

Sign Language Translation for the Deaf and Dumb & its Challenges

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Abstract:

Today, Sign language translation is considered one of the most important and popular studies, because it is directed to a special and very sensitive group of society, which is deaf and dumb. This type of translation requires specialized translators with a high level of training in sign language to facilitate the integration of deaf and dumb in various areas of life. We have established our study in order to investigate the current situation of Sign Language translation involving its critical role in global communication, cultural exchange, and professional development, alongside challenges in quality assessment, and adapting to new strategies and complex cultural contexts . Beside to understand the rules that govern this type of translation, and also to determine the necessary professional competencies and ethics of translators. We pointed out in this research to the most important issues related to the training of translators, the strategies used in Sign Language translation, and the major important problems that hinder this translation .

Keywords:

Sign language Translation -Deaf Dumb – Strategy –. Ethics - Training.

1.Introduction:

If language is considered as a symbol of communication between individuals, then translation is in fact a means of expression towards others, regardless of their civilisation and culture. As Dr. Salem Al-Issa states in this regard that: “Translation is the daughter of civilization and its constant companion across time and space. It is the window that different peoples open to be enlightened by the light of others” (1). It must be noted that translation before being a profession and an art, is without a doubt an extremely difficult linguistic practice. It is a

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discipline that has its own origins and techniques. Language is considered a complex component of sign symbols and communicative letters, while Sign Language Translating is by far more complex and more difficult, because it is in a relationship between two languages that are distinct in form and content,

It is known that deaf and Dumb individuals are unable to communicate and express themselves in the spoken language, except with an accompanying person who explains or a specialist who interprets what they saying using the method of sign expressions, that's why the necessity of the presence of specialized translators in the field of sign language is required, to facilitate the communication process and integrate the Deaf and Dumb within society in various areas of life Such as: education, health, media, law, conferences, and others. Therefore, the questions that came to our minds revolved around:

- What is sign language translation, and what are its characteristics?
- What are the problems which interfered the sign language translation?
- Who is sign language translators in this field?
- What are the strategies and techniques of sign language translation?

In order to answer these questions, our research was based on the following points:

2. Overview in the Conception of Sign Language Translation for Deaf and Dumb:

Translation is considered an art based on science. It seeks to meet human needs to transfer ideas and information between different languages in order to achieve communication and cultural exchange between the ancient and modern peoples around the world. We recognize that translation before it can be a profession and an art. it is In fact, an extremely difficult linguistic practice, as Dr. Yaqub Sarruf said: "It is not an easy matter, even more difficult, because the author is free in his own meanings, and the translator is a prisoner of others meanings, restricted by them, obliged to present them as they are - if he is faithful in the translation - as required" (2). Otherwise, he is not a translator, but rather a compiler. while Petrus Danielus Huetis defined Translation as "a text written in a very well-known language to represent a text in a very unknown language" (3), and this is directly or indirectly through an intermediate language or a transferred language.

In his study, Al-Jahiz explains translation in his definition by formulating the word (transferring), saying that , "The books of India were transferred, the Greek wisdom was Interpreted, and the literature of the Persians was transformed...and these books were transferred from nation to nation, from century to century, and from tongue to tongue until they reached us..." (4).

Edmund Carey believes that translation is "the process that seeks to find analogies between two texts expressed in two different languages, so that these analogies always and necessarily take into account the nature of the two texts and their audiences, the recipients of the two texts, as well as the relationships that exist between the culture of the two peoples and their psychological, intellectual, and emotional climate, in addition to all the circumstances surrounding the era and place from which we are translating " (5). Thus, Edmund formulated

for us a comprehensive definition of translation. In his view, it depends not only on linguistic issues but also on cultural contexts.

Therefore, it requires an Anthropological translator with a more cultural approach to be able to deal with textual issues and reconcile the source language with the target language. translator must also be familiar with the cultures of both languages, this is the matter that Al-Jahiz insisted on. In four important points that must be taken into account. Al-Jahiz laid the foundations of translation and clarified the required translator's qualities as follow; The translator:

- Must be aware of the topic he wants to translate.
- He Also Must be fluent in both languages.
- He must be aware of the writer's style, expressions, words, and his manner of interpretations (6).

1.2 . Sign Language Translation for Deaf and Dumb::

The process of sign language translation is similar to the process of written and spoken translation in its concept and work. while, sign language translators, are usually members of deaf families, teachers of deaf and Dumb, or volunteers in centers and institutions for the deaf and Dumb.. In practice, there are those who believe that we can call them facilitators or sign language indicators. In this regard, Youssef Al-Turki asserts, "There is a difference between the term of sign language translator and the term of sign language indicator/assistant. The sign language indicator is like a translator, but smoothly. Also, the sign language indicator may not know the ethics of the profession, and he translates in sign language from person to person according to his personal ideas and beliefs" (7).

