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The Role of Viewpoint in Linguistic Choices in Translation

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Abstract

Language used in communication involves viewpoint. Translation as a special yet common form of communication is no exception. This paper aims to present a view that translation is viewpointed in that the source text, the translator and the target text and other relevant contextual factors all make translation indispensible with viewpoint. This paper also demonstrates that a translator has automaticity and privilege in choosing language, narrative perspective and target text style in translation according to his preference and viewpoint, and that viewpoint plays an essential part in evaluating translation. In translation, though restricted by the source text, a translator can find one way or another to mingle his viewpoint into the translation.

Keywords

Viewpoint, Language Choice in Translation, Translation Evaluation

1. Introduction

Language used in communication involves various strata of form and multiple layers of meaning. Translation as a special yet very common means of communication is no exception. According to Halliday (2010: p. 14), the basic problem for the translator in translation is the problem of choice—as is the decision of a writer whether to prefer this form of expression over that one. The choices can be made consciously on occasions when the choices are brought under the translator's focus and attention. In this case, the translator's personal intention and preference will affect the choosing process and hence make the choices of linguistic units subjective, and in other words, full of viewpoint.

In a broad sense, viewpoint, or point of view, is the starting point of the behavior subject, the means and position of the behavior and activity, as well as the

subjective attitude, evaluation and judgment of the behavior and activity. Viewpoint can be physical, psychological, and linguistic. In the linguistic sphere, it is the position and perspective of the language user himself, as well as his evaluation and attitude to the linguistic message. Viewpoint relevant to language and translation is either mental, or psychological, and more relevantly, linguistic. Since translation is a normal way of communication which involves the communicators' individual choices of words and grammar, it necessarily involves viewpoint. Dancygier and Sweester (2012) argue that language and communication are inherently viewpointed. Viewpoint in translation can be studied via source text, its author, source context on the one hand, and translator, his subjectivity, target text, target context on the other. Furthermore, consideration of viewpoint of reader and others, or the intersubjectivity between them, will undoubtedly contribute to the clarification of viewpoint in translation.

This paper aims to present a view that translation is viewpointed in that the source text, the translator and the target text and other relevant contextual factors all make translation indispensible with viewpoint. It begins with the study of viewpoint in source text. Then viewpoint in target text is divided into translator's viewpoint, viewpoint in language choice of translation, narrative viewpoint and viewpoint in the context of target text. The paper goes on illustrating viewpoint in translation evaluation and draws a conclusion in the end.

2. Viewpoint in Source Text

An author of any writings, fictional or nonfictional, has her own intention to or aim at writing whatever she pleases. In her writing, she has to take a stance, present her perspective of communicating with her potential readers. In other words, she should have a viewpoint concerning her belief, value, ideology, attitude, evaluation, judgment, etc.

However, an author and her writing can hardly be independent of the social and cultural context. The source text is a representation of the context of source humanity, society, culture, and ideology. A writer will never begin her writing just for writing's sake. She must has such goals as preaching his ideal, revealing some social phenomena, praising benevolence, cursing darkness or even lighting a candle for people, or whatever. Such goals necessarily involve her ideology and further presenting her ideological viewpoint. According to Semino and Swindlehurst (1996: p. 145), ideological viewpoint refers specifically to the attitudes, beliefs, values and judgment shared by people with similar social, cultural and political background. These elements relevant to viewpoint in the source text will necessarily exert great impact on the translator and her work in translating, or converting the source text to a target one.

Different types of source text with different authors have their distinctive style of writing, which may necessarily reflect the author's viewpoint. A style in case is the difference between literary text and nonliterary text. The style of the former allows the translator, who is first of all a reader, to read creatively and thus un-

derstand distinctively, while the style of the latter generally contains fewer or more controlled ambiguities, gaps, and possibilities for the reader's engagement (Boase-Beier, 2011: p. 65). Functionalism and descriptivism asked who translated what, for whom, when, where, how and why (Munday, 2009: p. 95). A translator is adopting the viewpoint of the translation when he is faced with specific choices of whether or not to accept a source conception, what style of translating to pick, and what syntactical structures and lexical choices to put down in sentence after sentence. Among these choices, the style, or specifically the linguistic choice of words, grammar, modality etc. will reflect the translator's viewpoint. Therefore, it is crucial for the translator to take style into consideration in converting a source text to a target one.

3. Viewpoint in Target Text

3.1. Translator's Viewpoint

In the function of meaning-making, lexis and grammar are equally useful and thus lexical and grammatical choices exert impact on the meaning of texts. A translator usually has such privilege to choose the diction and syntax he preferred at first and at least. The choice of deixis, tense, and mood will influence not only the meaning conveyed but also viewpoint construction.

