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## What is Translation?

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Translation is the bridge to difference. It is the transfer of knowledge from one way of understanding to another. This can mean from one language to another or from one discipline to another. For example, from Spanish to English or from a scientific way of speaking into simpler terms understood by the common person. Either way, through translation, more people can get exposed to and understand different writings, viewpoints, and information than would be available to them without it. There are multiple ways to translate a text into a different language and scholars debate which one is correct. The phrase “meaning can be lost in translation but also created by it”(Freeman 432) means that as the work is translated to a new language and the translator is putting in his or her own influence, the original and the translation could look different and provide different meanings and feelings about the topic, or elicit the same feelings with a different arrangement of words. It all depends on how the text is translated, what the goal of the translator is, and how he or she alters the original into the new translation. This transfer of information is important because it brings people from different cultures and places together. Even so, the phrase “lost in translation” can be valid in many cases, because while translation brings new information and makes it available to more people, there are some things lost along the way. (Freeman 430)

Translation can be written or spoken, but there is a difference between the two. A translator takes a written work and translates it from a foreign language into his or her native tongue. There are a lot of considerations when translating a text that include what to leave out, what to do when there is not an exact translation between the languages, how to leave enough of the original culture and add in the culture of the translator so that the readers will understand, and more. The translator must decide between certain types of translation based on his or her goal. An interpreter translates spoken phrases between languages. (Schleiermacher 43-44) This is more of an immediate translation, so there are not as many considerations to be made on how to translate, because the interpreter does not have time to do so. The interpreter is more concerned with how to get the same idea or meaning across in the next language. Interpreters need to be familiar with the technical details and terminology needed to be able to benefit the participants. If the interpreters have this knowledge, they will

be able to work around the differences in languages and find an expression that gets the point across in the other language. (Schleiermacher 44) This type of translation can be done by anyone with enough knowledge of both languages according to Schleiermacher, but interpreting is actually a very challenging task. The interpreter has to have a high proficiency in both languages as well as have a vast knowledge of the cultures involved and how that language expresses meaning so that they can effectively translate, not only into a different language, but into a different culture as well. All these considerations have to be made immediately so that the conversation can continue. Interpreters do not always interpret the literal meaning behind the words of one language into the next because the literal meaning may not convey the correct meaning. They must deliver what was said accurately and in a timely manner while making those quick decisions on how to get the message across most effectively. It is a highly stressful field to work in as both parties involved are depending on the interpreter to make sure they understand what is being said. If the interpreter cannot understand the accent of a speaker or is not fully knowledgeable on the topic, vocabulary required, or the culture, it can interfere with the accuracy of the interpretation and the flow of the conversation.

According to Friedrich Schleiermacher, there is a considerable difference between interpretation and translation. Schleiermacher was a German philosopher, theologian, and biblical scholar during the Romantic era who is known for his work in the philosophy of religion and his theory of translation. According to Schleiermacher, the difference between a translator and interpreter is that the translator is considered an artist. The more the author adds in his own “particular way of seeing and drawing conclusions” (Schleiermacher 44) and organizes it according to principles that he has either chosen or designed to affect the reader in a certain way, the more his own character is in the work. (Schleiermacher 44) Schleiermacher also says that the translator must “be familiar with his writer and the writer’s tongue in a different sense than the interpreter” (Schleiermacher 44). For example, the translator must be aware of the author’s background and what he wanted to get across in the text as well as how that particular language manipulated the words to get that meaning across. In all, according to Schleiermacher, the translator is above the interpreter because the translator is incorporating

his own influences into the work he is translating, which includes the spirit of his own language and his own views and feelings about the topic. (Schleiermacher 44-45) He is considering a translator an artist because of the individual influence that is being added to the text making it more of his own work. The translator is considering the multiple characteristics of the text that the original author added and is having to manipulate those characteristics and the words into a text that would make sense to the new audience. While doing this, the way the translator personally expresses meaning will influence the text of the translation. In contrast to translation, interpretation is more for getting across the main point of what was said, so the interpreter is not putting much of his own personal influence into what is translated. Schleiermacher states that “the less obvious the author’s presence was in the original, and the more he served merely as an organ of apperception guided by his objects’ spatial and temporal organization, the more the translation will be a matter of mere interpreting” (Schleiermacher 43). Meaning, when the original text lacks a strong presence of the author, like in scientific works, the translation of that text will resemble the process of an interpretation more, since there are not many other aspects to translate into another language besides meaning.

