

Translating Journalistic Style: Linguistic and Cultural Dilemma

Naji Mohammed Khaleefa - Mahmoud Ali Ahmed.

Abstract

This paper revolves around translating journalistic style in terms of cultural and linguistic dilemma. It aimed at seeking to answer the study major question: What are the linguistic and cultural problems that translators face when translating journalistic style? The researcher reviewed the literature of the field to clarify the dimensions of the investigated problem. Having reviewed the previous studies of the same field, it was obvious that translators are encountered with linguistic and cultural dilemma when translating journalist style as it is a cross-cultural style which highlights the political, social, and other aspects of human beings throughout the globe. Mastering linguistic and cultural knowledge is the backbone of journalistic style. It is also significant to master stylistic differences to have a deep insight into the particular style being dealt with. The researcher surveyed the points which seem problematic for translators of journalistic style and on the basis of this put forward recommendations some of which could be as follows: Cultural and linguistic knowledge should be considered as of the initial stages of language learning to broaden learners' linguistic and cultural perspectives. Translators majoring in journalistic style should deal with linguistic and cultural knowledge as a paramount component of their translational process which leads to successful and professional translation. The investigated material could bring it home that the question raised by the researcher could successfully be answered by various researchers in the area of journalistic translation.

Keywords: journalistic style, linguistic competence, culture.

المستخلص

تتمحور هذه الورقة حول ترجمة الأسلوب الصحفي من ناحية الصعوبات اللغوية والثقافية التي تواجه المترجم الصحفي. هفت الورقة إلى ايجاد إجابة للسؤال المحوري للدراسة " ما هي الصعوبات اللغوية والثقافية التي تواجه المترجمين عند ترجمة الأسلوب الصحفي؟ قام البحث بتحليل أدبيات المجال لتوضيح أبعاد النقاط التي تم التقصي فيها. وعلى الأثر تجلى للباحث أن المترجمين يواجهون مشاكل لغوية وثقافية عند ممارسة ترجمة الأسلوب الصحفي يُعد من الأساليب الضاربة في عمق تعدد الثقافات حيث يتناول مظاهر المكونات الثقافية والسياسية وكل ضروب المعطيات البشرية على وجه الكرة الأرضية. إجادة المعرفة اللغوية والثقافية يمثل العمود الفقري للأسلوب الصحفي. كما أنه من المهم أن يكون المترجم ملماً باختلاف الأساليب اللغوية لتعميق رؤيته في الأسلوب الذي هو بصدد التعاطي معه. قام الباحث بمسح النقاط التي تبدو مشكلة لمترجمي الأسلوب الصحفي وعلى هذا الأساس أسدى بعض لتوصيات التي شملت ما يلي: يجب أن تُوضع المعرفة الثقافية واللغوية في الاعتبار منذ المراحل الأولى لتعلم اللغة لتوسيع الدائرة اللغوية والثقافية للطلاب كما يجب على مترجمي الأسلوب الصحفي التعامل مع المعرفة اللغوية



والثقافية كمكون عظيم من مكونات عملية الترجمة الاحترافية الناجحة. النقاط التي تم التقصي فيها برهنت أن سؤال الباحث قد تمت الاجابة عليه من خلال ما تم مناقشته من الدراسات السابقة في مجال الترجمة الصحفية.
الكلمات المفتاحية: الأسلوب الصحفي، الكفاية اللغوية، الثقافة.

Introduction

Translation basically depends on the translator's linguistic and cultural knowledge because language gets its meaning from these two essential and pivotal components or constituents; integrating them together gives rise to language proper understanding in terms of reception and production. Learners who master the linguistic competence of a particular language may not be able to use it in actual performance if they do not master its cultural components as well. Culture includes a set of various social and human values. Hence, the broader sense of the word "culture" covers all the aspects of human life and their interaction with the surrounding environment. (Richards, 1987: 179) argued that "culture is a total set of beliefs, attitudes, costumes, understand literary texts as they represent a way of communication all over the world.

When a translator masters succinctly and profoundly these two significant components of a language (linguistic competence and culture) he/ she will be able to practice translation professionally conveying and transferring the meanings of a source language into a target language innovatively with much creativity. Poor command of language makes translators unsuccessful in doing their job appropriately. Cultural differences would make the task a little harder on translators as they are confronted with culture specific

words and concepts. If the source language contains concepts, which the target language speakers find totally unfamiliar because they are related to religious beliefs, social customs or a particular kind of food, then such concepts might be referred to as culture specific (Baker, 1992).

