

The Professions of Translating and Interpreting

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Abstract:

This paper enjoins us to examine the role of interpreters and Translators in multilingual, multi-cultural societies. In dealing with the meaning of the words interpretation and translation, many questions come to our mind concerning the extent of commonly shared tasks between a translator and an interpreter in a given bilingual or multilingual society. Certainly, interpreters and translators share some common features, as they both rely on the same material, known as language combination which has an attempt to combine different cultures and beliefs. However, one of the major attempts of this paper is to deal with both professions differently as they fulfil distinct functions in the society.

Key words: Professions; Translating; Interpreting; Legal; Medical; Sign Language

Introduction:

In the field of employment, an occupation to mean the profession of somebody (what does he do), is an important resource for identity and prestige.

The profession of translators and interpreters has become more and more culturally determined throughout the world, since much attention is being given to globalization. The world undergoes many attempts to migration and transnationalism giving way to multiculturalism where interlingual exchange becomes inevitable.

Algeria, for instance, as many countries in the world undergoes massive processes of culture formation and transformation. It is a country that has been greatly and deeply influenced by the French. Many Algerian individuals are constantly using French for various reasons, especially for scientific, educational, and administrative purposes. French, in the Algerian society represents one of the motives for an inclination towards and adoption of French methods and some European cultural traits.

Moreover, Algerian students and pupils are sometimes educationally dependent on the French educational system when they are registered in and dependent on a French academic institution, or at University. This situation has favoured an over-growing need for translators and interpreters, and idealized the profession of translating for public services, mainly the translation of official documents, texts, and articles. However, for contemporary needs, translation from English and into English is also practiced.

The themes chosen in this conference enjoins us to examine the role of interpreters and Translators in multilingual, multi-cultural societies. In dealing with the meaning of the words *interpretation* and *translation*, many questions come to our mind concerning the extent of commonly shared tasks between a translator and an interpreter in a given bilingual or multilingual society.

According to Elka Jones (2002) in his article “Interpreters and Translators”: **“Interpreters and translators convert one language into another. But they do more than simply translate words- they relay concepts and ideas between languages .They must thoroughly understand the subject matters in which they work so they are able to convert information from one language, known as the source language, into another, the target language. And**

they must remain sensitive to the cultures associated with their languages of expertise”.

From this definition, we can understand that interpreters and translators share some common features, as they both rely on the same material, known as language combination which has an attempt to combine different cultures and beliefs.

However, one of the major attempts of this paper is to deal with both professions differently as they fulfil distinct functions in the society.

1. Interpreters:

Interpreters’ major task is to deal with spoken languages and convert a one into another. The same word can also be used in converting sign languages into spoken communications and vice-versa. In this respect, the interpreter is expected to grasp the meaning of a given discourse or utterance in away to give equal meanings in the target language and express thoughts and ideas clearly and carefully. By this way, the interpreter must become familiar with the idea recovered by the speaker, this enables him give correct interpretations.

1.1 Kinds of Interpretations:

Interpreters may give different kinds of interpretations; *simultaneous* and *consecutive*.

a) Simultaneous Interpretations:

In simultaneous interpretations, the task of interpreters requires a direct interpretation where interpreters are called to listen and speak or sign at the same time, while the speaker is always talking .The interpreter in direct contact with the participants and the speakers, is more ostensibly in-between in consecutive interpreting.

We can generally find this kind of interpretation in political discourse, where a president's or a minister's speech requires a direct and rapid interpretation. In this situation, the interpreter is often taking an intermediary position between the political parties to whom he is interpreting for twenty to thirty minutes segments. He should assure a perfect and a deep knowledge of the speakers' main objectives of communication, as to possess a rich knowledge about the topic discussed.

b) Consecutive Interpretations:

This kind of interpretation is rather indirect in comparison to the former. In practicing consecutive interpretation, the interpreter will follow a note-taking way. He has the opportunity of verbalizing a group of words or sentences, as it is generally done in some person-to-person political conversations which might offer some time for the interpreter to take notes as a former step before interpreting.

2. Translators:

In parallel to the profession of interpreting, the profession of translating will use the linguistic tool but to convert written materials from one language into another. The task of translating is also a hard task in which the translator should possess an effective ability of writing, in addition to the ability of analysing concepts and ideas.

The translator should show a big ability to comprehend the meaning of the text in a way to be an expert in the subject question of the source language as well as in the one of the target language to insure ideal translation.

