

Interdisciplinarity in Language, Linguistics and Translation

Kolawole, S.O. (Ph.D)

Department of French Ekiti state University, Ado- Ekiti

ABSTRACT: *The relevance of Linguistics in the field of Translation is obvious. It is also a truism that translation cannot be without language and that one cannot translate without knowing about the source language and the target language. In the world today, translation studies have been enjoying unprecedented success because it has become a fertile and frequent metaphor for the contemporary intercultural world. As a result, scholars all over disciplines have been working on translational phenomenon and particularly how it affects their various disciplines. It is also relevant to understand that to 'know' a language is not the same as to 'know about' a language. This means that being able to speak a language fluently is no guarantee that one is able to explain and present that language to others in another language. The knowledge of Linguistics is therefore a sure way of improving the quality of translation. Language, Linguistics and Translation have a somewhat asymmetrical relationship. In fact, every linguist needs translation as an autonomous, independent discipline especially when translation studies embraces a broader, transdisciplinary perspective that sees translation as an instantiation of more general cognitive and cultural processes of the creation, communication and transformation of meaning within and across cultures. This paper attempts to discuss the relationship between the three different but interrelated disciplines, translation, linguistics and language.*

KEYWORDS: *Interdisciplinarity, Language, Linguistics, Translation, Culture, Communication.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Translation, as it is generally acknowledged, is the transfer of meaning from the source language (SL) text to the target language (TL) text, (Ajunwa (1990), Steiner, (1978). The terms translation and interpretation are often confused by laypersons (Selescovitch, 1976). The term 'translation' generally refers to the general process of converting a message from one language to another and more specifically to the written form of the process whereas 'interpretation' denotes the oral forms of the translation process. Thus, the study of interlingual communication, commonly known as translation theory, encompasses interpretation as well.

Translation is rather reserved for activities put in writing while interpretation, whether simultaneous or consecutive, has to do with activities put orally. Interpretation is purely a human activity whereas translation can be both machine and human activity, particularly with the development of computers. The real difference between interpretation and translation, according to Joseph Ukoyen (2001:217) lies in their operational modalities. The interpreter operates essentially on the auditory communication chain, alternating between listening and speaking, (both evanescent activities). The translator, on the other hand, operates on the graphic communication chain and alternates between reading and writing.

The graphic nature of translation and the persistence of the textual material create the dichotomy between translation and interpretation. It is therefore possible to generalize that translation and interpretation are almost the same thing but they never are exactly. This is because an interpretation is likely to be simpler and colloquial. Whereas interpretation includes more redundancy, generally full of repetition, less detached and deprived of the original metaphors, with more emphasis on the essential points and more attention to the communicative resources, translation is more accurate, more concise and better formulated. It is, however, important to note here that, it is always better for a translator, particularly, of a literary text, to start his work by first interpreting the text before him. By this, the context becomes very clear to him.

This suggests that a good translation is one that is meaning based and not word-based, one that has the ability of conveying an equivalent message in the most accurate and natural way possible (Eugene Nida, 1965, Newmark, 1988, Catford, 1964 etc.) Catford (1965:20), defines it as 'the replacement of textual materials in the source language by equivalent textual material in another language (target language), i.e., an operation performed on language whereby a text is substituted in one language for a text in another'. Nida and Taber (1969:22), see it as consisting in producing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent to the message of the source language first in meaning and secondly in terms of style.

II. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LINGUISTICS AND TRANSLATION

Translation has indeed gone beyond being only derivatives and copies. It is no longer mechanical devices replacing linguistics codes (equivalents) from one language into another. Attention has now been shifted to the role of the translator as capable of analyzing his or her intervention in the process of linguistics transfer involving and using cognate disciplines. Bassnet (1996:22) argues that translation once considered a subservient, transparent filter through which a text could and should pass through adulteration, the translation can now be seen as a process in which intervention is crucial. As Translation Studies has grown, it has looked to other areas for ideas and inspiration. Some of these areas are Post-colonial Studies, Deconstruction, Women's Studies, Media Studies, Literary Criticism, Linguistics, and Interpreting Studies, which have all become major fields of research in Translation Studies.

