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Sight Translation:

Linguistic and Technical Difficulties

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my family, especially to my father Dr. Zuheir al-Khatib and to my wonderful mother Dr. Rihab Saleh, who guided me to begin and complete this thesis. To my beloved husband, and beautiful children Zaid, Ghazal and Taim.

Laila Zuheir Issa

Declaration

I declare that I have written and completed this Master Thesis by myself. Literal quotations and resources are clearly marked. This Master Thesis has not been used in the same or in a similar version to achieve any other academic degree to any other university or institution.

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Abstract

This research aims to investigate linguistic and technical mistakes of ‘sight translation’. It attempts to confirm the significance of adequate training and experience to perform ‘sight translation’ successfully. In this comparative exploratory study, data was collected by a questionnaire followed by a recorded sight translated material of two groups – First and Second year students enrolled in the academic year 2013-1014 in M.A. Translation and Interpreting Program at al-Quds University, and a group of sworn professional translators.

This thesis is hoped to urge translators and students to perform any type of translation or interpreting correctly, taking into consideration the syntactic, semantic and technical problems that have been found through this research. It concluded four major outcomes: first, untrained and inexperienced MA students demonstrated a notable shortage in performing ‘sight translation’, compared to professional translators.

This sheds light on the importance of training and experience in order to avoid and overcome its obstacles while performing. Second, most of the linguistic and technical mistakes were associated with legal and medical texts because of their difficult register and special technical terms. Thus, many students encountered lack of specialized vocabulary. Third, professional translators were more flexible in choosing syntactic features and have diverse choices of synonyms and equivalences. They had fewer pauses and hesitations than MA students, which make their ‘sight translation’ more reliable, and they could process the segments in a focused manner. Finally, the limited linguistic skills, lack of experience and lack of practice were the most important reasons behind students’ translation. Thus, this research suggests some recommendations that may set a path for further scholars in order to elaborate ‘sight translation’ on some of its details.

المشاكل اللغوية والتقنية في الترجمة المنظورة

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الملخص

تستقصي هذه الدراسة المشاكل اللغوية والتقنية التي تواجه المترجمين المبتدئين في الترجمة المنظورة من اللغة العربية إلى اللغة الإنجليزية وبالعكس وذلك اعتماداً على استبيان وستة نصوص في اللغتين الانجليزية والعربية تحتوي على مواضيع قانونية وطبية ووثائقية، حيث قام عشرة طلاب ملتحقين بالسنة الأولى والثانية ببرنامج الترجمة التحريرية والشفوية في جامعة القدس في السنة الدراسية 2013-2014 وعشرة مترجمين يحملون الختم القانوني من وزارة الحكم المحلي الفلسطينية بتعبئة الاستبيان وترجمة هذه النصوص. ولقد قامت الباحثة بتسجيل ترجمات الطلبة في مختبر اللغات في الجامعة وتسجيل ترجمة المترجمين في أماكن عملهم ومن ثم تحليلها لغوياً وتقنياً للمقارنة بين ترجمة المجموعتين.

ومن خلال تحليل كل من الإستبيان والترجمة توصلت الباحثة إلى أن مجموعة الطلبة واجهت أنواعاً مختلفة من المشاكل مقارنة بمجموعة المترجمين المحلفين، حيث تم استكشاف مشاكل لغوية والتي بدورها صنفت الى مشاكل نحوية ومعجمية ومشاكل تقنية وهي المشكلات التي تتعلق بوضوح الصوت وإعادة الترجمة والتوقف خلالها وسرعتها.

ولقد توصلت الباحثة إلى نتائج عدة كان من أهمها أن طلبة الترجمة لا يمتلكون المهارة والخبرة والكفاءة الكافية في الترجمة المنظورة مقارنة بالمترجمين المحلفين، وهكذا فإنها تسلط هذه الترجمة

الضوء على أهمية التدريب المكثف لإتقانها، حيث حدثت معظم المشكلات في النصوص القانونية والطبية وذلك بسبب طبيعة مصطلحاتها التقنية. ونتيجة لذلك تقدم الباحثة عدداً من الاقتراحات والتوصيات تأمل ان تساهم في إكساب الطلبة المهارة الضرورية لتحسين أدائهم في هذا النوع من الترجمة والتغلب على صعوباتها.

List of Abbreviations

Term	Abbreviation
Consecutive Interpreting	CI
Simultaneous Interpreting	SI
Source Language	SL
Target Language	TL
Source Text	ST
Target Text	TT
Participant Translators	PT
Participant Students	PS

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Chapter I

Introduction to the Core and Domains of the Study

1.1 Introduction

Translators and interpreters play a special role in helping countries and communities with different languages and cultures to understand each other easily and to communicate directly. However, the cultural and linguistic differences between languages often lead to miscommunication and misunderstanding. Therefore, it is important to identify translation and interpreting problems, analyze them and suggest a range of strategies to avoid them. Lexical, syntactic, and technical difficulties of 'sight translation' are the most difficult challenges that were faced by most of student translators who were the main part in the sample of the study.

