

## **To Be or not To Be; This is the Problem for Translation Critics**

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### **Abstract**

Translation is a way of transferring information and messages from one language to another. In order to investigate whether this purpose is attained, a translation critic must come to the scene and examine both the positive and negative aspects of the translation. A critic should see whether the translator is successful in choosing proper equivalents or not. If a translator knows his renderings will be criticized, he will try his best to translate more accurately and it is in this case that translation will receive greater improvements. The thing which matters in translation criticism is that the critic should consider both the negative and positive aspects of the translated text. He should give comments on the deficiencies of a translation but he should also appreciate those problematic parts which are solved by the translator. It is the right of a translator to be appreciated if he has done a very natural and clear rendering in which both the content and the form is transferred from the source language to the target language. The present study tried to define the characteristics of a critic and the reaction he should have while confronting different text types. In the end, the paper provided the readers with the procedures that exist in the process of criticizing a translated text.

**Keywords:** translation, aspects of translation, translation criticism, translation critic, translation procedures

### **INTRODUCTION**

Before talking about what translation criticism is, first we should have a brief clarification of the terms translation and translation studies which are receiving greater importance in recent years and have attracted many theorists' and critics' attentions.

As Nida (1984) states translation consists of providing in the receptor language, the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, first in terms of meaning and second in terms of style. From this point of view it is clear that translation is not always an easy task for the translator because although he must be very familiar with the source language and its structure, he must also have great mastery over the target language. The translator should know the styles of both languages and try to keep them in his renderings. It is not always possible for him to keep both the content and the form

of the source language simultaneously, so according to the type of the text he is translating and in accordance with the purpose and the audience he is translating for, the translator should always do his best to select the appropriate strategy to render a close natural translation equivalent to the original text.

Nowadays translation studies are trying to talk about these different strategies that the translator should choose, in order to cope with translation problems. To do so, translation studies have adopted a new discipline or branch which is called "translation criticism". This recent branch is becoming a main issue and needs training to produce competent critics who are willing to criticize translated texts and see whether the translator has chosen an appropriate strategy in his rendering process or not.

## TRANSLATION CRITICISM

Translation criticism is regarded as the act of making judgments on a translation and is carried out through assessing the quality of target text and evaluating it in comparison with the original. If our assessment is not based on a comparison with the original text, we have done a one-sided criticism which is not accurate and comprehensive at all. And is not also enough for our evaluation of the translated text and of the translator's potency in his rendering. When a critic aims at criticizing a translated text, he must consider all the different aspects of that text. Those who want to give comments on a translation do not look at all the aspects of the translated text and limit themselves to some simple ones only. According to what Newmark (1988) states, translation criticism is an essential component in a translation course: firstly because it painlessly improves your competence as a translator, secondly, because it expands your knowledge and understanding of your own and the foreign language, as well as perhaps of the topic; thirdly, because, in presenting you with options, it will help you to sort out your ideas about translation. As an academic discipline, translation criticism ought to be the keystone of any course in comparative literature, or literature in translation and a component of any professional translation course with the appropriate text-types (e.g. legal, engineering, etc.) as an exercise for criticism and discussion.

When a critic wants to start his job, he should know how to criticize a translation and be familiar with the principles involved in the act of criticizing. The value of constructive criticism is undoubtedly clear to anyone. If it is done in its own right and proper way, and is done based on some identifiable principles, it will lead to great developments in the field of translation studies. If our criticism is based on logic, it will help the translators to better improve their competence of the two languages and to better improve their potency in rendering a text. Some believes that criticism is always negative. In other words they have a pessimistic view and think that a critic is someone who always talks about the negative points and sees only the deficiencies of a translated text. They have the opinion that by criticism we can only refer to the problematic aspects of the translated text, and ignore all the positive and strong points.

Many translation theorists reject this idea and have a positive view toward translation criticism. They believe that we must give positive insights on the translated text to the

readers. They must be well aware of the purpose of the translator and whether he could achieve this purpose or not. A good translation is the one that fulfills the purpose it is intended for. We should see whether the message of the source language is accurately transferred to the target language. Some scholars are mostly concerned with defining the translators' methods (Vilikovsky) and purpose (Newmark). In order to do so, it is needed to read the original text and compare it with the translation to see whether the purpose is fulfilled and to examine whether the message is precisely transferred. A very important criterion in the act of translation criticism is to be faithful but to render a natural translation. It's better to say that, a translator should communicate the same message from the source language writer to the target readers as the one in the source language, but it should be done in a natural and readable way. Ironically, as Nabokov pointed out, many reviewers of translated books neither know the original work nor the foreign language, and judge a translation on its smoothness, naturalness, easy flow, readability and absence of interference, which are often false standards (Newmark, 1988).

