The Role of Translation Theory as a Background for Translation Problem Solving

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Abstract

J.C Catford (1965) defines Translation as: "The replacement of a textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language. "Meaning" and "Style", to many theorists, play an essential role side by side with "equivalence". Translation means reproducing the closest natural equivalent of the (SL) message in the receptor language, first in terms of meaning and second in terms of style.

Some theorists look at translation from a semantic perspective, others look at it from a communicative perspective in which the translator is interposed between a transmitter and a receiver. For others, it is always an interpretation. It is the final product of problem solving. All these views look at translation as a theory, a set of rules and principles that are helpful in the analysis of texts.

Translation theory is a form of comparative linguistics. The equivalence of grammatical categories in the (SL) and (TL) become a basis for establishing translation correspondents.

Translation theory includes principles for translating figurative language, dealing with lexical mismatches, rhetorical question, inclusion of cohesion markers, and other topics crucial to good translation. Translation theory, seems to Nida as something beyond the boundaries of narrower linguistic theories to put linguistics into the framework of communication.

Introduction

Translation theory plays a crucial role in translation process and translation studies. Theories of translation and practice are complementary. They are the two sides of the same coin. The translator, while practicing such a task or skill, should be aware of certain theoretical strategies which help him in solving problems.

Many views have been emerged nowadays about the importance of Translation theory in the process of practical translation and in translation studies. Some translators believe that there is no need to study these theories since translation is a branch of contrastive linguistics, while others affirm its importance. The study aims at finding out to what extend translation theory is important in translation.

The study tackles, what is meant by translation theory, view points on translation theory, its value in the process of translation, what type of theory is needed. Translation theory does not give the direct solution to all the problems that face translators, instead, it shows him the road map of translation process.

Translation and Translation Theory

Translation is a mutual process of conveying meaning from one language to another. To J. C. Catford (1965) "Translation is the replacement of a textual materialin one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL)", (p. 20). Translation as an activity attempts to serve as a cross-cultural bilingual communication means among people. The process is not a mere simple one by itself but requires several regulations and adequate knowledge.

A perfect translation is supposed to meet so many qualifications and illegibility.

Many linguists and translation theorists confirmed that "meaning" and "style" play an essential role in translation process side by side with "equivalence". Translation consists in reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style. (Nida and Tabor, 1965, p. 12)

On the other hand, functionalists view translation differently, to them translation is the reproduction of a functional target text maintaining a relationship with a given source text that is specified according to the intended or demanded function of the target text. (Nord, in Shuttleworth and Cowie, 2007, p.182)

To sum up, definitions of translation are numerous. Some look at it from a semantic perspective. Others look at it from a communicative perspective in which the translator is interposed between a transmitter and a receiver. For others, translation is always an interpretation. It is the final product of problem solving. All these views attempt to look at

translation as an activity not as a theory. Other views look at translation as a theory, a set of rules and principles that are helpful in the analysis of texts. (Catford, 1965, p. 125)

<u>What is meant by Translation Theory?</u>

The Theory of Translation is a branch of comparative linguistics, translation has been defined by Catford as the replacement of a textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL). This view leads him to consider the degree of equivalence of grammatical and other categories in the source and target languages. Thus, the equivalence of grammatical categories in (SL) and (TL) becomes a basis for determining translation correspondence.

Taking a more pragmatic view, Newmark claims that translation theory is not really a theory but a framework of principles and hints… a background for problem solving.

Translation theory's main concern is to determine appropriate translation methods for the widest possible range of texts or text categories. He also asserts that translation theory is concerned with choices and decisions, not with the mechanics of either the (SL) or the (TL).

Catford (1965: 20) argues that the theory of translation is concerned with a certain type of relation between languages and it is, consequently, a branch of comparative linguistics. Thus, translating is defined as "the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL).

Newmark makes a distinction between translation theory and contrastive linguistics. To him, any comparing and contrasting of two languages such as Catford's example about grammatical differences between languages in number and gender, may help the translator to translate but does not contribute to translation theory.

Having to discuss different translation theory views on theories of translation, it is worth mentioning here, to focus on the value of Translation theory in actual translation practice. People who are practicing translation as a profession have not appreciated the importance of translation theory, though there is a common belief that translation theory can serve at least in the preliminary stage of analysis, as a guide to translation process.

The translator, while practicing his skill, is aware of certain theoretical strategies which can help him in solving translation problems. In fact, theory provides him with alternatives leaving him to make the decision. The problem with translation theory is that it has to meet the great

demands which are made of it, i.e., great involvement in the actual process of translating, but to tell the translator how to translate is not the task of translation theory.

