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CONCEPTS OF TRANSLATION IN THE DIGITAL AGE: WHAT TRANSLATORS AND INTERPRETERS NEED TO KNOW

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Abstract

*Translation is ultimately a human activity which enables human beings to exchange ideas and thoughts regardless of the different tongues involved. It plays a key role in exchanging information between languages. The activity of translation has a long-standing tradition and has been widely practiced throughout history, but in our rapidly changing world its role has become of paramount importance. Recent trends, notably globalization, and advances in technology have influenced international communication and translation. The study of proper principles of translation is termed as **Translation Theory**. This theory, based on a solid foundation on understanding of how languages work, recognizes that different languages encode meaning in different forms, yet guides translators to find appropriate ways of preserving meaning, while using the most appropriate forms of each language. Nowadays, technological advances, which have transformed the working conditions of professional translators and researchers and have spawned new forms of translation, have also produced new areas of research, some more automatic. The invention of the internet, together with the new technological developments in communication and digital materials, has increased cultural exchanges between nations. This leads translators to look for ways to cope with these changes and look for more practical techniques that enable them to translate more and waste less. This paper looks at the concepts of translation in digital age: what translators and interpreters need to know.*

Keywords: *Concepts, Professional translators, Interpreters, Technological Advances, Translation.*

1.0 Introduction

Translation refers to carrying the meaning of a text from one language to another. This process involves interpretation of meaning of the text and producing the same meaning in another language. Translation is a legitimate offspring of the phenomenon of language, since originally, when humans spread over the earth, their languages differed and they needed a means through which people speaking a certain language (tongue) would interact with others who spoke a different language. Again, different languages give different ways to look at the world but translation provides us with the opportunity to explore and interact with these different views of the world. This means that inside or between languages, human communication equals translation.

A theory should be a coherent and integrated set of propositions used as principles for explaining a class of phenomena. It is an explanation of a phenomenon, the perception of system and order in something observed.

Translation theory is therefore the systematic study of the process of moving from the original text to the mental representation and how it differs from the original text. It includes principles for translating figurative language, dealing with lexical mismatches, rhetorical questions, inclusion of cohesion markers, and many other topics that are crucial to good translation.

The purpose of translation theory is to reach an understanding of the process undertaken in the act of translation and not to provide a set of norms for effecting the perfect translation. This goes to say that a satisfactory theory should help in the recognition of elements which have not been recognized, and as such should be more than a list of rules-of-thumb by which translators have generally succeeded in reproducing reasonably adequate renderings of such texts. A theory should also provide a measure of predictability about the degree of success to be expected from the use of certain principles, given the particular expectations of the

audience, the nature of the content, the amount of information carried by the form of the discourse, and the circumstances of use.

One of the earliest attempts to establish a set of major rules or principles to be referred to in literary translation was made by French translator and humanist Etienne Dolet, who in 1540 formulated the following fundamental principles of translation ("La Manière de Bien Traduire d'une Langue en Autre"), usually regarded as providing rules-of-thumb for the practicing translator. However, Beaugrande warns "It is inappropriate to expect that a theoretical model of translation should solve all the problems a translator encounters. Instead, it should formulate a set of strategies for approaching problems and coordinating the different aspects entailed".

Translation theory is relevant to translator's problems, and not only for academic purposes, but also to the practice of a professional translator, since it can "[...] offer a set of conceptual tools [that] can be thought of as aids for mental problem-solving" (Chesterman, in Chesterman and Wagner, 2002, p.7). Theory and practice are indissolubly linked. Consequently, it is suggested that conventionally, in order to perform their jobs successfully. Translation according to Zohre Owji (2013), is a complicated task, during which the meaning of the source-language text should be conveyed to the target-language readers. In other words, translation is encoding the meaning and form in the target language by means of the decoding meaning and form of the source, translators therefore, should meet three important requirements; they should be familiar with:

- The source language
- The target language
- The subject matter

In translation practice, a translator should be able to apply the methods of translation appropriately and should also be able to tackle the problem of equivalence. On his part as regards the importance of equivalence in translation acts Catford (1965) states that "the central problem of translation practice is that of finding target language equivalents".