In comparing with interpreters, translators will have much more time to achieve textual translations. They have the possibility of looking up any unfamiliar words, and might do additional readings on the subject matter if they have doubts

about ideas or concepts in the text. They might even consult the author of the source text to clarify unclear or unfamiliar ideas, words, or acronyms in case where he is not certain about the right meaning to give in the target text.

Within translating tasks, the translator might be confused with the task of using some kinds of translation depending on the nature of the source text. For instance, translators are sometimes using literal translation in which they respect the linguistic structure of the source text, but they normalize the structure to the rules of the target language; this is frequently the case of legal interpretations.

Consider the following example of an Algerian part of a legal text translated from French to Arabic:

.....délivrée pour une copie conforme et pour exécution, is translated as: /nusxa musallama tibqa l,asl litt nfi :d /(a photocopy designated for execution).

However, translators often use free translation in which the linguistic structure of the target language is ignored and an equivalent is found in respect to the meaning it conveys. The following example is also taken from an Algerian legal context: « La tierce opposition », is translated as : / ,i tira :d air lx :ri ni lx su :ma/ (The third opposition).

In this context, sentences and ideas must be manipulated to flow with the same coherence as the source document in a way to make the translation reads as if it originated in the target language.

Moreover, translators should take into consideration the cultural traits that characterize both the source and the target communities, insofar as to avoid cultural misunderstandings and confusions leading to an incorrect translated text. Hence, the translator is often required to

explain any cultural reference that might seem ambiguous to the reader in the target text like; colloquialisms, slang, proverbs, religious concepts and other expressions that do not translate literally.

Generally, the task of translating is often accomplished after a series of revisions before final text is submitted.

3. The Professions of Interpreting and Translating and Society:

In this part of this paper, we tend to examine the social status and the construction of occupational identities of translators, in addition to the role of both professions within society.

One of the factors contributing to the knowledge of the social position that the translator or the interpreter have in society is to pay attention to the motivations of the human agent behind them; to mean ,on the one hand, the way translators and interpreters perceive their occupation and their role as cultural agents, which is determined by their status as a professional group and individuals, and to the others' attitudes towards both professions and the cultural motives that they represent, on the other hand.

3.1 Roles of Interpreters and Translators in Society:

This paper will adopt a more sociological and organizational approach to how interpreting and translating are done, and in what context they are. Therefore, it aims at contextualizing the interpreter and the translator and their professions as social practices.

In many countries in the world, interpreting is socially recognized in community-based settings, and this means that interpreting can and does take place in courtroom, to healthcare settings, and other contexts in which the interpreter

and the translator are in social and cultural contacts with the members of the speech community. Hence, in any social setting of interpretation, the role played by interpreters, as Anderson (1976:209) puts it: “is likely to exert considerable influence on the evolution of group structure and on the outcome of the interaction”, in a way to monitor the social and discursive situation.

Translators, who are mainly translating textual documentations, show some social and cultural traits during the course of translating. In dealing for example with foreign literary texts originated from a culturally distinct area, the translator's task is rather transitional in the sense of transporting foreign cultures and realizing a certain cultural exchange between the members of culturally different communities. The main function of the mission is sometimes to generalize cultures and provide important information about different beliefs, thoughts, religions, and ways of life of many societies in the world. Thus, any individual would be able to develop a stereotypic behaviour about societies and individuals. To do his work with perfection, the translator needs a high degree of knowledge about the intended target audience.

a) Translators and Interpreters In Legal Contexts:

Similarly, when the professions of interpreting and translating are practiced in courtrooms and legal contexts, respectively, they function as linguistic materials designed for maintaining a social organization based upon the transmission of institutionally international decrees and laws which aim at realizing equality and unity in the social environment.

Translation of legal texts is meant here to present advantageously laws that have been already stated in another language aiming principally at global stability.

On another hand, the role of the interpreter with regard to cultural and social issues in the courtroom is difficult but very important in helping people who are unable or unwilling to communicate in a given language to express their feelings and ideas. This profession might be difficult, since many difficulties may emerge from the meticulous task of interpreting not only the others' languages, but more importantly the others' feelings and tones to give the same meanings in the way the original speaker wishes it to be, in order not to change the exact meaning of an utterance or a word, since this might influence the speaker's status and might nullify his arguments and make them have no legal force.

In this respect, the interpreter will have to consider some psychological and social points that characterize the original speaker such as his social class, his academic affiliation (if he is an intellectual), etc. in addition to the mood of the speaker in the course of interaction (happy, sad, anxious, certain, deferential, etc.).