Translation Theory is not supposed to provide the translator with ready-made solutions of his problems. Theory is not a substitute for proper thinking or decision making.

What does the Concept of Translation Theory Entail?

Translation theory is based on a solid foundation on understanding of how languages work. In addition, it recognizes that different languages encode meaning in different forms, yet, it guides translators to find appropriate ways of preserving meaning, while using the most appropriate forms of each language.

Translation theory includes principles for translating figurative language, dealing with lexical mismatches, rhetorical questions, inclusions of cohesion markers, and many other topics crucial to good and perfect translation. (Valleyjo, J. D. (n.d.) Translation theory. Retrieved from: http://www.translationdirectory.com/ article4/4.html)

Moreover, Hermans (2002 A) emphasized the role of translation studies by declaring that "Translation studies aims at exploring the ways in which Translation is both practiced and theorized in individual cultures." (p. 13). He added that translators decode and recode the text according to their concept and perceptions.

Nida (1964) defined translation theory as something beyond the boundaries of narrower linguistic theories to put linguistics into the framework of communication text interpretation should, also, be taken into consideration, first, the writer's intention beyond the boundaries of words, second, the relationship between the writer and the audience, the culture, and the receptor.

The importance of Translation theory in translation

Many theorists' views have been put forward, towards the importance of Translation theory in translation process. Translation theory does not give a direct solution to the translator; instead, it shows the roadmap of translation process. Theoretical recommendations are, always, formulated to assist the translator in his work, but final success depends on whether they are properly and successfully applied by the translator in each particular case. (pp.208-9, as cited in Shaheen 1991, p. 11)

Newmark (1988), clarified that translation theory cannot make a bad translation into a good one. It cannot make a translator intelligent, or sensitive, which are two qualities of a good translator, instead, translation is an art as well as a skill and a science, and it cannot teach anyone to write well.

The translator, while practicing his skill, is aware of certain strategies which can help him in solving problems. In fact, theory provides him with alternatives, leaving him to make the decision. The problemwith translation theory is that it has to meet the great demands which are made of it. (Shaheen, 1991, p. 11)

Linguists and Translation theorists' views towards Translation

Though there have been many attempts to arrive at a unified theory of translating, linguists and translation theorists are still in doubt about such a possibility. The idea of formulating a reliable theory is of a great significance, since it would systematize the methods and procedures of translating.

Catford (1965, p.20) argued that "the theory of translation is concerned with a certain type of relation between languages and consequently, is a branch of comparative linguistics." Here, Catford distinguished between different types of translation equivalence, i.e., textual equivalence and formal correspondence. He is concerned with translation equivalence as an empirical phenomenon. In other words, he is interested in formal correspondence.

Newmark (1982) claimed that translation theory is a label, a framework of principles: "It is neither a theory nor a science, but the body of knowledge that we have and still have is to acquire about the process of translating. Its main concern is to determine appropriate translation methods for the widest range of texts or text categories."

Newmark (1988, p.19) added that translation theory is concerned with choices and decisions, not with the mechanics of either the (SL) or the (TL). To him, any comparing and contrasting of two languages may help the translator to translate but does not contribute to translation theory.

Newmark (1988) argued that translation theory's main concern is to:

Determine appropriate translation methods for the widest possible range of texts or categories.

Provide a framework of principles, restricted rules and hints for translating texts and criticizing translations, a background for problem solving.

Give some insight into the relation between thought, meaning, and language, and the universal, cultural and individual aspects of cultures, the interpretation of texts that may be clarified and even supplemented by way of translation.

Cover a wide range of pursuits, attempts, always, to be useful, to assist the individual translator both by stimulating him to write better and suggest points of argument on certain translation problems. (Newmark, 1988. What Translation Theory is about)

Why Translation Theory? Which theory is needed for Translation?

Some linguists and Translation theorists believe that theory helps in practical translation task or work. Perez (2005) argued that theory is necessary on, at least, two accounts, namely for the practical texts of a) revision, and b) criticism of Translation.

According to (Hatim, 2001, p. 7) and (Venuti, 2000, p.26), theory helps to raise awareness amongst translators and encourages them to make conscious decisions, and to explain these decisions to other translators participating in the translating process. Likewise, Albert Einstein suggested that whether you can observe a certain thing or not depends on the theory which you use. It is the theory which decides what can be observed (As cited in Frank, 2008, p.1).

Which Theory is needed for Translation?

Frank (2008) indicated that the lens of a theoretical model or framework focuses on certain facts in order to understand them better while leaving other facts out of focus. He added "we can assess the worth of a theory in terms of its validity-i.e., whether or not it seems to fit and explain the facts and whether or not it is useful.

In linguistics, translation, communication and other social sciences, various theories exist, where one theory may take the place of another.

