

Conference Paper

Translation As a Tool of Intercultural Dialogue

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Abstract

The universe can be envisaged as a global village with a diverse population of more than hundred inhabitants. Each of them is unique. However, there is one thing which unites them: cultural dialogue and cross-cultural communication. The role of cultural interpretation is one of the vital phenomena in the cross-cultural dialogue. Therefore, the process of translation is directly connected with the discipline of cross-cultural communication. The process of translation was analyzed in this article as a phenomenon of civilization, since civilization is the result of cultural development, and only civilized cultures can be open to the interpretation of cultures. Consequently, the terms like dialogue, communication and connection have very close relationships with the translation process. This article seeks to distinguish these terms from each other and analyze their role in the civilization of cultures.

Keywords: civilization, interpretation, cross-cultural communication, cultural dialogue, Gutenberg galaxy

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1. Introduction

“Culture is a national concept and civilization is an international category. If culture is connected with one specific nation’s religion, moral, rights, thinking, aesthetics, language, economy and way of life, then civilization is the level of development peculiar to several nations’ social way of life” [1] Hence, the level of a development degree of the society equals to the level of society, which requires translation. It means that it equals to a civilization’s level of culture. This can be explained by the fact that on the cultural level of isolated society translation activities can rarely occur and cannot be transformed into systematic requirement of the society. On the contrary, in the civilizational society based on the stable relation of cultural dialogue, there is always necessity of translation activity. These societies have all required conditions for prosperity of translation process.

Translation is a necessity of civilization and its product. This is the main reason why translation studies turned to become separate science with own theory represented by scholars such as Clatford [2], Newmark [3], Savory [4], Steiner [5], Tytler [6] and

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others. The reason for this is in the intersection of different societies and cultures on the civilizational level. "Societies with different national cultures and religions can cooperate in civilization" [1]. For instance, Japanese are different from Europeans in the language use, religion, race etc. However, they are civilizational partners. Maybe this is the reason why Japanese pay great attention to translation. Any new idea elaborated in any language can be found in the Japanese translation not later than a year. This fact proves again the real civilizational level of the Japanese culture.

2. Complexity of Communicative Means and Direction of Civilization

The process of transition from the colloquial translation to the computer translation of today's movies, radio, and TV programmes is a remarkable story of the complicated nature of human communication. Then what does the term 'civilization' mean? This term was introduced by the French philosophers in the 18th century. They believed that civilization is a society based on wisdom and justice. Morgan related the concept of civilization to the stage of the human society which stems from the barbarian level to the government stage and the degree of rights formation.

As we see from these concepts, 'culture' and 'civilization' have a different historical capacity. Culture's capacity covers all the periods of the human development. On the opposite, civilization is related to the recent 1-2 millennia of the cultural history.

A number of definitions is given to the term 'civilization' and the schools studying the phenomenon are countless, and this fact shows the complexity of the subject of civilization. The initial concept definitions were in opposition to the civilization of the primitive societies. According to Child, there are 10 main measurements which separate civilization from a primitive society. They are the following:

- presence of a wide habitat like a city;
- development of the manufacturing sector;
- formation of tax system;
- development of economy with trade and commodity circulation;
- realization of skillful professionals;
- formation of written language;
- development of several types of science (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, philosophy);

- introduction of developed types of art;
- emergence of social differences;
- formation of state institutions.

In our opinion, these criteria are already outdated and cannot be extrapolated into the existing cultural society. The main reason for this is that Child used this criterion for comparison of civilization with an archaic society. Secondly, today there is no country which has avoided all these stages.

It is worth mentioning that none of the theories on the term 'civilization' can describe the society before civilization, because that period covers more than a hundred times longer period than civilization. According to the cultural genesis, it covers about 4 million years. It is impossible to cover such a vast period of time, and there are insufficient written data and material proofs for this. Hence, the interest to investigate the period is not so strong among the scientists. And in case of research, it would be based on some hypotheses.

The word 'civilization' derives from the word 'civil' which means a polite, well brought-up and a well-mannered man. In the Arabic muslim cultures the word in Arabic means 'tamaddun'. 'Tamaddun' derives from 'madina' (a city), and the meaning is 'a town man'. Therefore, in the Arabic muslim discourse the words 'culture' and 'civilization' have the same root and evaluate the city life. For this reason, most scientists relate the term 'civilization' to material values. These values can represent such material achievements as towns, communication means, huge architecture buildings, etc.

White proved that concept of 'civilization' was introduced because of the 'city revolution'. Later a city became a center for the type of culture as 'civilization'. These cities were initially a place to live for skillful workers. They are initial builders and first habitats of the contemporary cities.