Sign language translation is a term given to converting and translating the non-vocal means of communication used by people with special needs, auditorily (the Deaf) or phonetically (the Dumb), into a pure linguistic expression that is understood by both the public and the private .Although there are other practices that can be classified within the levels of gestural communication, such as divers' signals and more specifically such as police or military forces signals or even between gang members and others, where they use:

- **Hand movements:** such as fingers to clarify numbers and letters.
- **Facial expressions:** to convey feelings and tendencies. It is combined with hand movements to give structures of many meanings.
- **Lip movements:** This is an advanced stage of the power of observation, as the deaf person reads words directly from the lips.
- **Body movement:** such as placing some signs on the shoulders and sides of the head or the chest and abdomen in a suggestive use to clarify desires and meanings, in general to express oneself, and it varies from one country to another.

2.2. Brief History of sign translation in the Arab regions:

It is known that the process of sign language translation in the Arab world differs from sign language translators in advance countries such as: the United States of America, Europe, and others. The history of sign translation in Arabic language has been linked since its early inception to the so-called schools for the deaf in the Arab region. It is noteworthy that the first school on the Arab level was founded in 1933 in the city of Alexandria, and the credit for that goes to the Danish woman called (Tsotsu). Thus, Arab schools and institutes of the deaf and Dumb translation continued to be established, as the first school for the deaf was established in the Arabian Gulf region in the State of Kuwait in 1959. The first Jordanian school for the deaf and Dumb was established was opened in 1963, by King Hussein. It was founded by Father "Andwijk," who is an "Anglican priest."

It's revealing to us that the translation movement for the deaf- Dumb was, at its beginning, presented (as a random model) and (as a method of communication) without being classified as (an official profession), but going back to the 1980s, and during these research we couldn't find any scientific reference documenting of the sign translation movement in the Arab region, so this, movement was considered recent, emerging, and random, without qualification and training that relied on codified and clearly described references (8).

In fact, Sign language translation is related to sign language and its deaf users. Anyone who follows the development of Arabic sign language can identify the beginning of the active, random movement of sign translation that began in the early seventies, after the completion of the first sign language dictionary in 1976 in the Arab Republic of Egypt, the production of which was supervised by the National Center for Hearing (9).

The first sign translator appeared on Egyptian television in 1989, followed one day later by a sign translator on Jordanian TV. We can say that the actual sign translation movement and interest in it began was held at the end of the eighties, and thus Arab television continued to use sign translation services on its screens directed to the people with special needs or the so-called deaf and dumb.

At the beginning of the nineties, the official interest in translation services became clear, including sign translation, which was adopted by the Ministry of Social Development, but without any qualification or job description, unlike the Ministry of Social Affairs in Jordan, which took it upon itself to accredit translators in the courts.

However, with the emergence and development of technology and the spread of social networking sites, sign language translators in the Arab region began to form specialized groups, where the first specialized group in sign translators was established under the name "Arab Deaf Translators Group," on the social networking site "Facebook," and after that the (Egyptian Sign Language Translators Association) appeared on Facebook too (10). As it was mentioned above, we can see that sign language translation in the Arab world is still in its developing, despite the passage of two decades since its founding.

3.2. Sign language translation Standards :

Briefly, Translation in sign language is characterized by being an easy understood unambiguous translation, to make it easy for the deaf and dumb and facilitate their understanding and perceiving of the (message) that the sign-language translator wants to convey. This can only be achieved if his translation is smooth and appropriate for all the deaf and dumb groups.

3. Common challenges for sign language translator:

1.3 who is The sign language translator:

The term translator is generally defined as the transferor of concepts and cultures from one linguistic field to another, and not just a transferor of text from one language to another. Every proposal presented in a language (written text or audio) contain a culture and concept which are foreign to the culture and nature of the recipient. Therefore, the translator must bring to the reader or listener the same concept and culture in the target language. (11). However, The sign translator is specifically known as: the person who translates the message between the deaf and the hearing individual and vice versa, using sign language to convey symbolic meanings and connotations to the listeners. Hence, appears the great responsibility which falls on the translator to perform his work with professionalism and honesty.

2.3 Sign Language translator Specifications & Responsibility:

It is necessary to point out to the most Main elements that highlights the importance of the sign language translators responsibility, to explain the extent of making every effort to achieve the aimed goal of sign language translation. In the fact, translating without qualification is like a person plowing in the water. The translator, who does not have a clear concept of the translation process, can't understand and realize the value of translation which considered as an art and science that has its own principles and rules, that means having a dictionary on the hand cannot carry out an accurate translation as an easy task. By the other hand, Speaking Foreign language does not qualify an individual to do this job. Here are those who tackled this art and were not qualified to do so. They have fallen into serious mistakes, we mean those who have taken translation as a commercial profession.