Translation as a social practice can be seen to shape, maintain and also resist and challenge the asymmetrical nature of exchanges between parties engaged in or subjected to hegemonic practices. A basic knowledge of the nature of language, either spoken or written form, is indispensable for students of translation i.e. interlingual communication, because language is very central to translation activity. In this connection, the contributions of Ferdinand de Saussure and Noam Chomsky, fathers of modern structural linguistics and transformational generative grammar, have a lot to offer. Saussure in his *Course in general linguistics* posits a basic dichotomy which he makes between *langue* (language as a system) and *parole* (living, dynamic and evolving speech used by individual human beings) (Ukoyen, 2001). Within the structure of language, the meaning of words depends on their relationship to other words, not on their form. *Parole* is similar to individual speech while *langue* exists in the form of a sum of impressions deposited in the brain of each member of the community almost like a dictionary of which identical copies have been distributed to each individual' Saussure(1974:19). Saussure's dichotomy between 'langue' and 'parole' is similar to Chomsky's 'competence' and 'performance'. There are many elements that are central to any translation. To quote Nord (1997:11), "...a translation theory cannot draw on a linguistic theory alone... What it needs is a theory of culture to explain the specificity of communicative situations and the relationship between verbalized and non-verbalized situational elements".

Language, as a system, consists of contrastive relations between its various constituent elements such that element derives its meaning and value within the system from the simultaneous presence of all other elements (Atkinson, M., et al, (1982). The language system possesses an implicit grammar which makes communication possible among its users. The language system thus consists essentially of a highly structured lexis and syntax. It is a social product endowed with an objective existence independent of its human users who, besides, cannot arbitrarily modify or change it at will. Speech according to Saussure (1959) is the human being's use or actualization of the resources of the language system for communication or aesthetic purposes. Compared to language system, speech is relatively free as the individual language user can innovate to the best of his ability, subject to the basic constraints of the grammar of language.

Linguistics is principally concerned with the description of any language. It has generally been explained as the scientific study of language. Traditionally, it has to do with writing grammars and dictionaries for natural language and with describing phonetics. Chapman (1984:4) presents a more succinct definition of Linguistics when he writes that 'the study of linguistics is concerned with language as an observable phenomenon of human activity, both in general principles and in the particular realization which we call language e.g. French, English, Arabic languages'.

The two quoted sentences should justify your categorization of linguistics in the sentence before it. You either provide source for the assertion you made of linguistics before the quotations and find a way to link the quotes or use a sentence that links with the quotes.

As an observable phenomenon, Linguistics is concerned with the science and the theory of how languages work and provide categories and generalization on observations of language effect. Since Linguistics involves observation, generalization and verification, its method is purely scientific. According to Lyons (1967:7), a linguist approaches the study of language methodologically and scientifically. To do this, he needs a general theory of how languages are made up or function. Linguistics, though is the science of language, (Crystal, 1974), differs from the main sciences (Physics, Chemistry etc) as to goals and methods of investigating the things that take place in language. The same way linguistics can be described as a science, so also translation is.

The dominant characteristic of language is that it looks at its raw materials objectively and scientifically in the manner of disciplines such as psychology, sociology and social anthropology. The two main

components of language are phonetics and Linguistics, which are jointly referred to as the linguistic sciences. Linguistics is descriptive and not prescriptive i.e. rather than seek to set up standard habits of speech or writing, it only shows how people in a particular situation speak or write the language.

Harrison (1979), views translation as a modern science at the interface of philosophy, linguistics, psychology and sociology. Literary translation in particular is relevant to all these sciences, audio-visual arts, as well as cultural and intellectual studies. Since translation studies began, there has been a plethora of theories and approaches, a situation that has given rise to epistemological crises arising from history, methods and principles relating to Translation.

Translation as a discipline actually needs a redefinition of its roles in a context of fragmented texts and languages in a world of crises within national identities, transnational and translocal realities. The crises in translation studies compares with other situations of crises in other disciplines because all have to do with fundamental question of knowledge and meaning. Even in the area of machine translation, other disciplines such as linguistics are very essential. One cannot programme a machine to do the translators job unless one has given it a great deal of information. The machine needs to be told everything about the structure of the two languages which it is trying to relate and told how to go about finding the equivalences which exist between the two languages involved. Just like translation needs linguistics, linguistics as an independent discipline needs translation in diverse ways. In the first place, translation can save linguistics from extreme universalism or extreme relativism. Also, linguistic description of the languages of the world crucially involves translation and it would therefore be very risky for linguists to leave that translation aspect of their work untheorized Vries,(de) 2009). When linguists are aware of the central place of the translation element in their work and when they theorize the translational aspect, the quality of their work increases.

