PERCEIVED MOTIVATORS AND INHIBITORS AMONG PROSPECTIVE ACADEMIC TRANSLATORS

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ABSTRACT / ABSTRAK

Academics at higher learning institutions conduct research and write articles for journals and conferences, among others. They have general knowledge as well as that related to their respective areas of expertise and research interest. They possess writing proficiency. A question arises, since writing is second nature to teachers and researchers, are academics generally inclined towards translation? This study was carried out to discover the motivators and inhibitors to translation of academic and non-academic works. Motivators consist of personal as well as organizational factors that encourage academics to engage in translation, whereas inhibitors refer to factors that discourage the academics to be involved in the engagement. The study desires to identify the two opposing factors from the academics in social sciences through open-ended interviews using the social media platform. Target informants were the academics who have been servicing their institution for five years and less in order to compare their contribution towards translation works, if any. The transcribed answers were content-analyzed to identify the underlying factors that motivate or inhibit the academics to be involved in translation. The paper provides suggestions for extended research.

Keywords: English; inhibitor; motivator; publication; research; translation

INTRODUCTION

Translation contributes to dissemination of knowledge. Its intensity depends on the availability of needed references in the national language of a nation. While the relevant education authorities in a country may encourage teachers and researchers at all levels of learning to be involved in producing works of translations, self-motivation is deemed to be a strong push factor to make individuals involved in translation. This paper refers to full translation of a work, not translation as part of one's writing process in producing a conference paper or a journal article.

The primary purpose of translation is to disseminate knowledge. Translation enables knowledge sharing (Bleich, 2008; Cronin, 2012; Drugan, 2013). As an output, knowledge can be marketed globally (Cronin, 2003; Drugan, 2013; Lane-Mercier, 2014). With the advancement of technology, original and translation works can be digitized and made available to readers instantly (Cronin, 2013; Drugan, 2013) by using information and communication technology.

One of the most important requirements for the translator is to possess a good knowledge of two languages, e.g., the national language and the language of the original works. According to Tang (2017), the translation of publication in English into another language requires proficiency of English as non-native language into another language. Interestingly, Taviano (2013) argued that the translation of publication in English into other languages has increased the value of English as a lingua franca.

This study aims to explore two broad factors, categorized as motivators and inhibitors to the translation of academic and non-academic works. Motivators comprise personal as well as organizational factors that encourage academics to engage in translation, whereas inhibitors refer to factors that discourage the academics to be involved in the engagement.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Translation is a process that integrates social values with technology (Gouadec, 2007; Drugan, 2013; Ehrensberger-Dow & Massey, 2019). Drugan (2013) argued that there is standard assessment to assure the quality of professional translation. In fact, the socio-technical nature of translation requires translation professional to have continuous professional development (Ehrensberger-Dow & Massey, 2019).

Translation plays two roles: It contributes towards the dissemination of knowledge, and also provides a service. There are many users of translation services in the market (Pym, 2006; Samuelsson-Brown, 2006; Shaw & Holland, 2010; Taviano, 2013; Tang, 2017). According to Pym (2006) and Samuelsson-Brown (2006), globalization provides a huge commercial potential for translation services. In achieving effectiveness, there should be systematic planning for translation sector to survive, grow and sustain (Shaw & Holland, 2010).

Motivating factors

Motivating factors involved drivers, game changers, and triggers for individuals to have energy, persistency and sustainability. Newcomers to the translation world are expected to acquire knowledge and skill in relation to translation (Taviano, 2013; Cronin, 2013; Tang, 2017) persistently. The next step would be to apply the knowledge and skill into the real translation work (Nourinexhad & Kashefian-Naeeini, 2020.

While writing and researching constitute two important components in an academic's profession, translation may not be so. Translation is related to but not a core component of an academic's job description. There are many reasons that motivate academics into translation work. Individual factors such as age, experience and attitude influence one's involvement in translation work. According to Nourinezhad & Kashefian-Naeeini (2020), age and experience are dominant in driving academics into translation work. Yet, empathy to share one's thoughts with others may lead one to translate his works.

Irrespective of one's motivation to engage in translation, it is essential that the individual possess translation competency. Competency is the pre-requisite for responsible and ethical translation irrespective of one's academic standing. One's sure route to

acquisition of the translation skill and ethics is formal training. Taviano (2013) argued that competency can be acquired through intensive training and involvement in translation work. Peer or professional review of the translation will provide credibility to the translator's work. Results of peer review may be considered as recognition of one's achievement in the translation world.

