

Difficulties that Doctoral Students Encounter in Translating Social Scientific Terms from English into Arabic

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Abstract : This study aims at investigating the difficulties facing doctoral students of social sciences at Larbi Ben M'Hidi University – Oum El Bouaghi while translating social scientific terms from English into Arabic. It is conducted also to explore the strategies adopted by them in their translations. The sample included 25 doctoral students. The researcher used a questionnaire and a test to verify the hypothesis which stated that if these students are familiar with English language, are used to translate social scientific texts, have enough knowledge and use the appropriate method, they will be able to understand social scientific terms and translate them successfully without facing any problems or difficulties. The finding of the research showed that the difficulties faced by these doctoral students are due to lack of knowledge concerning both English and Arabic social scientific vocabulary, wrong selection of the suitable strategy, and misuse of grammatical forms.

Key words: translation, social sciences, social scientific terms .

الصعوبات التي يواجهها طلبة الدكتوراه في ترجمة المصطلحات في العلوم الاجتماعية من اللغة الإنجليزية إلى اللغة العربية

الملخص : تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى البحث في الصعوبات التي تواجه طلبة الدكتوراه تخصص علوم اجتماعية بجامعة العربي بن مهيدي بأم البواقي عند ترجمة المصطلحات العلم الاجتماعية من اللغة الانجليزية إلى اللغة العربية، كما تهدف أيضا إلى البحث في الاستراتيجيات التي يتبناها الطلبة في ترجماتهم. وتمت صياغة الفرضية التي مفادها أنه إذا كان هؤلاء الطلبة على دراية باللغة الانجليزية وكانوا متعودين على ترجمة النصوص في العلوم الاجتماعية، ولديهم المعرفة الكافية ويستخدمون الطريقة المناسبة للترجمة، فإنهم سوف يكونون قادرين على فهم المصطلحات العلم الاجتماعية وترجمتها بنجاح دون مواجهة أية مشاكل أو صعوبات. ومن أجل التحقق من الفرضية قمنا باستخدام استبيان واختبار ترجمة موجهين لخمس وعشرين طالبا. أظهرت النتائج أن الصعوبات التي يواجهها طلبة الدكتوراه تعود إلى نقص المعرفة وضعف المستوى اللغوي للطلبة فيما يخص المصطلحات العلم الاجتماعية سواء باللغة الانجليزية أم العربية. هذا بالإضافة إلى استخدام الطلبة للطرق الخاطئة في الترجمة وسوء استخدام الأشكال النحوية.

الكلمات المفتاحية : الترجمة، العلوم الاجتماعية، المصطلحات العلم الاجتماعية

Introduction:

Translating specialized terms from English into Arabic is a hard task because each term needs its appropriate equivalent in the target language. For this reason, students face problems and difficulties when translating them. Translation of social scientific terms is one of specialized translation that requires specialized vocabulary. Doctoral students of social sciences at Larbi Ben M'Hidi University – Oum El Bouaghi have been studying terminology for almost four years, currently at this level; they are supposed to have enough skills in specialized translation. Moreover, they are preparing their thesis in which a huge part of the literature review they should explore is written in English. This study will investigate the difficulties of translating social scientific terms from English into Arabic and show the methods used in their translations.

1. Translation and Social Scientific Translation

Translation is a substitution of a text in one language with another one in another language. It is a challenging task because not all words in SL have equivalents in TL. Translators face many difficulties especially when translating specialized texts such as social scientific texts. Translation of such texts requires specialized vocabulary.

1.1. Definition of Translation

Newmark (1988, p.05) considers translation as “rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way that the author intended the text”. According to him, the common meaning shows that is very simple to say something in two languages. However, translation may be so complicated because when using other language rather than native language, translator seems not to be himself.

Larson (1998, p. 3), in his definition of translation, focuses on the form when he claims that: “Translation is basically a change of form...In translation the form of source language is replaced by the form of the receptor (target) language”. He confirms that translator should keep the meaning because it is the main element in translation. The form is changed from source language to receptor language with respect to the lexicon, grammatical structure, communication situation, and cultural context of the source language text. The translator should reconstruct the same meaning using the lexicon and grammatical structure which are appropriate in the receptor language and its cultural context.

Hatim and Munday (2004), by their side, divided the meaning of translation into two meanings. Translation as a process which means that the focus is on the role of translator while rendering a text from SL to TL, and translation as a product in which the focus is on the TT.

