The Importance of the Logic Constraints in the Assessment of Professional Translators[1]

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Abstract

A translation of any kind takes place in particular conditions and involves the contribution of various elements. These elements appear to the translator as constraints, according to which he should act to make his choices and accomplish his translation. These constraints are more like obstacles sometimes, difficulties that might lead the translator to untranslatability. While some other times they act like norms and lead him to a good adaptation and therefore a successful translation. Is the role of constraints in translation different from other fields or are there any similarities? Does the reasoning by constraints or the general theory of constraints apply to the field of translation? And are there any advantages in applying this theory? The logic of constraints is a logic which takes into consideration all constraining given of a situation and tends to satisfy them, with the purpose of optimizing the result within available possibilities. To apply the logic of constraints to translation is to be able to identify these constraints, measure their degree of influence and study their behavior. It is also to be able to manage these constraints in a way that would enable us to reach a better result, which would be in our case a better translation. It would be interesting to apply this principle on the assessment of translators, and try to change or isolate different constraints and then compare the obtained results. I will try in this paper to show up the importance of this logic in the assessment of translators and therefore in their training.

Keywords: Assessment, logic of constraints, norms, obstacles.

Profesyonel Çevirmenlerin Değerlendirilmesinde Mantık Kısıtlarının Önemi

Özet

Çeviri, hangi türde olursa olsun, belirli şartlar altında ve çeşitli unsurların katkısıyla yapılır. Bu unsurlar çevirmene, kararlarını uygulaması ve çevirisini tamamlaması için uyması gereken kısıtlamalar olarak görünebilir. Bu kısıtlamalar bazen, çevirmeni çevrilemezliğe götürebilen zorluklara ve engellere benzer. Bazen de bu kısıtlamalar norm gibi bir işlev görerek çevirmenin iyi bir uyarlama ve başarılı bir çeviri yapmasını sağlar. Çeviride kısıtlamaların rolü diğer alanlardan farklı mıdır ya da herhangi bir benzerlik var mıdır? Kısıtlamalar aracılığıyla akıl yürütme ya da kısıtlar teorisi çeviri alanında da uygulanabilir mi? Bu teoriyi uygulamanın herhangi bir avantajı var mı? Mantık kısıtları, mevcut ihtimaller dahilinde en uygun sonuca ulaşmak amacıyla bir durum için geçerli bütün kısıtlamaları göz önünde bulunduran ve bunlara uyan bir mantıktır. Mantık kısıtlarını çeviriye uygulamak, bu kısıtlamaları tespit edebilmek, etki düzeylerini ölçebilmek ve davranışlarını çalışabilmektir. Aynı zamanda bu kısıtlamaları, daha iyi bir sonuca ulaşabilmek için, daha iyi bir çeviri için, yönetebilmektir. Bu ilkeyi çevirmenlerin değerlendirilmesinde uygulamak ve farklı kısıtlamaları değiştirmek veya izole etmek ve sonra da ulaşılan sonuçları karşılaştırmak ilginç olabilir. Bu çalışmada bu mantığın

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çevirmenlerin değerlendirilmesinde ve eğitiminde kullanılmasının önemini göstermeye çalışacağım.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Değerlendirme, mantık kısıtları, normlar, engeller.

1. The logic of constraints or the reasoning by constraints

It is impossible to evoke the question of constraints in translation and neglect the general logic of constraints or the reasoning by constraints, which is a reasoning purely scientific and yet perfectly applicable to translation.

In other words, the logic of constraints in translation is very much identical to the logic of constraints applicable to many other domains.

As a matter of fact, we can deduce that the logic of constraints is applied in everything we do, consciously or unconsciously, in order to reach a better result and to maximize our chances of success. I can quote for instance the theory of constraints (TOC), invented by the physician Eliyahu Goldratt. It is a philosophy of organizational management, based on precise scientific tools and approaches in order to identify and overcome the constraint or constraints of a certain organization. When we can identify a constraint, it becomes much easier to process the needs of this organization depending on the place where the significant constraint resides.

The main idea of this theory suggests that a constraint is a factor that puts limits to a certain system and in order to achieve optimum results we should know how to manage these constraints. A good management of these constraints will determine the result of this system.

