Changing Roles of the Translator as reflected in the Post-modern Discourse on Translation

Dr. Shaju Nalkara Ouseph–Dr. Ghurmallh Al Ghamdi

The development of the Translation Theory

Over the past 40 years, translation studies have materialized as a new discipline not only in the field of Applied Linguistics, but also as an interdisciplinary subject. Luo (1999) identified 30 text book articles between 1949 and 1989 discussing the relationship between Linguistics and Translation. This number as indicated by Luo has increased significantly to 160 publications discussing the relationship between the two disciplines between 1990 and 1994. Nowadays and in view of globalization ample studies on translation are available.

From the late nineteenth century and in the early twentieth century translation was seen as a serious activity, with writers like Matthew Arnold, or H.W.Longfellow advocating the curtailing of the translator's freedom and emphasizing that the *translator's duty is only to report* what the original has stated. I.A.Richards in his book *Toward a Theory of Translating* (1953) expressed that the translation process "may very probably be the most complex type of event yet produced in the evolution of the cosmos" (Nair 32). He was of the view that translators can be adequately trained to perceive the means needed *to arrive at a proper understanding of the SL text*.

Translation studies have emerged over the past thirty years as a new international and inter-disciplinary academic field. Between the fifties and the seventies, translation studies formed an integral part of applied and general linguistics, the single source of the discipline. James Holmes (1988) was the first to render a framework for this discipline by dividing it into two principal areas: translation theory as well as descriptive science

of translation and applied translation studies as well as translation criticism.

The Linguistic Approach to Translation Theory

The relevant literature indicates that linguistic theories on translation focused on issues of meaning, and structural equivalence. Grammar Translation as a language teaching methodology emerged powerfully in the 1950s. Students were given sentences and at later stage texts in the SL to translate into the TL. However, when Language was recognized as a tool of communication in various social contexts the trend of focusing on structures and meaning became superfluous. Nonetheless, if the purpose of translation is to achieve equivalence between SL and TL, then meaning and equivalence are the key issues for translation.

Roman Jacobson (1959) identified three types of translation processes, these are 1. Intralingual: rewording or paraphrasing, summarizing, expanding or commenting within language, 2. Interlingual: the concept of translating from SL to TL, translating meaning from one language to the other and, 3. Intersemiotic: Changing written texts into other forms such as art.

According to Jacobson, meaning and equivalence are linked to the Interlingua of translation. This means that two messages which are supposed to be equivalent are interpreted in two different codes. Recently, there was an incredible increase in the number of articles looking at translation from a linguistic point of view. Whether linguistics is a necessary part of translation is a question repeatedly discussed. Some believe that translation is an art and linguistics has nothing to do with it. We believe that this claim is not right as linguistics concerns itself with the language and what is translated is language in various forms: sentences, utterances or texts. Above all, semantics plays a significant role in translation. Ke Wenli (1992) argues that semantics, which in a broad sense includes pragmatics as well, should be studied to help understand, explain, and solve some of the problems encountered in translation. These linguistic advances explicitly show that the criteria of faithfulness, expressiveness, and elegance play significant roles in translation.

Linguistics-based theories dominated translation studies in the 1980s when the prevailing concept was equivalence. An important

theoretical advancement after the 1960s, is a choice between translations cultivating pragmatic equivalence, i.e. sense-for-sense translation (Nida & Thaber, 1969), functional equivalence (De Waard & Nida, 1986), communicative translation (Newmark, 1988), covert translation (House, 1981), semantic translation (Newmark, 1988), and overt translation (House, 1981). What constitutes equivalence to the source text is the decisive factor in judging a translation to be good, bad or indifferent.

Linguistic and cultural differences between languages often cause translations to be short of the equivalence ideal as it is impossible to produce a translation as an exact copy of the original text. In the 1990s, Hatim and Mason (1990) drew on text linguistics, discourse analysis, and pragmatics in conceptualizing translation as communicating a foreign text by working with the target reader according to certain factors such as quantity of information, quality of truthfulness, consistence of context, and clarity. Ernest-August Gutt (1991) explains that faithfulness in translation is a means of communicating an intended interpretation of the foreign text. The extent to which interpretation offers a similarity with the foreign text and the means of expressing that interpretation is based on their relevance to the target readership.

Owing to linguistic and cultural differences, it is impossible to produce a translation to be the exact copy of its original in accordance with the equivalence-based prescriptive/normative theories. A certain amount of subjectivity and reformulation is unavoidable in the translation process. A main drawback of these translation theories is that they neglect those socio-cultural conditions under which translations are produced in order to conform to the demands of communication in the receiving culture.

