A comparative Study between Translation Problems and Translation Errors

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Abstract: Translator training has been a field in Translation Studies that has known enormous development for the last decades aiming to instruct future translators by providing them with a solid theoretical background and helping them to improve multiple translation competences. The present paper focuses on the study of an area in translator training that bears a specific significance to the practice of translation, namely, translation problems and their close relationship to translation errors. The research starts by making the crucial distinction between translation problems and translation difficulties and it moves on by describing Christiane Nord's pedagogical approach to translation problems and their classification into four major categories. Afterwards, the research focuses on the nature and types of translation errors. Finally, the paper ends by suggesting some proposals that would help future translators both identify and avoid translation errors.

Keywords: translator training, translation problems, translation errors, functional approach, hierarchy of translation errors.

INTRODUCTION

One of the areas of reflection in translator training that affects the translation process itself regards the translator's competence to locate, analyze and, finally, to resolve the translation problems that he is likely to encounter when assigned a translation work. A significant distinction that should be made well in advance is that between translation problems and translation difficulties. According to Nord (1991: 158), what distinguishes them is the element of subjectivity; more specifically, translation problems are objective in nature and, thus, they should not be identified with translation difficulties, that is, the subjective difficulties that a professional translator or a trainee will possibly encounter during the translation process which are due to inadequate language, cultural or translation competences. In this sense, translation problems will always remain problems even if a translator has been taught how to solve them both fast and effectively. By comparing between features of the source text and those of the target text it is made clear which information and linguistic elements are likely to maintain and which need to be adapted according to the demands of the translation target.

METHODOLOGY

1. Christiane Nord's model

The research methodology explained is a theoretical exploration adopting Christiane Nord's (2018) pedagogical approach toward translation problems. Nord approaches translation problems for pedagogic purposes by categorizing them in four main types: pragmatic, cultural, linguistic and text-specific problems. As it is strongly believed in Translation Studies, each translation process makes up an act of intermediating of circumstances between the source and the target text. Pragmatic problems raise from the differences of circumstances between the two texts and they can be identified by comparing a number of textual factors such as the recipient, medium, time, place, motive, source-text function. In Nord's words (1991: 158) translation problems are due to the differences between the original text and the production situation of the translation text. Given that pragmatic problems are present in every translation work, they are characterized as generalised regardless of languages, civilizations involved or its direction (from or to mother tongue). Consequently, they are considered to be as the most significant problems that need to be handled at the initial stage of translator training.

Each civilization is characterized by its own habits, norms and conventions. Cultural problems result from differences in norms and conventions that characterize both the verbal and non-verbal behaviour between the two civilizations involved. The specific problems are related to all types of conventions and they are met in each translation work. However, due to the fact that cultural problems depend on the specific civilizations or the cultural teams that are involved, they are likely not to be that important in all cases.

Translation problems can also occur due to structural differences in the vocabulary, syntax and the stylistic features between the two texts. Some of these problems are met only in specific language pairs as it is the case with "false friends", that is words which are similar in form but different in meaning (the English word "sensible" is false friend to the French word "sensible") as well as in cases where in the target language there are more than terms corresponding to one specific

word of the source text (the English word "river" corresponds both to the French words "fleuve" and "rivière") or words for which there is not its equivalent in the target text. Comparative linguistics and stylistics can provide valuable contribution to solving such problems.

Text-specific problems are those related to specific difficulties and intra-textual characteristics of the source-text. As the solutions that are offered in such translation problems cannot be generalised the translator must be prepared to use both his intuition and his creativity.

2. A Functional Hierarchy of Translation Problems

In traditional translation classes, students start from the language components of the source text by transferring the text sentence by sentence, phrase by phrase or even word for word. This results in a translation product the quality of which can differ depending on the translator's competences. Afterwards, the produced text is adopted from a stylistic point of view so that it is acceptable according to the communicative circumstances that it serves to the target text. This is a bottom-up analytical procedure that starts from the superficial language structures of the text, it moves on with the pragmatic dimension of the text. It is obvious that such an approach which depends to a large extent on the translator's stylistic preferences as well as on his language and translation competences, entails many disadvantages both in the translation practice and translator training.