Constraints are also applied to computer science – the processing of constraints in logic programming consists in introducing a decision procedure capable to determine if a constraint or a group of constraints is satisfiable. This decision procedure is called “constraints solver”. This solver is considered complete if it is capable to decide the satisfiability of any group of constraints particular to a given domain.

This reasoning by constraints is also known for its capacity to resolve a great number of combinatorial problems (time tables, personnel shifts…). This is a reasoning which is related to the problem of satisfaction of constraints, which does not aim on getting any solution, but more on getting the “good” or “best” solution possible according to certain criteria.

These few examples prove that the concept of constraints and the related logic have the special characteristic of being universal and general, therefore applicable to different domains.

We can deduce that the logic of constraints is a general rule on the conceptual level but very particular on the applying level, since these constraints express themselves in different ways according to different occasions.

This universal character makes it applicable to any domain, but the moment they match with a particular domain or situation, they also match with its particularities.

2. Translation: a mathematical transformation

A deep analysis of the logic of constraints on one hand, and the process of translation on the other hand, enable us to establish a strong link between mathematics and translation, a link

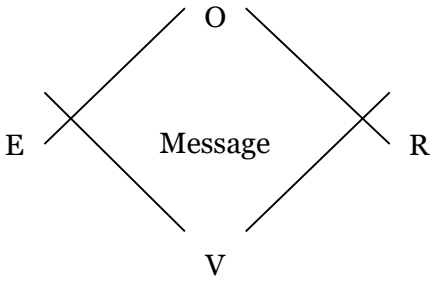
which expresses more a perfect analogy between a mathematical transformation and a translation.

As a matter of fact a translation is a horizontal transfer of meaning, and it always takes place in a particular space and time, i.e. a geographic and historic context, therefore sociologic, or to be more precise socio-cultural context.

Translation happens in this particular context and shapes according to circumstances and situations, in which it takes place.

The conditions, or elements, influencing the enunciation vary, and have a direct impact on the form of the message. This situation concept was elaborated by Maurice Pergnier (1980: 47), who states that a message is formed according to a situation related to a number of parameters, which are mainly four: E = the emitter; O = Object; V = vector and R = receptor.

The message in situation could be simplified in the following scheme:

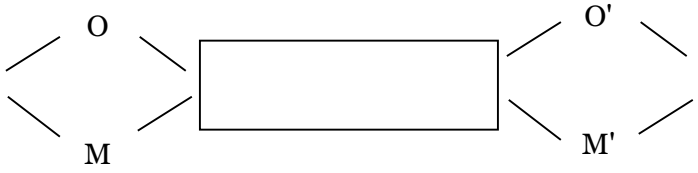


The message is written according to these parameters, combining all together in order to give it its final form and substance.

When a translator is operating on his text, he is actually working on the original message written in its original language, which he should transform in a target message written in the target language.

S.M (Source Message) → T.A. (Target Message)

When translating, the translator becomes a receptor of the first message, and "he puts himself in the shoes" of the targeted person, he also becomes an emitter of the target message, which means a re-emitter of the original message. When reemitting this message, a new situation is formed according to new situational given. Pergnier (1980: 48) places translation in the communication process as follow:



S.M T.M

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This schematization of the translation presents as matter of fact perfect analogy with the mathematical transformation which is a function of several variables expressed by a figure or a geometrical form and which should be transposed on another plan with respect of new variables or parameters. In other words we can say that M = f(x, y, q, v) and | M' = f(x', y', q', v').

In the case of translation x = E; y = V; q = O; v = R, meaning that M is a function of four variables E, V, O, D. The function would become as follow:

$M = f(E, V, O, D) \rightarrow M' = f(E', V', O', D')$

A transformation in translation or transposition is exactly identical to a mathematical transformation, where a geometric form or even algebraic form takes a different shape through this transformation and according to new parameters.

