

“Word for Word” VS “Interpretation” in Specialized Translation

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Abstract

Translation embodies different activities as long as translated documents differ, providing that the main purpose of this task is to render a message from the source language into the target language.

Nevertheless, the process of such mission needs some prerequisites so that the transfer would be operated as methodical and thoroughly as possible.

Indeed, this path has to go through specific phases which vary according to the type of the text the translator deals with. Once moving from one language into another, the translator has to bear in mind that general texts do not require the same terminology management like specialized ones.

As defined by Jean-René LADMIRAL, we mean by specialized translation all the informative texts, where the language has a designated function of representation, and documents are centered on real objects. Such definition may point out that interpretation in specialized translation is limited.

However, SAGER Juan C. suggests four phases while transferring, where “interpretation of specification” is included as a step in the first phase, which is called “Specification Phase”.

Therefore, limits of interpretation in specialized translation are problematic. Problems cannot be sum up in linguistic obstacles, i.e. style, syntax, grammar, specialized terms and expressions, but they go beyond, as it is a matter of passing from a whole system into another, not only in the letter, but rather, in the spirit of the target text with all the risks, adjustments, and the culture of the source language as well as the target language.

Key Words: Specialized Translation – Interpretation – Source Language – Target Language– Transfer

الملخص:

تهدف الترجمة أساساً إلى نقل رسالة معينة من اللغة المصدر إلى اللغة الهدف. إلا أن عميلة النقل تلك تأخذ منحى مغاير ما إن تغير المحتوى. فمسار ترجمة النصوص العامة يختلف بالضرورة عن طريقة العمل على النصوص التي تنتمي إلى حقل عربي معين. ومنه، تقتضي الترجمة المتخصصة المرور بمراحل يتصدرها "التأويل"، غير أن التأويل في هذا المجال يأخذ بعداً آخر، ويساهم في الحد من الوقوع في العديد من المشكلات، إذ لا يكمن الإشكال على المستوى اللساني فحسب، بل يتعداه إلى روح النص الأصل. Translation as a means of communication holds a sacred message, as the translator acts as a medium and exercises a new writing, by which he tries to transform the events that are concealed in a specific text. These events differ from one document to another. According to the content, scholars could attain a result relevant to the typology of texts the translator may work on. Indeed, we can distinguish between three main areas of translation:

The first: the translation of literary and philosophical works;

The second: the translation of science and technology;

The third: the translation of social/ economic/ political topics and institutions.⁽¹⁾

Others think that there are only two main types:

- The translation of Literary texts;
- The translation of non-literary texts.

Each type has its own exigencies and prerequisites.

As far as specialized translation is concerned, it is characterized by the presence of specialized terminology. This fact may lead us to believe that translating such kind of texts is only based on knowing the equivalents of the terms the document includes. The translator in this sense is asked to follow **“a word for word”** method if he aims to render the source text into the target language accurately.

However, terminology alone cannot be the only feature for classifying a text as “specialized”. Thus, Literal translation should be abstinent if a translator intends to be correct and thoroughbred.

For this reason, a translator faces several constraints and needs to choose between two alternatives. The translator’s dilemma is how free he is to interfere in the text he is translating. Therefore, the questions raised while dealing with such type are: **How far the translator is allowed to interpret the source text, to alter it so as to be suitable for reading and to adapt his new text to the culture of the target audience? To which extent can he go beyond “the word for word method” in the process of his work?**

In order to find a response to this question, we need first of all to know the different components of a specialized document. But, before, we have to bear in mind that the notion of **“a specialized discourse”** and **“LSP”** are not separated from the **“common language”** or **“the general language”**. The system of the latter is the one used in specialized texts. Hence, problems of both languages may coincide. They differ widely from text to text, and also **“vary depending on the method of rationality, logic, and control. In such a society, relationships are formed on the basis of shared commonalities”**⁽²⁾. Every discourse holds up dimensions and elements which are reflected not only in **“words”**⁽³⁾ or **“terms”**⁽⁴⁾ but also to the way of expressing them. These elements are: linguistic, sociological, cultural, cognitive and notional. They intervene in every special field and differ from a speciality to another. Ricoeur noticed: **“We have to dwell with others, in order to be able to conduct in ourselves as the host guest”**⁽⁵⁾, this means that, if the translator seeks the perfectness, he would master the elements mentioned above.

