

Abstract

This paper deals with a translation problem how it may fit in and be applied in foreign language teaching; whether it facilitates the process of teaching and learning in the long run.

1. Translation as a multidisciplinary branch of science is based on different interdependent fields of related spheres, such as text-linguistics, translation linguistics, psycho-linguistics, socio-linguistics, socio-semantics, theory of communication and theory of information.

2. Professional translators, students of linguistics and scholars in philology face a problem of translating polysemic words from one language to another. It is a challenging job even for those who are expected to know not only the source language but also to possess a thorough knowledge of all cross-cultural connotations with a historical-societal context. Literary texts tend to exploit the polysemic potential of language to create a unified whole in which multiplicity, heterogeneity and simultaneous understanding of different meanings of concept-words enrich the final unity of both texts in either language.

3. The attainment of the effect of polysemic (informative) potential implies tracing all the semantic constituents of the word-concept and their illustrations in the source-text as well as in translation. Otherwise the word-concept loses its wholeness and omnipotence of complicated text-building capacity. Thus any translated text is evaluated according to what extent the word-concepts and their semantic constituents are interwoven in the text to make them like goads – firmly embedded nails, inspired by Divine Spirit. The choice and application of a conceptual word is determined by two pragmatic factors: the cognitive reality of the text (objective factor) and the reader's personality, his thesaurus, aesthetic – emotional associations (subjective factor).

4. A conceptual word is the whole which can best uncover and reveal the essence of the parts constituting the whole. The concept-word representing the whole is chosen on the ground of semantic, logical and pragmatic consideration. Concept Learning and teaching translation introduces us into a realm of cognitive ideas and exciting discoveries. Learning foreign concepts makes relaxing atmosphere in class from global perspectives because dominant paradigm in learning language and teaching translation is based on cognitive intercultural awareness. So cognitive concepts expressed in verbal signs feature a particular clear-cut universalistic propensity: deep, complex semantic relations between words in literary texts. Cognitive activities involve not only the student but teacher as well in self-asserting and self-cognizing process that proves so challenging.

5. The category of semantic infinitude of polysemic words plays the palpable role to render order in functionally adequate texts of the recipient language (in translation). Since the miraculous power of creating a literary text lies on its polysemic word energy which is divine grace or free gift for the professional translator.

Key Words: Translation; Professional Translators; Polysemic words; Conceptual Word.

In present day scientific studies scholars assume that translators are born not made; though it is true that skills can be improved with training and practice. In order to understand the significance of translation for t/l of FL, it is important to know a number of basic principles. Yet before discussing these principles I would borrow a very expressive quotation from E. Nida's book on translation (Nida 1986): "how easy it would be to translate if only I could really know the meaning". This is both the frustration and insight of the translator into the essential problems of producing a functional equivalent in translating the text for target language. Unfortunately sometimes translators do know the meaning but still they are unable to render the meaningful text.

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Professional translators, students of linguistics and scholars in philology face a problem of translating polysemic words from one language to another. It is a weighty job even for those who are expected to know not only the source language but also to possess a thorough knowledge of all cross-cultural connotations with a historical-societal context. Literary texts tend to exploit the polysemic potential of language to create a unified whole in which multiplicity, heterogeneity and simultaneous understanding of different meanings of concept-words enrich the final unity of both texts in either language. My claim here is that a more comprehensive view of learning a language assists the translator in grasping what the word is in the source text so that it should be rendered and consequently interpreted.

One of the basic principles and requirements for any translator is deep knowledge of the subject matter, both general and specific. No matter how skilled a translator may be, if he is not aware of the implications of the subject matter, he is certainly going to make serious mistakes. So verbal facility intelligence, creativity of expression and knowledge of sociolinguistic associations are necessary to make an other speak fro himself, otherwise the results are inevitably going to be skewed. A translator who feels that one must embellish a text will certainly distort the true implication of the original. Due to the existing communicative functions (cognitive, informative, emotive, aesthetic, performative), which are especially relevant to the understanding of basic principles of translation, we have to consider language in its broadest, most varied sense.

Defining the term “concept” it should be important to outline conceptual system of the whole text in order to understand the purport the author. Fuller development of these ideas is found in Jokhadze’s Doctorate dissertation (2005).

My claim is that the word-concept is a turning point in the study of meaning and meaningful translating of any text. Long stated that meaning is not equivalent to a concept the latter implies in addition cultural connotations as well. To illustrate the above thesis we can present a comparative study of two English translations of one and the same Georgian hagiographic story “The Martyrdom of the Holy Queen Shushanik” by Jacob Tsurtaveli, dating to the V c. Presumably Authentic Literature is always very fertile ground for evoking various associations and discussions for our culturally diverged audience.

We give the key passage form the Georgian text and accordingly we present a comparative analysis of two different translators: one by J. Cholobargia – Georgian and the other by Elisabeth Fuller – a native English translator.

