

Language and Culture in Translation: Competitors or Collaborators?

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The title of this collection of papers sponsored by the International Federation of Translators outlines a direction of research which is of great theoretical and practical interest. Language and culture are obviously the two dominant factors which make translation an indispensable and most complicated kind of intellectual activity. Our world is a babel of languages and interlingual communication, that is communication between people speaking different languages, is impossible unless the linguistic barrier is overcome in some way. Thus language, or rather difference in languages, is the *raison d'être* of translation. We translate from one language into another to make interlingual communication possible. The idea of linguistic transfer is implicit in the very name of the phenomenon and a definition of the translating process usually makes some reference to language or languages.

The cultural factor in translation is also undeniable if not so obvious. No communication is possible unless the message transmitted through speech utterances (or texts) is well understood by the communicants. But this understanding can be achieved only if the information contained in language units is supplemented by background knowledge of facts referred to in the message. People belonging to the same linguistic community are members of a certain type of culture. They share many traditions, habits, ways of doing and saying things. They have much common knowledge about their country, its geography, history, climate, its political, economic, social and cultural institutions, accepted morals, taboos and many other things. All this information is the basis of the