As opposed to cattle-breeding and agriculture, needle work was an innovative type of economics in that period. Both cattle-breeding and agriculture were developed because of natural necessity to survive in the ancient times. But needle work was a more creative kind of work. Needle workers had to create new things and bear items of high culture. As a result, there was formed a new type of people with a new consciousness. This type of consciousness supposed that humans can be independent from nature and this premise was given by Protagoras, 'Human is a measure for essence and absence of all things'.

Thus, after the formation of the needle workers guild and the transfer of needle work into professional work, after the production of goods for the consumer and the

creation of middle-men who can work for the commodity circulation, there began to emerge the processes of civilization. As a consequence, the science of mathematics was improved. There were created methods of writing which served as the means of transformation of the collected information to the next generation. Later, there were formed social institutions that could teach to write and count. Science began to feel its independence from religion. Consequently, in the places with the developed crafts there were developed trades, mathematics, and writing. Also, cities were built. The process of formation of professionals was active, and education and governmental services were improved. All these factors prove a direct relation of the concept 'civilization' to the 'city'.

3. Cultural Relativism As a Key Approach Among Scholars on Civilization

Cultural relativism is peculiar for the contemporary scholars of civilization. According to the American scientists Toffler and Bell, the human history is divided into pre-industrial, industrial and post-industrial. But the recent research has taken into consideration the peculiarities of each country: cultural, historical, ethical religious, economic, geographical, etc. The contemporary scientists refer civilization to the countries with a peculiar economy, culture, language, currency. These countries could establish stable relations with other countries, based on the general human values. Hence, civilization can be considered as a way of achievement of necessity of unity.

In spite of the fact that most theories oppose culture to civilization, we should take into account that civilization is a part of culture. Some scientists offer an idea that civilization is a cover of culture. According to Spengler, culture is considered as a soul and civilization is a flesh. Hence, culture is eternal as a soul and civilization is changeable as a material object. Academician ESYM states that development means equal with changes.

Civilization is an open system, and an open system always requires new information and work with it. The significant function of civilization is communication. Civilization is always in contact with other civilizations. Communication is the source of civilization. It is one of the main conditions for civilization. According to the theory of Toynbee, who is one of the founders of civilization, civilization has to cope with numerous difficulties. Man will never get tired of cognizing new things. It is an essence of humankind. Civilization as reflection of this innovative peculiarity sources from innovations.

Genesis of civilization as superiority above nature is reflected in two aspects. From one aspect, a man gets controls over his nature and becomes free from the influence of social development. From the second point, it requires domination of man over

his inner nature as he perceives himself as a part of a society. These two aspects constitute a condition for the development of a man and society, and together they make manufacturing tendency of social wealth. Civilization is a natural process and a result of innovative actions. Only the collection of social wealth shows the signs of civilization in human life. Values of civilization are universal values, and this supports the development of the global relations.

The 21st century is an age of techniques and innovative technology. The most significant achievement of technology is evolution in storing and delivering of information. All kinds of information beginning from pictographs scripted in stones, hand-written books, polygraph productions, movies, radio programs, TV, internet, and mobile phone connections can be transferred, stored and delivered.

An essential part of today's society Internet was initially created in the sake of unification of the computer centres and the academic organizations of the US defence ministry in 1969. A vital peculiarity of the system was included either in its unique and profitable ability information transfer, or in ability of transferring and delivering of lots of information. No doubt, in the future transformation of information by 'papers' will be totally replaced by digital means. First or last, the book heritage with movie sources and collections of music will be only in electronic format. Hence, in future, the Internet system can become the only means of communication. This will be the result of the world progress. In fact, even today, the Internet system had risen people's information potential and gave possibility for billions of people to contact easily.

As a concluding remark about the term 'civilization' we may say that civilization is a product of the long-term historical development of culture. The main concept related to civilization is its relation to a man who became independent from tribal consciousness (Marshall McLuhan [7]).

Herbert Marshall McLuhan was one of the researchers who began to investigate the impact of mass media on the society in the fifties of the twentieth century. Later, he became known as a 'prophet from Toronto' who prophesized an electronic age in details. The ideas from his books became popular expressions. For example, the term 'global village' today became a well-known term among the Internet users. The term 'Gutenberg Galaxy' is also familiar to the majority of the universe. The McLuhan's prophesy about the human history is based on the leading social communication means, the phrase 'the medium is the message' has become a modern rule of the civilizational consciousness.

It is interesting to look through into his list of communication means, since he included in it items of clothing, automobiles, money, advertisement, electric light, houses, watch,

photos, games, guns, transport means and other things. He considered all the things that surround a man communication means. Communication means through a change of form change a way of world perception of a man and his way of life.

Communication means is 'enlargement' of a man to outer world. For instance, telephone and telegraph are his ears, while plane and space rocket are his feet, and TV and computer are his eyes and brain, etc.

