Using Translation Activities by Sudanese Students to Enhance Foreign Language Learning

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Abstract

Enhancing English skills, particularly reading, writing, listening, and speaking: It was observed that translation assists students in acquiring writing, facilitates their comprehension, helps them develop and express ideas in another language, and increases their motivation to learn English. Translation tasks are primarily intended to facilitate the communication process by interpreting the information received in one language (L1) into another language (L2), and vice versa. The basic function of translation is to convey the appropriate meaning of a word or a sentence linguistically semantically and pragmatically. If this complex process is carried out on a professional level, then, it is possible to say that translation has reached its ultimate goal.

Keywords: acquiring, pragmatically, semantically, complex process, professional level

1. INTRODUCTION

Quite a large number of approaches have been passed by linguists and educators as to the value of translation tasks in promoting second language learning. As long as translation studies depend largely of the concept of meaning interpretation as essential for the understanding of the texts many linguists have focused their approaches to semantics (Malahat, 2010). However, there are those

who have viewed the whole process from a phonological viewpoint with special emphasis on the function of utterances over the texts in their very contexts (Nord, 1997). Some researchers, however, look at the end product the text conveys as a whole on its audience or society (Venuti, 1998), while other researchers view the whole language effect from a purely philosophical point   of language as a means to consider its influence on meaning when translating (Malmkjær, 1993).

2. HISTORY OF TRANSLATION IN THE ARAB WORLD

Some scholars believe that the early translations used in Arabic are dated back to the time of *Omar Ibn Al-khattab*, who is considered to be the first person to start the so-called Arabicizing (to translate from foreign languages into Arabic), when he translated some *Diwans* from Persians. The first official scientific translation was done in *Ommiad's* era by *Khaild IbnYazeed*, who was famous for his interests in sciences and philosophy.

Generally speaking, the time of the prophet Mohamed (peace be upon him) is of paramount importance for history of translation. The spread of Islam and the communication with non-Arabic speaking communities as Jews, Romans and others leads the prophet to look for translators and to encourage the learning of foreign languages. One of the most famous translators of that time is *Zaid Ibnu Thabet*, who played a crucial role in translating the letters that were sent by the prophet to foreign kings of Persia, Syria, Rome and Jews, and also letters sent by those kings to the prophet.

Another era that knew significant changes in Arabic translation was related to the translation of the Holy Koran. Consequently, the early translators of the Koran focused on its meaning. *Salman El Farisi*, for instance, translated the meaning of Surat Al Fatiha for Persian Muslims, who did not speak Arabic. One of those famous writers who contributes significantly in this field,was *Sheikh Mohamed Al-Hafid Al-Boukhari,* whotranslated the Holy Koran into Persian.

Despite the increase of the Koran translations, this matter was and is still the point of many debates and conflicts in the Arab world. An example of these conflicts occurs after the translation of the Koran into Turkish language by the Turkish government in the time of Mustapha Kamal Ataturk. The latter aimed to use the translation

instead of the original book as a way to spread secularism in the Islamic country. This led to a wave of criticism from Arab intellectuals, journalists and muftis.

Besides, the central part of the conflicts that existed and still exist in the translation of Koran are related to the reasons behind translation itself, i.e., whether to use the translation as a way to teach the principles of Islam or to use it in praying and legislation was the difficult choice that faced translators. Nevertheless, some Islamic scholars and theologians state that it has been forbidden for non-native Arabic speaking people to use the translation of Koran in praying and legislation, whereas they can use it to explain the meanings and thoughts. In general, translation of Koran faces various changes. This is the fact that led to the creation of special committees that took the responsibility of translating Koran in a way that preserves it from falsification.

Another era that characterized by important developments in the Arab translation is that of *'the first Abbasid period'* (750-1250). Translation knew an enhancement with the *Caliph Al-Mansour*, who built the city of Baghdad, and was also developed in the time of the *Caliph Al-Ma'moun*, who built 'Bait Al Hikma', which was the greatest institute of translation at the time. During the period translators focused on Greek philosophy, Indian science and Persian literature.