At the linguistic level, terminology seems to be the most difficult obstacle we may ever face. When dealing, for instance, with an economic document, we bump into several specialized terms and collocations. Rendering them into the TL is not an easy task and cannot

be only a matter of checking a bilingual dictionary, but rather, a translator has to acquire a deep knowledge of the field.

For instance, when it comes to terms such as “brand”/ “market”, they are literally translated into “marquee – علامة” / “marché – السوق”. but what can a translator do when he finds “churn” in an economic text? Is he going to translate it by “a single word”? if yes, would the equivalent “attrition - إنهالك” be understood by the reader of the TT? It can be the case in French, however, the Arabic reader would never understand it unless it is explained. “Churn” in this field means “خسارة الزبون”.

Therefore, “word for word” is not always the right choice. Studying now the following examples. Let us find the procedure of their translation:

- **Branding**: it is formed of “brand+ ing”, grammatically speaking, it is the present participle and it has its French grammatical equivalent which is “verbe + ant”. So it is literally rendered into French “marquant”; but the most frequent asked question is: what about Arabic? Here again, we are obliged to interpret and explain it in more than one word. In a relevant field, it is meant to be “وضع العلامة التجارية”.

- **Franchising**: the French equivalent is found in specialized dictionaries as “franchisage”, using here the technique of “partial loan”. Finding the Arabic equivalent using the same procedure is “ideal”, the unique method in this case is “Paraphrasing”, because “franchising” in the general language means “امتياز – حق الانتخاب”, but in an economic context, it is “the authorization to sell a company’s goods”⁽⁶⁾. The suitable Arabic translation for this is:

- “عقد تنازل مؤسسة عن استعمال عنوانها التجاري قصد الترويج لسلعة”

Specialized collocations are made on the basis of fundamental concepts of the field⁽⁷⁾. We have the tendency to just find the equivalent of each word in order to preserve the meaning, such as:

The English collocation	The French translation	The Arabic translation
Buying behavior	Comportement d’achat	السلوك الشرائي
Institutional advertising	Publicité institutionnelle	إشهار مؤسساتي

Nevertheless, for the following example « marketing B to B », are we going to stop at “تسويق ب إلى ب”? The question asked by the potential reader is: what does “B to B” refer to? In the original context, the abbreviation is understood, and refers to “Business”, thus, in the target context, it has to be explained and the whole expression must be interpreted by “تسويق ما بين المؤسسات”. Hence, literal translation is “again” impossible, it’s rather an explanation ⁽⁸⁾ and it is considered as one of the free translation procedures suggested by Vinay and Darbelenet.

On the other hand, as far as metaphors are concerned, the translator faces another obstacle, which seems to be hard to resolve. Metaphors are generally original, so the translator is asked to keep this criterion “the originality”; at the same time, his task is based on making the TT reader understand what is exactly meant by an expression. Moreover, the aesthetic feature in specialized translation is reflected in its clarity and simplicity, unlike literary translation, where the aesthetic factor is the key of its success and it is totally linked to the ambiguity that the translator has to reproduce. ⁽⁹⁾

Taking the following metaphor as an example; “flagship product”, it is defined as “the most important product of an organization” ⁽¹⁰⁾. We can understand by this appellation, that this kind of product is wanted by everybody, but we cannot translate it literally saying “منتوج” “في الرابة”, it is, in fact, nonsense. Therefore, as it is the most important, it is for sure of a superior quality, and as we have this concept in Arabic relevant to economics, saying “منتوج ذو جودة عالية” is therefore understood by everyone. That’s why, it is better to use the known equivalent than trying to create an expression which misleads the reader.

