Equivalence in Translation: An Investigation of the Usefulness of Formal and Dynamic Types of Equivalence in the Translation of Some English Idiomatic Expressions into Arabic

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Abstract

One of the main problems in the field of translation is 'equivalence'. This study aims to identify the different types of equivalences. i.e formal and dynamic. Another aim of this work is to discover which of these types of equivalence plays a decisive role in translating English idiomatic expressions into English. Examining these issues depended on a collection of some English expressions to be rendered into Arabic. It has been noticed that translators have to strive in order to satisfy the target readers. It has also concluded that formal equivalence approach is not helpful in translating texts which are loaded with cultural colour. In addition, translators have to take the easier path and apply the dynamic equivalence approach in order to satisfy the Arab target readers. Finally, Every English expressions used in this paper were analysed and recommendations were made in this study too.

مستخلص الدراسة

ان احد مشاكل الترجمة تكمن في مفهوم (التكافؤ). تهدف هذه الدراسة للتحقق من انواع التكافؤ. كما تهدف ايضا الى اكتشاف اي من انواع التكافؤ الا وهي الرسمية والحركية في ترجمة بعض التعابير الانجليزية الى العربية. ولقد لوحظ من خلال التحليل ان المترجمين عليهم ان يبذلوا جهدا كبيرا لأقناع القارئين المترجمة اليهم هذه التعابير. كما اكتشف في هذه الدراسة ان نوع التكافؤ (الرسمي) غير مفيد في ترجمة هذه التعابير الى العربية. خصوصا تلك المليئة بالألوان الثقافية. اضافة الى ذلك فأن المترجمين عليهم ان يأخذوا لطريقه الاسهل وتطبيق التكافؤ (الحركي) لكي يتمكنوا من ارضاء القراء العرب المترجم اليهم هذه التعابير الانجليزية. وأخيرا فان كلا من هذه التعابير المستعملة في هذا البحث قد تم تحليلها والتوصيات قد اضيفت في نهاية هذه الدراسة ايضا.

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0. Introduction

Translation is a procedure of substituting a text in one language (SL) source language into another (TL) target language. The source language is the language where the text requires translation; and the target language is the language into which the original text is to be translated. This substitution, however, varies according to the approach.

It goes without saying, that translation procedure is not an easy task as many of us believe; by using just bilingual dictionaries to gain the meaning of a text, the procedure becomes very hard when we try to convey the exact meaning of the SL into the target receptors. Specifically texts, which have include cultural signs such as idioms, metaphors, proverbs, sayings, etc.

In this case, translators have to use their imaginative skills and the most suitable translation method in order to satisfy the target receptors. It is true to say that translation has been an important mean of communication between people. Arabs' civilization flourished because they translate into their languages many works and arts in which Nair (1996:2) proves that Arabs "translated many books… from Sanskirt". Consequently, many strategies of translation has been taken into account in order to produce a satisfactory translation to the target receptors. One of these strategies is 'equivalence', there is no doubt;equivalence is a central issue in the translation theory. Many translation students and learners struggle to produce as much as possible the meaning in the target text. According to Kenny, (2009:96): "Equivalence is a central concept in translation theory, but it is also a controversial one".

1. Objectives of the study:

The main objective of this paper is to shed some light on translation equivalence with reference to some English idiomatic expressions to be rendered into Arabic. The paper also aims to:

- Identify the notion of equivalence, including formal and dynamic equivalence.
- To investigate hoe equivalence plays a decisive role in translating English idiomatic expressions into English.
- The paper further attempt to show which types of equivalences, i.e formal or dynamic is useful in rendering these expressions into Arabic.

2. Review of the related literature:

Many scholars highlighted the notion of equivalence in translation. Kittel et al. (2004: XXVII) arises the problem of equivalence in the translation field. According to him, this problem arises because it is, "defined and applied in different ways, and its usefulness is

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often fundamentally questioned". Translators seldom accomplish precise translation correspondence between source language (SL) and target language (TL). Nevertheless, they are assumed to search for a way to attain as far as possible an appropriate degree of regularity,

Systematic action and standardization in the TT (Sidiropoulou 2004). However, (Bassnett 1991:29) has different point of view from Sidiropoulou's when she argues that, "Equivalence in translation […] should not be approached as a search for sameness, since sameness cannot even exist between two TL versions of the same text". We can deduce from Bassnet then that it is not very important to seek the same equivalence in the target language maybe because of the difference between the languages and cultures from the researcher's point of view. In the field of translation, two main important types of equivalences. That is to sayNida's formal and dynamic equivalence, which will be going to be discussed in the next section.