In translation practice therefore, the translator always aims at producing the exact meaning of the source text in the target language hence the focus is on the message. The importance of translating meaningfully from the source language to the target language is made obvious in the words of Confucius as cited by Asobele (1984:39). According to him, translating in a good language is important and:

If language is not correct, then what is said is not what is meant, if what is said is not what is meant, then what ought to be done remains undone, morals and acts deteriorate; if morals and acts deteriorate, justice will go astray; if justice goes astray; the people will go about in helpless confusion. Hence there must be no arbitrariness in what is said. This matters above everything.

The need for the study of techniques of translation is highly recommendable. However, it has been established that being bilingual or polyglot could not make someone a professional translator and or interpreter; because they do not possess the technical know-how or the methodological know-how which is necessary to function effectively on the professionally translation job. The earliest translators and interpreters despite that they did not have much need for methodological and technical know-how and produced fairly good translations because the texts were not technical texts or specialized texts unlike modern sciences, engineering, medicine, economy- taxation, stock exchange banking, products of contemporary digital age, legal matters- international agreements, contract agreements and of course, development in Information Communication Technology ICT which has vastly transformed every sphere of life and permeated all human actions and endeavors. Undoubtedly, all aspects mentioned above attract specific technicality.

In another word, today, the need to acquire some methodology skills has arisen as translation has gone beyond day-to-day activities to include texts like novels, plays and poems and technical texts like scientific

texts, texts in the area of environmental studies like geographical texts, texts on architecture, texts on urban and regional planning, texts in the area of economy like texts on banking and finance etc. The translation of a text has principles guiding it. One does not translate haphazardly to avoid coming up with a semantically and syntactically disjointed translation. Vinay et Darbenett (1977) mentioned two techniques of translation: direct and indirect translation. There are three types of direct translation; Literal, Loaning and Calque. The indirect or oblique technique includes: Transposition, Modulation, Equivalence and Adaptation.

The wide range of theories and the great diversity of problems in translation have been treated by a number of persons interested in translation theory and practice, eg. Güttinger (1963), Vázquez Ayora (1977), and Wilss (1988). Some professional translators however, take considerable pride in denying that they have any theory of translation- they just translate. In reality, however, all persons engaged in the complex task of translating possess some type of underlying or covert theory, even though it may be still very embryonic and described just as being "faithful to what the author was trying to say". Based on this, our paper highlights that instead of no theories of translation, there are a multiplicity of such theories, even though they are not always stated in terms of a full-blown theory of why, when, and how to translate.

2.0 Translation: Some Conceptual Definitions

According to Adedimeji & Ayuba (2012:235), the definition of translation is "central" but controversial and "differs radically". The New Encyclopedia Britannica defined it as "rendering what is expressed in one language or set of symbols into another language or set of symbols". Lack of understanding of the nature of challenges in translation has however made many to erroneously think that translation is an all-comer's affair. It is quite misleading to think that what is required in the act of translation is

just the ability to read, write and speak in the working languages. On the contrary, it is not everybody that is endowed with the high degree of critical intelligence and psychological awareness required for the process of decoding, encoding and transferring a message from a particular source to a target language. Before a person can be a translator or interpreter, he must be experienced in the art of translating/interpreting (language switch). Until this ability to switch ideas freely from one language to another is acquired, the translator cannot function effectively. Ajunwa (1991:16) sees a translation practitioner as "one who has acquired the necessary skills through his training and experience and in fact makes a living in translating". Continuing, Ajunwa (1991:16) quoting Nida says that "....translators should know both the source and the receptor (target) language, and should be familiar with the subject matter and should have some facility in the receptor language". At this point we consider it pertinent to look at some definitions of translation.

Translation has been defined in various ways by different translators, linguists and language experts.

Catford (1965:20) defines it as "the replacement of textual materials in one language (SL) by equivalent material in another language (TL)".

Peter Newmark (1981:7) says "Translation is an exercise which consists in the attempt to replace a written message in one language by that same message in another language.

