

**THE BARRIERS IN TRANSLATOR
TRAINING¹**

Çeviri Eğitiminde Engeller

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Abstract

Translations can be defined as genes of new knowledge. Within this framework, this paper explains and discusses translator training from the perspective of social and natural sciences. After enlisting the underlying reasons of failure in translator training despite the increasing number of the departments of translation studies in higher education, it compares translation activity in the fields of natural sciences and social sciences to shed light on the notion of translation as opposed to the past conviction defining translation solely as “text-bound activity” as an extension of language teaching. Within this coverage, it questions “translations as genes of new knowledge” based on the concept of “memes” as posed by Andrew Chesterman; Next, it discusses the functionality of translations as message carrier in consideration for the Theory of the Translatorial Action. In conclusion, this paper probes into the concept of “translation” to lay the foundations of translator training on sound grounds as an activity based on the notion of “division of labour”.

Key words: Translator training, natural sciences, social sciences, Translation Problems, Translatorial Action.

Özet

Çeviriler yeni bilgiyi taşıyan genler olarak tanımlanabilir. Bu çerçevede, sözkonusu yazı çeviri eğitimini sosyal ve doğa bilimleri açısından tartışmaya açmıştır. Ülkemizde yüksek öğretim kurumlarında sayıları giderek giderek yükselen çeviri bölümlerindeki başarısızlıkların nedenleri sıralandıktan sonra sözkonusu kavram doğa ve sosyal bilimler alanındaki çeviri etkinliği açısından karşılaştırılarak çevirinin dil eğitiminin uzantısı salt metin bağımlı bir etkinlik olmadığı konusu aydınlığa kavuşturulmuştur. Bu amaçla “çevirilerin yeni bilginin genleri” olduğu iddiası Andrew Chesterman’ın öne sürdüğü “memes” kavramından yola çıkılarak sorgulanmış; Ardından ileti taşıyıcı olarak çevirilerin işlevselliği “Çeviriye İlişkin Eylem Kuramı” açısından tartışılmıştır. Sonuç olarak, bu yazı çeviri eğitiminde çevirinin “iş bölümü”ne dayalı bir etkinlik olduğu düşüncesini sağlam temellere dayandırmak üzere “çeviri kavramı”nı irdelemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Çeviri eğitimi, Doğa bilimleri, Sosyal Bilimler, Çeviri Sorunları, Çeviri Eylemi.

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Introduction

Starting with the definition of translation is the best way to discuss the issue of translator training in the fields of social sciences and natural sciences. If we translate our ideas, thoughts or objects into signs in our mother tongue, we can also translate from one language into another. Roman Jakobson calls it “translation proper” as different from “intralingual,” and “intersemiotic” translations (cited by Hermans 1995:16-17). In this case, we can define translations as agents, or as intermediaries in transmitting knowledge. However, translations fall behind expectations in disseminating knowledge in the field of humanities and social sciences in comparison with natural sciences. Undoubtedly, it is due to the fact that translation is not an easy task. Dryden in 1680 explains hopeless case of translators and translation as follows:

'Tis much like dancing on ropes with fettered legs: a man may shun a fall by using caution; but gracefulness of motion is not to be expected: and when we have said the best of it, 'tis but a foolish task; for no sober man would put himself into a danger for the applause of escaping without breaking his neck. (cited from Pym 2017, <http://usuaris.tinet.cat/apym/online/intercultures/blendlinge.pdf>)

However, we cannot exist as human beings without exchanging knowledge with each other. The number of translation departments is increasing all over the world even if they cannot meet the expectations of neither translation market, nor academia.

There are several reasons for failure in translator training, but two major reasons may shed light why it is not an easy task. First, the speed and the size of information flow increased incredibly in every field of life; not only international, but also interpersonal correspondence increased because of advances recorded in the field of information technologies. The second is translation activity once limited to literary translation has extended its borders; Today the knowledge produced in science, industry or technology and politics are shared internationally. Namely, a professional translator requires to be equipped with technical and scientific, artistic and technical knowledge alongside linguistic skills. However, we cannot expect translators to be specialists in every field of study. It means the professional standards of translators should change. That is to say, translation is no longer an individual activity. It requires a team work. However, the professional status of translators has not been positioned yet although the demand for mid-level staff has increased.

