Translation: Practicing Rewriting in Context

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Abstract

Translation serves to provide a natural context in which a translator practices the role of a second writer. This natural writing environment accumulates the experience as well as the expertise of applying various translation and linguistic theories to tackle textual problems, being them lexical, semantic, cultural or merely grammatical. Translation is the only field in which two languages are consciously and unconsciously practiced at the whole levels throughout the translation activity. Written texts that require translation ought to be understood by translators as the starting point for the rewriting (translation) process. Translation, then, can be handled as a writing practice that makes use of the appropriate translation techniques and procedures, observing contextual differences. Translators write in almost every field, from simple to highly specialized texts. In translation, translators rewrite the Source Language Text in a Target Language that projects their competence in that TL, provided that they must thoroughly understand the respective ST; maintaining some sort of relevance or similarity between their reproduced TT, and its corresponding ST. This paper emphasizes the usefulness of translation practice in enhancing writing competence in various writing settings.

Keywords: Translation, Writing, Source Text, Target Text, Language.


Introduction

Munday (2016) states that “The process of translation between two different written languages involves the changing of an original written text (the source text or ST) in the original verbal language (the source language or SL) into a written text (the target text or TT) in a different verbal language (the target language or TL)” (p.8). Translation, being an inter-lingual activity, projects the impact of practice on the product quality. It stresses the Source Text-Target Text relationship that is dictated by the ability of the translator to rewrite the Source Text in a Target Language. It is then, a process that heavily relies on the mutual effect between "diction" and "syntax" throughout the textual components, emphasizing the presence of a myriad of subtleties pertaining to the translation process.
The fact that translation can be presented as a meaningful context for rewriting practice in a Target Language (TL), stands out of controversy. Writing makes an inseparable connection with translation, the same as speaking with interpreting. It’s an essential part of the translation process. To write consciously, the Source Text (ST) serves as an optimal template that provides the translator with the writing threads that leads to the translation end product (i.e. the TT). A Target Text’s value varies between the literal sense, up to the sole function of that translation resulted text (TT).

Trying to reproduce the literal sense of the SL expressions provides a primary task to practice writing without deeper idiomatic or cultural nuances. Translating a novel, for example, as an expressive text type, necessitates reproducing the same tone and flavor of the Source Text, namely assimilating the line of narrative and aesthetics, maintaining a free area of linguistic practice for translation trainees, or FL learners alike. The attempt to disguise in the idiolect of an aesthetic text type’s author, heightens the excitement in FL learners, thus makes of the translation practice a real sociolinguistic context where utterances are spontaneously reproduced in a TL.

### Writing in Translation

The purpose of translation practice in not necessarily practiced to train translation professionals; yet, it can also be practiced to enhance writing competence by proving meaningful and practical contexts. In other words, it is a means to an end, not an end to be achieved, as emphasized by Popovic (2001), who further states that some learners, however, "may become translators one day, and the basic knowledge of translation that they have gained in the classroom can serve as a solid ground for building up translation skills” (p. 2). In the same respect, Leonardi (2010) postulates that translation activities can serve a variety of purposes ranging from linguistic problems to more cultural, semantic and pragmatic concerns. Using translation can make learning meaningful because the learner is an active participant in the process. Understanding a Source Language Text can only be possible through a thoroughly reading of that text. The second phase of translation is decoding the ST messages, followed by the process of formulating the ST.

In the same respect, Cordero (1984) emphasizes that, "As an educational activity, translation is considered a learning device or a convenient means of verifying comprehension and accuracy" (p. 350). More importantly, translation, being regarded as the closest to the writing skill, makes it the most realistic tool to improve the practice of the writing skill. Translation derives the students’ attention from bare linguistic rules to a broader area of meaning, sentiments and intuitions, and that is by placing language as a system on a ground of messages that are of interest to learners. Committing grammatical errors in the TT is a secondary remark, whilst the main concern is given to the thread of thoughts expressed in a written form. In this way, fluency is triggered and solid grammatical rules are left for an upcoming phase of editing the reproduced text.

### Translation: Natural Writing Atmospheres

Translation provides a natural atmosphere for writing practice. Writing in context is a value-added to writing learning and teaching strategies. The best context to use for teaching or learning writing is translation, indeed. Popovic (2001) asserts that translation was found beneficial, and this has been confirmed by empirical research.
Translation is not proposed as a random and unplanned sequence of activities; rather, it is introduced as a properly designed activity. In this respect, (Duff 1989), cited in (Popovic, 2001:1), observes that if translation activities are properly designed, they can be employed to enhance the four skills and develop accuracy (p.7). The Source Text (ST) provides a sound template to imitate, having been instructed to observe cultural and idiomatic nuances.

Writing, indeed, has a greater resemblance to translation, at the level of procedures and practice. A translator is a second writer who has to seek an equivalent text formulated in a TL. In the same respect, (Sager, 1994), cf (Bagheri, 2011:293), emphasizes that, the closest of the four language skills to the translation process is the writing skill, since they share similarities in terms of approach and features.

**Writing via Translation**

Indeed, translation, unlike interpreting, highly weighs reading and writing: reading is a privileged process that is carried out for the purpose of setting the mind to a TL into which the read text is to be converted; writing a TT presupposes compliance with a set of linguistic, cultural and pragmatic parameters. There are two approaches to translating, as proposed by Newmark (1988), first is to “…start translating sentence by sentence, for say the first paragraph or chapter, to get the feel and the feeling tone of the text, and then you deliberately sit back, review the position, and read the rest of the SL text”, the second is to “… read the whole text two or three times, and find the intention, register, tone, mark the difficult words and passages and start translating only when you have taken your bearings”, (p.21).

TL constraints, may result in a TT that is completely divergent from the SL literal sense. This verbal challenge often serves as an impulse to decode cultural messages that are impeded in texts like idioms, proverbs, poetry and other aesthetic texts. Even texts of phatic and vocative nature represent an area of writing that goes beyond the linguistic borderlines of a SL. This free practice of writing for the sake of maintaining goals that are as high as the skill to be practiced itself, helps students break free of traditional writing assignments in which a mere topic is identified, and very little, if not missing at all, tracks are drawn for students to give their minds’ “bell” a shake, before they could hardly move on their writing instruments.

In translation classrooms, the main goal is not to make out professional writers, but, at least, to help students build up meaningful sentences in imitation of parallel texts in another language. Writing classes are supposed to help students acquire grammar and syntax in contexts, as well as considering which word to use in such given contexts.

**Conclusion**

Despite the controversial criticisms to the use of translation for pedagogical purposes, this paper asserts the vividness of translation as a field where two languages are actively involved. The use of translation as an activity is more beneficial since it gets students involved in the task itself, leaving the linguistic rules to be learnt indirectly and spontaneously. This suggests that translation is the core of language practice, and it remains essential for triggering the writing skill in varied contexts. Translation provides the ideas and context for practicing writing, in a natural reciprocal relationship between translation and writing.
A learner may know a given language’s grammar and syntax, yet, drafting a piece of writing in that language necessitates the availability of ‘messages’ to be communicated in real sociolinguistic contexts. Therefore, translation is presented as a vivid writing context, since it lies into two basic activities, i.e. understanding a Source Text (which is an essential stage of the reading process), then rewriting that ST in a Target Language (translation).

References


