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Is Translation A Science or Art?

The status of translation whether it be an art or a science has been controversial for a long time. Being used as a means for communication and to act as a bridge between two cultures, translation seems to be a complicated and multi-faceted activity or phenomenon.

Concerning the itentity of an adequate translation, philosophers claim that, "nothing moves without translation…no change in thought or in technology spreads without the help of translation." Nevertheless, not all kinds of translations can lay claim to such importance. (Bates,1943:7). Edwards points out that, "we expect approximate truth in a translation . . . What we want to have is the truest possible feel of the original." (1957:13)

Some scholars consider translation a science and believes that the desire for creating a science of translation seems to be a mere wishful thinking. However, Baker (1998:4) points out that translation is a separate academic discipline which, "like any young discipline, ... needs to draw on the findings and theories of the other related disciplines in order to develop and formulate its own methods.." (Long ,1996:10)

Theoretically, Some scholars can consider translation a science; practically, it seems rational to consider it an art. However, regardless of whether one considers translation as a science or art, one should bear in mind that a good translation should fulfill the same function in the target language as the original did.

According to Gabr (2001:2) translation is both a craft and a science; this is obvious when he writes "translation being a craft on the one hand, requires training, i.e. practice under supervision, and being a science on the other hand, has to be based on language theories".

In my point of view, translation is moving along from the science of translation to the art of it, professional translation can be considered as a science which is enhanced through both study and practice, which is part of what makes it an art.

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