Media is a huge industry and its main tool is language. This language has to be shaped according to its needs whether to make it more glamorous, more efficient, with the aim of shaping and influencing reader's opinions; that is why media language is accused of misleading the readers. (Qais, 2016, 2) cited in Abadri, L and Badawi, A (2020)

This paper is paper revolves around the cultural and linguistic problems in translating journalistic style. The two areas seem problematic and dilemmatic to a great extent if not handled the way they should be. Furthermore, professional translators seek continuously for absorbing cultural and linguistic knowledge to expand their creativity in dealing with the texts and contexts. The study covers various relevant points to achieve the postulated objectives of the thesis in question.

Objectives

The over-arching objective of this study is seeking to answer the study major question: What are the linguistic and cultural problems that translators face when translating journalistic style?



The study will revolve around this essential question through coping with reasonable amount of previous theoretical points in the field.

Theoretical Underpinning

Journalistic style as a genre

Journalistic style plays a primordial role in connecting the international communities through publishing the pivotal political, social, scientific, and other types of events which may draw the attention of a lot of people in different countries to what is going on around them. Journalistic style is one of the linguistic styles that we are exposed to in our everyday language particularly those who are interested in journalism. Journalistic language is very special. It has its own terms and vocabulary. The contexts in which journalistic language is used are different from the other linguistic styles. Some lexical items are exclusively used in journalistic style and not otherwise. e. g. words like “agenda, referendum, memorandum, inauguration,... etc.) are obviously journalistic. (Webster. 1974).

Before discussing the phenomenon of journalistic translation itself, it is worth looking at the two otherwise distant fields beyond such a translation from a unifying point of view. Most importantly, both journalism and translation play an indispensable role in the Age of Information. Not only do they inform the reader, but they also facilitate the flow of information itself. In terms of “how one field can benefit the other”, there is a certain degree of reciprocity involved – in order to carry out a

translation, one needs to search for information; and to achieve some information, one needs to translate as well. When it comes to the use of language, it seems important to realize what influence both activities have over their reader’s; that is why journalists and translators are often ascribed an enormous manipulative power.

Journalism is an interdisciplinary field which has connections and liaisons with almost every branch of knowledge or discipline as it is a medium for transferring ideas and concepts or it could be said most of human beings’ needs and wants from one language into another. Hence, translators are supposed to be aware of various branches of knowledge to widen their creative sense in translation. People need translation in their lives because they are socially, religiously, worldly, scientifically or beneficially connected and they need to have mutual connections with one another as their lives require that. In the ancient times kings and men of state used to translate the messages they sent to their enemies and neighbors to settle disputes and complete treaties and agreements, without translation that would not had been possible. (Palmer. 2009. 186) reported that “If Translation Studies is a young discipline, news translation research is in its infancy. There are, of course, numerous studies on news language, but most of them largely ignore the role of translation in news production.”(Routledge. 1998) spoke about the little work of citing the historical issues of (JT).



He found out that there were no specific entry for the information of the information in news outlets other than occasional references, as in the entries devoted to dubbing and subtitling. One of the books which included some documentary information about (JT) is “The Handbook of Translation Studies in which (Benjamins) included two entries related to news translation (2001. 181). That might amply prove the little work of citation and documentation to the issues of (JT).

Linguistic and Cultural Challenges Encountered in Translating Journalistic Style

The literature abounds with discussions on problems that translators generally face during the process of translation. According to Catford (1965) "the central problem of translation-practice is that of finding TL equivalents" (p. 21). Lack of equivalence is caused by several factors chief among which is the cultural specificity of some concepts which makes the task of finding a suitable equivalent arduously difficult. Toury (1995) stresses, “translation is not only a linguistic activity but a cultural one as well” (p. 26). If the source language contains concepts, which the target language speakers find totally unfamiliar because they are related to religious beliefs, social customs or a particular kind of food, then such concepts might be referred to as culture specific (Baker, 1992). Just like idiom translation where some idioms are peculiar to a certain culture, there are also certain types of foods and that exhibit such peculiarity.

