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ENGLISH, TRANSLATION AGENCIES AND EMPLOYABILITY IN THE ERA OF
GLOBALIZATION

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ABSTRACT

The paper endeavors to study mainly three aspects concerned with globalization, English, and Translation Agencies: (i) the role of English as a link language in the era of globalization (ii) translation services and employability (iii) requisite qualities of a translator in online market.

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1 English as a Link Language

The spread of English in the global era seems to be an object of delight not only for an enthusiastic English teacher, but also for all lovers of English in all corners of the world. English is used globally in almost all fields of human thought and activity including literature, Fine Arts, law, psychology, medicine, science, technology, media, and cultural studies. In a Master's Dissertation at the Department of English, University of Turku, Finland, Annika Hohenthal writes:

English has become a world language, spoken at least by 750 million people. It is more widely spoken and written than any other language...It can, indeed, be said to be the first truly global language.

English is nowadays the dominant or official language in over 60 countries.¹

While the global era is chiefly characterized by fast communication, the role of English becomes very significant in the present context. English becomes a *link* language in monolingual communities and in multilingual countries like Belgium, Switzerland and India. In countries like India where English is used in the parliament, judiciary, broadcasting, education and research, it becomes a link language effectively making communication possible between individuals and groups of different languages and cultures within the country. English enjoys the position as a link language in India helping in communication among speakers of Indian languages like Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Kannada, Manipuri, Punjabi, Telugu and others. Globally, individuals, groups, associations, organizations and companies belonging to different geographical and cultural

areas and different languages can communicate in English. The Internet revolution has added to the global spread of English. The online information on various fields, possibility and practice of exchange of ideas, fresh techniques of advertisements on webpage, sharing of research and new findings in various areas and spread of knowledge of the latest developments in various fields on Internet have popularized English. The exchange of ideas through e-mails, face-book and uploading videos have added charm to English as a powerful medium of global communication. You-tube videos on spoken English, poetry website and short story websites, online articles and books on English language learning and teaching have awakened interest in English in those communities which were to be believed so far slower towards learning English. Jukka Yucca Korpela therefore notes of the correlation between Internet and English:

The importance of Internet grows rapidly in all fields of human life, including not only research and education, but also marketing and trade as well as entertainment and hobbies. This implies that it becomes more and more important to know how to use Internet services and, as a part of this, to read and write English.²

2 Translation Services and Employability

2.1 Translation Services

However, all mankind cannot use Internet and English for communication since economic and linguistic factors do not allow them to do so. As a result the world is divided between Internet users and Internet illiterates, English users and users of other languages than English. To bridge the gap, the role of translator is very significant in this context. To quote Jukka Yucca Korpela:

But the Internet causes polarization in developed countries too: people are divided into Internet users and Internet illiterates, and as the use of the Internet grows and often replaces traditional methods of communication, the illiterates may find themselves in an awkward position...Learning to use a new Internet service or user interface may take a few hours, a few days, or even weeks, but it takes years to learn language so that you can use it in a fluent and self-confident manner.³

Translation services therefore satisfy the needs of clients who want to globally communicate with one another, whether they be individuals, organizations, Charitable Trusts or even business groups. English has triggered new opportunities of empowerment and employability especially in the area of translation. Translation Agencies offer part-time and full time jobs to translators who can translate from English into other languages. Since satisfaction of clients depends on 'quality' of translation, Translation Agencies offer jobs to highly skilled translators. Translation Agencies based in U.K., U.S., Spain, Germany and India have opened up a new world of employment. These Translation Agencies cover a number of subjects/fields for translation including aerospace, automobile, banking, industry, entertainment, Information Technology, e-commerce, law, education, marketing, Homeopathy and others. Among types of documents for translation, such Translation Agencies include business-cards, catalogues, certificates, corporate letters, manuals and surveys. To name a few Translation Agencies, 'Quick Lingo' in U.K., 'InterWorld Translations' in U.S., 'Ibidem Group' in Spain and Zappmedia Network in Germany seem to be established agencies. India based Translation Agencies like 'Translation in India', 'Somya Translations Pvt. Ltd.', 'Language Localist', 'JR Services' and 'Lingua World Services' employ translators who can translate from English into Indian languages like Gujarati, Marathi and also from Indian languages into English.

2.2 Working Condition and Wages

Materially, translator needs a computer with remarkable Internet speed. Translator can work either directly for his clients or through Translation Agencies. Translator can either advertise his skills, experience and qualification his own and can attract clients or he can submit his full resume to one of the Translation Agencies and can find employment. However, many translators prefer work through Translation Agencies to self-advertisement. Translators can avail the opportunities of part-time and full time jobs. Part time jobs include 6 to 8 hours of work per week, while full time job includes complete devotion to time. Wages of translators depend on a number of things including certification, skills, experience, education, and financial status of the employer. Besides, number of words or pages also matter in wages of translators. In India, translators can earn monthly Rs. 8,000 to 10,000 after a little period of struggle and hard work. In U.S. translators monthly earn \$

2,379 to \$ 2853. Added advantages are that the translators can work at home and can avail the opportunities of part-time and full time jobs.

