

University frères Mentouri- Constantine 1

Faculty of letters and languages

Department of translation

Academic year: 2021-2022

Level: L1

Module: Introduction to Translation Arabic/English/Arabic

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Lecture 01: Key Notions of Translation

Lecture Objectives:

To familiarize students with the translation process and its underlying principles.

At the end of the lecture, students would be able to:

Recognize translation mechanisms in acts of communication

Define translation as a communication process

Identify the different steps the translation goes through

Understand the reasons behind the translator's decisions

Lecture prerequisites:

No particular competence is needed for this course, except for efficient knowledge of English and Arabic, the two languages used here as a medium of presentation and illustration.

At this level, the students are not required to translate, but just to observe translations and analyse its different realisations.

Definition of translation: a simple definition of translation would take translation process to mean a transfer of message(s) between texts encoded in different languages.

What is a text?

It is any stretch of speech or writing, which is seen to make a coherent whole. It can be a single word like the sign road “Stop” (قف) or a longer stretch of words that can even be the volume of a book (E.g. Tabari's Annals/ كتاب تاريخ الرسل والملوك لمحمد بن جرير الطبري).

Source text (ST): the text waiting to be translated. The original you are asked to translate.

Target text (TT): the translated text (the product of translation)

Source language (SL): the language of the source text.

Target language (TL): the language of the translated text.

Translation strategy: the translator's overall plan to solve translation problems s/he may face, and the decisions s/he takes accordingly.

Before rendering a translation, the translator needs to approach the text methodologically, answering basic questions like the following:

- What is the message content of the ST?
- What are the most important linguistic features of the text?
- What are its potential effect(s)?
- What genre does the text belong to (literary, scientific, philosophic, ...)?
- What audience is it aimed at? (Is it to be read by a specialist, a layperson, ...)
- What are the prominent functions of the text? (informative, persuasive, expressive, ...)

The translation process

Translation process can be seen to be made of two important steps, which take place simultaneously, but are defined here separately for ease of presentation. These are:

- Understanding ST
- Formulating TT

For understanding to be successful, the translator needs to use all his/her experiential baggage- knowledge, beliefs, suppositions, inferences, and expectations resulting from personal, social, and cultural life.

These are exactly the same elements involved in processing any piece of information we happen to read or listen to in our daily life. Thus, **translation reposes on a natural process of communication and the message delivered should be clear and coherent, based on a thorough comprehension and interpretation of the original.**

Types of translation

Roman Jakobson (1971) differentiates between three types of translation: intersemiotic, intralingual, and interlingual translation.

Intersemiotic translation: this is the type of translation we all seem to do in our everyday life without being aware of that. Intersemiotic means between semiotic systems. A semiotic system is a system of communication using signs as a means of expression. For example, the green light at a cross-road means “go”, and the red light means “stop” (when we see the green light and act by going, or when we see the red light and act by stopping, it means that we have translated the sign mentally and reacted accordingly). The clock-face is another example. The act of knowing the time by looking at the big and little hands of the clock is an instance of intersemiotic translation.

Intralingual translation: another kind of translation we seem to practice in our daily life, without realizing that we are involved with the same process, is the intralingual, which is a translation within the same language. This especially happens when we simplify a message for a person who finds the original text complicated. When a teacher reads a paragraph and explains it in the same language of its production but in plain words, s/he, in fact, is doing an intralingual translation. When you are reading a letter to your grandma, telling her the essential of the message and escaping circumstantial details (for eg, your uncle is arriving next month), you are doing intralingual translation. In this last example, the intralingual translation is called a **gist translation**, that is a translation summarizing the essential information and skipping details. Intralingual translation can also be **exegetic**, that is involving details or information not explicitly said in the original. In the example of the letter above, you may tell you grandma that your uncle is busy now and so you cannot expect his arrival before next month. This information might have not been stated clearly in the original, but just based on your personal inference. You are doing that because you are expecting your grandma to ask why waiting until next month. Therefore, you are adapting your message to the situation and to the receiver.

A balance between gist and exegetic translation is **rephrasing**. This is the attempt to reformulate the original message without omission or addition. However, this is not always easy to achieve.

Interlingual translation: interlingual translation is translation proper taking place between two different languages. This kind of translation, too, involves rephrasing, gisting and exegesis depending on the nature of the text and the purpose of translation.

