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## Language, Translation, and Culture

Gelavizh Abbasi<sup>1+</sup>, Saman Saleh zadeh<sup>2</sup>, Elenaz Janfaza<sup>3</sup>, Arezoo Assemi<sup>4</sup>, Siamak Saadat Dehghan<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Islamic Azad University-Urmia Branch/Iran

<sup>2</sup>Young Researcher's Club - Urmia Branch, Islamic Azad University, Urmia/Iran

<sup>3</sup>Young Researchers Club, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran,Iran

<sup>4</sup>Urmia University of Medical Sciences, Urmia /Iran

<sup>5</sup>Education Organization, Urmia/ Iran

"Culture is widening of the mind and of the spirit." Jawaharlal Nehru

**Abstract.** Language is a phenomenon and a factor that links different cultures and a way of expressing feelings and ideas that people try to convey. We are going to study the main roles of translation in transferring cultural concepts between two or more languages and some barriers or difficulties that translators face in this process. We know that translation plays an important role of crossing through different cultures and communication. Therefore translation is one of the essential, fundamental, and adequate ways in transferring culture, but there are some limitations such as censorship and even culture itself. This paper also aimed to represent some barriers in the process of translation. A good translator should simultaneously be aware of the cultural factors, views and tradition in order to consciously consider the chronological orders, explicit meaning, development of related disciplines, historical and religious background of the source text. Finally, it is essential to evoke the same response as the source text attempted to and avoid inserting irrelevant new words into language used by people. All these factors must be taken into account in translating process.

**Keywords:** language, culture, translation bridge, censorship

### 1. Introduction

Studying on language, culture and translation and the relationship between them are valuable issues due to the importance of human communication in the world. The variety of languages with different cultures and necessity of communications in human life caused translation to be a very effective factor in communicating, exchanging cultures, and knowledge. Thus, it seems that language and culture are closely related and it is essential to consider both in the process of translation. Although there might be is no specific frame and force on how a translation must be done, all translators who transfer natural meaning based on the cultural and religious norms of their society, encounter some limitations and censorship through translation. In this study we discuss the translation barriers through transferring cultures among languages. We also define that translation has an important role in globalization of cultures especially pop culture leading to expanding ethnic habits and customs, or religious values. As languages and culture are complimentary of each other, and cultural features of every region is different, translators not only should concentrate on how to convey the same meaning, but also attempt to show the dissimilarities between two cultural perspectives.

### 2. Methodology

This study has been done using digital library books, and papers.

### 3. Language, Culture and Translation in Meaning

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<sup>+</sup> Corresponding author. Tel. : + (984412240641)  
E-mail address: (jamalkeshavarzi@gmail.com).

### **3.1. Language**

There are lots of definitions on language which are included here shortly. Language is used to maintain and convey culture and cultural ties. Different ideas stem from differing language use within one's culture and the whole intertwining of these relationships start at one's birth. [1] Language may refer either to the specifically human capacity for acquiring and using complex system of communication or to a specific instance of such a system of complex communication. The human language faculty is thought to be fundamentally different from and of much higher complexity than those of other species. Human language is highly complex in that it is based on a set of rules relating symbols to their meanings, thereby forming an infinite number of possible innovative utterances from a finite number of elements. [2]

### **3.2. Culture**

Newmark defined culture as "the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression". [3] He clearly stated that operationally he does not regard language as a component or feature of culture in direct opposition to the view taken by Vermeer who stated that "language is part of a culture." [4] The term culture originally meant the cultivation of the soul or mind; culture includes behavior such as courtship or child rearing practices material things such as tools, clothing and shelter, institutions and beliefs. [5] Culture is the sum total of the ways of living built up by a group and passed on from one generation to another. [6] Culture is a complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs and many other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. [7]

### **3.3. Translation**

The communication of the meaning of the source-language text is by means of an equivalent target-language text [8] so translation consists of language and culture. Jerome said that two things are necessary for a good translation - an adequate understanding of the original language (source language) and an adequate command of the language into which one is translating (receptor language). Larson claimed that "Translation is a complicated process." [9] However, a translator who is concerned with transferring the meaning will find that the receptor language has a way in which the desired meaning can be expressed, even though it may be very different from the source language form. Translation is no longer considered to be a mere cross-linguistic activity but it significantly is cross-cultural communication.

