

Translation Industry and the World Economy: Between Academic Skills and Market Requirements

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Abstract

One of the legacies of translation is faithfulness in meaning transfer. The word is supposed to be expressive, easy to comprehend and holds the denotative meaning of the original. That is, it must restrict itself to the nature of register and categorization. The literariness of language is not permissible in the world economy. The latter is in an ongoing development and transformation, and so is the register of its language. The problem, such development causes, is the normalization of the word to the original. Economic text necessitates a special skill in translation that cannot be done without a thorough knowledge in the field of economy. In this world of globalization, no error is permissible. Translators must be professional: they are constrained to learn, besides translation curricula, the major legacies of the specialized field of their choice, as the case here, economy. So, to indulge in the translation industry, the translator must have two major pre-requisites: the mastering of mechanisms of translation, and a fair substantial knowledge in the domain of economy. That is, his academic qualifications are the cornerstone of professionalism. Thus, training and certification are recommended for translators.

Key Words: Translation Industry - World Economy - Market and Translation - Professionalism - Certification

Introduction

Translation industry has become a must in this on-going process of change, mainly in the domain of market economy. It has become incentive to learn and get skills and adapt them with what you have got academically. In other words, in this world of globalization, translation activity has become inseparable from such economic growth. It affects and is affected by the economic boom of the world. The translator is no longer the one who knows languages and linguistic transformations and transfer, but, more importantly, the one that is performant, creative and comprehensive to what surrounds him in his activity.

Translation industry enables factories to know better and fair enough of what is going on 'out there' in Europe and all over the globe. That is, we know the outside world and the latest developments in the field of inventions, industry and economy, through translation. This faster and faster process of change has caused a change in translation activities. Translation is no longer the one that transfers poetry, drama, fiction, cultures and modes of writing of/to other people; its nature has become more professional and specific: it transfers science, economic terminology, and the like, to customers and businessmen to better know and be known by other in and outside the country. Furthermore, translation allows fair knowledge of the product. In the words of Bruce Maylath, "These changes are accelerating the process of providing documents, especially technical documents, in multiple language versions." (40)

Translating is informing the consumer about firms and factories and their products. "Firms anywhere have an incentive to sell everywhere, and that means adapting their products and services to the local languages and cultures." (Maylath 41) This adaptation cannot be done without professional translation. In the words of Gisèle Sapiro, "This [adaptation] was accompanied by a steady process of professionalization, contributing to the gradual unification of a global market of translations governed by the rhythm of the major international book fairs." (5)

Globalization boosts translation. Translation, in turn, encourages, advertises and presents the products to the global world and opens the way to consumers to know better about any product. Maria Lucia maintains that: "One of such issues would be the role of translation in responding to the march of the overall globalization process toward the making of the entire world into a single space." (47)

But how could a translator reply to these transformations and requirements imposed by globalization? Does the translator, who has got his academic skill, need only training in the field of specialization that keeps pace with market opportunity, or does he need to learn and get specialized degrees so that he could translate without any constraints?: "As globalization takes hold, the size and cost of language handling make translation more visible and create a huge market opportunity for vendors, who provide products and services in this area. ("Opportunities" 5)

Globalization has diversified and specified the world economy. Subsequently, it has segmented translation. The latter has become less general and more specialist. It has no longer become a meaning transfer of a culture, or a novel or a play or a poem, to another to language,

but has exceeded to other domains imposed by such a change, mainly translation services. The increasing demand for translation services has made it an industry by itself, with different disciplines and domains. That is, translation has become a real profession that no country or economy or industry can overpass. No industrial project can ever be done without it. In the words of A. L. Jan Chan: “More economic and social resources have been spent on translation activities by regional and international organizations as well as multinational corporations.”(1)

1-Characteristics of Economic Register and Terminology

Economic text is not easy to grasp because it needs a background in the field of specialty. Thus, we need relevant skill that is specific to the text of economy. “Compared with other subjects, economic literature characterized by profound linguistic and cultural connotation, epochal feature and disciplinary limit can be easily translated with mistakes.”(Wang, and Fan 786-787)