Nida and Taber (1969:12), said "translation, consists in reproducing in the receptor's language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message.

According to Susan Bassnet McGuire (1980:14), translation implies: "the rendering of a source language (SL) text to a target (TL) text so as to ensure that:

- a. The surface meaning of the two will be approximately similar and,
- b. The structure of the SL will be preserved as closely as possible, but not so closely that the TL will be seriously distorted.

Ajunwa (1991) quoted George Mounin, a French translation theoretician as having said that "translation involves the passage from one cultural world into another". In his own contribution, Ajunwa defined it as "the rendering in writing of a source language text into the target language, with a view to preserving as much as possible, the source message and style".

Okeke (1995), translates Darbelnet's French rendition of translation as "it can be said that translation is an operation which consists in transferring from one language to another all elements of meaning of a passage and only these elements, while ensuring that they retain in the target language their relative importance as well as their relative tonality, and also taking into account the relative difference presented by the culture to which the source language and the target language correspond respectively".

With the many definitions of translation already given and other definitions, it is clear that the concept is as varied as the perspectives of those trying to define it and as Ojeaga (2001:344) sees it "as a means of communication necessitated by cultural contacts and interactions between speakers of different languages". One can deduce that the common denominator is just the transfer of a message from one language to another, creating the same reaction in the mind of the target language reader as presented by the source language. Since the world is made up of separate speech communities and cultural entities, certainly we cannot do without translation.

3.0 The Nature of Texts

Each text to be translated has its peculiarities. All texts are not the same in nature. On this foundation, text topologists assert that different text-types require in the process of translating not only different transfer methods, but also different translation equivalence criteria. Texts can be classified into three categories according to their nature. These include: general or pragmatic, literary and scientific/technical texts.

3.1 General or pragmatic translation

These texts are texts whose language is descriptive and informative. The language is not too technical or literary. Examples include a general text, magazine or newspaper, administrative, commercial, political, religious, propaganda, etc. Translation here is almost perfect.

3.2 Literary translation

Texts in this category are usually flowery, subjective, and connotative; it occasionally flooded with camouflage for the author's message which is all laced with figures of speech.

3.3 Scientific/technical translation

These are texts in which the technical and scientific language level is so high that only professionals in that particular field can comprehend it. This differs greatly from pragmatic or literary translations. These texts treat particular domains with the given technical language of the domain.

3.4 Good and bad translations

Just like communication can be said to be successful or unsuccessful, effective or ineffective, translation can also be said to be good or bad.

3.5 Good translation

The essence of a good translation is to give the true image, thought, reality and original poetic intention and its true qualities. This is what would constitute its faithfulness to the original text. As Forest puts it:

A good translation is one which fulfils the same purpose in the new language as in that in which it was written.

Godspeed as cited by Ojeaga (2001:347) says:

The best translation is not that which keeps forever between the reader's mind, the fact that this is a translation, not an original English composition but one that makes that reader forget that it is a translation at all and makes him feel that he

is looking into the ancient writer's mind, as he would look into that of the contemporary.

A translation is then good when it presents in the receptor language the tonality of the source language. However, Julius Zulawski puts it:

translation is accepted as good when it gives you in different languages a true image of the thoughts, realities and poetic intention of an original, and at the same time reveals itself as an equally integral, genuine piece of work.

J.B. Philip warns thus:

The test of a real translation is that it should not read like translation at all...a translation into English should avoid translator's English.....

Maryamu Danbaba supports the view that:

A good translation must be accurate, clear, and natural. For a good translation to be marketable, the translation must communicate the meaning of the original message to the new hearers, which is to the people whom the translation is being made to.

In respect of determining a good translation, four criteria have been suggested by Donald Buchanan as cited by Ojeaga (2001:347):

- (a) Rendering faithfully the sense of the text;
- (b) Conserving the style and tone of the original;
- (C) Not making any incorrect grammatical construction;
- (d) Expressing oneself in a language which does not allow suspicion in any manner, of the fact that it is a translation

As far as translation quality assessment is concerned, Adedimeji & Ayuba (2012:250) rightly points out that: the object of translation is to make the knowledge, insights and wisdom embedded in one language text available to the speakers of the other language so that knowledge will be a common property. From the discussion, especially those concerning a good translation; it is revealed that a good translation takes all formalities of the original text, that is, all the formalities of

the departure language should be reflected in the target language.

