

The Pragmatics Of Literary Translation: Scope & Approaches

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Abstract

Every literary work not only has its unprecedented peculiarities but also has a special communicative effect on its readers. While translating any piece of literature, a translator usually strives to take care of all the intricacies and features of the original text. However, sometimes translators struggle to maintain the same level of effect in the translation. Since communicative effect is an essential part of a literary text, as a result, the adequacy of the translation is somehow compromised.

This article addresses the aforementioned issue of literary translation, suggesting how the Pragmatic Aspect of Translation can provide solutions to the same.

Keywords: Literary translation, communicative effect, speech acts, pragmatic potential, receptor, target text, translation adequacy, pragmatic aspect.

Among the numerous issues pertaining to contemporary linguistics, the study of different facets of inter-lingual speech activity—also known as "**translation**" or "**translation activity**"—has a significant place.

The term "**Pragmatics**" was first coined in 1938 by the American philosopher and semiotician **Charles William Morris**, who further classified semiotics into three categories: *semantics*, *syntactics* and *pragmatics*.

If the 1950s and 1970s were dedicated to studying the relationship between translation studies and linguistics, the 1970s and 80s shifted focus to semantics, syntactics, and pragmatics—the semiotic foundations of language and theory of speech acts.

As per the theory of pragmatics, the meaning of each sign consists of semantic meaning, syntactic meaning and pragmatic meaning. Each sign has a communicative effect (communicative impact), i.e. the power to cause a certain reaction on communicants. This effect is realized only when the sign is used in a certain context during communication. Pragmatics deals with this aspect of communication as it considers the use of signs by participants in communication in a specific speech situation (context).

The theory of speech acts has been influential in both pragmatics and translation studies. By focusing on the intended meaning and context of language, rather than just the linguistic forms, it has shifted the focus from language itself to the factors outside of language that influence communication. This shift has led to a new era in linguistics known as the "**Pragmatic Turn**".

Simultaneously, translation experts began to prioritize the study of extra-linguistic factors, recognizing the importance of crucial role of context in translation, which subsequently gave rise to a pragmatic perspective in translation studies, commonly referred to as the **Pragmatic Aspect of Translation**.

The theory of the pragmatic aspect of translation is also known as the **contextual** or **situational theory of translation**, as it emphasizes the importance of considering the context when translating a text.

The pragmatic turn of translation is a broad concept, since it does not only covers what is studied within the framework of linguistics, but also goes beyond linguistics. Following the pragmatic turn, translation studies began to examine both linguistic and extra-linguistic elements.

In other words, the meaning of each utterance is shaped not only by linguistic but also by extra-linguistic factors, such as cultural context, social norms, and the target audience. Translators must consider these factors to convey not only the lexical meaning but also the communicative function of the text. To achieve this, translators employ various strategies, such as compensation, addition, or omission of elements, to bring the translation as close as possible to the original in terms of meaning and effect on the reader. This approach to translation is known as the pragmatic aspect of translation.

Any linguistic unit has a communicative force, i.e. the ability to cause a reaction in the receptor. This communicative force, according to the theory of pragmatics, is called its **pragmatic potential**.

The pragmatic effect (pragmatic potential) can vary depending on the style of the original text. Different text styles have different levels of pragmatic potential.

As far as literary translation is concerned. It is the most difficult type of translation among translations of texts of other styles. Literary text has a high degree of pragmatic potential. When translating a text of fiction, the main task of the translator is not only to preserve the form, content, structure, but also to take into account the achievement of the communicative impact of the original text. The degree of equivalence and adequacy of the translation is measured by the degree of preservation of the desired communicative impact of the original in the translation.

The primary importance of preserving the pragmatic effect of the original when translating fiction is that, firstly, fiction has the power of communicative (pragmatic) impact, so a literary translation should evoke the same emotions, sensations, mood and experiences in the reader of the translation as the original text. Secondly, in literary translation, pragmatics plays a significant role not only in the analysis of the original text, but also in the creation of a communicatively equivalent text in the target language, in which the figurative and situational meaning of the original text can be easily assimilated.

The importance of considering pragmatic factors can be assessed by the fact that in the process of literary translation, thanks to accounting for pragmatic factors, not only the understanding of the original text increases, but also the quality of the translation improves.

However, the presence of polysemy, imagery, emotionality, expressiveness, aesthetics, multi-style, figurativeness, and cultural and national coloring complicates the translator's task and also prevents the reproduction of the communicative effect of the original in the translation, so the full achievement of the pragmatic potential of the original turns out to be a difficult task when translating fiction.

However, through pragmatic adaptation, the gap between the degree of pragmatic potential of the original and the degree of pragmatic potential of the translation can be reduced to some extent, so that the receptor of the literary translation feels the uniqueness and strength of the creative talent of the author of the original and in his soul he would have the same feeling and impression as the receptor of the original.

If a translator manages to achieve this, then his translation can be considered adequate, therefore, considering the pragmatic potential of the original is very important when translating literary texts, without which any equivalent translation cannot become adequate.

Based on the theory of the pragmatic aspect of translation, the role of a translator can also be redefined. The role of a translator in the translation process can be compared to the role of the actor. Much like an actor who, understanding the playwright's intent, strives to convey the script's emotions, feelings, and impact to the audience, the translator aims to replicate the original text's communicative effect in the target language. The goal is to create a translation that is as vivid and realistic to the target audience as the original was to its intended audience. A translator strives to convey the original text in the same way as the author of the original.

However, the task of identifying and measuring the specific degree of the original text's communicative effect on the original reader sometimes seems insurmountable, because no matter how experienced and skilled a translator may be, due to differences in languages, cultures, and social systems, they find it difficult to fully convey the original text and similarly transform the original's communicative effect in translation.

Certainly, a translator can bridge the gap between two languages and cultures to a certain extent, but not entirely. In addition to the above-mentioned reasons, the distinctive characteristics of the translation receptors also complicate the translator's task of measuring the degree of pragmatic impact of the original text, as the degree of pragmatic impact of any text (original text and translated text) varies from one receptor to another.

Thus, based on our research it is clear that fully preserving the pragmatic impact is extremely difficult due to the significant differences in cultures and languages across different peoples. However, incorporation of the original text's pragmatic potential is essential for achieving a successful literary translation.

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