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Norms and Translation

发表时间: 2005-11-8 18:51:06 点击次数: 916 次 作者: 翻译研究在线

Norms and Translation

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[Abstract] Norms can be defined as the “social reality of correctness notions” (Bartsch, 1987). This thesis is aimed to give a brief introduction of norm theory in translation by discussing the nature of linguistic norms and the implications of norm theory to translation

practice.

[Key Words] linguistic norms, norm theory, translation

翻译和 规范

梁 怡

摘要: 规范可定义为标志正确性概念的社会现实。本文旨在通过对语言规范及其与翻译实践中规范理论的关联的分析, 对翻译的规范理论作了简要介绍。

关键词: 语言规范, 规范理论, 翻译

Within the community, norms serve as criteria according to which actual instance of norms in situation allows for different kinds of behavior, on the condition that selection among them be nonrandom. Norms are the key concept and focal point in any attempt to account for the social relevance of activities, because their existence and wide range of situations they apply to are the main factors ensuring the establishment and retention of social order. This holds for cultures too, or for any of the systems constituting them, which are social institutions ipso facto. Of course a behavior which does not conform to prevailing norms is always possible too. Norms can be expected to operate not only in translation of all kinds, but also at every stage in the translating event, and hence to be reflected on every level of its product.

1. Norms of Language

1.1 Definition of Norm

Bartsch (1987) defines norms as the “social reality of correctness notions”; the correctness notions exist in a community by being the contents of norms. On this view, people in a given community inevitably share certain ideas about “correctness” of a particular act of behavior. Thus, we can say

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norms are the translation of general values or ideas shared by a group—as to what is conventionally right or wrong, adequate or inadequate—into performance.

For example, in some cultures people tend to keep to the right when standing on escalations: this is “correct behavior”, and is agreed to be such. One does not breach this norm with impunity: standing on the left.

As “social reality”, norms exist intersubjectively. Individuals have individual knowledge of norms, but norms are only recognized virtue of their social existence. Let S =a given community, C =a given set of conditions, X =any individual belonging to S . A =a given act.

Then: there exist a norm governing A if and only if all the following conditions satisfied:

Most members of S regularly do A under C .

If X does not do A , members of S may criticize X and others will regard much criticism justified.

Members of S use expressions as “ X ought to A under C ” or “:It is the rule that under C , people in S so A or “the right thing to be under C is A ”. In order to justify their own or others’ actions or criticisms.

Note that all these conditions must hold in order for us to postulate the existence of a norm. Condition<1> alone merely states a common practice, condition<2>adds the point that the practice is accepted as being valid and desirable, and condition<3> the point that norms are accessible to intersubjective consciousness: we know them and can talk about them.

Linguistic norms are some social expectations, which determine the forms of social linguistic interaction within the boundaries the linguistic system. Linguistic norms govern the functional conditions of communication (maxims of conversation, acceptability, comprehensibility) and in specific situation curb the choice and organization of linguistic pronunciation. Situative norms refer to functional and thematic appropriateness to correct speech in social roles. Linguistic norms are implicitly determined and legitimized by criteria such as circulation, age, structural accordance, and purpose. The demarcation of linguistic norms and rules of a linguistic system is methodically difficult, since the existence of implicit linguistic norms can only be deduced from usage.

1.2 Typology of Linguistic Norms

Norms of language, at the most general level, fall into three main types. In the first place, there are product norms describing the notions of “correct” phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, lexis etc. in a given speech community.

But these product norms are in turn based on two higher—order norms, in fact process norms. One of these is the communication norm. Informally stated, this norm requires us (as speakers) to communicate in such a way that others recognize our intention, and (as hearers) to interpret in accordance with the speaker’s intension. In short, the achievement of understanding is the goal. The second higher—order norm of language is an ethical one: Bartsch calls it the norm of honesty, or sincerity, and formulates it thus:”conform to the norms of communication (interaction)as long as you must assume that the hearer(partner)can not directly recognize the breaching of the norms!” (1987:61). In other words: if you do breach norms, do so in such a way that your hearer recognizes that you act breaching norms.

1.3 Voices from the Field of Translation Studies

The notion of “norms” was first introduced into translation studies by Gideon Toury in the late 1970s to refer to regularities of translation behavior within a specific socio-cultural situation (see Toury , 2001). According to Toury, the notion of norms assumes that the translator is essentially engaged in a DECISION MAKING process. Toury suggests that being a translator involves playing a social role, rather than simply transferring phrases and sentences across a linguistic boundary. The translator fulfils a function specified by the community and has to do so in a way that is considered appropriate in that community. Acquiring a set of norms for determining what is appropriate translational behavior in a given community is a prerequisite for becoming a translator within that community. Toury (1978/1980a: 53-7; 1995:56-61) discusses three types of translational norms: initial norms, preliminary norms and operational norms.

Chesterman (1993) attempts to refine the notion of norms further by distinguishing between professional norms and expectancy norms. Professional norms emerge from competent professional behavior and govern the accepted methods and strategies of the translation process. They can be subdivided into three major types: accountability norms (ethical, therefore calling for professional standards of integrity and thoroughness); communication norms (social, emphasizing the role of the translator as a communication expert), relation norms (linguistic, requiring the translator to establish and maintain an appropriate relation between source and target texts on the basis of his/her understanding of the intentions of the original writer/commissioner, the projected readership and the purpose of the translation). Expectancy norms are established by the receivers of the translation, by their expectations of what a translation (of a given type) should be like, and what a native text (of a given type) in the target language should be like. In attempting to conform to the expectancy norms operating in a given community, a translator will simultaneously conform to the professional norms of that community.