Translation as a discipline is born and lives in interdisciplinarity. Generally, interdisciplinarity signals a change because it is no longer the disciplines that decide how to analyze their objects of research but the objects themselves now ask for certain instruments of research. The distinction between what translation is and what it is not, what stands inside or outside is no longer important but what matters is the promotion of ideas of a multiple transdisciplinary concept of translation. The distinctions belong to older sense of limits that scholars register when they create categorical but also hierarchical divisions between self and the other.

Translators in the course of their work always take note of two things at the same time. The first thing is linguistic and cultural otherness and differences, gaps and bridges on the one hand and of continuities, bridges and overlap on the other hand. This specific sensitivity to both gaps and bridges, according to Vries (de), cited in the inaugural edition of *Translation*, should be celebrated as the heart of translation studies because one of the central and lasting contributions of translation to humanities is to be an antidote to the distorting impact of ideologies of both universalism and relativism. The major tool of translation is language. Translation has always been defined in relation to Language and Linguistics. In fact Ukoyen (2001:219) is of the opinion that 'knowledge of the nature of language is thus very essential for any translator who wants to make headway in the art or science of interlingual communication because the use of language is central to their activities.' Language is concerned with the application of general descriptive principles of linguistic structure or analytical methods-phonetics, grammar and vocabulary.

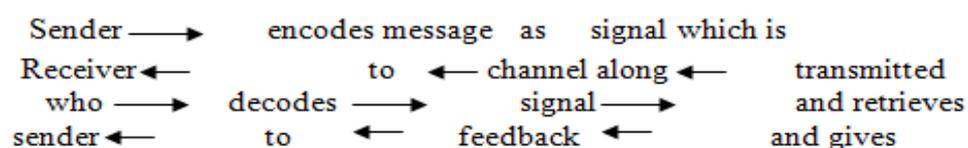
The aims of practical language study are to acquire writing, reading, speaking and understanding. While Linguistics is a 'language-specific science, it will be impossible, for example, to study French or English or any other language for that matter, without the knowledge of General Linguistics i.e. the general theory of how languages are made up or function. Even, in language education, the problems of translation are essentially linguistic problems. According to Lyons (1967: 7), 'The scientific study of Language is by means of controlled and empirically verifiable observations and with reference to some general theory of language structure'.

With Catford's (1965:1) definition of translation as 'an operation performed on Languages', it is clear that the theories and practices of translation must draw upon a theory of language. If Translation can truly be considered as a case of Comparative Descriptive Linguistics as Halliday (1974: 23-24) stresses, the, the theory of Translation is necessarily a part of contrastive linguistics and must be the concern of theoretical linguists. Translation is a sine qua non in the analysis of a new language and this is why translation remains a core business for any linguist. Linguistics is a form of translation with a very specific scholarly *skopos*, to translate the categories and distinctions of the lexicons and the grammars of the languages of the world in an English-based metalanguage with strong traces of an earlier Latin-based linguistics metalanguage with categories such as ablative, switch reference, noun phrase etc. *Skopos* theory which was established by the German linguist

Hans Vermeer comprises the idea that translating and interpreting should primarily take into account the function of both the source and target text. It focuses on translation as an activity with an aim or purpose, and on the intended addressee or audience of the translation. To translate means to produce a target text in a target setting for a target purpose and target addressees in target circumstances. According to Nord (1997), in skopos theory, the status of the source text is lower than it is in equivalence-based theories of translation. The source is an "offer of information", which the translator turns into an "offer of information" for the target audience. The function of a translation is actually dependent on the knowledge, expectations, values and norms of the target readers, who are again influenced by the situation they are in and by the culture. These factors then determine whether the function of the source text or passages in the source text can be preserved or have to be modified or even changed. (Hancher, M. 1970).

Language activity is primarily geared towards interpersonal communication and as we know, communication is dynamic in both its expressive and receptive phases involving a Translation stands the same relationship to Linguistics, as do other Applied Sciences like Psycholinguistics and Sociolinguistics. As a science, translation is directly related to contrastive linguistics, It is concerned with the aspects of Language that derives some of its principles from its duality of Saussure's 'the signifier' and 'the signified' and to the distinction between Chomsky's 'langue' (language as a system) and 'parole' (the living, dynamic and evolving speech used by individual human being. These distinctions and their application to the general theory of communication draw Translation closer to Linguistics. Sources are lacking in this paragraph. Your reference to Saussure and Chomsky is meaningless. It is like you are assuming that your readers should know or figure out what you are trying to say. What about lay person?