Seeking for the equivalent might remain unchangeable for every single translator, but the absence of equivalent when dealing with a particular text would further the complexity of translation for translators and several translational strategies will be created to contract the space properly. Culture is defined as “an integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, languages, practices, beliefs, values, customs, courtesies, rituals, manners of interacting and roles, relationship and expected behaviors of a racial, ethnic, religious or social group, and the ability to transmit the above to succeeding generations” (Goode, Sockalingam, Brown & Jones, 2000)

This means that language is not only a part of how we define culture, it also reflects culture. Thus, the culture associated with a language cannot be learned in a few lessons about celebrations, folk songs, or costumes of the area in which the language is spoken. Culture is a much broader concept that is inherently tied to many of the linguistic concepts taught in second language classes. Through initiative such as the national standards for foreign language learning, language educators in the United States have made it a priority to incorporate the study of culture into their classroom curricula. Cultural knowledge is one of the five goal areas of the national standards. Through the study of other languages, students gain a knowledge and understanding of the cultures that use that language; in fact, students cannot truly master the language until they have also mastered the cultural contexts in which the language occurs.



National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1996, p. 27)

As for linguistic challenges, it is taken for granted that language is a system which is composed of several subsystems thereby, a translator is supposed to master these subsidiaries in such a way that he would efficiently deal with linguistic units in contexts smoothly without committing lots of trivial mistakes during practicing translation. Traditionally, the basic aim of linguistic description is to specify the rules and thereby relate to strings of speech and sounds to their semantic interpretation. This is not the process, which is actually applicable to a specific case; it is a long term process- a process which is applied to an infinite number of cases. The advantage of this process is that it gives rise to language competence to the user of language. Traditional Grammars, however, fail to specify in great detail how many different components of sentences combine to yield well-formed sentence structures. The reader can acquire this device by his linguistic intention. As a result grammars are supposed to explain the nature of a speaker's linguistic knowledge and thereby appeal to that very knowledge in order to make good their deficiencies. This can be made if the grammatical rules are supposed to be fully explicit. Explicit grammatical rules help the grammar to specify the structure of sentences independently of a speaker's linguistic knowledge. Two possible alternative ways may be proposed. One way of stating this requirement is to say that the

predictions afforded by the grammar should be an automatic consequence of its actions and rules. Another way of stating is to say that the grammar must be specifiable in terms of its rules, which will generate all, and only grammatical sentences of a language. (Tannen, Hamilton and Schiffrin. 2001)

According to Badawi, A (2017) Professional Translators and University staffs of languages have little familiarity of Machine Translation (15%). (18%) of Professional Translators and University staffs of languages are in favour of Bing meanwhile (35%) are in favour of Google Translate. (3%) of Professional Translators and University staffs of languages implement MT to translate news headlines from Arabic to English and vice versa.

Idiomatic Expressions as a Problematic Area in Translating Journalistic Style

According to (Baldick.. 121) "an idiom is a phrase or grammatical construction that cannot be translated literally into another language because its meaning is not equivalent to that of its component words. " Common examples of which there are thousands in English include: follow suit, hell for the leather, flat broke, on the wagon, well hung, etc.

Difficulties in translating idiomatic and culturally-bound expressions Idioms constitute a problematic area for both foreign learners and translators. When translating idiomatic and culturally-bound expressions from one language to another,



translators usually encounter many hurdles and difficulties in stylistic, cultural and even religious ones which are hard to overcome (Smadi, 2015, p.124). Straksiene (2009) claims that one of the problems that translator faces in translating idioms is the lack of equivalence on the idiom level. All languages have idioms but it is not easy to find equivalent in the target language that corresponds to the idiom in the source language both in meaning and form. There are several difficulties which have been reported in the literature with regard to translating idioms and the reasons behind those difficulties. The two interrelated difficulties which may encounter translators when translating idioms are: the ability to recognize and interpret an idiom correctly on one hand, and success in looking for the most suitable equivalent in the target language. Baker (1991, pp.80-85) states that the main difficulties involved in translating idiomatic expressions are: first, idiomatic expressions may have no equivalent in the target language. The way languages use idioms to express different meanings and notions vary from one language to another and that constitutes a great difficulty translators. The difference of languages in the social and religious cultures might be a cause of difficulty when translating from English into Arabic (Al-Shawi&Mahadi, 2012, pp. 141-146). Therefore, lack of equivalence in the target language can be a source of difficulty. Idioms and culturally-bound expressions contain culture-specific items which may be untranslatable in some cases. For example, the idiom “feels blue” cannot be understood by Arabic speakers because the color “blue” is never associated

with sadness or depression as in American culture. Second, the conventional use of idiomatic expressions is mostly in spoken discourse and it is a matter of style, however, language such as Arabic and Chinese make a sharp distinction between written and spoken discourse in using idioms and they avoid using idioms in a written text mode which is associated with a high level of formality. This kind of differences between language and their use of idiomatic expressions could be a source of difficulty for translators (Baker, 1991, p, 84). There are several studies which have been conducted in the Arab world to investigate difficulties encountered by students when translating idioms and culturally-bound expressions from English into Arabic.

