

Translation Competence and Linguisticskills

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الملخص

يتناول المقال موضوع الكفاءة الترجمية وأهمية اكتساب المهارات اللغوية بالنسبة للمترجم الذي يطمح لإنتاج ترجمة تؤدي المعنى الحقيقي الذي أراده الكاتب الأصلي للنص كما يحاول إبراز أهم الخصائص اللغوية التي تندرج ضمن المكونات اللسانية لكل لغة؛ نذكر من بينها الواقعية اللغوية؛ القدرة النحوية والمعرفة النصية.

ويسعى المقال أيضا من خلال تحليله لمهارات اللغوية إظهار الصعوبات التي قد تعترض المترجم الذي يفقد مثل هذه الإمكانيات في اللغة المصدر أو الهدف أو كلاهما.

Key words:

translation- translator- source language – target language- translation competence- bilingualism- linguistic skill- grammatical skill- pragmatic skill- textual knowledge- pragmatic- functional- communicative .

Abstract:

Translation plays a significant role in today's society. It has a multidimensional influence. It not only paves the way for global interaction, but also allows nations to forge interactive relationships that lead to further advancements and progress in different societal fields such as politics, economy, and medicine and so on...

The activity of translation has always had an outstanding and paramount status in all societies and has widely been practiced throughout history. Yet, in our rapidly changing world its role is becoming more and more crucial because of the motivation for knowledge sharing, cultural exchanges and intensification of international communication.

Hence, the phenomenon of translation has become fundamental. Be it for scientific, medical, technological, commercial, economic, legal, cultural or literary purposes. In fact, the most basic human communication depends heavily on translation. Hence, interest in translation is clearly justified.

Newmark defines translation as "a craft consisting in the attempt to replace a written message and/or a statement in one language by the same message and/or statement in another language." (1981:7)

Similarly, Mohammad Akbar expresses the importance of translation through the following words:

"Whatever we were to say about the critical importance of translation, we would never do it justice. In this context, we have nothing to do but to remember played by translators over the ages by translating sciences and knowledge among nations and peoples and their role in achieving civilizations and development for nations."

(2012: vii)

Accordingly, the discussion, in the present paper advocates the importance of translation competence for a correct and accurate rendering of any given material submitted for a translation task and the majorlinguistic skills that translators should possess to ensure a translation of quality that conveys the meaning of the source text author.

Translation competence is aindeed complex concept that has been advocated by a number of authors in the field of translation studies, among them Ezpeleta, who traced back it historical emergence and development as follows:

Reflection on the matter is a relatively recent development and results from empirical studies are still scarce. Some authors talk of translation abilities or skills (Lowe, 1987; Pym, 1992; Hatim and Mason, 1997) while others refer to translation performance (Wilss, 1989). The term competence - translational competence - was first used by Toury (1980, 1995), because of its similarity to Chomsky's (1965) famous distinction between linguistic competence and performance, to explore certain aspects of translation practice. Nord (1991) employs transfer competence and Chesterman (1997) called it translational competence.

(2005: 136):

Giuseppe Palumbo, in his turn definestranslation competence as the skill to translate a text or a sentence or a word from one language into another. This competence tended to be equated with linguistic competence and no distinction was made between competence of professional translators and that of bilingual individuals with no specific training in translation. (2009:21)

Yet, in recent years, a great focus has been attributed to translation competence. The more specific areas of interest include the particular strategies adopted by translators in performing a given translation task; competence in using translation aids and researching vocabulary; development and implementation of translation routines including standard transfer operations leading to appropriate target language equivalents. (ibid)

Another definition of translation competence was given by Pacte, who claimed that it includes knowledge, skills and abilities, which considerably vary between individuals. (2000: 100)

Hence, according to the same author, translation competence comprises the followings: (idem 101-102)

- ✓ Bilingual Communicative Competence including linguistic, discourse and sociolinguistic competence.
- ✓ Extra-Linguistic Competence in both general and specialized knowledge.
- ✓ Professional Competence consisting of skills related to translation as a profession.
- ✓ Psycho-Physiological Competence including skills for reading and writing, memory, attention span, creativity, logical reasoning, intellectual curiosity, perseverance, rigor, a critical spirit, and self-confidence.
- ✓ Transfer Competence including the ability to achieve the transfer process from a source text to a target one including the ability to comprehend source text content and re-express it in the target language.

- ✓ Strategic Competence including the translator's ability to employ conscious and unconscious verbal and non-verbal procedures to solve potential problems encountered during the translation process.

According to Christina Schäffner and Beverly Adab translation competence can be judged on the basis of certain clearly defined objectives and needs, and that a highly competent translator is important to meet the rapidly evolving requirements of the professional environment. (2000: xiv) They also insist on the role of the university supposed to be the first responsible of the training of the student translator. It should also design programs and contents that meet the demands of translation as a profession. (2000: xiv)

Within the same context one should acknowledge that the study of translation is necessarily a study of language. Hence, translators are supposed to possess a competency to deal with two linguistic systems and associate between two different cultures. This implies that they are communicators of knowledge through two different linguistic systems; they are in other words, bilingual mediating agents between monolingual communication participants in two different language communities. (Bassnett-McGuire 1980:23)

“Since the 1980s definitions of the translation process have insisted on the linguistic and cultural context (source text) to another (target text), underlying how a translator manipulates and re-writes a text in order to make it available to another language reading public.”