Translation plays a vital role in the transfer of information from one linguistic code into another. A Translator has to be able to let his decoding competence in the source language be commensurate with his encoding competence in the target language. As already mentioned, language activity is primarily geared towards interpersonal communication. Communication is essentially dynamic and it involves a sender and a receiver. i.e.



The model of communication cited here is adapted from Roger Bell, 1986:404)

In interlingual communication, otherwise known as translation, the translator serves as the intermediary between the original sender and the ultimate receiver. He is both a receiver as well as a sender. In an act of human communication, language and translation are highly related in the sense that they are basically the transmission of information of some kind i.e. they transmit 'a message' from a source to a receiver but in the case of language, both source and receiver are human while in Translation, the transmission can be through machine. The message is transmitted either vocally, through the air (this is called, in translation parlance interpretation) or graphically by marks on a paper. I can see you are treating interpreting as a field subsumed in translation. I disagree as translators are known not to be good interpreters and interpreters are also known not to be good translators. They are different but related fields.

Translating is a business of correspondence and its study has a lot of relationship with structural linguistics i.e. descriptive, synchronic and comparative linguistics. Like language, a rule-governed creative activity whose major function is communication of ideas and information, so also is Translation with the major function of transferring textual materials from one Language into another in order to enhance interlingual communication and interaction.

The problems of translation are closely related to problems of linguistic analysis and therefore to the theory of language learning and that make translation partly a discipline in applied linguistics. A translator is therefore primarily a linguist before being a novelist, a scientist or a poet. The linguist studies the grammar of a language and explains how sentences are used i.e. what they consist of and how related they are. This, of course, is the creative task a linguist has to perform on language. He sees grammar as much more 'alive' feature of language. He essentially tries to discover those rules in a language which are grammatical and acceptable and

which are not. For example, in English, adjectives precede nouns while in French; adjectives come after the noun except when idiomatic meanings are assigned to such nouns:

English ----- He has a brown car

French ----- Il a une voiture brune

Also, in English, nouns as subjects go before verbs but it is not the case that any noun can precede any verb. There are important restrictions on their co-occurrences. For example, it will be wrong to say:

‘The stone eats bread’

‘The car sleeps near the bush’

The general theory of language structure is partly derived from the observation of actual speech events and partly from hypotheses that are invented as an attempt to explain the pattern of occurrence underlining speech event. Comparative Linguistics is very relevant to translation in the sense that it makes the establishment of equivalences or the setting up identities between the languages that are compared possible.

Translation studies is a discipline predicated on difference and the very act of translating emphasizes differences between peoples, their cultures and their languages. Disciplines predicated on differences such as translation studies and cultural anthropology may have an uneasy relationship with the focus on difference. The intimate connection between language and thought, as opposed to the earlier assumed unilateral dependence of language on thought, opened the way to recognition of the possibility that different language structures might in part favour or even determine different ways of understanding and thinking about the world. Obviously, all people inhabit a broadly similar world, or they would be unable to translate from one language to another; but, obviously, they do not all inhabit a world exactly the same in all particulars. Translation is not merely a matter of substituting different but equivalent labels for the contents of the same inventory. From this stem the notorious difficulties in translation, especially when the systematizations of science, law, morals, social structure, and so on are involved. The extent of the interdependence of language and thought—linguistic relativity, as it has been termed—is still a matter of debate, but the fact of such interdependence can hardly fail to be acknowledged.

III. CONCLUSION

Translation is generally seen to be related to Linguistics because like Linguistics whose object of study is language, Translation is also concerned with aspects of language and derives some of its principles from the general theory of language. (Kwofie, 1999). The importance given to the notion of linguistic sign in translation theory is undoubtedly a carry-over from general linguistics.

The major purpose of linguistics in Translation is to relate general properties of language to those aspects of individual speakers or writers or the language community which may be taken as determining the nature of language whether these are cognitive, perceptive, or social in nature. It is therefore very difficult to separate Translation from Language and Linguistics. Indeed, the problems of interlingual communication, oral or written, usually boil down to imperfect language mastery. Where language mastery is of mother tongue or near mother tongue quality in two or more languages, the problem of interlingual communication simply disappears.

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