Translation theory is an aid to the translator. It helps him capture the sense and the spirit of verbal and non-verbal elements in texts. Any attempt to translate a text without restoring to translation theory would fail to produce certain elements, which are essential to the effectiveness and efficiency of a text. Therefore a good and successful translator is the one who can link between translation theory and translation practice.

Translation theory enriches the translator's knowledge of the text. It provides insight into cross-cultural semantics and pragmatics. Moreover, it equips the translator with adequate knowledge and understanding of the techniques and ways of approaching a text; other views advocate the idea that translators need, only, translation practice.

Some translation theorists recommend following a semantic or communicative approach to translation, while others might follow structural theory to focus just on the surface or deep structure rather than other components.

Nida's Theory of Translation

Nida (1976) indicated that since translation is an activity that relies on language, all theories are linguistics. He classifies these theories of translation into three main categories:

Philological   2) Linguistics 3) Sociolinguistic

Philological theories of translation

Philological theories of translating deal with the problems of the equivalence of literary texts by comparing and contrasting the (SL) and (TL). They also focus on literary quality. i.e., the form of the text and its stylistic features and rhetorical devices. (Nida, 1976, pp.67-8)

Nida listed a number of works as representatives of philological theories of translation. Savory's book "The Art of Translation" (1957) falls under this category. Nida, also, regards most of the articles published in Babel as philological in perspective.

One of the major preoccupations of philological theories of translating is the discussion of literary works of high quality such as Shakespeare's works.

Another major issue in philological theories of translating is the problem of equivalence of literary genres between the (SL) and the (TL).

One can include, here, all the previous controversies on translation, e.g. whether translation is an art or a science, whether it should concentrate on the form or on the content of the message. In fact, traditional rules and directives for translators were on philological basis.

Linguistic theories if translation

Linguistic theories of translation are based on a comparison on linguistic structures of source and receptor texts rather than on a comparison of literary genres and stylistic features of the philological theories.

One major difference between linguistic theories of translating and philological theories of translating is that linguistic theories are descriptive rather than prescriptive. They demonstrate on how people translate rather than how they should translate.

The principal differences between various linguistic theories of translation lie in the extent to which the focus is on surface structures or corresponds to deep structures. These theories based on surface structure comparisons involve the use of more-or-less elaborate sets of rules for matching roughly corresponding structures.

Their development is due to two factors, first the application of the rapidly expanding linguistics, the scientific study of language, to several fields such as cognitive anthropology, semantics, pragmatics and translation and interpreting skills, and second, the emergence of Machine Translation (MT) which has provided a significant motivation for basing translation procedures on linguistic analysis as well as for rigorous description of (SL) and (TL), (pp. 69-70).

The pioneers of these theories are Eugene Nida, Roger Bell, and J.C. Catford, who viewed translation as simply a question of replacing the linguistic units without reference to factors such as context of connotation. In this regard, it seems that "equivalence" is a milestone in the linguistic theories.

Moreover, Newmark (1982) classified linguistic translation into communicative translation and semantic translation. He stated that communicate translation attempts to produce on its reader an effect as close as possible to that obtained on the original. Semantic translation attempts to render, as closely as the semantic and syntactic structures of the second language allow, the contextual meaning of the original (p. 39). Besides, Newmark's classification resembles, somehow, Nida's formal and dynamic equivalence.

In like manner, Ilyas (1989) indicated that in formal equivalence "the translator focuses on the similarity of from between (SL) text and the (TL) text as well as on the content, while in dynamic translation " the translator has to reproduce an equivalent effect on the receiver as that experience by the (SL) receiver (p. 28-29).

Sociolinguistic theories of translation

Sociolinguistic theories of translating emerged out of the dissatisfaction with linguistic theories of translation and the growing interest in communication. Such interest resulted

from the work of anthropologists who recognized the role of text recipient in the process of translating.

Sociolinguistic theories of translating relate linguistic structures to a higher level where they can be viewed in terms of their function in communication. When discussing a text, the sociolinguists concern particularly with its author, its historical background, the circumstances involved in its production, and the history of its interpretation for such elements figure in the social setting of communication. (Shaheen, 1991, p.15-6)

These theories endeavor to link translation to communicative theory with certain emphasis on the receptor's role in the translation process. They do not completely overlook language structure. Instead they deal with it at a higher level in accordance to their functions in the communicative process. Moreover, these theories require the translator to exhibit language competence as well as language performance. In translating, one should be aware of the fact that there are several styles at work which must be rendered into the (TL). IN observing different styles in translating, the translating is achieving a near dynamic equivalence. (Nida and Taber, 1969, p.129)

Practical Practice in Translation

The following sentences represent practical practice in translation, both from English into Kurdish and vice versa. It points out certain problematic issues in rendering certain words or expressions for which semantic translation theory doesn't serve, thus, the translator attempts to use Communicative Translation theory which is the most recent approach in translation to meet the needs of the (TL) reader. The underlined words and expressions in the (SL) text have been treated communicatively in the (TL).

