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Problems of translating drug leaflets from English into Arabic

Lect. Dr.. Najat Abdul- Rahman Hassan*

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Introduction

A drug leaflet is a full and comprehensive description of a pharmaceutical product which lists some vital information about the drug's composition, uses, dosage, and side effects. Based on the fact that the main drug producers around the world especially those producing certain sophisticated medications for treating chronic illnesses don't include an Arabic version of the English leaflet's information. Hence Arabic speaking patients will not be able to benefit from the highly sensitive information included in the leaflets, particularly if we take into consideration the life threatening consequences accompanied by the misuse of drugs due to poor understanding of the drug's composition, dosage, side effects and safety precautions. Based on the aforementioned, we can imagine the significance of the proper translation of drug leaflets for both drug users and translation students. Consequently, serious translating errors and problems might emerge.

Scientific translation

Translation has been defined and viewed differently by different scholars. For Ray (1962:187), translation means "the transference of meaning from one language into another". Savory (1968:34), defines translation as "a craft attempts to replace a written message / or statement in another language". The aforementioned definitions are given for translation in general. Now we turn our focus to the scientific translation definitions as presented by different scholars. According to Ghazzala (1994) "scientific translation is mainly about translating terms in the field of science and technology of all kinds, medicine, physics, chemistry, mathematics, and computer sciences from one SL into TL".

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Scientific translation is simpler than literary translation and this fact is endorsed by many linguists, such as, Savory (1968: 161) who confirms "that scientific translation is so much more direct, so much freer from alternatives, so much less artistic than the translation of any other kind of prose". The language of scientific and technical texts is characterized by impersonal style, simpler syntax, use of acronyms, and clarity.

Shaheen (1996: 144) highlights an important feature of this translation stating that scientific translation has to be accurate in that the information which it imparts to the reader should be as true and exact as the information in the original.

According to Nida (1964), "it is not easy at all to translate scientific terms that emerged in western developed countries languages into a language of third world countries which are still having financial and social problems". Hager (2000) states that "translation is at the heart of international scientific and technical communication". Yowell and Lataiwish (2000) claimed that terminology could be one of the most serious obstacles that may face translators of scientific texts, especially if the target language is Arabic. Kingscote (2002: 247) states "it has been estimated that scientific and technical translation now accounts for some 90% of global translation output".

Medical translation

Henry Fischbach (1961: 462) believes that medical translations are divided into two main categories depending on their purpose, (information and promotion). A medical communication may inform as it promotes, and vice versa. But a text intended solely for internal information need not be as highly polished stylistically as one prepared for external promotion. He puts forward that good translating is the rewriting in the foreign language of the ideas contained in the original.

When the medical communication being translated is intended for the private information of only a few individuals the translator requires no specialized knowledge other than the scientific subject

matter of the translation, except in the case of patents where experience with some legal terminology is desirable (Fischbach, 1961). Medical translation is a crucial factor in disseminating knowledge and new discoveries in the medical field, making such knowledge and innovations accessible to people all over the world.

Medical translation also plays a significant role in providing healthcare services to those who need it whether they were patients under medical supervision or ordinary people seeking to maintain a healthy life style and proper health conditions.

Medical terminology

Medical terminology can be defined as a specialized language with unique features that is used by health care practitioners. This kind of terminology has its own vocabulary that is particularly dedicated to the description of diseases, symptoms, anatomy, treatments, and physiology. The vast majority of medical terms have been derived from Greek or Latin that are accepted and used in almost all languages. These medical terms are used and understood by doctors and health professionals all over the world. According to Caldwell and Henger (1987), "the language of medicine is verbal and symbolic and seemingly filled with mystery to the uninformed".

Barthes (1988: 212), on the other hand, highlights another feature of medical language saying that "medical language is a register in which more than one style can be detected". "There are three main categories of medical terms, each used within its specific group of people for communication, information and documentation" (Fogelberg & Petersson 2011: 13, 22).