Gisting is most likely to arise when the ST involves a high level of repetition of meaning, like in this example of a text in Arabic:

الشعر تعبير وتصوير لمشاعر الشعراء وأفكارهم سواء كانت التجربة واقعية أو من نسج خيال الشاعر . وفي كلتا الحالتين فإن التجربة صادقة، لأنها حتى ولو كانت التجربة غير واقعية- أي خيالية- فإن الشاعر يعيش فيها مدة طويلة قبل أن ينظم شعره يحس فيها نبضات قلبه ويشعرها تسري في دمائه.

Now consider the difference between the two translations below, where the second, more idiomatic, adopts gisting to some degree.

- (1) Poetry is an expression and description of the feelings of poets and their thoughts, whether the experience be real or from the fabric of the poet's imagination. And in both cases, the experience is true, because even if the experience is not real- that is, imaginary- the poet lives in it for a long time before he composes his poetry, sensing it in the pulses of his heart and feeling it flow in his blood.
- (2) Poetry is an expression of the thoughts and feelings of the poet. Whether the experience be real or imaginary, it is true in the sense that the poet has spent a great deal of time experiencing it internally before composing his poetry.

Exegetic translation can be found in the English interpretation of the Quran.

Consider the following example of the English interpretation of Surat al-Ikhlās by two different translators; the first is more exegetic in nature.

(1) In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

- 1- Say: "My God is one"
- 2- The cosmos is a manifestation of His eternal names, for He is mirrored in all things in a most subtle manner, and He is free from all wants and needs.
- 3- He does not beget or produce anything, nor He is begotten or produced by anything.
- 4- And there is nothing in the whole of the cosmos that can be likened to Him.

(2) In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

- 1- Say: He is God alone
- 2- God the eternal
- 3- He begotteth not, and He is not begotten

4- And there is none like unto Him.

Conclusion

Translation can be compared to an ordinary act of communication where the listener or receiver has to interpret the source message using his linguistic, cultural, social and world knowledge, then when he is required to transmit this message to another person, he has to consider all important factors (situation, function of the text, receiver's knowledge and expectation, etc) for the message to be understood and for communication to be successful.

Translator is not a parrot repeating words. He is a conscientious person understanding his role and taking decisions accordingly.

There are other types of translation we are daily involved in, and which go through the same process of cognitive interpretation: intersemiotic and intralingual. Interlingual translation is translation proper and it is the one involving two different linguistic systems (two languages).

References

Dickins, J; Hervey, S; and Higgins, I (2002). Thinking Arabic Translation. A course in Translation Method: Arabic to English. Routledge: London and New York.

DEGREES OF FREEDOM IN TRANSLATION

In the previous lecture, we introduced the notions of gist and exegetic translations, and we explained that while the first tends to produce a summary of the message focusing on just the essential, the second tends to add more details, which are normally not stated explicitly in the original.

Both gist translation and exegetic translation constitute degrees of freedom in translation. In the present lecture, we are going to see more degrees of freedom in translation. While some of these have justification to exist, others are just a source of weakness and should be avoided.

I- Degrees of freedom

1) Interlinear translation

This is a one to one correspondence to the source text (ST) without due consideration of the grammar of the target text (TT). When you read a translation of this kind, you just feel it is made by a machine. It is often hard to understand the produced text, unless you are a detective trying to work out clues from the text!

For example, the following colloquial Arabic proverb in English shows a interlinear translation:

ST: اللي فات مات

TT : The what passed died.

You see that the TT does not respect rules of the TL and it is just a structural imitation and a substitution of vocabulary of the ST.

2) Literal translation

In literal translation proper, the denotative meaning of words is taken as if straight from the dictionary (i.e. out of context), but TL grammar is respected. It often involves grammatical transpositions, that is to say, changing of word class or of word order to meet the requirement of the target language (TL). For example, الطقس بارد is translated « it is cold ». The word طقس disappears in the TT and is replaced by the dummy subject “it”. Literal translation is often deliberately produced in area of direct correspondence between SL and TL.

3) Free translation

Here, there is only a global correspondence between the textual units of the ST and those of the TT. A possible free translation of the colloquial Arabic proverb **لي فات مات** discussed earlier, would be ‘Let bygones be bygones’. Here, the grammar is completely different, and the metaphor of ‘dying’ is lost. Similarly, a free translation of the proverb **يوم لك ويوم عليك** might be ‘You win some, you lose some’; here, the grammar and vocabulary are completely different. This free translation is responding to the requirement of the TL. We cannot translate those proverbs literally.

