Translation and Diplomacy : The Role of Translators in International Relations

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Abstract

This study sheds lights on the role of translators in international relations . It aims to study the translation strategies used in translating the diplomatic texts , to identify the difficulties faced by translators in translating the texts in the diplomatic field . It hypothesizes that the translators have a limit knowledge of such terms used in diplomatic context . In the present study , four samples contained diplomatic terms were taken and rendered by translators adopted Vinay and Darblent strategies (1995) of direct translation and oblique translation to know how the meaning is conveyed from the source text into the target text.

Key words: - diplomatic field, international relations, oblique translation, united nations

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الترجمة والدبلوماسية: دور المترجمين في العلاقات الدولية

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الـمستخلـص

تسـلط هذه الدراسـة الضـوء على دور المترجمين في العلاقات الدولية، وتهدف إلى دراسـة استراتيجيات الترجمة المستخدمة في ترجمة النصوص الدبلوماسية , والتعرف على الصـعوبات التي يواجهها المترجمون في ترجمة النصـوص في المجال الدبلوماسـي . تفترض الدراسـة إن المترجمين لديهم معرفة محدودة بمثل هذه المصطلحات المستخدمة في السياق الدبلوماسي . في هذه الدراسـة، تم اخذ أربع عينات تتضمن مصطلحات دبلوماسية وتم ترجمتها من قبل مترجمين اتبعوا استراتيجيات فيناي و داربلنت (1995) للترجمة المباشـرة وغير المباشـرة لمعرفة كيفية نقل المعنى من النص الأصلي إلى النص الهدف .

الكلمات الدالة: – المجال الدبلوماسي، العلاقات الدولية، الترجمة غير المباشرة، الأمم المتحدة

Introduction

This study deals with the role of translators in international relations, their development and how these relations effect decision-making . Translation is a vital bridge between cultures and people , the importance of translation lies clearly in the arena of international relations . It is not just a transfer of words between two different languages , but rather a process that enables communication and understanding across linguistic and cultural aspects .In this field , translation becomes an essential tool for building bridge between nations to enhance cooperation and understanding in various fields , whether political , economic or cultural .

The objectives of this study, is to know the translation strategies used in translating the diplomatic texts , to identify the difficulties faced by translators in translating the texts in the diplomatic field .

The problem of the research lies in the existence of a great difference in the various systems applied by countries ,as there are agreements that propose terms and formulas that differ from one country to another .

The current study tries to find the solutions for the two following questions : what are the difficulties translators face in translating diplomatic terms ?   what are the reasons for choosing the strategies that translators followed to deal with these problems ?

Definition of Diplomacy

Ronald (2006 : 1) states that diplomacy includes spoken or written communication by representatives of state, intergovernmental, or non-governmental institutions intended to influence events in the international system . He explains that diplomacy is the main instrument of foreign policy which represents the broader goals and strategies that guide a state's interactions with the rest of the world, and also international treaties , agreements , alliances, and other manifestations of international relations are usually the result of diplomatic negotiations and processes. Diplomats may also help shape a state by advising government officials.   Al-Rushdan (2005 : 15) asserts that diplomacy in ancient times meant the document issued by those in power and senior politicians , granting its holder certain privileges . One of these privileges is the diplomatic passport . It also deals with the agreements concluded to arrange relations between countries .

At the recent time the word " diplomacy " has come to refer to representatives of foreign countries who carry letters of credence from their countries . Fuda (1961: 47-48) mentions that the word " diplomacy " was used in two different meanings ; the first meaning is the certificate or official document that includes the envoy's status , the mission he was sent on , and the recommendations issued regarding him by the ruler with the intention of introducing him , receiving him well , and facilitating his movement between different cities within one country . The second one is that which expresses the character of the envoy or ambassador , and what the instructions and laws directed to the mission required in terms of the necessity of adhering to etiquette , developing affection , and avoiding causes of criticism .

Johnson (2020: 67- 68) defines diplomacy as the cornerstone of the complex structure of international relations that embodies the sophisticated and nuanced dialogue between countries . It is the primary instrument of international policy , which represents countries' efforts to coexist and cooperate in a complex and often turbulent international landscape .

The Diplomatic Terminology

Dupont (2021 :125) confirms that the language used in diplomatic speeches is distinguished from the language of other fields , this distinction may occur depending on the responsibility of the diplomatic speaker who talks in charge on behalf of his country , this is the speech which determines the country's position on a particular issue . In addition , the diplomat is being the spokesman for his country and his speech should be reliable and binding to be implemented , it was therefore necessary for the diplomatic speech to be written with great precision and care , more than the precision and care with which any other speech is written , this speech characterized by precise accuracy , clear intent and can be analyzed and translated smoothly to convey the intended meaning , avoiding mistranslation .

