Lecture 3 : THEORIES OF TRANSLATION

Introduction

According to Newmark (1981: 19), translation theory is concerned mainly with determining appropriate translation methods for the widest possible range of texts or text-categories. It also provides a frame work of principles, restricted rules and hints for translating texts and criticizing translations, a background for problem solving. Any theory should also be concerned with translation strategies adopted to address difficulties and problems in certain complicated texts.

A rigorous theory of translation would also include something like a practical evaluation procedure with specific criteria. A good survey of the theories of translation is perhaps best furnished by E. Nida who asserts that due to the fact that translation is an activity involving language there is a sense in which any and all theories of translation are linguistic (1976:66-79).

Classification of Theories of Translation

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1. Philological Theories

Philological theories rely upon 'philology' as the study of the development of language, and the classical literary studies. They are mainly concerned with the□ comparison of structures in the native and foreign languages, especially the functional correspondence and the literary genres in addition to stylistics and rhetoric.

Philological theories of translating deal with the problem of the equivalence of literary texts by comparing and contrasting the SL and the TL. They also focus on the literary quality, i.e. the form of the text and its stylistic features and rhetorical devices. Another major issue in philological theories of□ translating is the problem of equivalence of literary genres between the SL and the TL. The question whether poetry should be translated as poetry or prose or whether an epic in the SL should be rendered as such in the TL was one of the main obsessions of such theories.

2. Linguistic Theories

Linguistic theories of translation, according□ to Nida (1976: 69), are based on a comparison of the Linguistic structures of the STs and TTs, rather than a comparison of literary genres and stylistic features of the philological theories. Thus, 'Linguistic Translation' (or Linguistic Approach) is a product of these theories which view translation as simply a question of replacing the linguistic units of the ST (source text) with "equivalent" TL units without reference to factors such as context or connotation. According to Nida and Taber (1969:134) it is□ only a linguistic translation that can be considered 'faithful' , because it "is one which only contains elements which can be directly derived from the ST wording, avoiding any kind of explanatory interpolation or cultural adjustment which can be justified on this basis." One major difference between linguistic theories□ of translating and philological theories of translating is that linguistic theories are descriptive rather than prescriptive. They demonstrate how people translate rather than how they should

translate. According to Nida (1976): The principal☐ differences between various linguistic theories (or semi-theories) of translation lie in the extent to which the focus is on surface structures or corresponding deep structures. Theories based on surface-structure comparisons involve the use of more-or-less elaborate sets of rules for matching roughly corresponding structures.

3. Sociolinguistic Theories

   Sociolinguistic theories of translating emerged out of the dissatisfaction with linguistic theories of translating, and the growing interest in communication. Such interest resulted from the work of anthropologists who recognized the role of text recipients in the process of translating.

   Sociolinguistic theories of translating relate linguistic structures to a higher level where they can be viewed in terms of their function in communication. When discussing a text, the sociolinguist is concerned particularly with its author, its historical background, the circumstances involved in its production, and the history of its interpretation.

   Nida and Taber (1969), have pointed out that the old focus on the form of the message in translation has shifted to the receptors, i.e. the readers. Therefore, it is the reader's response to the translated message that determines the correctness of that message. They set the average reader as the only criterion for measuring correctness in translating. Correctness, in their view, is not only the possibility of understanding the message by readers but rather the impossibility of misunderstanding it.

References

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