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THE ROLE

OF TRANSLATOR IN THE DISCOURSES OF GLOBALIZATION AND DE-GLOBALIZATION

EL PAPEL DEL TRADUCTOR EN LOS DISCURSOS DE LA GLOBALIZACIÓN Y LA DES-GLOBALIZACIÓN

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ABSTRACT

This paper further explores the relationship between translation/interpreting and globalization focusing on the relationship between translation/interpreting and the discourses of globalization and de-globalization. The unique status of English as an international language and its subsequent fast spread around the world pose a serious challenge to the role of the translator/interpreter as a profession and translation studies as an academic field. This global expansion has a direct negative impact on translation/interpreting as the very existence of translation/interpreting as a field of study and the translator/interpreter as a profession has become under risk. On the other hand, despite the obvious negative consequences of these disadvantages, there are still serious issues challenging globalization and the further spread of English in the world. Some of these issues have purely linguistic and some have extralinguistic nature. In this connection, the paper deals with mostly extralinguistic issues, which positively and negatively affect the role of translation/interpreting and the translator/interpreter in this challenging environment.

Keywords: globalization, de-globalization, English, translator/interpreter.

RESUMEN

Este artículo explora más a fondo la relación entre traducción/interpretación y globalización centrándose en la relación entre traducción/interpretación y los discursos de globalización y desglobalización. El estatus único del inglés como idioma internacional y su rápida difusión por todo el mundo representan un serio desafío para el papel del traductor/intérprete como profesión y los estudios de traducción como campo académico. Esta expansión global tiene un impacto negativo directo en la traducción/interpretación, ya que la propia existencia de la traducción/interpretación como campo de estudio y del traductor/intérprete como profesión se ha puesto en peligro. Por otro lado, a pesar de las obvias consecuencias negativas de estas desventajas, aún existen serios problemas que desafían la globalización y la mayor difusión del inglés en el mundo. Algunas de estas cuestiones tienen carácter puramente lingüístico y otras tienen carácter extralingüístico. En este sentido, el artículo trata sobre todo cuestiones extralingüísticas, que afectan positiva y negativamente al papel de la traducción/interpretación y del traductor/intérprete en este entorno desafiante.

Palabras clave: globalización, desglobalización, inglés, traductor/intérprete.

INTRODUCTION

According to Kramsch and Zhu (2020) while Applied Linguistics was re-emerging after World War II as a field of study in the social sciences, drawing from linguistics, psycho- and sociolinguistics, two other fields were emerging: Translation Studies and Intercultural Communication Studies. The first came from literary theory and criticism, rhetoric, philology, and philosophy; the second from anthropology, communication studies, and cross-cultural psychology. All three fields have in common that they are linked to language practice: language learning and teaching, professional translation, and communication across cultures respectively. All three have moved from a formal, structural focus on equivalence in the sixties to an interest in the pragmatic, the functional, and the communicative in the seventies; and since the nineties, all three have reached out to critical cultural theory and poststructuralist theories of meaning that have, to varying degrees, informed their practice.

The importance of these fields of study has been historically evidenced in numerous mediations. As highlighted by Godev (2018) the symbiotic relationship between interlanguage negotiation and accomplishing goals in a variety of human endeavors is such that it is difficult to imagine globalization as possible at any point in history without the communication brokerage afforded by translators and interpreters, even as translators often come through as concealed negotiators. In addition, this fields have also gradually gained special relevance with the phenomenon of globalization, which has been accelerated nowadays due to the COVID 19 pandemic.

As stated by AbdAlgane Mohammed (2020) globalization is a process of integration of different cultures, languages, organizations, countries, etc., from across the globe. Due to the globalization everyone is connected in the world for the sake of personal and business; influence of globalization is everywhere. According to Chen (2012), five important features of globalization can be traced: (1) globalization is a dialectically dynamic process, which is caused by the pushing and pulling between the two forces of

cultural identity and cultural diversity, or between local and global; (2) globalization is universally pervasive as it penetrates into every aspect of human society and influences the way it lives, thinks, and behaves; (3) globalization is holistically interconnected as it builds a huge matrix in which all components are interconnected with networks; (4) globalization represents a culturally hybridized state, which allows cultural transmission via new media to take place at a very rapid rate by permeating and dissolving human boundaries; (5) globalization increases individual

power in the new media society, which pluralizes the world by recognizing the ability and importance of individual components. These features clearly summarize the opportunities and risks that should be taken into account.