The interpreter can also fall in a set of sociolinguistic difficulties in which he should differentiate rural from urban dialects which may cause the use of homonyms, and increase the potentials for communicative difficulties. He is constantly expected to weigh choices in search of the best ways to convey shades of meanings and speakers' intent.

b) Medical Translators and Interpreters:

Translators and interpreters can also work for health services; they are called medical interpreters and translators. Medical translators of medical texts need again solid grasp of the languages to be translated, a thorough understanding of technical concepts and vocabulary, and a high degree of knowledge about the science.

The social characteristic of medical translations and interpretations is to provide language services to healthcare

patients. Medical interpreters help patients communicate with their doctors and the medical staff as a whole. We can call them “humanitarians”, they are involved in improving people’s lives and reducing the others’ sufferings.

Medical interpreters need a strong grasp of medical and colloquial terminology in both languages, along with cultural sensitivity regarding how the patient receives the information. They must stand detached but aware of the patient’s sensitivities and pain.

c) Sign Language Interpreters:

The presence of sign interpreters is very important in society; they provide viable social services for a special class of people in society who are deaf or hard-of-hearing in achieving communication between them and people who can hear. This profession involves fluency in sign languages, combining signing, finger spelling, and specific body language. This language has its own grammatical rules, sentence structure, idioms, historical contexts, and cultural nuances. Some interpreters in this field specialize in oral interpreting for deaf or hard- of-hearing persons who lip-read instead of sign, in addition to deaf-blind persons.

4. Translators perception of their professions (The case of Algeria):

In Algeria, translators find their work interesting, financially rewarding and educationally enriching. They exchange exported information with valuable knowledge about different subjects leading to future career opportunities. However, it seems that the professions of translating and interpreting need more support in the Algerian society.

According to some students in my area (Department of Translation and Interpretation, Algerian context), Algeria has not yet recognized interpretation services in institutional settings, and it does not enhance the formation of translators and interpreters with the promise of providing opportunities of work in the field, especially at public centres that are attached to the state.

According to them, interpretation is imperatively needed in courtrooms and hospitals to interpret for illiterate and old persons from one language to another, and from Standard languages into dialects, as well.

Algerian translators face some difficulties at different levels .At the professional level, translation is perceived as a newly established discipline whose role and sometimes existence is only known by people in the field; to mean intellectuals and students.

Some students ‘assume’ that some translators practice the profession of translating despite the fact that they are not linguistically and professionally qualified to practice the profession. According to them there is lack of formation and information concerning the methods and the techniques of translating. They mention the absence of many discipline in the programme delivered for practice at the Department of Translation at University, as the teaching of psychology and cultural studies, in addition to the restricted number of hours designed for the teaching of foreign languages.

Conclusion:

As a conclusion, it is noteworthy focusing on the integration of interpretation and translation as professional disciplines in public institutions like courtrooms and hospitals especially to help ignorants, illiterates, old persons, deaf people, and sometimes intellectuals not understanding either French or Arabic. Our society, and throughout this paper and

other papers in the field calls for a revision of the importance of translation and interpretation at public places.

A one should be realistic and reasonable in saying that some Algerians are still not well adapted to the use of Standard Arabic (SA) after the policy of Arabization, this policy which aimed at generalizing the use of SA, while French has been occupying an important place in Algerian institutions for a long run. Beside the necessity of interpretation and translation, it is reasonable too to believe in the accelerated integration of English in many domains of life, especially at Universities and for contemporary scientific and technological purposes.

Moreover, elementary points will be positively generated from the setting of the profession of interpreting and translating in society; for example new attitudes to scientific culture and the popularization of scientific knowledge will become visible, hence society can move forward to modernisation. In addition to this, languages would be enriched by importing a large number of words throughout translation, since language serves as the medium of knowledge transmission and it is also an important part of culture. More importantly, interpretation will serve as a sociolinguistic and a socio-cultural practice helping on the one hand in the brake of ignorance in society and serving the human agent with the rights that have been institutionally elaborated for the assurance of his legal and absolute membership in the community. On the other hand, interpretation at public places, like courtrooms for instance, will permit all the judicial staff including lawyers and judges use a single language , the one that has been officially selected for use in formal settings. In the case of Algeria, courtrooms will establish Standard Arabic to achieve the respect of Arabization laws about language in Algeria. This “solution” will be an attempt towards a realization of a linguistic unity inside courtrooms; this unity is

determined to make clear a distinction between judicial members and civil parties of all kinds, levels, and classes.

Therefore, it would be necessary to consider again the question of linguistic coherence in Algeria to ensure social homogeneity.

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