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Problems of Translating Humor from English into Arabic

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Abstract

Most authors and writers of translation had defined the term “translation” and explained it according to his own words and thought. One of those authors is Savory (1958) who said that translation has two types, the first type is “literal translation”, and the second one called “non-literal translation”. Jakobson (1958) divided translation into three types:(a) intralingual translation, (b) interlingual translation, and (c) inter semiotic translations whereas Nida (1964) views translation in terms of formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence. Humor means the mental group of discovering or expressing something in a way or another. It also means to be funny or amused by something that are funny. In other words, one can say that humor means to do something that will not lead to upset others. The study aims at (1) showing and resolving the problems, which face translators when they translating humor into Arabic and (2) Showing in some cases that there is a need to adopt an interdisciplinary approach in order to arrive at a better translation. It hypothesized that (1) there is no one to one formal correspondence between the source language and target language in translating humor and (2) transferring the structures of the source language to target language is the appropriate procedure for translating humor.

Key word :(Humor, Translation, Intralingual, Inter semiotic)

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مشاكل ترجمة الفكاهة من الإنجليزية إلى العربية

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المستخلص

لقد عرف العديد من منظري الترجمة مصطلح الترجمة بوجهات نظر مختلفة وعامة. ومن بين هؤلاء المنظرين ذكر سيفوري في عام 1957 بأن هناك نوعين من الترجمة (1) الترجمة الأدبية و(2) الترجمة الحرفية.

وقد قام جاكبسون في عام 1959 بتقسيم الترجمة إلى ثلاثة أنواع :

(1) الترجمة ضمن اللغة الواحدة.

(2) الترجمة بين اللغات.

(3) الترجمات السيميائية.

وفي عام 1964 فسر نايدا الترجمة من منظوري التكافؤ الرسمي والتكافؤ الديناميكي. ويمكن تعريف الفكاهة أو أسلوب التلطيف بأنها تعني التعبير عن شيء ما بطريقة أو بأخرى وبعبارة أخرى، يمكن للمرء أن يقول إن الفكاهة تعني القيام بشيء لا يؤدي إلى إزعاج الآخرين. تهدف الدراسة إلى

(1) إظهار وحل المشكلات التي تواجه المترجمين عند ترجمة الفكاهة إلى اللغة العربية.

(2) إظهار الحاجة إلى اعتماد منهج متعدد التخصصات من أجل الوصول إلى ترجمة أفضل.

3. نقل البنية التركيبية من لغة الأصل إلى لغة الهدف عند ترجمة الفكاهة أو أساليب التلطيف.

الكلمات المفتاحية

التلطيف .. الترجمة ... السيميائية ... اللغويات

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Meaning of Translation

Most authors and writers of translation had defined the term “translation” and explained it according to his own words and thought. One of those authors is Savory (1958) who said that translation has two types, the first type is “literal translation”, and the second one called

“non-literal translation”. According to Jakobson (1958) had divided translation into three types, (a). Intralingual translation: It explains the word meaning in the same language. (b). Interlingual Translation: It explains the meaning of the words and sentences between two or more languages. (c). Inter semiotic Translations: It means to translate the text from one shape to another like film to short story or novel. According to Nida (1964) views translation in terms of formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence whereas Catford (1965) views translation in terms of level, rank and extent.

Toury (1995) states that translation means descriptive concepts, whereas H, Venuti (1996) proposed that translation is visible and invisible.

Bassnett and Trivedi (1998) views translation in terms of discovering the relations between translation studies and the theory of post-colonial as well as a particular rendering as a communicative activity.

From these views, one can say that there is a number of agreements that the main word in translation is ‘replacement’ of a particular text from SL by another text in the TL with different style and aims apart from other principles and features. So, one can say that translation in general can be considered as an operation that can be showed one language, text or more whereby the parts of the SLT can be putted with the parts of the TLT.