Some Sudanese idioms expressed only in Sudanese Arabic variety cannot be figured out or interpreted by non-Sudanese, some of which could be: التسوي كريت في جلدھا تلقاه في القرظ

This idiom cannot be understood by non-Sudanese, but a translator can try to find an equivalent one that is used by the members of the target language, otherwise, he/ she can follow different strategies to translate it as a total opaque one. Another example of such an opaque idiom could be from the area of journalism namely it is “red tape” which means bureaucracy. This idiom cannot be easily decoded through the surrogate strategies of dealing with opaque idioms when failing to find the equivalent. In this case a translator might suffer so much to transfer the desirable meaning without an obvious distortion for the meaning.



Language of journalistic style is used to convey meanings of authentic events and stories directly or indirectly so they set their report accordingly in a language that maintains its professionalism and obey the context in which it is used. An idiomatic expression was being used commonly among Sudan revolutionary people and it was exclusively made out by them. Furthermore, the news agencies around the world were soon interested in decoding that idiom and it could widely be repeated everywhere in and outside the country. Some news agencies tried to translate it and the most well-known translation of that idiom was: “Just fall that is all” whereas, the original idiom was **تسقط بس**. Sudanese people may fully appreciate this idiom, but foreigners or those who are not Sudanese cannot appreciate it the way it should be and it may lead translators to use form-based translation unless they are told that the context in which it was used was political where Sudanese citizens wanted to change their government and overthrow it.

Equivalence in Translation

One of the five super memes of translation, ‘equivalence’ is described as ‘the big bugbear of translation theory, more argued about than any other single idea’ (Chesterman 1997: 9). Catford also refers to a ‘central problem of translation theory’ which is ‘defining the nature and conditions of translation equivalence’ (1965: 21). Steiner, for whom all communication involves translation, widens the scope of the problem to

interpretation in general, ‘the fundamental hermeneutic dilemma: does it make sense to speak of messages as being equivalent when codes are different’ and introduces the related question of ‘fidelity’, ‘one could say that all theories of translation are variants on a single question: in what ways can or ought fidelity to be achieved’ . The can/ought or descriptive/evaluative distinction is crucial in any attempt to pin down the concept of equivalence. Nor is equivalence simply a theoretical problem; it is also a central problem in translation practice, viz. finding translational equivalents (Catford, *ibid*). This suggests that a definition of equivalence will have a direct bearing on a definition of translation. Indeed, one of the abiding problems of translation theory has been the circularity of defining equivalence and translation in terms of each other. Fidelity has been another long-running issue in translation theory and is likely to remain so, since, like its sister-terms equivalence and translation, it is firmly fixed in the public consciousness, as one of the ‘facts of reception’ or ‘socially determined expectations’ (Pym 1992. 64. 995: 166). This is the problem: these three interlinked terms — translation, equivalence and fidelity — are conventionally used and ‘understood’ but translation theorists have been reluctant to grant them much — or even anything — in the way of theoretical status.



Utilising the insights of pragmatic theory, this paper aims to do precisely that, demonstrating how each term can be clearly defined in an intrinsic (i.e. nonrelative) fashion. The terms are interdependent but it would seem that the cornerstone or the heart of the problem is the concept of translation, a term that has proved astonishingly resistant to definition.

Using Authentic Material as a means of Procuring Culture

The point in question is to show how the culture of a target language community is fostered and instilled in students' minds as of the initial stages of learning for overcoming the linguistic and cultural problems which might occur later on the part of translators who approach journalistic translation. Hence, having been exposed to the target language culture since primary school, will expand their perspectives and deepen their cultural and linguistic and cultural competence.