- 1- Scientific medical terms used among professional medical staff.
- 2- General medical terms used between medical staff and patients.
- 3- Medical terms used among medical staff (often jargon).

Medical terms constituents

Medical terms consist of three parts as follows:

- 1-Prefix: a prefix is an element attached to the beginning of the word. Prefixes modify the meaning of the term by indicating number, location, time.
- 2-Root: the central part of the word.

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3-Suffix: a suffix is the ending part of the word that modifies its meaning.

For example in the medical term (myocarditis), three parts can be identified as follows:

myo : prefix which means muscle.

Card: root which means heart.

itis : suffix which means inflammation.

Definition of drug leaflets

According to Wikipedia, a drug leaflet is a full and comprehensive description of a pharmaceutical product which lists some vital information about the drug's composition, uses, dosages, and side effects. A Drug leaflet can also be defined as a technical scientific document regulated by the government and directed at health professionals and patients in order to inform and instruct its users about the use of a medicine. Drug leaflets are provided by medication manufacturing companies which normally follow standard templates comprising the same types of information for all medications, such information includes, medication dosage, administration, precautions, and potential side effects.

Challenges of translating drug leaflets.

Drug leaflet is mostly a vocative text in which the manufacturer addresses the reader trying to give some instructions and recommendations concerning the medication. In order to translate such texts, the translator must keep as much as possible the effect of the original text. In this regard, Newmark(1982:15) proposes communicative method of translation in which the equivalent effect of the text is kept . In order to keep the effect, the translator of drug leaflets requires specialized knowledge of medical field in addition to proficiency in both the source and the target languages. As the translator go through the task of rendering the meaning of drug leaflets, certain issues and problems may arise which require the translator to neutralize these translation problems through conveying the most appropriate meaning of the SL text in the TL language. The difficulties and hindrances of translating medical

texts in general and drug leaflets in particular are mainly manifested in linguistic and semantics aspects.

Strategies of translating medical texts

Due to the complicated nature of medical texts in general and particularly drug leaflet texts, translators normally come across numerous instances of hindrances and difficulties that require them to provide the right and accurate TL equivalent that matches as closely as possible the SL text. Hence translators will resort in their endeavor to find the accurate TL equivalent to several translation strategies. Among the most prominent translation strategies increasingly attracting the attention of medical translators are the strategies proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet (1958) which provides an appropriate framework for the translation of medical and leaflet texts in addition to Nida's model of formal and dynamic equivalence. In the following lines, we will have a brief look at these strategies

Vinay and Darbelnet translation strategies

Vinay and Darbelnet (1958) identify two general translation strategies namely, direct translation strategies and oblique translation strategies. The two strategies comprise seven sub-strategies of which direct translation covers three, borrowing, calque, and literal translation. (Vinay& Darbelnet, 1958:46)

The main focus with regard to this study will be on direct translation strategies since it is the most preferred with relation to scientific and medical text in general and to drug leaflet texts in particular. In this context, Savory (1968:161) confirms " that scientific translation is so much more direct, so much freer from alternatives, so much less artistic than the translation of any other kind of prose" this statement asserts that accurate and precise rendering of the SL text is a key issue in such kind of translation and this represents the reason behind giving priority and preference to direct translation strategies.

Direct translation strategies comprise the following types

1-Borrowing

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In this procedure, the SL word is transferred directly to the TL. Borrowing means using foreign terms from the SL and putting them in the TL in a way that these words will become part of the lexicon system of the target language.

2-Calque

In this strategy, the SL expression is transferred in a literal translation to the TL. Calque means translating a phrase borrowed from the SL literally through maintaining the source language structure and the manner of expression which may not be familiar to TL. This strategy is not widely preferred or used by medical translators, that's why we will not provide any examples with relation to this strategy

3-Literal translation

This is a "word –for-word" translation in which the SL text is translated literally into the TL, provided that the same effect and wording of the SL is preserved in the TL.

