

## The Measurement of Bilingualism and Its Employment in Teaching Second Languages

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### Abstract

This paper aims at the illustration of how to measure individual bilingualism (B) and communal B and how to employ the results of measurement in second-language (L2) teaching and curriculum.

The paper has dealt with five types of measurement instruments : questionnaires (Q), tests, interviews, self-rating, and others' ratings. The paper has given examples of parent Q, preferred-language Q, language-exposure Q, attitude Q, motive Q, and outcome Q,

It has also given examples of parallel tests (T) and how to use them in measuring the four major language skills and other sub-skills. It has given, as well, eleven types of special tests to measure B : reaction-time T, word-association T, extraction T, mixed-reading T, interference T, under-stress T, semantic - congruity T, language alternation T, dichotic listeningT, Stroop T, and vocabulary-list T.

The paper has also show the vital significance of L2 and B measurement in L2 teaching and curriculum design. It is essential to self-evaluation, promotion, item-analysis, diagnosis, grouping, placement, prognosis, error analysis, contrastive analysis, L-policy planning, curriculum design, and measuring motives for L2, attitudes towards L2 and its native speakers, and the outcome of L2 learning.

ambiguity can be divided into two main types : inherent i.e. structural ambiguity and casual i.e. lexical and phonological ambiguity.

Both types do not pose a real problem for native speakers because of the possibility of clarification and decoding. But they do really pose a serious problem for translators who do not have full mastery over both SL & TL i.e. Arabic & English, because, unlike literature,

translation as I stressed above, involves two language systems.

To solve these problems, students of translation must adopt problem - solving strategies, and develop a frame of reference in constructive linguistics, linguistic analysis and cultural awareness. It is also indispensable that they gain wider panorama of knowledge of both Arabic and English and expand their real life experience.

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#### Notes and References :

- (1) There is the notorious inherent structural ambiguity which gave rise to «Pyrrhic Victory» : When Pyrrhus, the Greek, invaded Rome with his dephants, he went to Delphi before he launched and asked the oracle : «Shall I conquer the Romans ?» She answered an ambiguous statement as usual. She said : «Pyrrhus the Romans shall conquer». It turned out to be true. He conquered but was conquered as well. Because he obtained victory only at the highest price. Almost all his invading troops.
- (2) This is due mainly to lack of metaphoric expressions and avoidance of allegory and other figures of speech.
- (3) Wormhoudt, A. (1978), *Dirwan of Abu - Taysyib Ahmed Ibn al-Hussein al-Mutanabbī*, Vol. vi, William, Penn College. p. 467.
- (4) The Holy Qur'an the children of Israel, 8
- (5) Pickthall, M.M. (1930), *Holy Qur'an*, Hyderabad, Deccan, p. 175
- (6) Al - Baqillani, A.M. (1977), *l'Jāzu - 1 - Qur'an, Dārūl - Ma'ārif*, Cairo, p. 210.
- (7) Az - zavtani, A.A.I (1948), *Sharhul mu'allaqāti - 'Isah'a*, Muḥammad Ali Sabīh, Cairo p. 98
- (8) Arberry, A.J. *The Seven Odes*. C.U.P., Cambridge, 1957. p.151.

Or No ! Turn right ! Only more information can elucidate your friends'.

## 2. Lexical Ambiguity :

It is worth - mentioning that 'Roget' in his «Thesaurus» gives the words 'uncertainty', 'obscurity' and 'equivocality' as synonyms of the word 'ambiguity'. He says : «It is hardly possible to find two words having in all respects the same meaning, and investigation of the distinctions to be drawn between words apparently synonymous, forms a separate branch of inquiry». 'Roget' stresses here one aspect of the problem of lexical ambiguity which even a «Thesaurus» like his does not give a final solution to, and was only concerned with reciting and enumerating thousands of synonyms.

However, synonymy is not the only frame within which ambiguity occurs because the problem of lexical ambiguity gets rather complicated for translators from English into Arabic and vice versa. This is because both languages have been taking a different course of development ages ago. For while Arabic has developed a kind of diglossia and colloquialisms that lag behind an ever - expanding panorama of new concepts for which no words in Arabic simply exist, the English - which is the lingua franca of modern times - evolved a wide spectrum of regional varieties, registers, and an ESP.

The problem gets complicated also because translation involves two language systems - which, in the case of Arabic and English, are extra - ordinarily mazy and labyrinthine particularly when we remind ourselves of the paucity in theoretical literature and lack of a comprehensive frame of reference for Arabic as compared to English.