As translation involves the application of one's mastery of the translated language and vis-à-vis the language of the original work. It is unreasonable to expect a translator to be able to translate without mastering the two languages concerned. Tang (2017) contended that the mastery of languages is essential. It is basically from the language of the original work into the target language. Each language has its own technical and contextual aspects. Due to the uniqueness of each language, word by word direct translation may not be able to portray the contextual aspects. If each word is being translated without considering the context, focusing merely on grammar for instance, then the translated sentence may appear to be dry and spiritless.

Irrespective of whether the translation is done manually or electronically, translated work retains its uniqueness. It can never be superseded by globalization. There is yet to exist a truly global language. Although there is a popular and commonly used language, like English reality shows that translation is still natural and becomes part of the medium in communication. Take for instance, economic activities. Import-export activities are being carried out using a chosen language, i.e., a language of mutual understanding. Importers and exporters resort to using a common language, e.g., English, or translation into English. According to Cronin (2013), the economic activities are not effective without the use of correct language. If the participants do not use the same language, then there is a need for translation, whether orally or in writing, or both.

In ensuring that translation is done, one has to look into the translators themselves. Without them, translation work could not be produced. Although machine translation is available, one cannot deny on the superiority of human translation. Motivating factors for translation are multidimensional. Essentially, translators need to possess strong determination (Nourinezhad & Kashefian-Naeeini, 2020), competency (Taviano, 2013), mastery of language and culture (Tang, 2017) and global perspective (Cronin, 2003; Shaw & Holland, 2010).

Higher education

Knowledge is available in various languages (Bleich, 2008). Higher education provides support for the relevance and importance of works of translation. If some critical works exist in another language, people who are not conversant with or ignorant in the language can only benefit form the original works from translation. Translation affects not only learning, but also teaching and research activities. While English may be widely used in research, there are also researches that rely on works in other languages (Cronin, 2013; Tang, 2017). Thus, there is a need to translate research work into other languages for greater benefit of the learning communities.

In absence of one truly global language, translation remains the life-saving bridge to make humans human. There is a perpetual need to translate research work into other languages to extend the benefit to greater communities. Thus, translation becomes an

essential profession (Goudec, 2007). When researchers have the ability to translate the research work into other languages, they extend the reach of their research work.

It is important that any translation meets some standards of integrity and professionalism. Drugan (2013) argued that there is a need for standard and strict compliance to the standard. Without a standard, translation work will suffer from substandard work and reflects work of questionable quality (Bleich, 2008; Drugan, 2013; Tang, 2017). When translation work is inferior, it will quickly erode the level of acceptance and trust in translation.

Modern translation has been aided by technology. Digital technology and artificial intelligence have been providing instant access of the literature to community of learners. They also aid the works of translations. This thought is perhaps expressed by Ehrensberger-Dow & Massey (2019) who say that the digital and artificial intelligence enables translation to integrate social dimension with machines. However, man always believes that while the machines may reduce human error in the manual translation, the quality of translation still needs human intelligence (Shaw & Holland, 2010; Drugan, 2013; Tang, 2017).

METHODOLOGY

The study explores the role of motivators and inhibitors in translation by soliciting the opinions of academics through open-ended interviews using the social media platform. Target informants were the academics who have been serving their institution for five years and less. The authors choose this yardstick because they think that newcomers to the higher learning institutions would give priority to publication of academic works related to their respective areas of specialization. These academics would focus on the activity directly related to their tenure. For this reason, the academics would concentrate on producing journal and conference papers translation.

This study interviewed five informants among academics from three different public universities in Malaysia. Informant 1 is a specialist in information technology from University A. Informant 2 is a law specialist also from University A. However, Informant 3 is a marketing specialist from University B. Informant 4 is a business specialist from University C. The fifth informant is an entrepreneurship specialist from University A.

Personal interview falls under qualitative research. The qualitative research allows the study to obtain detail information and understanding about an issue from the contextual perspective rather than mere generalization (Creswell &Poth, 2017; Mason, 2017). This study developed the interview questions from intensive literature review. Then, it approached independent researchers who are competent with qualitative research and the subject matter to validate the interview questions and the interview protocol (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Charmaz, 2014). After the validation, the study conducted a pilot study to ensure that the interview questions are understandable to the practitioners. Unlike the quantitative research, there are structured ways to determine reliability and validity of the instruments. For qualitative study, the use of triangulation

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the feedback from the informants on motivating and inhibiting factors of translation work in research, teaching and publication in social sciences. The informants argued that there are motivating factors that operate in individuals to involve in translation of research, teaching and publication.