Nida's translation strategies

According to Nida's (1964) translation strategies are classified into formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence. Formal equivalence is used when there is a direct equivalence in the TL, whereas dynamic equivalence is used when the translator can't find a direct equivalence in the TL and at that time he/she will adopt one of the three procedures proposed by Nida and which he calls, techniques of adjustment, they comprise (additions, subtractions and alterations). These procedures can be used for different purposes as follows:

1. Adjusting the linguistic form of the related item to make it appropriate for the TL.
2. Producing structures that are semantically equivalent to SL texts.
3. Generating stylistically appropriate equivalents.
4. Producing the same communicative effect of the SL.

In the following more details will be given for these three procedures as follows:

3.7.2.1. Additions:

This procedure is used for some cases in which the addition is necessary. The first case is to clarify elliptic expressions. The second is to disambiguate the lexical item in the TL. The third case is to change the linguistic category when necessary. The fourth is to explicate implicit elements. The fifth is adding connectors when required as in the case of translating from English into Arabic.

3.7.2.2. Subtractions:

There are four cases in which the translator is capable of using this technique, unnecessary repetition, specified references, conjunction and adverbs.

3.7.2.3. Alterations:

Three main types of alterations are noticed, changes due to problems caused by transliteration, changes due to differences of structures of the two languages, and changes due to semantic misfits, particularly with idiomatic expressions.

The model adopted

An eclectic model of Nida (1964) and Vinay and Darbelnet (1958) has been adopted for this research.

Data analysis

In this section, a number of sentences and expressions have been extracted from several drug leaflets written in both English and Arabic languages. These text fragments exhibit certain linguistic and semantic translation problems which will be the focus of our analysis as in the following:

1-ST: the ability of patients to engage in hazardous tasks such as operating machinery or driving motor vehicles may be impaired.

TT:

ينصح بعدم تشغيل الات او قيادة مركبات بعد تعاطي الدواء خصوصا اذا شعر المريض بدوخة

Discussion

The translation of the SL text has been conducted inappropriately in the sense that most of the SL text has been neglected and mistranslated into the TL text. The translation clearly contradicts the meaning of the SL text and conveying only part of the SL meaning. For example, in the TL text segments:

(ينصح بعدم)،(بعد تعاطي الدواء)،(خصوصا اذا شعر المريض بدوخة)

It is obvious that the above translation is irrelevant to the SL text due to the fact that such translation has no reference in the SL text and the conveyed TL meaning doesn't relate to the SL meaning, hence the translation procedure used is that of addition. Moreover, it is also evident that some SL text segments such as, (the ability of patients to engage in hazardous tasks), (may be impaired), have not been translated into the TL text and hence the translation procedure used is that of subtraction. Based on the aforementioned remarks we can propose an alternative translation that would be as follows:

قد تضعف قابلية المرضى على الانخراط في اعمال خطرة كتشغيل المكنائ او قيادة المركبات.

With regard to translation strategy used, it is evident that we have resorted to the strategy of literal translation. (*This example has been taken from Epigesic drug leaflet*).

additions	Justified /unjustified
ينصح بعدم	+
بعد تعاطي الدواء	+
خصوصا اذا شعر المريض بدوخة	+

Subtractions	Justified /unjustified
The ability of patients to engage in hazardous tasks	-
May be impaired	-

2-ST: Discard 30 days after opening

TT:

تجنب استخدامه بعد مرور ٣٠ يوما على فتح القارورة

Discussion

The SL item (discard) has been mistranslated into the TL text

تجنب استخدامه

The SL item (discard) means to dump or throw away, while the TL meaning is impertinent to the SL meaning in that

تجنب استخدامه

Means refraining from using the drug while the original intended meaning is to dump and get rid of the medication after the elapse of 30 days. Since the medication after this period won't be beneficial to the patient and that the patient should get a new medication in case there was a need for longer treatment intervals. The translation procedure used is that of alteration. Also we have a case of addition represented by the TL item (القارورة). Therefore the alternative translation would be:

تخلص من الدواء بعد مرور ٣٠ يوما .