4) Communicative translation

These examples of free translation are themselves examples of communicative translation. A communicative translation is produced, when, in a given situation, the ST uses an SL expression standard for that situation, and the TT uses a TL expression standard for an equivalent target culture situation. ‘Let bygones be bygones’ is an obvious translation of **لي فات مات**, and, in some situations at least, would be a must. This is true of many culturally conventional formulae that do not invite literal translation. Public notices, proverbs and conversational clichés illustrate this point:

ممنوع التدخين	No smoking	Public notice
ضرب عصفورين بحجر واحد	To kill two birds with one stone	Proverb
لا شكر على واجب	Don't mention it	Conversational cliché

5) Idiomizing translation

By an idiomizing translation, we mean one that respects the ST message content but prioritizes TL ‘naturalness’ over faithfulness to ST detail; it will typically use idioms or familiar phonic and rhythmic patterns to give an easy read, even if this means sacrificing nuances of meaning or tone

The five degrees of freedom – as well as the rarely used interlinear translation – can be illustrated by the following translations of the phrase:

مثل هذه الأشياء عليها إقبال كثير الآن

Interlinear	Like these things to them demand much now
Literal	Such these things have much demand now.
Faithful	Things like these are in great demand now
Balanced	This kind of things is in great demand at the moment
Idiomizing	This type's all the rage.
Free	This one's dead trendy./

II- Equivalence and translation loss:

1) Equivalence

Descriptive equivalence (a one-to-one correspondence)

ممنوع الدخول Forbidden is the entrance

مع السلامة With the well-being

Prescriptive equivalence (canonical target language rendering)

ممنوع الدخول No entry

مع السلامة Good-bye

The dangers in the normative use of the term ‘equivalence’ is to imply ‘sameness’, as it does in mathematics for instance. In mathematics, an equivalent relationship is objective, indisputable and reversible. In translation, however, such reversibility is unthinkable for any but the very simplest of texts – and even then, only in terms of denotative meaning. To test this try to make a back translation of simple sentence to discover that the result is not always identical to your first original.

ST: هل أعجبتك الرحلة؟

TT: Did you like the journey?

Back translation: هل أحببت الرحلة؟

To think of equivalence as total sameness may be counterproductive. It is more realistic, and more productive, to realize that because SL and TL are fundamentally different, the transfer from ST to TT inevitably entails difference – that is, loss.

2) Translation loss

As the examples suggest, it is important to recognize that, even where the TT is more explicit, precise, economical or vivid than the ST, this difference is still a case of translation loss. Some writers refer to such differences as ‘translation gains’. It is certainly true that the following TTs, for example, can be said to be grammatically more economical, sometimes even more elegant and easier to say, than their STs. But these so-called gains are by the same token grammatical, phonic or prosodic failures to replicate the ST structures and are therefore by definition instances of translation loss.

ST	TT
Cross-eyed	أحول
Islamic jurisprudence	فقه
سيارة أجرة	Taxi

3) Translation by omission

The most obvious form of translation loss is when something that occurs in the ST is simply omitted from the TT.

Omission can occur for many legitimate reasons; the following are a few illustrative examples. Quite often, omission reflects the different ways in which Arabic and English link bits of text together (i.e. different patterns of cohesion). Arabic radio broadcasts, for example, often make use of the phrase . . . و هذا to introduce a piece of information related to the material that has gone before but takes the broadcast onto a new subtopic. Normally, the best translation of this in English is to simply miss the phrase out.

وانتهى النقاش بوضع خطة عمل على المدى البعيد. هذا وكان الرئيس قد شدّد على ضرورة احترام الإجراءات الأمنية.

The discussion was concluded by the adoption of a long-term plan of action. The president insisted on the importance of respecting security measures.

Similarly, one often finds the phrase جدير بالذكر (or ومما يجدر ذكره) at the start of paragraphs in Arabic newspapers; this can be regarded as a signal in Arabic that what comes next is background information to the main argument. Again, one would normally not expect this to be translated in an English TT.

وجدير بالذكر أن المفاوضات كانت قد فشلت فيما مضى.

Negotiations had failed before.

Another occasion for omission is when the information conveyed is not particularly important and adding it would unnecessarily complicate the structure of the TT. Consider, for example, the following extract from an Arabic newspaper :

كان الرئيس الأمريكي بيل كلينتون قد أكد مساء أول أمس...

Two days ago the American president, Bill Clinton, confirmed.....

In fact, it is not stylistically elegant to say: two days ago in the evening, the American president Bill Clinton...

