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RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS



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RESEARCH ARTICLES

1. Social Networking sites -
alarming Threat
Shanmuganandam, T.K. ... 133
2. Status of self help group in
rural areas
Pushpa, J. ... 134
3. Decision making power and
responsibilities of rural people
in family
Vijayarani, D. and Baradha, G. ... 139
4. Prevalence of childhood obesity
in Kottayam District of Kerala and
the effect of nutrition education
*Meera Mary Mathew, P. and
Dorothy Jaganathan* ... 146
5. CSP -C Continuous Sampling Plan
*Muthulakshmi, S. and
Sumathi, N.P.* ... 153
6. Economic impact of migration
*Ambiga Devi, P., Geetha, K.T. and
Gomathi, K.R.* ... 158
7. Parsi impasse a study of Parsis in
Rohinton Mistry's Family Matters
*Bagyalakshmi, S. and
Christina Rebecca, S.* 164
8. Translation in the era of
globalisation: A cultural and
linguistic phenomenon
Jeevarathnam, G. 170
9. Problem solving ability of
visually impaired and sighted
pupils - a comparative study
*Sambathrani, K. and
Roselin Indumathi, K.* 174

RESEARCH ABSTRACT ...181

NEWS MAKERS ... 185

SHORT COMMUNICATION ... 188

BOOK REVIEW ...190

TRANSLATION IN THE ERA OF GLOBALISATION: A CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC PHENOMENON

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Introduction

The world faces many challenges since the end of the 20th century, large and small nations of the world need to live in dialogue with each other to establish good relations for collective survival and to avoid war. Few countries are so sufficiently isolated that they are unaffected by global economic and political changes. Traditional channel structures are giving way to new forms, new alliances and new processes—some more slowly than the other. This internationalism has given rise to the increased demand for languages and translations. Translation is part of the process of globalization as it brings cultures and languages closer together and helps to make communication and understanding easier (Kramisch, 1996).

The main focus of this article is to bring out the significance of globalization and translation in the 21st century as translation is becoming an important tool to enhance understanding between cultures. In view of the differences and similarities between the two terminologies, an attempt was made to study the basic contributions of globalization to translation. Then the paper reviews the concept of translation as both a cultural and linguistic phenomenon.

Globalization

Two fundamental features of globalization are the overcoming of spatial barriers and the centrality of knowledge and information. These developments (mass tourism, migration, information and media flows) result in the increased mobility of people and objects and a heightened contact between different linguistic communities signal an exponential growth in the significance of translation, which becomes a key mediator of global communication.

Globalization and translation both deal with languages and cultures. They attempt to remove cultural and language barriers but while translation targets better understanding among people and maintains cultural diversity, globalization moves towards reducing languages and cultures to the language and culture of the global village.

Translation

Translation being more than a simple mechanism of transferring textual language in independent discourses, it involves process of the movement of people, ideas, technologies and literature between different places, cultures, languages and even times. It helps people to appreciate others and

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respect their ways of thinking – summed up in their cultures. (Venuti, 2000). Translation is the most basic yet the most important tool for effective cross-cultural communication. Therefore, it is crucial to consider its paramount importance.

On a larger and more important scale, translation bridges the languages and cultural divide between prominent societies and creates an image of the world as a single network of highly interconnected places. It weakens barriers between languages and communicates messages, spreads cultures and increases understanding among neighbours near and far. Translation is no longer an isolated task, but a step in the global workflow. (wiersema, 2004)

Translation's role in globalization

Globalization and translation are interlinked. It can be safely said that one fuels the other. Globalization promotes translation and translation nurtures globalization if globalization is defined in terms of increased connectivity, it is possible to identify a basic similarity between globalization and translation.

Translation plays a major role in facilitating cross-cultural communication, which in return catalyses globalization, with increasing interdependencies between countries through regional integrations (such as the European Union and the Asia Pacific economic cooperation) and trade agreements (North American free trade agreement) and increasing number of very large multinational firms located in intra and

inter organizational networks and alliances. An exploration of the process of global connectivity on a concrete, material level is the fundamental contribution of translation to an understanding of the nature of globalization.