Nowdays, Unfortunately, we see people who are more daring to translate in sign language than in any other language (13). without any experience or qualification and that is considered as a real danger that is Threaten this type of translation. That's why, Sign language translator must possess characteristics, which distinguishes him from other translators and qualify him to this type of work, which are as follow :

- The legal age of the translator must not be less than eighteen years.
- His experience in the field should not be less than three years.
- Obtaining the highest academic qualification.
- He should have a good presence , and acceptable to the deaf and dumb.
- He must pass a professional qualification test(14).

There is another thing that translators should be aware of, which is the mistake that make when it comes to sign language translation, which relates to issues of specialization, does not

only affect its listeners, its effect is reflected in the translator himself, who is the first responsible for what he translates, and on the other hand, he may expose himself to criticism from critics. the prophet Muhammad peace be upon him warned against such situations, saying: “Beware of every matter for which an excuse is made.” (15) Therefore, the work of a translator is extremely difficult and requires a sense of responsibility, especially since we are talking about a special group and a very sensitive segment of society, which is the deaf and Dumb , because everything that is conveyed to them is believed. So, Faithful and truthful translation is a great matter in this field.

3.3 Ethics of the sign language translation profession:

Among the most important morals and ethics required in the sign language translator, as follow :

- **Confidentiality:** To be responsible for the secrets and information he deals with in his work.
- **Accuracy:** Punctuality and conveying the message with all honesty and sincerity (16).
- **Integrity and impartiality:** The sign language translation is neither a guide nor an advisor. It is not permissible for translator to introduce his personal opinions.
- **Professional Proficiency:** He must be cautious and prudent, take into consideration the situations and circumstances in which he translates, and be proficient at work.
- **Appearance:** not to appear offensive to deaf and Dumb.
- **Patience and endurance:** Bear the brunt of workload while performing his duties.
- **Professional permit:** He not allowed to work without a Professional permit that qualifies him to perform his work (17).

4. Significant obstacles & problems of the Sign language translation :

Sign language translation faces many obstacles and problems which we can as follow:

1.4 Linguistic problems:

It refers to all problems that arise in the work of the translator in sign language through the difficulty of remembering the sign symbol in the required time, in addition to the problem of differences in linguistic structures and grammar between languages .

2.4 Cultural problems:

Sign translator cultural level and the extent of his knowledge can impact his work, whether in the scientific and culture side or even on the culture of the deaf and dumb, and their

communication and thinking way, also he should be aware about the meanings of the their communication signs.

3.4 professional problems:

translator faces a number of problems while performing his duties, which can be summarized in the following points :

- Speaker's fast speech makes it difficult for the translator to do his work, mainly in creating the appropriate synchronization between the regular language and the sign language during the translation.
- Sign language translator may encounter a blockage of understanding the speakers' dialects or even the deaf and Dumb signs, which makes it more difficult for him to perform simultaneous translation correctly.
- Problem of overlapping sounds or similarity of sign symbols, makes him not enable to distinguish the meaning intended by the speaker(18).
- Technical factors also have a role in obstructing the work of the translator such as, the interruption of the sound may stop the translation performance, and that leaves deaf-dumb viewers confused.
- Uncomfortable communication with the deaf and dumb may give the translator the feeling that his translation is incomprehensible, which makes him losing confidence(19).
- The fear's obsession of translating in front of people also has a great impact, which makes the translator incapable to complete the translation . Sometimes he feels hopeless and frustrated and thus he withdraws.

5. Sign language translation 's Mechanisms to avoid obstacles & problems :

Due to the problems faced by the sign language translator in his field of work, it was necessary to work on finding solutions that would advance this type of translation and make it credible. Several solutions were proposed and formulated for the sign language translation profession according to the translation needs of the deaf and dumb, such as :

1.5 Sign Language Translation's Techniques:

Sign language translation isn't different of other translations. It also has a number of skills that characterize it and make it unique. Among these techniques we mention:

1: Sight translation:

A- Quality:

In Sight translation, The Sign language translator relays whatever the deaf individual is pointing at and converts the sign symbols into spoken words. It is called visual translation

because it is visual symbols that express the deaf individual's thoughts and carry concepts and meanings. This type of translation is considered one of the most difficult that requires skills, practice and a strong experience. The translator must sit or stand in a place that allows him to see the deaf person's signs and physical expressions clearly.

B- Skills :

We can summarize the visual translation skills of deaf and dumb in the following points:

1-The ability of the sign language translator to monitor manual movements and sign symbols with extreme accuracy, by, analyze them, and understand their concepts and meanings very quickly, and to choose the corresponding terms then express them orally in the target language (20).

