

الفصل الثالث والعشرون

Chapter XXIII

Advanced Analytical Study

On

TRANSLATION AND TRANSLATORS

(With Emphasis on Egypt)

دراسة تحليلية متقدمة عن الترجمة والمترجمين

(مع التركيز على مصر)

The Importance of translation:

In spite of the paramount importance of translation in the lives of nations, it passed through ages of flourishing and deterioration. These ups and downs in the history of translation depend mainly on many factors that may encourage or hamper the movement of translation in a certain city, country or region. Such factors may be related to the state policy, the educational institutions, the cultural movement during a certain epoch, the outer currents, the human factor (both collectively and individually) and the tools and methods that are used in the process of translating.

In fact, the importance of translation does not only stem from the bulk of the material (e.e. books, magazines, Journals, records, films, songs ...etc) that is being translated during a certain epoch or a period of time but it stems from the whole bulk of literature that have been translated throughout the ages into the language spoken in a certain region or – even – by dispersed people living in different parts of the world yet having the same affinities and interests. In reality, translated items that from the body of advent cultures, have a great bearing upon the thoughts and cultures of different peoples. Therefore, it is not surprising that policy-makers in certain countries

find it an impelling responsibility to interfere in the translation movement in this or that country or even ban the circulation of certain translated items through ages passed.

During the fifth decade of the twentieth Century, Egyptian authorities gave an incentive to translation in the field of Socialism yet when a political crisis was reached between Egypt and U.S.S.R. at the beginning of the sixties this trend was at an ebb, even it took a counter turn. In such cases, translators should adhere to the policy of their governments because the danger of translation (from their own points of view) does not merely lie in its cultural effects but it surpasses them to political, social, economic or even behavioral effects. Thus, it can safely be said that the gates of translation may be opened or closed in the face of a certain cultural trend according to the policy adopted by the concerned authorities in a certain nation. Of course such a stand may have its effect on translators in general.

On the other hand, it should be understood that the trend of translation movement does not always mean per necessity that the act of translation always takes place to transfer a higher culture into a lower culture or vice versa at a certain point of time . The reason for this lies in the fact that the endlessly moving current of translation does not confess the bounds or confinements of time or place; it takes and gives simultaneously, it enriches and fecundates the modern discipline with the most ancient ones. It enables critics, poets and writers to compare the Greeks with the Arabs, or the Romans with the Americans or the British. Now, we can use the norms and standards of Aristotle in passing certain judgements on Shakespear's Macbeth or Hamlet, Marlowe's Dr. Faustus, Arthur Miller's The Crucible, or Dryden's.

Translation Trend and Force Majeure

Sometimes a certain translation trend is imposed upon a certain country due to what might be called "force majeure". An impelling translation movement appeared in Egypt during the French occupation (Essam El Deen, 1986) with the aim of collecting information about the Egyptian life and Society as well as imbuing the French language and culture amongst the elites. Yet, although this movement started with an impelling nature, it quickly acquired acquiescence and even it found a fertile soil in the heart of the men of letters and artists that were eager to translate the French plays and novels for the Egyptian cinema and theatre that were beginning to flourish at that time. Moreover, missionary schools have opened their gates wide to Egyptian nationals who were really interested in learning much about the French culture and life which in their turn gave a new impetus to translation at that time . The same is true of the British occupation when it superseded the French occupation.

This picture can be seen with slight differences in most of the lands that were subjugated to German, Spanish, Portuguese, French or English occupation either in the Old or New World alike . There is always an impelling fact: that although these lands freed themselves from political imperialism, they themselves clung willingly to the umbilical cord that closely attached them to the cultures and civilizations to which these occupying Powers were related to > In short, they forgot the violent nature of the source and clung to the valuable bequest (i.e. its language and literature) that is bequeathed by it. However, such a stage is considered just a starting point in the movement of translation due to the fact that the foreign language is considered a means of communication among the masses more than its being a means of education and acculturation.

Translation as a Discipline

In a later stage when such languages were adopted by educational institutions as a means of education or even were taught for their own sake as pure disciplines, they were subjected to several supervisory bodies (i.e. the ministries of education or specialized councils). These bodies began to organize, regulate and divided into graded levels the teaching of languages. Then they assigned them according to their importance (i.e. in Egypt, the English language is considered the first foreign language and the French language as the second foreign language).