2.3 Competition and Employment

But then, the area of translation services is a competitive field. In fact, there are two types of competition found in the market of translation services. First, there is a competition among aspirant translators to get job or project from Translation Agencies and second, there is a competition among Translation Agencies themselves. From fresh graduates to well experienced persons apply to Translation Agencies to get jobs as translators. Therefore, a good number of aspirants are in the race to be employed by Translation Agencies. Many aspirant translators apply simultaneously and submit their resume to many Translation Agencies. Many translators simultaneously work in more than one Translation Agencies. Besides, a tough competition is also there among Translation Agencies. Every Translation Agency wants to win the market and advertises its commitment to work to attract clients. Also, criteria decided by Translation Agencies for selecting translators differ from one-another. While a few Translation Agencies employ translators who have been awarded certificates in translation by universities, many Translation Agencies do not rely on university certificates and give a testing document to translators for practical job and test their skills before employing them.

2.4 Human Translation versus Machine Translation

Debates on reliability of human translation and machine translation have started since last several decades. While supporters and advocates of machine translation argue on the ground of speed of machine translation, defenders and supporters of human translation propound the idea that 'human' element is essential to translation process. Human translation process is a complex phenomenon. Human translation process includes decoding the meaning of the Source Language (SL) and re-encoding the same meaning in the Target Language (TL). This decoding and re-encoding process requires on the translator's part a good knowledge of grammar, semantics, syntax, shades of meanings and idioms of the Source Language (SL) and the Target Language (TL). Machine Translation (MT) is a branch of computational linguistics that investigates the use of software to translate speech or written word from one language to another. Machine translation can find equivalents of the Source Language (SL) in the Target Language (TL), but it too often fails in semantic and syntactic aspects of language translation. Translation is a very delicate process and the greatest drawback in Machine Translation is the absence of human sensitivity and human mind. Jukka Yucca Korpela therefore sadly notes:

During the last few decades, quite a lot of predictions and even promises have been presented regarding machine translation, but useful software and systems for it have not been available until recently. This has caused disappointments and pessimism to the extent that many people consider Machine Translation as definitely unrealistic.⁴

3 Requisite Qualities of a Translator in Online Market:

Theoretically, translation is a hard nut to crack since while many theorists and men of letters believe it to be an art, a number of theorists hold the view that it is a science. To put a happy solution to the problem, it could be argued that translation is a process which includes both talent and skills. Translation itself is a very difficult task since complaints about poor translations always fill the air today. A study of certain requisite qualities of a translator in online market can help an aspirant translator to make a place in the market.

- (1) Not only mere computer literacy but also very good skills in computer operating become perhaps the most essential quality of a translator to survive in the market. In fact, the work of a translator depends upon his knowledge and use of computer. He must know various functions of computer from Microsoft Word and Power Point to saving, protecting and re-naming his files and documents. He must know uses of e-mails, spam, attaching files and opening and saving the files sent to him.
- (2) A good translator must have a good knowledge of the Source Language (SL) and Target Language (TL). He must be well versed in grammar, syntactic and semantic aspects of the Source Language (SL) and the Target Language (TL). A good knowledge in the Source Language (SL) would help him in proper

interpretation of documents and a good knowledge of the Target Language (TL) would help him in appropriately translating the documents in the Target language (TL).

- (3) A good translator must have a good knowledge of the subject his material is centred on. It means that besides linguistic skills, good knowledge of the subject the translation material deals with, is also required to be a good translator. Translation Agencies therefore ask aspirant translators to mention the areas in which they are comfortable. On the part of the translators, it is necessary that they specifically and honestly mention only those areas or subjects in which they can successfully translate from one language to another.
- (4) Appropriateness of words in the Target Language (TL) is a very important requirement in the job of translator. To successfully carry moods, emotions, motives, aims and objectives from the Source Language (SL) to the Target Language (TL), the translator must choose the most appropriate words. Too often, words carry shades of meanings. A careful translator would think and re-think before wielding his pen for translating such words.
- (5) A good translator is always expected to be well-equipped. He must have standard monolingual and bilingual dictionaries, encyclopedias, e-dictionaries, glossaries of respective fields. He must not forget the fact that his future in translation market depends on the proper use of his tools.
- (6) Commitment to work is always a great quality of a good translator. The biggest threat is haste and the greatest friend is patience for a translator. Often Translation Agencies hire translators on a trial basis for three months and check their commitment to work. Commitment to work, therefore is a virtue for a translator to survive in the market.
- (7) Patience is perhaps the greatest quality of a good translator since commitment to work cannot come without patience. Translation is not simply a process of finding equivalents from one language to another; it is a long process. Translation includes knowledge of subject, knowledge of languages, skills of decoding the message from the Source Language (SL) and re-encoding it into the Target Language (TL). Yet translator has to finish his task before the deadline given by the client or by Translation Agencies.

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