At the bottom-up analytical procedure, translation is seen as a process of code alternation, during which lexical and syntactic equivalences play the most important role. Students tend to stay as close as they can to the structure of the source text which results in language interferences and errors even when translating to their mother tongue. At the same time, they have difficulties in realizing how the text works as a whole, as a communicative event, and this results in taking intuitional decisions that cannot be verbally justified. Thus, the translator cannot neither explain his decisions effectively nor justify his choices to the client.

Christiane Nord suggests a top-down analytical procedure in the framework of a functional approach to translation where the first task of the translator is to clarify and decide on the intended function of the text to be translated. The next methodological step is to make the distinction between the functional elements of the source-text which are necessary to be reproduced as they are and those which need to be adapted according to the recipient's level of knowledge, his expectations and his communicative needs. Finally, the type of translation defines whether and to what extent the translated text will have to be comply with the stylistic conventions of the source civilization or those of the target civilization. Only at this point and if it is considered to be necessary, it is time for the translator to be occupied with the differences between the two language systems. If, at that point, there are still more than possible solutions, the final decision will be taken in accordance with the translator's preferences always bearing in mind that he has to respect the function of the text to be translated.

Applications of this functional model in different text-types have shown that a wide range of translation problems must be handled in a generalised manner in the framework of a translator training programme. Professional translation education, especially, at university level, owes to facilitate trainees through the translation of certain text- types in order to obtain knowledge and practical competences that they will be able to use in all types of texts or translation works that they are likely to encounter in their professional life. This could be accomplished only through a systematic approach of the general problems in translation as they are described by a theoretical model. In fact, functional approach suggested by Nord (2018) could provide such a framework for the professional training of translators.

As far as the solutions to such problems are concerned, Pym (1992) believes that seldom exists the "right" or "wrong"; on the contrary, he talks about "binary" and "non-binary" mistakes. He claims that translation errors are usually interrelated by forming networks or hierarchies where the solution of a problem affects the handling of other problems.

3. Translation Errors and Translation Evaluation

The concept of translation problems could be applied for defining translation errors. It could also be used for evaluating "good" translations as "functional" or "adequate" for their goal. Presch (1980) believes that in foreign language teaching, "errors" can be defined as a deviation of a system of norms or regulations. Wills (1977) describes a

translation error as a violation of a norm at a certain language communication, furthermore, he explores translation as a means of learning a foreign language and not as a functional act.

According to the notion of functionalism, the concept of translation errors must be defined in relation to the purpose of the translation process or the translated text. This is a functional approach to translation errors that was introduced by Singrid Kupsch-Losereit (1985) and it was further developed by Christiane Nord (1991). Singrid Kupsch-Losereit defines translation error as violation of: a. the function of translation, b. the consistency of translation, c. The text-type or the text form, d. Language conventions, e. The particular conventions and circumstances that are related to each civilization and f. The language system.

Regarding translator training, this functional definition of translation error entails certain advantages since we cannot demand from trainees to have right from the start excellent knowledge both of the source and the target language. In addition, it is proven that trainees make fewer errors language when they possess exact knowledge of the communicative circumstances for which they translate such as to whom they address and for which purpose.

4. Functional Classification of Translation Errors

With the presupposition that a translation error is inadequate solution of translation problem, Nord (1991) suggests classifying translation errors into four main categories:

1. Pragmatic translation errors which result from inadequate solutions to pragmatic translation problems when, for instance, the translator does not take into enough consideration the recipient of the translated text.
2. Cultural translation errors which result from an ineffective decision regarding the reproduction or adaptation of cultural conventions.
3. Language translation errors which are caused by an inadequate translation when attention is centered on the language structures.
4. Specific translation errors related to each text which are connected to a particular translation problem of the original text.