During this initial stage, translation was a practical exercise and it depended upon individual efforts. It did not depend on hard and fast rules. There were no teachers of translation as a separate discipline. It was taught through practice more than its being a science that has its own laws. Moreover, translated works were merely confined to individuals and lexical words were still in their cradle.

The Emergence of Translation Theories

The wider the gates of translation movement got opened, the greater the number of translators got involved. Thus, improvement both in the tools and methods used in the process of translating has become simultaneously accrued in that domain. As a result, translation theories have been formulated and with the lapse of time such theories were reviewed and reformed to get adapted with the ever growing requisites of translation. Prominent among those theoreticians is Catford (1956) who defined translation as the act of "replacing text material in the source language by an equivalent text material in the target language " where not only superficial semantic equivalents are sought but also a maximum of implied meanings and emotional and aesthetic effects are transferred.

The end product of translation is the result of a series of phrases that the translator undergoes consciously or unconsciously and more or less intricately according to factors such as the characteristics of the original text to be translated, the translator's intellectual and material resources, the source and target language involved, the purpose of the translation and other basically external influences such as time and physical or emotional conditions for the task.

Really, there was an obvious trend for paving the proper ground for the realization of a translation that might be objectively correlative to the original text both in form and content. Yet, although much has been said about the text to be translated and the audience for whom the translation is intended, the translator himself is often overlooked.

Professor Hayes who is considered one of the few prominent linguists, has given due care to what might be called the third variable in translation, when he said it is reasonable to speculate that he (the translator) is likely to produce a better translation of a work for which he feels some special affinity than for a random work for which he happens to be commissioned. Moreover, just as accomplished actors portray Hamlet differently and concert musicians give different renditions of the same Bach fugue, skilled translators will also interpret a literary work in various ways, for every translator has his own unique personality, his own special understanding of the source and target languages, and his individual method in performing the translating function. Therefore, no matter how strong a desire may exist to preserve and transmit the character of the original author's writing, the critic must remain aware that the translator's Self is also present in any translation (Hayes, 1975).

Hayes' concept can be considered a launching point for many critics

who are desirous to set the norms and standards for a mature translator and hence for a better translation; for if we are to have better translations, we should have mature translators who are able to translate efficiently any given text that lies within the domain of their translation maturity having in mind its form and content .

Translation & The State

Translation, as any other creative work, has a tremendous effect on cultural, social and political life of peoples. Governments and ruling authorities are fully aware of this fact, therefore they have passed laws, and imposed regulations to control the items to be translated with the purpose of protecting thoughts and ethics of their citizens. However, censorship bodies are entrusted with playing this role and they are authorized to ban or permit certain types of books, to encourage, or discourage certain trends of thought or philosophy. As such, the solution of this problem is considered one of the assignments of the ruling authorities and it is defined according to the national interests of their people.

As far the state is concerned, it can safely be said that its role goes far beyond its authority in banning or permitting a certain work of art or a certain book of philosophy from being translated. Yet, it has to draw certain plans to encourage or discourage the movement of translation.

Also, the state has to be clear in the policy it adopts towards the prevailing trends of the time because it takes the initiative towards channeling the whole efforts of the army of translators living upon its earth. This was quite clear in the Arab World during the years of awakening as well as in Europe during its Renaissance. Egypt, being prominent among the Arab countries, saw a period of cultural and scientific flourishing that was accompanied by a flourishing movement in translation .

This period reached its peak during the reign of Mohamed Aly who conceived the importance of European culture and science. He sent to Europe hundreds of scientists, men of letters, and philosophers. He did not forget to win the spiritual backing from Al-Azher, therefore, he appointed Rifaah – Al – Tahtawi, who was one of the most famous Sheikhs at the time, to supervise all the missions that were sent abroad in pursuit of acquiring knowledge (Essam El Deen, 1986).

Moreover, Mohamed ali entrusted Al – Tahtawi with the job of regulating and directing "The School of Languages " that proved to be a nucleus for an affluent movement of translation that still has its deep effects till the present day .

