

Ethical and Cultural Issues and The Strategies Adopted in Translation

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Abstract

Translation plays a vital role in assimilating the cross-cultural aspects of the linguistic pluralities and divergences. Translation of a literary text is not easy. Words, phrases and facts have different connotations and implications due to the asymmetry in the cultures as well as the dissimilarities in the language structures. Language represents the culture of the speakers. Hence, it needs to understand the cultural terms and the strategies followed in translating a Source Language (SL). It requires the understanding of the cross-cultural psychology which holds out certain ethical and political issues. It is greatly difficult to bring about a successful version of a text from the SL to the Target Language (TL) owing to the cultural differences of both the languages. The academics and the scholars face it highly demanding to collect the data and to comprehend the cultural responsibility and ethical consciousness of both the SL and TL. A paltry disparity in the process of adaptation, may amount to a major disruption of perceptibility. In order to see through these issues, one needs to understand the cultural terms of the languages. The baffling aspect of translation is the dearth of equivalent terms between the languages and cultures. Research has proved that a flawless transcription of a culturally grounded text is inconceivable. It is observed that all languages express the same thing in different ways. Invariably, the translators turn to different procedures and strategies to handle the issues of translation. Procedures such as adaptation, borrowing,

calque, generalization, substitution, transposition etc. But, these techniques are not the remedy the issues. Thence, caution should be exercised to balance the cultural and ethical aspects and there should not be any subversion to reality.

Key words: asymmetry, cultural, ethical, source language, strategies.

Introduction

Translation, of late, has emerged as a major sphere among the literary circles. Translation of a literary text introduces the social as well as the cultural aspects across cultures and societies. One of the major issues that may crop up in the process of translation is that it is difficult to identify the facts, phrases denoting the socio-cultural phenomenon from the source language to the target language owing to the dearth of analogous jargon to suit cultural and ethical differences across the languages. This may pose a great difficulty to the translator. A little leniency on the part of the translator may lead to severe complications. Hence some theorists like Santoyo, Yifeng and others support the 'untransability' with regard to the culture-bound and culture-specific texts. Due to this factor, it is challenging to accomplish a successful transfer of text from one language to another.

A minute aberration in translation from source language (SL) to the target language (TL) is regarded as undermining the cultural absoluteness of the target language. As Suzanne Levine avers, "the literary translator can be

considered a subversive scribe” (7). Expressing the similar view, Katherine Silver says, “I understand subversion as at the core of the translation project itself” (5). This paper tries to identify various types of cultural terms and the type of issues likely come to surface in the process and the strategies to be followed to address such cultural and ethical issues. Litterateurs agree that language represents the people who speak that particular language and their cultural ethos. As a result, it is a great difficult to find the equivalent cultural terms. The term ‘*realia*’ is used to mention the objects, customs, habits, and other cultural and material aspects of a language.

Concept of Translation Ethics

Many scholars have conducted various studies to define and identity what exactly constitutes the concept of translation and the ethics of translation. Scholars are divided in their perception about this. Some argue that that the translation should be true to the form and content of the source language, need not mind whether the translation may suit the requirements of the target text. On the other hand, some scholars contend that translation should commensurate to the beliefs of the readers of the target language and does suit the specific intent of the target language. The ethics of translation suggest a via media that the translation should adhere to the form and content of source language to the possible extent and create such a text which is intelligible to the readers in the target language as well. W. Benjamin opines that “instead of resembling the meaning of the original must lovingly and in detail incorporate the original’s mode of signification, thus making both the original and the translation recognizable as fragments of a great language...” (79). Other critics like D. Robinson feels that meaning of the text from original language should not be altered in translation. But this type translation is refuted by critics like M. Tymoczko, as the translator may take liberty in translation to suit various contexts in the target language. Ethics

largely focus on behavior, limits and validity of things. Consequently, it is adduced that the translator should try to understand the assumptions of the author himself.

Divergent views have been advanced with regard to the nature of the ethics of translation. Some view it as the “most intimate act of reading”. The westerners view translation as a means of communication and intercultural transfer of content from one language to the other. Studies have indicated that a fine balance should be maintained between the traditional way of translation and the functional view of translation in the target culture. Lefevere examines the influence of translation in the light of the cultural and the social environment of the target language. In view of the complexity of concept of translation ethics, different strategies and processes are followed. Thus, functionalist and descriptive studies are involved to answer such an inquisition as who translates what text in to which target language and what is the validity of such a translation and for whom is it meant etc.,. Some critics went on to study “how translations from Greek and Latin in Victorian Britain contributed successfully to the concept of a national culture” (Osborne, 2001).

It is presumed that translation takes place in cultural view point of a single text related to the target culture and so the translators are deemed to be ‘persons-in-the-culture’ of the target language. According to Tymoczko, “the place of the translator can be taken within the TL culture, SL culture or in a different culture, as in the case when German philologists rendered some literature written originally in Irish into English, then published it in series written in German” (qtd. in Alwazna, 53). In a similar way, S. Simon sees “the domain of translation as the reach of a person with multicultural backgrounds; it is the hybrid place which exists between the realities of different national cultures, though has no role to play in affecting any of them” (qtd. in Alwazna, 53). Spivak and Mehrez feel that the

translators in postcolonial bilingualism create such a language which is placed 'in between' the source language and the target language. Thus, the place of a translator is viewed as a 'speaker' positioned between two different communities. It can be deduced that translation is 'space' between two different languages.