Ghazala (2008, p.1) defines translation as “all the processes and methods used to render and/ or transfer the meaning of the source language text into the target language as closely, completely and accurately as possible”. He focuses in his definition on the meaning, so the translator should understand first the meaning of the word in the SL and then try to find the

appropriate equivalent in the TL. This equivalent may be a word, which already exists in the TL, a new word, a foreign word written in TL letters as pronounced in the SL, or a foreign word made to fit TL pronunciation, spelling and grammar.

1.2. Strategies of Translating Technical Terms from English into Arabic

Ghazala defines technical translation as “the translation of scientific terms of all kinds... the word ‘term’ is used to refer to any scientific expression, whether one, two, three or more words together” (op cit., p.156).

1.2.1. Transcription

Transcription or what is also called ‘transference’ is “the literal spelling of the English term in Arabic letters as it is exactly pronounced, for example, microphone (مايكروفون) , television (تلفزيون) telephone (تليفون)” (Ghazala, op cit., pp. 156,157).

1.2.2. Naturalization

According to Ghazala (op cit.), this method is based on making some changes in the English terms to fit the Arabic language concerning the pronunciation, alphabet and grammar. This means that the translator keeps the English term as a root and adding just Arabic affixes; for example, technology (تكنولوجيا) technological (تكنولوجي) .

1.2.3. Translation

This strategy means translating the technical terms from SL into terms that exist already in TL, Ghazala (op cit., p. 161) claims that “80 - 85 % of scientific terms are rendered by means of translating them into Arabic equivalents that are part of Arabic language lexicon: e.g. geology (علم الأرض) geometry (هندسة) radiation (إشعاع)”.

1.2.4. Coinage

Ghazala (op cit.) considers coinage as the best method of translating scientific terms from English into Arabic. This method allows the translator to use new terms that have not been in use before in Arabic language. Coinage may be realized in three main ways:

a. Revival

This method is also called ‘engendering’, which means to look for old dead words, give them new meanings, and disregard the original meaning. For example, train (قطار) is an old word used to mean ‘a line of camels’. Now, it is used to arabize the well-known word ‘train’. Newspaper (جريدة) is another old word used to mean ‘a small palm stick used to write on patches’. Nowadays, it is used as an Arabic equivalent to ‘newspaper’ (Ghazala, op cit., p. 162).

b. Derivation

The Arabic language contains many measures that allow users of the language to derive new words from existent words, ‘instrument names’ is one of these measures. For

example, laboratory (مختبر), factory (مصنع), washing machine (غسالة), refrigerator (ثلاجة) (Ghazala, op cit., pp. 163- 164).

c. Neologisms

According to Ghazala (op cit.), this strategy is used mainly in technical translation. It is the use of new words, ideas and expressions that did not exist in classical Arabic. For example, psychology (علم النفس), physiology (علم وظائف الأعضاء), metaphysics (علم ما وراء الطبيعة).

1.3. Problems of Translation

The problems of translation may be in a form of obstacles or difficulties with different kinds. Concerning this subject, Ghazala (op cit.) states that translators may come across many difficulties while translating, which require them to stop the process, look for solutions, and help.

According to Melby & Warner (1995), a most known translation difficulty for someone is to be deceived by a false cognate. They add that the other difficulties in translation are more difficult to avoid and have more severe effects than false cognate. Ghazala (op cit.) divides translation problems into grammatical, lexical, stylistic and phonological problems. While Sadiq (2010, p. 11) divides them into linguistic (lexical, syntactic, semantic and stylistic) and cultural problems. The interest of this study is lexical and grammatical problems.

1.3.1. Lexical Problems

Sadiq (ibid) states that lexical problems are due to the absence of direct TL counterparts on one hand, and the different functions of the TL counterpart on the other hand, "in this case, the SL word meaning can be conveyed relying on another TL word having the same function". Sadiq gives the example of Nida (1959) where "snow" is not a known phenomenon in some languages, this makes the translation of the phrase "white as snow" difficult. Translator, here, needs to use another expression having the same function like "white as cotton". Snow and cotton are known to express the meaning of whiteness and cotton is known in these languages.

According to Sadiq (ibid), translator may face another problem that may be solved by paraphrasing. It is when the SL word has neither an equivalent nor another word of a similar function in the TL. For instance, "حور عين" may be translated into "extremely beautiful females of bright complexion and lovely eyes". Translator may use transliteration when paraphrasing is impossible and this leads to the appearance of new words in Arabic, such as telephone "تلفون", radio "راديو", and television "تلفزيون".

