

The Cultural Agenda of Translation & Arabization: Aspects of the Problems

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Abstract

Translation is activity – a cultural activity at that-intended to widen the area of human understanding and communication with reference to general and specific information. The basic requirement relevant to good translation is that the translator must have a thorough knowledge of the cultures of both the source language and the target language. The translator needs not sit biting nails and rush to the dictionary every ten minutes. When it has been accepted that translation is not only important but also necessary to our Arab World, there is no point in pondering over the problems of translations. Cultural proximity is a big advantage for translators, it is rewarding for them to look for this when they choose their work.

Arabization is part and parcel of the whole journey of the Arab societies to its roots. The starting-off point for any translator is their preferred future; in order to arrive at the destination then it is clearly important to know what the destination is. But it is perhaps better to think

of the journey roads, but rather as trek through occasional high hard places surrounded by low swampy ground. To arrive at the destination requires resolve and spirit, and it requires a good strong machete for cutting through the undergrowth. The undergrowth in question is the plethora of initiatives that almost land daily on our desks from central and local academic community.

Keywords: Translation, the culture, Arabization, politics

I

The Cultural Agenda of Translation

(Introductory)

Arabization and translation play an active and a pivotal role in the constitution of our culture. They both are activities of increasingly vital importance in the educational, political, economic and cultural life of human endeavors. Nowadays, countries in our "so-called global village" are closely linked with each other; the development of informational technology having facilitated the removing of boundaries between them. Needless to say culture exchange is taking place through more cultural interaction among global residents and this has posed a challenge to translators. In other words, a translator requires identifying the shifting between cultures, to know what new ideas and usages are introduced so as to accomplish the intercultural exchanges. We can say without hesitation that translators are the bridges between different cultures.

According to Ceramella (2007:3):

In effect, it is true that in this new scenario, no, at the beginning of the twenty – first century, translation has begun to play a vital role in supporting the globalization process and the exchange of all sorts of informationWe should not be surprised then if information is now central to debates about languages and cultural identity, stressing the role of translators and translations (and Arabization).

As necessary to safeguard and promote linguistic and cultural diversity in the changing geography of globalized societies. It is for this very reason that now, translation must be approached as symbolic or material exchange among different population and not as a merely linguistic or literary questions.

The job or work of translator doesn't merely involve text duplication. It's indeed a process of text transformation that subsumes text of assimilation and discourse processing.

Translation is not only a skill, but a great art that is embellished by intuitive introspection. It is a profession besides being an art. A translator like a poet, is a creator. It can be a great unifying force to abridge that is corroding the human psyche at present.

Newmark (1973:11) defines translation as:

The attempt to produce approximate equivalence or respectable synonymy between two chunks of different languages on various levels, of which the two main ones are thought and linguistic form. He added that translation is:

Partly an exercise in the art of writing as well as field of comparative applied linguistics Newmark further says:

The word, not the sentence, is essential element of translation. There is an image of the creative, visible translator, who helps intercultural exchange, so varied that the translator seems as a manipulation of reality at the expense of the sources cultures and languages.

To quote Manhassat Sengupta (1992:172):

We remain trapped in the cultural stereotypes created and nurtured through translated texts.

Translation is an ongoing, creative process. It is never finished, although it is temporarily abandoned. As such, "the exhaustive fallacy "of translation is a myth. In fact translation is an impeccable instrument of empowerment, an unfailing means for a dynamic interaction between peoples, languages and cultures.

According to Al- Hamdallah (1998:23):

Translation is a channel through which ideas and cultures pass. Arab heritage benefited considerably from materials translated from Greek, Persian, and Indian work, as other nations benefited from the Arabs' works they translated into their languages. The translation's activities reached the zenith during the reign of the Abbasid Caliph Al-Ma'moun, who established a special house for translation, the famous Dar-Al-Hikma, in Baghdad where proficient philosophical materials were translated into Arabic.

It is fortuitous then that there is a growing tendency to rethink the role of translator as equal to that of the writer, which comes as a consequence of the need to dissolve the inequality by status between the source and the target texts, for the first time by placing translators on the same footing as writers.

On his turn Newmark (Ibid, p: 33) says:

The main features of translators are that they are writers .Culture is web of meanings, and a crucial part of it is encoded in translation. In this sense we can quote Lefevere (1992:9):

Translation is the most obviously recognizable type of rewriting, and... it is potentially the most influential because it is able to project the image of an author and/or those works beyond the boundaries of their culture of origin.