(Eleonora Federici, Vanessa Leonardi 2013:18)

Translation should be perceived as more than a mere changing of a text from one language to another but as a substitution of a text form

including its lexicon and discourse type without affecting its meaning through the addition or substitution of a given lexical item; an act that would indeed distort its meaning.

To achieve this, the translator must possess a range of skills; we devote the present paper to discuss a major one related to linguistics.

Linguistic competence refers to the translator's ability to deal with two languages. It has been defined as the replacement of a material of a textual nature in the source language by an equivalent textual material in another language (target language). In other words, it is an operation whereby a text is substituted in one language for a text in another language. (Catford 1965:20)

Nida and Taber in their turn perceive the process as consisting in producing in the receptor language a closest natural equivalent to the message of the source language first in meaning and secondly in terms of style (1969:22). Most thinkers in translation studies agree that the degree of competence in the two languages has to be very high, and largely the same in the two languages involved in the process of translation.

Jakobson in his turn claims that a correct translation is the one that considers the linguistic aspect of translation, which consists of the interpretation of the verbal signs of a source text by means of equivalent verbal signs in another language. In this case, the translator must have a linguistic competence in both source language and target one. The translator is also required to have a good knowledge of the language peculiarities of both languages he is dealing with. (In Munday 2001:5)

Based on this, the linguistic skill implies that any given translation should reflect the translator's bilingualism. This view was claimed by Gyde Hansen, Andrew Chesterman, Heidrun Gerzymisch-Arbogast, who equated translation with bilingualism (2008:272). Hence, bilingualism occurs when a translator is able to use the two languages in such a way that s/he will be considered a native speaker in each of the respective speech communities.

Bilingual translators are supposed to be exceptional readers in the source language and exceptional writers in the target one. They should be able to read and comprehend a given text, and reproduce it in another language in such a way as to convey the original meaning in the most accurate way. They should also possess wide knowledge in its subject field with the abilities to render the meaning of the source text in the most accurate way. Furthermore, translators should possess skills which are the result of expert training in linguistics making them excellent readers in the source language and excellent writers in the target language.

Linguistic skills include pragmatic, grammatical, and textual knowledge. Levinson defines pragmatics as the relationship between structure and extra linguistic context. "It focuses on how linguistic expressions are encoded by their context" (Levinson 1983: 8). It is concerned with bridging between the meaning of sentences and the intention of the author of these sentences. This implies that the translator as a producer of a new text should first attempt to understand the source text author's intended meaning, and then attempt to create a target text which is equivalent to the source text and which has the same intended meaning and impact on the audience of the

source text. Thus, pragmatics implies a pre-analysis of a source text in terms of its situational context, within which its content was produced, including the knowledge and beliefs of the author and the relation between the author and translator.

Newmark defines the pragmatic aspect of a given translation through the translator's ability in rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way the author intended the text." (1988:5)

Claudia V. Angelelli and Holly E. Jacobson divide pragmatic competence into illocutionary competence and sociolinguistic competence. The first refers to the translator's knowledge of how both source and target languages perform different language functions. For example the functions of apologizing and complaining are expressed differently. According to the same authors the knowledge of this competence has an important role in the act of translation both in the pre-analysis of the source text as well as in the production of the target one. The illocutionary competence allows the translator to discern the specific genre of the source text and its primary objective. The importance of illocutionary competence lies in the fact that it helps the translator to reproduce the source text genre and its specific objective. (2009:34) sociolinguistic competence includes the translator's knowledge of both the source and target texts linguistic variations including dialects, national varieties and so on... knowledge of variation helps the translator in the interpretation of the source text and thus, comprehension of any cultural assumptions that may underlie any given source text. (Idem)

An illustration of a pragmatic difficulty includes the following example in which the translator is required to translate the expression *بارك الله فيك*, which is translated as blessing of God upon you. Although the statement expresses an act of greeting and thanking; it reflects the

tendency of the Arabic language to use formulas containing religious references. A fact that is not present in the English thanking conventions. A pragmatic difficulty may arise even when translating from French into English, specifically with the translation of the personal pronoun “vous” into “you”. The translator must consider the context of the utterance before deciding whether the formal or the informal “you” is more appropriate in the context of translation; a decision, which can be problematic for the translator.

