

Translation of Taboo Words & Expressions in Saramago's Blindness



Literature

KEYWORDS : Euphemism, Censorship, Substitution, Taboo Word, Offensiveness

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ABSTRACT

Almost all translation theorists have defined translation as rendering the exact message from source language (L1) into an acceptable form in the second or target language (L2) (Larson, 1984). As Miremadi (2003) stated, to Tytler, a good translation is not only one that observes loyalty, but also one that is conducted in such a way that the public acceptability is achieved. Toury (1978, cited in James, 2005) defined translation as "a kind of activity which inevitably involves at least two languages and two cultural traditions". Assessing the offensiveness level of words entails the difficult task of identifying participants, role relationships, social norms and individuals' intentions. Discussing offensive language automatically raises the topic of taboo words and euphemisms. In this study, we examine the translation each translator choose in translating taboo words & expressions to find out the equivalence each of them have employed in the process of translating taboo words. This was carried out through examining three Persian translations of taboo words & sentences of Saramago's Blindness by Asadollah Amrayi, Mino Moshiri & Koroush Parsa to show the x-phemic value (euphemistic-orthophemistic-dysphemistic).

INTRODUCTION

Culture is "the combination of the customs, arts, social institutions, etc. of a particular group or nation" (Oxford dictionary, 2000). In other words, "culture is a complex collection of experiences which conditions daily life; it includes history, social structure, religion, traditional customs and everyday usage" (Thriveni). Newmark (1988, P. 94) also defined culture as "the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression". As James (2005) stated in her article, "The cultural implications for translation may take several forms ranging from lexical content and syntax to ideologies and ways of life in a given culture". In every country, some factors like; geographical conditions, people's thoughts, manners, and religious beliefs will form their culture. And due to these factors, people in different countries may have different cultures. The differences between two or more cultures may cause one nation believes in some things, events, and habits which are strongly strange or forbidden to another nation. So the laws and costumes that are acceptable in one culture can be prohibited or nonsense in another cultures. For example; in the state of Washington, it is illegal to pretend your parents are rich (Richards, etal, 2000). In some Islamic countries like Iran, people believe that you mustn't enter the restroom by your right foot. These laws are strange and nonsense in some countries, but they are acceptable to people in Washington, or Iran.

Methodology

Adopting Allan &Burridge (2006)'s pragmatic approach to euphemisms, we rely on Mino Moshiri, Asadollah Amrayi & Koroush Parsa's translation of Saramago's Blindness by comparing them to the original to find the strategies each translator choose in translating taboo words n Persian.

Taboo in Iran society:

"Our countries are the thing that we are, because they are generated from our aggregation, so their rules and laws are on the basis of our interests, and their actions are our good and bad actions in very much greater scales"(Durant&Durant, 1989). It is for some years that Iranian society spends to pass from tradition and entering to the modernity and turbulence and disturbance of this conversion is seen in all fields such as science, culture, morality, religious, policy. But this informed and inevitable problem doesn't remedy and ameliorate yet. According to this, there are very limited works that consider and introduce Iranian Taboos and collected them into a book. May be its main reason is that the majority of Iranian societies' taboos is related to the religious, power and sexual behaviors and in a closed society that all things and issues are divided in the nimbus of

holiness or excommunication; we can't easily challenge these issues. This explanation is enough for recognizing the first taboo of Iranian society that talking about Taboo even though in public societies is a Taboo.

One of the methods in propounding taboos and forbidden thoughts and actions in stories is the use of simile, metaphor, allegory. As applying the Fable literary style in Iran's traditional literature, was one of the methods for writers to propound dangerous and disputable matters for example they ridicule the taboo of strength by fail of a selfish lion, also nowadays writers apply symbols and similar images to approach the forbidden limit that want to express.

The procedures used in translating taboos

To translate a taboo, the translator must be familiar with the cultures of both L1 and L2 to know if the expression considered as taboo in L1, is taboo in L2 too.

Allan &Burridge (2006) have put this idea forward that "the source of stylistic variations can be found in the connotative meaning of words which give rise to 'cross-varietal synonymy', that is, words with the same denotative meaning but different connotative meanings". (p.47). Therefore, "connotations attached to the words give rise to x-phemisms(euphemism, orthophemism, dysphemism) which in turn function as 'stylistic indicators' in particular contexts of use"(p.29). Based on what has been said so far, it should be noted that speakers realize the taboo (contamination) level of a word mainly through its connotations and the appropriateness of a word to be uttered in a particular situation is perceived through corresponding the connotations with the formality level of a situation.

Facing taboo terms in L1, the translator may feel unable to render the exact meaning to the second language. Sometimes s/ he will get confused and feel down in this way. To translate a text from one language into another one, understanding the cultures, especially the target culture is necessary. But it is not as easy as some people think. It needs a lot of sever studies and investigations on the cultures of both source and target languages. To translate a taboo, the translator must be familiar with the cultures of both L1 and L2 to know if the expression considered as taboo in L1, is taboo in L2 too. In this case, there are three possibilities; a) the taboo term in L1 is not taboo in L2, so the translator will translate it directly. b) The taboo term in L1 is taboo in L2 too. c) The term which is not taboo in L1 is considered as taboo in L2. Facing these situations, in part (a), the translator has no problem and can translate the word easily, but in parts (b) and (c), there are some choices to render if not exact but

similar and acceptable meaning and feeling of the word into the second language.