Using authentic sources from the native speech community helps to engage translators in authentic cultural expressions. Authentic material defined as "the contextualized real life material that a person encounters in everyday life but that weren't created for educational purposes. They include newspapers, magazines and websites, as well as driver's manual, utility, bills, pill bottles and clothing labels." (Richards, 1987:14) So that sources can include films, news broadcasts, and television shows, websites, travel brochures, and other printed materials. Teachers can adapt

their use of authentic materials to suit the age and language proficiency level of the students. For example, even beginning language students can watch and listen to video clips taken from a television show in the target language and focus on such cultural conversations as greetings. The teacher of a second or a foreign language might supply students with a detailed translation or give them a chart diagram, or outline to complete while they listen to a dialogue or watch a video. After the class has viewed the relevant segments, the teacher can engage the students in discussion of the cultural norms represented in the segments and what these norms might say about the values of the given culture. Discussion topics might include nonverbal behaviors (e.g. the physical distance between speakers' gestures, eye contact, social roles, and how people in different social roles relate to each other). Students might describe the behaviors they observe and discuss which of them are similar to their native culture and which are not and determine strategies for effective communication in that target language community. Literature provides a resource or authentic context for the teaching of grammar and vocabulary.

It is perhaps the most frequently cited reason for using literary texts in ESOL pedagogy. An early proponent was Povey (1967:42), who claims that the study of literature can extend the student's knowledge of vocabulary and syntax.



Sowden (1987:28) suggests that literature can be used in the teaching of language 'by the linguistic manipulation of literary texts chosen for their real literary worth, but with an eye to their suitability for such manipulation'. He goes on to list examples of manipulation exercises that include cloze vocabulary recognition and development, grammar reinforcement and extension, sentence building and pronunciation practice. These, he claims, 'will challenge the student, ensuring he gets completely involved in the language and style of the text, so increasing his familiarity with the language and improving the facility and accuracy with which he uses it' (1987:32).

Similar claims can be linked to the renewed interest in the teaching of grammar within a broadly communicative approach. What distinguishes this from the older, pre-CLT methods is the importance of an authentic and meaningful context (Carter 1990; Kilfoil & Van der Walt 1997:99; Carter et al. 2000:vii). Thus Helfrich (1993) uses fables as resources to illustrate and practise basic language structures. Karant (1994:iii) argues that while 'students may have problems remembering unrelated sentences, they tend to remember stories'; similarly Deacon and Murphy (2001:23) present stories as a context for learning new vocabulary and language forms, engaging 'our narrative minds in the service of language learning in the classroom.' Dodson (2000) makes similar claims for the benefits of using drama in the language classroom. Most of these

writers also promote the idea of creating literary texts as a means of practicing the grammatical structures. This approach is exploited to great effect by Spiro (2000) and Holmes and Moulton (2001), both of whom use simple poetry as a way of teaching and practicing grammatical form.

Recommendations

On the basis of the discussions which were made in this study, the researcher put forward some recommendations for the translators of journalistic style for more professional work of translation in the field in question. The recommendations include the following:

- Cultural and linguistic knowledge should be considered as of the initial stages of language learning to broaden learners' linguistic and cultural perspectives.
- Translators majoring in journalistic style should deal with linguistic and cultural knowledge as a paramount component of their translational process which leads to successful and professional translation.
- Journalistic style has lots of culturally-bound and culture specific words as well as it has its own idiomatic expressions, so translators are supposed to absorb this linguistic variety quite amply for more perfect journalistic translation.
- Journalistic style translators have to keep procuring linguistic and cultural knowledge as long as they practice the art of translation to fortify their translational repertoire for more perfect translation.



Conclusion

This study was based on a fundamental question that "What are the linguistic and cultural problems that translators face when translating journalistic style? The researcher surveyed the literature related to the very problem in terms of linguistic and cultural difficulties which face translators as the translate journalistic styles. Having analyzed the investigated area, the researcher found out that linguistic and cultural knowledge are interdependent or inseparable to the extent that they are fostered and developed inseparably through the several stages of acquiring language. Teachers at the initial stages of learning are supposed to foster these traits and skills in their students' minds. Authentic materials can be used and exploited as a source of procuring linguistic and cultural issues. Some instances were given in this study to assure the significance of linguistic and cultural knowledge in translational creativity and professionalism.

The researcher built his recommendations upon the interdependency between linguistic knowledge and culture alongside with translation as a linguistic activity that needs high command of language and culture either in the source or target language when translating journalistic style. The above investigated points were endorsed and assured by the previous literature surveyed by the researcher in this study.

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