

Learners' Pragmatic and Cultural Hindrances of Translating Arabic Bedouin Poetic Expressions into English

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to shed light on the main pragmatic challenges and difficulties that face English students in translating Arabic Bedouin poetic expressions into English. This study is classified as qualitative and quantitative study; it includes 25 junior level students at the University of Jordan/Aqaba. The students were asked to translate one English Bedouin poem into English. The findings of this study show the students face real problems in translating Arabic poetic expression and the students performed poorly in their translation due to pragmatics and cultural differences. There are several reasons behind the problems that encounter the students in translation Bedouin poetic expressions from English to Arabic such as culture, using figurative language, and structure of the poems. Culture is one of the main problems that lead to real problems in translating English literary text into Arabic. Furthermore; pragmatic challenges that is considered one of the main hindrances in translating literary text.

Keywords: Translating, Culture, Bedouin, Poetic, Expressions.

1. Introduction

Translation is a way to know other languages and sciences, and it is a means of communication among people. Al Smaihyeen and Bani Abdo (2018) state that translation reduces the gap between source language (SL) and target language (TL), and it facilitates the contact between people who have different languages. Al-Qurashi (2004) declares that translation is very important for all people in everywhere, and by translation people can transfer knowledge, culture, religious beliefs from one place to another. The differences in culture and religious beliefs cause a lot of problems for the translators, so they should have good background about the target language (Nida, 1964). If there are differences between SL and TL in culture, this leads to serious problems for the translator and problems in communication (Dweik, 2000). Generally, translating literary text is more difficult than other types of texts due to it includes aesthetic and expressive values (Hariyanto, 2003). He reassures that literary works includes using figurative language and the focus mainly on beauty of the words. Arabic language has a special culture and special idioms and expression and it has different poetic expressions. Arabic language has many varieties and dialects, and each dialects has its own idioms and expression in poetry and the way of forming their poems, such as Bedouin in the south of Jordan who use different poetic expression, and unique style in writing poetry like Nabati poetry. Bedouin poets wrote verse identical in several things as structure, theme, metre and rhyme to the works of Imru'l Qays and other pre-Islamic poets. English students in universities encounter challenges and difficulties in translating Arabic Bedouin poetic expressions into English. In this study, the researcher tries to find the challenges face junior students in translating Arabic Bedouin poetic expressions into English in the university of Jordan/ Aqaba.

2. Pragmatics and Translation

Leech (1983) defined pragmatics as "the study of how utterances have meanings in situations" By pragmatics, the contextual meaning is used and analyzed to understand and recognize the "real" meaning.

In pragmatics, it is necessary to talk about the implied meaning, intent, assumptions, and purpose of communication between people. One of the main reasons for giving birth for pragmatics is semantics incapability in explicating certain phenomenon in oral communication. Thus, translators should translate any text according to intended meaning in source language not according to their views or opinions. For instance, in Arabic, we use the term "حماتك بتحبك" when someone comes at time of eating or serving food to express welcome. This term in Arabic culture has a specific meaning, so it should not be translated literally as "your mother-in-law loves you". The equivalence translation for "حماتك بتحبك" in English is "you have come at the right time". Thus, translators should understand the intended meaning before translation process.

3. Culture and Translation

Translation is a very complicated matter. It is several categories: material culture that indicates the whole industrial production, institutional culture that indicates many rules and the theories which enrich them like social rules, religious rules, ritual rules, educational rules, kinship rules and language, and mental culture that indicates how people think and behave.

Culture is considered one of the most important issues in translation because the translation involves two languages and two cultures. Thus, culture affects the translation in several ways. If there is no overlap in culture between SL and TL, there will be some problems in translation (Newmark, 1988). There are several kinds of cultural problems in translation, such as religious culture, social culture, geographical culture, linguistic culture. What considered praising may be a kind of insulting in another language and culture. For example, to describe the beauty of a woman's yes in Arabic we say "عيونها كعيون الغزال الريمي" and if this phrase translated into English as "her yes like deer's eye" when this phrase translated into English, it has no sense. Thus, the students try to find cultural equivalence between SL and TL in semantics and in pragmatics.

4. Statement of the Problem

The translation of Arabic poetry into English makes it vulnerable to the loss of many characteristic. The translation of poetry is rather difficult because poetry has metaphor and connotative meaning. It is difficult for translator to understand and render the connotative meaning and metaphor to the TL. In addition to, certain culture-specific metaphors lead to some challenges for translators. For this reason, this study is carried out to find the pragmatic and cultural challenges that face junior students who study English language at the university of Jordan/ Aqaba in translating Bedouin Poetry into English language.

5. Research's Aims

English and Arabic are very diverse linguistic systems and work differently at word, sentence and text level, a feature that makes the translation process complex and difficult, especially if it is a poetic translation. This study was conducted as a means to help students and translators to translate poetry from Bedouin Arabic into English. The study attempts to achieve the following:

- i. To explore the main pragmatic and cultural hindrances of translating Arabic Bedouin poetic expressions into English.
- ii. To provide analysis for the reasons behind pragmatic and cultural problem of translating Arabic Bedouin poetic expressions into English.

6. Research's Questions

This study includes the following questions:

- i. What are the main pragmatic and cultural hindrances of translating Arabic Bedouin poetic expressions into English?
- ii. What are the reasons behind pragmatic and cultural problem of translating Arabic Bedouin poetic expressions into English?