This paper aims at:

1. Showing and resolving the problems, which face translators when they translating humor into Arabic.
2. Showing in some cases that there is a need to adopt an interdisciplinary approach in order to arrive at a better translation.
- 3 . Revealing that the concept of ‘adequacy’ is more useful than the concept of ‘equivalence’, in translation, especially with the translation of humor.

This study hypothesized that:

1. There is no one to one formal correspondence between the source language and target language in translating humor.
2. Transferring the structures of the source language to target language is the appropriate procedure for translating humor.
1. Many definitions of translation were given.
2. Six different structures were selected from books and conversation as a data for the research in question.
3. These different structures were given to two subjects (PhD and M.A students in the dept. of Translation, College of Arts).

2. THE CONCEPT OF HUMOR

Humor means the mental group of discovering or expressing something in a way or another. It also means to be funny or amused by something that are funny. In other words, one can say that humor means to do something that will not lead to upset others.

As for Cambridge Advanced learner s Dictionary, humor means the ability of someone to amuse something whether it is heard, seen or thought about. It will help others to improve their wishes or mood.

2.1 Types of Humor

1. Aggressive Humor: It relies on making fun of others, which makes them laugh.
2. Self –Enhancing Humor: It means to not rely on jokes to make others feel better when bad something happens.
3. Witty Humor: It relies on intellectual engagement of the audience.
4. Euphemism: It means to use indirect word when referring to something unpleasant.
5. Inside Humor: It means to use expressions that only understand by members of group.
6. Satiric Humor: It means to draw attention of current events.

2.2 The Situation’s Context

The translation of any word or phrase depends on the knowledge of the writer’s life that is affecting the text’s perception. It means that the study of meaning in communication needs the knowledge, which is called context.

Context was viewed by pragmatists and semanticists, namely: (a) Malinowski who was an anthropologist and (b) Firth who was the linguist. Both of them stated meaning in terms of context of situation, but in different ways.

According to Malinowski (1922) says that context of situation is “a bit of the social process which can be considered apart” whereas the linguist Firth (1958) said that meaning’s study couldn’t be done without context. Added to these, he asserts that sentences or words has no meaning without context. Firth states that situation’s context is “a linguistic apparatus” that could be applied to language and containing the following (1) verbal actions and non-verbal which were be achieved by the participants. (2) the speech events that are related to objects. (3) The verbal actions and its effect of on the hearer. (4) time and place of the event of speech.

Brown (1982) concludes that the interpretation of word, sentence or utterance depends upon context whereas John, L (1963) states that the identifications of the utterance’s context couldn’t be done via depending just upon the situation in which the sentence or utterance occurs, but also on the knowledge of what is discussed between the participants.

Wilson and Sperbar (1995) states that the addressee is only responsible about context. The addressee earns the data to make him can form his speech (utterance or sentence) which made the relevant relation with the sender. One can say that the utterance of sender to be translated faithfully, the receiver is supposed to supply a context which links to the speaker’s context. On the other hand, any misunderstanding between the contexts by the speaker and hearer will lead to ambiguity.

3. TRANSLATION AND DATA ANALYSIS

Text (1):

- (A) How did the child burn his mouth?
- (B) He ate his breakfast before it was cool.

Context: A man to his wife.

When a man went home, he saw that his little child was crying with burning mouth. He asked his wife about the reason via using this utterance (How did the child burn his mouth?). She answered him that he ate his breakfast before it was cool.

The Renderings:

1. كيف أحرق الولد فمه؟
لقد أكل طعامه قبل أن يبرد.
2. أعلميني ما الذي أحرق فم الولد؟
لقد تناول فطوره بسرعة قبل أن يبرد.

Proposed Rendering:

1. لما أحترق فم الطفل؟
لم يصبر حتى يبرد الطعام.

In this example, one can see that the wife uses “aggressive humor” which relies on making fun to decrease the shock.

Translation and Data Analysis

Text (2):

- (A) Did he take a shower today?
(B) No, he said, is one missing?

Context: A doctor to the nurse.