Students are supposed to be equipped with a vast knowledge in the global world and understand conditions that characterize the global economy. This fact makes them develop and get acquainted with what this world offers as a job market. It enables the translator/student adapt his profession to the changes required and even imposed by the world economy. Furthermore, having learned about all the parameters of the market, the student is in disposition to know better and offers to himself a choice of the field of his professionalization. Students will draw “independent conclusions as they confront development problems, their sometimes ambiguous evidence, and real-life development policy choices — ultimately to play an informed role in the struggle for economic development and poverty alleviation.” (Todaro, and Smith18)

So, many words and expressions are daily coined by the world economy and globalization. The translator must be up-to-date with them and has to offer a good understanding and transfer to the target language. That is, he must read referential documents and update his knowledge in this field of industry and get acquainted with the newness and changes that globalization (re)generates. Jian jun Wang and Yize Fan state that: “There are a lot of terminology or technical words with specific meaning in the texts. These words and expressions loaded with special meanings are fixed and mainly used in economic texts, for example, externality, internalization, present value, and consumer surplus, etc...” (786)

Inequality between languages is a fact imposed by the process of globalization. That is, language development is dialogically related to its use in technology and science developments. Powerful languages are those which are related to developed countries. Translators constrained to coin words to adapt with the product they want to translate if the term or the register is absent. In doing so, they develop the target language. In other words, If the translator cannot or is unable to specify or find out the relevant words and terms, he risks to water down and affect the original text. Subsequently, the message becomes flat and ineffective and, worst, out of context and erroneous. Maylath maintains that: “Translators create a means of communicating in a specific target situation. Translation can be seen as a

problem-solving process in which the communication expert is part of a complex, dynamic system with various cultural, communicative, situative and professional aspects. (44) Maylath extends further claiming that: “Expending knowledge and register and skill repertoires in the field of specialization is the surest way to get a job and secure it permanently.” (47)

Faithfulness is the primary criterion to translation. The translator is supposed to give accurate loyal version to the original: the more the translator is ambiguous, the more the message fails to pass and, subsequently, the translation loses its effect and its mode of information. The translated text should be expressive, understandable and easy to communicate the right message, mainly if the text to be translated is economic. Suqing Huang maintains that: “Economic literature is the product of economic development. More translation works of economic literature came into being with the developed economy. Meanwhile, the problem of normalization in translation of economic terminology cannot be ignored.” (111)

The basics of any translation are: the translator should have at least two languages to know quite well. He should have academic degree in translation and appropriate skills in the field of his professional choice. Besides, he needs experience and training before indulging, as a professional, within the job market. Therefore, when we translate economic literature, “it is necessary for us to learn something about economics, which can help us better understand the source language and deeply analyze the economic facts to give good translation to the readers.” (Wang, and Fan 787)

Common words and expressions are unnecessary and even problematic in economic translation. The latter is highly specific with characteristics that are typical to the domain of economy. That is, no common language is ever possible to express or replace economic terms and registers. In the words of Jian Jun Wang and Yize Fan: “In translation, particularly with regard to economic terminology, translators are required to deeply understand its connotation and set proper translation version. Improper translation can lead to confusion of the meaning. Hence we have to attach high importance to the norm to avoid inaccurate translation.” (788)

Accuracy and clear terms do not create ambiguity, which is the enemy of transfer process. No literary, poetic impressive words are supposed to be used in economy, mainly abstract ones. Mei Liang and Jia feng Liu put it well when they warn us about the exaggerating of metaphorical use in industry. They point out: “The abstract concepts and expressions in business activities would hinder readers from assimilating and digesting relevant information. Consequently, business discourse employs conceptual metaphors to explain unfamiliar economic activities with familiar concepts. As a part of business discourse, stock news report is also metaphorical. With conceptual metaphors, the abstract and complicated stock activities are vividly explained in stock news report.” (119)

Translation process is a decisive act based on mind-decision of the translator after consulting the necessary tools and data of and about the text to be translated. In the words of Andy Lung Jan Chan: The act of translating is seen as “a series of a certain number of consecutive situations—moves, as in game—situations imposing on the translator the

necessity of choosing among a certain (and very often exactly definable) number of alternatives.” (11)

The rapid growth of translation is dictated by two parameters imposed by globalization: Information and communication. Chan states that:

Although globalization is by no means a non-problematic concept, it should encompass the following forces: the rise of the network economy; the restructuring of the economic world system; the political reshaping of the world order; growth in the real and virtual mobility of people, capital and knowledge; the erosion of nation-states; and the increasing complexity of cultural developments. Although globalization creates more opportunities for translators as there is increasing demand for translation services, the development also brings a number of formidable challenges. Therefore, in a globalized world where multinational corporations have played an increasingly important role, it is common for a translation project coordinator to be responsible for translating and localizing a product into a number of languages in a short time.(183)

In china, according to Chan, there are more than 450000 people and 3000 translation companies, who/which contract and work with individuals and commercial authorities.