2.1 Formal Equivalence of translation

Formal equivalence is the closest match in terms of form and content.According to Kelly (1979:131), "Formal equivalence depends on one-to-one matching of small segments, on the assumption that the centre of gravity of text and translation lies in the significant for terminological or artistic reasons".

Formal equivalence can be helpfully applied to texts, which are not loaded with cultural signs translation, and according to Bassnett (1991:26), this "focuses attention on the message itself, in both form and content". Kelly (ibid:131) on his side sees that formal equivalence can be used only according to expressive objectives of the source language.in this context he adds that it depends on , "one-to-one matching of small segments". We can deduce then that formal equivalence refers to the translation of the source language text into the target language text in terms of meaning and style. We might conclude with Nida's best definition of formal equivalence when he states, "Such a formal-equivalence (or F-E) translation is basically source-oriented; that is, it is designed to reveal as much as possible of the form and content of the original message." Having briefly shown the notion of formal equivalence, let us now see the other type of equivalence, i.e. dynamic, and to investigate, by analysis, which type of equivalence is best in the translating of some English idiomatic expressions, or, 'maybe', both of them are not useful. This will be shown in our analysis of data later on this paper.

2.2 Dynamic Equivalence of Translation

It is the closest match of effect between source language (SL) and target language (TL). It is an attempt to achieve the same effect of the source language receptors to the target receptors. Translators and translation trainees are free to change the form and content of

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the source language text in order to achieve the 'effect' of the intended meaning. In this regard, Baker (1992:57) supports, "It is also important to bear in mind that the use of common T-L patterns which are familiar to the target reader plays an important role in keeping the communication channels open".Kim (2004:16-17), advices translators and translation trainees to seek for an expression that is similar not in form but in meaning in the target language in order to convey the intended meaning to the target receptors. In this prospective he adds, "search for the meaning of the text and then to use the resources of the receptor language to the best advantage in expressing that meaning". This is exactly what Nida (1964:166) means by a dynamic equivalence translation describing it as "the closest natural equivalent to the S-L message".

3. Corpus resources and Data Analysis

The data in this paper consist of some English idiomatic expressions, Shakespeare's sonnet, and a Bible verses. These expressions will be applied to both types of equivalences, 'formal' and 'dynamic' in order to see which type of equivalences is useful in the translation of these expressions into Arabic.

3.1 Data Analysis

As it is stated in literature review above, formal equivalence is the closest match in terms of form and content.This ,of course, will not be useful in the translation of texts, which are loaded with cultural signs, such as, idioms, metaphors, proverbs, etc. This is because, formal equivalence calls for the 'match' just in terms of 'form' and 'content' only. If we apply this notion to the expressions that say:

- **It warmed my heart!**
- **Shall I compare thee with a summer's day!**
- **Lamb of God!**

They will distort the meaning of the message that these expressions intended to convey. It will provide nonsense translations for Arabs as follows

- **قد أدفأ صدري**
- **وهل لي مقارنتكي بيوم صيفي**
- **خروف الاله**

The above translations show that formal equivalence is illogical for the target Arab readers for two reasons: first, it is because that Arabic and English are remotelyunrelated

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in terms of cultures, and ecology. Secondly, formal equivalence conveys only the form and content but not the 'intended meaning', which is most important. If we see the translationsof, '**it warmed my heart**' into Arabic, 'ادفأ صدري', '**shall I compare thee with a summer's day**' as 'وهل لي مقارنتكي بيوم صيفي', and, '**lamb of God'**, as 'خروف الاله'. This will give bad impression for the target Arab readers because, Arabs, unlike English, live in a very hot areas. The expressions, '**warmed my heart**' refers to hearing very good news that charming the hearers. However, if we say, 'ادفأ صدري' for the Arabreader, expectedly, given that the Arabs have the extreme heat of the climate, this will be giving a bad response to them. Therefore, the solution would be to use a term that has the closest result to that of the meaning, replacing '**warmed**' with '**frozen**'. The idiomatic expression would then be: **'it frozen my heart'** because this will make more logic given the context. The same problem that faces formal equivalence in translation would be in Shakespeare's sonnet,

Shall I compare thee with a summer's day!