On her turn, Simon (1996:136), in the conclusion to her book, summarizes the contribution of culture to translation as follows:-

Cultural studies bring to translation an understanding of complexities of gender and culture. It allows us to situate linguistic transfer within the multiple "post" realities of today: post structuralism, post colonialism and postmodernism.

In an era of globalization and drastic changes on all level and spheres of human life, translation and Arabization is a continuing challenge encountered by translators all over the world. These challenges vary according to the type of translation requested, the target and source languages involved and text producers and receivers.

The impact of cross-linguistic influence on translation and Arabicization has long been a controversial topic. This controversy has had a long life not only among translation practitioners, but also among linguists and researchers interested in questions of large scientific and literary texts and in particular may affect source language text comprehension and may therefore have far -reaching implications for text reproduction in the target language .

According to Gerding- Salas (2001:1):

The main aim of translation is to serve as a cross-cultural bilingual communication vehicle among people.

It should be kept in mind that by culture we mean all aspects of life including our social and religious rituals .Failure to convey these cultural aspects to people should result in our inability to communicate with those peoples belonging to other cultures. Therefore, a translator is expected to give more attention to the cultural aspects that permeate the text they translate.

To quote Gerding- Salas (Ibid, p, 2):

The translator plays an important role as a bilingual or multi-lingual and cross-cultural transmitter of culture and truths by attempting to interpret concepts and speech in a variety of texts as faithfully and accurately as possible.

On his turn Ilyas (1989:123) says that:

Translation between languages of disjunctive cultures is more difficult than carrying out translation between languages that are culturally related or similar. This does not imply that translation

between languages that are culturally related or similar is a straightforward activity. In fact, it embodies some serious pitfalls from the translation as well, although to a lesser degree compared with translation between languages of different cultures

Translation, the Italians say, is treachery. To a large extent, they are right. Few translations succeed in conveying the meaning of the original with both accuracy and beauty. Certainly, the translation of Arabic literature into English involves plenty of pitfalls.

The two languages, and the two cultures, are far apart. To bring them closer together through the arduous act of translation requires a series of finely –judged compromises. Some Arabs even go as far as to argue that the effort is not justified by the results and suggest that it would be best not undertaken. Others ask how one culture's literature can be shared by those who do not know the language.

According to Ludi (2003:10):

Cultures and language shape perception. Studies have shown that people of different languages interpret the same picture in different ways, using different interpretive frames.

Everybody who has learned to speak in a foreign language knows that it is often difficult and sometimes nearly impossible, to express something precisely or at least adequately in the other language .On his turn AL-Hamdalla (Ibid, p, 28) says:

Al-Chalabi focuses on linguistic problems facing English – Arabic translators. He says that serious problem that has had a considerable impact on modern Arabic terminology and bilingual lexicography, is

the controversy between the influential language purists and innovators. The former group believes that new terms must be derived from classical Arabic linguistic patterns or by semantic extension of older forms. On the other hand, the latter group, under the increasing influence of Western civilization and cultures, accepts the numerous borrowed words in Modern Arabic today and advocates free borrowing from these two languages in order to enable Arabic to cope with the problems of ever-increasing number of scientific and technical terms.

In the new millennium, the era of globalization, cultures have come into close contact with one another. The need for mutual understanding between these cultures increased significantly. In this context, we can quote Iser (2004:35) who states:

The notion of translatability emerges as a counter-concept to a mutual superimposing of cultures aiming at comprehension.

Ghazala (1993:10) dealt with problems related to translation of cultural and cross cultural links between Arabic and English. Though he acknowledges the problems of translating culture, he argues for strong ties among global cultures giving examples from Arabic and English. As Shunnaq (1998:42) argues:

In some cases, the Arab translator may find certain lexical items in Arabic that have no equivalences in English because the concept they refer to do not exist in English. Such items are normally culture-bound items in Arabic.

According to Makhlouf (1994:4):

In the Muslim Arab society, it is lawful for a man to marry up to four wives, if he can treat them equally and fairly, whereas in the Christian West, polygamy is prohibited. Polygamy, thus, is strange and unacceptable to the people of the West because normally it never happens in their society and it is by no means part of their culture (Bahameed, 2008).

Al- Darwish (2005:5) suggests that one difficulty of translation lies in what he terms as "the music of language ". The beauty of expressions and their music influence the writer. So he/she chooses a certain term because of its melody. He also argues that Arabic has a special music which makes translation from it especially difficult if we take all rhetorical devices of Arabic into consideration.