To access to information and communication and the circulation of economic notions and concepts, people and nations are in need of translation and language that respond to such facts and realities. Marco E.L Guidi claims that:

An important part of the market for political economy is also the market for economic translations, which inform about ideas and institutional settings (packages) that efficiently functioned in other contexts and that, once adapted, can be useful to other countries. Both the knowledge of languages and that of economic notions and realities serve to categorize an informed participation of actors in the market and in its surrounding institutional network. They both play a cognitive function, because they contribute to socially constructing what they categorize.(14)

Oleg Rudavin stresses the importance of the translator to follow the changes occurred in the world economy and links any development of professional translation to economic sectors. He writes: “One thing to mention though: the translation industry does not generate its own product and only processes ‘raw materials’ supplied by other sectors of the economy. Hence, we are fully dependent on the shape the world economy takes in the coming years. How the economy is going to develop remains to be seen.” (Rudavin net)

Rudavin is right to a great extent, because it is the market that dictates what the translator has to do and has to avoid. His competence and performance are canalized by the market economy: his skill and intelligence have to develop in this context. Anthony Pym states that this millennium has imposed a new mode of job requirements: more technical, more particular and specific. Thus, it needs more skills and know-how. He writes:

This millennial problem is partly handled by claims to fidelity or its technocratic surrogate equivalence: translators will always signal their loyalty to the cause of their client. In particularly closed cultures, trustworthiness is only properly signaled by the translator being born into one social group rather than the other, or even by the translator belonging to a family of hereditary professional translators.(12).

In the same vein, Tian Chunmao claims that translation industry has developed and been developed by companies and states. This development allows them to have a more performing and powerful industry in the world economy. He writes: “Translation services became more and more needed. As a response to this demand, translation companies began to make their debut in the translation market. Some of the companies developed out of the translation department of the government or state-owned enterprises.” (Chuanmao net).

But how does this new industry (Translation at service of economy) develop through the world? What are the mechanisms used by developed and developing countries, mainly in the Arab world? My Illustration is essentially of two trends: one is Europe; the other is the Arab world.

Europe: For 20 years, in Europe, Canada and the USA, many researchers have tried to overcome the difficulties caused by the problem of transfer of technology, within and to the market, in every European country. “While some participants in the Canada survey believe technology is being developed in collaboration with the service industry, others see inadequate links between these two core segments. Unless these links are strong, and perceived to be important, the synergy between the two segments of the industry may be lost - or may provide opportunities for exploitation outside Canada. (“Opportunities” 10)

In Canada, translation industry has always been segmented so that it satisfies and responds to the needs of companies and the market. This fact consolidates the industry and serves the market and favours exchanges with the other world economy. In other words, it broadens the size market and exchange. (“Opportunities” 14)

The report of Claudio Sfreddo about translation and interpretation associations pretends that there are around three (3) associations of translators and interpreters in the European Member States, many of them of quite recent creation. This proliferation of associations has mostly as job information and social functions. (Sfreddo net) The report maintains that: “Beyond the positive market effects of associations and the measures that can be taken for authorised/sworn translators, there are many areas where inefficient or confusing signals seem to be resulting in market disorder, low status and a corresponding decline in perceived

standards. (Sfreddo net) Sfreddo sums up the inefficiency and disorder in the following indications:

- 1- A general lack of efficient signaling training (qualifications or certification) with regard to translation services in “immigrant” languages;
- 2- Online lists of “professional translators” that have been compiled with no checking of qualifications or skills;
- 3- Outsourcing of translation services for justice systems, notably to private companies that have little regard for skills or qualifications (case of Spain) or are not trusted by translation professionals (case of the United Kingdom);
- 4-Review processes of long-standing certification systems, especially in the United States, Canada and Australia. As a response to market disorder, employers tend to trust professional experience or their own recruitment tests rather than academic qualifications or membership of an association.(Sfreddo net)