Wherever omission reduces the specificity of the information regarding a particular person, thing, process, etc. that is being referred to, it is also a case of **generalizing translation**.

4) Translation by addition

Translation by addition is translation in which something is added to the TT that is not present in the ST.

Consider the phrase from a newspaper text about the Kosovo war of 1999:

منذ الهيمنة التركية .

Ever since the time of the Turkish hegemony

Ever since the days of Turkish hegemony

And not ever since the Turkish hegemony

In English, it is necessary to add ‘days of’ (or something similar) for the sentence to be correctly structured.

A similar example, which involves the specific context rather than general considerations of usage, is the following:

هو كاتم أنفاسه ومغمض عينيه عما يجري

This has been translated as:

He was holding his breath and had closed his eyes to what was going on around him.

The translator added ‘around him’ which was stated in the original because it seems that the structure in English requires that.

Wherever addition provides further specification regarding a particular person, thing, process, etc. that is being referred to, it is also a case of **particularizing translation**.

5) Controlling translation loss

As we have suggested, translation loss is an inevitable consequence of the fact that languages and cultures are different. Given this, the challenge to the translator is not to eliminate it but to control and channel it by deciding which features, in a given ST, it is most important to respect and which can most legitimately be sacrificed in respecting them.

Everything depends on the purpose of the translation and on the role of the textual feature in its context. Sometimes a given translation loss will matter a lot, sometimes little. Whether the final decision is simple or complicated, it does have to be made, every time, and the translator is the only one who can make it.

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MCIL1 / Introduction to translation Arabic/English/Arabic

TRANSLATION STRATEGIES

INTRODUCING VINAY AND DARBELNET'S TRANSLATION PROCEDURES

Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Understand the difference between languages in expressing the same meanings and the limitations of a given language in rendering some expressions in some situations.
- Identify the different linguistic procedures applicable to some translation difficulties.
- Apply these procedures in translating sentences of varying difficulties.

Vinay and Darbelnet's translation strategies

Vinay and Darbelnet identified two types of translation strategies: direct and oblique. They argued these strategies are subdivided into seven procedures: borrowing, calque, literal translation, transposition, modulation, equivalence, adaptation. The first three are direct, the last four are oblique.

- 1- **Borrowing:** this is used when a SL word is transferred as it is in the TL because no equivalence is available in the TL. Some of the borrowed items become part of the vocabulary of the TL. For example, menu, coup d'état, café, alcohol, sheik and Islam which were brought from French and became part of English. Similarly, Arabic words such as *سوبرماركت*، *تكنولوجيا*، *ايميل* were borrowed from English. And many words were borrowed from Arabic to English, such as cotton, falafel, algebra, sheriff, Mujahidin, Fedayeen, caliph, sheik, halal. This borrowing has the advantage of preserving the same connotations used in the SL.
- 2- **Calque:** this is a special kind of borrowing used when a SL expression is transferred with minimum adaptation. It is of two types: lexical calque and

structural calque. In lexical calque, the lexical item in the ST is transferred into the TT without any change in the structure of the TT; for example, translating the English expression ‘compliments of the season’ into French as ‘Compliments de la saison!’ and ‘pomme d’Adam’ into ‘Adam Apple’ or translating ‘Secretary General’, into

الأمين العام and ‘life is a journey’ into الحياة رحلة. Other examples include:

Cornerstone حجر زاوية

Feedback التغذية الراجعة

Play a role as يلعب دورا

In structural calque, a new structure is introduced into the TL, translating the ST lexicons literally. For example, translating the English expression ‘Science fiction’ into French as ‘Science fiction’. In this example, the English structure is introduced into the French language. Structural calques rarely exist between English and Arabic because of the discrepancy between the two linguistic systems.

- 3- **Literal translation:** this is a word-for-word translation which occurs mostly between close languages and cultures or when there is a direct correspondence between ST and TT elements in the two languages. For example, ‘I love travelling’ as انا أحب السفر .