If we are to discuss the issue from the perspective of Turkey, we can easily observe that she has had a rich experience of translation activity since the foundation of Turkish Republic. In other words, she has acquired international or universal knowledge through intensive translation activity. However, today trainees graduating from philology departments cannot meet the translation demands in every field of study, or in every field of life. Accordingly, we can summarize the underlying reasons of failure in the field translation from the perspective of Turkey as follows:

- 1.The increasing number for translations from distant languages and cultures
- 2.The convention of teaching foreign languages through translation in the past
3. The failure in developing a translator training model peculiar to Turkish students

4. The low income and status of translators as professionals.

After enlisting the underlying reasons of the failure briefly in Turkey, the nature of translation as an interdisciplinary will be discussed within the framework of social and natural sciences to explain the underlying causes why we encounter problems in the field of translation studies. This way of explanatory approach will also discern it from the fields of language learning and philology departments.

Translation: Natural Sciences vs Social Sciences

Scientists of different languages and cultures who study in the field of physics, mathematics or biochemistry share knowledge and interact with each other much more easily than those studying in the field of social sciences since they share the same universally acknowledged numerical data, or formulae. A scholar in the field of natural sciences can retrieve information through translations much more easily than those in the field of social sciences. Then we can conclude that a scholar or scientist can infer the same conclusions from the same numerical data or formulae when s/he aims to retrieve information through translations even if s/he cannot associate lexical items with mental content of his language.

However, in social sciences lexical items in translated texts may fall short of providing intercultural communication due to cultural and linguistic divergences in reasoning. What feeds humanities and social sciences is divergent thinking since they are based on theoretical thinking, or on abstraction even if the researcher conducts quantitative research in the field of social sciences.

On the other hand, those in the field of natural sciences base their research whether on observation of natural events, or on numbers rather than individual argumentation, or reasoning as in the field of social sciences. In the fields of social sciences and humanities, the research starts when there is a problem in target culture. Social sciences may also involve in quantitative research, but numerical data only act as a means on the path to qualitative research, not as an end as in the field of natural sciences. Accordingly, scholars studying in the field of natural sciences may retrieve information more easily from translated texts even if they are inadequate. Numerical data guide them to comment on the findings they obtained from research, and help them reach the same numerical or formulaic conclusions as opposed to vagueness of translated texts in the field of social sciences (Yazıcı 2017:255-257).

Social Sciences survive amongst other disciplines as long as they broaden mental content of its theoretical or conceptual framework, or as long as they submit new perspectives, or ideas to the academic environment. Accordingly, we can claim that the subject matter and type of research pose barriers in transferring knowledge from one language to another since the researcher first translates his ideas intra-lingually on the documents he reads; Next, s/he translates it into another language. Whereas, in the field of natural sciences, the scholar describes what he sees. The numbers, the charts, or the statics tell the reader what s/he thinks, and the translator does not have to spend much effort to share «the invariant core of the message» the author wants to express. The scientific texts in the field of natural sciences is generally based on «object level reasoning». However, the knowledge produced in the field of social sciences, or humanities is based on «meta-level reasoning» (Hermans 1997:18-19). It is for this reason that the task of the translator doubles in transferring “the invariant” in the field of social sciences alongside the problems arising from linguistic and cultural distances. Accordingly, one can claim that translator’s task in seizing «the invariant core of the message», and transferring it to another culture in the field of social sciences is much harder compared to natural sciences. Besides, knowledge flows unilaterally from developed countries to developing or

underdeveloped countries. Accordingly, we cannot mention bilateral exchange of knowledge equally. Despite all these barriers, translation activity and translations continue to act as catalysts, or as a pool in exchanging and generating new knowledge. It is for this reason that Lawrence Venuti calls it “Utopian Dimension in translation” (Lawrence 2000:484).

Translations as genes of knowledge

Translations as fact of target culture fulfill different functions and serve for different ends. Andrew Chesterman claims that “translations are survival machines for memes”. Studying what he means by this claim will gain us new perspectives both in transferring knowledge from one to another, and will enhance the functionality of translations as conveyors of universal knowledge. Accordingly, before questioning whether translations act only as intermediaries or not, explaining the term “meme” will be helpful in understanding Chesterman’s claim as cited above.

Chesterman defines “meme” in two ways: The first is “a unit of cultural transmission” (Chesterman

1997:5); the second is “a unit of imitation”, which is derived and contracted from the Greek root “mimeme” as “meme”. To put it another way, it is analogically derived from the term “gene”. Just in the same way as “genes” act as replicators, they propagate, or evolve; On the other hand, in some cases just as bad genes killing their hosts as in cancer, they may mutate, mutilate, disappear, or transform while travelling from one culture to another. It means that the translated text ends in “non-translation” since the researcher cannot prove the postulates of source text, transfer and relationship due to the “memes” killing the source text. In this case, the texts hypothetically called as “translation” in target culture turn into “non-translations” (Toury 1995: 33-35).

