

Strategies of Arabic – English Translations: Problems and Solutions

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ABSTRACT

This paper sheds light on the impediments of translation and on the strategies that should be followed for clarity of intent. It focuses on basic prospects of linguistic, lexical, and cultural problems. The paper tackles the ambiguity some new learners might fall with during translation. It exposes models of Arabic sentences, expressions and proverbs to English and back for a precise translation. The objective of this work is to avoid some peculiarities which are dealt with as defects in both academic and non-academic fields of translation. This paper is, therefore, an attempt to expound these problems so the translator can aware of the lacunae which might go unseen in the process of translation. It is also to seek which meaning is possibly intended by the writer based on, not a customary translation, however, diversity of times and attitudes as well. To ease the function to the foreign speakers and to make this work more attainable, the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) transcriptions are considered whenever necessary.

KEYWORDS: Translation, Problem, Solution, Equivalence, Source Language, Target Language.

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I. INTRODUCTION

According to the community in which the language has been uttered, problems are stemmed and formed to produce discrepancies among language norms. The problems of translation are vast to be studied as a whole. This paper concentrates on some of these problems which sound to be proliferated in the field of translation with the progressing of time. These issues occur between two tongues, the source language (SL) and the target language (TL). More than one void in various fields of language will be considered linguistically, lexically and culturally. It is significantly valuable to highlight these problems to root out the function of translation as it should be.

The translation is transferring the meaning from one language to another. Some clarify that translation is a process of transmitting traditions and cultures rather than words; however, others say the contrary. Some stressed style rather than words whilst others pointed out that a word-for-word translation might give more than one meaning and perhaps be inefficient translation. Newmark defines translation as "rendering the meaning of the text into another language in the way that the author intended meaning of the text" (1988, p. 5) while Hatim and Munday define translation as "the process of transferring a written text from the source (SL) to target language (TL)" (2004, p. 6). Moreover, Nida articulates that translation "consists in producing in the receptor language, the closest natural equivalent to the message of the source language, first in meaning and second in style" (1982, p. 96).

From the above definitions, the comprehensive meaning of translation is to show meaning and an explicit explanation corresponds to what has been in the target text. Consequently, translation involves an attempt to render the target language by translating not only the idioms but also thoughts and ideas. Newmark illustrates that:

Translation theory attempts to give some insight into relation between thought, meaning, and language; the universal cultural and individual aspects of language and behavior, the understanding of cultures, the interpretation of texts that may clarified and even supplemented by way of translation (1988, p. 5).

The Translation Process

The translation process, whether for translation or interpreting, can be described simply as:

1. Decoding the meaning of the source text, and
2. Re-encoding this meaning in the target language.

To decode the meaning of a text, the translator must first identify the unit or the component. In other words, the segments of the text are to be treated as cognitive units. A translation unit may be a word, a phrase or even one

3. Optimal Equivalence

This type of equivalence is achieved as both formal and functional equivalences have been achieved. It will be called optimal i.e. if phraseology and function are achieved, this means optimal equivalence, for example:

A friend in need is a friend indeed الصديق وقت الضيق

In this proverb, it is clear that the coincidence is very close to each other formally and functionally.

4. Ideational Equivalence

On occasions, no one of the above-mentioned types of equivalence can be the alternative for the target word. Here, it is inevitable to opt for ideational equivalence which maintained the communication of ideas to have an appropriate equivalent away of form and function. To illustrate, consider this example:

Add wetness to the clay يزيد الطين بلة

Translation Problems and Solutions

1. Linguistic Problems

Linguistic problems involve grammatical voids that obstruct the steps of translation. Grammatical mastery may be secured in the source language whereas whenever is being in a target language becomes disordered and filled with hitches which lead the text to differentiate the meaning. This field requires close attention by the translators if they want to present their translation accurately. This problem is presented in the hope of being closely studied and widely explored especially by new translators. These problems are; cognate accusative, passivization and modality.