Criteria for Translation

The criteria or the norms of translation serve as good mechanism and guiding principles to the translators. These norms impact the behavior of a translator socially and psychologically. They make a translation take a proper shape as expected by the society. Such a transmission is seen to uphold the cultural aptness of a translation. The norms also guide a translator to behave and act as demanded in a specific setting. According to Toury, the norms of translation finally fabricate the text of translation and serve as guiding principles in shaping the text in the target language. The principles of translation are looked at as subtle instruments that support the translators in carrying out the tasks within the social cultural ethos and make a translation an authentic version.

The norms, ethics are a prerequisite for an accomplishment of valid and legitimate text in the target text. They build trust and extricate the misconceptions between the translator and the targeted group. According to Pym, translation is a "cross-cultural transaction" which aims at achieving a collective favor of all those associated with translation, which fosters intercultural and interlingual communication. However, it was observed that the translators didn't adhere to the criteria and they were seen to exercise their discretion and intervening and restating the original text in a different way and this led to the subjectivity on the part of the translator. But critics feel that translation ethics must be followed so as to generate respect for the source text and content and allow the target reader to listen to the voice of the original author

Strategies Adopted in Translation

Translation may lead to many thorny issues for translator. Ethical issues are a major problem in cross-cultural translation. Issues like translating sensitive and offensive texts, interpreting and negotiating the text etc. The common good, responsibility, integrity, justice and the rights of the people should be borne in mind while translating a cross-cultural text. Translation of cultural terms is very difficult. Research has proved that a flawless transcription of a culturally grounded text is inconceivable. It is observed that the translators follow a variety of strategies and procedures to solve the issue of connecting the cross cultures in translation. These strategies are intended to produce ideal solutions to the problems of translation. These strategies are meant to produce a language which can describe other languages. According to Vinay and Dalbarnet, adaptation, claque, equivalence, modulation, borrowing, literal translation and transposition are the best known strategies of translation.

Adaptation is a procedure in which the situation described from source language is not understood in the target language. As such, the translator creates something which is a situational equivalent. In other words, it refers to cultural element from SL that is replaced by a different term in the TL. This strategy is being used in advertising and children's story telling. The primary intention of adapting is to "domesticating" the cultural terms in TL. When a term is used directly without translation in the TL, then IT is called barrowing, which is usually resorted to when an equivalent term in TL is not available or when the translator wishes to have some rhetoric and different impression in translation. Such a borrowing is "pure" or "naturalized". Borrowings loans are considered as means of augmenting the translation of a language. For instance, Wagner's observation about English that "it is the only language whose elements are seventy-five percent of foreign origin" (qtd.. in Guerra, 8) is apt. Calque is a procedure which

translates a lexical or structural in a word for word manner.

It is considered a special type of borrowing as translator adapts the word from source language to target language straightforward. In the strategy of compensation, an element from the source language is used in another place in the target language to balance the semantic loses of translation. The procedure of condensation involves the process of synthesizing of the unnecessary elements from SL to TL. It is usually used in translating the cultural terms. Description is used to replace a term or expression of SL with an explanation in the TL. The strategy of equivalence is employed to describe the same standpoint of SL with a different structure all together in the TL. Explication is used to describe something in TL which is not expressed and implied in the SL. In the technique of generalization, more generic terms are employed in order to ward off any ambiguity in translation. In the similar fashion, the strategies of literal translation, modulation, particularization, substitution, transposition, variation are adopted to face various problems which arise in the course of translation.

Ethical and Cultural Challenges in Translation and Solutions

Translation is not merely the process of changing words from one language into another. It is also a process of transferring ideas, values, beliefs, and cultural meanings. Therefore, translators often face ethical and cultural challenges while translating a text. Ethical issues arise when a translator has to decide how faithfully the original text should be represented. Cultural issues arise when certain words, expressions, customs, or traditions of one culture do not have exact equivalents in another culture. One of the major ethical concerns in translation is accuracy. Translators have a responsibility to convey the original meaning without distortion. Any omission,

addition, or alteration may change the author's intended message. At the same time, translators must be sensitive to the target audience. This creates a balance between faithfulness to the source text and readability in the target language.

Cultural differences also present significant challenges. Every language reflects the culture of its speakers. Idioms, proverbs, religious references, social practices, and historical events may be easily understood by readers of the source language but may confuse readers from another cultural background. For example, a proverb in one language may not have a direct equivalent in another language. In such situations, the translator must find an appropriate way to communicate the intended meaning. To overcome these difficulties, translators adopt various strategies. One common strategy is cultural adaptation, where a culturally specific term is replaced with a similar concept familiar to the target audience. Another strategy is explanation or paraphrasing, in which the translator provides additional information to make the meaning clear. Footnotes and translator's notes may be added to explain cultural references without changing the original meaning. Ethical translation requires honesty, responsibility, and respect for both the source text and the target readers. Translators should avoid personal bias and ensure that the original message is represented accurately. At the same time, they should make the text understandable and meaningful for the target audience.

Conclusion

Translation has emerged as a chosen profession since times immemorial. Despite that, it still remains a difficult task for a translator to handle the poetic texts with cultural heritage. The 'cultural gaps' persist across cultural languages; it becomes an uphill task for the translator to bring out successful translation. As Nida and Taber opine, we can understand that anything can be transmitted

from any given language to any other language. Hence ‘objectivity’ is possible despite the differences in cultures. To conclude in the words of Levine, that a balance between domesticating and the TL text would be the most appropriate and to a certain extent, “a translation must subvert the original” considering “what is lost and can be gained in crossing the language barrier” (qtd. in Guerra, 23).

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