Translation and Text Types

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Abstract

Language can function in different occasions; it can establish social relations and express one's mind and personality. The three major types in this paper are descriptive, social, and expressive functions of language. The paper also illustrates text classification. The aim of the texts is to convey information. Whether the texts are scientific, technological, commercial, geographical, historical, or philosophical, they are mainly informative.

1-The Functions of Language

Language is mainly used to communicate information; but this is not its sole function. It may also be used to establish social relations and to express one's attitude and personality (Lyons, 1977, 50). These three types of function are usually termed descriptive, social and expressive functions of language. The type of information encoded in

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texts, which serves the descriptive function of language is factual. It asserts or denies a state of affairs in external world or in a possible world, as logicians term it. For example, 'Tripoli is the capital of Libya' is descriptive statement. The second function of language, the social function, is to establish social relationships among the members of a language community. Thus a person not to convey factual utters 'Good morning' uttered by a person not to convey factual information 'This morning is good' but to establish amity between the speaker and the hearer. Expressions belonging to what Malinowsky calls 'phatic communion' (1953) serve a social function. Expressive utterances convey the third function of language; they convey the attitude of the speaker. This meaning therefore varies with the speaker. For example, the difference between the present simple and present progressive in the two following examples may be explained in terms of factual and expressive meaning:

1- Salem always works carelessly in the office. (factual)

2- Salem is always working carelessly in the office. (expressive)

(1) is neutral, it states factual information; it belongs to descriptive texts.

(2) on the other hand, conveys a certain degree of irritation on the part of the speaker. The\ speaker complains of Salem's behaviour. The text is expressive. This difference may be shown in an Arabic

translation by means of a lexical device since it is not grammaticalized in Arabic tenses.

1 a- قال: يعمل سالم في المكتب بإهمال دائما.

2a- قال شاكيا: يعمل سالم في المكتب بإهمال دائما.

some linguists combine the social and the expressive functions under the term the emotive function of language. Halliday uses the term interpersonal to cover the functions. He uses 'ideational' to refer to the descriptive function.

Buhler (1934) uses a different classification. Following Aristotle, he states that in a speech act someone says something to someone else. These three factors, the speaker, the external world, and hearer determine the function of what is said; whether the utterance is mainly directed towards the speaker, the hearer or the content. The terms used by Buhler are representative for texts oriented towards content, expressive for texts oriented towards the speaker, and vocative, for utterances directed towards the hearer.

Buhler's classification has been modified and extended by Jakobson (1960), who replaces appellative (vocative) by conative, which

emphasizes the instrumental the channel of communication and the poetic function. The first of these, language as code, refers to the metalinguistic function of language or the reflexive use of language. The channel of communication includes such expressions as greeting (Good morning), set phrases (Nice to meet you). Poetic function of language refers to the creative and artistic use of text.

The discussion above reveals that linguists disagree about the main functions of language. These classifications are more often arbitrary and the divisions overlap considerably. However It is true to say that a text often performs a number of functions and is not confined to just one function.

The function of a text is closely interrelated with its meaning. Thus a certain text may be said to have descriptive, or social meaning according to the dominant function of the text. The main functions of language may by related with the traditional dichotomy of form and content. The descriptive use of language stresses the content of message; whereas the expressive and the social uses emphasize the form of what is said. A text

typology may be achieved on the basis of these functions and their relation to form and content. Such topology will have relevance to translation. This is the topic of the next section.

2- Text classification

On the most general level texts may be divided into in formative and creative. Informative texts emphasize content and their main function is descriptive. They aim at conveying information to the reader. Scientific, technological, commercial, geographical, historical philosophical texts are basically informative, although historical and philosophical texts occupy a special position among informative texts. They often give equal importance to content and form. Philosophical texts are especially difficult to translate because they deal with ideas, concepts and beliefs which mean different things to different people.

Creative texts aim at achieving artistic or aesthetic effect rather than convey information. The main emphasis here is on form rather than content, although content may also be important. Creative texts include literary writings such as novels, plays, essays and poetry. Creative texts pose special problems for translators, since translation

equivalence is more difficult to achieve with regard to aesthetic value. There is one kind of texts which does not fit well in either of these two types, namely religious texts. For these texts both form and content may be of equal importance. The message expressed by a religious text is based on faith in addition to the information contained in the message, and the way this information is conveyed.

This paper is mainly concerned with the problems related to the translation of some texts such as scientific, commercial, journalistic, political, and linguistic.

