The Role of Presupposition in Communicative Translation

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ABSTRACT

This study employs the communicative functional theory to explore the relationship between translation and presupposition. The linguistic term, presupposition, is regarded as a pragmatic inference, i.e. involving in logic analysis of information from a pragmatic viewpoint. The usage of presupposition in translation is to clarify the meaning of a linguistic expression embedded by contextual and cultural factors. Fawcett (1997, p. 124) points out that contextual and cultural presupposition are of most interest to translators. Hence, in this study the contextual and cultural presupposition in the process of translation are going to be firstly examined. Nord (1997, p. 59) indicates that every translation task should be accompanied by a (translation) brief that defines the conditions under which the target text should carry out its particular function. Therefore, in this study the role of presupposition in the translation brief will be secondly studied. The study firstly analyzes the issue regarding how a translator presupposes the denotative and connotative meanings of lexical items and the cohesive elements in a source context to produce properly translated result. Secondly, it explores the reason why the trainee students make incorrect cultural presuppositions. Realizing that a translator should presuppose target text (TT) readers' cultural background knowledge if he or she wants to achieve a successfully communicative purpose, the study thus discusses the following two aspects with regard to cultural presupposition in translation: (1) connotative meanings related to cultures, (2) decision making in the cultural gaps between source text (ST) and TT. Finally, this study evaluates the divergence of readers, place, motive and function in a brief between ST and TT. The result of this study shows that contextual and cultural presuppositions in ST influence and determine the meaning of a linguistic expression in TT. It further demonstrates that the significance of translation brief before a translation case should be considered. A translator's presupposition on context and culture thus plays an important role in achieving a communicative purpose in translation.

Keywords: contextual presupposition, cultural presupposition, translation brief, translation process