Although translations do not replace the originals due to spatial-temporal distances, they spread, or propagate the ideas, or memes in it and provide grounds for the extension of ideas, or further interpretations: thereby enriching the pool of memes. Namely, even if they are subject to change in transferring ideas, or knowledge, they spread the memes of source text (Chesterman 1997: 6-14). In this case, we can claim that translations do not act as an end but as a means in lifting the borders across cultures. However, the question is what impact they would have on target culture. Would they provide integration for a better world? Or would they end in standardization of language, or assimilation? Or can we expect them to provide unity in diversity for the sake of flourishing new ideas and perspectives in the field of social sciences.

Within this framework, defining scientific texts in social sciences will yield clues concerning the challenges awaiting us in the field of social sciences. Jody Byrne defines scientific text as “A scientific text will discuss, analyze and synthesize information with a view to explaining ideas, proposing new theories or evaluating methods (2012:2). In fact, a translator undergoes similar cognitive stages in translating a text. However, his/her workload in transferring scientific knowledge is much heavier as intermediary than the author of the scientific texts since he encounters the following barriers:

1. The ways of argumentation in scientific texts is closely related with the logics of languages. We may categorize languages into two groups as inductive and deductive. While inductive languages proceed from specific points to generalizations, deductive languages proceed from generalizations to specific observations to verify, or refute the thesis proposed in generalization. The reverse sequencing of ideas from inflected languages to agglutinative ones may challenge the translators in transferring the new knowledge. One can infer from this remark that the translator should observe the delicate

balance between the foreignness of new knowledge in the original text and its intelligibility, or clarity in the target text. Within this framework, Friedrich Schleiermacher explained two strategies in his treatise “Über die verschiedenen Methoden Übersetzens” (On the various Methods of Translation) on June 24th 1813, in the Royal Academy of Sciences in Berlin as follows;

The translator can either leave the writer in peace as much as possible, and bring the reader to him, or he can leave the reader in peace as much as possible, and bring the writer to him. The two approaches are so totally different from one another that one or the other must be followed as strictly as possible; any mixing will necessarily produce a highly unreliable result. (cited trans. by Wilss 1982:33).

Wolfram Wilss defines it “a translator must prove his stylistic competence by blending his own language with the foreign language in such a way that “the original language” is preserved in translation.

2. The second problem is concerned with the barriers in translating the idiomatic language. In fact idiomatic language is the heart of culture, and changes in the course of time. In other words, idiomacity of languages reflect the cultural wit, or wisdom of source culture. It reflects the cultural identity of source culture the readers of target culture are unfamiliar with. There may be no equivalent idiomatic usage of language in target language. This usually happens in translation of phrasal word, collocations, idioms, proverbs. For example, in the case of translation of idiomatic collocations, the translator may have a recourse to explicitation strategy, or transfer it directly and insert a footnote defining it. However, the translator should consider the text-type, sub text type or genre of the original texts. For example, s/he may not insert footnote if he translates “an anecdote” so as not to disrupt the flow of humor. The following Turkish anecdote from Nasreddin Hodja, one of the most leading humorist and satirist of Seldjukian period in the 13th century may illuminate in what way Turkish idioms are translated into English. (<http://u.cs.biu.ac.il/~schiff/Net/front.html#intro>)

Ya Tutarsa

Hoca, Akşehir Gölü'nün kıyısına oturmuş. Çevresindekiler bir de bakmışlar ki Hoca, çömleğinden çıkardığı kaşık kaşık yoğurdu göle boşaltıp karıştırmıyor mu? Şaşkınlıkla sormuşlar:

Hocam, ne yapıyorsun öyle?

Göle yoğurt çalıyorum!

Göl hiç yoğurt tutar mı?

Ya tutarsa?

Back Translation (Literal)

Hodja, seated on the shore of Aksehir Lake. They looked, and didn't they see Hodja was pouring the spoonfuls of yoghurt into the lake? Surprisingly they asked:

Hodja, what are you doing?

I'm stealing yoğurt!

Does the lake ever eat yoğurt?

What if it keeps?

Translation 1

What if it should!

One day Hodja was washing his yogurt pot and pouring yoghurt remained in it into lake. Some people wanted to make fun of him when they saw him, - Hodja, what are you doing?" One of them asked.

- **I am turning the lake into yogurt**" Hodja replied.

- **Can a little bit of yeast ferment the great lake?** The man asked while others laughed at Hodja.