In his PhD dissertation entitled, “Information Economics, the Translation Profession and Translator Certification,” Andy Lung Jan Chan cites, for matter of illustration, many associations that are essential for consolidation through collaboration. No professional translator could stand and endure alone without being into a mass and associations. He writes:

In the translation profession, the two major professional translator associations and the largest accreditation body, ATA, IoL and NAATI, have made CPD an important element of their membership. Starting in January 2004, ATA-certified translators have been required to accumulate 20 continuing education points per three years in order to maintain their credentials. Members must keep a record of all activities through which they earn continuing education points. These activities include approved seminars and conferences, university courses, membership in other translation, interpreting and specialization-specific professional organizations (e.g. Society of Automotive Engineers and European Society of Clinical Pharmacy), becoming mentors, mentees and ATA Certification Program graders, and publishing articles on the subject of translation or interpretation. As ATA-certified translators may refer to their certification in their résumés, business stationery, cards, and other related materials and these can be important signals to the prospective employees that they are competent and reliable, losing certification may affect translators’ competitiveness in the translation market.”(203)

Arab World: Translation in the Arab world suffers a lot. Its primary concern was the translation of European and Latin American literary and philosophical works. It rarely directs its concern to industry, except some Middle east (Gulf) regions, where English is dominating

and where a serious translation industry has given birth to some associations linked to this field. So, Arabic translation activities are not as important as the European ones. Foreign firms, which activate in the area, take hold of translation by themselves and delivers what they translate as products to the inside consumption and to the external world. In other words, translation industry is not a must since Arabic is not global and the Arab world has to learn English in the East and French in the North to solve the problem of the market.

The Arab world is a market of consumption more than a space of industrialization. Thus, what we get as product is translated in the origin of the product: companies inside 'us' translate for us. Take any product and you find the Arabic translation labeled on it. Even China has imposed itself in the Arab world through the Arabic translation of its product, which is very lousy and erroneous. In his report on Saudi Arabian translation in the oil sector, Mamdouh Alkhiab points out the characteristics of Arabic translation industry and claims that they do not respond to the importance of the sector: These characteristics can be summarized as follows:

1: The size of the Arabic translation, in the field of oil sector, reveals very small compared to other sectors and sub-sectors of the economy. The overall performance of this industry can be considered as poor.

2: By examining the structure of the Saudi economy, the performance of the industry in general and the performance of the Arabic translation industry in particular, the role of labor as determinant of the supply in the last industry can be evaluated as poor. (Alkhaib 28)

Besides, the problem of having foreign workers, who do not need translation, because the staff of the companies is mostly formed in English, and because of the poor, non-qualified national labor, Alkhaib adds another parameter. He maintains that the relationship between translation industry and oil industry is very poor. He says: "The industries based on the products of Arabic translation activities as production inputs are almost neglected. The public institutions producing the Arabic translated books (universities, institutes, etc.,) are non-profit institutions. The foreign competition is very high." (29)

For Alkaid, the problem in the Arab world (the case of Saudi Arabia) is that there is a deficiency and lack of qualified experts in translation in foreign language as well as Arabic. He writes: "Most of the translators exercise translation as an additional job to their education profession in the universities and institutions. Thus, the translation activities constitute additional load for them." (32)

Another diagnosis about translation industry is attempted by Nadjib Haribi. Haribi claims that what we have as data about translation industry is not encouraging. It even gives the impression that there is no dynamism and substantial activities in translation, in almost all the sectors, compared to Europe and America. He claims that the Arab world suffers from translation qualifications. He writes: "The lack of a sufficient number of qualified translators both in quantitative and qualitative terms and the lack of capital investment in the latest publishing equipment seem to be major handicaps for the development of publishing companies engaged in Arabic translation." (12)

Haribi gives the case of Egypt, where translation activities is felt. But, hopelessly, it is only in humanities, especially in literature and without any quality control. In Egypt, he writes, “there is an abundance of translators but they are not always specialized. In addition, quality control is lacking. Specialized translators in areas such as banking, insurance, engineering, science, and some modern branches of law are still lacking.” (12)

The translation performance in the world economy needs favorable conditions for consolidation and continuity. This is not the case in the Arab world. “Neither the size nor the characteristics of the demand side is growth-enhancing for this industry.” (13)

2-Certification/Accreditation

Is certification the only issue for the remedy of translation and its development as a real industry? But after all: what does it mean? Is it an ‘accreditation’? Does it solve the problem?

