

Transference vs. Translation: Bridging Cultural and Linguistic Gaps and the Challenge of Finding Equivalents

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to argue for a terminological equivalence using any appropriate translation strategy or procedure instead of the usually followed process or technique of *transference* when translating technical and cultural terms from English into Arabic. Actually, transference maintains much of the flavor of the original text as it involves transliteration/transcription of the SLT. It also indicates borrowing the original word from the SL and implants it in the soil of the TL. Consequently, it is introduced to the TL readers as a new text that can be added to their linguistic and cultural systems. It is a SL-oriented procedure as it respects the linguistic and stylistic choice of the SL culture. However, since the task of the translator is to interpret the meaning of the SLT and then find the appropriate equivalent in the TL, transference cannot be considered a logical translation procedure; rather it is an indication of translation failure as it imposes SL items on the TL.

Keywords: transference; cultural gaps; linguistic gaps; equivalents; translation failure

INTRODUCTION

Translation can be defined as the process of converting source language (SL) texts into equivalent target language (TL) texts. It is a process of expressing meanings among languages. Transference is defined by Newmark (1988, p. 81) as the process of transferring a SL word to a TL text as a translation procedure. It includes transliteration or transcription of the original text, i.e. it is a loan or borrowed text. (cf. Ordudari, 2007; Mashhady, 2015).

Choosing the appropriate procedures or techniques for rendering SL meanings or ideas into the TL depends on the type and the function of the text to be translated. Naturally, translators try to find appropriate equivalents of the SL texts in the TL. However, especially when they are faced with cultural bound texts or technical terms that have no direct equivalents in the TL or their meanings cannot be expressed naturally in the TL, translators resort to the so called transference technique as a translation procedure to bridge linguistic gaps.

Sometimes, when it is hard to find natural equivalents in the TL for SL lexical items, translators resort to transference as a strategy to overcome the shortage of lexicon in the TL; hence, in a way or another, the translator uses a copy of the original SL words

themselves and sends it to the readers in the TL. In fact, this process implies the transference into the TL of some basic SL phonological features. In other words, there is no real *translation* performed in this case. It can be hardly admitted that moving a term from one language into another falls under the umbrella of translation proper. The researcher is going to shed lights on some implications of transference as a *translation strategy* employed by many Arab translators for translating English technical and cultural terms.

According to Catford (1965/78) *transference* implies a process in which a TL text may have SL meanings. According to him, translators are not transferring meanings from SL into TL; rather, they substitute TL meanings for SL meanings (cf. Bassnett, 2014). Then, there should be a clear cut line between translation and transference. We can say that translation is always concerned with finding equivalent or similar meanings in the TL for meanings envisaged in SL texts. In other words, it is a TL-oriented process of communication. On the other hand, transference is always concerned with borrowing SL texts and polishing them to suit the TL linguistic and cultural system. Accordingly, it is a SL-oriented process of translation, as it maintains the SL meanings or some of their aspects in the TL.

In the researcher's point of view, transference is not a real or typical translation procedure; it is in fact the last resort for the translator to avoid a translation failure. Some questions may come to the surface as to discussing this issue. In the light of Newmark's sense of transference, can we say that transferred lexical items substitute TL translation equivalents adequately? Shall we classify transference under the umbrella of translation proper? In other words, can we consider borrowing, transliteration, adaptation, and transcription as actual translation procedures, or shall we consider them compensation techniques to avoid translation failures?

Transliteration, adaptation, borrowing and transcription are all implied as translation procedures within the process of transference. Each of these procedures indicates the absence of translation equivalences in the TL. They also imply the introduction of new words and structures in the TL as well; these newborns become later an integral part of the target language system. This transference procedure can be considered sometimes as a compensation strategy for the shortage of TL ability to cope with the SL superiority in producing new vocabulary for its inventions.

Transference implies moving SL terms into the TL with, or sometimes without, some linguistic changes (phonological or morphological). Actually, this movement process of SL elements with all or some of their original linguistic features shall not be considered a translation procedure in any case; rather it is the result of translation failures in finding direct equivalent texts in the TL for the SL texts. Consequently, we shall ask ourselves the following questions: Is transference a process that bridges the gaps between cultures and languages? Or is it a procedure for destroying the bridges between languages? As it is a fact that some languages are superior and more powerful than others, won't transference lead to linguistic globalization or linguistic domination of some languages at the expense of others? Actually, transference does not bridge the gaps between superior languages

and inferior ones; rather it widens the voids and strengthens the superiority of some languages over others.

