

Some Translation Problems face Students to translate from English into Arabic

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Abstract

This paper aims to describe s the concept of translation, the significance of translation and some problems which the students are facing during the process of translation. It is known that translation is important as a source of diffusion of knowledge of every kind. Knowledge of the target language is crucial for successful English Arabic translation. The ability to choose the correct translation technique is an indispensable skill; therefore it is essential for translation students to be aware of why a particular technique is used. It is obvious that translation subject is not easy for students to learn because they are suffering from the weakness of word equivalents, grammatical problems, sentences structure, collocations, proverbs and translating idioms. The problems of translation make the students take time more than the usual in translating the texts because of the difficulties that they face in their translation make them unable to do the job easily.

1. Introduction

English language becomes famous and familiar during the last century. Teaching English as a foreign language is very important not like the other language because it essential in different areas of live, such as business keeping up with the technology and so on. Translating from one language to another is useful because translation "takes place in the context of the relations between two cultures, two worlds of thought and perception"(Delisle, 1988: 74). Furthermore, teaching and learning translation subject is important to people who do not speak the same language, or they are not from the same speech community to communicate effectively. Translation is considered as a remedy for such communicational problems. Translation is "the process of transferring a written text from source language (SL) to target language (TL)" (Hatim & Munday, 2004: 6). This paper presents the difficulties that face students to translate English texts into Arabic and vice versa. Differences between languages are not only related to the linguistic system, but involve differences in the speakers' interpretation and understanding of the world they live in (Abdul-Fattah,

2001). Moreover, it also offers solutions of some translation problems in order to help students to translate well.

2. Understanding Translation Problems

The term translation itself has several meanings: it can refer to the general subject field, the product or the process. The process of translation between two different written languages involves the translator changing an original written text in the original verbal language into a written text in a different verbal language (Bassnett, 2002). Throughout the process of the translation, the students may encounter some problems which may hinder them to translate any text from one language to another. Newmark (1988:05) argues that translation "is rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way that the author intended the text." Translation is an important subject for students to learn because it is considered as the principle means of communication between people who do not know the language of each other. "A translation problem is any difficulty we come across at translating, that invites us to stop translating in order to check and recheck, reconsider or rewrite it, or use a dictionary, or a reference of some kind to help us overcome it and make sense of it" (Ghazala, 1995:17). Although translation is always possible, it may for various reasons not have the same impact as the original" (Newmark, 2003: 6).

2.1. Lexical problems

The literature shows that one of the most difficulties which encountered university students is lexical problems. This difficulty occurs during the translation process to find the equivalence of some lexical items (Zagula, 2003). The students may not find the equivalent word, also they may be confused in the first time because of some words have many meanings, that lead to the confusion of selecting the exact equivalent. Therefore, students should look for the context of the translation, also "these problems occur when a word, phrase or an expression is not understood clearly and directly, misunderstood not known at all to students, or not found in standard dictionary"(Ghazala, 1995:19). The following are the most important lexical problems; literal translation, polysemy and monosemy, collocations problems, idioms, word order and solutions are discussed below.

2.1.1. Literal translation

During translation process, literal translation is one of the difficulties that the university students confront, which refers to several causes."In literal translation proper, the denotative meaning of words is taken as if straight from the dictionary (that is out of context), but TL grammar is respected.

Because TL grammar is respect, literal translation very often unavoidably involves grammatical transposition"(Dickins et al, 2002:16). Moreover, this kind can concentrate more and more on the surface structure rather than the content, it defined as the following; it is a "method in which the translator focuses more on the form not on the content"(Ibid: 2002: 04). Moreover, words are used together in special combination, texts and contexts. It means that the words cannot work in isolation. These words keep their direct literal meaning, even when they occur with one another. However, literal translation is sometimes possible and acceptable.