Another problem a translator encounters while working on a specialized document is “Neologism”. This means: a newly-coined word or an existing word used in a new sense ⁽¹¹⁾. Specialists create terms when there is a new concept, so they feel the need of naming things with the appropriate word ⁽¹²⁾. Besides, Cabré suggests specific norms which determine neologism: ⁽¹³⁾

- 1- **The date:** it should be recent;
- 2- **Lexicography:** it is a neologism when it is not found in dictionaries;
- 3- **Unsteadiness:** in the meaning, as well as in the form;
- 4- **Psychology:** it is a neologism when users consider it as a new unit.

The hereafter mentioned example seems to respond to those criteria, but the question raised in this case is: is it interpreted? We will try to analyze the meaning and see whether the translator chooses “the borrowing” or another procedure.

“Dogs” in a general context is understood by everybody as an animal (chien – كلب). In a literary context, as far as idioms are concerned, the expression “let sleeping dogs lie” means leave things undistributed, we use then “the equivalence” as a translation procedure. In Arabic we say “دع الفتنة نائمة”. However, when “dogs” (the plural noun of a dog) is found in a specialized context raises several constraints. According to Lendire, dogs in English means in French “les poids morts” or “un produit non-rentable”. For the Arabic translation, the translator chooses between: “كلاب” - the literal translation; “أوزان ميتة” word for word; or “منتوج غير مريح” the explanation technique. The first translation seems to have a bad connotation in the Arab society, therefore, it should be avoided. The only way to make the reader understand what is meant by “dogs” is to appeal to “the explanation”. “منتوج غير مريح” is the best suggestion for the translation.

A good translation needs to reflect that terminology. The correct use of terminology is not sufficient, but it contributes heavily in a thorough work.

As for the cultural element, where the original writer focuses on values, ideas, ideologies and traditions of the source community; and as the main purpose of translation, regardless to its type, is to let the readers attach the effects they hope to imagine as they read along according to their own native culture. The reader is someone blind, who would be able to catch the sight so far he understands what is meant by an expression. In this context, Fernando Poyatos reported a blind person’s speech, the latter said: “what a novelist writes about colors means nothing to me, I cannot imagine what you understand by color. I can imagine, though, shapes and textures of things because I touched many things before, or smells I am familiar with, or tastes of course, but no colors, no sir!”⁽¹⁴⁾ This illustrates very well that a reader can never understand an expression or a text he is not acquainted with its nature. The translator, thus explains, adapts the original to the target to reach the aim of his work.

Specialized translation cannot be excluded from this reality. Indeed, judicial documents enclose an unlimited number of articles and expressions that bear a heavy load of cultural background. It forms the main characteristic – in addition to terminology – of the judicial field. The latter is not a group of terms with different notions, but the way they are expressed as a whole system form the spirit of a judicial document⁽¹⁵⁾.

In fact, law is a social phenomenon, the product of culture which acquires specific and unique characteristics in each society. Because of them, it is hardly to grasp the meaning of a judicial text. This may explain why translators stay bound to the ST. this fidelity to the ST is put forward in order to justify a merely literal translation⁽¹⁶⁾.

In translating the Algerian law into French, numerous terms have been lent because their translation was impossible; as their notion does not exist in the TL. Most of them have a religious background, and hence, the translator could only interpret the signification.

In the 54th article in the “family law”, the term “الخلع” could not be translated, but rather explained in other words as the following:

L'épouse peut se séparer de son conjoint sans l'accord de ce dernier, moyennant le versement d'une somme à titre de « khol'a »	يجوز للزوجة دون موافقة الزوج أن تخلع نفسها بمقابل مالي. (17)
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The concept of “الخلع” was explained, and followed by the lent term “Khol'a” . The latter is, therefore, one of the judicial terms which do not have an equivalent in the TL and cannot easily transferred without making a loan and without adding an expressing interpreting the Islamic signification.

Consequently, interpretation is a tool to reduce the translation gaps and notional interferences, as it is an illusion in believing in « the ideal translation » by a perfect equivalent. ⁽¹⁸⁾

If literal translation leads to nonsense, we appeal to other translation procedures. The translator is condemned to interpretation as the purpose of each translation is making the text understood by its readers.

To succeed in translating specialized documents, the translator has to render the information as accurately as possible, but also as freely as possible.

SL = Source Language;

LSP= Language of Speciality;

TL= Target Language;

TT= Target Text.

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