Al- Hamawi (1949: 29- 31) mentions that the nature of diplomatic discourse makes it an intellectual system in which concepts and terminology accumulate , he says that the discourse cannot be understood without understanding these concepts . The brevity required in diplomatic situations characterized by severity and strictness needs the use of terms that express concepts accurately . The diplomatic term is considered a scientific term and represents a part of scientific language , it is characterized by all the features of clarity , precision and indication of a single concept . Furthermore , diplomatic term is universal concept , free from regionalism , it has the ability to discuss the interests and issues of all countries. This is what must be organized in the best possible way by agreeing on its translations at the level of one language and then at the level of the other world languages.

It is certain that the diplomatic term represents a great importance , because it is considered the basic pillar of diplomatic discourse and the only determinant of the existing relations between countries , this is what makes a diplomat chooses his terms in which he expresses the concepts with a great care . These terms are usually precise and clear , so they must be translated accurately and clearly .

What is Translation

Translation has many definitions since what is known by certain writers might not be known by others .In general , translation means the communication of the meaning of a source- language text by means of an equivalent target-language text . Venuti (1995 : 17) sees that translation is a process by which a chain of signifiers constitutes the source-language text is replaced by a chain of signifiers in the target language which the translator provides on the strength of an interpretation . Catford (1995 : 20) defines that translation is a replacement of textual material from one language , source language (SL) into another , target language (TL) .   Steiner (1998: 114) states that translation is the interpretation of verbal signs of one language by means of verbal signs in another . He defines translation as the bridge to difference . It transfers the meaning from one way of understanding to another. He adds that translation with reference to semiotics is an operation which produces a text in the target setting for a target purpose and a target addressee in target circumstances .

Finally , Baker & Malmkjaer (2001: 278) state that translation is an academic discipline which was not investigated much longer than a few decades ago , but it was used and studied in the academic studies as a chapter belong to the domain of comparative literature

The Relationship Between Translation and Diplomacy

There is a close relationship between translation and diplomacy . Translation plays an important role in diplomatic visits , because it facilitates communication between individuals who speak different languages . Diplomats often visit different countries to establish and maintain international relations , negotiate agreements and exchange information in such situations . Translation helps diplomats understand the culture , customs and language of the country they are visiting , enabling them to explain their policies and positions more clearly , helping them to build relationships and enhance international collaboration . Alvarez (2019 : 96) asserts that translation in diplomacy is essential and highlights the crucial function ,that it plays in international relations . He adds that it has always been a vital tool for enhancing communication , overcoming linguistic , cultural gaps and influencing the results of diplomatic efforts . The study of translation in diplomatic contexts demonstrates its significant influence on previous and current events, proving that translation is actually more than just a mean of transferring words from one language to another , but it also serves to promote international understanding , cooperation and peace .   Delisle (2010 : 116) adds that translation was considered in the past ,   a significant global diplomatic , business and cultural endeavor . Particularly , translators who come from many ethnic and religious backgrounds had unparalleled privileges and status in Turkish history during Ottoman era . These translators assisted with various bureaucratic tasks and during diplomatic conversation . Furthermore , they took on significant responsibilities in a variety of fields , including law , local affairs and educational activities .

Techniques of Translating Diplomatic Terms

Vinay and Darblent (1995) classify translations' methods in their book " Comparative Stylistic of French and English : A Methodology for Translation" into seven techniques , three of them are related to direct translation and four are related to oblique translation . As cited in Gailan (2022:126) , Biria (2015:4) highlights the significance of Vinay and Darblent strategies in the translation process and how the procedures are used to render the meaning from source language into target language . They show that direct strategy is classified into (borrowing , calque and literal translation) whereas oblique strategy is also classified into (transposition, modulation, equivalence and adaptation)

1- Borrowing – Direct Translation

According to Vinay and Darblent (1995, cited in Shihab , 2024:130) borrowing is the procedure that is used when there is no equivalent , when the translator wants to convey the source language culture or to create a stylistic influence in the target text . It is applied to translate terms and new concept like terms (protocol – بروتوكول) and (software – برمجيات).

2- Calque – Direct Translation

In general , the term " calque " is a loanword from a French noun , it's derived from the verb " calquer " which means " to copy " or " to trace ". Vinay and Darblent (1995 : 32) define a calque as a word – for –word translation from one language into another . The translator uses this technique when he wants to create a new vocabulary in the target language by adopt the structure of the source language . For instance , " المجتمع الدولي " is a calque of Arabic for the English expression " international community ".