Synonymous

Translation of synonymy is another difficult issue face the university students. It means the sameness. "Synonym is the sameness, or the similarity of meaning between two or more words, such words are described as synonymous, or synonyms, for example "Big", "large" and "huge" are synonyms "Ghazala, 2008:89). A word or a sentence has more than one equivalent. Students confused in choosing the suitable equivalent word because it is hard task for them to choose the precise one during the translation. Some examples show synonymous difficulties are presented below:

- "He is angry." (هو غاضب)
"He is annoyed." (هو متضايق)
"He is disturbed." (هو منزعج)
"He is inconvenient." (هو غير مرتاح)

It is obvious from the examples above that there are different words in English and one word in Arabic. This proved that students can not find the precise synonymous word in Arabic. This can be described as the precision of translation, however, "the problem for the students is that it is a hard task for them to find the precise synonymous word in Arabic" (Ghazala, 2008: 92). The suggested solution for this problem is that:

- Students have to distinguish the precise synonymous word in Arabic.
- Distinguish the general level of the meaning of the word and translate it.
- To translate any word in the same lexical set into the general name.

Polysemy

It means the word has more than one meaning. For example, the word "break", it has many meanings. The students may know "يكسر" as the common meaning of the word "break". Here "break" is as a verb, but "راحة"

is also means break in English. These more different examples about the word “break”: “Some people break the law”, its translation is “يخرق بعض الناس القانون”. This is another example for the word “break” “علينا التوقف من اجل الغداء” in English, “We must break for lunch”. However, students should know the different meanings of the word and should know if the word is a verb or s noun etc (Hatim& Munday, 2004). The differentiations of meanings of one word make problems for students when translate. To overcome these problems of translation polysemic word, students can use the following points:

- Students are required to bear in mind that there are some words have several meanings, which makes it difficult to translate it into its common meaning.
- The type of the text is another good quid to students. For example, in a text about birds, the word “sound” is likely to have its common meaning “صوت”. Also in a passage about phonetics “sound” is the meaning of “صوت”, in geographical texts, rivers, seas, etc. “sound” is not expected to have the meaning of (صوت), but rather something geographical.
- The context can also be decisive in guessing the more likely meaning of a polysemous word. The context means that, we must look at the preceding and following sentences, or clauses. Moreover, the general context of the whole text should be also taken into consideration.

2.2. Problems of Translating Collocations

A collocation is the way words combine in language to produce natural-sounding speech and writing. It is considered as a combination of words in a language that happens very often and more frequently that word happened by chance. Collocation is "an occurrence of one word in close proximity with another. 'Pretty' and 'handsome', for example, have a shared sense of 'good Looking'" (Baker,1992:71). For example, in English you say strong wind but heavy rain, it would not be normal to say heavy wind or strong rain. Collocations are very important in language, they play a vital role. The main problem for the students is to find the proper Arabic equivalent collocation, especially that the collocations are existing in the English language, another problem in translating collocations is understanding them very well as fixed expressions in Arabic language. Therefore, students should to attend seriously to them. The main problem for students is to find the suitable and correct Arabic equivalent collocation.

Moreover, Ghazala (2004) states that although translating collocations is a very interesting part or task of the translator's job, it is actually a challenging and demanding one. Rabeh (2010: 4) found that Arab students made grave mistakes in translating collocations, and that there were two reasons for such mistakes. "First, students adopt literal translation as the main translation method. Second, students do not give enough importance to collocations which belong to another culture and language." According to Benson (1985), there are several types of collocations. The classification of these types is pure grammatical, depending on the grammatical groupings of word classes according to their occurrence together in language use. The adoption of grammatical description makes the structure of collocations easier to follow, understand, and hence, easy to translate. These are some of the important collocations problems and some suggested solutions:

2.2.1. Adjective + noun collocations

Most of the following examples can be found in both English and Arabic, usually these collocations are translated into identical Arabic collocations (noun + adjective).

Examples:

- "black market" (سوق سوداء)
"idle talk" (كلام فارغ)
"Warm reception" (استقبال حار)

Many examples can be found in both English and Arabic for this most popular type of collocation. Usually, these collocations are translated into identical Arabic collocations (Noun+ adjective) as the examples show. This is possible in most cases, and students should be encouraged to do their best to find the equivalent collocation in Arabic (Ghazala, 2004). However, there are collocations in English which do not have identical ones in Arabic:

Examples:

- "peaceful death" (موت هادي)
"Good day" (يوم سعيد)
"Bad news" (اخبار سيئة)

The Arabic versions are not widely recognized collocations; they can be called semi- collocations, or just translations. The main problem for students is to find the proper Arabic equivalent collocations. At least, they just translate the collocation at hand correctly and suitably into Arabic. Moreover, special adjective-noun collocations are used to describe bad, inedible food.

