



International Conference; Meaning in Translation: Illusion of Precision, MTIP2016, 11-13 May 2016, Riga, Latvia

In defense of communicative-functional approach to translation

Vadim Sdobnikov*

Nizhny Novgorod Dobrolyubov State Linguistic University, 31-A, Minina str., Nizhny Novgorod, 603155, Russia

Abstract

At the present stage of translatology development we witness a collision of two approaches to translation: the text-focused approach and the communicative-functional approach. This paper offers arguments in defense of the communicative-functional approach and proves that this approach is a convenient tool of revealing the intrinsic nature of translation as a human activity. It is instrumental in solving traditional problems of translatology, including the problem of translation quality assessment. Translation quality is assessed in terms of adequacy defined as the conformity of the target text to the translation goal and the purposes of the activities performed by the communication actors.

© 2016 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Peer-review under responsibility of the organizing committee of MTIP2016

Keywords: Translation; communicative-functional approach; text-focused approach; translation quality assessment.

1. Introduction

The landscape of Translation Studies, a comparatively young discipline, has been changing swiftly in recent decades. New approaches are used to research the phenomenon of translation, new ideas result from the collaboration of translation studies with humanities and social sciences. The science has even acquired the status of interdiscipline, as Mary Snell-Hornby termed it (Snell-Hornby, 1994).

Two distinctive stages in the development of translation studies as a science can be differentiated between. At the early stage of the translation studies development, in the 1950s–1970s, translation scholars focused their attention on the differences between the two languages that “collide” in the translation process. Since translation was viewed as transformation of a source text (ST) into a target text (TT), it was believed, therefore, that the differences between the lexical and grammatical systems of the languages present the major problems, and the efforts of the translation investigators were focused on finding the ways and means most suitable for overcoming purely linguistic obstacles

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +79023078698.

E-mail address: artist232@rambler.ru

on the way to transforming one text into another. The efforts resulted in many classifications of what we call “transformations” now. Transformations are presented as operations performed by a translator over the lingual material of the ST, and aimed at helping a translator overcome the possible absence of correspondences between the languages.

The most striking feature of this outdated approach, which I have called “the text-focused” approach (Sdobnikov, 2011), is a lack of attention to extra-linguistic factors that influence the translation process and its outcome. Viewed from the perspective of the present-day situation in the translation studies, the text-focused approach seems to be inadequate for the task of revealing the intrinsic nature of translation as a form of human activity. When a ST is perceived as an independent and self-sufficient entity that exists in a vacuum, in isolation from the environment in which it has been produced, Translation Studies become incapable of revealing the whole complex of factors, both lingual and extra-lingual, that impact the translation process and must be taken into account by any translator or interpreter who feels responsible for the results of his/her professional activity. In practical life, the situation is even worse than in the field of theoretical investigation of translators’ activity. Translating a text as if it is isolated from any specific environment, as a text *per se*, translators ignore the needs of the text recipients and the goal of translation.

Opposed to the text-focused approach to translation is the so called communicative-functional approach substantially fuelled by the ideas of many translation scholars at the second stage of translation studies development (from the 1970s to present). Among the theories that contributed much to the formulation of the communicative-functional approach to translation, scopos-theory of Hans Vermeer and Katarina Reiß (Reiß, & Vermeer, 2013) further developed by their disciple Christiane Nord (Nord, 1997) deserves special attention. The communicative-functional approach suggests that a text to be translated should be viewed within a certain communicative situation in which it was produced as an instrument of communication between specific actors. It means that in order to reveal the most significant factors influencing the translation process, it is essential to take into consideration both linguistic aspects of translation, specifics of languages and texts themselves, as well as to investigate thoroughly what I would call human aspects of translation. With the development of the communicative-functional approach, the process of translation has acquired, so to speak, a “human face”. It implies special attention to the needs and expectations of humans who produce texts in source languages and use texts written or spoken by translators in target languages.

Thus, the two approaches to translation are opposed in essence. The issue is significant in terms of both theory and practice. Adherence of a translator to a certain approach is manifested in the results of his/her work, and predetermines the translation quality. Since I strongly believe that it is only the communicative-functional approach to translation that ensures the high quality of translation, its best value, I shall devote more attention to the fundamentals of this approach.

2. Fundamentals of the communicative-functional approach to translation

As has been stated above, the communicative-functional approach implies consideration of a translation event in a certain, frequently imaginary, supposed, yet realistic environment within which this event happens or *may* happen. The term “environment” may be replaced by the more traditional and specific concept of “communicative situation”. The latter term seems to be more precise, too, as it implies an interaction of human beings. It should be borne in mind that people interact only when they need to or have to. The necessity to interact arises when any substantive work performed by people cannot be done unless they communicate. The communication can be both direct and indirect. In case the communication actors are divided by a language barrier, mediation by a translator/interpreter is needed. It is self-evident that a translator who performs the role of the mediator between the communication actors is supposed to take into consideration the aims with which they get engaged into the communication process, the needs and requirements of their substantive work, possible or definite ways in which they will use the target text produced. E. Gentzler states that “...a client who hires a translator has specific goals that need consideration; the receiving audience has certain expectations that need to be addressed; translation is a form of action, a communicative interaction” (Gentzler, 2001). Only after the translator has realized the needs and expectations of the target audience, he/she is able to understand and formulate the translation goal. The notion of the translation goal is widely discussed and even widely disputed by many translation scholars. Those who admit the relevance of the notion offer different definitions of the translation goal, according to the approach they use. The principal translation goal is not to simply produce a text that would be acknowledged as equivalent to the ST by an idle outsider who is capable of comparing the TT to the ST. It is noteworthy that in real life a translation is rarely assessed by professional critics or by those who pretend to be

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5126293>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5126293>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)