3-Translation of scientific Texts

Biological, mathematical, medical and technological texts depend mainly on content and aim at conveying certain information to the reader. The way the content is expressed has a minor importance . The meaning of these texts consists basically of sense and reference; this is propositional meaning or descriptive meaning. The translator does not face any serious problem of form when he renders a scientific text from one language into another. The main difficulty in one of terminology. This can be a serious problem. Much

time and effort are spent by individuals and organizations including language academes on coining Arabic equivalents for the names of products and concepts imported from abroad. Often terms are coined and recoined and old terms which have gained some currency are replaced by new and 'more correct' once. Sometimes one feels that the process is endless. All these wasted efforts are based on misconception that linguistic signs should be logically related to their content (the referent). Those who are occupied with rendering sciences into Arabic 'often forget that the relation between a name and the thing to which it refers is arbitrary. The most efficient linguistic sign is that which is not tied up with its referent except by convention. Iconic signs, i.e. signs which are geometrically related to the things they name are not the best kind of terms. A good term is one, which gains currency; this means it is a name accepted by the people who use it. The Black Sea need not be 'black', it is a name agreed upon by those who use the name. The term 'atom' which comes form the Greek 'atoma' meaning the smallest unit of a substance was originally used with this signification in mind. Now it is used as a mere name, although it is now possible to spit an atom into smaller units. No one

objects to using the term 'atom' and suggests that it should be replaced by a 'more correct' term.

Misconception of the arbitrary nature of a linguistic sign is not the only cause which contributes to the aggravation of the terminological problem in Arabic. Underlying this problem is another equally serious related to the very nature of terms and language. Purists insist that before a new term is coined the translator should search into the vocabulary of the Arabic language in the hope of finding an equivalent for the foreign word. Only if such an equivalent is not found is the translator justified to coin a new word. Fairly well-established new coinages are sometimes attacked by critics who claim that they have found in 'older' Arabic a word which expresses the same conception expressed by the new coinage.

There are two misconceptions here; one related to the linguistic nature of a scientific term, and the other concerning the nature of language itself. First, the misconception related to scientific terminology. Every discovery of a product or an idea is like a new born baby; it needs a name. It is futile to search for an old Arabic term which means exactly

what the foreign term denotes. Any old Arabic term may be chosen and given a modern sense, since the relation between the term and the referent is basically arbitrary. There is no justification for wasting time and energy looking for an 'exact' Arabic equivalent of the foreign term or replacing a well-established term by a new one.

I turn now to the second misconception related to the nature of language itself. The translator is required to search thoroughly the vocabulary of the language before he is allowed to coin a new term. This view of language is erroneous; it views language as a product rather than dynamic process. It presumes that a language is a 'reservoir of words' tailored to fit new ideas and inventions, as that poet Hafiz Ibrahim says in his well-known and often quoted line: 'I am a sea whose depths are full of pearls; you may ask the diver about my valuable shells. ' The modern view of language, which may be traced back to some eighteenth century philosophers, namely Descarte, is that language is a mental ability which helps a person to say and comprehend utterances which he has not said or heard before. It is creative process which a person uses to express whatever situation arises. Vocabulary, unlike

grammar, is an open-ended component of language and it is not possible to search every word in it in order to look for a new term. The only restriction that should be observed in coining a scientific term is that it should follow the phonological and morphological rules of the target language. The condition for a successful term is that it is accepted by the user of the language: and thus it gradually becomes established. It is hardly necessary to state that the main characteristic of a scientific term is that it should have only one sense. Synonymy in scientific terminologies is misleading and results in confusion. It should be avoided at all costs: no two terms should mean the same thing or refer to the same object.

4- Translation of Commercial Texts

The basic objective of a commercial text is to convey information. Content here is of paramount importance. Form has a minor role; nevertheless it is important. Commercial texts developed a style of their own which is characterized by brevity, clarity and frequent use of abbreviations. Note the following example:

1. Please send the following items as specified below, c.i.f. and C.O.D, Benghazi, as quoted in your invoice No. 33/5 ،dated 7 August, 1996.

Item	Quantity	No. of item
T.V. set	*60*	3/213
VIDEO RECORDER	40	3/217
Vedeo Camera	30	3/221

Signed

Manager

Northern Stores Ltd

The major part of the above and other commercial writings consists of figures and abbreviations. Translating figures raises no problems, but abbreviations is another matter. The translator must know that c.i.f (cost, insurance and freight included in the price quoted) and C.O.D. (cash on delivery) are special commercial abbreviations which should be replaced by equivalent abbreviations in the target language. Some languages have not developed an adequate terminology of symbols. In this case, such abbreviations have to be rendered fully into the target language. Organization of commercial texts also requires especial attention.

Text (1) may be rendered into Arabic as follows:

. يرجى إرسال المواد المبينة أدناه بما في ذلك التكاليف والتأمين والنقل مشـــحونة إلـــى

بنغازي حسب قائمة الحساب رقم 5/33 في 7 أغسطس 1996 aميناء1.