- You never know perhaps it might, Hodja replied,

-but **what if it should!** (<http://salpagarov.narod.ru/kultura/hoca/Jokes-Anecdotes.htm>)

As seen in this example, the translator has a recourse to "explicitation" strategy to explain how to ferment yoghurt. In Turkish, we use "yogurt çalmak" (=steal yogurt) or "yogurt tutmak" (=keep yogurt) within the coverage of making yogurt. While the former refers to "fermentation", the latter refers to "conversion of yeast into yoghurt". However, this text is not a recipe explaining how to make yoghurt. It is an anecdote from Turkish history. The translator uses standard language in transferring the anecdote due to linguistic and spatial distances. Since he fails to seize the idiomacity of Turkish language, he inescapably fails to introduce the Turkish sense of humour to the targetee.

On the other hand, we can not limit idiomatic language only to literary text. we may also encounter such examples in technical or scientific jargon.

3. Translation of scientific texts, or texts of specific field involves specific field knowledge, terminological knowledge, knowledge of text-typology, and knowledge of translation strategy. Millions of terms, new words (neologisms, nonce words) are coined in languages. For example, there is still no established equivalent of the term "drone" in Turkish although it is used in several occasions even in weddings. The suggestions are as follows: argözü (=bee eye), uçangöz(flying eye), uçan kamera (=flying camera), uçarçeker(=Fly and shoot), uçurgör(=fly and see). In Turkish they are suggested as compound words. In face of these barriers, the translator considers the intercultural gap by inserting new knowledge the readers unfamiliar with. (<http://www.haberturk.com/ekonomi/teknoloji/haber/1544025-tdk-drone-kelimesine-turkce-karsilik-ariyor>)

4. Lack of awareness of translation norms in target culture may also cause translation problems. Linguistic and specific field knowledge is not enough to overcome barriers. On the other hand, knowledge or awareness of translation norms will also serve to raise ethical competence of translators. In other terms, today translators are expected to acquire the skills peculiar to the coordinated translators, who can first associates lexical or terminological items with mental repertory of his own; Next, they associate them with the mental repertory of the target culture, and finally reproduce it in target language in consideration for the translation norms present in target culture (Presas 2000: 24)

Conclusion

After having discussed the complex nature of translation so far, the following conclusions may be drawn to improve the quality of translator training;

1. Instead of opening departments at undergraduate level, training, or raising specialists at MA and PhD level will be much more useful in laying the foundations of translator training at undergraduate level. Training at PhD or MA level in the field of translation studies will help to develop training models peculiar to Turkish Students. However, we cannot open Doctorate or Masters programs in universities without giving service at undergraduate level.
2. If we have no other option other than opening undergraduate programs, we should develop such schedules to bridge the gap between theory and practice in consideration for the linguistic and cultural distances. That is to say, it should be something peculiar to us, but also loyal to universal or global standards of translation.
3. We should train trainees in such a way as to give up their vegetative learning habits. Most of the students are enrolled to the departments of Translation Studies since they think they can lead their vegetative life style as a translator. However, as discussed above, translation is no longer a task based on “texts” or “transfer of texts” from one language to another. It is replaced with translatorial action based on “division of labor”. Accordingly, when a message is sent to another culture, the experts involved in sending and receiving the message in cross cultural communication fulfil different kinds of “translational action”. However, they require expertise of a translator in crossing message into another cultural, which is called “translatorial action”. This means we should develop such translation tasks simulating real life conditions and developing team spirit.
4. Translation studies is an interdisciplinary of study. Accordingly, departments of Translation Studies should be in close contact with other disciplines to extend specific field knowledge and scientific jargon of trainees as well as gaining awareness of research methods and information technologies such as CATs, machine translations.
5. Translation is not a means of language learning. Teaching translation especially in distant languages is a difficult task. Without developing linguistic competences in both languages at proficiency level we should not start translator training programs at undergraduate level. This means lengthening the duration of undergraduate programs. However, when we consider the low pay and social status of translators in Turkey, lengthening the duration of translator training programs seems neither practical, nor economic. Then, we can open lifelong learning translation centers in universities in cooperation with federations or associations of translation and translator agencies. Especially when considered the rapid change and expansion of text type conventions, information technologies, specific field jargon, foundation of such centers becomes “a requisite” of translator training programs” in cooperation with professionals.
6. We should raise occupational standards of professional translators as soon as possible to save translation and translators from amateurish position. In conclusion, all the above-mentioned conclusions and suggestions can be fulfilled only if the social and economic status of translators are raised to international standards.

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