Sometimes, the state may interfere but not in such a way so as to give impetus to translation movement. Such a state of affairs may have its bad effects even on individuals or on independent societies and corporations. Saad El Deen M. (1984) says that translation in Egypt is going through a crisis nowadays. He adds that this fact is stressed in a report submitted by the cultural Division in the Specialized National Councils. The report said that the activities of both the state and the individuals in the field of translation in the near past were adding hundreds of literary, economic and scientific books, yet, nowadays the torch of translation had died out and the Arabic Library is now lacking both Eastern and Western Modern books in different disciplines.

Saad El Deen also reminds us of the report submitted by the cultural Division when Youssef El Sebaei was the Minister of Culture. The report demanded that the State should give special care to create a translation movement under the auspices of a certain council or a general authority for translation that may comprise the society's elites. The report suggested that

this council or general authority should be entrusted with planning, technical supervision and the following up of all the items to be translated. Also, it should make lists of all what should be translated. Moreover, it should lay down the bases for both the professional and technical preparation of proficient translators, as well as providing them with the necessary tools and means that may facilitate their duty.

Mekkawi (1983) went far as to demand the formation of an independent ministry for translation. He said that translation is a creative art especially in developing countries. He believes that it is considered the life buoy that may save us from our cultural tardiness. He also suggested that all the bodies and authorities that are working in the field of translation should be unified in one body.

Youssef. M. (1988), says that the suppressor (the occupying forces) was the imperialist that was using his own language in the past, whereas the dominant factor at present is the international market which is wholly managed by using the English language. In fact, commodity, in the age of international domination does not know any nation . Therefore, those who are desirous to satisfy their needs whether they are material or spiritual, should use this language as a from or a medium for interchanging commodities among nations . Thus, international cultures are enriched through the interchanging of cultural production. Meanwhile, we can use comparative studies in order to distinguish between the linguistic, artistic, cultural and social levels of both languages.

Youssef believes that if the process of translating foreign cultures into our own language is to be done in a sober way, or if we translate our own culture into other languages we shall obtain a dual benefit. For in this case we shall lose nothing of our mother language as well as we shall add

something new to our Arabic culture. In fact, it would be our own destruction if we think that through boycotting foreign cultures and languages we are preserving the purity, and genuineness of our own culture and language. On the contrary , we get unified into the world culture when we move knowingly and soberly towards our own aim by using the tools of comparison and analysis.

Al-Ashry (1983), expresses his sorrow for the state of translation today. He says that in spite of the importance of translation and its effective role in bridging the gap between the different cultures and civilizations, yet it is still considered as a second class profession. He asserts the fact that translation is neither a mechanical profession nor it is an automatic process, yet it is an artistic and technical creation that needs exceptional effort. Moreover, he clarifies a truth that is universally acknowledged when he says that translation plays a very important role in political domain because it develops understanding between nations (as in the U.N.O.) as well as between various peoples and successive generations .

Al-Ashry says that translation in the past was given due care by the state and translators were encouraged both materially and spiritually. Yet, negligence and lack of respect to translators were even followed by a shrinkage in the translation activities that were provided by the General Egyptian Book Organization when it stopped issuing two of the most popular and flourishing series at the time namely; "universal novels" , and "The best Universal Theatrical Plays".

In fact, this of affairs has led either directly or indirectly to a state of stagnation amongst prominent translators who either left the arena willy or nilly. Thus, when a state prize was announced to be given to the best translator according to certain norms and standards, the Translation

committee that was entrusted with selecting such a translator ruled out that there is no translator all-over Egypt who deserves this prize according to the stated standards . There-upon it was decided then that the prize would not go to anyone because there was no proficient enough translator who deserved it. Although, it was the right of such a committee to issue whatever decision it deems proper, yet, it was really reflecting the prevailing vacuum in which translators were living.

However, the role of the state is still needed to encourage and organize the movement of translation especially in developing countries where the financial abilities of individuals are still limited. The state has to take in consideration the rapidly changing economic situation all over the world, and to change, accordingly, the rates paid for translators in return for their efforts. It is really unbelievable to pay today the same rate that was prevailing during the sixties whereas everything inflated to more than ten times its real value since that time. Translators are now preferring to work in the field of interpretation because it is more lucrative and governed by universal rates. But it should be noted that not all translators have the ability to work in the field of interpretation, nor have they the ability to continue to work in the field of translation which is really drying up .