Here are the definitions of the two terms, according to Pym:

- **Certification:** “A voluntary process by which an organisation grants recognition to an individual, who has met certain predetermined qualification standards.”.(15)

- **Accreditation:** A process by which an entity grants public recognition to an organisation such as a school, institute, college, program, facility, or company that has met predetermined standards.(15)

What characterizes our degree of ‘Licence’ in translation is its academic nature. It does not qualify in any of the job market. In other words, not anyone who has a degree of translation is a translator *par excellence*. So, what does certification/accreditation do in this field? We can have degrees in languages, where we find its holders better qualified in translation than the translator himself. In Europe, as pointed out by Pym, the degrees we get from universities are only the first for a better qualified translator. The European Commission’s Directorate-General for Translation selects through competition candidate for the domain of translation. This competition lasts around nine months (between five and nine). Candidates must have two foreign languages and “a university degree, not necessarily in languages”. In some cases, degree in translation is not required. They only need qualifications and competences in more than one language. (Pym 21)

Pym goes on underlining the importance of this competition for translation industry. He claims that there are so many European organizations (around 31) that apply such selection. A report of European commission in 2008-2009 (DGT, IAEA, ICC, ICRC, ILO, ITU, OECD, UN (ESCWA, UNHQ, UNOG and UNOV), World Bank, WIPO and WTO) reads as follows: The findings on admission criteria for examinations and tests show a universal requirement for a first-level university degree but not for a specific translation qualification, which is required by relatively few organizations but seen by many as an asset. All organizations test for translation into and not out of the mother tongue (or main language), and testing précis writing in an examination appears to be confined to the UN in this respondent group. Most organizations test ability to translate out of at least two languages, and other expertise is occasionally an alternative to a second source language. (IAMLADP 2009: 79 in Pym 21)

But can the certification or accreditation be possible and functional without authorization from higher qualified instances, whether governmental/institutional or academic? In Europe, the terms “sworn” and “state authorized” are used and are useful for the translator to be acknowledged of being so. In Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, France and Germany the term ‘sworn’ or ‘authorized’ is carried out by courts, whether regional or local; in Austria the case is different: there is a national register of sworn translators (Pym 26). In Finland the authorization is got by an exam organized by the Authorized Translators’ Board under the auspices of the National Board of Education. (Pym 27)

But a question poses itself here: can certification be a solution and a means to enable the translator to get a job easier and better than a common translator, who does not hold it? Chan claims that: “A translator certification system, if properly designed, can act an effective signal to differentiate between “good” translators and “bad” translators. The recruiters seeking translators surveyed see translator certification as something that can enhance the overall image of the translation profession and bring benefits to translators who hold it.”(1) If it is used in its positive context, this certification could be a good sign and effective signal in the world market.

In his research, Chan cites for us some associations, which have developed some systems for translation development: The American ‘Translators Association’ and the British ‘Chartered Institute of Linguists’ have developed systems for translator certification. Likewise, in China, there is an attempt initiated by the Ministry of Personnel to devise a national certification system for translators in 2003, called ‘China Aptitude Test for Translators and Interpreters’ (CATTI). This certification is modeled after the Australian ‘National Accreditation Authority for Translators Authority for Translators and Interpreters’ (NAATI—1977). (33)

Conclusion

Translation has become by the *force des choses* a real industry that should be consolidated through certification, specialization qualification and segmentation. Companies and institutions, which are supposed to care after translation professionalization, are constrained to coordinate their efforts to develop it. Companies should keep in touch with professionals, as engineers, scientists, to develop programmes to respond to the needs of translation necessities.

Basing recruitment and job market enrolment on academic qualification only is not enough. There must be training and certification related to the specialty the translator leans to and likes as a field of interest. His choice must be done via exams, competitions or at least testing.

Internet Data basis has become a necessity. It is a place, where the translator can find facilities, dictionaries, models of translations supports, contacts of institutions qualified in language and linguistics, besides the profile of his certification. On the other hand, it is preferable, but not a must, to have competent institutions qualified for the control of the quality of translation and the job in general. Government should organize and promote the professionalization of translation, mainly in the field of marketing and commerce.

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