

Translators: Between language qualification and job requirements

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In this world of globalisation, translators are no longer language professionals, but learners of the new advances of technology and everyday discoveries imposed by the quicker process of change. Such faster-and-faster process of change has constrained translators to cope accordingly in order not to be buried under the hold of oblivion. A translator, who is not aware of such a change, and who is not up to date with these advances will lose his place and will no longer survive. In this context, the translator is constrained to have the background of some basics in technology and world-wide requirements in science. Such prerequisites are important for any translator whose vocation/will is to work in the field of translation industry.

This does not mean that he must specialize in whatever fields, but at least he has to know the rudimentary elements of the world of his interest. In other words, to have/get some background experience or education is essential but not all. Unlike the scientific or technological professions, there is no precise academic obligation for an

individual to be a translator. That is to say, we can be translator without being a degree holder of translation.

This booming translation industry needs from the individual to acquire two or more languages. The more the translator gets the basics of foreign languages, the more he sharpens his linguistic competence and further gets knowledge of the scientific discoveries, innovations and commercial necessities. “The need for terminology resources,” Rita Temmerman and Uus Knops state, “has increased due to the globalisation of specific, technical and business exchanges and the development of international communication networks.” (11)

Translation globalizes the local, and globalization is dialogically tied to translation, mainly in this world of technology, cultural diversity and linguistic varieties. In order to understand the languages and cultures of the nations with whom there is business and commercial exchange, many companies have turned to translators to render advertisements into the language of the client. The translator becomes a catalyst: he provides companies with information about other nations and exposes to these nations what the company has as products. In her article, “When And Why Should Translations Be Used?” Margnus Merkel maintains that:

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A large proportion of commercial translation is done within the field of technical documentation that is manuals, instructions, descriptions of machinery, etc...; a product cannot be shipped without technical documentation. (2)

The global market has made companies translate and label their products in many languages. “Globalisation,” Jeannette Orsted underlines, “means preparing a product to be launched in many different countries at the same time” (440). Therefore, translation has become necessary for such launching. Subsequently, the language industry has spread out at large. Translation employers have become more selective than ever. Daniel Gouadec notifies that: “La traduction remplit une fonction primordiale d’aide à la diffusion des produits ou idées. Elle doit annuler l’effet de frontière en adoptant les formes de communication aux divers ‘pays’, aux diverses ‘régions’, et aux divers publics. Elle permet l’extension ou la conquête de marchés ou d’aires de diffusion et d’influence idéologique, politique, culturelle, et bien entendu, économique” (7). The translator, who wants to remain only a language professional, cannot get a suitable job. He needs more qualifications in the work he is in. That is, he must have some requirements of his work. He must know more than the linguistic bases. Such a challenge makes employers seek candidates with

very specific skills; they turn out translation degree holders to meet these demands. “Technical vocabulary,” Teresa Mihwa Chung and Paul Nation point out, “is largely of interest and use to people working in a specialised field.” (104)

Recently, trading, industry and marketing have flourished throughout the world, and accordingly job opportunities in translation have increased. Companies ask for higher translation output, because of the harsh competition on the market. Candidates are expected besides their degree to bring a range of skills to the job: Excellent understanding of the source language and the target language, efficiency in communication skills, necessary knowledge of the field of job specialization. This severe selection is imposed by the global market need and competition. Margrette Peterson claims that:

It is important that translation firms use the right translators for the right jobs and that translators only accept the jobs for which they are qualified, i.e., those which match their language combination and subject specification. (217)

But how can a translator manage with specialisation that he does not master well? Technical discourse is not at all suggestive or metaphorical. It is straightforward and holds one

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clear-cut meaning. In other words, a signifier had one signified. A technical term has a unique translation that may or may not correspond to the translation of its components. The technical discourse is not opaque, it is ideally very transparent. Barbara Folkart maintains that:

Essentially, then, the process of technical translation involves apprehending the extralinguistic referents verbalized by the source text and re-verbalizing them, more or less directly (i.e. more or less independently of the source text), in the target language. (230)

For the matter of illustration, I have selected three prototypes of problems in translation of the technical terms: Anthony Pym's example of an advertising of the state of Kuwait in Le Monde, Nicolas Froeliger translation problem of an English passage "Respecting Human Rights-Crucial Dealing with HIV/AIDS" into French, and finally, Barbara Folkart's example of a technical sentence to be rendered into English.