Moreover, the state should help towards the formation of a "Translators Union", because through such a union they will express their hopes and desires as well as they can coordinate their efforts with those exerted by the State. Moreover, they can get in touch eith the members of other unions widespreading all over the world. The state has also to form a higher committee for classification of translators in order to classify them according to their proficiency, maturity, and fields of specialization. This being done, extensive and intensive courses should be arranged for junior translators so

as to raise up their levels. Promising translators can be apprenticed by specialized senior translators for a certain period of time and those who prove their maturity would be given a licence indicating their seniority in that field of specialization. These senior translators can be given the title "chartered translators" and should be given access to international bodies and conferences through a recommended list of names to be distributed through the concerned ministries such as the ministries of culture, of information or foreign affairs.

Tools & Learners

Translation is not merely a language – learning technique, it is mainly a professional training approach. Therefore, importance should be given both to the tools used in achieving its purposes as well as to the persons who use such tools. Hence, if we think of a better translation, we have to think also of a better translator. A translator is like a fighting soldier in the field of war; although he depends upon his intrinsic faculties as well as his whole background such as his learning, training and experience, yet he depends also upon the assistance provided by others who serve him in the field as well as the tools provided to him by his seniors.

The tools of the translator are the following:

- 1- The various types of dictionaries that are available at the time.
- 2- Text books on the art of translation.
- 3- Practical books dealing with translated texts.
- 4- Critical books on the art of translation and translated texts .
- 5- The various appliances that are used as assisting tools in translation.
- 6- Processed data that are being stored in computer systems with the aim of helping translators.

7- Recorded items on tapes and discs that are used as aids assisting translators in the various techniques used in translation or interpretation with the purpose of developing his listening comprehensive and developing his oral language skills .

As far as translation is concerned, it can be said that dictionaries are considered the master keys towards opening its gates wide. All of us know our demanding need for both general and specialized dictionaries, having in mind the tremendous developments in the field of communication that made our world, so small a globe. Realizing such a need, many lexicographers concentrated their efforts in producing various types of dictionaries. Some of these dictionaries are either monolingual or of dual languages. They of course vary in size, scope, methodology and specialization. Even some of them may give the various meanings of a certain word during certain periods of time or as being used by a particular author (e.g. chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary, which gives special importance to the meaning of certain words in the works of Shakespeare in addition to indicating if a certain meaning has become obsolete or not).

The history of lexicography is a witness for the hard effort exerted by Lexicographers in compiling dictionaries. Yet, it is far from the truth if we say that the existing dictionaries are sufficient to fulfill the ever-increasing needs of translators. This need becomes more conspicuous if we realized the fact that with the rising sun of everyday, hundreds of words and technical terms are coined in order to cover the new discoveries or inventions that appear everywhere in the world. In reality, no individual language can live apart from the overgrowing tide of the new words that are coined somewhere else by other languages. The more a certain language is capable to translate, absorb, assimilate, or adopt new words and terms within its active body, the

more it will have the ability to survive among world languages. Moreover, in such a case it will enable translators that are working in various disciplines of translating the new knowledge into their own language .

If dictionaries are considered the main sources of meanings , related books on translation, or on criticism of translated works are considered the guidelines towards a good translation. Yet, in spite of the importance of such books their number is considered comparatively limited. I would like to mention some of those books that are dealing with the theories and methods of translation and are still holding firmly in this domain:

Catford, J.C., 1956. A Linguistic Theory of Translation.

Essam El-Deen, A. 1986. The Translation Movement in Egypt in the Twentieth Century.

Eugene A. Nida, 1964, Toward a Science of Translating.

Mansy, A. & Ibrahim, A. 1988. Translation : Basics, Principles and Applications.

Newmark, P. 1981, Approaches to Translation .