Examples:

- “addled eggs” (بيض فاسد)
 “Bad milk” (حليب فاسد)
 “Putrid meat/fish” (لحم سمك فاسد)

These collocations pose some problems to students of translation into Arabic, because it is difficult to find Arabic equivalents for the English adjectives (Benson, 1985). The problem, here, is easy to overcome. The solution is simply to use the adjective (فاسد / فاسدة) with all kinds of bad food.

2.2.2. Verb + Noun Collocations

The central point here is to match certain verb with a certain noun in Arabic.

Examples:

- “Pass a law” (يسن قانونا)
 “Win confidence” (يكسب الثقة)
 “Pay attention” (يلفت الانتباه)
 “Exert an effort” (يبذل جهدا)

The central point, here, is to match a certain verb with a certain noun in Arabic (as the examples show). We usually say (يبذل جهدا) not (يقدم جهدا); (يكسب الثقة) not (يعلم درسا); (يلقن درسا); (يصنع يمرر قانونا) not (يسن قانونا) (يربح الثقة) The problem for students with these collocations is to spot the suitable verb in Arabic. They can translate them into their meanings: For example (يحزر انتصارا) instead of (يفوز); (يصدر قانونا) instead of (يسن قانونا); (يلفت الانتباه) instead of (ينتبه)

As for the grammatical structure of these collocations in Arabic, it is mostly a verb + noun (or a verb + an adj). Yet, few exceptions can exist:

Examples:

- “pay a visit” (يقوم بزيارة)
 “shake hands” (يصافح)

2.2.3. Noun + Noun Collocations

Examples:

- “brain drain” (هجرة الادمغة)
 “Death sentence” (حكم الاعدام)
 “Honey moon” (شهر العسل)
 “Essay bank” (بنك المعلومات)

These collocations usually have equivalents in Arabic, but with different grammatical structures. Two dominant structures are available in Arabic: (a) “noun + adjective” e.g. “State university” (جامعة حكومية)

2.2.4. Adverb + Adverb Collocations

Examples:

“wholly and heartedly“ (بالتمام والكمال)
 “Secretly and publicly“ (في السر والعلن/ سرا وعلانية)
 “willy nilly“ (رغم انفه /شاء ام ابى)

The three Arabic translations are collocations but have different grammatical structures. They are grammatically different from the English collocations.

2.2.5. Noun +Verb Collocations (names of sounds)

Examples:

“Bees buzz“ (دوي النحل)
 “Bells ring/ toll“ (رنين الاجراس)
 “Cats mew“ (مواء القطط)
 “Dogs bark“ (نباح الكلاب)

These collocations are not difficult to translate into Arabic collocations; the problem for the students is to be able to recognize the sound of the animal, insect or thing required in Arabic (Benson, 1985). The solution is to know the name of the sound in question in the target language which is possible for students. For example, using the word (الصوت) as a general word to describe the sound of anything is poor and unadvisable ("صوت النحل" صوت صوت "صوت الجرس", "القطط"). On the other hand, the grammatical structure in Arabic is "a noun + a noun" (i.e. genitive), not "noun + a verb" as in English. Yet, a noun and a verb construction are possible in Arabic if the context requires that. E.g.: 'I heard the dogs bark last night' (سمعت الكلاب تنبح ليلة امس).

2.2.6. Noun+ Preposition Collocations

Examples:

“A claim for“ (ادعاء ب)
 “A protest against“ (احتجاج على)
 “A pride in“ (تفاخر ب)

Predictable examples are not included, e.g.: “conversation about“ (حول / اقتراح يتعلق ب/ بخصوص) (محادثة عن); “a suggestion concerning“ (تقترح بالالفاظ) (تقترح ب). The students should beware of the direct translation of the preposition (Ghazala, 2004). We do not say in Arabic (تلاعب بالالفاظ) but (تلاعب بالالفاظ); (تفاخر ب) but (تفاخر في). The problem is to spot the suitable preposition after the noun in Arabic. This needs to be done regardless of the preposition in English. The solution is the students' increasing interest in Arabic prepositions, and their unusual use in context. The problem for students with these collocations is to understand them rightly as fixed expressions in Arabic. The solution is to exert some efforts to get the

appropriate translation in Arabic, bearing in mind the risks of direct translation. Usually, good dictionaries include such collocations.

