

Translation: Meaning, Theories and Historical Survey

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Received May 1, 2015

Accepted May 12, 2015

ABSTRACT

In the global world, translation has a vital role to play. Translation has emerged as a field of study also. Translation of literary pieces from one language to another has benefitted the reader. Previously because of the language barriers literature of a language was not accessible to the readers. But translation has made it easier for the readers to understand the text. It is very important that first we understand the theories and meaning of translation. The research paper focuses on various definitions of translation. At the same time it deals with different theories of translation.

Key words : Translation, Theories.

To define translation specifically is, if not impossible, but it is surely very difficult. It may be explained as the process to re-create the work from one language to another language. Here the form doesn't get changed, only the language changes. The great translator and theoretician, Eugene A. Nida defines:

"Translation consists in producing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent to the message of the source language, first in meaning and secondly in style".

The definition does point out the importance of finding the closest equivalence. By "natural" we mean, says Nida, that the equivalent forms should not be "foreign" either in form (except of course for such inevitable matters as proper names) or meaning. That is to say, a good translation should not reveal its non-native

source. However, it is not always possible that equivalence in both meaning and style can always be retained. When therefore one must be abandoned for the sake of the other, according to Nida, the meaning must have priority over the stylistic forms.

Looking to it from another angle, we can say that the process of translation is mainly a process of communication between different languages. About the nature of this communication process, different views have been expressed; of which some deserve special attention.

G.Gopinathan and S.Kandaswami have given an analysis about nature of translation as following.

"Dr. Johnson's famous definition "to translate is to change into another language, retaining the

sense"- was considered an all inclusive definition. But A.H.Smith, a modern critic, has suggested that a modification is necessary in this definition because in all sorts of translation, there is always a possibility of some effect of the original being lost. He has modified this definition as "to translate is to change in another language, retaining as much of the sense as one can "Scholars, generally agree that each act of translation involves some loss of meaning and this "basic loss of meaning is on a continuum between over translation and under translation".

However, there is divergence of opinion among scholars whether translation is the transference of meaning alone, almost all scholars are agreed on the significant aspect of meaning in translation. Translation is a kind of cultural bridge between languages. Cultural Anthropologists, like Malinowski and others have stressed the socio cultural significance of translation. Each language has got a special cultural environment, which is formed by the historical, anthropological, social and geographical aspects, traditions etc. in which the speakers of a language lives. In each language, there are such numerous words, which have got long cultural background and associations. Malinowski's theory of "context of situation" is highly useful in the study of socio-cultural problems in translation, says G.Gopinathan in his article "The Nature and Problems of Translation". Here, the term "context of situation" implies the total cultural context of the word of a particular language. And the term

'culture' embraces the entire way of life, tradition, social and geographical background etc. of the speakers of the source language. Translation in Malinowski's words, implies the "unification of cultural context" and wherever a cultural unity is lacking, the translation of words having reference to particulars uses in a limited field is more difficult to achieve by means of a single lexical equivalents and requires at best circumlocutions and often more lengthy explanations themselves in part recruiting the relevant context of situations. Above this, the other critics like Firth and M.A.K. Halliday have also stressed the need for considering the total context of the text in literary translation.

As a Russian Scholar Mednikova rightly points out, "translation is a way of commenting." We find that translation, especially of literature, needs an 'interpretative transfer' Roman Jakobson also says that, "translation proper or inter lingual translation is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs in some other language." James Holmes also reaches the conclusion that "all translation is an act of critical interpretation".

It means, translation as an act of interpretation involves creative approach to the literary text. No two translations of the same text can be identical. The cultural, socio-semantic, aesthetic and stylistic aspects of literary piece of works are effectively translated only by interpretative techniques like substitution and comprehension

J.C.Catford in his book *A linguistic Theory of Translation* defines translation as "the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL)." In explaining the terms "textual material" and "translation equivalence" Calford gives primary importance to levels of language viz. phonology, graphology, grammars and lexis; and further defines translation categories in terms of extent levels and ranks. Even though Calford indicates the importance of meaning in translation, in his treatment of the whole process of translation, meaning becomes a main or secondary aspect and the formal aspects of language becomes the central theme of the study. So, it seems necessary to re-interpret his definition in the light of the views of other linguists like Nida who give primary importance to meaning, and only secondary importance to style, in translation.

The view expressed by Nida (which is quoted at the beginning of this chapter) is more useful for a comprehensive analysis of the process of translation. In short, as Tancock says, the translator's task is twofold: first, he must translate the exact meaning of the original texts; secondly, he has to give his reader some impression of the flavour of original text.

The process of translation is nicely equated to the process of transmigration of soul by G. Gopinathan, in his book *The problems of Translation*. He compares this process with the Indian traditional concept of "Parkaya Pravesha" entering of the soul into another body

of the 'Metempsychosis' of Pythagoras. The German philosopher, Schopenhauer (1891) maintained that in translation no less labor and genius is needed than "transference of soul". This concept may be useful in developing a synthesis of the various views discussed earlier, as translation is the unification of cultures, or as interpretations.

In the context of translation, meaning is the inner content or soul of the text which is being transferred, and style is the outer aspect in which meaning is clothed. Style can be divided into the levels of phonology, word, morphology and syntax. When translation is performed, the meaning or soul is mainly transferred. The style of the SL text at the various levels is replaced by the levels of style in the TL. But a peculiar aspect of translation is such that the traits of the style or body of the SL text are also transferred to the body or the style of the TL text along with the soul or meaning.

In this way, the "metempsychosis" of translation is the transference and unification of the soul and body, meaning and style from one culture to another culture. This process demands a 'recreation' and in this way translation is the interpretation of the spirit of the original text in the context of a new language and its culture. The total structure of language itself is dual or dialectical. In other words, it is a combination of semantic and stylistic structures. Hence, we can interpret translation as a dual process of transference of semantic structure of the SL text

into that of TL text and replacement of stylistic structure of the SL text by that of TL.

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**The only thing worse than being blind is having sight
but no vision.**

~ Helen Keller