Translation strategy used is the strategy of alteration of meaning. *(The example has been taken from Fucithalmic drug leaflet).*

alteration	Justified/unjustified
تجنب استخدامه	+

addition	Justified/unjustified
القارورة	+

3-ST: Skin rash

TT:

القرصة الجلدية

Discussion

The SL text (skin rash) has been translated inappropriately into the TL text as

القرصة الجلدية

This translation is clearly irrelevant to the SL meaning in the sense that (skin rash) is a dermatological condition where the skin experiences the spreading of a number of red spots as a result of an

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illness or as a reaction to something. The TL equivalent on the other hand denotes the meaning of pinching or squeezing of the skin, which renders the translation as inappropriate conveyance of the SL text. The translation procedure used is that of alteration.

Therefore, the alternative translation as we see fit is:

الطفح الجلدي

The translation strategy used is that of literal translation. (*Example is taken from Panadol drug leaflet*).

alteration	Justified/unjustified
القرصة الجلدية	-

4-SL: Colona was carefully designed to achieve effective relief of gastro-intestinal spasms and colitis.

TL:

تم تنفيذ كولونا بتركيبة صممت بعناية خاصة لتجعله متميزا بقدرته على التخلص من التقلصات المعوية والمعدية والقولونية

Discussion

The SL item (colitis) has been inappropriately translated into التقلصات القولونية

This translation is inaccurate in the sense that (colitis) refers to the inflammation of the colon while the translation is referring to colon spasms which represent a different disease. The translation procedure adopted is the procedure of alteration of meaning.

The SL text (to achieve effective relief) is translated into the TL text لتجعله متميزا بقدرته على التخلص

This translation is inaccurate since the SL text is referring to the achievement of full recovery of the disease while the translation is referring to the ability of the medication to treat the disease.

The translation procedure used is that of alteration of meaning.

Also we have several cases of addition of meaning as follows:

- تنفيذ - تركيبة - خاصة-

So, the alternative translation would be:

تم تصميم كولونا بعناية للتوصل الى الشفاء التام من التقلصات المعوية والمعدية والتهاب القولون

The translation strategy used in this example is the strategy of literal translation. (*The example has been taken from Colona drug leaflet*).

addition	Justified/unjustified
تنفيذ	-
تركيبية	+
خاصة	+

alteration	Justified/unjustified
لتجعله متميزا بقدرته على التخلص	+
التقلصات القولونية	-

5-SL: Post-dysenteric colitis

TL:

اضطراب القولون في حالات الدوسنتاريا الاميبية المزمنة

Discussion

In this example the SL text has been inappropriately translated into the TL text in the sense that post-dysenteric colitis refers to the occurrence of bowel or colon irritability syndromes following an acute contraction of dysentery. While the TL rendering is giving the conception that the colon irritability case is occurring simultaneously with existence of symptoms of chronic amoebic dysentery and that clearly represents a misinterpretation and contradictory translation of the SL text since the symptoms of irritable colon normally show up after the termination of the dysentery symptoms. The translation procedure used is that of alteration. Moreover, there is a case of addition represented by the TL text (في حالات) Therefore, the more appropriate translation of the SL text would be:

اضطراب القولون ما بعد الدوسنتاريا المزمنة

Translation strategy used is that of literal translation. (*The example has been taken from Duspatalin drug leaflet*).

alteration	Justified/unjustified
اضطراب القولون في حالات الدوسنتاريا الاميبية المزمنة	-

addition	Justified/unjustified
في حالات	+

6-SL: The medication has a high viscosity between blinks and low viscosity during blinking.