Appliances & Facilities of Translation

As for the appliances and facilities used in translation, it can be said that they are not available for all those working, training or practicing in that field. Their prices are still comparatively high and are considered in some countries as luxuries in the field of education especially in developing nations. Thus, as far as translators are concerned such appliances are widely used in developed countries as well as by those who have personal abilities to purchase them. Therefore, the circulation of such appliances and assisting tools is still limited. Sometimes private educational insitiutes or centres may provide for a language lab and short-term courses are arranged there. In such

cases translation is just one of the language activities practiced by those institutes. There is no sufficient concentration that is really required in order to train efficiently those who are eager to be future translators. However, with the passing of time, it is hoped, that the using of such appliances and facilities will be available on a higher scale.

The Human Factor in Translation

The human factor in translation is considered of utmost importance. If we try to simplify the relation of the translator with the work he translates, we can draw it as follows: The original author transmits a message through a certain code which we call the Source Language. The translator receives this message as a Receptor to transmit it through a different code, which we call the Target language, to the new receptors whom we call the Audience or Readers.

Though this equation seems so simple, yet the job is very complicated. For, although the job of the translator is decoding and encoding the same message yet, many other factors are involved during the process. The translator, after reading and understanding the original text, has to identify its objective (Becher Costa, 1988), and the devices through which its original author has achieved any special effects (Hayes, 1975). Also he has to get acquainted with the cultural, historical, literary or scientific phenomena involved in the text.

To identify the objective of the text means to know its function whether it is informative, expressive, or vocative and to whom it is intended. To identify the devices used by the original author means analysing the original text with the purpose of knowing his style, his particular use of language, the linguistic forms adopted, the dialect chosen, the syntactic and semantic traits, the vocabulary and terminology used.

This phase which we can call the phase of "decoding" or "deciphering" the original text is in need for a profound understanding of the source language because this language skill is considered the basis of communicating the knowledge he obtained into his native language. If his comprehension to the source language is complete, he can move to the next step which is called the encoding phase which means to produce the original work in his own language (the target language).

In this phase the translator's central task is to achieve equivalence, and ideally he will strive toward equivalence both of content and form, but inevitably he will encounter situations in which one must be relinquished in order that the other may be preserved. (Hayes, 1975) In fact most translators may achieve equivalence in content alone because it is almost impossible to achieve both or else they will sacrifice the content for the sake of the form.

However, a translator is considered successful in so far as he encodes the total message into the target language not only the informative content but also the emotional and cultural traits of the original communication. In this phase it is the translator's duty to respect the characteristics of the target language, adopt the social and cultural nuances whenever necessary, and transfer the original mood created by the source language text in order to produce as similar as possible an effect on the reader (Becher Costa 1988).

Thereafter, the translator goes through the whole text once more to do the necessary editing, having in mind the correct use of the target language in terms of syntactic and semantic traits as well as spelling and punctuation. The translator is allowed only to make the necessary adjustments that are required to make the text understandable in the target language; a process which is called by Nida: minimal transfer. In fact, the more the translator

practices in the mechanism of transference from the original text into the target language text the more he approaches relative maturity in his field of specialization.

In reality, I believe there is no mature translator in the absolute sense of the word because a translator may achieve proficiency in one discipline or more, yet he can not achieve absolute maturity in all the disciplines. We may find a proficient translator in economics, geography, history, medicine or computers but we cannot find a proficient one in all these disciplines. Therefore, a translator may be relatively mature due to the fact that he can never achieve this relative maturity in all fields of specialization, yet he may be an acceptable translator or a class "B" who is always in need for a class "A" translator to revise his work. On the other hand, a translator may be proficient in translating from a foreign language into his own language but he may not be so is he is asked to translate a text into a foreign language.

Although it is desirable to lay down the guidelines for those who intend to dedicate themselves to translation, yet, I decline to impose rigid and fast rules to be followed by translators. However, it is suggested that during their first years of dedication, translators should go through an exhaustive difficulty, i.e. lexical difficulties, syntactic difficulties, logical difficulties and content difficulties. During this stage, it is suggested that the teacher plays a supervising role – guiding, suggesting, orienting, correcting or indicating. His job should be suggestive rather than imperative: he should teach the translator that there are probable alternatives for most of the difficulties encountered in both the source language and the target language and that he has to learn the art of selecting.

After being taught the art of selecting, the translator can teach himself the art of decision making. This is gained through much experience, by acquiring confidence in himself, and by being all the time aware that he is transmitting a faithful message from his author to his audience or his readers.

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