When translating a written text of high artistic quality, however, it is not an easy task to transfer information from one way of speaking into another while preserving all that the original piece had to offer. Therefore, Friedrich Schleiermacher explained what can alter the original text and what translators have to be aware of when translating a text. The first consideration is whether a word in one language can correspond directly to a word in the other and can express the same idea with the same range of meaning. If that were true, he said, then the translation of these areas would be just as mechanical as interpretation, where you are only communicating the information in the piece (Schleiermacher 45). Schleiermacher writes, “the further removed (the languages) are from one another in etymology and years, the more it will be seen that not a single word in one language will correspond perfectly to a word in another” (Schleiermacher 46). Even people who know both languages very well are not going to be able to find the exact word in the other language, and so it becomes the task of finding the most fitting word to get across the same point. An example of a word that does not have a direct translation to English is the Spanish word “sobremesa”, which is used to express the moment

after eating a meal at the table where the food is gone but the conversation is still going. There is not a single word in English to describe this so the translator would have to express this meaning differently in the translation. The second point Schleiermacher noted was that when someone is translating, his own self-expression can take over. The way one author manipulates words to paint a picture within a story is going to be different than how another author would. Since some words are not going to translate directly, this opens the opportunity for the translator's influence to enter the text as they find a different way to convey the original thought. From here Schleiermacher outlined two points that define the relationship between the language and the writer. One is the language's effect on the writer and the other is the writer's effect on the language. He described the language's effect on the writer by stating "every human being is...in the power of the language he speaks" (Schleiermacher 46). This quote is saying that the language a person speaks influences that person. This influence could be in the way that an individual interprets something or in the way he or she words things and expresses thoughts. The way someone combines words and forms ideas is shaped by the language and culture he or she grew up in. He described the writer's effect on the language by stating "every free-thinking, intellectually independent individual shapes the language in his turn" (Schleiermacher 46). Here Schleiermacher is saying that the individual also has the ability to manipulate language. How a person puts words together and shapes the language to express meaning is the power he or she has over the language. The individual causes new forms of the text to emerge because he or she is using his or her own way of combining the words in that language.

Schleiermacher said the goal of translating is to "place the foreign reader in the same relationship to the author and his work, as was the reader of the original" (Schleiermacher 45) so the same impression made by the original piece on its readers would be felt in the same way by the readers of the translation. It is a difficult task to preserve what the original text got across to the reader considering that there is not a word for word translation and that the readers are from different cultures, so they may interpret things differently. An example of a word for word translation that was incorrect was the Pepsi slogan "Come Alive With the Pepsi Generation" when it was translated for advertisements in Taiwan. The translation of the slogan

did not translate correctly and instead meant “Pepsi will bring your ancestors back from the dead”. Most of the time, there is no direct translation possible for a text and the translator must try to find a way around this using words in the new language to somehow get across the same meaning and impression to the reader, as well as preserve the linguistic style of the original author.

Other things, like cultural context, are just untranslatable. For example, direct cultural references and jokes are pretty much impossible to translate because the reader would not have the cultural context to be able to understand them. Freeman states, “Knowing at a distance – made in and mediated by translation – makes for incomplete renditions, blurred images, and partial truths” (Freeman 430). The reader is not going to grasp the whole meaning of the text without that cultural context behind the words. In addition to losing the original author’s way of wording the text, the readers of the translation will not understand the cultural background that the text was written in because they live in a different culture. By expressing a text or spoken phrase in another language, the cultural context that gives greater meaning to the words spoken can be lost. The translator and the reader would have to have spent an ample amount of time immersed in that culture to be able to understand it. (Freeman 431)

There are different ways that a translator can try to maintain the original cultural context of a text. Sometimes the cultural differences that need to be explained so that the reader can fully understand the text can be provided by footnotes. Even so, this also raises the question how many footnotes are too many, because the reader is not going to enjoy the text as much if he or she must keep referring to the footnotes to understand. Maintaining the original culture can also be mended by foreignizing. This is when the translator will leave the original word in the text when translating it to leave that cultural flair (Venuti). In this case there would not be a direct translation of this word because it is a cultural term specific to that time and place. Leaving the word adds in the historical and cultural context of the original culture and language that would have been lost if the translator had just omitted that word. There are many decisions that the translator has to make when translating a text based on which part of the original he or she is trying to be the most faithful to. Many questions arise such as whether to leave cultural words or terms in the text even if they might be hard to

pronounce and the readers might not understand them. When should the translator add footnotes? How many footnotes are too many? How much time should someone spend trying to understand the culture that they are translating? How knowledgeable does the translator have to be about this culture in order to translate it effectively? Overall, the question is how to achieve a translation that pays respect to the original text.