As mentioned previously if we do not compare the translation with the original text, we have done a one - sided criticism. This type of criticism is the one which is only based on the target text without considering the source text. In this kind of criticism, naturalness of the style and the readability in the target text can be evaluated because it shows the mastery of the translator in the target language. To evaluate such mastery there is no need to refer to the original text.

If we want to have a comprehensive view toward translation criticism, we should compare the translation with the original. A critic may read a translated text without any comparison with the source language and see that the translator is very natural in his translation. But he must also see to what extent the translator is faithful to the original writer. In order to evaluate the degree of faithfulness, the critic should refer to the source text and not to do one - sided criticism.

We can infer that a comprehensive criticism is the one based on analytical comparison of a translation with its original text. Alongside with such analytical comparison, there are other aspects that a critic must take into account. After determining the purpose of the translation and that of the translator, a critic must consider the type of the text which is translated, because each kind of text has its own translation strategies.

## **REACTION OF A CRITIC ACCORDING TO DIFFERENT TEXT - TYPES**

One of the most important approaches to translation criticism is text-based approach. This approach considers the text type of the source language and gives it prime importance. The strategies the translator chooses for his translation is determined by the type of the text he wants to translate. The critic's responsibility here, is first to identify the appropriate text type and know about the original text, and then to give comments on that translation according to that particular type of the text. Different texts, according to their forms and contents, can not be translated by the same strategy.

In some, the form may have prime importance and in others, the content. This is the point a critic should pay attention to.

Katharina Reiss introduces a functional approach which aims initially at systematizing the assessment of translations. It borrows Karl Bühler's three way categorization of the functions of language. Reiss links the three functions to their corresponding language "dimensions" and to the text types or communicative situations in which they are used. The main characteristics of each text type are summarized by Reiss (1977/89) as follows:

- 1) 'Plain communication of facts': information, knowledge, opinions, etc. the language dimension used to transmit the information is logical or referential, the content or topic is the main focus of the communication, and the text type is informative.
- 2) 'Creative composition': the author uses the aesthetic dimension of language. The author or sender is foregrounded, as well as the form of the message, and the text type is expressive.
- 3) 'Inducing behavioural responses': the aim of the appellative function is to appeal to or persuade the reader or receiver of the text to act in a certain way. The form of language is dialogic, the focus is appellative and Reiss calls this text type operative.

Karl Bühler (1990, p. 28) categorizes language functions in a similar way as follows:

- 1) representation as in content – focused
- 2) expressive function as in form – focused texts, and
- 3) persuasive as in appeal – focused texts

According to Karl Buhler, in scientific texts, for example, it is the content to be transferred to the target language. What the original writer says is very important and the exact message should be communicated through the process of translation.

The purpose of the content-focused text is different from that of the form-focused text and this is what the critic should focus his attention on. In the first type it is the information that the translator is sensitive to transfer to the target language and in the second type, it is the form and the style of the original writer to be transmitted through the translation process. In order to fulfill these different purposes, the translator should choose different strategies.

In form-focused text like poetry, the translator should try to employ a similar form and create the same impression on the target readers as the one the original writer tries to create on the source language readers. Although in most cases styles are not transferable from the source language to the target language, a good translator should do his best to impose the same impact on the audience by choosing proper equivalents

or correspondences. The critic should identify such corresponding styles and investigate their effects on the readers. He should examine that although the translator cannot exactly transfer the source language form to the target language, he is successful to find equivalent form to cause similar responses on the target readers.

The third type of text, appeal-focused, has the function of persuasion. In commercial texts, for example, the original writer wants to persuade his audience to show a particular response the text is designed for. The translator should produce such similar response on the target language audience and the critic should estimate the degree of such responses on the target readers and compare it with that of the original ones. The critic should investigate whether they show similar responses or not. If yes, he can come to the conclusion that the translator is successful in his renderings. In this type of text the critic should consider that fidelity is not adherence to the original content and form as in the first and second types of text but it is achieving equivalent responses.

It is the duty of a critic to identify the type of the text which is translated and examine whether the translator chooses the appropriate strategy according to each type or not. In the first type the translator should transfer equivalent information. In the second type he should transfer correspondent style to create equivalent impression and in the third type he should produce similar responses.

In order to better criticize a translation there are other principles to be taken into account which are going to be discussed briefly in the following section.

## **PRINCIPLES OF TRANSLATION CRITICISM**

Many useful principles can be employed in order to better evaluate the quality of a translated text. As Newmark (1988) explains, any comprehensive criticism has to cover five topics: (1) a brief analysis of the Source Language text stressing its intention and its functional aspects; (2) the translator's interpretation of the Source Language text's purpose, his translation method and the translation's likely readership; (3) a selective but representative detailed comparison of the translation with the original; (4) an evaluation of the translation – (a) in the translator's terms, (b) in the critic's terms; (5) where appropriate, an assessment of the likely place of the translation in the Target Language culture or discipline.