2.3. Problems of translating special fixed phrases

According to the researcher experience as translator teacher, translating fixed phrases is one of the biggest problems that students face. Special phrases are phrases with special meanings which cannot be understood from the direct meaning of their words nor from their total meanings when taken together such as idioms and proverbs. A fixed phrase is a phrase which cannot be changed, interrupted or reversed. Baker (1992: 64) believes that "A person's competence in actively using the idioms and fixed expressions of a foreign language hardly ever matches that of a native speaker. The majority of translators working into a foreign language cannot hope to achieve the same sensitivity that native speakers seem to have for judging when and how an idiom can be manipulated." The following are some examples of idioms which can be translated directly and indirectly:

Direct idioms

Examples:

"A true friend does not stab the back" الصديق الحقيقي لا يطعن في الظهر

"You scratch my back and I scratch yours" كل وو كل

"He serves two masters" يلعب علي الحبلين

"Let us turn a new page" لنفتح صفحة جديدة

This kind of idioms is easy to translate for two reasons:

- Such idioms are favorable for the students as well as for some pedantic teachers. Therefore, their translation is interesting for both.
- The idioms of this kind have direct and indirect equivalents in Arabic.

Indirect idioms

Examples:

"How nice to remember your palmy days" ما اجمل ان تتذكر ايام العز

"My nice is so selfish. She is a dog in the manager" ابنة اخي انانية جدا.

انها لا ترحم ولا تدع رحمة ربي تنزل

"The two runners were neck and neck in the race" كان العداء ان جنباً الي

جنب في السباق

This kind of idioms is not easy to translate for students, because they are entirely indirect and cannot be understood from the direct, common meaning of the words (Abdul Wahhab, 2002). The problem will be clear for students when these idioms are translated literally and directly. Therefore, students

should be careful to translate any idioms.

2.4. Word order problems

The changing in the position of words and sentence's structure considered as one of the grammatical problems during the translation process, because what can be started with in one language, it could not in another language (Bahumaid, 2006). The word order in Arabic is sometimes different from that in English whose normal order is as the following:

In English: Subject – verb – object or complement.

In Arabic: There are two types:

Nominal word order: topic and comment. مبداء وخبر

- Verb word order: verb – subject or complement.

The literal word –for- word translation of English into Arabic by students results in an English word order of subject- verb- object or complement.

Examples:

“The sky was cloudy.” السماء كانت مليدة بالغيوم

“The students enjoyed their holiday.” استمتع الطلبة بعطلتهم

To overcome such these problems, in a verbal sentence, English word order should be replaced by the Arabic word order of: verb – subject – object or complement.

Generally speaking, possible solutions for the translation of English collocations into Arabic suggested by Ghazala (1995) when he stated that tracing the identical collocations in Arabic, if and when available. He added that in case that an identical collocation is not found in Arabic, a close collocation can be suggested. For example “straying sheep” is (غنم قاصية) but when students cannot get it, they can suggest a close alternative like (غنم (شاردة). Ghazala also suggested that a direct meaning should be translated into a direct meaning, and an indirect meaning into an indirect meaning in Arabic (especially the collocation of similes). For example, it is not advisable to translate “as swift as an arrow” into a direct meaning as

اسرع من لمح البصر اسرع من البرق (اسرع جدا), but into an indirect meaning as (اسرع من السهم).

Moreover, when students are unable to find a solution, they escape with a blind, direct translation which may result in a wrong, funny Arabic version. For example, “hard currency” is (عملة صعبة) but if it is translated into (عملة قاسية), it will sound strange and funny. Likewise, “brain drain” cannot be translated into (تصفية الادمغة) because it is unclear and may bring to mind irrelevant dimensions of meaning in Arabic.

2.5. Conclusion

The paper shows that each problem of translating from English into Arabic has its own way to be worked out according to its kind and text. The student has to find a solution of some kind of problems, in order to be able to continue his translating task, without finding solutions, one cannot translate. Lexical problems, problems of translation of collocations, solutions of collocations problems, problems of the translation of special fixed phrases, grammatical problems, word order problems and solutions were presented in this paper for professional development. Therefore, students are required to be extra sensitive, cautious, and highly interested in spotting the proper collocation in the target language when available. Using English language for students is essential to discover and correct their mistakes when they translate from English into Arabic and vice versa.

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