There are two main models in translation theory that relate to this question. The first is the instrumental model, which is the model that was dominant in translation studies up until the Romantic period. This theory of translation focuses on the reproduction of the source text in form, meaning, or effect. The goal is to have the translated text be a copy of the original. This type of translation is also called word for word or sense for sense translation. The word for word concept refers to the translator being more focused on translating exactly what the original author said by translating each word to the other language. This way of translating can affect how the sense of the text is conveyed since the way words are organized in one language might not make sense in another, and it does not take into consideration the cultural differences between the different audiences. The sense for sense concept means that the translator is more focused on conveying the same meaning that the text had for the original readers. It translates the whole meaning of a statement rather than just each word one at a time. This allows for the meaning of the text and flow of sentences to be preserved in a way so that the audience of the translation will be able to understand it. The second model is called the hermeneutic model. This theory views translation as an interpretation of the original since the text is a product of many factors. It considers the cultural and social context of the texts and translates accordingly. It is considered a more holistic approach, since it considers all aspects (writers' style, cultural context, etc.) of the text to be important. According to the renowned translation scholar, Lawrence Venuti, the hermeneutic model is better because it gives a more sophisticated, comprehensive, and ethical translation. This model recognizes that translation cannot reproduce an unaltered version of the source text. (Venuti 5-6)

The translation of specific texts can be completed using different methods, based on these models, depending on what the translator wants to accomplish with the translated text. Multiple theorists have defined the different ways texts can be translated and differ in what

should be included and what is left out or changed from the original text. Nicolas Perrot D'Ablancourt was a French translator during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, who translated ancient Greek and Latin works into French. During this time period there was a debate going on between scholars regarding which authors were superior: the ancients or the moderns. On one side, some scholars believed that the ancient Greco-Roman civilization was the apex of human achievement and the height of human intelligence and wisdom. They thought that the works created during that time were superior and should be imitated, not changed. ("The Quarrel") On the other hand, the scholars in favor of the moderns saw human knowledge and creativity as progressive and changing over time. They considered classical works admirable but in need of some improvements as the times have changed; they "strove to use the past creatively, adapting it to present conditions" ("The Quarrel"). D'Ablancourt was on the side of the moderns as he believed that the context in which the text was written differed greatly from the time period in which the translation was written. Therefore, in order to preserve the meaning and goal of the original text, the translation has to be altered to fit the modern era and cannot be a word for word translation. D'Ablancourt's translations were called "les belles infidèles" or the "beautiful but unfaithful" because while they were enjoyable to read, they differed substantially from the original (D'Ablancourt 31-37).

Other methods for translation have been identified by Schleiermacher. The first is paraphrasing. Schleiermacher said that when one cannot find a word that means the same in both languages, paraphrasing is like taking a word from one language and finding a similar one in the other and then adding or subtracting its value by adding modifiers to the word (Schleiermacher 48). Schleiermacher adds that, "even if I cannot find a word in my language to correspond to the word in the original, I will attempt to approximate its value by adding restrictive and amplifying modifiers" (Schleiermacher 48). For example, if the original word carries the meaning "great", and the word in the other language means "good", adding "very" to the front of it would make the words carry about the same meaning. This method can reproduce the text with some accuracy according to Schleiermacher. The second method is imitation. He says that imitation cannot produce a replica and has parts of the text that are noticeably different, but "its effect comes so close to the original as the differences in the



material permit" (Schleiermacher 48). Here the identity of the work is sacrificed to preserve the impression made by the work so that it gives the new readers a similar impression to that of what the original readers received. Either way, according to the hermeneutic model, when translating a written piece from one language into another there is no way to make an exact copy of the original.