Anthony Pym is curious about a Kuwaiti advertising into a French newspaper Le Monde in 15 November 1991. His attention is driven by a subtitle translation in French of the English advertising. "Strangely enough," Pym remarks, "the French

newspaper has presented the announcement in English. But an official hand has added three lines, of small print below the English text, beginning “La publicité ci-dessus est relative à une préqualification internationale des contractants pour participer aux offres concernant...” (“The above announcement concerns an international prequalification of contractors to participate in tenders concerning...”).

Kuwait’s advertising is supposedly addressed to receivers, who understand English. So, why do we have such a translation in French? For whom is it addressed? Why specially Le Monde? Why not English speaking newspaper?

Technical texts float between cultures. It could be understood without reference to any culture. The advertising scope in Le Monde has transgressed the commonly established formula of adverts within newspapers. Questions that could be raised are: Why do we have a French addition to the original Text? Why don’t we translate directly the text into French? Whether in French or English, can this advert imply the same meaning? If yes, what is the aim behind the use of two languages? Is it intentional? Is it to make the French speaking community know better about the semantic implication of the advert? The question that remains open is the following: Is it redundant as an advert or intentional? Or further, is it a political obligation,

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because, as far as I know, no advert in any language is allowed except French? Then, it is to contour such prohibition that Le Monde has added the French language in the advert. Or probably, the translator has intended to use two languages in order to make the advert spread over to all, whether French or English. Moreover, the message holds insinuations to the French receiver that Kuwait prefers English and the intender should know some basics of English language if ever he wants to work there.

The second example that requires qualifications in the field of medical knowledge is of Nicolas Froeliger. Froeliger is requested to translate a Human Rights notice advert about HIV/AIDS. Here are the two versions: the original then, the target.

English: “Respecting Human Rights-Crucial
Dealing with HIV/AIDS

Protection and fulfilment of human rights is essential for an effective response to HIV/AIDS. Respect for human rights helps to reduce vulnerability to HIV/AIDS, to ensure that those living with or affected by HIV/AIDS live a life of dignity without discrimination and to alleviate the personal and societal impact of HIV infection. Conversely,

violations of human rights are primary forces in the spread of HIV/AIDS.”

French: “Lutter contre le sida passe par le respect des droits de l’homme”.

La protection et la mise en œuvre des droits de l’homme sont essentielles à toute action contre le VIH et le sida. Elle contribue à réduire la vulnérabilité à ce fléau, à garantir aux séropositifs et aux malades une vie digne et exempte de discriminations, et à atténuer l’impact de la menace sur les individus et la société. A contrario, les violations des droits de l’homme sont de puissants facteurs de diffusion du virus.”

It is noticeable that some words have gone and some others have appeared. “HIV/AIDS has appeared five times in English version, whereas only one time in French. But the translator has diversified his translation by adopting new words and expressions that are similar in meaning to the English original. “Tout traducteur, » Danièle Beltran Videl maintains, « sait que l’on ne peut traduire que ce que l’on a parfaitement compris, il tente alors de trouver la généalogie des mots de la santé qu’il a à traduire, la source dont ils sont issus » (84).

The third example of Barbara Folkart is purely scientific:

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French : Les joints convergent tous vers le centre et sont donc perpendiculaires à la surface de la douelle.

English: All joints radiate from/converge towards a common centre lie along radii of the generating arch and are therefore perpendicular to the intrados.

As we see, this single sentence in French has begotten three possible sentences in English. So, which one does it fit better the translation? Which one do we accept and which one do we neglect? These three possibilities to one sentence clearly shows that whatever we do , and whatever we have as competence, we can never get straight to the original meaning of the sentence, simply because, each language has its own specificities. Or better simplified, to get right to the original, we have to deviated from the original language structure of the TLT, ie; to coin or borrow words from the SLT.

The translator should have the necessary resources to deal with the material, as monolingual and bilingual dictionaries, specialized dictionaries, encyclopaedias, glossaries, various . scientific magazines and journals. They have to strive to improve their knowledge of the fields they work in by reading related material and consulting colleague, who work in the industries. Though professional

translators have to be able to write, the forum is not as necessary as the right translated terminology. They should keep in mind that adequate terminology is better than good style or punctuation. In other words, translators should have a well developed knowledge of specialized fields, such as medical, financial, legal, etc... Translators should take into account that a wrong or a misleading apprehension of text could underevaluate translation. Reading comprehension is a good strategy to take hold of the text.

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