

Translation Problems Facing Fourth Semester Students of English

In Translating Scientific Texts from English into Arabic– a Case Study

Abstract

This study aims to investigate the problems encountered by Libyan students at university level in translating scientific texts from English into Arabic. Fifteen students studying at Department of English, Faculty of Arts, University of Zawia were asked to translate a scientific texts. The students' translations to the text were analysed and evaluated to identify: the problem in translating the items concerning order and sequence (clear and unclear), translation (under translation, complete translation and over translation). The obtained results revealed that students have encountered difficulties in translating a scientific text.

ملخص الدراسة:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على المشاكل التي يواجهها الطلاب في الجامعات الليبية في ترجمة النصوص العلمية من الإنجليزية إلى العربية. طُلب من خمسة عشر طالباً يدرسون في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بكلية الآداب جامعة الزاوية ترجمة نصوص علمية. تم تحليل وتقييم ترجمات الطلاب للنص لتحديد: مشكلة ترجمة العناصر المتعلقة بالترتيب والتسلسل (واضح وغير واضح) ، الترجمة (حذف أو إضافة أو الترجمة الصحيحة). أظهرت النتائج المتحصل عليها أن الطلاب واجهوا صعوبات في ترجمة نص علمي.

Introduction:

Language is the greatest means of communication amongst people, who are brought closer to one another through the act of speech. Translation has played a significant role in all walks of life: from politics, to science and technology to religious activities. Translation has immensely affected the manner in which languages and literature continue to progress and is here defined as the process consisting of “reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source–language message, first in meaning and secondly in style” (Nida& Taber, 1969:12). Translation, then, is a process of constant search for the transfer of a message from source language (SL) into target language (TL), since “no two languages are identical, either in the meaning given to corresponding symbols or in the ways in which such symbols are arranged in phrases and sentences” (Nida, 2000:126). By concerning itself with the process of conveying a message from source language into target language, translation often undergoes many linguistic problems: lexical, syntactic, semantic, and stylistic. Hence, translation is a necessary process in this changing world as it helps in transferring meaning, concepts, and ideologies from one language into another one.

There are many types of translation and the main focus of this study is the scientific translation. Nida (1964) pointed out:

“ If... the translation of scientific texts from one language to another participating in modern cultural development is not too difficult, it is

not surprising that the converse is true– that translating scientific material from a modern Indo–European language into a language largely outside the reach of Western science is extremely difficult” (p.).

Scientific translators are often trained linguists who are specialized in fields, such as medicine, biology or chemistry. In translating a scientific text, , a translator has to first be able to convey the exact meaning of the original text, and furthermore comprehend the underlying concepts, thoughts, and embedded meaning of the text. According to Gasagrade (1954), to be a scientific translator one should have:

1. Broad knowledge of the subject–matter of the text to be translated.
2. A well–developed imagination that enables the translator to visualize the equipment or process being described.
3. Intelligence, to be able to fill in the missing links in the original text.
4. A sense of discrimination, to be able to choose the most suitable equivalent term from the literature of the field or from dictionaries. (p. 1954: 335–40)

Translators, thus, should be able to deliver the intended meaning written in the source language to the target language without changing the purpose of the source text at all (Waldorf, 2013).

This study aims to identify the translation problems facing fourth semester students at the Department of English of Zawia University in translating scientific texts from English into Arabic. To achieve this objective, the following questions are formed:

1. What are the difficulties that face students in translating scientific texts?
2. Which sentences are the most difficult to translate among the sentences of the three groups?

These questions are answered in this paper in an attempt to identify the possible reasons behind the translation problems, and suggest remedial actions. Based on the initial investigation of the issue it is hypothesized that many students face source text comprehension problems, rendering problems and target text revision problems. It is also hypothesized that these problems are due to low competence in English language reading comprehension, lack of adequate knowledge and practice of translation methodology, and low competence in Arabic.

Literature review:

There are many different translation strategies, most of which are based on equivalence. The concept of equivalence is a central and controversial issue in translation. It has been studied by various theorists (cf. Jakobson 1959, Catford 1965, House 1977, Nida and Taber 1982, Newmark 1988, Vinay and Darbelnet 1995 and Baker 1992). Scientific translation has been discussed by many scholars,

but few studies deal with how scientific terms are translated into Arabic. El-Shami (2010) discusses the translation of prefixes and suffixes in the scientific terms.

Whereas Ahmed Adel Nouri, (2011) investigated the errors made by Iraqi students at the university level in translating a scientific text from English into Arabic. The study was conducted on 66 students, who were given a scientific text to translate into Arabic. It was then analysed according to a special scheme to show the problems in translating the items concerning order and sequence (clear and unclear), translation (under translation, complete translation and over translation), and accuracy (little and numbering). The results of this study show that the students made errors and faced some difficulties in translating text because many of them depended on the use of general-purpose dictionaries rather than specific scientific dictionaries. According to Peter Newmark's translation theory (1988, 1991), there are two kinds of translation: communicative translation and semantic translation. Semantic translation focuses on replicating the source text forms within the target language. It denotes formal correspondence between the source text (ST) and the target text (TT). It focuses on the phonetic, morphological and lexical structure of the text, based on the syntactic and semantic characteristics of the TT. According to Corder (1981:45), error analysis has theoretical and applied purpose. The theoretical purpose serves to explain what and how a learner learns when she/he studies a second language.