Though different from telling a story, which asks for the story teller's narrative viewpoint, translation virtually resembles telling a story in that it is as if the translator retells what a certain author's story in a written form and a diverse language. Therefore, the translation has kind of narrative viewpoint, explicitly or implicitly derived from the translator's viewpoint.

A translator can fulfill more or less of his own desire or ambition in his work. In this case, translating process may inevitably reveal the translator's repressed desire to challenge the author of the source text by releasing an unconscious remainder. Venuti (2013: p. 51) summarizes that the translators desire may vary from assuming a position of authority in the translation, to questioning and challenging the source author's status as an original creator. Many translations all contain verbal dislocations and deviations wherein the translators resisted the source author's cultural prestige by revising their texts in ways that fulfilled the translator's desire—namely, to accept a theory of translatability, to advance a conservative political ideology, to dismiss a psychoanalytic explanation of fantasies. In each case, the translator's revision indicate a more fundamental and urgent desire to act as an original author and present his viewpoint in target text.

A translator usually has his own special and specific style of diction and grammar, which is determined largely by her preference, habits of using and choosing linguistic units. Translator's style often reveals his viewpoint in translation. Saldanha (2014: p. 105) suggests that the concept of audience design can be used to explain some aspects of translator style and demonstrates how certain stylistic pattern can reveal translator's different conceptualization of their readerships and of their role as intercultural mediators. Boase-Beier (2006: p. 52) argues that

literary texts are read differently from non-literary text because the emphasis is not only on the content but also on the form of expression. She distinguish between a primary meaning, determined by lexis or syntax, and a second-order meaning, or weakly implied meaning, where choice can be exercised by the author/translator. Weakly implied meanings place the burden of meaning-making on the reader or translator. After proposing the use of translator's meaning for the extended meaning which goes beyond what can be assigned to the text or passage on the basis of semantics, Boase-Beier (2006: p. 37) suggests that translating primary meanings requires cultural background and linguistic knowledge, while translating weakly implied meaning requires a particular stylistic sensitivity.

3.2. Viewpoint in Language Choice of Translation

Though being restricted by the source text as if dancing with fetters of iron, translation is still well acknowledged as a subjective and creative activity. A translator is first of all a purposeful and careful reader before translation. The situation described in a text is often a source of dual emotional response, aligned with at least two viewpoints: the text and the reader's own. Dancygier (2014: p. 217) argues that in the process of reading, the text may move her into two kinds of responses. To put it in detail, the reader often associates himself mentally with the ego the text describes and takes a text-constructed viewpoint by understanding the intentionality of the text; and then the reader needs to become another experiencing ego by responding to the construal of the text through simulation of what the text evokes.

A translator has to firstly understand the source text as a reader and then translate it into another language, thus producing the target text. This process is done in accordance with his preference, evaluation and viewpoint. Particularly, a translator has considerably autonomous privilege to choose his language and style. A typical example from Tabakowska (2014: p. 107) is the frequently mentioned free indirect speech by the translation theorists. It seems clear that linguistic or grammatical signals serves as guides to interpretation of the narrative in terms of establishing the viewpoints conveyed. Ultimately, however, viewpoints ascription comes as the logic of reading, a complex cognitive process, making use of both linguistic and extra-linguistic cues.

Being drawn from a closed set of options, grammatical choice is obligatory and rules out other choices from the same system by default. According to Baker (1993: pp. 83-84, 172), the most important difference between grammatical and lexical choices, as far as translation is concerned, is that grammatical choices are largely obligatory while lexical choices are largely optional. Languages which have morphological resources for expressing a certain category such as number, tense, or gender, have to express these categories regularly. Those which do not have morphological resources for expressing the same categories do not have to express them except when they are felt to be relevant.

3.3. Narrative Viewpoint

In telling a story, the narrator or story-teller has a voice. It is about who is narrating, when the narration occurs and where it occurs. This is also the case as far as translation is concerned. Hermans' (1996) article brought the category of the translator's voice to the fore in translation studies and argues that translator's voice makes itself heard in three distinct scenarios: 1) where the translator intervenes in the text to explain cultural or historical references that would be otherwise inaccessible to the new target readership; 2) where the translator has recourse to para-textual material, especially notes, in order to resolve incongruities which emerge in translation from "self-referential' use of the source language (e.g. puns, direct statements that reveal the original language of communication); and 3) where the translator has confronted with contextual overdetermination, that is where the link between what is being said, how it is being said and where it is being said is so strong as to forestall translation into another mode and place of saying. In all three cases, the translator's voice resounds, more or less discernibly, from the text or the paratext, attesting to more than one voice in the narrative, more than one discursive presence.

