Science, Art or Skill: One Zero Zero

by

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The question whether translation is a science, an art or a skill is a dilemmatic one. Since the debate on the nature of translation is endless, theoreticians and practitioners respond to this question each according to his/her own understanding of this refined and intricate human industry. Addressing such a question is not an easy task since no answer is "safe and sound". The present paper is an attempt in this regard.

Till now, it is common practice to say that if one gives a text to 10 students or even professional translators, one may get 10 different translations of same text, claiming that translation is an art and there is nothing wrong with having these 10 different translations. Some argue that it is not a science or the science component is one of the three slices, giving it the smallest portion of the cake. They take the case of literary translation to support their argument.

To begin with, Translation is a SCIENCE. Mathematically put, Science is One. Art is Zero. Skill is Zero. Now, if placed in this order, the outcome is 100. What makes this 100 is the One in this sequence of numbers, not the two Zeroes.

The word "science" in this context should not be understood in its strict sense. It is not one of the pure sciences like Math or Physics. It is a human science with all its flexibility and interdependence on neighbouring disciplines such as Applied Linguistics, Computational Linguistics, Contrastive Linguistics, etc.

Looking at translation as being basically a science has its positive impact on the way of choosing would-be students, the teaching of translation, and its practice.

Art is Luck. Practice is Time. Science is Translation.