رقم المادة	الكمية	المادة
213/3	60	جهاز تلفزيون / مرئى
217/3	40	مسجل فيدو
221/3	30	كاميرا فيدو

التوقيع :

مدير المخازن الشمالية المحدودة

5- Journalistic Texts

journalistic texts are like commercial texts in that their main function is to convey information. But the style of these texts is also important. The language of mass media has developed a special style, which often aims at conveying information in a thrilling or even dramatic way to attract the attention of the reader, or to influence the opinion of certain sections of the public or the ruling party. Such a style requires that certain aspects of new items be given special prominence. Headlines have also their own ways of attracting the attention of the reader. In English, informationally empty forms (including auxiliaries and articles) are usually deleted from headlines. Only semantically heavy words are retained. Furthermore, newspaper headlines normally use block language for two reasons: to give prominence to certain items which have much news value, and to save space. Here are some examples:

1. Interior Minister says everything under control.
2. Woman claims harassment by boss.
3. . French defeat unexpected.

The full forms would be:

1. a The Interior Minster says that everything is under control .
2. a A woman claims that she has been harassed by her boss.

3. a The French defeat has been unexpected.

Note also the use of the simple present instead of the present perfect. An adequate translation of journalistic texts requires that the conventions of the target language be observed. For example, Arabic has no auxiliaries, the articles are normally in headlines, the verb often appears either in the present (the imperfect (المضارعor in its infinitive form . (المصدر)

Examples (1)-(3) . would be rendered in Arabic as:

4. وزير الداخلية يقول إن كل شيء تحت السيطرة.
5. امرأة تدعي إن رئيسها يضايقها .
6. خسارة فرنسا غير متوقعة .

It should also be noted that the frequent structure used in Arabic newspaper headlines is SV rather than the unmarked VS, which is the unmarked pattern in other types or texts. (5) is specially noteworthy since it starts with an indefinite noun, which is not possible in an unmarked pattern.

6 Translation of Political Texts

political texts raise the problem loyalty and ideology. Political terms are probably the most controversial type of terminology. The reason for this is that the evaluative sense of a term is sometimes more important than its denotation. For example, there may be agreement about the denotation of the adjective 'liberal' when used for a kind of

behaviour characterized by non-commitment to a dominant political pattern. However, when it comes to the evaluative sense of this term, there is certainly much disagreement among different political systems of government. For some systems it might convey the sense of 'unpatriotic'; for other systems the adjective may have a favourable connotation, or at least a neutral sense. How can translator render such adjective into second language? All that can be done is translation of the denotation of the word. But as soon as the word is translated it acquires the evaluative sense of the ideology of the target language.

'Liberal' is not the only term which has a strong evaluative sense. There are many similar terms. In fact most political vocabulary gives priority to the evaluative connotation of a word. Here are a few examples. 'Democracy' does not mean the same thing in China and in Britain. This is also true of 'freedom', 'parliament', 'representation' and many other terms. Once a translator was asked what name he would use for the well-known town where the 'Solidarity Movement' started. Would he use Gdansd or Danzig? The translator replied: 'It depends on which side of the boarder you are living.' The use of one or the other of these two terms would betray the political ideology and loyalty of the speaker: pro-Germany for Danzig and pro-Poland for Gdansd. Even colours may acquire political shades. Red, green, black and white nay suggest different political or ideological hues.

The translator must pay careful attention to this aspect of political texts. Although the risk of mistranslation in political texts has often been exaggerated and bloody wars between nations have been

attributed to such mistakes; nevertheless pitfalls of political translation may be serious. To avoid such pitfalls, the translator should be familiar with the main political trends of the source culture and the target culture.

7 Translation of Linguistic Texts

Linguistic texts raise two main problems in translation: the first is related to object language and metalanguage distinction and the second concerns terminology. In linguistics we use one language to describe another. The language that is described is the object language and the language of description is metalanguage, For example:

1. the possessive determiners in English have corresponding possessive pronouns except 'its', which is rarely used as an independent pronoun.

In (1) English is used as metalanguage to describe English as object language. When this example is translated into Arabic, or any other language, the distinction becomes clear. Items belonging to object language are not translated:

2. جميع نعوت الإنجليزية لها ما يقابلها من ضمائر التملك في الإنجليزية سوى its فأن هذه الصيغة قلما تستعمل ضميراً للتملك .

In (2) the object language is English, the metalanguage Arabic. Metalanguage is normally translated; object-language is not translated

as a rule. Thus in this example 'its' is not translated. Here is another example:

3. Arabic uses two types of pronouns: or separate pronouns, ana, nahnu, anta, antum, etc. , and dependent forms realized as suffixes attached to the end of the verb : katab-tu , katab-na , etc.