Ghazala (op cit.) states that lexical problems "occur when a word, a phrase or an expression is not understood clearly and directly, misunderstood, not known at all to students, or not found in standard dictionaries". He summarizes the main lexical problems in literal translation: synonymy, polysemy and monosemy, collocations, idioms, proverbs, metaphors, technical translation, proper names, cultural term...etc.

Melby & Warner (op cit.) state that the distinction between general vocabulary and specialized terminology is one of translation problems that is called asymmetry. They give the example of the word “bus” which we can find in general vocabulary, with the meaning of public transportation vehicle, and in specialized terminology referring to a component in a computer.

1.3.2. Grammatical Problems

English and Arabic belong to different language families. Consequently, many grammatical problems may occur when translating from English into Arabic and vice versa because their grammars are totally different. According to Ghazala (op cit.), grammatical problems are due to complicated SL grammar, different TL grammar, and different TL word order.

Sadiq (op cit.) believes in the accordance between the degree of relatedness between the SL and the TL and the frequency of these problems. The more related they are, the less grammatical problems there are when translating from one into the other. The most common grammatical problems faced by translators are tense, word order and syntactic ambiguity.

1.4. Social Scientific Translation

Social scientific texts are distinct in significant ways from humanities and natural sciences. Hence, they need a distinct strategy to translate them.

1.4.1. Definition of Social Sciences

Gorden (1991) discusses Harry Elmer Barnes' opinion about the origin of the social science when he said that it was a result of the industrial revolution, which is considered as “the greatest transformation in the history of humanity”. This revolution made radical changes in the bases of the “previous social system” and “made demand for solving the new social problems” (p. 634). Social sciences developed consistently in both quality and quantity all over the world. This development becomes a necessity in studying modern societies' phenomena, such as inequalities within and between societies, social conflicts...etc. (Bamyeh, 2015).

Social science aims at understanding all aspects of society and finding solutions to deal with social problems. It includes several different disciplines, such as history, political science, sociology, psychology, economics...etc. (*Introduction to Social Science*).

Bhattacharjee (2012, p.01) defines social science as “the science of people or collections of people, such as groups, firms, societies, or economies, and their individual or collective behaviors”. He adds that Social sciences can be categorized into many branches such as psychology, sociology, and economics. While Sinnema (2004) offers the definition of Hill (1997, p. 02): “the social sciences are concerned with the interactions people have with each other and their environment”.

Similarly, Halloran (2010, p.01) says that “social science consists of the disciplined and systematic study of society and its institutions, and of how and why people behave as they do, both as individuals and in groups within society”.

1.4.2. Translation of Social Scientific Terms

According to Krein-Kutiile (2003), scientific and technical translation plays an essential role in making knowledge widespread all over the world. She adds that “Successful STT is mostly a matter of 'correct terminology' and that equivalence in the sense of one-to-one correspondences at the terminological level can be taken for granted” (p.15).

Translation of specialized texts is mainly based on the accuracy of translation. When translating such texts, translator must take into consideration constant, cultural and stylistic matters. Thus, he must have the knowledge of the subject of the text being translated in addition to both languages competence. Also, he should analyse the target situation, and define its function, its receivers...etc. (Grygoruk, 2009). Manfredi (2008) states that specialized translation is complex at the level of lexis and terminology, text-types, and syntactic aspects. Some terms may be translated or not depending on the target language.

Price (2008, p. 350) confirms that “good social scientists do not so much traffic in concepts as seek their elaboration. The concepts themselves are not fixed”. He believes in Immanuel Wallerstein (1981) opinion when he argues that some difficulties appear while translating social science because of concept. The latter is the most important component of the social scientific writing, “it is shared, but not universally shared” (p. 349). In addition to this, Gribat (2009, p. 125) claims that “concepts are not necessarily bound to one language context, sometimes the cross different language contexts”.

Heim and Tymowski (2006) state that concepts tend to appear as technical terms in social sciences. Concepts are related to the period in which they occur, ethnic or ideological characteristics. Hence, “dictionary translations” of concepts may be misleading and fail to convey the real meaning. Translation of such words needs from translator to know not only the subject matter of the text but also the “broader field of meanings through which it moves”.