### **3.4. Culture through the Languages**

We came to agree on the existence of the so-called "cultural universals" that enhance communication, change of ideas in order to achieve progress in all life domains. Change of ideas, concentration of mutual efforts in different directions, communication among different peoples in different ways, all these are a constant necessity of spiritual and material life. Not only cultural acts are achieved by means of continuity process alone, but also being discontinuous can be as creative at certain times. Yet, this breach is to be performed to existent models and not to a state of nothingness. [10] But how cultures transfer through the languages? For answering this question we should consider the relationship between culture and language which is deeply rooted. Translation is the only way which does it. The fact that there is only one human species is explained by the possibility to transfer sense, meaning from one language to the other, by means of the word, thus, by translation. [11] But during translation process there are some barriers that are discussed as follows:

## **4. Some Various Obstacles**

There are some obstacles which effect culture transferring through different languages such as limitation and censor, culture, religion, etc. and are described as follows:

### **4.1. Limitation and Censor**

Traditionally, there is something which is lost in translation process. Limitation and censor as obstacles that limit translators in conveying the "semantic" message in the receptor language. [9] The other limiting factor which translators encounter is moral filtering being based on religion, family, society rules, and

culture, etc. Moreover limitation related to different kinds of the audience. So it is the time to say that culture itself is a filter in translation.

## **4.2. Culture**

Difficulties arising out of differences of cultures constitute the most serious problems for translators and have produced the most far-reaching misunderstanding among readers. [12] Culture itself has its own limitation in transferring the source text into target text. Each society or group of people based on their historical background, local situations, and religion with their specific language, construct their own culture which is respected, performed and accepted along with its limitations. Limitation in translation is one of the specific features of culture, not necessarily imposed from outside world. Behaviors which are acceptable will vary from location to location. [13] Nowadays, the major problem in translation is being certainly influenced by different cultural norms in the source language and target language. The translator's responsibility is to choose the norms that take priority over others. It depends on translator's decision if the cultural norms of the source language, target language, or a combination of both are essential to be considered.

## **4.3. Religion**

Religion is one of those obstacles that cause problem in translation. Religion can be understood only by its cultural language and to translate this religious context we face with some limitations that cannot be translated. Because religious texts are described in an implicit way, natural and effective translation is almost impractical. Besides, religion and culture are intertwined and religion has taken its root from human mind and soul, people accept them by the core of their hearts. Therefore, it cannot be changed or distorted by any one. because it leads to stimulate people and evoke negative reaction by them. Therefore translators' job is more difficult and must avoid such distortion or any work which is against their religion in the process of translation.

## **5. What Translation Does Exactly**

We talked about the limitations of translation process but let's add that translation not only transfers fundamental aspects and features of culture but also it transfers modern science, and foreign histories. Therefore, that a translator's job is to eliminate and destroy boundaries is not always true. It crosses the borders to communicate cultures.

## **6. The Significant Roles of Translation in Transferring Culture**

### **6.1. Making Culture Universal**

Translation plays a vital role in making a culture universal and general. It acts as a bridge to communicate all kinds of languages specially those similar to each other considering their linguistic features and cultural customs in all parts of the world. So it links all units of the world in the global network. Moreover translation presumes the existence of boundaries between different cultures and the translator most probably is aware of these boundaries and the inevitability of crossing them. Without cultural similarities and universalities, there is no way for people of different cultures to communicate with each other and translation will be impossible. When speaking of two languages which are to be translated equivalently, translators must convey the same referential, pragmatic and interlinked meanings. However, due to differences between two cultures, semantic equivalence is limited to some.

