

Translator: A Mediator, Mentor and Preserver of the Culture

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Abstract: *What is Translation? It is the art of reproducing the work of art from one language to the other. Who is a Translator? He is a person who takes sole responsibility to reach the mass. The art of translation is highly appreciated if the translator translates a work of art without his own ideas. Translators find it difficult to translate a piece of art from the source language (SL) to the target language (TL) for various reasons. Though they face many difficulties in translating a text, the translators are the preservers of the culture and they act as a mentor and a mediator as they transform a culture to the other. This paper focuses on the problems faced by the translators and in spite of that how they are transforming culture to the people of another culture.*
“Translation is that which transforms everything so that nothing changes.”

- **Gunter Grass**

I. Introduction

Language is the most needed tool for communication in a society. Language and society are inseparable. A society cannot exist without a language. Language of a society determines its culture. Culture can be transmitted through language. Literature is the mirror of the society and society is being determined by the language. Lotman says ‘No language can exist unless it is steeped in the context of culture; and no culture can exist which does not have at its center, the structure of natural language’ Hence the work of literature determines the culture of that particular society. If a person wants to know about the culture of another society he needs to learn the literature of that particular society. The art of translation and the work of translator play an important role in transmitting the culture from one to the other.

II. Types Of Translation

Roman Jakobson classifies translation into three types:

1. Intralingual or Rewording.
2. Interlingual or translation proper.
3. Intersemiotic or transmutation.

According to these classifications, Jakobson says that complete equivalence cannot take place in any of these categories and only creative transposition is possible. Whatever may be the categories, translators decode and recode the source language (SL) to the target language (TL) passing all difficulties. Thus the translation should be of the context meaning and not the word meaning.

III. Translation Vs Interpretation Vs Transcreation

In *Modern Applied Linguistics*, N. Krishnasamy says ‘The ‘correct’ interpretation of the original and its ‘loyal’ recreation in the other language have always been the central issues in all translation activities.’ Tanke quotes in *Better translation for better communication*, ‘The objective of all translation is being a perfect equivalence of meaning between two texts.’

The other commonly used word for translation is interpretation. It means that a translator/interpreter comprehends a message from the SL to the TL. The International Association of Conference Interpreters defines interpretation is not simply to translate but to transpose with semantic, emotional and aesthetic baggage from the SL to the TL. An interpreter should comprehend the text which exchanges the mentalities of one culture with the other.

Dolet, a French scholar, translator and printer points that a translator must (i) grasp the sense and spirit of that of the SL, (ii) have an exhaustive knowledge of the SL and TL, (iii) be faithful to the meaning of the sentence, (iv) produce a version in plain speech, (v) have appropriate tone. A translator must become a transcreator in order to achieve the above mentioned effects since the original is recreated. This kind of translation becomes transcreation with the liberalism in translation for the translator. A translator feels free to translate whatever pleases.

IV. Theory Of Translation

Theory of translation states that translation is the invention of Romans. George Steiner classifies the translation studies into four periods.

- i. Immediate empirical focus - stem directly from the practical work of translating.
- ii. Hermeneutic Enquiry – development of vocabulary and methodology to approach translation.
- iii. Machine Translation – structural linguistics and communication theory into the study of translation.
- iv. Revision of hermeneutic theory – metaphysical enquiries into translation and interpretation.

V. Translator As A Mediator

Translator plays an important role in being a mediator between two cultures. A translator not only translates the text from source language (SL) to the target language (TL) but also carries the culture and tradition of one to the other. After the colonization, Literature spread wide and far, which made the cross culture exploration. A translator, with his creativity, he recreates the work of literature of a different language to his own. As Anuradha Dingwaney puts it, “the processes of translation involved in making another culture comprehensible entail varying degrees of violence, especially when the culture being translated is constituted as that of the “other”.”

The translator is a force for good, a creative artist who ensures the survival of writing across time and space, an intercultural mediator and interpreter, a figure whose importance to the continuity and diffusion of culture is immeasurable. In contrast, another interpretation sees translation as a highly suspect activity, one in which an inequality of power relations (inequalities of economics, politics, gender and geography) is reflected in the mechanics of textual production. As Mahasweta Sengupta argues, translation can become submission to the hegemonic power of images created by the target culture.

VI. Translator As A Mentor

Translator is considered a mentor for the generations since he is not only translating the text but also transmitting the traditions of a particular culture to the other. A reader who reads the translation work done by a translator does not read only the text but, he comes to know the tradition of that particular language. The translator acts as a guide here to teach the tradition to the younger generation. A mentor not only teaches but educates. Edward Sapir says ‘language is a guide to social reality’ and that human beings are at the mercy of the language that has become the medium of expression for their society.

The translator is seen as a liberator, someone who frees the text from the fixed signs of its original shape making it no longer subordinate to the source text but visibly endeavouring to bridge the space between source author and text and the eventual target language readership. This revised perspective emphasizes the creativity of translation, seeing in it a more harmonious relationship than the one in previous models that described the translator in violent images of ‘appropriation’, ‘penetration’ or ‘possession’. The post-colonial approach to translation is to see linguistic exchange as essentially dialogic, as a process that happens in a space that belongs to neither source nor target absolutely. As Vanamala Viswanatha and Sherry Simon argue, ‘translations provide an especially revealing entry point into the dynamics of cultural identity-formation in the colonial and postcolonial contexts.

VII. Translator As A Preserver

Translating a text from the source language does not mean that only the literature has been translated but it is for the reference of the future generation to keep the tradition of one culture. Translation makes the readers to explore the culture of other languages. Language shapes the society and society shapes the language. One can learn the society through the language that they use. Language and society are inseparable. A translator is solely responsible in passing on the culture to the younger generations. Georges Mounin, the French theorist, perceives translation as a series of operations of which the starting point and the end product are *significations* and function within a given culture.

The values of one culture can be forwarded to the other using translation. The translator not only translates or recreates or interprets but he is imposing it to the TL society. As Susan points out:

To attempt to impose the value system of the SL culture onto the TL culture is dangerous ground, and the translator should not be tempted by the school that pretends to determine the original *intentions* of an author on the basis of a self-contained text. 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.

VIII. Conclusion

It makes us clear and evident that the translator is not a person who translates only the text but he acts as a mediator, mentor and preserver of the SL culture and he passes it to the TL.

Works Cited

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