TL:

هذا الدواء له لزوجة عالية نسبيا اثناء فتح العين ولزوجة منخفضة عند اغلاق العين
اثناء فتح الرمش

Discussion

The SL text (between blinks) is misinterpreted into the TL text

اثناء فتح العين

(Between blinks) designates the interval or time lapse between opening and closing the eyes, while the TL text is only referring to opening the eyes without any reference to closing the eye, which obviously contradicts the SL text meaning which asserts that there is the process of opening and closing of the eyes. Also it is clear that the SL text (during blinking) is inappropriately translated into the TL text

اغلاق العين اثناء الرمش

The SL text (during blinking) refers to the period between the opening and closing of the eyes while the TL text is pointing out to closing the eyes while blinking which represents a contradictory rendering of the SL text since closing the eyes will readily prevents the eyes from blinking.

The SL text is making a difference between blinks and blinking in terms of the interval or the period between opening and closing of the eyes in the sense that (blinks) has longer duration for eyes opening while (blinking) has a shorter interval for opening the eyes. The translation procedure used is that of alteration. Moreover, there is a case of addition represented by the TL item (نسبيا).

Based on the aforementioned discussion, the TL rendering is an inappropriate translation of the SL text. Therefore, the more appropriate rendering would be:

لهذا الدواء لزوجة عالية عند فتح وغلق العين ولزوجة منخفضة اثناء الرمش

Translation strategy used in this example is that of literal translation.

(The example has been taken from Hyfresh drug leaflet)

alteration	Justified/unjustified
اثناء فتح العين	-
اغلاق العين اثناء الرمش	-

addition	Justified/unjustified
نسبياً	-

7-SL: Nausea

TL:

قى

Discussion

The translation of (Nausea) into

قىء

Is inaccurate. The SL lexeme (Nausea) denotes the meaning of disgust and uneasiness resulting from certain interactions accompanied by disturbing or inconvenient situations causing the individual to develop this bitter feeling. The TT rendering on the other hand denotes the meaning of vomiting which appears irrelevant to the SL text meaning. The translation procedure of alteration is adopted in this case.

Hence, the alternative translation would be:

الغثيان

Translation strategy used is the strategy of literal translation. The example has been taken from Bidontogyl drug leaflet).

alteration	Justified/unjustified
قىء	-

8-SL: Metformin interferes with the absorption of vitamin B12

TL:

ان ميتفورمين يتعارض مع امتصاص فيتامين ب ١٢

Discussion

The translation of the SL lexical item (interferes) into

يتعارض

Is clearly inappropriate. The SL lexeme denotes the meaning of involvement or intervention in other things or activities, while the

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TL rendering denotes the meaning of contradiction or clash. The translation procedure used is that of alteration of meaning.

Therefore, the more appropriate translation would be:

ان ميتفورمين يتداخل مع امتصاص فيتامين ب ١٢

Translation strategy used is that of literal translation.

This example is taken from Metformin drug leaflet)

alteration	Justified/unjustified
يتعارض	-

9-SL: symptoms of over dosage may include drowsiness.

TL:

اثار الجرعة الزائدة تتمثل في الدوار

Discussion

The SL text (drowsiness) has been inappropriately translated into the TL text as

الدوار

This translation is inappropriate in the sense that (drowsiness) means the propensity or inclination to sleeping and this meaning is completely irrelevant to

الدوار

Which implies the meaning of giddiness and vertigo that is related to the feeling of spinning and disorientation. This feeling is associated with losing the ability to walk in a balanced way with potential falls that may follow. The translation procedure used is that of alteration. Also we have another case of alteration represented by the TL item

تتمثل

Which stands for the SL item (include).