Like every other phenomenon on earth, translation is no exception as far as evolution and transformation is concerned. In the 21st century, every nation and her people are ever more dependent on one another to supply goods and services, solve political disputes and ensure international security. At this juncture, translation plays a crucial role, adapting to an intercultural sensitivity which can mould our world into a place filled with trust and understanding.

With the advent of technology, as in machine translation and computer-aided translation, translation has taken a step forward with respect to its spontaneity. Nowadays, machine translation and computer-aided translation software are often used by professional translators in their daily work. Such changes have brought about both opportunities and challenges for translation and translator training alike. One key question today is how translator training should respond to these changes. While translation is gaining more and more academic attention in the 21st Century, to respond to an increasing market demand it is also important to look at the issues raised in translation theory and the contribution of this discipline to cross-cultural communication.

Translation, culture and language

Translation involves two different languages and cultures and it is not only an inter-lingual activity, but also a cross-cultural communication event. In the past two decades, there has been a clear shift of focus in translation studies, a moving away from looking at translation only as a linguistic phenomena to looking at translation as cultural phenomena. Translators have found to use terminologies like "intercultural cooperation" "acculturation" to refer to translation. While Daniel Shaw coins the work 'transculturation' to replace translation as translation is both a cultural and a linguistic phenomenon. While communicating with a foreign partner, if the culture of the country is ignored or neglected this may cause immeasurable harm.

A global language

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, the world faces many challenges, but one that strikes the mind most is the issue of the fast growing languages of the global village, commonly called the language of business. (pym 2003). Language is known to be the most important parameter in translation. With globalization reducing world languages gradually to the language of the global village, it looks as if there will be no more need for translating. In Africa today, English is seen as a means of easy access to good jobs and to progress and this preference for English is a great concern and one of the new millennium's greatest challenges. Translation units have gradually

disappeared in some international establishments partly because of the funding problems but mostly because of the monolingual tendency of workshops, seminars and conferences. Most presentations are now done in English, the preferred language of communication in international establishments. Everyone seems to be acquainted with the new rules of the global village (Goswamy, 2003).

But the attitude that English alone is enough in fact creates self-imposed limitations. To remain monolingual is to stunt educational development and to restrict communication. There are several other prominent industrial nations, some of the countries are newly emerging and fighting hard for their share of the global market. Many of these countries like India, China, Japan and the Arab states have a strong culture and even though they have knowledge of English, they need help with translating their business.

Furthermore even in countries where English is taught as a foreign language, there are millions of people who would not understand a marketing campaign in English. People today are more aware of languages, they have exposure to an outside world, they are no longer closeted by boundaries-foreign movies, television programs, music which abound all families across the world and younger ones are the most vulnerable. It helps the younger ones to lose more of their native culture to the benefit of the culture of the global village therefore cultivating a global language today, the

global lexis is very rich and the speakers have a vocabulary at their disposal which allows them to express very fine nuances.

Conclusion

Current economic and political changes in the world have brought out the need for translations in our daily lives not only as a profession but also as a prerequisite for daily living of today's global citizens. The need of the hour is to evolve an education for international understanding and global competence, teaching and learning of foreign languages. As business has turned more and more to an integrated world market to meet its needs, the difficulties of communicating at a global level have become increasingly

widespread. Lack of understanding deriving from ethnocentrism or ignorance of culturally based assumptions erroneously believed to be universal can readily escalate to unproductive conflict among people of differing cultural orientation. This may occur on the domestic front as well. In combination with a growing emphasis on global markets and an interdependent and internationalized economy, the need for dealing with intercultural differences and cross-cultural communication has to be given prime importance. Universities and colleges will need to adopt an educational paradigm where interdependence and inter connectedness among the world's people become the norm.

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