

## *Some Translation Strategies in Bilingual Settings*

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### **Abstract:**

Borrowing and calque are two direct techniques commonly used in translation. In this article, we will try to describe these two translation techniques using for illustration some examples taken from the Algerian mass media. The starting point set out from observation of terms and expressions used in the media. The article also points at some of the limits of the strategies used in some cases.

### **Introduction**

Translation has been a growing sector especially with globalisation and the intensive contact between different people with different cultures and languages. The mass-media are no exception of the effect of globalisation. One of the most obvious problems of translation is the lack of terms in the target language, a fact which leads to the use of different strategies to translate different terms and expressions. In fact, the translator is often confronted with the differences existing between the languages involved. Good translation is not usually just a question of translating each word from the source text into the target language. It is not also taking the idea from the source text, putting it aside and then giving the general idea of it in one's own words in the target language. In-

between the two extremes, there is a wide variety of strategies and techniques which translators will use intuitively for any given word, expression or text. Catford (1965:20) defines translation broadly as

*the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL).*

However, the question that is raised is that in shifting from the source language (SL) to the target language (TL), a term keeps the marks of its origin or its use in the TL. Sometimes it is so subtle that it carries no traces of its origin and poses no problem as far as the TL morphosyntactic or semantic constraints.

## 1. Different translation strategies

### Direct Translation Techniques

- Borrowing
- Calque
- Literal Translation

### Oblique (or indirect) Translation Techniques

- Transposition
- Modulation
- Reformulation or Equivalence
- Adaptation
- Compensation

This article is not devoted to the exploration of all the different techniques used in translation but will focus on

two direct techniques: borrowing and calque. The examples given for illustration are taken from the domain of the mass media (television, radio and newspapers).

## 2 Direct Translation Techniques

### 2.1 Borrowing

A lot has been said about borrowing and different definitions have been put forward by scholars. Heath (1989:23), for instance, defines borrowing as

í [T]he adaptation of a lexical item Py from Ly into Lx, becoming Px (that is, a regular lexical item in Lx satisfying phonological, canonical-shape and morphological rules for this language.

However, in the present article, it is not our aim to review these definitions or to comment on them. We will adopt here Poplack's (1980) approach which insists on the phonological, morphological and syntactic integration of the borrowed word into what she called *the base language*.

As a translation technique, borrowing consists in taking words straight from another language. Borrowed terms often pass into general usage, for example in the fields of technology but also in general use. Beside the structural integration, most of the time different graphic signs such as inverted comma, parenthesis, underlying, italic or bold, etc., are used by journalists or writers to bring out the borrowed words.

We will see below some examples of borrowings and the different forms of adaptation.

### 2.1.1 Phonetic adaptation

Borrowed words are sometimes phonologically adapted to fit better the sound system of the TL. In fact, when the languages involved, Arabic and French, for instance, are genetically different, the borrowed words undergo some sound substitution to fit the phonological system of the TL.

A few examples will clarify such a process:

In the word **سينما** *cinema*, the two vowel sounds [i] and [e] are realised [i].

In the following two examples, **فيروس** *virus* and **كليب** *clip* the [v] sound is substituted by [f] while [p] is replaced by [b] in the second. In both cases, the French vowels [e] and [i] and consonants [v] and [p] are replaced by Arabic sounds which are close but not identical with the SL.

### 2.1.2 Morphosyntactic adaptation

Similarly, when integrating Arabic, French borrowings are morphologically and/or syntactically adapted to fit the grammatical system of the TL. The Arabic language often adapts borrowings so as to be inflected according to the different existing plural forms. For example, the plural of **سيناريو** from French *scénario* is built according to the Arabic sound plural which uses the morpheme {-aat}, i.e. **سيناريوهات** /sinarjuhaat/. In addition here, the sound /h/ is inserted in the plural form to satisfy a phonological constraint in Arabic.

### 2.1.3 Semantic adaptation

Semantic adaptation is a step in which the borrowed word depends on its new environment and where it may be used to express more than what is expressed in the SL. Of course, most of the time the original sense is kept, but there may also be an extension of its sense. In the following example, بطارية, from French *batterie*, is used to translate both the word *battery* and *pile*.

Something that might be worth noting is that a number of words in TL are themselves borrowed from other languages, in particular from English. For example, the word سيتكوم from French *sitcom* is itself borrowed from English 'sitcom' (situation comedy).

However, translation poses a number of problems, especially in the domain of graphic representation. Morsly (1995) explains that in the written media (newspapers) the representation of the Arabic sounds in Latin script does not seem to be systematic and is often left to the choice of the writers, since the graphic representation, as she says, is characterized by lack of systematicity: "í caractérisée par un manque de systématique et une hésitation impressionniste commandée par le libre-arbitre des journalistes." Morsly (1995:43-44)

The following examples, display two different graphic representation for the same term: فولت / فاط *volt* -and ديمقراطية / ديمقراطية *démocratie*.

As for the morphological category adopted by the borrowed term, it may keep the original grammatical category (feminine/masculine) as in ديمقراطية which is a feminine noun in SL and TL. However, sometimes, the borrowed words does not adopt the grammatical category of the SL as in the following example : تلفزيون *télévision*,

which is a masculine noun in French, is feminine in Arabic.

## 2.2 Calque

While borrowings find their way in the TL, mostly because of the lack of corresponding terms to denote the same reality, in some cases, translators<sup>1</sup> use calques. A calque, also called loan translation, is a literal translation (word-for-word) at phrase level. However, sometimes calques are appropriate to the target language and sometimes they are not. As a matter of fact, some calques can become widely accepted in the target language such as *كأس العالم* *la coupe du monde* or *حمام ماري* *bain-Marie*. However, some calques sound funny or odd and are often interpreted as indicating lack of expertise of the translators who are most of the time journalists or writers, non-experts in the target language: the following examples may illustrate such *يعود من بعيد* inappropriate uses: *il revient de loin* literally 'he's coming from far' whose English equivalent may be 'he has been at death's door', or *حمام الدم* *bain de sang*, 'bloodbath'.

## 3. Reasons for translation

There exist different reasons<sup>2</sup> for translation:

- *Necessity*: the TL has no equivalent (cultural borrowing, Myers-Scotton 1993b).

<sup>1</sup>. We do not refer here only to specialists but also to journalists and writers.

<sup>2</sup>. See also, H. Boussaha (2007), p 54-6 who has given different reasons for translation in the Algerian context.

- *Prestige*: the SL word sounds 'better' (more specific, fashionable, more well-known), even though it can be translated.
- *Authenticity*: to retain some 'feel' of the SL.

### Conclusion and implication

If borrowing and calques are common techniques in translations that occur in all languages for enriching the target language, the problem that these techniques pose is that of excessive and unsuitable use of translation by non-experts. This may hinder the creativity of Arabic, especially if we bear in mind that this language, with its derivational productivity ó different words are built from a single stem ó is limited to just adopting or adapting foreign words, a practice that leads to language lethargy. The solution is perhaps to see in the translation activity a multidisciplinary field of research which calls on services of different experts from different domains.

In the present article, we have tried to illustrate two different techniques of translation in a bilingual setting. The examples given were taken from the media. We have dealt with translation from French (SL) to Arabic (TL). In future research, it will be interesting to see how Arabic words are translated into French, a process that consists not only in shifting from a foreign language to the native language, but also in taking account of specific culture-related terminology, as in the following examples: *la wilaya*, *la daïra*, *la fatwa*, *un tagine*, *un burnous*, etc.

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