1.1. The Evaluative Cognate Accusative:-

In the Arabic language, the cognate object is mostly from the sort of verb. In other words, Arabic uses the cognate object to ensure events that are mentioned in the sentence. This grammatical structure is not available in English by the same structural machinery which in turn leads to the linguistic problem as the translator renders the Arabic cognate accusative to an English one; as can be illustrated in the instance below:

English	IPA	Arabic
<i>Heard pupil teacher <u>hearing</u></i>	<i>Samia'a Italib-u Imualim-a sama-an</i>	سمع الطالب المعلم <u>سمعا</u>

- (a) The pupil heard the teacher hearing.
- (b) The pupil heard the teacher.
- (c) The pupil heard the teacher perfectly.
- (d) The pupil did hear the teacher.

Here, with the above four English translated samples; the more reasonable example grammatically is only (d) which grants the sentence the utilizing of evaluative cognate accusative as being in Arabic by using the verb "to do" that employs emphasize of the action. It is important to be informed that the other above examples (a, b, c) excluding (d) are used commonly by most of the translators, whereas they are regarded as unacceptable phenomena and as a linguistic problem in the process of translation because these examples have changed the intended message as to be in the English language.

Example (b) has not had the assigned emphasis which occurred in the source action and (c) modifies the meaning by expressing the type of the action rather than to give the intended emphasis for the action. It is possible also to accomplish the Arabic cognate accusative by using lexis to have an overlapping between the two different grammatical points; as illustrated below:

English	IPA	Arabic
<i>The pupil heard the teacher <u>indeed</u>.</i>	<i>Samia'a Italib-u Imualim-a hak-an</i>	سمع الطالب المعلم <u>حقاً</u>

Thus, the lexis "indeed", indicates to emphasize the intended message of the Arabic sentence instead of using "did" which refers to the same function that utilizes the evaluative cognate accusative in English. B. Hatim and I. Mason's state that "The meaning of an utterance has to do with what the utterance is intended to achieve" (Hatim, 1990, p. 25).

1.2. Passivization

Passivization is considered linguistically one of the translation problems since the form of passivization is employed differently among languages. This goes to put translators in the presence of linguistic problems throughout the process of translating. For instance, both Arabic and English use passive structures, but in different machinery. Arabic may use nominalization and the objective relativized topic- common structure as strategies to render the English passive into Arabic one.

Objective relativized topic-common structure often occurs and is utilized in Arabic fiction. It is usually used to translate English passive because it captures form as well as meaning. English utilizes passive forms for stylistic variation, whereas Arabic employs passive forms for pragmatic purposes. English uses passive much more than active whether the agent is present or not. Arabic cannot use passive forms unless the agent (subject) is absent or there was an attention to hide the identity of the agent, this will cause a linguistic problem that may face translators. The translator, therefore, has to know the grammatical structures of the two languages (source and target) to recognize the rules of each one and then present the translation perfectly.

1.3. Modality

It is well known that models are used to reflect the possibility of something. More clearly, they are employed in the manner in which the speaker explicates the situations around him probably. In translation, one cannot think of a certain model to be a counterpart for the other target model, unless it coincides with the meaning of the translated text. Thus, the translator may sometimes opt for an inappropriate equivalent model due to the presence of a linguistic problem related to modality. For example, the model "must" in English has two referential semantic meanings. It may be utilized to reflect the obligation notion, sometimes it may express conjecture. So, the linguistic slot will be presented in this case, particularly the translator will be confused for which he should refer to. For example, the Arabic correspondence for "must" is "yajibu" which expresses the obligation sense, but not conjecture; here the translator will fall in incorrect style. Based on the above explanation, this can be illustrated with the following examples:-

	English	IPA	Arabic
A.	The war must be finished on one day	inna alharb yajibu-u an tantahi yawman ma	ان الحرب يجب ان تنتهي يوما ما
B.	Must war be finished tomorrow	labudda llharb-I an tantahi khad-an	لا بد للحرب ان تنتهي غدا

The above examples show two different senses. The translation of (A) from Arabic into English is awkward due to the use of the model "must" to state conjecture, whereas, the translation of (B) is correct for "must" is used to express obligation because the translator has come to opt for appropriate target model as an equivalent to "labudda".