According to the Palestinian political circumstances and to the Israeli blockade, Palestinian authority tries to develop its economical and institutional situation through contacting different European and American organizations in order to support it financially. In this regard, translators and interpreters are considered as essential keys to help Palestinian authority and different foreign donor countries to communicate easily. Therefore, this current research presents different 'sight translation' difficulties and provides practical translation strategies that have been a great help in international conferences and meetings.

Catford defined translation as “[t]he replacement of a textual material in one language source language [SL] to an equivalent textual material in another language; target language [TL]” Catford (1965: 20). The word ‘textual’ in Catford’s definition refers to point out the written nature of translation.

The words ‘replacement’ and ‘equivalence’ that are mentioned in the previous definition indicate the importance of finding the proper equivalence in TL without any ambiguity. However, other linguists and theorists such as Newmark consider translation as a skill; he explained that “[t]ranslation is a craft consisting of the attempt to replace a written message and/or statement in one language by the same message and/or statement in another language” Newmark (1981: 7). According to Newmark’s definition, what can be understood is that translation is not a gift that someone can be born with; it is a skill that needs practice. Therefore, he used the words ‘craft’ and ‘attempt’ to refer to translation as a skill

and he also used the words ‘message’ and ‘statement’ in order to highlight two elements of a translated message: form and idea.

Translation approaches help translators and interpreters to be objective and professional in delivering the contents as well as the effects of conveyed messages, written or spoken in the ST without any changes, thus avoiding translation and interpreting mistakes. To illustrate more, Newmark (1981: 33), mentioned two different approaches to translation that focus on these two elements. He said that “[i]n semantic translation, the translator's main concern is being loyal to the author of the original text more than anything else. While in communicative translation, the translator is more concerned with the force and effect of the message on the receiver.”

1.2 Differences and Similarities between Translation and Interpreting

Due to the hybrid nature of ‘sight translation’ which combines the processes of both interpreting as well as translation, this part focuses on the differences and similarities of both in order to help the reader understand why and how do ‘sight translation’ problems happen and how to avoid them.

Translation and interpreting aim at re-expressing the idea and meaning of the SL message into the TL and at maintaining its form and function. They are closely related on the linguistic level and require the same fundamental skills of comprehending SL and TL. They use the same cognitive processes: comprehending, paraphrasing and rendering the meaning correctly. Both translators and interpreters need to acquire bilingual, conceptual and cultural knowledge.

On the other hand, the input and output of translation and interpreting constitute the major difference between them: written versus oral. In interpreting, the input and output are both oral while in translation they are both written. Hence, no memorization is required.

Unlike translation, the output of the interpreting is produced under time pressure because the oral input is presented only once by the speaker so interpreters cannot go back for correction or revision. They have to memorize what the speaker says and continuously translate it without pauses or hesitation. They need to pay special attention to the speaker's intonation and language register in order to convey his/her ideas and opinion in an

understandable way. Crystal (1987: 179) emphasizes the difference between interpreting and written translation:

“The difference between structure and use between spoken and written language are inevitable, because they are the product of radically different kinds of communicative situation. Speech is time-bound, dynamic, and transient while writing is space bound static permanent”.

He compared between them according to time and accessibility perspectives, whether time-bound or space-bound. In translation, the translator has got enough time to find the suitable equivalence and arranges his/her thoughts and ideas neatly. However, in interpreting, the speaker chooses simple and unsophisticated words and phrases; he/she organizes his/her speech spontaneously. Therefore, interpreters do not have enough time to think of several synonyms and equivalences when they produce oral output simultaneously.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

For the interpreter to be able to perform interpreting successfully, several factors are required. Serious training, adequate knowledge, considerable experience and hard effort are the most important factors that affect translation and interpreting production. Any loss or shortage of such factors would raise many linguistic challenges and difficulties to the surface.

The statement of the problem is that inexperienced translators and interpreters face several linguistic and technical challenges when they perform ‘sight translation’. Deficiency in lexical and syntactic skills, lack of SL and TL cultural background, misunderstanding the ideas of the SL text and interpreting with many pauses and hesitation are all translation problems that can be resolved and avoided with practice and experience. The following examples of ‘sight translation’ were given to two groups: participant students and participant translators.

Example 1:

Sentence: This contract shall come into effect

Translation by a participant student: سوف يأتي هذا العقد للتأثير

Translation by a participant translator: يصبح هذا العقد ساري المفعول