The mathematical theory of optimization of a function of severable variables subject to a number of constraints (for example finding the maximum value of the function while satisfying all the constraints influencing the variables) while using the Theory of "Lagrange multiplier" or even by using the Simplex Method for linear programming or any other scheme of optimization within the theory of Operations Research could be applied efficiently to shed some light on optimizing the translation process which in turn entails finding the best possible translation while taking into account the constraints whatever they might be.

This analogy between an exact science like mathematics and translation will open new windows of research still unexplored. Establishing this resemblance is putting the whole arsenal of mathematics in our disposition and in service of translation in order to prove hypothesis and draw conclusions and exact theories applicable to translation.

This is by the way a common practice in sciences, where a perfect analogy between disciplines help one discipline develop through the application of the same reasoning and the same logic to be able to resolve what it is still not resolved. Many other examples exist; as the case of mathematics applied to physics, which gave relativity, or the laws of electricity to solve problems in hydrology.

3. The impact of constraints on the translation process

Translation is undoubtedly a complex hermeneutic process, and is related to a number of variables. It is an interaction between 2 discrete domains and 2 linguistic and cultural realities that makes this process very dynamic and subject to the influence of different sort of critical constraints.

We cannot ignore the impact of these constraints which dictate the choices and decisions the translator makes, and which will also reflect on the procedures he undertakes to resolve problems.

It is also very important to note that when a problem is not solved, it will definitely lead to an error-which means that errors are the result of unsolved problem.

In other words constraints pose problems, they are inhibitive they could be obstacles, restrict and limit the process from achieving its optimum result.

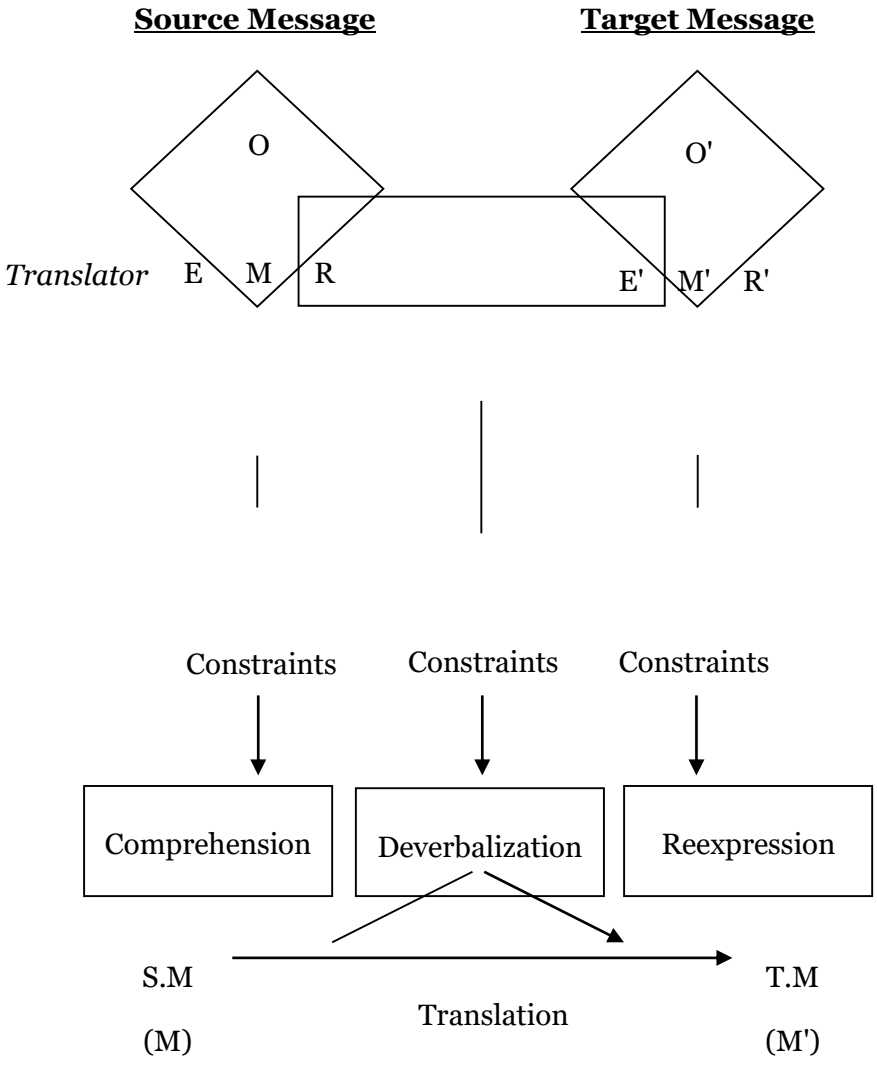
These constraints act on the parameters, and parameters move or change according to constraints. It is true that they can be a limitation factor, but limitation means sometimes precision and a defining framework; otherwise the result might be infinite.