Even though there are different methods on how to achieve the translation, there is a code of ethics that translators try to follow when translating texts in order to preserve the original text's integrity. Ethics in translation is important because the translator ultimately wants to have a faithful rendering of the source text. Even within one language, there are regional, generational, and socio-economical differences as well as changes in the language over time. Therefore, it makes sense that taking one constantly changing language and translating information into another constantly changing language is a difficult task that comes with many questions. The translator's goal, according to Kwame Anthony Appiah, the British-Ghanaian philosopher, cultural theorist, and novelist, is to produce a translation that "aims to produce a new text that matters to one community the way another text matters to another" (Appiah 342). If a text has a great impact on one community and is received in a certain way, the goal of the translator is for his or her translation of the original to be received in the same way and carry the same impact on the new audience. The different ways a translation could be considered unethical, like for example the addition of information, misinterpretation, or misrepresentation of the original author's intentions, affect how the readers perceive the source community. Therefore, it is important to ensure that the source community's culture and ideals are preserved along with the translation of the text.

There are many benefits of translating literary texts. Translation promotes different values and experiences by making them available to other cultures to read. In this way it encourages a greater understanding between different cultures and communities. Translation connects cultures across the world. It provides the opportunity for people to have access to other languages and therefore their culture, ways of thinking, and ideas:

"Translation expands our ability to explore through literature the thoughts and feelings of people from another society or another time. It permits us to savor the

transformation of the foreign into the familiar and for a brief time to live outside our own skins, our own preconceptions and misconceptions. It expands and deepens our world, our consciousness, in countless, indescribable ways” (Grossman).

By reading a translation, the audience is receiving an insight into another part of the world. Therefore, it is important that a translation preserve the uniqueness and difference of the original text so that the cultural connections that are present are still available to the reader of the translation. Translation is the bridge to difference and without it we would be cut off from much of the world. Writers want to connect with as many people as possible and translation provides the opportunity for a text to reach an even greater audience. This is especially true for texts written in minority languages. As Grossman states, “for writers whose first language is limited in terms of how many people speak it, translation is indispensable for achieving an audience of consequential size”. Appiah says that we should challenge ourselves to “understanding the reasons characteristic of other cultures and other times” because the “rich differences of human life in culture” (342) are easily lost if people only pay attention to their own opinions. Michael Cronin points out that heterogeneity is something we want to keep. Difference is important and should be protected. When translation is being used to reduce difference, it is destructive, but when it is respectful and ethical and keeps heterogeneity alive, it is good. (Cronin 108)

While there are many benefits to translation, it is also important to note the potentially negative impacts that it can have on minority languages and cultures. Hegemonic or dominant languages can take over minority languages and the minority languages could be lost as a result. Writing in major languages, like English, ensures that the piece will be able to reach a large audience, but if a speaker of a minority language chooses to write in English rather than his or her own language, they sacrifice cultural specificity. Michael Cronin points out that the reality for many parts of the world with a minority language is that due to their lack of resources to share their language and culture, the language could become less relevant and could result in the extinction of the language. Therefore, the language, culture and perspectives that come with it either are not shared at all with the rest of the world or they are translated into a dominant language, risking the loss of intentions, style and cultural context of the source

text. Cronin relates translation to tourism. It is beneficial when people learn about a minority language and culture in particular because it decreases the likelihood that the language will go extinct. Even so, while the tourists are there, they are influencing that language and bringing in their cultures ideals that influence the native community. Therefore, tourism is to some extent a double-edged sword.

Translation connects us to the world around us so that we can understand different perspectives and broaden our own. We live in a world where being connected to not only our community but also communities outside of our own is beneficial to our well-being. Because of technology, we are now able to reach people across the globe within seconds and this increase in ability to connect has increased the need and desire for translation. The translator has to ensure that the original intentions and influence of the author are preserved. While translating, steps have to be taken to preserve the original intentions and influence of the author. A text does not only hold the language, it also holds the influences of that part of the world and that community's way of life and way of thinking. Cronin states, "If we want a world that values diversity of perspective over the certainty of singular belief, a world where many voices balance the privileged few, then translators must be part of the dialogue" (Cronin 104). Being exposed to difference broadens our perspectives and opens us up to new ideas. Translation makes this exposure to difference possible.

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