2. Lexical Problems

Equivalents are not always possible through transferring from one language to another, since many languages have differed in more than one field such as cultural varieties and linguistic formulas. In this case, the translation has to be presented semantically with some clarifications in the footnote whenever needful. This case will generate lexical problems and will subsequently mirror two different cultures. It is worth mentioning that the degree of their divergence bases on the extent of closeness or remoteness between the cultures of the two languages.

Lexical gaps are said to be natural and easily managed. They are natural because each language expresses experience by various idioms. With losing some meaning, the translator can render the missing word with another one from the target language that seems asymptotic to the required meaning. Below are some examples to be considered for illustration:

1- " If water is present for ablution, the use of earth is discontinued" إذا حضر الماء بطل التيمم

This proverb states a ritual meaning according to Islam principles. Worshiper has to have ablution before his prayer but, in case of the unavailability of water then he can employ of earth instead. English people have no idea about this phenomenon. The translator here will encounter a lexical problem due to there is no accurate equivalent that can support his translation. In this case, the translator might present some clarification about the missing word.

The translating should not be lexically but, in terms of the overall meaning of sentences. For example; the string **good morning** has two different meanings in the following examples:

- a- When he entered the room, he said "Good morning" to her.
- b- It was a good morning when he set out.

In sentence (a) the string *good morning* is a greeting, it is translated into Arabic as the greeting "Sabaahu lkayr صباح الخير". In sentence (b), the string *good morning* is the sum of the meaning of *good* and *morning*, it is translated into Arabic as "Sabaahan tayyiban صباحاً طيباً" (Al- Najjar, 1984, p. 208). This is another lexical problem that might encounter the translator through the process of translation.

2- The word "السحور"

In Islamic culture, the word "al suhoor السحور" indicates a meal which is served in the case of intending to feast all the day from all the appetencies till the time of Sundown to obey God. English people have not such a ritual for which the translator will be in the presence of lexical problem because there is no suitable equivalent to render the Arabic word "السحور"

3. Cultural Problems

Cultural problems are the most difficult in translation that give rise to discrepancies between source and target language, each is influenced by its culture. For example, principles and traditions of Islam create additional expressions in the Arabic language, whereas, English is influenced by Christianity. There are differences in beliefs, climate, traditions...etc between two foreign languages. If the aspects of the cultures were similar, then the translation will be clear and easily find suitable equivalents. If the cultural aspects were different, then the translator will be in the presence of a cultural problem because some equivalents tend to be unknown. Consequently, some translators follow for opting arbitrary equivalents according to their considerations, then, the translation will lose the original meaning.

Many expressions change and then push alternatives to cover the exact meaning and support the situations of another cultural word. One of the cultural problems is ascribed to beliefs. "The central problem for describing the beliefs of exotic people is that if they have beliefs surrounded by network of other beliefs dynamically interact with each other in ways different than our beliefs do, then these differences make alien mental state" (Rubel, 2003, p. 54).

Cultural problems can be gathered and discussed briefly under the following headings:-

- 3.1. Ecology (geographical features).
- 3.2. Material Culture.
- 3.3. Social Culture.
- 3.4. Religious Culture.

3.1. Ecology (Geographical Features)

It involves all the natural views in one country that might be found in one area but not another. Consequently, this will be led to differentiation in the idioms. Nature, climate, temperature, weather, and the other ecological components affect the forming of the style of languages. For example, Arabic ecological features like the dry climate, vast deserts, hot, are on the contrary of ecological nature of the English world which is cold, rain, snow, all these discrepancies in ecology lead influence on the words which are used in both Arabic and English, for example:

The Arabic saying (أتلج صدره) is influenced by the Arab environment because this saying is taken from the type of life that Arab used to live. They used to live in dry weather so that saying such expression is indicative in hot countries of the Arab world. The problem here, when the translator wants to transfer the meaning from one language to another has to consider all the environment varieties which may render the meaning. Thus, it is to form suitable meaning coincides with reader comprehension and the area in which a reader is living in.