As it is said above, environment can play a significant role in the translation procedure. A translation is further effective if translators consider the environment of the target culture when rendering the meaning of the source language culture. When an Arabic girl is flirted with the above Sonnet, her immediate response will be very bad. This is because, since Arab girls live in a hot country, the sonnet will not give comfort and this may refers to that she is 'ugly'. Consequently, the solution would be to use a term that has the closest effect to that of the Western girls, who live in very cold countries, experienced. This will be done by substituting the word, '**summer**' with a season that is welcomed in Arab areas, '**Spring**'. The Shakespeare's sonnet translation would then be:

Shall I compare thee with spring's day!

Which can be rendered into Arabic as,

وهل لي مقارنتكي بيوم ربيعي

The same Bible verses,

'Lamb of God'.

Nida faced problems when he was a 'missionary'. He faced difficulties when he attempted to translate the Bible verses,**Lamb of God**' to the Eskimos. The word '**Lamb**'
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looks vague to them since they live in a very snowy area and they even did not see the animal lamb in their lives because lambs do not live in very snowy areas. When he attempted to render the form and content of the verses, as, 'خروف الله', it gave nonsense to them. Nida then, tried to substitute the word, '**lamb**' into an animal, which is very common to them like, '**seal**' i.e. he applied the dynamic equivalence approach, which calls for, 'naturalness'. The translation will be then like,

'Seal of God'.

Which can be translated into Arabic as

فقمة الاله

Snell-Hornby (1995:19) comments on Nida's explanation in dealing with this case:

> A literal translation ("formal equivalence") would create problems in a culture, such as that of Eskimos, where the lamb is an unfamiliar animal and symbolizes nothing. The "dynamic equivalent" in this case would be "Seal of God", the seal being naturally associated with innocence in the Eskimo culture.

In addition, Nida and Taber (1982: 201) accept that the formal equivalence distorts the sense of the Source language. In this regard they state, "Formal correspondence distorts the grammatical and stylistic patterns of the receptor language, and hence distorts the message, so as to cause the receptor to misunderstand or to labour unduly hard".

Whereas dynamic, which is more workable tan formal in translating such expressions, calls for the closest match between the source language and target language in terms of, 'effectiveness' commenting:

> This type of definition contains three essential terms: (1) equivalent, which points toward the S-L message, (2) natural, which points toward the receptor language, and (3) closest, which binds the two orientations together on the basis of the highest degree of approximation (1964:166).

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4. Conclusion, findings, and recommendations:

This paper has investigated a method of comparing the types of equivalences, formal and dynamic with reference to some idiomatic expressions including, Shakespeare's sonnet, a bible verses, and an English idiomatic expression. Going back to our analysis of the data provided, we can cautiously suggest that translating such expressions would seem to be more *comprehended* when applying dynamic equivalence approach *than* the formal one.

- On the basis of analysis of the data, it is determined that most of the English expressions have their equivalence in the target language, Arabic. However, they require some adjustments in order to achieve the same 'effect' on the target readers as that experienced by the source language readers from the original text.

- It has also found that the 'dynamic equivalence approach' translators have the choice to change source language words by adding or glossing words on the condition that they retain the intended meaning of the original text working within its framework.

- It has also investigated that formal equivalence approach is not that co-operative method for translating texts that are loaded with cultural expressions.

- Finally, it has been noticed through our analysis in this paper that in order to achieve equivalence, translators should take into account that they act as a connexion between the source language writer's mind and the target language text addressees. Therefore, they have to take the easier path, by using dynamic equivalence, to guarantee that the target language text reads like the source language original text. More than a few directions for additional study can be taken at this point. This equivalence approach could be applied to other contexts such as, proverbs, idioms, metaphors, etc. as well as to other religious documents and texts. To conclude, from a methodological point of view it would be important to apply the above mentioned types of texts in order to achieve to the target readers the intended meanings of the original documents.

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