3- Literal Translation – Direct Translation

This type of translation is called word-for-word translation . It is transferring the text from the source language into the target language to get a syntactically and semantically accurate translation . According to Vinay and Darblent if the two languages are from the same family (French , Italian , Spanish ……) . So , literal translation can produce acceptable results , even if it is limited . For instance , " He went to the hospital to see the doctor ."

" ذهب إلى المستشفى ليرى الطبيب " .

4- Transposition – Oblique Translation

Vinay and Darblent (1995 : 36) assert that this technique involves transferring from one grammatical category to another without changing the meaning . It is in a sense a shift of word class . Grammatical structures are often different in different languages . Here , the translator knows that it is possible to replace a word category in the target language without altering meaning of the source text . The translator also can translate by increasing , i.e by adding one or more words to express the same message contained in the source text , or by decreasing when he translates a group of words from the source text into another group that has fewer words in the target language.

Types of transposition

* Adverb – verb : as in , I only defended myself / I did nothing but defend myself .
* Adverb – noun : as in , I called him early this week / I called him at the beginning of the week .
*Adverb – adjective : as in , She lives safely / She lives a safe life .
* Adjective – noun : as in , He finds it difficult to read French / He has difficulties reading French .

5- Modulation – Oblique Translation

Hatim and Munday (2014 : 150) clarify that modulation consists of using a phrase that is different in the source and target languages to convey the same message without altering meaning by introducing a semantic change or perspective in the source language . This technique is often used within the same language . For instance : " I left this food for you " means literally " تركت هذا الطعام لك ", but it would be more appropriate to say " you can have it" and translate it as " يمكنك أن تتناوله ".

6- Equivalence – Oblique Translation

Leonardi (2007 : 79) states that equivalence in translation is a fundamental concept which refers to the goal of accurately conveying meaning from one language to another . It involves to find the appropriate linguistic and cultural equivalent which faithfully reflect the source text in the target language. For instance : translating proverbs or idioms in languages that do not have the accurate equivalent in the other languages . For example :

" Don't sell ice to Eskimos ." would be more appropriate to translate it as : " لا تبيع الماء في حارة السقايين".

7- Adaptation – Oblique Translation

Vinay and Darblent (1995 : 38) emphasize that adaptation is a cultural element which concerns changing the cultural reference when a situation in the source culture does not exist in the target culture . In this case , the translator needs to reproduce or recreate a new situation which can be considered more appropriate to the target audience . For instance :

If the translator wants to translate the Arabic novel " ألف ليلة وليلة " into English, he will translate it as " Arabian Nights " . Because , this expression does not exist in the target language .

 Problems of Translating Diplomatic Texts

Munan (2002 : 119 – 121) clarify that diplomatic translation is considered one of the most difficult translations due to the specificity and accuracy of its language . Its difficulty increases as it is a rhetorical language full of specialized vocabulary , as well as the difficulty of finding the verbal equivalent or applied term for the contents of the international document .The reason of these problems is the difference in the legal systems applied in countries , for example there are agreements that introduce terms and formulas that differ from one country to another . The problems faced by the translator lie in the fact that the language used in diplomatic field differs from other languages used in other fields , due to the precision of its specialized terms and expressions .

One of the problems facing the translator is that the diplomatic system is logical and not understood by any person . This requires the translator to study further in order to understand it , as he may encounter a complex and unclear source language text . Here , he must reject creativity during the translation process and take into consideration several diplomatic , linguistic and cultural aspects so as to reach the complete equivalent or at least the most acceptable meaning . Al-Khuri (1989 : 56) sees that one of the diplomatic translation problems due to the large number of diplomatic terms , i.e one term in English language that can be translated into multiple terms in other languages , for example Arabic language.For instance : the word " immunity " in English has multiple meanings in Arabic , it could be translated as " حصانة " , " مناعة " , " إعفاء " , " استثناء " .

Texts Analysis

SL Text (1)

((التقى السيد وزير الخارجية العراقي بالكادر المتقدم من موظفي **السلك** الدبلوماسي في الوزارة))

TL Text (1)

((The Iraqi foreign minister met with the senior staff of diplomatic **community** at the ministry))

SL Text	TL Text	Technique
((التقى الســـيد وزير الخـارجيـة العراقي بالكادر المتقدم من موظفي **السلك الدبلوماسي** في الوزارة))	((The Iraqi foreign minister met with the senior staff of **diplomatic community** at the ministry))	Equivalence

Discussion

It is noticed that the translator rendered the Arabic expression " السلك الدبلوماسي " into English as " diplomatic community " and it is known that the closer equivalent for the term " community " is " society " , the term " سلك " corresponds to the term " crop " . Here , the translator in this sample , used the equivalence technique in his translation , because he relied on the context and the meaning . In addition to his reliance on the most accurate and widely used term in diplomatic field .