The applied purpose serves to enable the learner to learn more efficiently by exploiting our knowledge of her/his dialect for pedagogical purposes. Furthermore, error analysis shows where students face difficulty in translation and where that error might be grammatical, structural, semantic, or stylistic

The study:

Context and Participants:

This study took place at the Department of English, Faculty of Arts, University of Zawia. The Department of English is divided into the Division of Translation and Linguistics. The Division of Translation is considered the most recent and there are fewer students than the Division of Linguistics.

The students who participated in this study were fourth semester students. Whose ages range between 20 and 21 years, and one of the requirements of this chapter is to study the translation of scientific texts and some courses for the study of translation, such as studying translation theories, studying English grammar and others. The Students who have taken the examination are expected to become translators in the future.

Data Collection:

To achieve the study aims and test the study hypotheses, a sample of 15 students were asked to translate a scientific text with average difficulty from English into Arabic. The text was given as part of a formal exam so as to ensure the students' best efforts would be

applied. . Students' translations were investigated to identify recurrent problems, which were analysed and classified.

Results and Discussion:

The following sections are devoted to present and discuss the results of this study.

Below are two sentence examples and their translation:

ST: Sleep plays a significant role in the consolidation of memories.

TT1: النوم يلعب دورا هاما في تعزيز الذكريات

TT2: الليل يؤدي الى الذاكرة السيئة

As an example (TT1), it is noted that the students failed to give adequate translation, and although source text is identified as a nominal sentence it was translated into a nominal one which is incorrect. The translator should have the necessary knowledge to realize that the preferred word order in Arabic is verbal sentence, but this translation is considered better يلعب النوم دور مهم في تنشيط الذاكرة

In example two (TT2), the student translated the sentence in a different way, which led to the opposite of meaning and great ambiguity in the translation when he described the night as a cause of weakness in memory, and in this case gave the incorrect response which would a drastically impact the results of scientific research.

Baker (1980) states that different grammatical structure in ST and TT may cause remarkable change in the way the information or message is carried across. Change may induce the translator either

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to add or to omit information in the TT because of the lack of particular grammatical devices in the TT itself.

Table1 presents the students' error in translations showing the frequencies and occurrence percentage within the group studied. Then the distribution of the test results is summarized in Table 2.

| The sentences | Students translation | N | % |
|---|---|---|-----|
| We use faxes to send message. | نحن نستخدم الفاكسات لي ارسال الرسالة | 6 | 40% |
| Automated flight following is an on line government application. | تحليق مؤتمت يتابع تطبيق حكومي على الهواء | 4 | 27% |
| hemangioma is a usually benign vascular tumour derived from blood vessel cell types. | الورم الوعائي هو ورم وعائي حميد عادة مشتق من أنواع خلايا الأوعية الدموية. | 5 | 33% |
| the false promise of DNA testing | الوعد الكاذب لي اختبار الدنا | 6 | 40% |
| get started withyour pixel phone | ابدا باستخدام هاتفك البكسل | 9 | 60% |
| Hitzero with superhuman and you will see a dreamlike landscape. | هيتيرو فوقالبشرية الخارقين وستشاهد منظرًا يشبه الحلم. | 4 | 27% |
| Total | 15 Students | | 100 |

Table1: Analysis of the students' errors in translation.

| Section | N | Subsection | % |
|--------------------|---|----------------------------------|-----|
| Order and sequence | 6 | Clear | 40% |
| | 9 | Unclear | 90% |
| Translation | 5 | Under translation | 33% |
| | 4 | Over translation | 27% |
| | 6 | Complete and correct translation | 40% |

Table 2: Distribution of the test items:

According to the errors made in the items above, the order is arranged according to its difficulty in translating as summarised below:

1. Translation: There were (4) answers incorrect out of (15) answers, where the text was translated and included more information than was required from the original text; there were (6) answers correct out of (15) answers, where the students did not add or [disregard/ignore/delete] any information from the original text; Under Translation: there were (5) answers incorrect out of (15) answers, where the student [ignored/ disregarded/ deleted] some information from the original text.
2. Order and Sequence

- a. Clear: There were (6) answers correct out of (15) answers, where the students translated the sentences in the text with clear order and sequence.
- b. Unclear sequence: There were (9) answers incorrect out of (15) answers, where the students did not commit to translation of the sentences in the text in order and sequence.

Students failed to give the correct translation, either by adding a meaning not present in the original text or by omitting a meaning, as well as students' errors in the arrangement and sequence of the original sentence.

Conclusions

The findings obtained from the paper investigated the challenges facing fourth semester students studying at Department of English, Faculty of Arts, University of Zawia while translating scientific text from English into Arabic. The obtained results reveal that the 50% of the students made errors in comprehending lexical items. Furthermore, translation problems related to a lack of knowledge and practice of translation techniques, as well as failure to check and edit their translations were amongst the findings. As a remedial action, students are encouraged to acquire the skills necessary to use both monolingual and bilingual dictionaries. To translate scientific text, first a translator has to have a satisfactory scientific background that allows her or him to play with the terminology without changing the meaning of the text. Moreover, attending lessons in translating

scientific texts is significant for students and the unsatisfactory students' performance could be due to the students only attending limited lessons at their fourth semester of study in translating such kinds of texts. This causes lacking comprehension of the meanings of certain words. More practical lessons and opportunities to practice scientific translation are highly recommended in order to enhance their skills and performance.

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