In (3) the object language is Arabic, and the metalanguage is English. The metalanguage is only translated; any forms in the text belonging to the object language are retained without translation:

4. تستعمل اللغة العربية نوعين من الضمائر: الضمائر المنفصلة نحو أنا،نحن،أنت،أنتم، وغيرهم ، والضمائر المتصلة التي تلحق بآخر الفعل نحو كتبتُ، كتبنا ، كتبتَ ، إلى غير ذلك.

In (4) both the object language and the metalanguage is Arabic. The terms belonging to the object language are kept as in the original. In the following example Arabic is the metalanguage:

5. تستخدم الإنجليزية ثلاثة أنواع من الأدوات : أداة التنكير a وأداة التعريف the وأداة التمييز على سبيل المثال بين the book و books

When (5) is translated into English, or any other language, the terms of the object language and the examples are retained as they are:

6. English uses three articles: the indefinite a , the definite article the , and the zero article, which draws a distinction, for instance, between the books and books.

Sometimes the forms of the object language are translated usually literally and the translation is placed between brackets for the benefit of the new reader if the metalanguage is different from the object language as in example (7):

7. In English the noun 'money' is non-count.
في الإنجليزية الاسم money (نقود) من الأسماء غير المعدودة.

Note the translation does not add much to the content of the message, which is basically about the English noun 'money' rather than about the referent of this noun, or about the Arabic noun. This use of object language may raise the problem of self-reference discussed in 2.3. Note the following example:

8. The mark of number in the verb may be vague as in the eighth form in this sentence.

In this example 'eighth' has self reference, it refers to the form 'may' , which belongs to the object language. The reference should be made explicit:

9. may قد تكون علامة الجمع في الأفعال غامضة ، كما في الفعل

The word 'eighth' is replaced by 'may', which makes the reference explicit. This form is not translated because it belongs to the object language.

The second problem of linguistic texts, linguistic terminology, has much in common with the problem of terminology in scientific texts (see 8.3). However, translating English linguistic texts into Arabic or vice versa raises some special problems owing to the fact that these two languages gave long linguistic traditions. The translator of linguistic texts is often tempted to equate a linguistic term in English with an established linguistic term in Arabic, e.g. pronoun: الضمير: demonstrative pronoun: أسماء الإشارة. The risk here is that the English and the Arabic terms may be equivalent just in name: they may differ considerably with regard to content. The term 'pronoun' in English covers a wider area than does the term. For example, **all**, **both**, and the forms **myself** , **yourself** , etc are pronouns in English , their equivalent Arabic terms are nouns , To translate " pronoun " into الضمير may be misleading , unless the term is fully defined . Notice also the term " demonstrative pronouns ", which are termed in Arabic أسماء الإشارة. In Arabic they are nouns. The translator .has the choice to use established Arabic term. أسماء الإشارة Or a translation which has the advantage of showing that ضمائر الإشارة، demonstratives in English are pronouns .

Secondly, the target language may have more than one with roughly the same meaning as that of the term the source language, or vice versa . This is sometimes the case with superordinate terms in

hyponymy .For example, for the English term grammar there are two terms in use in modern Arabic : النحو ، and . القواعـد The first of these Arabic terms is earlier one. To qualify for a technical term, a word should have no synonym. Multiple terms with the same referent are confusing. Even when the term in the source text and the target language are equivalent as lexemes, they may have different derivatives. For example may be equated with النحوor ، القواعد but the problem here is that the English term is sometimes used in form grammars . The Arabic term النحو is normally used in the singular , it has no plural , or its plural is rarely used. The other term القواعـد is plural and cannot have a plural form .

A different problem is raised by translating such English terms as masculine feminine, neuter, and the superordinate word" gender", which are related by hyponymy. The gender system in Arabic consists of two terms masculine . . المذكر and feminine . المؤنث A translation from English into Arabic has to coin an Arabic word " neuter " perhaps . جمـاد although this may not be a happy term . Then there is the problem of coining a superordinate term to cover masculine and feminine in Arabic. Classical Arabic grammars use . (باب المذكر والمؤنث

. the category of masculine and feminine). The equivalent of" gender

"is lacking in Arabic terminology; a new term has to be coined; perhaps الجنس النحوي or الجنس اللغوي There are other problems which concern modern linguistic concepts that were not known in the past. These have no equivalent in traditional Arabic linguistics and require that new terms to be coined .Further research may deal with these problems in future.

In Conclusion, The first part of he paper illustrates the three types of language functions namely descriptive, social, and expressive. Then a look at text classification indicating the levels of texts as informative and creative.

In the second part of the paper the writer discusses the problems in reference to the translation of a number of texts such as , scientific, commercial, journalistic, political, and linguistic.

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