Translator's voice can be regarded as an indicator of the narrative style, which presents itself in various forms in translated texts. The voice in translated narrative discourse may be more or less overtly present and it may remain entirely hidden behind that of the narrator, rendering it impossible to detect in the translated text. According to Hermans (1996: p. 27), there are more than one "voices" in translated narrative discourse. Translated narrative discourse always contains a "second" voice, which can be referred to as the translator's voice and an index of the translator's discursive presence. Translator's voice is most directly and forcefully present when it breaks through the surface of the text speaking for itself, in its own name.

Textual traits that are constantly translated in the same direction will cause shifts in the narrative viewpoint, focalisation and mind-style. According to Lodge (1990: pp. 4-5), a writer's choice of narrative point of view is part of the deep structure of the text and it follows that the narrative point of view will remain constant when the text is translated into another language. However, all meanings in a text may be modified in translation since they are expressed through language. Moreover, Levenston and Sonnenschein (1986) suggest that a failure to compensate or preserve linguistic features in translation can affect the reading of the target text to such a degree that the thoughts of the fictional character will be understood or interpreted as ideas presented from the narrator's point of view. Levenston and Sonnenschein (1986: p. 52) also emphasize that studies investigating changes in point of view must be extensive, since a change in one sentence could be compensated for elsewhere. They (Levenston & Sonnenschein, 1986: p. 58) also raise an important issue when they question the effect that shifts in a single feature actually have on the text's whole structure.

It is difficult to know when microstructural shifts in the text affect its macro-

structure. Simpson (1993: p. 46) holds that narrative viewpoint will ultimately bring about a change in the fictional universe represented in the texts, also known as the feel of the texts. Focalisation and mind-style are considered in order to see how the translator's choices affect the narrative structures. The potential problems involved in the translation of linguistic features are linked to the notion of point of view (Bosseaux, 2007: p. 17). Levenston and Sonnenschein (1986: pp. 53-55) discuss the translation of point of view or focalization in fictional narrative and show the four forms of focalization including register -restricted vocabulary items, register-restricted collocations and clichés, word order, and free indirect speech, different translations of which will result in very different narrative effect in target texts.

Munday (1998: p. 15) takes up the category of segmentation (i.e. word order) and cohesion as particularly susceptible to alteration in translation in his corpus-based comparative analysis of a short Spanish story in its English translation, where they are determined to be useful in indentifying changes in the narrative viewpoint that is presented to the readers of target text.

3.4. Viewpoint in the Context of Target Text

Word order is extremely important in translation because it plays a major role in maintaining a coherent point of view and in orienting messages at text level. Baker (1993: p. 110) argues that word order is largely a matter of stylistic variation and is available as a resource to signal emphasis and contrast and to organize messages in a variety of ways.

Equivalence, complete equivalence of translation in particular, is a sheer ideal. As long as a translator begins her work, no matter how loyal she wants personally or she is required socially or politically, a source text is destined to change into a target text not only in a new or foreign language, but in diverse syntactic structure, wording with different denotation, and inevitably, with the translator' personal subjective involvement, particularly viewpoint, for example. Baker (1993: pp. 83-84, 172) thinks that a translator cannot always follow the thematic organization of the original. If at all possible, s/he should make an effort to present the target text from a perspective similar to that of the source text. But certain features of syntactic structure such as restrictions on word order, the principle of end-weight, and the natural phraseology of the target language often mean that the thematic organization of the source text has to be abandoned. What matters most is that the target text has some thematic organization of its own, that it reads naturally and smoothly without distorting the information structure of the original, and that it preserves any possible special emphasis signaled by marked structures in the original and maintains a coherent point of view as a text in its own right.

4. Viewpoint in Translation Evaluation

Just as translators constructed their own viewpoints in the reading, understand-

ing and eventually the translation, potential readers of target text surely have their viewpoint while reading and evaluating. Evaluating translation or the target text involves multidimensional factors such as source text and its author, target text and its author, potential readers of target text, or sometimes even the publisher, the investor, and the social, cultural and psychological context of the target text. House (2014: p. 249) reviews various approaches related to translation evaluation. Gregoriou (2014) adopts the premise that textual means enables readers to take particular implied reader stance or viewpoint when engaging in literary reading.