SL Text (2)

((أكد الرئيس التركي على ضرورة **الوساطة** من أجل وقف القتال في قطاع غزة)).

TL Text (2)

((The Turkish President stressed the need for **mediation** to stop the fighting in the Gaza strip)).

SL Text	TL Text	Technique
((أكد الرئيس التركي على ضرورة **الوســـاطة** من أجل وقف القتال في قطاع غزة)).	((The Turkish President stressed the need for **mediation** to stop the fighting in the Gaza strip)).	Equivalence

Discussion

It is shown that , the translator while translating the Arabic term " وساطة " into English language as a " mediator " . He depended on the equivalence technique to preserve the clear intended meaning , this is because it is the only synonym used in texts specializing in Arabic diplomacy . The term was translated with its usual equivalent in English . It is an equivalent that conveys the suitable intended meaning in terms of the concept to be

conveyed . He used this vocabulary in this context , because it is a purely diplomatic term with a single meaning .

SL Text (3)

((The US and French presidents held separate **discussions** during their meeting at the White House , and these **discussions** resulted in a major agreement between the two countries))

TL Text (3)

((أجرى الرئيســان الأميركي والفرنســي مباحثات منفصــلة خلال لقائهما قي البيت الأبيض , وقد   أســفرت هذه المناقشات عن إتفاقا كبيرا بين البلدين))

SL Text	TL Text	Technique
((The US and French presidents held separate **discussions** during their meeting at the White House , and these **discussions** resulted in a major agreement between the two countries))	((أجرى الرئيســان الأميركي والفرنســي **مباحثات** منفصــلة خلال لقائهما قي البيت الأبيض , وقد أسفرت هذه **المناقشــات** عن إتفاقا كبيرا بين البلدين))	Literal translation

Discussion

      It is noteworthy that the translator in this sample , translated the term " discussions " from English into two synonymous terms that have the same meaning in Arabic . Here , the phenomenon of multiple diplomatic terms in Arabic is evident . Sometimes , there is one term in English that has several meanings in Arabic , as it mentioned in the theoretical part . This is what sometimes constitutes a major obstacle for the translator , as he finds it difficult to choose the appropriate term . Here the translator used the synonyms " مباحثات " and " مناقشــات " to express one concept " discussions " . So, he used the literal translation technique in translating this English term , and his translation was appropriate , because it did not go out of context .   **SL Text (4)**

((اســتقبل الرئيس العراقي الرئيس المصــري قائلا : إن من دواعي ســروري أن أرحب بفخامة الرئيس الصــديق عبد الفتاح الســيســي رئيس جمهورية مصــر العربية))   **TL Text (4)**

 ((The Iraqi president received the Egyptian president saying : It is my pleasure to welcome His Excellency president Abdalfattah Al-Sisi president of the Arab Republic of Egypt))

SL Text	TL Text	Technique

((اســـتقبـل الرئيس العراقي الرئيس المصـــــري قــائلا : إن من دواعـي ســــروري أن أرحـب بفخـامـة الرئيس **الصـــديق** عبد الفتاح الســـيســـي رئيس جمهورية مصر العربية))	((The Iraqi president received the Egyptian president saying : It is my pleasure to welcome His Excellency president Abdalfattah Al-Sisi president of the Arab Republic of Egypt))	Literal translation

Discussion

It is clear that the translator followed literal translation technique in translating the text from Arabic into English, as the source text (Arabic) contained the word (الصديق) but when it was rendered to the target language (English) , the word (الصـــديق) was omitted . Despite the omission of this word , the context meaning was not distorted and the translation became accurate and acceptable .

Findings and discussions

This study reached effectiveness of translating diplomatic context , it proved that the diplomatic translation is accompanied with many challenges and required a wide knowledge of both languages . The researcher sees that the reason for the difficulties that translators face in translating the diplomatic texts are due to their rhetorical language which contains a large number of special vocabulary .

This study found that Vinay and Darblent model is evaluable strategy to analyze and to convey the suitable meaning from the source text into the target text .Through the analysis of the four texts included in this study , it is shown that the translator had adopted the technique of equivalence for two texts and literal translation technique for the other two .

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