When these procedures of direct translation fail to give an adequate translation, we have to resort to oblique translation. Procedures of oblique translation are the following:

- 4- **Transposition:** this implies changing the word class without changing the meaning. Transposition is of two types: obligatory and optional. Obligatory transposition is sought when the TL does not allow anything other than a specific form. For example, the French expression ‘Dès son lever’ must be transposed into the English expression ‘As soon as he gets up’. This is the only permissible form in English. Another example is when translating ‘استغربا’ into “find strange”. Optional transposition occurs when we have a choice between two or more possibilities. For example , الذين يؤتون الزكاة , as it can be translated as ‘zakat payers’ or ‘those who pay zakat’.
- 5- **Modulation:** this happens by changing the semantics and point of view expressed in the SL. Similarly to transposition, there are obligatory and optional modulations. An example of an obligatory modulation is the phrase, ‘The time when’, which must be translated into French as ‘Le moment où’ (literally: ‘the moment when’). By contrast, optional modulation turns a negative SL expression into a positive TL expression. Other examples of modulation are the French phrase ‘peu profond’, which may be translated into English as ‘shallow’; ‘lend me your ears’, which can be translated as اعطني اذني ; ‘a piece of cake’, which can be translated as امر هين او سهل ; انتباهك ; the

translation of 'ups and downs' as تقلبات الحياة ; and translating 'you are going to have a child' as ستصبحين أما.

- 6- **Equivalence:** is a strategy whereby different stylistic or structural means are used by the SL and TL, respectively, as in idioms and proverbs. Equivalence mainly comprises a fixed phraseological repertoire of idioms, clichés, proverbs, nominal or adjectival phrases and so on. For example, the French proverb 'Il pleut à seaux/des cordes' is an equivalent to the English proverb 'It is raining cats and dogs' Other examples are شئت أم أبيت , which can be translated as 'willy nilly', and 'let things slide', which can be translated as دع الأمور تجري في أعنتها.
- 7- **Adaptation:** it is the changing and/or explaining of cultural differences between an SL and a TL. This strategy is employed to create situational equivalence. For example, the English 'hello' can be adapted to be assalamu alikum in Arabic, instead of its linguistic equivalent أهلا. This strategy is frequently used in translating literary work. It is also used in translating movies. For example translating swear words (e.g. 'fuck', 'damn') as اللعنة. Also, translating 'boyfriend' and 'girlfriend' as صديق و صديقة.

These strategies frequently overlap, as more than one strategy can be used within the same text or even the same sentence. For example, the translation of 'private' (as would be written on a door) by 'défense d'entrer' can be considered as a transposition, modulation, and equivalence. It is a transposition because the adjective 'private' is transformed into a nominal expression; a modulation because a statement is converted into a warning; and an equivalence since it is the situation that has been translated, rather than the actual grammatical structure.

Exercise: find out the different translation procedures used in the translation of the following passage:

- 1) The principles guiding the development of information technology and systems within the federal Government are contained in a 'Federated Architecture Program' run by the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat. The Committee is, however, concerned that the child parliament project is run by civil society and therefore is not provided with adequate support, especially financial support, to enable the programme to be sustainable.

ترد المبادئ الموجهة لتطوير تكنولوجيا المعلومات ونظم المعلومات داخل الحكومة الاتحادية في البرنامج الاتحادي للبنية الأساسية الذي يدير شؤونه مجلس الخزانة التابع لمجلس الوزراء الكندي.

ومع ذلك، تشعر اللجنة بالقلق لأن المجتمع المدني هو الذي يدير مشروع برلمان الطفل ولا يحظى من ثمّ بالدعم الكافي، لا سيما الدعم المالي، لضمان استمراره.

(2) وسلمى- سلمى الجميلة العذبة قد ذهبت إلى ما وراء الشفق الأزرق ولم يبق من آثارها في هذا العالم سوى غصات أليمة في قلبي وقبر رخامي منتصب في ظلال أشجار السرو. فذلك القبر وهذا القلب هما كل ما بقي ليحدث الوجود عن سلمى كرامه.

...and my beloved, beautiful Selma is dead and nothing is left to commemorate her except my broken heart and tomb surrounded by cypress trees. That tomb and this heart are all that is left to bear witness of Selma.

3) Translate the following sentences, saying which of the above procedures have you been using.

- There is a big living room in my house.
- Nadia is a true friend.
- They have two ranch hands, who do everything in the ranch.
- I don't see eye to eye with my father on many things.
- Birds of the same feather flock together.

- أنت بحاجة إلى تمارين رياضية لتستعيد لياقتك البدنية.
- الصلاة ركن أساسي في الإسلام.
- لم يعر أي اهتمام للموضوع.
- لا فرق بين عربي أو أعجمي إلا بالتقوى.
- انطلق الآن!

Reference :

Noureldin Abdellal (2020) : Translation between Arabic and English: A textbook for students and educators. Palgrave Macmillan