3.6 Bad Translation

Bad translation is then simply one which is lacking in all the qualities stated above.

4.0 Theories of Translation

Translation practice involves the appropriate application of the translation theories for one to produce semantically and syntactically jointed expressions. Ajunwa, (1991:25) suggests four stages in practice. These include;

a. **Assimilation-** involves the thorough reading and comprehension of the entire text. The aim of this is for the translator to understand the shades of meaning as well as the construction of the text.

b. **Conversion-** conversion of the source language text into the target language and involves the thematic and stylistic analysis of the whole text.

c. **Drafting-** drafting and conversion go together. They take place simultaneously because drafting involve the initial writing down of the entire source language text in the target language.

d. **Checking-** this is the final stage and involves three stages that must be thoroughly carried out. The first stage is *objective re-reading*. This is the comparison of the translation with the original text, with a view to assessing its degree of closeness to the source text in terms of the message and style. The second stage is the *critical re-reading* which involves a careful examination with a view to removing all the grammatical errors. The final stage is the *re-reading* stage which is not done by the translator himself but by a reviser who must be a skilled translator. His job is mainly to proof-read the translation in order to correct and improve on it.

5.0 Types of Translation

There are three main types of translation:

- i) **Intra-lingual Translation:** this involves

rewording a text or interpretation of a verbal sign by means of a verbal sign in the same language. Intra-lingual translation does not involve two languages. Example- translating from Pidgin English into English language or vice-versa

(i) **Inter-lingual Translation:** this is the translation of a verbal sign from one language to the other. This involves two languages. For example, translating from English into French or Igbo

(ii) **Inter-semiotics (Transmutation):** this involves the interpretation or translation of a verbal sign by means of a non-verbal sign or vice versa. Example, English language (verbal sign) to Music code or Road sign and vice versa

6.0 AN OVERVIEW OF TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Before the advent of spoken words, humans had to depend on signs, symbols and basic sounds in order to communicate with each other. Gradually, these sounds came to represent specific objects or events, ultimately evolving into a complex pattern of vocal expression called speech. Charles Darwin, in his controversial work *The Descent of Man*, speculated that human language evolved from birdsong. Some other scientists have added veracity to that speculation. Today, language has come to be an invaluable part of any culture- no matter how evolved or primitive that culture or language might seem to be.

The 21st century has witnessed a revolution caused by the rapid development in communication and information technologies. The rate of scientific and technological advancement in the world today owes so much to the dissemination of scientific and technological information through translation and interpretation. The rapid developments in science and technology, with people's increased demand and need to get the message across, have had major effects on the expansion of the study of language. People have to access knowledge to

keep pace with the latest developments. In such scenario, translation and interpretation, which play a major role in the language of any country, become even more important.

Translation not only increases the productive capacity or skill of the individual but also his earning power. It gives him a sense of well-being as well as capacity to absorb new ideas, increases his social interaction, gives him access to improved health and provides several more intangible benefits. For example, when doing business globally, the key element is mutual understanding. This is made possible generally by professional translators and interpreters. Without mutual understanding, communications technology would not be much use at facilitating conversation between parties who do not share the same language. The role of translation and interpretation in enhancing mutual cooperation among the different peoples of the world and helping in national development has also been highlighted by many (Anyabuikwe, 2015:13, Efika and Okeogu, 2000:324, Ojeaga, 2000:345, Okeke, 2013:76).

Translation originally developed to fill a sore need that plagued every nation that wanted to trade or even communicate with another. Statistically, there are about 6,800 to 6,900 languages spoken in the world today, of which a significant portion have unique scripts and many have shared scripts based on the origins of the language in question. Nearly every culture in the world has interactions with every other culture. This goes to say that there is incalculable number of translation requirements every second of every minute of every day around the world. It is no wonder that translation is a dominant part of intercultural interaction.