When a doctor entered a hospital to check his patients, he saw that one of his patients is not well. He asked the nurse via using this utterance (Did he take a shower today?). She answered him that he said, is one missing?

The Renderings:

1. هل أستحم المريض اليوم؟
لقد سألته وأجابني هل تفقدون شيئاً؟
2. هل أستحم اليوم؟
سألته وأجابني هل هناك شيء؟

Proposed Rendering:

- هل أستحم المريض اليوم؟

لقد أجبني المريض بأن فاقد الشيء لا يعطيه.

In this example, one can see that, when the nurse asked the patient if he took a shower or not, he uses “self –enhancing humor” which means to not rely on jokes to make others feel better when bad something happen.

Translation and Data Analysis

Text (3):

(A) What should you do before getting off a taxi?

(B) I would get on it.

Context: A person to his friend.

A person saw his friend coming by a taxi and asked him via using this utterance (What should you do before getting of a taxi?). He answered him that he gets on it.

The Renderings:

1. ما الذي فعلته قبل نزولك من التاكسي؟
كنت صاعدا فيه.
2. ما الذي فعلته قبل وصولك الى هنا؟
كنت صاعدا في التاكسي.

Proposed Rendering:

ما الذي كنت تفعله قبل نزولك من سيارة الاجرة؟
كنت جالسا في سيارة الاجرة.

In this example, one can see that, when the man asked his friend about what he did before getting off the taxi, his friend answered him via using “inside humor which means to use expressions that only understand by members of group.

Translation and Data Analysis

Text (4):

(A) I hate all rich people.

(B) I think I had be darling it.

Context: A man is talking with himself.

A person was talking himself via using this utterance (I hate all rich people) but at the same moment he likes to be rich and for this reason replied himself that he loved money and darling it.

The Renderings:

1. أكره جميع الاغنياء.
- اعتقد بأنني أحب الاموال.
2. انني أكره جميع الاغنياء.
- انني اعتقد بأنني احب ان اكون غنيا.

Proposed Rendering:

إنني لا أطيق رؤية الناس الاغنياء.
أعتقد بأنني سأقتن بهم يوما ما.

In this example, when the man talked himself via using the utterance “I hate all rich men “then he answered himself that “I think that I darling it “means that he used satiric humor which means to draw attention of current events.

Translation and Data Analysis

Text (5):

- (A) Coward person dies many times before his death.
(B) The hero will not taste death but once.
Context: A conversation between two friends.

The Renderings:

1. يموت الجبان عدة مرات قبل وفاته.
- البطل لا يموت الا مرة واحدة.
2. يلقي الجبان حتفه مرات عديدة قب اوانه.
- لا يموت البطل الا مرة واحدة.

Proposed Rendering:

1. يموت الجبان مرات عديدة في حياته.
- لا يلقي البطل حتفه سوى مرة واحدة.

In this example, when the man talked to his friend via using the utterance “Coward person die many times before his death” and his friend answered him “The hero will not taste death but once”, it means that he used euphemism which means to use indirect word when referring to something unpleasant.

Translation and Data Analysis

Text (6):

- (A) They were going too far place to live forever.
- (B) They may die in the attempt.

Context: A conversation father and his son.

The Renderings:

1. ذهبوا الى منطقة بعيدة للعيش الى الابد.
- لربما يموتون عند المحاولة.
2. رحلوا الى منطقة بعيدة لكيلا يموتوا.
- قد يموتون في هذه المحاولة.

Proposed Rendering:

1. لقد رحلوا الى منطقة نائية بغية العيش مدى الحياة.
- لربما يلقون حتفهم في هذه المحاولة.

In this example, when the man talked to his son via using the utterance “They were going too far place to live forever” and his son answered him “They may die in the attempt”, it means that he used aggressive humor which relies on making fun of others, which makes them laugh.

Conclusion

The main conclusions of this research are:

there is no one to one formal correspondence between the source language and target language in translating humor and (2) transferring the structures of the source language to target language is the appropriate procedure for translating humor. Added to these, the translator should be bilingual as well as bicultural.

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