### **6.2. Getting Familiar With Pop Culture And Habits**

Pop culture develops within human's growth which some of those pop culture's would be a part of our life way. Since translation transfers the culture, unconsciously behind this culture, we get familiar with the pop cultures and people's habits of different regions. For example, "Mother Day" as a pop culture shows that people respect Mothers. So this special day has become a habit for all countries in different geographical regions. Also daily habits such as using the Internet have become so common globally so using this is inevitable almost for all.

### **6.3. To Get Acquainted With Cultural And Religion Customs**

Each language has its own culture and religion. Each society propagates its own specific culture through translation. Culture translation helps to know the variety of worship of different cultures. For e.g. Muslim pray in Mosque, Christian in Church, Jewish in Synagogue or celebrating "Christmas Day" has been expanded. Thus, translation link cultures as a chain. Thus translation obviously is a cross-cultural communication; it is beyond structures and sentences, and not simply a mere language.

### **6.4. Give Advantages of The Source Language Cultures**

A proper translation makes the reader to ponder over the cultural context of the source language. Cultural borrowing is one of the advantages that transfer ideas, customs, and social behaviors from another culture. By an adequate translation readers or audience of target language culture will acquire a lot of useful benefits for e.g. hospitality; way of greeting and saying hello when they meet each other in Iran would be extend in the world through translation. The other e.g. is table manner of some nations that reflect how that nation's culture is.

## **7. Conclusion**

We should note that culture is not material phenomenon; it does not consist of things, people, behavior, or emotions. It is rather an organization of these things. It is the form of things that people have in mind, their model of perceiving and dealing with their circumstances. [14] Culture is the total life way of people, the social legacy the individual acquires from his group. [15] Culture would be transferred through language. As Sapir-Whorf argues, different thoughts are brought about by the use of different forms of language. [1] One is limited by the language used to express one's ideas. Different languages will create different limitations, therefore people who share a culture but speak different languages, will have different world views. Still, language is rooted in culture and culture is reflected and passed on by language from one generation to the next. [16] From this, one can see that learning a new language involves the learning of a new culture. Consequently, teachers of a language are also teachers of culture. [17] Culture is vital in forming civilization. In other words, culture is more likely to be essence and basis of civilization. Civilization is more extended than culture as the former one relates to the vast majority of people beyond the borders, but generally culture belongs to a specific group of people limited inside the borders. Knowledge, beliefs, perspectives transfer through language and culture. Culture links the past, present and future together. What that something is, and the significance of it, has been a matter of debate as long as there has been a need for translation. The practical effects of the practice of translation, however, are much easier to judge and document. Translation is not just a literal recasting of a work from one language to another, but is also an adaptation of one culture's values and biases into another. [18] Moreover, translation seems to be the only possible way to "unite" all cultures in order to create cultural network, cultural globalization. However, Translation which causes to insert new words from foreign languages, in most cases damages that language. By cultural (linguistical, literary) globalisation we mean the union of all the forms of culture that matter and that imprint their values to the art of the people. Therefore, we strongly believe that "to translate means to circulate," [19] and this is what our world really needs: the freedom to find the right ways to express itself, to understand and to be understood out there, by the other. If done correctly, translation has this prerogative of being the way and the means to make it happen. We should not go further than the translation of the Bible. What would the world be today unless the Holy Book hadn't been translated for everybody, in every language?

In conclusion, it can be pointed out that the trans-coding process should be focused not merely on language transfer but also - and most importantly - on cultural transposition. As an inevitable consequence of the previous statement, translators must be both bilingual and bicultural if not multicultural. [20]

In this study we discussed on the translation obstacles through the transferring culture among languages. Also we defined that translation has important role in globalization of culture especially pop culture which causes to give advantages of the source culture, knowing the habits and customs even religious customs.

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