Informant 1 argued that the reason to translate from English to Malay language is due to the motivation to get the industry enlightened with some knowledge. Informant 1 said:

"I have incomplete experience. However, I was doing machine translation research in the early 90's - basically doing programming works to translate English-Malay-English in those days! I did that because I think the industry needed to acquire knowledge in their own language at a start; later, they can share their knowledge with us. In those days we did not use triple helix or industrial linkages systematically in today's terms. We did so out our sense of academic responsibility. I got annoyed when the public demanded the academics to produce responsible research and publication."

There are challenges in translation work. According to Informant 1, the passion to translate work for the benefit of the industry has provided him a very strong motivation and determination. Informant 1 added:

"Translation was not my specialisation. I was determined to do translation because of the benefit it would give to the industry. I kept asking myself, if not me, who else? It turned out to be true. Nobody at that time was willing to help me with the translation. The main challenge was trying to find translation for technical terms and forming the most accurate sentences. Malay language does not have past tense like in English!"

The same motivating factor was shared by Informant 2, i.e., about knowledge sharing and knowledge development. Informant 2 said: *"Knowledge sharing is always our passion in academia. By doing what I did, I believed we can disseminate knowledge. I have passion in drafting law. I translated from English to Malay. Basically, I did it on my own without any support from my faculty or research division."*

As for Informant 3, the translation work is needed by those who have no access to higher education. Informant 2 said:

"We have no choice but to translate all marketing courses in English into Malay because the participants in all courses are from SMEs. Entrepreneurs came from various backgrounds. Most of them are not university educated."

The motivation to share the knowledge with all has always been the driving force. Informant 4 said:

"I did translate a few times from English to Malay and also from Malay to English but my works were not correct. Since the subject is not technical, even with some errors in translation, the targeted group could still benefit from my work."

Informant 5 also shared his concern about knowledge development. He said:

"I tried to translate from English to Malay on entrepreneurship subject, but it did not materialise. Our participants were very comfortable with English."

The informants seemed to suggest their attempts to integrate language with machines (Ehrensberger-Dow & Massey, 2019) due to their strong determination to translate (Nourinezhad & Kashefian-Naeeini, 2020). With some mastery in language and the desire to meet the need of the industry (Taviano, 2013; Tang, 2017), the informants could address challenges in technical and other industry requirements (Cronin, 2013; Tang, 2017). The academic settings of the academics interviewed did not appear to be very critical in enabling the informants to engage in translation.

Research Implications

There are three research implications. Firstly, the study has implications to the body of knowledge in the area of organizational behaviour, performance management and decision science. Motivators and inhibitors are part of the Herzberg's Two-Factor motivation theory. By understanding this theory, managers should be able to design organizational structure and job design that could motivate employees to make superior performance. Secondly, it is the implications to practice. Managers and supervisors of high learning institutions could include motivators into job design, performance appraisal, and annual work target. In the meantime, managers should avoid inhibitors that could inhibit quality of work and performance. Finally, implications to policies related to employment, industrial relations and knowledge economy.

Limitations

There three limitations in this study. Firstly, the study has the limitation on the sampling and the number of informants. In qualitative research, there is no specific number of informants required. However, there is a need to get deep feedback from the informants. Secondly, it is about the challenges in the personal interviews such as time, effort and cost. In the informed consent, it gives freedom to informants to withdraw at any time. The researchers could request for more sessions of the personal interview. However, the risk would be the informants may withdraw from the study. Thirdly, this study had to use content analysis instead of thematic analysis for the interview transcripts. The main reason is due to the little feedback from the informants.

Future Research Direction

This study proposes that the future research should employ qualitative case study. In a qualitative case study, researchers could use interviews, observations, focus group and document analysis. The interview results can be used to conduct observation in both direct observation and participant observation. While enriching the information, the observation can be a triangulation for the interview method. Likewise, the results from interviews and observations can be used to guide researchers to conduct focus group. Then, the analysis of document will reinforce the findings from all methods.

CONCLUSION

The study attempted to identify two opposite factors that could help readers appreciate the role of the former – motivators and inhibitors – in transitioning the academics into the translation world. The findings reflected primarily the motivators rather than inhibitors. The

spirit of sharing and disseminating knowledge to others seems to be the common thread for motivators. However, the apparent inhibitors, such as public's demand for responsible research and publications and lack of support from one's faculty may be aggregated as motivators rather than inhibitors. Clearly, the exploratory nature of the study demands further investigation, the next logical move would be to increase the sample size. Comparing the interview results with research and publications productivity of the informants will provide invaluable insights into the relationship between priorities of the core tasks of the academics and the voluntary task of translation.

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