2. Norms in Translation Practice

2.1 Translator as a professional expert.

With respect to translation, the norm authorities par excellence are perhaps the members of the society who are deemed to be competent professional translators, whom the society trusts as having this status, and who may further be recognized as competent professionals by other societies also. ”Competence” and “professionalism” are thus understood here to be intersubjectively defined: you are competent if you are recognized to be so by people who in turn are recognized by others to be competent to make this judgement; and so on.

The products of the professional’s work are the yardsticks by which subsequent translations are assessed by the receiving society. Their translation behavior, in other words, is accepted to be norm setting. Conversely, if a translation is accepted as confirming to the relevant expectancy norms, the translation of text is (qua translation of that text, at least) accepted as being a competent professional.

All professional translation norms can be subsumed, as Chesterman’s theory, under three general higher—order norms: accountability norms, communication norms, and relation norms.

2.1.1 Accountability norms

The accountability norm implies that a translation should act in such a way that the demands of loyalty are appropriately met regard to the original writer, the commissioner of the translation, the translator himself or herself, the prospective readership and any

other relevant parties.

This is thus an ethical norm, concerning professional standard of integrity and thoroughness. Take the following as an example:

[1a] Philip: So you've decided my career for me? The jam business.

James:(sharply) Is there anything to be ashamed of in it?

Philip: Oh no, nothing at all. Only it doesn't happen to appeal to me.

James: If you know which side your breed was buttered it would appeal to you/

[1b] 菲利浦:您就这样替我决定了我的事业?轻松愉快,舒舒服服的过一辈子?

詹姆斯:(尖锐的)这有什么不光彩的吗?

菲利浦:对,是没有什么不光彩的,一点都没有,只不过对我没有吸引力.

詹姆斯:假如你知道好歹的话,这吸引力就相当大了.

[1a] is a dialogue between a father and son.. The translator in [1b] succeeded in picturing the father and son's emotions so as to confirm to the author's original intentions, by a well-tried attempting to represent the ideas, emotions, styles and spirits of the original text.

2.1.2 Communication norms

The communication norm denotes that a translator should act in such a way as to optimize communication, as required by the situation, between all the parties involved. This is a social norm, which specifies the translator's role as a communication expert, both as a mediator of the intentions of others and as a communicator in his own right. Here is an example: (2a) "Big help you are!", from which we can two translations with opposite meanings: (2b) "你真是帮了大忙!" and (2c) "你倒会帮忙啊!" How can the same utterance convey opposite meanings? The obvious reason is its meanings depend, not only on semantic contents, but crucially on the context in which it is interpreted.

2.1.3 Relation norms

The relation norm means that a translator should act in such a way that an appropriate relation of relevant similarity is established and maintained between the source text and target text. It is up to the translator to decide what kind of relation is appropriate in any given case, according to the text-type, the wishes of the commissioner, the intentions of the original writer, and the assumed needs of the prospective readers.

In (3a) Fritz was pushing towards Moscow. (3b) 德国鬼子正向莫斯科进犯. the "Fritz" can't be translated as "德国人", nor can "was pushing" be translated into "进攻", "推进" or even "挺进". Since the original writer is holding an attitude against the German army, the translator must convey these intentions correctly.

2.2 Expectancy norms

As stated above, expectancy norms are established by the receivers of a translation, by their expectations of what a translation should be like, and what a native text in the target language should be like. In attempting to conform to the expectancy norms operating in a given community, a translator will simultaneously be conforming to the professional norms of that community.

When translating, if and only if a harmonious combination of accountability norms and communication norms are made, will a quite perfect translation be produced:

(4a) Here is even Herold Stassen, the Young Lochinvar of the 1944 campaign, crying for his lost chances and still reaching for the brass rings 40 years later.

(4b) 此番再次出场的甚至还有1944年的老将,当年的风流人物哈罗德·史塔生.40年来,他对数次失去良机一直感到痛惜,今天仍然期待着"中彩"的机遇.

注:(1) "Young Lochinvar"是Walter Scott长诗《玛密恩》(Marmion)中的人物.在他的恋人无奈的与他人举行婚礼舞曲时,他机智的带走了她.(2) "Brass ring"原指儿童乘坐旋转木马(merry-

go-round), 取铜环以示胜利的游戏。

(4b) is a typical example of the above-stated combination.

Conclusion

Theories of norms have replaced the theory of equivalence, because it has misunderstood about the concept of “equivalence”. Proved by translation practice, Toury’s and Chesterman’s norm theories can be widely and efficaciously used. They, however, are not effective enough to explain all the phenomena in translation, and norms, as a part of Polysystem, merely supply an angle of studies for our translational practice, after all. The weakest point of norm theory of translation lies in its “descriptiveness” of expectancy, with regard to the great differences among the receivers’ “expectancy” of various translation, who come from different social, educational and economic backgrounds. How should translators opt for the objects of “expectancy”? Theories of norms do not give us definite answers.

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