Arabic, for instance, does not have capitalized forms. In English capitalized forms of the same words can assume an entirely different meaning e.g. Mosaic, Reformation, Inquisition, the Hill, the House, the Church, the Hundred Flowers, Society, Protestant..etc.

Students rarely give a correct translation of statements involving lexical ambiguity and

therefore, an extension of double meaning runs through the whole statement e.g.

- 1 - He pronounced a sentence.
- 2 - He found the table fascinating.
- 3 - The bull was unexpected.
- 4 - What a bad digest !
- 5 - He gave the finishing stroke.
- 6 - Address the chair, please.

Similarly in Arabic when a polysemic word can have different meanings according to context e.g.

- مثل أمام القضاء.
- دخل مبنى القضاء.
- أنها بحكم القضاء والقدر.
- سيان لديه القضاء على خصومه أو تركهم وشأنهم.
- عين بوظيفة قائم مقام في قضاء الحمدانية.

Collocations, registers, compounds, and colloquialisms do not give rise to ambiguities for English translators. But some of these categories would lay down problems for Arab translators of English particularly when they allow for double meaning. The same thing takes place in some Arabic expressions when translated into English e.g. Arberrys' translation of the following line from the pre-Islamic MuCallaqua of Zuhair :

ومن لم يذد عن حوضه بسلاحه  
يهدم ومن لا يتق الشتم يشتم<sup>(7)</sup>

Whoever defends not his watertank with his goodly weapons,

Will see it broken, whoever assaults not others is himself assaulted<sup>(8)</sup>.

Where the Arabic word 'hawdah' : family, honour, homeland, is literally and erroneously translated as 'watertank'.

## Conclusion :

In conclusion we see that ambiguity is one of the main features of natural languages and it comes as a result of many factors. Also that

dungeon for the disbelievers.<sup>(6)</sup>

«عسى ربكم أن يرحمكم وإن عدتم (إلى  
الطاعة) عدنا (إلى المغفرة) وجعلنا جهنم للكافرين  
مصيراً».

As contrasted to Arabic, punctuation in English is of a paramount importance to both text comprehension and translation into Arabic e.g.

- 1-a. Ali, with his four brothers, is in the car.
- 1-b. Ali and his four brothers are in the car.
- 2-a Later, commentators said that..
- 2-b Later commentators said that..

In the example 1- a 'Ali' is the subject of the sentence and should be co-ordinated with a singular verb while in the example 1 b. 'Ali and his four brothers' is the subject of the sentence and should be co-ordinated with a plural verb. In example 2-a, on the other hand, 'Later' is an adverb while 'Later' in example 2-b is an adjective. But it should be mentioned that punctuation does not pose any serious problem of text misunderstanding for English translators from Arabic and that the kind of ambiguity it gives rise to for Arab translators is more or less a problem of competence and text comprehension. Headline ambiguity is in most cases part and parcel of ellipsis e.g.

- 1 - Insanity Rules Critic.
- 2 - Electricity Crisis Restriction.
- 3 - Bull Grants Increase.

An interpretation of the afore-mentioned headlines will cover a wide spectrum :

- 1 - a. A critic criticizes insanity rules.
  - b. Insanity of a kind or another rules a critic.
  - c. A critic whose task is to criticize insanity rules.
- 2 - a. Restriction imposed by electricity crisis.
  - b. Restriction imposed to minimize the impact of electricity crisis.
  - c. Restriction electricity crisis imposed on people.
  - d. Restriction electricity crisis imposed on usage, voltage, generation stations.
- 3 - a. Bull (stock exchange market brokers) grant increase in- i.e. prices, rates, dividends...etc.
  - b. The grants offered by Bull market have gone up.

Finally, lack of information may cause ambiguity and may result in an erroneous practical difficulty. e.g.

«Suppose you are giving a friend lift to his house for the first time. As you approach a T - junction, you ask :

- «Which way ? Left ?»
- «Right». Your friend replying:

There is no telling as to whether the word 'right' here means : «that is correct, turn left».

1 - I am very happy that we haven't got children like John and Mary.

2 - He gave her dog biscuits.