When there are no constraints, possibilities might vary from zero to infinity.

By limiting the possibilities, constraints can play the role of norms or obstacles, it is important to be able to manage these constraints in order to optimize the result. By isolating one or many constraints it becomes possible to measure and define the influence of the remaining constraints.

It is very important to be able to identify these constraints, measure their degree of influence and study their behavior.

In this context I propose the following diagram to show the influence of constraints on parameters and therefore on the process of translation:



This diagram summarizes the role and influence of constraints but also introduces a new idea which is the types of constraints. It is very important to categorize and to distinguish between constraints in order to study them. This diagram shows 3 categories of constraints which are:

1. The constraints arising from the text which could be exposed in three types:

- Constraints of the language
- Constraints of the domain
- Constraints of the culture

2. The constraints arising from the translator:

- Constraints of the psychological state of mind
- Constraints of the personal knowledge and training
- Constraints of the levels of cognitive perception

3. The constraints arising from the situation:

- Constraints of the profession
- Constraints of the type of translation
- Constraints of the context

Translation is a decision making process, each stage is highly influenced by a category of constraints.

We suggest that constraints of the text highly affect the comprehension stage, while constraints of the translator reflect on the deverbalization level; the final form of the text which is the result of reexpression is influenced by the constraints of the situation.

Each unsolved constraint will reflect on the translation as a different sort of error.

By identifying these constraints and their impact on the different stages in translation we would be identifying the origin of the error which is a necessary step before dealing with it.

4. The impact of the logic of constraints on the assessment process?

The assessment or evaluation of translation is still an open subject as there is no model for translation quality assessment yet, since translation is an intellectual product where the establishment of quality standards and measurement tools is hard to find.

We suggest in this paper that the application of the logic of constraints on assessment will help in the identification of error and in the quantification of quality. The identification of error will lead to the source of error, which is a certain constraint.

To isolate the constraint will help us understand how they affect the decisions and define the strategies a translator should follow or adopt in order to exploit them, explore alternatives and manage more effectively.

The application of this logic is not only useful for the assessment of the quality of the translation product, but also as learning process.

This logic will help in drawing criteria or parameters, and measure the result of dealing with them. It is therefore useful for the teacher and the professional translator as a self- learning assessment process.

Dealing with these constraints will at least lead to a product free of critical defects, and will reduce quantification of defect to the minimum.

The translation will be as a first step acceptable on the microscopic level, which means free of any linguistic error; it should be comprehensible and correct.

It should be also free of translation error, and we mean by this, failure to render the meaning, mistranslation, contradiction, or other similar mistakes.

In order to have an acceptable translation on the macroscopic level, the translation should also take into consideration external constraints which are not related to the text itself but to the situation and to the target culture. At the stage he should be able to render not only the meaning but also the impact and the effect as a whole.

5. Conclusion

By applying the logic of constraints to translation, we aim at a good solving and management of constraints in order to optimize the result within available possibilities.

Constraints are very similar to the traffic law (Thiery 1990), which imposes rules or constraints on the driver all along his drive, with the purpose of helping him arrive safe as long as he is abiding by these rules. We can certainly not imagine people driving in the absence of any rule.

The logic of constraints is a logic which takes into consideration all constraining given of a situation and tends to satisfy them, with the purpose of optimizing the result within available possibilities.

In the frame of the translation process the translator applies this logic of constraints in order to satisfy them and resolve all problems and obstacles facing him.

This reasoning does not only aim at finding a translation but the best translation possible according to criteria descending from these constraints.

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