Some other scholars have set some other principles for evaluating a translated text. Some of the general ones can be listed as follows:

- 1) One of these principles can be the readers. Acceptability of a translated text by the readers of the target language is of great importance. If a translation reads well and is accepted by the readers, we can infer that, by observing the rules of translation, the translator could successfully transfer the style and the message of the source writer to the target readers through his translation. The reader will accept the translation if he will understand the message the original text is intended to communicate. A critic should estimate the degree of acceptability

and see how the readers will communicate the original message which is transferred to them via translation.

- 2) Another principle can be the selection of suitable equivalents by the translator. This is a very important factor which can isolate successful translators from those who are not doing well in their career and their readers can not accept their translation. A critic should compare the translation with the original text and pay attention to the equivalents the translator chooses for each single word. If they are appropriately selected, the critic should let the readers know because criticisms should be positive and give the readers information about positive aspects as well as the negative ones. If the equivalents are not selected in a right and proper way, the critic should criticize them and find some equivalents which better suit the text and better fulfill the purpose of the writer.
- 3) In criticizing a translation it is important to see whether the translator is faithful to the original text or not. The translator must be competent in both the source and the target languages and by paying attention to the structural differences in the two languages render a very accurate and natural translation. Although he should try to be natural, he shouldn't lose fidelity to the original writer. The translator must remain faithful to the source language and transfer the message and the style as closely as possible to produce similar effects on the target readers.
- 4) In every translation there are many words and concepts that the translator can not find any exact equivalents for. So by resorting to some appropriate strategies he can find some closer equivalents. Two of these strategies are giving footnotes and paraphrasing. By giving footnotes the translator can give explanations about the concepts and give more information to the readers to help them better understand the translation. And by paraphrasing he may also make the text more explicit and easy to be grasped. A critic should find the concepts in the translation which do not have any exact equivalents in the target language and see how the translator could cope with them. The critic should examine whether the translator chooses the proper strategy and whether he can find close equivalents for words or not.
- 5) If the translator determines his audience and the purpose the original text is written for, he will make better renderings of the text. The critic here, in this case, must identify the readers and the purpose and the type of the text to investigate how successful the translator is in his translation.

We can of course set other principles for criticizing a translation but it should be done in a more scientific and systematic way, because translation is regarded as a science and criticizing it in a logical way can lead to greater developments and improvements in this field. After talking about translation criticism and the principles employed for such criticism, we should see who is eligible to criticize a translation. Better say, which characteristics a critic should have to be considered as a qualified critic?

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF A QUALIFIED CRITIC IN THE FIELD OF TRANSLATION STUDIES**

When a text is translated by a translator and wants to be criticized, it is the critic who is going to give positive and negative comments on it and examine the degree to which the rules and principles of translation are observed or violated by the translator. To be able to give his suggestions, the critic, must have some characteristics.

First of all he must be like a translator and have many similar characteristics as the ones a translator has. If he wants to compare the translation with the original text to have a comprehensive criticism, he should be competent enough in the two languages. He should be very accurate to notice the differences between languages and have the ability to decide which strategy to choose to handle such differences. The critic should be faithful both to the original writer and to the translator. He should not criticize a translator if his evidences are not based on logic.

Impartiality is a feature the critic should possess in the process of criticism. Alongside with the technique he has about translation, he must be well prepared with information about his occupation. It is his duty to be familiar with principles and ethics of his career. The critic tries to show the readers the correct way of criticizing. The critic is to criticize what is said not to criticize the person who said it. His criticism can lead to the production of many accurate and fluent translations. He must help the translators to improve and develop their potency in translating different types of texts. In order to be familiar with different text types, the critic is considered to gain information about other different branches of knowledge.

Many of these features, as you can see for sure, are the characteristics of a good translator. We can conclude that a translator can be a critic himself but not to criticize his own translations because his private opinions and beliefs may interfere with his act of criticizing. It is better for a translator as a critic to criticize the translations of other translators if he wants to be productive.

## **CONCLUSION**

We understood that evaluating the quality of a translation is dependent on different factors. The purpose of the text and the type of the text are amongst the most important ones that can help us in evaluating a translation. Evaluating the quality of a translation or criticizing it is a very central issue in translation studies. So if we want to have a productive criticism we should look at all the different aspects of a translated text. One sided criticism which carries no comparison of the translation with the original cannot be a useful way of criticizing because it only shows the naturalness and not the faithfulness of a translation.

The point that a critic should always keep in mind is that the translator chooses different translation strategies for different types of texts. So the critic should identify different types of text and examine which strategy is more useful for each kind.

Fortunately By the help of the constructive and productive criticisms of many competent critics and also by the assistance and cooperation of many translators, translation is receiving a higher position amongst other fields.

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