3. CULTURAL CONSIDERATION ON TRANSLATION

It has been long taken for granted that translation deals only with language. Cultural perception, on the other hand, has never taken into consideration. When defines translation, Catford, for example, concentrates on the replacement of textual material in one language by equivalent textual material in another language. According to this definition, the equivalent textual material is most important part in translation process. Yet, it is still blurred in terms of the type of equivalence in which culture is not taken into account.

Some scientists believe that translation is a process of transferring of thoughts and ideas from one language (source) to another (target), whether the languages are in written or oral form; whether the languages have established orthographies or do not have such standardization or whether one or both languages is based on

signs, as with sign languages of the deaf. Yet, there is no indication that culture is taken into account except in that of Nida and Taber.

Actually, Nida and Taber themselves do not mention this matter very explicitly. Following their explanation on *"closest natural equivalent"*, however, it can be inferred that cultural consideration is well thought-out. They maintain that the equivalent sought after in every effort of translating is the one that is so close to the meaning/message that is intended to be transferred.

It is obvious that out of the definitions of translation only one takes cultural aspects into account, that is, the one by Nida and Taber. As the content addresses all walks of life and culture plays an important role in human life, culture, therefore, should have more consideration.

4. LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Language and culture are inseparably connected. It is universally agreed that a language is a part of culture and culture is a part of language. Samovar Etal (1982:24) observes:

> *"Culture and communication are inseparable because culture does not mean only dictates who talks to whom about what and how the communication proceeds, it also helps to determine how people encode message, the meaning they have for message and the conditions and circumstances under which various messages may or may not be sent, noticed or interprete–culture is the foundation of communication".*

Culture in this regard is not only understood as the advanced intellectual development of humankind as reflected in the arts, but also it refers to all socially conditioned aspects of human life.

According to Snell-Hornby (1988), culture means how to organize things, people, behavior, or emotions in a manner acceptable to the members of the societies and how do people deal with their circumstances.

5. CULTURAL TRANSLATION

The term cultural translation is used in several dissimilar contexts and carries a variety of meanings. In its narrower sense, as defined by

Kate Sturge in her entry in the "*Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*" (2009), cultural translation is used to refer to literary translation that conveys cultural difference, tries to express extensive cultural background, or intends to represent another culture through translation. This perception also includes an ideological perspective involved in the discussions over the right strategy to provide the cultural difference of a text (Sturge 2009:67). In its broader sense, cultural translation is an intricate concept as it has been used in different senses in different contexts.

In his book "*A Conceptual and Empirical Approach to Cultural Translation*" (2012) Kyle Conway presents a matrix of cultural translation, which encompasses all the combinations that stem from the diverse meanings of "culture" and "translation". Conway mainly categorizes culture as "anthropological culture," "symbolic culture," and "community," and classifies translation as "rewriting," and "transposition". While explaining the matrix, Conway reminds his readers that the distinctions between the modes of cultural translation are not clear cut, and emphasizes the points of conceptual similarity and difference between the modes (Conway 2012:4).

6. INTRODUCING TRANSLATION INTO CLASSROOM SETTINGS

When introducing translation into classroom teachers have to deal carefully with English vocabulary cause of variety of English words' meaning. Only context determine those meanings. The word "**right**", for example, has got various meanings. The following text shows this clearly:

"The teacher asked the student to draw a **right** angle زاوية قائمة, but insisted that the student draw it with his **right** hand بدهاليمنى while student was left-handed. Of course he did not draw it **right**مضبوطة and the teacher gave him low marks. **Right** awayعلىالفور the student went to the head master and complained that it was his **right**منحقه with whichever hand he liked. The teacher who was an up **right** manاد رجلعل agree that he was **righ**بحق على and that the teacher did not treat him **right**يعاملهبالعدلاوكماينبغي and order the teacher to **right**يصحح the students marks.