Mentalist approaches to translation assessment emphasize the belief that the quality of a translation depends largely on the translator's viewpoint and subjective interpretation, based on his intuition. For the mentalist, it is reflected in the century-old subjective, intuitive, and anecdotal judgement of how good or bad one finds a translation. Instead of striving to develop criteria with which to evaluate the translation in an intersubjectively reliable manner, propagator of this approach believe that the quality of translated text is intimately linked to the translator, whose interpretation of the original is regarded as rooted in his intuition, empathy, and interpretive experience. Translating is regarded as an individual creative act, where the meaning of a text is also created anew. There is no meaning in the text itself; the meaning is in the eye of the readers, and especially in the viewpoint from which they read this text.

The functionalist takes a skopos-related view, which maintains that the purpose, the manner and degree are important for translation evaluation. Function here means something similar to the real-world effect of a text. Translator is given purpose or right to change, reject, or improve in the translation process, but by its nature, a translation is bound to its source text and to the conditions governing its reception in the linguistic and cultural context. Stress on either of the two approaches will fail to make a balanced and reasonable evaluation of translation.

Linguistic approach takes the relationship between source and target texts seriously, attempting to explicate the relationship between the texts and how these are perceived by authors, translators, and readers, but they differ in their capacity to provide detailed procedures for analysis and evaluation. The most promising are approaches that explicitly account for the interconnectedness of context and text, because the inextricable link between language and the real world is definitive both in meaning making and translation. A pioneering approach to evaluating translation is Reiss's (1971) text typology deemed relevant for translation evaluation. She assumed that it is the text type (expressive, informative, operative) to which the original belongs that predetermines all subsequent translational decisions. More linguistically oriented works on translation and its evaluation includes Hatim and Munday (2004), and Baker (2011).

The so-called equivalence in translation is a matter of degree concerning the evaluator's viewpoint. A reasonable way out is to keep a relatively balanced degree between the two polars of being too form-oriented and too meaning-

oriented. Equivalence seems to be a popular term to evaluate translation. Yet absolute equivalence is too idealistic to realize. Common experience shows the emphasis on linguistically formal and structural equivalence will inevitably suffer a loss or distortion of meaning and function. On the contrary, functional or semantic equivalence often loses the aesthetic sensibilities of form (or structure) and rhythm. Other failure of equivalence may attribute to those untranslatable units like some proverbs, idioms and figurative language. House (2014: p. 253) argues that equivalence is a relative concept defined by the interplay of many different factors and aspects, e.g. socio-historical, linguistic and contextual factors: source and target language and their specific structural constraints, the extra-linguistic world, the original text's reflection of particular linguistic and stylistic source language norms, the linguistic and stylistic source language norms of translator, target language and culture, target language receptors' expectation norms, the translator's comprehension and interpretation of the original and his creativity, the translator's implicit and explicit theory of translation, or both, translation tradition in the target culture and interpretation of the original by its author.

Translation changes the receiving cultural situation by bringing into existence a new and different text that is neither the source text nor an original composition in the translation language, and in the process it changes the values, beliefs, and representations that are taken as viewpoints in evaluating translation. Translation carries the potential to bring about multiple transformations. Evaluation of any versions or levels of translation must take these transformations into consideration. Venuti (2013: p. 10) argues that translation changes everything from the form, meaning, and effect of the source text, even when the translator maintains a semantic correspondence that creates a reliable basis for summaries and commentaries. Translation changes the cultural situation where the source text originated through an investment of prestige or a creation of stereotype.

5. Conclusion

There are many different ways of expressing the same thing, and the elements of choice over how to express something attribute considerably to the speaker or translator's individual viewpoint. Any form of linguistic choice is meaning-making and the meaning made is somewhat creative. In communication, it is common for a person to express her viewpoint together with the information she wants to convey. In translation, though restricted by the source text, a translator still finds one way or another to mingle his viewpoint into the translation. For example, footnotes, endnotes and preface in the target text are very common and explicit forms of realizing this purpose on the one hand. The translator's preference and choice of words, grammar and style or any other linguistic form are less explicit yet very reasonable and effective means on the other.

In conclusion, translation is viewpointed in that the source text, the translator and the target text and other relevant contextual factors all make viewpoint an

indispensible composing element in translation. Translator has automaticity and privilege in choosing language, narrative perspective and target text style in translation according to his preference and viewpoint. Viewpoint also plays an essential part in evaluating translation in that since translators constructed their own viewpoints in their translation, potential readers of target text surely have their viewpoint while reading and evaluating. In translation, though restricted by the source text, a translator can find one way or another to mingle his viewpoint into the translation.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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