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Under-Translating Verbosity-Based Arabic News Headlines into English

Abstract

The aim of this study is to explore the impact of verbosity in Arabic news headlines on translators when rendering such verbosity into English. To demonstrate so, ten Arabic headlines and their renderings have been taken from ^{*}Al-Markazi Magazine to be analyzed according to the eclectic model: Hatim's (1991) analytical model and Newmark's (1988) translational model. The current study hypothesizes that communicative under-translation is inevitable for translating such texts into English. The study concludes that verbosity is a challenging aspect in Arabic –English translation. Thus, communicative under-translation is the most suitable method for translating such a type of discourse into English since it highly conforms to the target language norms: simplicity and understatement.

1. Introduction

Understanding the stylistic and cultural preferences is essential in any act of translation, especially when the two languages concerned are not culturally related. In translation, translators often come across such phenomena that translated texts reveal either more or less information than the original ones. Consequently, this, no surprise, results in loss or gain of meaning that poses problems for readers to reach the real meaning. Both over-translation and under-translation are two contradictory approaches to translation realized by the amount of information conveyed to the addressee as compared with the original (Malone, 1988: 46). Few ink has been spilt on 'verbosity in translation'. However, different scholars look at it from different angles. Newmark (1988:47) is in line with communicative under-translation to avoid verbosity, therefore he states: "generally, a communicative translation is

^{*} Al-Markazi is a bi-monthly bilingual journal of the Central Bank of Oman: Vol. 35, December 2008.



likely to be smooth, simplertending to under-translate. A semantic translation tends to be more complexIt tends to over-translate". Conversely, Ghazala (2006: 253) speaks of 'redundancy' as a stylistic problem in translation, and he views that a translator is not authorized to modify the bad style 'redundancy' into good since this is part of the translator's faithfulness to the original. On the contrary, Hatim and Mason (1997:79) point out: "in subtitling, the redundancy is inevitably reduced". Accordingly, breaking up the monotony with reduction is recommended by all means (Malone, 1988: 46).

2. The Notion of Verbosity

Verbosity is a rhetorical technique aims to provide informativity to the addressee using more lexical items than is actually required. Some of the linguistic forms of verbosity are parenthetical clauses which are employed by the communicator for different pragmatic functions (Oliphant, 1955:195). Rhetorically, however, verbosity is an effective mode of discourse that can deliver several pragmatic functions. According to Abdul-Raof (2006:190-1), the pragmatic functions of verbosity are:

1. To influence the addressee and raise his/her sympathy and affection, as in:

"I apologize for not being able to attend yesterday's meeting because of some urgent family circumstances. I had to accompany my wife to the hospital to give birth and had to stay with her all day".

Although this is an informative discourse, it is marked by verbosity which is represented by the details (I had to accompany my wife to the hospital to give birth and had to stay with her all day). However, verbosity is deliberately provided on the part of the communicator to raise the addressee's affection.

2. To achieve affirmation, as in:

"I read the book page by page, and carefully considered it word by word".

where the communicator could have said (I have read and considered the whole book.)

The pragmatic function of affirmation can also be achieved through the grammatical means of parenthesis, as in:

The teacher urged the students who did not listen to his advice earlier to hand in the homework exactly on time.

Where (who did not listen to his advice earlier) is a parenthetical clause that aims to affirm the fact that the teacher has indeed advised his students previously about the same problem.

3. To achieve politeness to the addressee, as in:



With respect to you, you are wrong.

Where (with respect to you) is a parenthetical construction added by the communicator for the pragmatic function of respect to the addressee.

4. To provide clarification, as in:

The worst two diseases that inflict the nation are: ignorance and racism.

Where the details (ignorance and racism) provide more clarification about what is mentioned in the first part of the proposition.

However, too many details make the text non-effective and make it marked by bombast and prolixity in which case the text becomes boring due to the stylistic fact that it is unnecessarily protracted. Verbosity is also employed by the communicator in various aspects such as reconciliation, praise, dispraise, admonition, public speeches, congratulation, manuals, and profile reports (Cheney, 2005:22).

3. Related Notions:

3. 1 Redundancy

The amount of information provided in a target text (TT) segment over and above that which is essential. Redundant information in the TT may be, for instance, occurred if a translator decides to use explicitation as a translation procedure to overstate in order to clarify a particular source text (ST) meaning in the TT (Munday, 2009:219).

