also known as a dialect. Consequently, where there is a cultural emphasis, "there is a translation issue due to the cultural "gap" or "distance" between the source and destination languages" (Translation, 2001).

Alternatively, if translation issues arise due to a lack of word-level equivalence, what should the translator do when there is no word in the target language (TL) that conveys the same meaning as the word in the source language (SL)? The primary method of escape remains manipulation. For Bell: The choice of an appropriate equivalent will always depend not only on the linguistic system or systems being handled by the translator, but also on how the author of the source text and the author of the target text, i.e. the translator, choose to manipulate the linguistic systems in question (Bell, 1991).

Compromise, it would appear, should be the result of deliberate decisions made in consideration of not only the latitudes permitted by the SL and TL, but also all the factors that can play a determining role in translation: the nature of the ST, its relationship to SL audiences, the purpose of the TT, and so on. Only then can the translator have a clear understanding of which features of the ST can be surrendered with the least impact on the effectiveness of the TT, both as a translation of the ST and as a TL text in its own right. Since "the words of a language often reflect not so much the reality of the world, but the interests of the people who speak it," this may only be a temporary solution (Palmer, 1981).

Conclusion

We began by explaining that translation faces social and cultural obstacles. Inasmuch as translation is a symbiotic activity involving both the writings to be translated and the translator, these social and cultural barriers hinder the efficacy of translation. Further, the essay argued that the word social is destroyed by the word culture because social relationships and acts occur within a culture. In the course of the discussion, it becomes clear through logical analysis that compromise is inherent to translation. This has ramifications for accurate or flawless translation, which appears to be an illusion. The conclusion of the article is that manipulation or compromise in translation reveals a gap

that remains very wide, leaving translators with a significant burden not due to their incompetence in translation per se, but due to cultural differences in words and language, hence the recommendation that the closer a translation is to the original words or text in terms of equivalence, the better.

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