Machine Translation

Machine translation is an innovative method of translation which is done through computer assistance. It performs simple replacements of key words in to the foreign language that needs to be translated. Software such as Dr. Eye functions in Google and Yahoo! toolbars facilitate this type of translation without difficulty. However, machine translation should not be relied on for one hundred percent accuracy, as it is the individual who has to function both as editor and proofreader.

The following sentences in English and its Arabic equivalent suggested by Google translator illustrate the different word order and the discrepancies in grammar that is obvious in the translation of TL text.

1. The   boy is in the zoo
Asabi   whoa fi hadikhat alhayawan
(The boy) (he) (in) (the zoo) (animals)
2. He has gone home
Waqad   dahaba   ila beitihi
(in addition) (he went) (to) (house)
3. Changing Roles of Translator in the Post Modern Discourse on Translation
Tagheer   dor almutarjmeen fi alkhetab   alhadith   musharekua fi altarjama
(Changing) (the role) (the translator) (in the speech of) (modern) (contribution) (in) (translation)
4. What is your title?
Ma whoa al ainwan alkhas bika
(what is) (the title) (that belongs to you)
5. The girl could not come to school because of the heavy rain
Yumkin   anna alfatah latati ila   almadrassa besebab alamtar alghazeer
(it is possible) (the girl) (does not come to) (school) (because of) (rain) (heavy)

The different word order in sentences for Arabic and English is to an extent causing these sorts of variations in Google translation. However, it is an ideal approach that translation trainers, learners, and professional translators should be familiar with, for learning skills and finding a way to learn and teach through multilingual translating can be facilitated by software.

Translational Process

Different kinds of texts require different translational processes. The translator has to judge the demand of the text and use the most effective approach. Peter Newmark (1981) in *Approaches to Translation,* suggests that there are two types of texts: one, which would

demand semantic translation and would remain as close as possible to the semantic and syntactic structures of the SL and the second set of texts would demand communicative translation and would aim to produce the same effect in the TL as was produced in the SL. He proposes a model to differentiate between Semantic translation and Communicative translation. Newmark states that all translation must be in some degree, communicative and semantic, social and individual. It is a matter of difference of emphasis. In this regard it is the responsibility of the translator to identify the possibilities before him at the functional level.

1. A translator can be a messenger, or a carrier
2. A translator can be an interpreter
3. A translator can be an intruder, or a source modifier
4. A translator can be an invisible entity

These aspects are crucial in *fixing* the translator to the process. The strategy and position adopted by him will affect the dynamics of the Source Language Text to Target Language Text (SLT-TLT) relationship.

The translator as a messenger or a carrier

Significantly the history of the translation process has by and large assigned the translator a role of messenger or carrier of the SLT to TLT. In an 1813 lecture on the different methods of translation, Friedrich Schleiermacher argued, "there are only two. Either the translator leaves the author in peace, as much as possible, and moves the reader towards him; or he leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author towards him" (Venuti 19).The translator is in the middle of two demands that seem almost impossible to reconcile. On one side, the author calls out to him: respect my property, don't take anything away from me, and don't attribute anything falsely to me. On the other side, the audience demands: respect our taste; give us only what we like and how we like it. (Schaffner 1994)

The emphasis on structural approach to translation changes toward the end of the 1950s and early 1960s with the work of Vinay, Darbelnet and Catford, and with the emergence of the concept of translation shift, which examines the linguistic changes that take place in the translation between the ST and TT (Munday, 2001). Catford (1965) states that "Translation as a process is always unidirectional; it is always performed in a given direction: from a Source Language (SL) into a Target Language

(TL)." The central problem of translation practice is that of finding TL *translation equivalents*." Semantic equivalence and structural equivalence are two significant components of the translation process. The following illustration addresses the problem of translation in providing an English language equivalent rendition of an Arabic text. The texts discussed here is the Arabic novel *Banaat Al Riyadh*, written by Raja Alsanea (2005) and its translation *The Girls of Riyadh* by the original author and Marilyn Booth.

1. *Masha Allah! Milh waqublah okht alarous* (BR)

   How nice it is! She is pretty, the sister of the bridegroom (GR)

2. *Alei hi asalatu wasalam* (BR)

   God's blessings and peace be upon him *Ewallah* (GR)

   [She wanted to show the English reader, the reinforcement of the expression '*Éwallah*'. The language she used is culture bound and it needs to be introduced to other readers.]