In Linguistics, redundancy (also, less frequently, called tautology) means the use of more words when expressing an idea than necessary. Often, redundancies occur in speech unintentionally, but redundant phrases can also be deliberately constructed for emphasis, to reduce the chance that a phrase will be misinterpreted. In rhetoric, the term "redundancy" tends to have a negative connotation and may be perceived as improper because of its use of duplicative or unnecessary wording that some people expand the message to include self-contradictory wording, similar to double negation); however, it remains a linguistically valid way of placing emphasis on some expressed idea. Through the use of repetition of certain concepts, redundancy increases the odds of predictability of a message's meaning and understanding to others (Ghazala, 2006: 253).



To sum up, redundancy to some extent takes the form of tautology: phrases that repeat a meaning with different though semantically similar words. Common examples are:

"end result", "free gift", "future plans", "unconfirmed rumor", "to kill, murder, or electrocute someone to death", "past history", "safe haven", "Potential hazard", "completely surrounded", "false pretense," and so on.

3.2 Tautology

In logic, tautology means the repetition of the same idea in different words. It is a complex linguistic expression which, regardless of which possible word it refers to, is always based on its logical form. Tautologies are, unlike contradiction, analytically and logically true propositions. In other words, it stands for the same word or idea which is unnecessarily repeated (Oliphant, 1955:194). An illustrative example is:

Let observation with extended view.

The tautological expression 'observation with extended view' signals 'observe extensively' no more no less.

3.3 Pleonasm

Pleonasms exactly repeat the sense of the addresser, but it adds nothing to it of any consequence — nothing that is not already involved in what has been said or written previously. Pleonasms are commonly used in many languages including Arabic and English. They are often employed for stylistic and pragmatic reasons and are, thus, acceptable in a text. However, they could be avoided in non-fictional texts since the second, dependent, element of the pleonastic structure usually does not carry any additional information. Most linguists consider pleonasms as errors (Skillin and Gay, 1974:407; Cheney, 2005:22). Common pleonasms are: 'lonely isolation', 'continue to remain', joint partnership', 'the reason is because', and the like (Oliphant, 1955:195).

4. The Model Adopted:

Following Hatim (1991:9), English has a preference for understatement. While in Arabic, one can literally do more by saying more. Likewise, other scholars have the same views concerning the differences between Arabic and English. For example, Zaharna (1995:248) states that the two cultures- English and Arabic -do not only



differ in the way they view the role of language, but they show different preferences for some rhetorical devices in designing any persuasive message. The following highlight such differences: repetition means to repeat something over and over again, or to be wordy or verbose. In Arabic, repetition is a decidedly positive feature. It is not uncommon to find a string of descriptive phrases or words all referring to one phenomenon. Not only there is a repetition within a message, but also often repetition is used as a strategy among messages. For many English speakers, using excessive repetition may have negative implication. This could imply that the statement is either not heard or not taken seriously and, hence, there is a need to repeat it; whereas for the listener, repetition could imply that the addressee is either not paying attention or may not be mentally capable of comprehending (Ibid:48). Another distinctive differentiation between English and Arabic preferences for rhetorical devices is that the English are more often restrained, undemonstrative, and understate, whereas the Arabs prefer exaggeration and overstatement (ibid:49). As a result, it is realized that both cultures-English and Arabic-prefer different rhetorical devices influenced by their different cultural and socio-historical background. Hence, this study focuses on two of these rhetorical devices: 'verbosity' and 'synopsis' with a discussion in relation to their orientation and usage in English and Arabic rhetoric. Newmark's (1988) translational model, communicative, is thought to be the most appropriate approach for translating the Arabic news headlines into English once it is target reader-oriented.

5. Under-translation

'Under-translation' and 'over-translation' are two contradictory translational procedures that can be used to have creative equivalence. Over-translation gives more details than its corresponding SL unit; it is often a more specified element. Over-translation can also be used in the sense when two units of translation are perceived where there is in fact only one. In over-translation, more words are used to express an idea in the TT than were used in the ST. Under-translation, on the other hand, gives less detail and is more general than the original. Under-translation is the inevitable loss of ST meaning, depending on the precise circumstances that lead to an increase in details or generalization in TT. If it leads to the latter, it is termed under-translation (Newmark, 1988:47) .

It is argued that most translations are under-translations. Under-translation entails the use of a general or briefer word whereas over-translation includes the use of a detailed or more specific word. These two procedures are closely related to addition and omission. Under-translation sometimes includes omission while over-translation includes addition. They are close to expansion and reduction. Addition and



omission are commonly used in translation to add more expressivity and rhetoric to language (Al-Jabri, 2007:177).