Arabic culture influenced other languages and cultures and a large numbers of Arabic words have been introduced to those languages. Additionally, the contact of the western culture with Arabic cultures resulted in the progress of the former. The West and other cultures also adopted the Arabic counting system instead of the Roman one which is long and tiresome. The concept of Zero was introduced by An Arab mathematician, Al-Khwarizmi.

In the absence of the editors of translation in our Arab World, a not so equipped translator will escape unscathed and in the result the work leaves much to be desired. English is still the language of a different culture, and behaves like a new brig groom (in Arabs context)! It is not the case when translation is from Arabic language to another; they get merged like milk and water.

II

The Cultural Agenda of Arabization

Arabization is part and parcel of the whole journey of the Arabs society to its roots. Arabic is our great asset, our invaluable heritage and the repository of our identity. It is something closest to the most cherished sentiments of Arabs. We must regard it as vital to the general progress of our Arab World as an essential step towards the improvement of quality in education.

To quote Al- Hamdallah (Ibid, p,36):

The Arabic language nowadays is witnessing an international recognition and significance .Arabic is the sixth official language used at the United Nations. As William Convey indicates, the use of a certain language as one of the official languages of the United Nations depends on the military might of the country, the number of the speakers of the language, and its financial obligations to the United Nation.

We should keep in our minds that the Arabic language is a powerful tool of affirming our identity and a nation that doesn't use its own mother tongue in all spheres of life and is bound to lose its linguistic and cultural identity. The learners in many small countries in East Europe, East and South of Asia are studying various branches of science in their own mother tongues. These countries are now making a considerable international contribution to knowledge reflecting their technological and scientific achievements and their cultures as well.

We must realize that Arabization is the right track that leads to the process of sowing seeds of, and rooting as well, our intellectual and creative powers.

There is no doubt that we may face some obstacles in the process of Arabization, but instead of exaggerating them, we must determine to solve them. In other words, Arabization may entail some hardships, but we must create a proper educational system at all costs.

Al-Hamdallah (1998) summarizes some obstacles that have to be dealt with in order that the Arabizing movement can succeed; they are as follows:

First, translations of universities textbooks are sometimes incomplete. This problem is related to the unavailability of specialized experts to write in their fields.

Second, language academies in the Arab World have to unify terminologies and expressions.

Finally, proficient university teachers should be relieved from teaching to devote themselves entirely to translation activities. These teachers might be more useful and productive in translation than in teaching

III

Advantages of Arabization

The increasing awareness of the importance of the Arabic language has led to an active movement for Arabizing university curricula in the Arab World. In fact, in some Arab countries, like Sudan and Syria, have gone a long way toward Arabizing university curricula at various colleges such as the college of medicine and the college of engineering.

Arabization offers greater creative, opportunities with more facility and appropriate speed in learning and perceiving the subject-matter. It has also the following positive merits:

1. Arabization is a civilizational issue, a national necessity and a call for self-reliance that revives the nation and strengthens its identity and civilizational roots.
2. It facilitates understanding of lectures and acquiring of knowledge, because Arabic is easier for the learner to use than foreign languages.
3. It makes natural science and various branches of knowledge within the reach of the learners and the masses, and enables them to participate in the civilization orientation of the nation.
4. It strengthens the bond between the learners, the learners' achievement and the common man.
5. It emphasizes our national identity, and true integrity

IV

Recommendations

1. We should pay a prime attention to translation and translators. There should be a body to define and specify the priorities and translations we need at the present time.
2. We should give a compassionate call to our academic community to make an all-out concerted effort for the revitalization of language teaching programs.
3. We should carry on continual evaluation and need- based restructuring of the curriculum on translation.
4. Translations should cover all languages and cultures that can be of help to Arabs to develop.

5. Translators must have through cultural knowledge of both the source language and target language.
6. We should pay special attention to the importance of learning a foreign language, for example English language, for specific educational purposes and not for getting influenced by the culture of the target language.
7. We should unify the terminologies related to the colleges of our universities.
8. The educators should realize the advantage of Arabization and shake off the burden of the past , to avoid moving round and round in an endless and vicious circle.
9. We should develop parameters for comprehensive, progress – controlled and phased teaching framework of teaching translation.
10. Arabization may entail some hardship, but we must create proper educational systems at all costs.
11. Finally, we have to seek answer to the following important QUESTION!

SHOULD WE HAVE TWO KINDS OF TRANSLATIONS, ONE FOR THE READERS FROM THE SAME OR SIMIALR CULUTRE AND THE OTHETR FOR THOSE WHO HAVE NO KNOWLEDGE OF THE SOURCE – ORGINAL –TEXT CULUTRE?

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