Communicative translation is used to solve the problems of untranslatability but sometimes even this will not serve in translation and it requires to be translated freely. Thus, the first attempt in translation is to start with semantic translation but once it fails, communicative translation will be applied in the process of translation.

A) Practical Practice in English → Kurdish Translation

1. Ali looked in the mirror. He had a kind face. He had intelligent brown eyes. He usually had a friendly smile. But Ali wasn't smiling today.

عەقلي ستيري ئاوێنەكەي كرد، دەم و ضاویَکی زۆر خۆش و ضاویَکی قاوەيي زيرەكانەو هەڕەوەها وەکو هەتموو جاريَك وزڕردەخەتيەكي دۆستانەي هەتبوو، بەلأم ئەمرۆ زڕردەخەتنەي نـي ية.

2. Rome was not built in a day.

ئەتنجامداني :اري مەزن بة شەو و رۆذيَك ناكريَ.

3. I pray that my sister will pass in the exam.

لة خوا دەثاريَمەتوە كة خوشكةكەم دەربضيَ لة تاقيكردنەوة.

4. It rains cats and dogs.

باران بة طورِ دەتباريَ.

5. He was filled with anger.

زۆر توورة بوو.

6. An eye for an eye

تۆلة بة تۆلة

7. Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?

ئايا ئەتوانم بەتراوردت بكەم بة رۆذيَك لة رۆذاني وەرزي بەهار؟

8. Break an ice.

شەكريَك بشكيَنة

9. Ahmed went out to have his dinner.

ئەحمەد ضووە دەرەوە بۆ نان خواردني ذەمي نيوەڕۆیَ دواخراو.

10. The child cannot sleep on his stomach.

منالَةكة ناتوانيَ لةسەر سطی بخەويَ.

11. Dozens of children are affected by this disease every year.

سالانة بة دەيان منال تووشي ئەم نەخۆشية كوشندەية دەتبيت.

B) Practical Practice in Kurdish →English Translation

1. من لة بةرنامةمداية خوَم خانةنشين بكةم و حسابی ئةوةم كردووة لیَرة لة كوردستان (10) سالَ بمینیَمةوة، ئةطةر خودا ئیزن بدات ثیَم خوَشة ضةند سالیَكی دیكة لیَرة بمینیَمةوة.

I have in my agenda to retire myself, and I have thought to stay for (10) years here in Kurdistan, and if God wills, I would like to stay here for some more years.

2. سالاني ثةنجاكان لة طةرةكی ئیَمة حةوشةیةكی هةبوو ضوار هةتیوان و ضوار ضووری تیَدا بوو، لة هةر یةكیَ لة هةتیوان و ذوورانةدا ذن و میَردیَك دةذیان، هةموویان ضوار خیَزان بوون، ثیاوةكان یةكیَكیان باقلةفروَش بوو، ئةویتر یان سیو و جطةری دةبرذاند و دةیفروَشت، سیَ یةمیان شاطرد ضاضي بوو، ضوارةمیان دوو طویَ دریَذی هةبوو ، هةموو وةك یةك خیَزان سةریان نابوو بة یةكةوة و وةك یةك خیَزان بةتیَبیَ دةنطی دةذیان.

During the (1950s), there was, in our quarter a courtyard in which there were four terraces and four rooms, a wife and husband were living in. They were, all, four families. One of them was a broad bean seller, the other one was grilling and selling lungs and liver. The third one was a café apprentice. The fourth one had two donkeys. They and their families, all, lived quietly, together as one family.

Conclusions

Based on the findings, the study comes up with the following conclusions:

Translation Theory can be of aid to the translator. If theory stops short at semantic or syntactic analysis of language or at contrastive analysis at the level of word-group, relevant and important as this may be, the translator may fail to transfer into practice any of the practical grounds learned or experienced.

Translation is not an easy task whatsoever for the translators, but a complicated one.

Translation from mother tongue, i.e., from (SL) to (TL) is rather more difficult for the Kurdish translators in the process of rendering into English (TL).

Difficulties arise owing to lack of enough knowledge and background about the culture of (TL) and the details of the constants of expressions and meaning construction.

Problems of the linguistic differences including inconsistent semantic and grammatical patterns between English and Kurdish languages.

One of the most problematic areas translators have got problems with during translation is grammatical one particularly in Kurdish to English translation.

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