6. Data Analysis:

Text 1:

"يصدر حضرة صاحب الجلالة السلطان قابوس بن سعيد المعظم-حفظه الله ورعاه-
أوامره السامية"

"His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said Issues his Royal Directives".

The ST headline is abundant with verbosity realized by honorific expressions to show respect to the Sultan of Oman, Qaboos. Honorifics are constructions used to demonstrate dissimilarity of the personal pronouns in some languages in terms of (social) status or (in)formality (Lyons, 1968: 280); verschueren, 1999: 21).

Honorifics are socially deictic because they are indicators of the relationship between participants. If people do not know each other or if one of them tries to show respect for the hearer, a polite form of personal pronouns is required. An example is the use of the first person plural rather than singular to express majesty of the ruler which s/ he states in his/her announcement using 'we' rather than 'I'. This is why 'we' is called the royal pronoun or royal 'we'. In sum, two principal factors override such uses: power and solidarity (Calude, 2002: 3; Al-Rubaii, 2005: 71).

According to the adopted model, such verboisities as 'حضرة صاحب', 'أوامره السامية', 'حفظه الله ورعاه', 'المعظم', 'قابوس بن' are to be under-translated because the TL audience uses only the surname in news headlines (Al-Jari, 2005:11). Accordingly, communicative translation is the most suitable approach for it is simpler, clearer and more direct. Thus, a proposed rendering is:

His majesty, Sa'eed issues directives.

The under-translation-based proposed rendering meets the demands of news headlines: synopsis and highly condensation to attract the reader's attention.

Text 2:

"مسألة تأمين القطاع الزراعي"

"Ensuring The Agricultural Sector"

The ST news headline under discussion reveals redundancy realized by 'مسألة', which is non-sensical for the TL receivers, and to be dropped. Thus, the translator successfully opts for under-translation



which is the outcome of the communicative approach as apparent in the TL version.

Text 3:

"المؤشرات الدالة على درجة أهمية المخاطر في البنوك والمؤسسات المالية"
"Risk Profiling Indicators of Banks"

Obviously, the ST headline reflects more than one unnecessary expression. The pleonastic expression is well manifested in 'الدالة على درجة' and the redundant expression 'المؤسسات المالية'. The translator in question is well aware of such pleonastic and redundant expressions. Henceforth, s/he successfully managed to under-translate the text communicatively to conform with the TL norms: simplicity and understatement.

Text 4:

"البنك المركزي العماني يعقد مؤتمر كشف ومكافحة التحويل المالي"
"The Central Bank of Oman Convenes a Conference on Fraud Detection and Prevention"

The news headline under investigation signals verbosity 'التحويل' instead of 'التزوير' or 'الفساد' for euphemistic purpose, reconciliation as s/he speaks of harsh and unpleasant expressions like 'التزوير' or 'الفساد المالي' in a mild and somehow pleasant one, 'التحويل'.

From a translational aspect, the translator successfully opts for communicative translation through under-translation since s/he has reduced the SL expression 'التحويل المالي' into one item in the TL version, 'fraud' instead of 'financial disorder' for simplicity and economy in effort.

Text 5:

"دول المجلس ضحية محتملة لحالات حدوث التحويل المالي والفساد"
"GCC Countries Could Potentially Be Victims of Fraud"

Here, verbosity in the SL is well manifested in 'التحويل المالي والفساد', which denotes 'counterfeit' and its impact on the above-mentioned countries. Such verbosity denotes affirmation to shed more light on reconciliation because the model of the study argues that Arabs can literally overstate by saying more. Thus, verbosity is apparent in such an expression as 'التحويل المالي والفساد', which stands for a bad phenomenon, 'fraud'. As far as translation is concerned, the translator successfully



adopts communicative translation realized by under-translating 'التحايل' into 'fraud' for simplicity and economy in effort, and consequently to be easily digested by the TL audience.

Text 6:

"الرؤية الحديثة التي تتطلع لها السلطنة في المجال السياحي"
"Prospects for Tourism in the Sultanate"

The SL news headline here signals verbosity represented by parenthesis introduced by the reduced relative clause 'التي تتطلع لها' to indicate elaboration. Similarly, the lexical item 'المجال' is elaborative too. Translationally, building on his/her sound understanding of the message, s/he adopts the communicative approach through translation by reduction to convey the message appropriately as far as possible. Thus, under-translation is obvious in rendering 'الرؤية الحديثة التي تتطلع لها' into 'prospect' since the latter indicates expectation for the future. As for the item 'المجال' has been dropped by the translator since it is contextually accessible.