The translation industry is very different now than it was some years ago. In a fast-paced world governed by technological change, it is understandable that globally operating businesses should want to use translations delivered quickly but without any reduction in quality. In the contemporary digital age, translation therefore, in increasing efficiencies by introducing more technology is just part of the full picture. The key words

are:-

- * Machine translation and translation optimization
- * Collaborative translation and crowdsourcing
- * Interoperability of translation tools and resource
- * Automated real-time translation
- * Spoken translation
- * Language and translation business innovation
- * Community/voluntary translation
- * Translation memory and language data sharing

7.0 THEORY & PRACTICE OF TRANSLATION / INTERPRETATION: RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Technology has broken down the barriers of time and space, enabling global business via constant connectivity. Over the two decades we have witnessed the enormous growth of information technology with the accompanying advantages of speed, visual impact and ease of use. Because of the use of new technologies, processes have accelerated in all fields of human activity. Translation is no exception. For more than half a century, busy translators have been relying on information technologies to make tight deadlines and deliver high-volume translation services. In the digital, translation providers can take advantage of automated translation (AT) or computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools, in order to increase their productivity. As such, translators use tools such as lexicons and terminology databases to find the right words quickly, and can use a range of tools such as computer-assisted translation to speed up their work and improve consistency. This technology can't yet replace a human translator, but instead helps to complete jobs more quickly and accurately than would otherwise be possible.

The following are the most important computer tools in the translator's workplace, from the most elementary to the most complex:

- **Electronic Dictionaries, Glossaries**

and Terminology Databases:

Electronic dictionaries are available in several forms: as software that can be installed in the computer, as CD-ROMS and most importantly through the internet.

- **Concordances:** They are word-processing programs that produce a list of all the occurrences of a string of letters within a defined corpus with the objective of establishing patterns that are otherwise not clear.
- **On-line Bilingual Texts:** A bilingual corpus normally consists of a source text plus its translation, previously carried out by human translator. This type of document, which is stored electronically, is called a bi-text. It facilitates later translations by supporting ready solutions to fixed expressions, thus automating part of the process. The growth of the translation market has led to increased interest on the part of companies and international organizations in collections of texts or corpora in different languages stored systematically online and available for immediate consultation.
- **Translation Memories:** Translation Memories represent one of the most important applications of on-line bilingual texts, going back to the beginning of the 1980s with the pioneering TSS system of ALPS, later Alpnet. Translation memory programs are based on accumulation and storing of knowledge that is recycled according to need, automating the use of terminology and access to dictionaries. A translation memory can be used in two ways: in interactive mode and in automatic mode.

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, translation is important because it facilitates multilingual communication and allows people from around the world to better

understand one another culturally, economically and socially. However, different aspects of modern life have led to the need for more efficient methods of translation. The translation market has changed dramatically in the last decade because there has been an increase in demand of translation services. The sharing of information is at every level of the human experience today, Skype, face book, create video, etc. "According to UNICEF more people die from lack of knowledge than from diseases. People in poor countries are simply unable to access global knowledge in a language they understand. Modern translation technology may be bringing this knowledge closer to the bottom three billion....."Translators therefore envision a world where knowledge knows no language barriers.

At the present time the demand for translations is not satisfied because there are not enough human translators. Furthermore, because companies want to get their products onto the shelves in all corners of the world as quickly as possible, and because electronic documents such as web pages often contain content that needs to be updated frequently, deadlines for completing translation jobs seem to be growing ever shorter. Translation technologies have provided the answers. In this paper, we have been able to establish that despite a number of important treatments of the basic principles and procedures of translation, no full-scale theory of translation now exists. In fact, it is anomalous to speak of "theories of translation", since all that has been accomplished thus far are important series of insightful perspectives on this complex undertaking. To this, we contribute that translators/Interpreters should pay more attention to this all important aspect of translation profession "theories of translation" and the new technologies and learn how to use them to their maximum potential as a means to increased productivity and quality improvement.

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