Before giving the passage we`ll try to give the plot in a nutshell, it tells about the early age of Christian religion in Georgia. Shushanik, the wife of the head in one of the princedoms, learns about her husband’s sin – his conversion to fire—worshiping. Being a pious and faithful Christian she is horrified with the news and wouldn’t hear the name not only of her husband, but her children as well. The husband in fury applies various unspeakable tortures to force the disobedient wife back to the palace. Shushanik patiently takes all long-continued tortures and sends steadfast prayers to the Lord. She chooses to suffer and die rather than give up her faith here is an excerpt form the original:

“da Semdgomad orisa dRisa movida mgeli igi taZrad da hrqua msaxurTa TvisTa: “dRes me jojik da colman misman erTad puri vWamoT, xolo sxuasa nu vis uflied CvenTana Semoslvad”. da ra Jams Semwuxrda, mouwodes colsa jojikissa da inebes erRad purisa Wamai, raiTamca moiyyanes wmidai SuSanikca. da viTarca moiwia Jami purisai Sevides jojik da coli misi winaSe wmidisa SuSanikisa, raiTamca masca aWames puri, rameTu yovelni igi dReni uzmasa gardaevlnes. da viTarca metad aiZules da ZaliT wariyyanes taZrad. xolo gemoi ara raisai ixila. xolo colman jojikisman miarTua Rvinoi WiqiTa da aiZulebda mas, raiTamca igi xolo Sesua. hrqua mas wmidaman SuSanik risxviT: “odes yofil ars aqamomde, Tumca mamaTa da dedaTa erTad eWama puri!” da ganyara xeli da Wiqai igi pirsas Sealewa da Rvinoi igi daiTxia.(69)

(Georgian translator) And after two days that wolf came to the palace said unto his servants: “Today I and Jojik and his wife shall eat bread together, so let nobody come hither at supper time”. Now when even was come they called Jojik’s wife and desired to have supper together and commanded the saintly Shushanik to be brought too. And when supper time was come Jojik and his wife entered before Shushanik so that she should eat with them for she had continued fasting all those days.

And they constrained her to go with them and took her by force to the palace, but she did not taste anything. And Jojik’s wife brought a glass of wine to her and constrained her to drink it. The saintly Shushanik said unto her with indignation: “Since the world began was it ever heard that women and men ate bread together”. And stretching forth her hand she threw the glass in her face and the wine was spilt. (68)

(English translator) And when two days had passed that wolf came to the palace and said to his servants: “Today I and Jojik with his wife shall dine together, and none may disturb us”. At dusk they summoned the wife of Jojik that she might deign to eat with them and ordered that the blessed Shushanik be brought before them. And when the time came for them that Jojik and his wife went to the blessed Shushanik to invite her to dine with them, for she had spent all those days fasting. And they compelled her to go with them and took her by force to the palace. But she would not partake of any food. Then Jojik’s wife offered her a goblet of wine and tried to make her drink, whereupon the blessed Shushanik exclaimed in anger: “When has it ever been the custom for men and women to dine together”. And stretching with her hand she flung the goblet in her face and the wine was spilt. (199)

In this passage (in Georgian variant) lexical unit “bread eating” is repeated several times (5). This is already stylistically marked which seems the key word-concept for the whole passage and it carries cultural connotation for the Georgians culture. Although first time it is translated correctly by the Georgian translator but not repeated the same way in many other cases to the end of the passage. Yet with the native English translation it is not translated as bread eating elsewhere. It means that English translator is not aware of Georgian traditions and cultural associations. For Georgians “bread eating” is associated with Jesus “Last Supper” concept and it is esoteric knowledge which means partaking sacred, Eucharistic grace and is shared with only like-minded people. This meaning is the major information to understand the reason of Shushanik’s wrath. She is faithful Christian (an established religions system in Georgia) is terrified at the fact of learning her husband’s denial of their creed in favor of fire-worshipping.

The attainment of the effect of polysemic (informative) potential implies tracing all the semantic constituents of the word-concept and their illustrations in the source-text as well as the translation. Otherwise the word-concept loses its wholeness and omnipotence of complicated text-building capacity. Thus any translated text is evaluated according to what extent the word-concepts and their semantic constituents are interwoven in the text to make them like goads – firmly embedded nails, inspired by Divine Spirit. The choice and application of a conceptual word is determined by two pragmatic factors: the cognitive reality of the text (objective factor) and the translator’s (reader’s) personality, his thesaurus, aesthetic – emotional associations (subjective factor).

On the whole the text is a big system of justified expectations expressed through stylistically marked elements, which is named by us as dimensional predictability. The author’s intention is embodied in a number of biblical concepts or prolonged allusions. The final allusion makes up the stylistic framework with the first concept in the opening sentence highlighting the basic informative potential of the word-concept as the clue to the text. This is compact information to goad the reader into changing behavior – from negative into positive.