Text 7:

"التطلعات الوظيفية لجيل الشباب"
"Career Aspirations of Geny"

Here, the SL redundancy is apparent in the lexical item 'جيل' since it is unnecessary, and contextually comprehensible. On his/her part, the translator opts for blending, i.e. a word formed by combining two different words, therefore the translator has blended the two items 'generation of youth' to form a new word 'geny' for economy in effort and achieving creativity. The SL item 'جيل' has been dropped by the translator to achieve the communicative translation for it is simpler and more direct.

Text 8:

"إنهاء احتكار شركة واحدة أو اثنتين للخدمات المقدمة إلى المستخدمين وإعطاء الفرصة لدخول أكثر من مشغل"

"End the Monopoly of Only One or Two Communication Companies in Providing Telecom Services to the Customers"

It is worth mentioning that the SL news headline here is abundant with the pleonastic and tautological expressions. The former is well manifested in 'المقدمة إلى المستخدمين'. The latter is realized in 'إعطاء الفرصة لدخول أكثر من مشغل', which is reflected in repeating the same idea by

different style. However, such pleonastic and/or tautological expressions, according to the TL norms, should be avoided so as not to be boring and non-sensical. The translator, however, to some extent has failed to manage the situation properly once s/he has adopted semantic translation as in 'الخدمات المقدمة إلى المستخدمين' 'providing telecom services to the customers'. A better translation can be:

End Monopolistic Communication Companies

This is attributed to the fact that news headlines should be highly condensed to be more attractive since the wit of speech is brevity.

Text 9:

"تحسن آفاق الانتعاش الأوروبي"

"Improved Outlook for Europe"

Notably, the SL text under investigation embodies redundancy realized in 'آفاق', which is unnecessary. The translator has succeeded in skipping or overlooking such a redundant word by undertranslating the expression 'آفاق الانتعاش' into 'outlook', which means 'expectation for the future' communicatively to be easily accessible by the TL audience.

Text 10:

"كلية الدراسات المصرفية والمالية تضع الرؤية المستقبلية والاستراتيجية للسنوات المقبلة وتفتح القاعات التدريبية والتعليمية الجديدة"

"CBFS Launches Its Future Vision and Unveils New Training Rooms"

Investigating the text in question, one can find pleonasm and verbosity to shed more light on what is being stated. The pleonastic expression is illustrated by 'الاستراتيجية للسنوات المقبلة', which is unnecessary to be mentioned since 'الرؤية المستقبلية' is sufficient. Verbosity which is apparent in 'التعليمية' is used to provide clarification. As far as translation is concerned, though the translator to some extent well managed to under translate, s/he failed when s/he semantically has rendered the expression 'الرؤية المستقبلية' into 'future vision'. A better translation is 'prospect' since it stands for expectation in the future.

Conclusions:

The conclusions of the current paper are presented as follows:

1. Verbosity is the most common aspect in Arabic as it is manifested in 1, 5, 6 , 7 and 10.



2. Verbosity is associated with politeness formulae and/or honorific expressions since they tend to superfluous expressions as in text 1.
3. Multifunctionality of verbosity is context-bound as is the case with 1, 5, 6, 7 and 10.
4. Communicative under-translation is the most suitable approach for translating Arabic news headlines into English as is the case with text 2, 3, 4, 5, 7 and 9.

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الترجمة التلخيصية للإطّباب في عناوين الأخبار من العربية إلى الانكليزية

المستخلص

إن الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو تبين أثر الإطّباب في عناوين الأخبار العربية على المترجمين عند ترجمة هذه الأساليب إلى اللغة الانكليزية. وللتحقق من ذلك، تم اختيار عشرة عناوين إخبارية عربية مع ترجماتها من مجلة المركزي* ليتم تحليلها وفقاً للأنموذج التحليلي (حاتم: ١٩٩١) والأنموذج الترجمي (نيومارك: ١٩٨٨). تفترض الدراسة الحالية بأن الترجمة التلخيصية التواصلية أمر لا مناص منه لترجمة مثل هذه النصوص إلى اللغة الانكليزية. توصلت الدراسة إلى أن الإطّباب جانب انبرائي في الترجمة من العربية إلى الانكليزية. لذلك فإن الترجمة التلخيصية التواصلية هي أفضل طريقة لترجمة هكذا نوع من الخطاب إلى الانكليزية لأنها تتماشى بشكل كبير مع معايير لغة الهدف: البساطة والتهوين.

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