Translation errors can be classified in hierarchical order at a top-down order that would also help in evaluating trainees progress in translator training. Pragmatic translation errors can be easily resolved

as long as common sense is used. However, the consequences of pragmatic translation errors are serious since the recipients tend not to realise that the information they receive is from a pragmatic point of view wrong. Thus, pragmatic errors are classified among the most serious errors that a translator can make. Pragmatic errors are not easy to identify by simply checking the target-text; they are usually recognized by individuals with particular translation competences in comparing the source to the target text.

As far as the cultural and language errors are concerned, their importance depends on the extent to which they affect the function of the target- text. If the aim of a translation task is to check students' language competences, then, language errors are considered to be more serious than cultural errors. On the contrary, if the aim of the translation task is to check students' cultural competences, then, cultural errors are considered to be more important in comparison to pragmatic errors.

RESULTS AND SUGGESTIONS
One of the main translator's types of competence is his ability to take a series of decisions and initiatives in order to solve translation problems and correct translation errors both quickly and effectively. His decisions will depend on the nature of these problematic areas and thus any effort to dictate certain rules would be aimless. However, in the framework of translator training instructors could provide students with guidelines that would help them to handle successfully any translation problems. These proposals could be summarised as follows:

- It is imperative that the translator conduct research at all levels that will help him avoid translation errors and find appropriate solutions to translation problems. Research will help him gain a better picture of the way the target language and civilization work and finally produce a quality product.
- Proofreading and self-evaluation of the produced text make up a necessary stage of the translation process that should not be skipped or underestimated. The assessment stage will provide the translator with the opportunity to identify errors and spot any inconsistencies in translation. It has been observed that a considerable number of mistakes could have been avoided if the translator made a complete and detailed proofreading.
- The use of quality assurance tools will also help translators identify errors at a fast rate and

decide which parts of the translated text are below the level of acceptance.

- Interpersonal relations and effective communication with colleagues make up another step in achieving a quality result. Cooperation with other professionals will help ensure the quality of the final translated text.

- Postediting of machine translation will help translators avoid inaccurate translations that are often produced by machine translation which apart from being a useful tool bears certain limitations that should be taken into account by the professional translator. Although machine translation has certainly made considerable advances, translation errors are inevitable even with the latest innovations in artificial intelligence.

- Systematic reading and analysis of the source text since the omission of this stage can result in serious translation errors. Given that the text bears certain meaning, the findings of the text analysis can be used in order to decide on the degree of difficulties of the source text. If the translator does not analyze the text thoroughly, it is likely that he makes a series of serious translation errors and produce a text that would lack meaning.

- The stylist character of the source text should be another basic parameter that must not be underestimated by the translator. By the term "style" we mean the way in which the translator decides to present the information of the text to the target audience. The question of style does not relate only to literary texts but other text types as well. The style of a text is not only a matter of language choices but also a process that depends on certain factors such as the writer of the source text, the recipient of the translated text and the subject matter of the text to be translated.

CONCLUSION

Translation problems and errors will always occur in the translation process and they are by all means unavoidable. It is suggested that translators receive a solid theoretical training that will help them, first, to identify and, then, to decide on the methodology and techniques that will help him handle these problematic areas in the pratique of translation. It is imperative that trainees acquire knowledge on certain theories of translation that are strongly related to the translation process such as functional theories which focus on the text to be translated, text- typology which stresses the text-type to be translated and the importance of determining the target readership in taking translation decisions. In addition, the role of a systematic reading and analysis of the source text should not be underestimated since it could lead to serious translation errors. The significance of the research stage in the process of translation makes up an important step that should be stressed since it could help future translators to avoid errors and produce quality translations that will sound natural to the target readership by conveying both the meaning and the message of the source text to the target text readers.

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