In this regard, the rapid development of communication technologies and mass media have fostered intercultural communication and dialogue across the world. The emphasis on intercultural communication and dialogue is motivated by many factors including growing number of newly independent states for the last decades, rapid development of communication technologies, European integration, increasing opportunities for interaction and employment leading to economic and academic mobility in Europe and beyond. All these developments have made the role of translators/interpreters in Europe and worldwide increasingly important giving rise to the number of the workplaces for translators/interpreters in the European arena and beyond. As stated by Cronin (2003, pp. 104–105): *“seeing our contemporary age as a translation age rather than information age better defines not only changing understandings of information and technology but also the alterations, the mutability in relations between languages and culture brought about by new translation media”*. This very dynamic process promoted the translator/interpreter as a professional and translation/interpreting as a field of study with a clear interdisciplinary perspective.

While it is premature to tell what globalization will become, we have seen that the pandemic has had a major impact on the global economy, health care and many other sectors. Then, it is interesting to analyze: How does the pandemic affect language? What will happen to language when people increasingly rely on online communication? (Dong, 2021). Taking this into account, this paper explores the relationship between translation/interpreting and the discourses of globalization and de-globalization. Thus, this paper is another attempt to shed a light on this topic, giving some clues to understand better why the translator/interpreter and the translative discourse matter in the contemporary social life.

DEVELOPMENT

The last five or six decades have been characterized by the fast expansion of the training of the translator/interpreter when a multi-purposed and multicultural institutional discourse revealed a social need for a professional and gave a rise to the training of a specialist-translator/interpreter. In this connection, governments, NGO's and business communities across the world, as well as international and regional organizations have adopted a new approach to translation/interpreting as one of the key

instruments and driving forces of intercultural communication and dialogue. As the demand in the translator/interpreter has become stronger there has also been growing interest in his/her competence resulted in the institutional reforms such as establishing new University faculties, schools, departments, centers of translation, designing new international and regional projects.

As a result, a new army of the mono-professional translators/interpreters have emerged and developed. Many researchers in the field prioritized the issues related to the status, training and professionalism of the translator/interpreter. In this connection, Pym (1998, p. 160) states: A slightly different kind of 'translator', also technically singular, is the one who is presumed to be competent, who is supposed to abide by the reigning norms, and who is worth paying some kind of standard rate for translating. Munday (2016, p. 11) also focuses on the same issues: First, just as the demand for translation has soared, so has there been a vast expansion in specialized translating and interpreting programmes at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. These programmes, which attract thousands of students, are mainly oriented towards training future professional commercial translators and interpreters and serve as highly valued entry-level qualifications for the professions.

On the other hand, this era has also witnessed the fast expansion of the trends of globalization, which have gained momentum in the same period of the end of Cold War. The processes of globalization have many dimensions including political, military, economic and cultural. As a result of these processes, the phenomenon of monoculture has become a reality. From this perspective, Blommaert (2010, p. 77) remarks are quite symptomatic: *“Cultural globalization processes are seen as the production of a global monoculture”*. In this connection, it is intriguing to study the consequences of these processes in terms of culture, intercultural and translation/interpreting as one of the tools of intercultural communication. It is obvious that the existence of one culture or monoculture makes translation useless and therefore researchers focus on the crucial role of intercultural and intercultural communication in the studies of the role of culture in translation (Pym, 1998; Schweitzer, 1988). For example, Schweitzer (1988, p. 3) explicitly demonstrates the vital importance of culture and intercultural communication during translation: The basic of translation as one of the types of interlinguistic and intercultural communication is not only the search for correspondences for particular linguistic units, but also the construction of a text, which adequately replaces the text of translation, in other culture, in other language and in another communicative situation. Pym (1998, p. 191)

also stresses the importance of cultures or intercultural from the perspective of translation: If there were not cultures, there would be no resistance to the free passage of information; messages would remain unchanged. We can thus ask cultures to show their existence by transforming the texts (words, ideas, concepts) that enter through intercultural and leave through intercultural.

Translation/interpreting becomes necessity when individual cultures dominate because texts operate within a cultural context, that is, they are created within a particular culture and operate within the value system of that culture. Thus, text of translation is considered as “the dialogue of cultures” in the general context of the view of translation as a tool of intercultural communication. The existence of different cultures and languages creates favorable condition for translation/interpreting, which has actually served as an instrument to fill the gap between cultures and languages for centuries. Pym (1998, p. 191) discusses this issue in a very interesting manner. A method that places all translators one side or the other is unable to imagine many alternatives. It will not ask about the relations between translation and the weak intercultural power of European empires, be it the Holy Germanic or the European Union. It will not see intercultural as spaces of non-translation, of alternatives to translation, since translators need not depend on translations. It will not weigh up the benefits of international languages. It will mostly fail to perceive networks, the internet, the intercultural city.