In fact, it is axiomatic that transference causes harmful effects on the SL itself, as the new transferred terms will become, by pass of time, a part of the TL literature, and later have their own derivations and meanings which may differ widely among the users of the same language. They will be treated as original texts in the system of the TL. In other words, they transferred texts will lose any relationship with their origin in the SL. For example, the word 'باص' /bas/, which is borrowed from English, is considered an Arabic word. Many Arab users of language will never think of the original English word 'bus' when they use the Arabic borrowed word. The same is true as to the word 'cotton' which is originally an Arabic word. The English users of this borrowed word will never think of the original Arabic word 'قطن' /qotn/. At a higher level, let us consider the idiomatic expression 'turn the tables', for example. In Arabic, language users nowadays use a borrowed copy of this English expression to cover the same original meaning. They use the Arabic expression 'يقلب الطاولة' /yaqlib altawilah/ to refer to the same original meaning, i.e, (change the situation completely).

However, we should not ignore the fact that languages usually, plausibly, borrow lexical items, concepts and even structures from other languages. It is an intrinsic nature of nearly most languages. It is worth noting here that transferred or borrowed words and concepts are preferred to be used by many Arabs, even if original TL original substituents exist in their linguistic system. Many Arab natives usually prefer to use foreign language words and concepts as a kind of intended linguistic shift even when equivalents of the terms they use do exist in their language; this phenomenon is due to some social beliefs and preferences related to the prestigious status of the users of foreign terms. In fact, adopting transference as a translation technique is more likely to affect the linguistic identity of such language users, as this strategy indicates giving them the license to use foreign terms legitimately. It is worth mentioning here that English is the most influencing language on language users in the Arab World. In many societies, imported English linguistic items helps eroding the autonomy of the native language-culture.

According to Baker (1992) Arabization (transference) involves the rendering of foreign terms into Arabic in their original linguistic forms, after introducing minor phonetic and/or morphological changes where necessary (cf. Vinay and Darbelnet, 2000). This method has received much opposition from Arabic language purists, who fear that the assimilation of foreign terms may change the identity of Arabic and, if applied to excess, would even result in some form of a hybrid language. However, faced with the massive influx of new terms which need to be rendered into Arabic, even the purists have had to accept some of the Arabized terms which have found their way into the language and increasingly gained acceptance, with or without academies' approval.

In fact, the translators' job is to translate not to transfer or borrow words from other languages. Transference should not be considered a translation procedure as it does not imply finding adequate equivalents in the TL. However, we should not confuse the need to transfer or transliterate proper names, names of geographical places,

organizations...etc, since translating such names may deprive them from their original meanings cultural flavor.

Translators are always better in translating into their native languages as they are linguistically and culturally competent by nature. Hence, they should exert all efforts to find equivalents rather than resort to transference, affected by their cognitive burden. Coining, derivation, monolingual Arabic dictionaries, creation ... are some of the strategies translators should resort to. Standardization should also be taken into consideration. However, awareness and familiarity of the two languages and cultures involved in the process of translation is the way out of many of the translation problems, particularly when cultural and technical items are concerned.

Shunnaq (1998, p. 111) states that most of technical terms have not been Arabicized, and that even those which have been translated into Arabic are neither equivalent nor convincing. In fact, resorting to transference by many translators, when translating technical terms from English into Arabic, is the reason behind Shunnaq's opinion. Arab translators mainly resort to transference as it is the easiest method to avoid the burden of finding appropriate equivalents. Most of the time, they do not make serious efforts to find equivalents from their mother tongue (by coining or creating new terms that abide by the rules of their language naturally, for example).

CONCLUSION

Translators are not translating lexis; they are communicating ideas. Using a bilingual dictionary is not enough for a translator to do his job; it's just the first step. Knowing another language does not mean being able to translate! In fact, translation is a more complicated task. Translators should rely on paraphrasing, monolingual dictionaries, thesauri and notes if they are after achieving the best rendering of SL texts appropriately. *Transference*, as a translation strategy, as it were, should be reduced to the minimum.

Arab translators have always encountered problems when trying to find equivalents to English cultural or technical terms. These problems cannot be solved by the translators alone. For example, marketability, standardization, and the tendency of the users of Arabic to use English words while using their mother tongue are some of the issues that need to be handled by the translators, linguists, and decision makers.

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