Therefore, the more appropriate rendering would be

النعاس

The translation strategy used is that of literal translation.

alteration	Justified/unjustified
الدوار	-
تتمثل	+

This example is taken from Motilone drug leaflet)(

10-SL: use in liver disorders

TL:

يستخدم لمعالجة مرضى الكبد

Discussion

Translation of liver disorders into

مرضى الكبد

Is totally inappropriate rendering of the SL text in the sense that liver disorders are certain hepatic cases where patients may experience several symptoms that may waver between mild and acute liver infections, while the TL rendering designates patients suffering from liver diseases, such as, hepatitis and cirrhosis.so, it is evident that the SL text meaning is mainly focused on liver related difficulties and symptoms while the TL text is centered around patients suffering from liver diseases and that may result in contradictory and inappropriate translation of the SL text. The translation procedure used is that of alteration. Also we have a case of addition represented by the TL item (لمعالجة) which lacks any SL counterpart. The proposed rendering would be *يستخدم لمعالجة لاضطرابات الكبد*

The translation strategies used are the strategies of literal translation and addition of meaning represented by the addition of the TL item لمعالجة

to the proposed rendering.

(example has been taken from Ceftriaxon drug leaflet).

addition	Justified/unjustified
لمعالجة	+

alteration	Justified/unjustified
مرضى الكبد	-

Findings and conclusions

- 1- The difficulties encountered in translating drug leaflets are mainly linguistic and semantic ones. T
- 2- ranslators faced with such difficulties have resorted to adopting the three translation procedures of (addition, subtraction and alteration).
- 2-The previous analysis shows that there are serious translation problems and gaps that have been detected in the discussed drug leaflets examples.
- 3-Translation of drug leaflets should be performed mainly by professional translators in order to avoid translation inconsistencies and gaps.
- 4-The importance of translating drug leaflets stems from the fact that any slight misunderstanding on the part of the drug consumers may lead to highly dangerous consequences where the life of patients might be compromised or being highly at risk.
- 5-Scientific translation in general and medical translation in particular should be given proper attention not only by drug producing companies but also by translation departments in order to make future translators more acquainted with the field of medical and pharmaceutical related translation.
- 6-Enough attention should be given to the training of translators working in the field of medical translation, given the fact that there are constant accomplishments and discoveries in the medical arena especially with relation to new drugs and medical appliances that requires the translators to maintain a serious and continuous follow up of the new developments that accompany such drugs and medical appliances.
- 7- Since there is no one to one translation equivalence in the translation of medical texts, so translators will use various translation strategies to handle the task of translating medical texts, and among the most important translation strategies used in

translating medical text is the strategy of literal translation and Nida's formal and dynamic equivalence strategies.

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مشاكل ترجمة النشرات الدوائية من اللغة الانكليزية الى اللغة العربية

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مستخلص

يسلط البحث الضوء على المشاكل والصعوبات التي تنتج عن ترجمة النشرات الدوائية من اللغة الانكليزية الى اللغة العربية وفي البدء يمكن تعريف النشرة الدوائية بانها تمثل وصفا شاملا وكاملا لمنتج صيدلاني يتضمن معلومات ضرورية عن تركيب الدواء ،استخدامه، الجرعة والاعراض الجانبية.

واستنادا الى الحقيقة القائلة بان منتجي الادوية البارزين عالميا خصوصا اولئك الذين يقومون بانتاج انواع مهمة من الادوية الخاصة بعلاج بعض الامراض المزمنة لا يستخدمون اللغة العربية في النشرات الدوائية الخاصة بالادوية التي يقومون بانتاجها فان هذا يعني ان مستخدمي تلك الادوية من الناطقين باللغة العربية لن يتمكنوا من الاستفادة من المعلومات الضرورية الموجودة في تلك النشرات الدوائية خصوصا اذا اخذنا بالاعتبار النتائج الخطيرة المترتبة على سوء فهم هذه المعلومات والتي تتعلق بتركيب الدواء والجرعة المقررة والاحتياطات الواجب الالتزام بها عند تناول الدواء.

بناء على ماتقدم يمكننا ان نتصور اهمية الترجمة الدقيقة للنشرات الدوائية لمستخدمي الدواء وللطلاب الدارسين في قسم الترجمة على حد سواء.