For illustration we offer some other samples of translated texts where a word sometimes partially conveys the original concept not retaining the effect of the multiple meanings in the original. To make this point clear some examples are taken from “The Man in Panther’s Skin” by Shota Rustaveli XII c. Georgian writer, which is translated or interpreted by various translators in different ways and in different epochs. Naturally, our criticism should not be taken as ungrateful remarks to the translators. Marjory Wordrope’s translation is a virtually word-for-word literal paraphrase, while that of Venera Urushadze’s is more poetic although not attuning to the author’s word-concept, especially the epigrammatic line is selected for illustration that figuratively conveys the compact thematic information; moreover it shows the author’s outlook about general biblical wisdom of didactic principles that make the essential pattern of man’s upraise and the purpose of his earthly existence. Unfortunately, part of the information is missing in both translations.

This is the original stanza in Georgian:

“radgan Tavia sicrue yovlisa ubedobisa,
me ar gavwiro moyvare, Zma umtkicesi Zmobisa?!
ara viqm, codna ras margebs filosofosTa brZnobisa!
miT viswavlebiT, mogveces SerTva zesT mwyobrTa wyobisa.”
(avTandilis anderZidan, strofi 781)

Here is Marjory Wordrope’s literal translation:

1. “Since lying is the source of all misfortunes, why should I abandon my friend, a brother by a stronger tie than born brotherhood? I will not do it! What avails me the knowledge of the philosophizing of philosophers! Therefore are we taught that we may be united with the choir of the heavenly hosts” (M. Wardrope).

An attempt of poetic version of the same stanza is performed by Venera Urushadze:

2. “Since the sin of deception is the source of our sorrows and troubles,
What shall avail me the lessons instilled by the wise in all ages,
Philosophy’s golden treasure, making us one with the angels,
If I abandon the friend who is dearer to me than a brother?”
(The Testament of Avthandil, 771) (V. Urushadze)

We venture to offer our own rendering of the same stanza, which sounds like:

“Since lying and deception is the source of all our misfortunes
Why should I throw up my friend dearer to me than a brother?
I will not do it! What advantage has a man from the knowledge of the sages in all ages?
We are only taught to be favored to join the heavenly order of orders”.

Presumably more functionally adequate equivalent of the epigrammatic concept has not been traced out: SerTva zesT mwyobrTa wyobisa - *join the heavenly order of orders*. Moreover there is a simultaneous realization of the following meanings: 1. mystical joining the Lord posthumously (hierogamy), 2. the road to super cognition, 3. personification of super nature which prophesies man’s Godly nature, 4. to share super principles, 5. to join in living liturgy partaking Jesus’ Eucharist, 6. to join the cosmic order through organized behavior and righteous way of earthly life. What’s more the latter becomes the core semantic element and moves to the top easily in our multi-dimensional cognitive pyramid. In this case all the meanings above enumerated are entangled in a node. Does this epigram in the final line have more than two or three of above-mentioned meanings? It does. It is so because of our knowledge of the world. Thus we experience likewise feelings and emotions with the author and plus our creative aspirations in addition. So we are involved in sharing a re-creating process with the author.

Nevertheless it is extremely challenging to spot such a basic concept that may acquire the all-embracing informative potential in the translated text that may convey a hidden multiplicity. It should reveal compact information of Rustavelian thoughts in one unit, which combines and modulates the concept into poetry. It should be rhythmically precise in sound-symbolism, stylistically adequate (rhetoric devices of pun repetition , alliteration, allusion etc.) and methodically appropriate, taking socio-semiotic and cross-cultural features into account. The exact equivalent is hard to seek even in the same language on the level of paraphrase become part of the information is definitely lost. So a perfect translation relies on the goal, that expresses needs for what and to whom the translation is oriented and the basic word concept retains intentional polysemy.

Sometimes it is difficult to determine which communicative function is predominant but when it is realized that this is the wisdom that comes from the religious language of the Scripture or hagiographic texts it becomes clear that the informative-instructive function is prevailing. In case of hagiographic texts a word definitely acquires exclusive informative power, since the author is preoccupied to feature not his own talent and virtues but to convey God's word. This is the case where the individual manner of writing is concealed and the age-old figure of speech is highlighted in the source text. Then the word entropy (as a measure of infinitude) generates universal self-regulating principle that forms basis to render order and decipher religious texts not only in the original but also in translation.

Consequently a conceptual word is the whole which can best uncover and reveal the essence of the parts constituting the whole. The concept-word representing the whole is chosen on the ground of semantic, logical and pragmatic consideration. Concept Learning and teaching translation introduces us into a realm of cognitive ideas and exciting discoveries. Learning foreign concepts makes relaxing atmosphere in class from global perspectives because dominant paradigm in learning language and teaching translation is based on cognitive intercultural awareness. So cognitive concepts expressed in verbal signs feature a particular clear-cut universalistic propensity: deep, complex semantic relations between words in literary texts. Cognitive activities involve not only the student but teacher as well in self-asserting and self-cognizing process that proves so rewording.

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Translators:

- a) MARJORY SCOTT WADROP (A close rendering from the Georgian)
- b) VENERA URUSHADZE (The Knight Panther's Skin)
- c) RUTH H. STEVENSON (The Lord of the Panther- Skin)
- d) KATHERINE VIVIAN (The Man in the Panther's Skin)