Translation from such widely different languages as Arabic and English will inevitably involve various types of grammatical changes, which obviously reflect the nature of both languages, and makes of translation a complex decision making process. Popovic claims that decisions are imposed by the fact that the translator strives to reproduce a target that is as faithful as possible to the source text (1970: 80). The importance of the consideration of these changes from the part of the translator is his aspiration to ensure the production of a pragmatic, functional and communicative target text. (Venuti 2000:122)

Graeme Davis asserts that a pragmatic target text is the one that that plainly conveys facts through a full transmission of referential and conceptual concepts of the source text. (:219) He also adds that translation should be plain and non redundant with the use of explication when required. (Idem)

Maurizio Gotti expresses the importance of a functional communicative target text through the following words:

Translating means producing a target text in a lingaculture T (=target text) that is needed for specific communicative purposes by processing the information given in a previous text

Produced in different linguaculture S (=source text)
(2007:200)

He also claims that a translation is functional when it succeeds to fulfill the intended communicative purpose as intended by the original author or the commissioner in the translation brief. (Idem)

Nida assures that the grammatical changes in the process of translation are dictated by the obligatory structures of the receptor language (Nida 1964:167). Yet, as mentioned by Newmark automatic shifts are not always evident.

Claudia V. Angelelli and Holly E. Jacobson express the importance of grammatical competence in translation by saying that:

Clear grammatical competence plays a vital role in the act of translation....

Morphology (the way that smaller parts combine to form words), syntax (the way that words combine to form phrases and sentences), and graphemic (writing system) knowledge...
(2009:32)

The authors also emphasize on the importance of grammatical competence by referring to the fact that the translator's failure to understand the effects that syntax and morphology have on meaning can lead to incomplete or mistaken understanding of the text and the production of a difficult or misleading rendition in the target text." (Idem)

Deborah Cao claims that the grammatical skill refers to the mastery of the language code of source language and target language at a high level consisting of intimate knowledge of syntax, lexis, and semantic rules that determine sentence formation and the meaning of sentences in both source and target languages. (2007:42)

Among the grammatical issues that can be problematic for the translator, the place of the adjective in both English and Arabic. For example the compounding Cold war should be translated in Arabic الحرب الباردة. Yet, a translator who is unfamiliar with the Arabic place of adjective would translate الحرب الباردة as war cold.

Another example of an Arabic grammatical construction that can cause difficulties for the translator is the translations of the statement wars are destructive الحروب مدمرة. The Arabic statement contains two grammatical forms the noun الحروب and the adjective مدمرة; while in the English statement the verb is present. This requires that the translator should be familiar with the grammar of the two languages involved in translation.

Textual knowledge refers to the knowledge of the regularities and convention of texts' genres and text types. It is important for the translator to distinguish between the different types of texts as this helps him to identify the way in which the text can be translated. For instance, translating a text from an economic genre is different from translating a literary text or a poem. Having competence to distinguish types of texts is crucial for a translator.

Deborah Cao defines textual competence as follows:

“It includes the knowledge of the conventions for joining utterances together to form according to rules of cohesion and rhetorical organization... cohesion comprises was of explicitly marking semantic relationships it denotes the mastery of how to combine forms and meanings to achieve a unified texts in different genres by using cohesion devices to relate utterance forms and coherence rules to organize meanings.”

(2007:43)

The same author further adds that translation competence heavily relies on the translator's ability to comprehend rules and conventions in the source language and reproduce them in the appropriately according in the target language. (ibid: 43)

According to Lawrence Venuti textual competence consists of the ability to translate various non specialized genres and texts types (2017:34). The acquisition of translation competence is often regarded as a gradual and continuous process that is strongly influenced by the degree of complexity of the genres and text types the translator is required to translate. The greater the complexity of the text is, the higher the level of competence required of the translator will be.

Kelly claims that textual knowledge includes the capacity: to understand and analyze a range of different types of texts from different fields through a perfect respect of the characteristics and conventions of the text genres and sub-genres. (2002: 17)

Textual knowledge enables a translator to perceive the functioning of certain text genres in certain cultures. In case, the translator is not fully qualified in this regard, this can result in an inaccurate target text. In fact, the translator is an intermediary between the source text

author and the target text audience in another cultural setting. To avoid & mismatch between the source text and target one, which will probably result in a misunderstanding and dysfunction of the text being translated the translator must be textually qualified. This skill enables him to establish the status of the participants and their degree of authority on each have, infer and create the purpose of interaction, recognize and establish the context of the source and target texts, create and infer intentionality of the source text, have a thorough understanding of the socio-linguistic context and its thematic context.

Based on the previous claims, textual competence enables the translator to respect the genre and function of the source text and ensures a correct understanding from the part of the audience through the creation of an appropriate communicative situation. The difference between the linguistic skill and the textual one lies in the fact that the first emphasizes on the text type, genre and convention rather than the concept of language understood by the originator of the text and the receiver of the target text.

Inadequate conceptual knowledge will produce a disabled target text that does not convey the meaning of the original author of the source text.

To sum up the present article, one can say that translation should be perceived as more than changing a text from one language to another. Translators are in fact knowledge mediators responsible of the transfer of a given content from one language into another. The transposition does not concern the lexical level only but the discursive rank as a whole. Additionally, the transposition should in no way affect or change the meaning of the source text through an addition or distortion of

information. The process of translation should absolutely be carried without destroying the meaning of the source text and to achieve this the translator must have a translation competence to be fully qualified as translator.

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