Wallerstein (cited in Price, op cit., p.p. 349, 350) lays down a set of ground rules for the translator:

1. Search for the standard translation, if one exists. By standard translation, I mean the accepted equivalent in the two languages of technical term.
2. If the best translation seems either to be anachronistic or to miss a nuance, the solution is to add the original in parentheses.
3. If a concept is standard in one language but not (or not yet) in the other, either do not translate, or indicate to the reader the existence of this intellectual difference between the two linguistic cultures.
4. If a term, which does have a standard translation is used by the author in a markedly different way, which is understandable in the original context, do not translate with the standard term.
5. If a term has different cognitive ranges in the two languages, and the concept is central to the article, the translator ought to indicate that, either by a note or by a parenthetical use of the original term.

6. If a term has different cognitive ranges within both languages but parallel between the languages, the safest bet is literal translation, preferably by use of cognates if they exist.
7. When an author seeks to undo a conceptual confusion, the translator must not restore it.

Translation is a very challenging task. It requires from translator not to be only competent in both SL and TL, but also to find the appropriate equivalent among lots of equivalents. Since social scientific texts are distinct in significant ways from humanities and natural sciences, they need a distinct strategy to translate them. Translator must take into consideration constant, cultural and stylistic matters. Thus, he must have the knowledge of the subject of the text being translated in addition to both languages competence.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Questions and Hypothesis

The research aims at answering two principal questions that are stated as follows:

- What are the difficulties doctoral students face in translating social scientific terms from English into Arabic?
- What kind of methods students use in translating social scientific terms?

In an attempt to answer these questions, it is hypothesized that if doctoral students of social sciences at Larbi Ben M'Hidi University, Oum El Bouaghi, are familiar with the English language, are used to translate social scientific texts, have enough knowledge, and use the appropriate method, they will be able to understand social scientific terms and translate them successfully without facing any problems or difficulties.

2.2. Population and Sampling

The sample of both research questionnaire and test consists of twenty five students whom have been randomly selected from the whole population of doctoral students, (69 students), specialized in social sciences at the university of Larbi Ben M'Hidi – Oum El Bouaghi. The choice of the sample is motivated by the fact that they have been studying terminology for almost four years. Currently at this level, they are supposed to have enough skills in specialized translation. Moreover, they are preparing their thesis in which a huge part of the literature review they should explore is written in English.

2.3. Research Tools

Data is collected through a questionnaire (see appendix 1) and a test (see appendix 2) which were administrated to doctoral students of the social sciences. The questionnaire is designed to report their attitudes and opinions towards translation from English into Arabic and vice versa , and to determine whether these students encounter any problem or difficulty when translating social scientific terms from English into Arabic, and whether they adopt any strategy in their translation. However, the aim of the test is to assess the students' abilities in understanding and translating successfully social scientific terms, and also to determine the strategy (ies) followed by students while translating them from English into Arabic.

2.3.1. The Questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of ten questions. It is divided into two sections: the first section includes four questions about translation in general conceding the evaluation of students' level in translation, which translation they find easy; from English into Arabic or from Arabic into English, and whether they come across problems when translating. The second section is about social scientific terms translation and the difficulties they face in such kind of translation and the strategies used.

The questionnaire was handled to a sample (25 doctoral students) during the end of the first term and the beginning of the second term of the academic year 2016/ 2017, and exactly during the month of February. Besides, students were given enough time to deal carefully with each question and were reassured that their identity would be kept anonymous. After ensuring that all students have finished answering the questions; we have collected the questionnaires and analyzed them.

2.3.2. The Test

The test is used to evaluate the students' ability to translate social scientific terms from English into Arabic. It consists of twenty five social scientific terms. These terms are taken from Badawi (1982). The terms are intentionally put in isolation in order to avoid any other kinds of difficulties such as the effect of the context. Then, we have analyzed the data focusing on the students' translation of social scientific terms.

Twenty five doctoral students were asked to translate twenty five social scientific terms from English into Arabic. We have tried to select familiar and basic terms which suit the students' level and specialization.

The Results

From the results obtained from the questionnaire and the ones gained from the test, we can see that there is a significant correlation between the students' answers in the questionnaire and their performance in the translation test. Also, it can be deduced that the sample succeeded in translating some of the social scientific terms given in the test, and failed in translating others. This may be due to many difficulties namely: poor linguistic background and vocabulary. In addition, some students translated the terms by using literal translation, this might indicate that these doctoral students face problems and difficulties, especially lack of knowledge concerning both English and Arabic social scientific vocabulary.