7. LITERARY LANGUAGE VS NON-LITERARY LANGUAGE

There is almost a consensus nowadays on taking up *the language of literature* as a major, and to some, sole criterion for defining literature and distinguishing between what is literature and what is not. Literary language has been assigned a special character since antiquity. It has been considered as sublime to, and distinctive from all other types of language, written or spoken, due to the special use of language that is deviant, or 'estranged' from ordinary, everyday, non-literary language. It breaks the common norms of language, including graphological, stylistic, grammatical, lexical, semantic and phonological norms.

The Formalists were the pioneers who examined the idea of deviance. They equated literary language with deviation, and claimed that it is used in a particular way and set off in contrast with the normal use of language. But they did not elaborate what the norm of language use could precisely be. Different terms were used by them to define deviation such as 'estranging of language', 'foregrounding', 'defamiliaization', and 'automatization' vs. 'de-automatization' of ordinary Language (Carter, 1979: Intro.; Ghazala, 1987 & 2011; Wales, 1989/2001 and Simpson, 2004). Among the obvious shortcomings of the formalists' perspective of literary language was that they identified it with poetry to the neglect of other types like prose and drama.

The American New Critics followed the formalists' suit and viewed literary language as a special kind of language use. Some modern stylists have viewed it in a way similar to the formalists. Yet, this does not mean that they have defined literary language in terms of deviation only. In fact, they have refuted that and argued with many other contemporary stylists and critics that it is not wise to draw a line between literary language and other types of language, and that the ordinary language has been used in literary texts and produced no less stylistic effects than the deviant language. Deviation to them is only one aspect of literary language, (Leech, 1969; Widdowson, 1975; Enkvist, 1973; Chapman, 1973 and others). Broadly speaking, this argument is true, especially of the language of poetry. However, in reality, it might not be quite applicable. Linguistic / stylistic deviation is required and fairly common in all literary genres for aesthetic, rhetorical and stylo-semantic reasons,

whereas they are completely absent, or, at best, occasional in non-literary texts.

Non-literary language is a term which is always considered in conjunction, and in contrast with literary language. Controversy has been and is still going on in academic circles as to the validity of dividing language into these two different types. Traditionally, there has been such division between literature (especially poetry and fictional prose) and non- literature (other types of writing other than what is labeled as literature). The main line of argument is that literary language is emotional, rhetorical, rhythmical, deviant, aesthetic, expressive, symbolic, fictional and, therefore, sublime and superior to non-literary language which is normal, expected, direct, and lacks all other literary characteristics, and, hence, inferior to literary language.

Recently, however, and in the past few years in particular, this view has been challenged by several writers. They claim that such polarization between literary and non-literary language does not exist because they overlap in many texts, and we can find literary features in non-literary texts, and non-literary features in literary texts, (Fish, 1980; Carter and Nash, 1983; Widdowson, 1975; Leech and Short, 1981; Simpson, 2004; Boase-Beier, 2006; Jeffries *et al*, 2010).

In fact, there is a point of truth in each of these two points of view. That is, the traditional one is right in its distinction between literature and non-literature, simply because it exists, whether we like it or not. Further, it has a strong linguistic and stylistic basis. The recent one, on the other hand, is true in rejecting the superiority of literature, for a certain social or linguistic context requires - not to say imposes - a certain type of language. For example, nobody is expected to talk or write to a doctor in verse, nor does anybody read a car leaflet or a list of instructions as to how to make a telephone call as a short story full of symbolism, rhetoric, irony and hyperbole. In the same way, no one can mistake a poem for a medical prescription, or a novel for a telephone directory.

8. EQUIVALENCE AT WORD LEVEL

If language were simply a nomenclature for a set of universal concepts, it would be easy to translate from one language to another.

One would simply replace the French name for a concept with the English name. If language were like this the task of learning a new language would also be much easier than it is. But anyone who has attempted either of these tasks has acquired, alas or unfortunately, a vast amount of direct proof that languages are not nomenclatures that the concepts … of one language may differ radically from those of another … Each language articulates or organizes the world differently. Languages don't simply name existing categories; they articulate their own (Culler, 1976: 21 – 2).