3.2. Material Culture

Material culture includes some materials and items which are not found in the target language and then automatically will not be translated. The translator has not accurate equivalent for material cultural items because they are from peculiar cultures. The number of objects will differ between two cultures whenever the distance was great between cultures. So, the translator has to be careful and aware of the source culture once the material objects faced him in the process of translation. Taking this example for illustration:

The Arabic expression (غربل الناس) has its parallel in English as (He squashed the people). The difficulty in translating this expression stems from the material word that appears in (غربل). This item is

peculiar to the Arab culture, and here lies the difficulty of rendering.

3.3. Social Culture

The difference in social habits between two languages tends to affect the speakers of these languages. For example, Arabic and English languages have impact counterparts in their social experiences which occur in everyday life like beliefs, marriage, food, drink, costumes, traditions, principles of friendship and relationship...etc. Among these various social factors between Arabic and English, there will be huge common peculiarities in the utilizing of expressions. These Arabic and English expressions for illustrating the above speech:

Arabic expression	English literal meaning	English equivalent idiom or meaning
اعمل خيرا وارميه في البحر	Make good and throw it in the Sea	Make good and forget it

The expression is used by Arabs when someone has done something good for someone else who does not deserve it. In this expression, a piece of advice has been given to someone else to forget what he has done and not to ask for a reward in return. This expression shows that Arabs make whatever is good not only for earthly benefit but a commitment to their Islamic doctrines and consequently to God's satisfaction. It is also because the Arab's habits which associated with chivalry and generosity. Another instance is the following:

English expression	Arabic literal meaning	Arabic equivalent idiom or meaning
Sunday clothes	ملابس الأحد	افضل ملابس لدى الشخص

This expression belongs to the English world. It is used to express that on this day there will be the finest clothes to wear. People in this day in English world go to the church to attend a religious meeting and also because Sunday is the first day of the official working in the English world.

3.4. Religious Culture

Religious expressions express the feeling and moral lessons of language's culture. They are dominated by the religious beliefs to which they belong. In the world, there are many beliefs like Islam, Christianity, Judaism, and Buddhism...etc. each one has its religious features which will affect the manner of speaking thus, according to the culture and religion. Here the problem of the translation will be in the presence of religious cause. The Arab world is controlled by Islamic factors while the English world is dominated by Christian culture and religion. This difference in culture will lead to a variety in expressions, for example:

The Arabic expression 'رمضان كريم' refers to one of the ritual Arabian months in Muslim calendar. This idiom is untranslatable in English speaking world, therefore, is considered a lacuna or gap. Accordingly, there will be a cultural problem that requires an appropriate equivalent for that foreign expression, mostly translatability.

General Problems of Translation

The translation is often considered a difficult and complex task. In addition to the major problems of translation (Linguistic, Lexical and Cultural), the translator may be in face of minor problems like incomprehensibility of the source text, misprinting, translating caption, abbreviations, proper names and organizations. Problems concerned with a skeleton of the language like jargons idioms, technical expressions that are used by a group of people, but other people do not understand as mathematic figures, computing and legal jargon i.e. the words which occur in one field, but not another. Also, problems related to poetic aspects like metaphor, rhyme, puns, poetic meter...etc. for instance, the word "translation" means "copying" in medicine.

Along with these lines, punctuation marks are treated as a general problem of translation that relates to the coordination of the text and to reflect the eligible meaning. The ability of a translator to elucidate a meaning will be disfigured if it is not provided with accurate punctuation.

II. CONCLUSION

The translation is a difficult task for the unpracticed translator since it has several problems which should be known, treated and solved by the translator. The basic issue of translation is to opt for the most appropriate equivalent to send the message skillfully and perfectly. To avoid hitches in the process of translation, the translator has to study the target language from all respects such as nature, culture and the environment. Linguistic rules should be absorbed carefully to root out whatever is related to grammatical lacunae in both SL and TL. The lexical discrepancies are indispensable to let the translator identifying the decisive equivalent for the source word. It is worth mentioning that, sometimes, no specific translation could be determined, especially for literary contexts and some religious expressions.

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