The traditional theoretical debates on the role of culture in translation have become more intriguing with a new focus on globalization as the researchers have started to address the issue of the correlation between translation and globalization from different perspectives. For example, Cronin (2003) studies this correlation in a broader context of the political, economic, and cultural transformations at the beginning of 21st century. Bielsa (2005) further explores this issue focusing on the theoretical aspects of the role of translation in globalization as well as on the articulation of the global and the local. Xie (2014) calls the process of globalization as the politics of the universal considering translation between the local and global. One of the recent attempts in this field was made by Godev (2018) and other authors in the edited volume titled “Translation, Globalization and Translocation: The classroom and beyond”. In the Introduction to this volume, Godev (2018) emphasizes the crucial role of translation and translators in globalization: *“Globalization phenomena are fundamentally mediated by translation and translators”*. Meantime, the studies on the relationship between translation and globalization have attached much attention to the role of the global expansion of English in the era of globalization

since one of the most intriguing issues from the perspective of the translation/interpreting studies is the relationship between translation and the global role of English.

The trends of globalization also gave rise to the cultural expansion associated with the various cultural codes of globalization. It is obvious that English is one of the most important cultural codes of globalization. In this connection, Blommaert (2014, p. 131) writes: *It is a commonplace to say that English is the language that defines globalization processes; the public awareness that the world is globalizing is to a large extent driven by the fact that one 'sees' English all over the world nowadays.* The era of globalization has produced a new reality—the global dominance of one language—English labelled by Phillipson (1992) as linguistic imperialism. Crystal (2003) focuses on the 1990s as the turning point in the global dominance of English: *The 1990s were a revolutionary decade, in that respect, with proliferation of new linguistic varieties arising out of the world-wide implementation of Internet, an emerging awareness of the crisis affecting the world's endangered languages, and an increasingly public recognition of the global position of English.*

The global status of English has been further cemented by the fact that more and more countries started to recognize it as a second foreign language making it a compulsory subject at elementary school level. As the non-native speakers of English gradually outnumber the native speakers of English, this language has become a very important tool for intercultural communication worldwide. In this connection, McKay (2002, p. 132) writes: *International English is used by native speakers of English and bilingual users of English for cross-cultural communication. International English can be used both in a local sense between speakers of diverse cultures and languages within one country and in a global sense between speakers from different cultures.*

This view shows the position of English on the global scale in terms of the number of people who use it and of its impact on bilingualism, plurilingualism and multilingualism worldwide. People (especially educated) use English across the world for various purposes (including politics, business, education, culture, sport) stimulating the construction of the discourses of globalization. Sharifian (2009, p. 10) clearly reflects this trend in his following remarks: *For better or worse, by choice or force, English has 'travelled' to many parts of the world and has been used to serve various purposes. This phenomenon has created positive interactions as well as tensions between global and local forces and has had serious linguistic, ideological, political and pedagogical implications.*

Thus, translation and the global spread of English have become two key and at the same time competing tools in intercultural communication worldwide. In this connection, we can partially agree with the above-mentioned view of Godev on the mediating role of translation and translators in globalization. On the other hand, we think that translation from or into English has become the driving force of globalization. Even though the functions of translation and global English seem to complement each other in the era of globalization, at certain point the fast expansion of English can give sharp rise to the number of people, who can comfortably communicate in English. As a result, English can prevail as a tool of intercultural communication and gradually less people need translation/interpreting for the same purpose. Nowadays the participants of the majority of international events, especially in diplomacy, economy and business can communicate in English without any language barrier. The same is true in the academic sphere as well. The working language of various international and regional academic congresses, conferences and seminars is usually English, or English is added as a second working language. That is why the spread of global English can impose limits for translation/interpreting.

[Weighing disadvantages and advantages facing the translator/interpreter](#)

Thus, the spread of English worldwide positively and negatively affects the current role and the future of the translator/interpreter as a job and translation/interpreting as a field of study. The global status of English promotes the study of this language at schools and universities worldwide, including from the perspective of translation/interpreting. In this connection, the studies in translation/interpreting from or into English obviously prevail in terms of the number of students, academics-researchers and monograph, textbook and journal publications. This fact, in its turn, has also negative side since the study of translation/interpreting from or into other languages draws less interest both in terms of theory and practice.

On the other hand, the sharp rise in the number of people who can use English in communication with different level of competences not only in the traditional English-speaking regions (South and South-East Asia, Middle East, some parts of Africa) but also in other places of the world raise serious questions about the future of translation/interpreting from or into English and probably about the future of the studies in this field. Meanwhile, there are serious issues of linguistic and extralinguistic nature for the further spread of English in the world, which can ease concerns about the future of translation/interpreting.

