

Lecture 1

What is Translation?

The Meaning of Translation as a noun or a verb

1. The origin of the word 'translation' is the Latin word 'translatus' which means 'transferred'.
2. The dictionary meaning of the English verb 'to translate' is 'to express or be capable of being expressed in another language or dialect.'
3. In French , it means 'traduction' as a noun and 'a traduire' as a verb
4. In Arabic, it means: الترجمة من لغة إلى أخرى

Simple Definitions of Translation

1. Catford (1965): defines translation as "the replacement of textual material in one language SL by equivalent textual material in another language TL".
2. Newmark (1982): defines it as "a craft consisting in the attempt to replace a written message and/or statement in one language by the same message and/or statement in another language".
3. Bell (1991) mentions two views:
 - one looks at it as an 'art' especially when the scholars of last century were preoccupied with the translation of literary text as a pastime ;
 - and another looks at it as a 'profession' where the majority of translators are professionals engaged in making a living rather than a pastime. This is mainly clear in the translation of technical, medical, legal and administrative texts.
4. In the present sense of the word, translation is a 'generic term used to refer to the process of rendering a text in one language into an equivalent text in another.'

Advanced Definitions of Translation

Having taken into account all the developments in Translation Studies during last century, Bell (1991) seems suggest a more comprehensive definition of translation which stress the dimension of semantic and stylistic equivalence in translation:

1. **“Translation is the replacement of a representation of a text in one language by a representation of an equivalent text in a second language.”**

Another advanced definition of translation is the one introduced by Etchnia Arjona (Gerver 1977) as follows:

2. **“Translation is a generic term for the interlingual, sociolinguistic and cultural transfer for any message from one community to another through various modes of written, oral, or mechanical means or combinations thereof.”**

How can we achieve Equivalence in Translation?

When we are faced by a text- written or oral in a language we know, we are able to work out its equivalence by looking in to the following :

- The semantic sense of each word and sentence.
- Its communicative value
- Its place in time and space.
- The information about the participants involved in its production and reception

Using the Six Wh-Questions in looking for Equivalence in translating a text.

1. **What?** Is the message contained in the text, the content of the signal, the propositional content of the speech acts.
2. **Why?** Orients us towards the intentions of the sender, the purpose for which the text was issued.
3. **When?** Is concerned with the time of communication realised in the text and setting it in its historical context; contemporary or set in recent or remote past or future.
4. **How?** Is ambiguous as it can refer to:
 - a): manner of delivery: the tenor of the discourse; is it serious or ironic?
 - b)- medium of communication; the mode of the discourse: is it oral or written?
5. **Where?** Is concerned with the place of the communication; the physical location of speech event realised in the text.
6. **Who?** Refers to the participants involved in the communication; the sender and receiver(s). Both spoken and written reveal the characteristics of the speaker or writer as an individual.

What is a Good Translation?

According to Bell, a good translation is “that in which the merit of the original work is so completely transfused into another language, as to be as distinctly apprehended, and as strongly felt, by a native of the country to which that language belongs, as it is by those who speak the language of the original work.”

Three Laws of Good Translation

As a result of the above good definition of translation, the following three laws emerge from it.

1. That the Translation should give a complete transcript of the ideas of the original work.
2. That the style and manner of writing should be of the same character with that of the original.
3. That the Translation should have all the ease of the original composition.

Translation as process and product

A more advanced definition of translation can be seen when we look at it as process and product. In other words: **“It is the abstract concept which encompasses both the process of translation and the product of that process”.**

- Translating : is the process i.e. (to translate; it is the activity rather than the tangible object)
- A Translation: is the product of the process of translating (i.e. the translated text)

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