1. Censorship: censoring the taboo is the first and the simplest choice in translation of such these terms. In this case, the translator ignores the term easily and censors it as an extra term. But it is not a proper and acceptable way, because in some occasions, the taboo term is a key term in the source text and the omission of it will distort the meaning of the text.
2. Substitution: the other way to translate a taboo term is by substituting the term with another term in L2. But it often certainly distorts the meaning
3. Taboo for taboo: On the other hand, although the translator knows the expressions are not acceptable to target people and society, s/he prefers to translate them into taboo.
4. Applying euphemism: "Euphemism derives from Greek words "eu" well + "phem" speaking, and it means "right silence" in ancient Greek" (Shoebottom, 2005, 1). In other words, euphemism is the substitution of an agreeable or inoffensive expression to replace one that offends or suggests something unpleasant. "The need of euphemism is both social and emotional as it allows discussion of 'touchy' or taboo subjects without upsetting other people" (Linfoot-ham, 2005, p.228). In fact the function of euphemism is to protect the readers or audience from possible offence (Linfoot-ham, 2005).

Categorization of x-phemism (euphemism, orthophemism, dysphemism) by Allan & Burridge

Adopting Allan &Burridge (2006)'s pragmatic approach to euphemisms, we rely on their categorization of x-phemisms (euphemism, orthophemism, dysphemism) to determine how x-phemistic value of words in Persian are designated through particular situational contexts. To distinguish among these three terms, let's see what they mean by x-phemisms. According to Allan &Burridge: "Euphemisms and orthophemisms are words or phrases used as an alternative to a dispreferred expression. An orthophemism is typically more formal and more direct (or literal) than the corresponding euphemism. A euphemism is typically more colloquial and figurative (or indirect) than the corresponding orthophemism". (2006: 32-33). "A dysphemism is a word or phrase with connotations that are offensive either about the denotatum and/or to people addressed or overhearing the utterance". (2006: 31; 1991:26).Therefore, since both euphemisms and orthophemisms are substitutes to tabooed expressions, they avoid the loss of face by the interlocutors. Of course it should be pointed out that "orthophemisms are neither necessarily euphemistic nor insulting and dysphemistic". (2006:32).

Samples in sentence level:

No.1

Saramago	...from that first, knowing contact of lips, from that first intimate caress, to the successive explosions of an orgasm
Amrayi	Be lezati ke dar pish dasht fekr mikard, az ebteda ta enteha
Moshiri	-----
Parsa	Ba tamame vojood ehsasate motefavete zanane ra maze maze mikard

In this sample, Amrayi & Parsa are used substitution that is the way to translate a taboo term by substituting the term with another in L2. But it often certainly distorts the meaning. In Moshiri's case, we see that she doesn't translate the sentence & she is censoring the sentence, that is the way the translator choose to ignore the term and censors it as an extra term.

NO.2.

Saramago	She was in bed with someone
Amrayi	Zaheran ba yeki khabide
Moshiri	Az gharar ba mardi boode
Parsa	-----

In this sample, as we can see, Amrayi is used euphemism. Moshiri use substitution & Parsa is censoring the sentence.

No.3.

Saramago	Was in hotel room with a man lying on top of me
Amrayi	Khak too sari mikardam
Moshiri	Ba mardi boodm
Parsa	-----

In this case, Amrayi translate the sentence "a man lying on top of me" as "Khak too sari mikardam" & he use euphemism in his translation. Moshiri is going to translate it as "Ba mardi boodam" which is substitution. In Parsa's case, again, we see censoring of the sentence.

No.4

Saramago	A blind man was lying on top of blind woman, the man caught between her legs
Amrayi	Marde koori yaghe zane koori ra gerefte bood v azan oo ra raha nemikard
Moshiri	-----
Parsa	-----

In this sample, we see that Amrayi use substitution in his translation as he translates the sentence "lying on top of blind woman" to "Yaghe zane koori ra gerefte bood" & "the man caught between her legs" to "Zan oo ra raha nemikard". Moshiri & Parsa are censoring this sentence in their translation.

Result & conclusion

Translation has played an important role in human communication and in transferring cultures and their influences on each other. The relation of translation and culture is among the important issues within the field of translation studies. Translation scholars believe that various cultural factors influence both the process and product of translation and they try to investigate the reason and result of such influences.

As we analyzed three translations of taboo words & sentences in this essay, our translators were tend more to use euphemism which is the substitution of an agreeable or inoffensive expression to replace one that offends or suggests something unpleasant, censorship which is censoring the taboo is the first and the simplest choice in translation of such these terms & substitution which is substituting the term with another term in L2.

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