In order to translate these social scientific terms, students used two main strategies; neologism and naturalization. They succeeded in choosing the appropriate Arabic equivalents for some terms such as in translating the term "abstraction" into "التجريد", "perception" into "الإدراك", "addiction" into "الإدمان", "correlation" into "الارتباط", "induction" into "الاستقراء"...etc. But they failed in translating other terms which led them to borrow foreign terms to the Arabic language. Some students preferred to transliterate; for example, they translated the term "dialectic" into "ديالكتيك". Others adopted naturalization by adding some

modifications to the terms, such in translating the term “demography” into “ديمغرافيا”, “radicalism” into “الراديكالية”, “microsociology” into “ميكروسوسيولوجيا”, “macrosociology” into “ماكروسوسيولوجيا”, “epistemology” into “الابستمولوجيا”, “phenomenology” into “الفينومينولوجيا”...etc.

When translating social scientific terms, students neglected grammatical forms of some terms. They were interested only in finding the meaning of the terms without adjusting Arabic terms grammatically. Therefore, they did not give importance to the singular/ plural form such as in translating the term “human resource” into “الموارد البشرية”, and the definite and indefinite terms, all the terms in the test were indefinite but most of them are translated into definite Arabic equivalent. Also, students did not give importance to the form of words such in translating the noun “modernism” into the adjective “العصرية”, and the adjective “social” in the term “social stability” into the noun “المجتمع” in the term “استقرار المجتمع”, and the compound term “phenomenology” into a simple term “الظاهرة”.

We can deduce that the difficulties faced by these students are due to lack of knowledge concerning both English and Arabic social scientific vocabulary, the wrong selection of the suitable strategy, and misuse of grammatical forms.

conclusion

This study aims at investigating the difficulties doctoral students of social sciences at Larbi Ben M'Hidi University – Oum El Bouaghi face while translating social scientific terms from English into Arabic. It is conducted also to explore the strategies used by them in their translation. The results obtained from the questionnaire and the test confirmed to a large extend the research hypothesis which stated that if these students are familiar with English language, are used to translate social scientific texts, have enough knowledge and use the appropriate method, they will be able to understand social scientific terms and translate them successfully without facing any problems or difficulties.

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Appendix 1

Student's Questionnaire

This questionnaire is part of a research work about the difficulties doctoral students face while translating social scientific terms from English into Arabic and the methods used in translations. It is designed to report your attitudes and opinions towards translation from English into Arabic and vice versa, to determine whether you encounter any problem or difficulty when translating social scientific terms from English into Arabic, and whether you adopt any strategy in your translation.

We would be very grateful if you could answer the following questions by ticking the appropriate box. Thank you in advance.

1. Your gender

Male ☐

Female ☐

2. How do you evaluate your level in translation?

Excellent ☐

Good ☐

Average ☐

Bad ☐

3. Which translation is easier for you?

From English into Arabic ☐

From Arabic into English ☐

4. When you translate, do you come across some problems?

Yes ☐

No ☐

5. If you across some problems, what are they?

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.....

...

6. How do you find the translation of social scientific terms?

Very difficult ☐

Difficult ☐

Very easy ☐

Easy ☐

7. Do you have any problems and difficulties when translating social scientific terms?

Yes ☐

No ☐

8. What are the problems and difficulties that you face when translating social scientific terms from English into Arabic?

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9. When you translate social scientific terms, do you use?

Social sciences dictionary ☐

General dictionary ☐

Both of them

☐

10. When you translate social scientific terms, do you use?

Literal translation ☐

Free Translation ☐

Appendix 2

Translation Test

Dear student,

This test is a part of a research work. We shall be so grateful if you could answer the following question to the best of your knowledge. Thank you in advance

Translate the following terms into Arabic.

1. Abstraction.....
2. Perception.....
3. Addiction.....
4. Correlation.....
5. Static.....
6. Dynamic.....
7. Social disequilibrium.....
8. Social stability.....
9. Induction
10. Deduction.....
11. Socialism.....
12. Capitalism.....
13. Pragmatism.....
14. Socialization.....
15. Modernism.....
16. Typology.....
17. Dialectic.....
18. Demography
19. Radicalism.....
20. Microsociology.....
21. Macrosociology.....
22. Clinical psychology.....
23. Epistemology.....
24. Human resource.....
25. Phenomenology.....