First, serious barriers exist in the use of English by non-native speakers both in spoken and in written discourses. One of these barriers, which can be considered as traditional and fundamental is the genealogical and typological differences between languages. The native languages of English learners across the world are sometimes basically different from English and therefore they need serious language education to overcome this barrier. A trend for particularly idiomatic speech (metaphorical language use, idioms, phrasal verbs) in spoken discourse is another serious barrier (Seidlhofer, 2003). Non-native speakers can't or are not willing to use culture-specific words and expressions. There are two main reasons:

1. they feel difficulties in the use of figurative language due to the linguistic and cultural differences.
2. they want to focus on those competences, which they need for communication in different contexts without any emphasis on culture (Bhatt, 2002).

In case of written discourse more questions arise regarding English applied in the academic sphere by non-native speakers and whether its correction to conform to certain norms in the way it is used by native speaker (Seidlhofer, 2003). Non-native speakers of English mostly survive both in formal and informal situations due largely to their discourse competencies in English. The advantages (such as prestige, future career) and efficiency of direct communication in English and also shared knowledge among discourse participants (for example, the knowledge of topic or terminology in formal communication) can seriously increase the chances of non-native speakers to communicate even with little knowledge of English.

Second, the global expansion of English is associated with the concept of linguistic imperialism in the sociolinguistic studies (Phillipson, 1992). As any type of imperialism, this type also faces resistance, which has two main sources-political and cultural. Some researchers consider the expansion of English as ideologically motivated because of the obvious fact that this expansion, first of all, carries a strong sentiment of the American dominance in the global arena. In this connection, it is reasonable to put distinction between imperial or colonial and post-imperial or post-colonial societies (Mammadov & Mammadova, 2022). As a rule, imperial or colonial societies strongly resist any kind of linguistic globalization which they consider to be an imminent threat to their ideologies, cultures, and languages. In addition, some non-imperial societies also resist to the expansion of English for the same reason.

The trend of resistance to linguistic imperialism also reflects strong incentives and eagerness to preserve cultural identity even in the English-speaking post-imperial

societies (Bhatt, 2002). Post-imperial societies, on the other hand, tend to have a more open attitude to the realities of a global language since they feel more secure in their cultural identities. There is a general understanding in these societies that if English is used in such a way as to serve its unique function as international language, it does not represent a threat to other languages because of its distinct role and status. In addition, the spread of global English creates an excellent opportunity for building plurilingualism among already bilingual people in non-English speaking post-imperial societies.

Recent trends of isolationism and de-globalization (Brexit, the former US Administration's policy, the ultra-conservative agenda of some right-wing politicians in the continental Europe) have added new challenges to the discourse of globalization. Wodak and Krzyżanowski (2017) discuss these trends in the context of the analysis of the right-wing populist discourse suggesting that it clearly opposes globalization and international or regional organizations such as European Union. As a result of this isolationist policy, the role of English as a Lingua Franca in the European arena and beyond could be considerably decreased. On the other hand, it can seriously change the role of the translator/interpreter making it again a key tool in intercultural communication. All these developments can directly affect workplaces of translators/interpreters in the world due to the complex environment of increasing trends of the global and European expansion of English, on one hand and of disintegration and isolationism, on the other hand.

CONCLUSION

The recent trends of isolationism and disintegration represent serious disadvantage for the global role of English as a Lingua Franca in the European arena and beyond. The following explicit question is quite interesting: Will this specific disadvantage negatively affect this role? In this connection, two scenarios can be formulated.

The first scenario implies the further spread of English in all spheres of social life on the global level due to the still dominating role of the English-speaking countries in politics, military, economy, science, technology, education, and culture. In addition, it is the most suitable language at present to play the role of Lingua Franca in Europe, especially considering the strong position of English in the Northern, Central and Eastern European countries. This scenario is not favorable for the further institutionalization of the global multilingualism and consequently of translation/interpreting and the translator/interpreter resulted in their decreasing role in the world.

The second scenario is favorable for translation/interpreting and translator/interpreter as it implies the strengthening of the political trends of isolationism and disintegration which are quite popular not only among right-wing politicians (including former President D. Trump) in the USA and UK, but also in the continental Europe. In addition, the strong linguistic ambitions of the non-English speaking imperial societies (Russia, China, France) and cultural, including linguistic identities should be taken into consideration as well. This scenario is favorable for translation/interpreting and the translator/interpreter as it obviously make translation and the translator/interpreter on demand.

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