Intonation will shift the focus alternately i.e. from «children» in the first utterance to «John and Mary» in the second. So that the first reading will make «John and Mary» children whereas the second reading will make them our next - door neighbours who have many children while we have none. The same thing applies to the second sentence when the pronoun «her» carries the tone so as to make «her» the receiver of the «biscuits» specially manufactured for dogs, whereas in the second utterance the word «dog» carries the tone as so the «dog» not «her» becomes the receiver of the «biscuits».

Premodification falls under the same category of structural ambiguity, but it is more of an inherent character e.g.

1 - The young men and women.

2 - Young boys and girls.

3 - New houses and shops.

While context and / or co-text can be of much help in finding out the ellipted modifier, it is quite a hurdle in Arabic texts especially in rhetorical literature which runs counter to MSA that tends to simplicity and clarity<sup>(2)</sup>. In pre-Islamic poetry as well as in sacred literature e.g. Quran, where the most recurrent kind of ellipsis i.e. the ellipsis of the modified noun occurs, representation becomes a real obstacle before translators e.g.

وعيني إلى أذني أغرّ كأنه

من الليل باق بين عينيه كوكب<sup>(3)</sup>

«While my eyes were fixed on the ears of

my elegant horse

As if a star were left betwixt his eyes by the departed night».

Where the adjective «'aghghara» - indicating a horse «ḥiṣān» with a white spot on the forehead - replaced the modified ellipted noun horse «ḥiṣān».

The translation of the following verse will serve as an example :

«عسى ربكم أن يرحمكم وإن عدتم عدنا  
وجعلنا جهنم للكافرين مصيراً»<sup>(4)</sup>

Translation by Pickthall as :

«It may be that your Lord will have mercy on you, but if ye repeat (the crime) we shall repeat (the punishment) and we have appointed hell a dungeon for the disbelievers.<sup>(5)</sup>»

«عسى ربكم أن يرحمكم وإن عدتم (إلى  
المعصية) عدنا (إلى المعاقبة) وجعلنا جهنم للكافرين  
مصيراً.»

The conditional phrase «وإن عدتم عدنا» contains two ellipted prepositional phrases which have been interpreted by pickthall as 'if you (the crime). We shall repeat (the punishment) ; while the ellipted phrases are meaningfully related to what precedes the conditional particle implied by «إن», taht is «It may be that your Lord will have mercy on you'. It follows that this interpretation of the ellipted phrases is contextually incorrect and that semantic conformity necessitates an entirely different interpretation of the verse, thus «It may be that your Lord will have mercy on you, but if you revert to (obedience), We shall revert to (forgiveness). And we have appointed hell a

- 2 — الدروز والغجر المتنقلة
- 3 — غرائب المفردات والأشعار القديمة.
- 4 — العمال والموظفون المدربون فنياً.
- 5 — نحو الأمية والتعليم العالي على نطاق واسع.
- 6 — أسواق المدن الرئيسية.
- 7 — مسؤوليات العمل والأسرة.

which when handed over to 3rd year translating students, the following translations were received :

- 1 - The groves and the large garden.  
The large gardens and groves.  
The large groves and gardens.  
The large groves and the large gardens.
- 2 - Druz and emmigrating Gypsies.  
Emmigrating Druz and Gypsies.
- 3 - The oddities of old terms and verses.  
The oddities of terms and old verses.
- 4 - Technically - trained staff and workers.  
Workers and technically - trained staff.
- 5 - Eradication of illiteracy and large - scale higher education.  
Large - scale eradication of illiteracy and higher education.
- 6 - Principal cities' markets.  
Principal markets of the cities.

## 7 - Work and family responsibilities .

Work responsibilities and the family.

The postmodifying adjectives in the Arabic examples are being interpreted by the students whose mother tongue is Arabic as belonging to either the postfixed noun or to the prefixed noun. The ambiguity persists in the English version-So that any retranslating of the above translations will in 99 % cases add up to the original ambiguity of the Arabic statements<sup>(1)</sup>.

Structural ambiguity also arises from ellipsis which normally results in miscues and mistranslations e.g.

- 1 - John loves the theatre more than Susan.
- 2 - He likes the dog more than his wife.

Above 90 % of 4th year translating students rendered these two sentences as follows :

- جون يحب المسرح أكثر من سوزان.  
— يحب كلبه أكثر من زوجته.

While the same ambiguity persists in the Arabic counterpart (1), we see that counterpart (2) is completely misrepresented and consequently, mistranslated.

The following statements are ambiguous structurally, but additional information elicited from pronunciation will make their meaning clear :