

Bilingualism And A Translator

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Abstract: *All over the world, translation has become a universal activity. Bilingualism as a concept is based On the field of psycholinguistics with different scholars having divergent views about its role in the theory of translation. What is translation activity? What is bilingualism? Is there any peculiar relationship between these two concepts? What are the specific functions of bilingualism in the general theory of translation? These are the questions to which this paper provides answers. The paper also considers the relationship between innateness of translating skills and bilingualism. Terms such as natural translation, social bilingualism, professional bilingualism and native translation are examined. Is there any need for translator training? What is the role of metalinguistic knowledge in the translation activity of a bilingual? All these form the nucleus of our discussions in this paper.*

Keywords: Bilingualism, translating skills, native translation, metalinguistic abilities, British dominance, compound and coordinate bilingualism, Machine translation.

1. INTRODUCTION

There are a number of languages spoken throughout the world. Every person knows at least one language, which he learns in his childhood and which is routinely uses for speaking and writing. However, many people choose or are forced to learn one or more additional languages. There are numerous benefits of being bilingual, such as an improvement in linguistic and metalinguistic abilities, as well as betterment of cognitive flexibility such as divergent thinking, concept formation, verbal abilities and general reasoning.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Many people have the capacity to learn a second language. It may be another language in the same country or a totally different language of another country. Nowadays, several institutes and schools offering foreign language courses are popping up throughout the world. Many colleges and universities have included some foreign language courses in their regular academic syllabus, too. When learning another language, you need to understand its basic grammar and learn its vocabulary. Being bilingual offers greater sensitivity to language, more flexibility in thinking and a better ear for listening. It also improves a person's understanding for the native language. It opens the door to other cultures. Moreover, the knowledge of other languages increases the career opportunities, offering several job options.

3. MAIN PART

The term bilingualism derives from 'bi' and 'lingua' which means two languages. The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines bilingual as having, speaking, or writing in two languages. Complete mastery of two languages is designated as bilingualism. Normally, people acquire a single language initially, that is, their first language or mother tongue. Subsequent languages are learned to different degrees of competence under various conditions. Speakers of these

learnt languages grow up as bilinguals, but ordinarily the learning, to any extent, of a second or other language is an activity superimposed on the prior mastery of one's first language and it is a different process intellectually. Bilingualism is a deliberate activity when undertaken after adolescence, when one has already or nearly or fully acquired the basic structure and vocabulary of one's first language. It is only in getting in contact with a second language that one realizes how complex language is and how much effort must be devoted to acquiring one.

One can generally distinguish two types of bilingualism according to whether the two languages were acquired from the simultaneous experience of the use of both languages in the same setting and circumstances or whether they were acquired from exposure to each language in different settings. In Thierry's is saying in his work '*True Bilingualism and second language learning*' when he states that the term 'perfect bilingual' suggest two things.

1. One speaks both languages equally well
2. One has two mother languages

An example of the first scenario, English children living in India during the period of British dominance learned English from their parents and learned an Indian language from their nurses or family maids. This may not be considered a general case of bilingualism because it may be difficult if not totally impossible to measure whether or not a person can speak two languages equally well. This is so because; no criterion for comparison has ever been put in place. In the case of the second type of perfect bilingualism, one may want to consider what is actually meant by mother tongue and even how languages are acquired.

A compound bilingual is defined as the one who has learnt two languages simultaneously (from infancy) and with interlocutors who used the two languages equally well and often interchangeably. This is also known as the true or perfect bilingualism. For compound bilinguals, words and phrases in different languages are the same concepts. That

means that 'chien' and 'dog' are two words for the same concept for a French-English speaker of this type. These speakers are usually fluent in both languages.

A coordinate bilingual is that one who has different acquisition settings for each language, that is different times of acquisition (the second language learned after infancy) and socio-cultural context, one language at home and the other outside the home (at school or in the neighborhood. this can also be called '*la bilingual d'expression*' which means mastering a second language as a working language but without competently speaking it. For example, speaking good French but managing to speak English. For coordinate bilinguals, words and phrases in the speaker's mind are all related to their own unique concepts. Thus a bilingual speaker of this type has different associations for 'chien' and for 'dog'. In these individuals, one language, usually the first language, is dominant, and it may interfere in thinking in the second language. These speakers are known to use very different intonation and pronunciation features, and sometimes to assert the feeling of having different personalities attached to each of their languages.

The distinction between compound and coordinate bilingualism has come under scrutiny. In studies done on multilinguals, most are found to show an intermediate behavior between compound and coordinate bilingualism. Some authors have suggested that the distinction should be made only at the level of grammar rather than vocabulary, others use "coordinate bilingual" as a synonym for one who has learned two languages from birth, and others have proposed dropping the distinction altogether.

In bilingualism, there are always the issues of balanced bilingualism, the idea of language dominance, because one cannot talk of perfect bilingualism, so it is difficult to evaluate equivalence as far as translation is concerned. One only has to measure the dominance of one language over the other.

At the level of cognitive competency, those bilinguals who are highly proficient in two or more languages, such as compound and coordinate bilinguals, are reported to have a higher cognitive proficiency, and are found to be better language learners (third, fourth, etc.) at a later age, than monolinguals. The early discovery that concepts of the world can be labeled in more than one fashion gives those bilinguals an advantage.

A continuous link between two mutually incomprehensible tongues and one that does not lead either to suppression or extension of either is translation. And as soon as two speakers of different languages need to converse, translation is necessary either through a third party or directly. Paul Kholer (1973) discusses the relationship between bilingualism and translation giving real examples as case studies by considering the lexical levels of translation and the role bilingualism plays. Kholer also goes further to say that there is no satisfactory machine translation for the simple reason that language structure is complex and words have more than one interpretation depending on the context

in which they are used. Machine translation cannot make a distinction between the different meanings of words.

Just it maintained, the question of whether any bilingual can translate obviously has no definite answer. This is simply because it all depends on what is understood by the term translation. I will also conclude with a quotation from A. A. Potebnia, cited in Schäffner, Christina : "A person who speaks two languages shifts the character and direction of his thought as he shifts from one language to the other, and shifts them in such a way that the effort of his will...changes the course of his thought and then affects its subsequent course only indirectly. This effort can be compared with what a switchman does in switching a train over to another track."

But if we are to speak of switches, rails, routes, and the motive forces of bilingualism and authors' translations, then continuing Potebnia's metaphor, I could say that literary translation in general, and an author's translation in particular, is not when one route is "primary" and the others only "secondary."

4. CONCLUSION

It is an undeniable fact that bilingualism is necessary, but not sufficient for translation proficiency and efficiency. Other requirements include natural ability, training and cultural background. The need for each translation scholar to introduce his own style, terminology, and way to convey meanings actually plays a significant roles in translation activities.

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