9. STIMULATING STUDENTS TO USE TRANSLATION TASKS TO IMPROVE LEARNING

Introducing Arabic idioms into translation classes can be one of the very stimulating areas that help learning. Students will be able to discover the richness of Arabic language particularly when they look for the equivalents in English. Sudanese students who are on the whole Arabic language speakers may find it useful to study the various possibilities for translating into idiomatic English. Examples:

مما يؤدي حتما الى Which will inevitably lead to……………

ايذانا بانتهاء announcing the end of……

لم يصب باذى he was not hurt, he suffered no injury, he sustained no injury

تأزمت الأوضاع the situations became critical

على أساس أن on the basis that/of………….

اسوة ب In the same manner as/ following the example of

الخلاف الحاصل أصلا the dispute already existing

In accordance with basic principles حسب الاصول

We shall spare no efforts لن نألو جهدا

We went there in the hope that……….ذهبنا الي هاك املا منا

In a state of complete preparedness, in full alert على أهبة الأستعداد

Those with great power and influence أهل الحل والعقد

سابق لاوانه Premature…..

Translators are primarily concerned with communicating the overall meaning of a stretch of language. To achieve this, they need to start by decoding the units and structures which carry that meaning. The smallest unit which we would expect to possess individual meaning is the word. Defined loosely, the word is 'the smallest unit of language

that can be used by itself' (Bolinger and Sears, 1968: 43). For our present purposes, we can define the written word with more precision as any sequence of letters with an orthographic space on either side.

Many people think of the word as the basic meaningful element in a language. This is not strictly accurate. Meaning can be carried by units smaller than the word. More often, however, it is carried by units much more complex than the single word and by various structures and linguistic devices.

10. INTRODUCING MORPHEMES

In order to isolate elements of meaning in words and deal with them more effectively, some linguists have suggested the term 'morpheme' to describe the minimal formal element of meaning in language, as distinct from word, which may or may not contain several elements of meaning. Thus, an important difference between morphemes and words is that a morpheme cannot contain more than one element of meaning and cannot be further analyzed.

To take an example from English, inconceivable is written as one word but consists of three morphemes: in, meaning 'not', conceive meaning 'think of or imagine', and able meaning 'able to be, fit to be'. A suitable paraphrase for inconceivable would then be 'cannot be conceived / imagined'. Some morphemes have grammatical functions such as marking plurality (funds), gender (manageress) and tense (considered). Others change the class of the word, for instance from verb to adjective (like: likeable), or add a specific element of meaning such as negation to it (unhappy). Some words consist of one morpheme: need, fast. Morphemes don't always have such clearly defined boundaries; however, we can identify two distinct morphemes in girls: girl + s, but we can't do the same with men, where the two morphemes 'man' and 'plural' are, as it were, fused together. An orthographic word may therefore contain more than one formal element of meaning, but the boundaries of such elements are not always clearly marked on the surface. More examples:

He had the greatest admiration for him أعجب به أي اعجاب

There is no comparison between them أين هذا من ذلك

To begin with ....بادئ ذي بدأ

It goes without saying من البديهي

The above theoretical distinction between words and morphemes attempts, by and large, to account for elements of meaning which are expressed on the surface. It doesn't, however, attempt to break down each morpheme or word into further components of meaning such as 'male' + 'adult' + 'human' for the word man. Furthermore, it doesn't offer a model for analyzing different types of meaning in words and utterances. In the following section, we will be looking at ways of analyzing lexical meaning which will not specifically draw on the distinction between words and morphemes. It is, nevertheless, important to keep this distinction clearly in mind because it can be useful in translation, particularly in dealing with neologisms in the source language.

11. CONCLUSION

Language is an expression of culture and individuality of its speakers. It influences the way the speakers perceive the world. This principle has a far-reaching implication from translation. If language influences thought and culture, it means that ultimate translation is impossible. The opposite point of view, however, gives another perspective. Humboldt's "inner" and "outer" forms in language and Chomsky's "deep" and "surface" structures imply that ultimate translation is anyhow possible.

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