7. Methods of the Study

This study was conducted by selecting a random sample consisting of 25 male and female students at the University of Jordan / Aqaba for the academic year 2019/220. The researcher distributes some Bedouin poetic expressions and asks the students to translate them into English. Then, the researcher uses qualitative and quantitative method to analysis the students' translation. Qualitative method is employed to find out the pragmatic and cultural challenges that encounter students who study English language in translating Bedouin poetic expressions into English. Furthermore, Qualitative method is used to find the main reasons for the pragmatic and cultural challenges. Additionally, quantitative method is used to find the number of students facing cultural and pragmatic problems.

8. Literature Review

Several poetic elements are going to be lost in translating Arabic poetry into English. Besides the lost of meter as well as the communicative value of the original poem, the aesthetic elements cannot be retained in translation. Literal rendering when adopted in most cases obliterates the sense and aesthetics of the original. The task becomes more complicated especially when the two languages are belonging to dissimilar families as in the case with Arabic and English.

Nida (1984) scores that what has been said or written in language is possible to translate it into any other language unless the form which is the most important element of the message. Wilss (1982) states:

"All translation seems to me simply an attempt to solve an impossible task. Every translator is doomed to be done in by one of two stumbling blocks: he will either stay too close to the original, at the cost of taste and the language of his nation, or he will adhere too closely to the characteristics peculiar to his nation, at the cost of the original. The medium between the two is not only difficult, but downright impossible" (P.35).

9. Data Analysis and Discussion

قصيدة فريخ السرحاني:

يا طروش يلي ناحرين المراجيب واتريضولي و قصروا من خطاكم
واخذوا كلام الصدق ما به تكاذيب ويماوفقين الخير حنا وياكم وهديت بيكم رادلن لوادي سلاحيب
ولقيت بصة خامدة في جماكم وثمان سنين ارطب القلب ترطيب والتاسعة وانا اترجى حداكم
واجيكم عن الوعر مع تداريب ومن خوفي يابوي عايل يجهد بلاكم واسعى مع الخلقان ورافق الذيب
ومن خوف لا ينقص عليكم عشاكم و عيال ما سرحتكم مع الاجانيب

ولا عالصقة كلتيم غداكم ويا عيال ما ضربتكم بالمصاليب ولا سمعت الجيران جظة بكاكم
 و احفيت رجلي في سموم اللواهيبي و خليت لحم الريم يخالط عشاكم و قمت اتعكز فوق عوج المذاريب
 وقصرت خطاي يوم طالن خطاكم ويا عيال اخوالكم مرويين بالطيب وما تعلموني هالردا منين جاكم
 وهم يا جيل الخنا كلكم عيب يلي على الوالد كثير لغاكم وانتم تبعتم صفر العراقيب
 ما هن معزة سود الله قراكم وريت نساكم ما تحبل ولا تجيب وتقعده بطالة جالسات بلاكم وعسى قمركم لا يطلع
 و لا يغيب والشمس مطلية ويعتم سماكم

This poem is written by Freej Al-Sirhani. This poem has many difficult words and symbolic words. Also, it has several metaphorical expressions.

I. Some students find some problems in translating "ياطروش" so this word is difficult for the students to know its meaning in Arabic also. It is used by Badia to refer to people who look for new place for their sheep and their family especially if the new place has grass and water for their sheep.

II. Some students encounter problems in translating "تريضولي" which refers to the wishes of the poet for the people who look for new place to wait and to walk slowly and do not walk quickly.

III. Several students face problems in translating "خوفي يا بوي عيل يجهد بلکم". These words have different and specific meaning in Arabic. They refer to feeling of the author that he is afraid of some people who behave as a child may get you angry and you may kill him.

iv. Many students fail in translation in translating "ولا على الصقعة كلتيم غداكم". This means he looks after his children and he always makes them feel warm. He brings food for them to eat in warm place while he suffers in bringing food for them. "الصقعة" is a word used in Al-Badia refers to very cold weather.

V. Majority of the students do not succeed in translating "خليت لحم الريم يخالط عشاكم". The poet means here he brings the most delicious food for them with the finest meat "deer's meat".

iv. Some students face problems in translating "وقمت اتعكز فوق عوج المذاريب". He means here he is getting old and cannot depend on himself. The reference here he spent his life to bring up his children without caring about himself and he sacrificed for them.

Vi. All of the students do not provide translation for "تبعتم صفر العراقيب". The students do not understand the meaning of this phrase. He means here his children when they got adult and married they obey their wives.

The problems in translation are:

I. Cultural problems: some words are used in Arabic context and it has not equivalence in which refers to the finest meat in Arabic society where as in "لحم الريم", English. For example English society it does not.

II. Pragmatic Problems.

refers to him got old. Here is a kind of presupposition which is reference "اتعزز فوق عوج المذاريب": to the old man and he cannot depend on himself and his sons and daughters should help him in this age.

10. Conclusion

By way of concluding, it can be said that students face several problems in translating Arabic poetry especially Bedouin. This study finds that students encounter cultural and pragmatic problems in translating Bedouin poetry into English. The students do not find the equivalent to the Bedouin poetry. The study gives the translators chance to know more about the ways how to deal with the text in the future especially literary text.

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