2- Sign language translator should have the ability and competence necessary to capture the terminological expressions and gestures of manual movement because they are an integral part of the sign language. Also he must to pay attention to the movement of the sign symbol which carries different connotations and meanings.

3-The translator's ability to embody and simulate the sounds and emotions produced by the deaf and dumb and convey them vocally.

4-The ability to speak loudly and clearly in accordance with the rules of the language and the conditions of translation(21).

C- Training:

The translator must obtain the necessary training in sign translation for the deaf and Dumb, which are as follows:

- Observing the deaf conversations in their gathering places or while they are speaking to each other and performing simultaneous translation in a low voice.
- Watching television programs translated into sign language and trying to translate them loudly into spoken language.
- The sign language translator should not hesitate to involve himself in sign translation for the deaf and dumb, to gain more experience by correcting his errors and developing his level.
- Reading books and topics loudly with the aim of increasing knowledge first, second practicing reading, third correcting pronunciation(22), and finally, increasing the sign language knowledge(21).

2: Audio Translation:**A- Quality:**

Sign language translator should hear the text or sentence from the spoken language and then try to convert it into sign symbols according to the rules of sign language. Audio Translation is considered one of the easiest types of sign translation.

B- Skills :

Audio translator requires a number of skills, Such as being able to :

- Formulate a sentence according to the rules of the sign language. The translator must learn and master the sign language and be well versed in it, so that, he can express the spoken language in the sign language without any difficulties or any significant effort.
- Analyze and understand the meanings inherent in spoken words. This means that he should be able to analyze the speech and its intended meaning, in order to have correct and accurate sign language translation.
- Understand different dialects, whether local, national or international.
- Distinguish sounds and embody them, because the Communication cannot be achieved except through auditory or vocal perception.
- Express in words in body language, conveying the speaker's emotions, and embodying feelings.
- Interpret and choose appropriate sign symbols for the audible utterance.
- Take on a roles of individuals and imitate them.
- Adapt sign language symbols and use it adequately(23).

2.5 Sign language translation Strategies:

Generally, Translation strategies express all textual or verbal rules that govern the text or speech's meaning or concept, However the sign language translator in order to keep the adequated concept he goes beyond these strategies and rules in performing his work, as :

1. Grammatical strategies:

The translator relies on the Grammatical strategy a changing in the order of words respecting sign symbols, which means advancing and delaying. Where sign translation, does not require Adherence to the order of words according to the audio, written text. It is known that sentence structure in sign language differs from sentence structure in normal written or spoken language. Each one of them has special rules and regulations, so it is possible to change the syntactic structure according to the target language(24). by adding or deleting one of the verbal linking articles, and that does not affect the meaning, but it is considered permissible in this type of translation under the principle of omission.

2. Semantic strategies:

Sign language translator intends to use verbal or indicative vocabulary that is more general than the word that has no equivalent in the target language. In other words, choosing the most common and appropriate semantic meaning of the word, or the verbal symbol(25). The use of This strategy in the sign language translation is base on the knowledge of the grammatical abstraction meanings as :

- **In morphology by :** Omission of morphological additions in The word .
- **In grammar:** Omission of articles.
- **In Rhetoric:** Changing a metaphory by close metaphory in the target language(26).

3. Pragmatic strategies:

As we mentioned above, gestures are one of the basic components of sign language. That's why deaf and dumb resort to exaggerating some sign symbols. This linguistic method is to imitate the vocal intonation in order to attract attention. which means that must be taken into account in sign language translation, because the transferring of the same signs and physical expressions, accompanied by explanations and physical gestures performed by the translator in sign language.

4 Conclusion:

We have worked through this research paper to show the value and the importance of sign language translation in daily life, because it provides humanitarian service to a group of society that was deprived and marginalized for a period of time, due to the lack of people who could communicate with them and decoding the meanings of their expressive signs. Accordingly, our study was aimed at raising the topic of sign language translation in order to draw the attention of researchers to introduce this type of translation services and make it known among those who are working in the field of translation so that they understand its secrets and the extent of its importance, and on the other hand, we have sorted out from this study of sign language translation a set of conclusions that must be mentioned:

- 1- Sign language translation is an extremely important profession due to the services that provides to the deaf and dumb.
- 2- Sign language translation needs a methodological study and requires dedicated attention from Specialists, Scholars and Authorities .
- 3-The necessity of forming professional translators in sign language.
- 5- The specialty of translation in sign language is considered almost marginalized by the Algerian government, as the truth proves that this specialty is not taught as a standard in the Department of Translation and Languages, despite its role in switching the communication between the deaf and dumb and Normal person and working to integrate them into the social milieu. Therefore, we should reconsider this issue and work to give it its importance. We should also ensure the sign language training for translators and specialists to keep up with the advanced countries.

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