Any kind of sense, when becoming more intensive, as soon as possible makes other senses more feasible. A powerful sense acts as anesthetic. For example, dentists use music or other noises in order to weaken teeth pain. The intensive sense makes other senses dependent on it. M. McLuhan called this effect 'amputation' of senses. The development of technological infrastructure is supposed to amputate human senses. For example, a person who uses calculator is not capable of solving simple arithmetic tasks. If a person is dependent on virtual life, he is not able to communicate with real people. The main danger is in 'amputation' of human consciousness.

He related the main periods of all humanity with the change of communication means. To them he referred language, printing, science, computers, television, etc. To be exact, communication means are tools of social unification of the time. It means that the content of communication, ways of its transfer and its form have a great importance.

In 1967, most people considered McLuhan's work "The Medium is the Massage" as a typographic mistake. It had to be 'message' instead of 'massage'. However, this mistake was made on purpose. The first reason was in the epithet 'massage'. The mass media influence people as massage that makes people relax. The mass media act as a tool for controlling people's consciousness. The second meaning was related to the words 'mass-age', which means an era of information technologies.

McLuhan directly related the process of social culture with the changes in communication patterns. He opposed the discrete idea to continual idea of culture development. One of his main theses in his work is 'all issues are in mass media means'. All issues are identified by him as dominating communication type. Personal perceptual, cognitive level is identified with the speed of information transformation. This type of communication identifies a social structure. The history of humankind is a history of gaining communication means from each other.

McLuhan divided three stages of the human history development according to the changes in the communication means. They are as follows:

1. transfer from oral speech culture into written speech culture;
2. transfer from oral speech into book culture;

3. transfer from 'Gutenberg printing galaxy' into electronic communication means.

Each historical cultural stage has its own peculiarities. The first stage is the barbarian period. The main communication was through the colloquial speech. People used to live in the acoustic space full of sounds. In that period, the humankind was unable to realize its independence from society. Hence, its consciousness was formed on the tribal, group form [8].

Since the main communication means was colloquial speech, there were wide-spread traditions and customs, myths, rituals, folklore in oral form. They were a basis of the generations' inheritance. Language was the main means of communication. Therefore, it made people to live in unity.

The changes in human senses based on the technological changes accord with the cultural changes. Karotes stated in his article 'Culture, psychiatry and visual word' (Psychiatry 1959, November), 'In my opinion, the word had lost its power and sense after being printed in paper' [7]. This statement concludes that word loses its individual peculiarity when it becomes visible. From this moment a word becomes a sign of transcendence. Sacredness and holiness become peculiar to book' [9].

The invention of writing made human transfer from acoustic space into visual space. Wisdom and life-long experience began to be recorded as printed texts. 'Pen made from duck's feather made a barrier for language domination; it neglected a sacred secret of life; it made to develop architecture and cities, roads, army, and bureaucracy. It brought consciousness from darkness to light. And it became an absolute metaphor which led to civilization' [10].

The ear was the main sense of touch before the development of the alphabet in the tribal society. Hearing was equal believing. The phonetic alphabet transferred the ear world into the eye world. Since then, the eye has become the main sense of touch.

Through the integrity of communication means the system of thinking, world perception, actions, and mentality of humans changed. As a result, people became to be separated from each other. The isolation process, which started with the development of writing, became wider after the creation of printing-press in Europe. In the 15th century, Johann Guttenberg switched on the creation of the printing press. According to McLuhan, 'Guttenberg galaxy' made a real information revolution. There appeared the first conveyer of goods and this opened doors to enormous opportunities.

If at the first stage of communication development the experience of the previous generation was passed by tribe leaders, now it could be delivered to individuals through

book reading. Each person began to understand that he is an individual. Now he feels as individual with his own features. The idea of nationalism arose as group identification.

From this stage of human communication development, the people felt necessity to spread information broader than ever before. Books as holders of wisdom became common property of humankind. Any kind of a significant book was evaluated by real wealth and other nations tried to get it. This condition was a good basis for formation of professional translators. All countries which refer themselves to civilized ones try to be in pace with the contemporary human achievements. This is surely achieved by the translators' contribution.

4. Conclusion

This analysis shows that civilization was directly connected with appearance of alphabet in the life of the people. The visual space of people offered wider opportunities to cognize more knowledge. Knowledge is information. However, in order to perceive this information along with human sense the knowledge of the language of 'others' was required. Hence, it bore high necessity in translation. Consequently, translation was always on one stage with innovation. By translation activities people could get numerous kinds of information from different cultures. If to consider innovation as a main key of civilization, then civilization cannot be regarded on the whole without translation processes. As it was mentioned above, the main function of civilization is in the unification of cultures and keeping stable conditions for this unification. Therefore, translation as means of cross-cultural communication had great impact on the formation of civilization. Obviously, translation can be regarded as a phenomenon of civilization.

Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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