3. *Bayaduha bayadshawam* (BR)

   Her skin is so fair (GR)

4. *Ya Allah, Ya Allah temsheen Ya Allah Ya Allah tatakalameen Ya Allah, Ya Allah tabtasmeen Ya Allah, Ya Allah tarkuseen* (BR)

   [Repeated expressions of Ya Allah Ya Allah indicates again author's reinforcement, which means 'barely']

   You barely walk. You barely talk, you barely smile, you barely dance. (GR)

As de Beaugrande and Dressler say, "the literal translator decomposes the text into single elements and replaces each into a corresponding element in the goal language, the free translator judges the function of the whole text in discourse and reaches for elements that could fulfil that function in a goal-language situation" (216). Thus, over the years, the form as well as the content of the message is given due prominence. It is this role of the carrier, which the translator has played in the translation process. He has been involved in the transference of meaning from one set of patterned symbols into another, bridge building from one to the other.

Translator an as Interpreter

When part of a text is important to the writer's intention, but insufficiently determined semantically, the translator has to interpret. In fact the cultural history of translation is replete with examples of such interpretation, misinterpretation and distortion, which may be due to the translator's incompetence as much as to the contemporary cultural climate.

Translation is normally written in modern language, which is in itself a form of interpretation, and lexically at least a reflection of the TL culture. One can even say that the use of language itself involves translation. Following Vygotsky's (1896–1934) four-way classification-*thought without language, inner speech, social speech, and language without thought*-one can say that our inner speech is translated into social/outer speech. To scholars like Roman Jacobson, all translation is nothing less than an act of critical interpretation−"an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs in some other language" (Singh 45). Nair (1996) identifies the strategies employed by the translator to overcome the cultural and linguistic differences. The chief techniques used are *borrowing, literal translation, transliteration, omission, addition, substitution, lexical creation and transcreation*. All these point to the fact that such interventionist strategies are only to enhance the credibility and acceptability of the recreated TLT.

Translator as an Intruder or source Modifier

Further, the translator can assume the role of *intruder* into the process, particularly with the theoretical framework provided by structuralism and post-structuralism. Ronald Barthes, dislodging the author from his high pedestal of centrality, states that the moment writing commences the disjunction between the author as a person and text occurs and the author "enters into his death." In the text it is "the language which speaks not the author," for the author fails in mastering the language. In the process of mastering the language he surrenders himself to the language and becomes subservient. The meaning of the text exists in the system of rules and conventions−not in the text itself as believed for long (Singh 1996). Since the textual meaning got diffused and dissipated, the author was decentered and the translator gained, rather elusively,

liberation from the periphery. The translator is a reader-critic who sees the work as he wants to see it and the work becomes what this reader-critic intends it to be. The creation of meaning is often thrust upon the text and this process in which he produces his text is different from the one brought about by the creator/author whose organic living product is creatively and constructively distorted, damaged, and reconstructed. Thus originates a new text and the translator emerges as a producer of a new text in a new linguistic system. For Paul De Man, translation 'disarticulates' the original. That is to say, the translation undoes all the tropes and rhetorical operations of the original, and so demonstrates that the original has always already been falling apart. De Man proposes that translations kill the original by discovering that the original was already dead (De Man 1986).

Derrida says the source text is not an original at all; it is the elaboration of an idea, of a meaning, in short it is in itself a translation. Translation enables a text to continue life in another context, and the translated text becomes an original by virtue of its continued existence in that new context. Derrida suggests translation might better be viewed as one instance in which language can be seen as always in the process of modifying the original texts, of deferring and displacing forever any possibility of grasping that which the original text desired to name. In a similar fashion, translation can be viewed as a lively operator of *différance*, as a necessary process that distorts original meaning while simultaneously revealing a network of texts both enabling and prohibiting interlingual communication. "Translation is a process by which the chain of signifiers that constitutes the source language text is replaced by a chain of signifiers in the target language, which the translator provides on the strength of an interpretation. Because meaning is an effect of relations and differences among signifiers along a potentially endless chain (polysemous, intertextual, subject to infinite linkages), it is always differential and deferred, never present as an original unity" (Venuti 17).

Feminist translation theory focuses on the interactive space between the two poles:Source text (male) and Target text (female) and notes that those poles have been interpreted in terms of masculine and feminine. Lori Chamberlain points out the sexualisation of this terminology, i.e. the notion of translation as a betrayal of the original. She says "it has captured a cultural complicity between the issues of fidelity in translation and marriage," wherein "fidelity is defined as an implicit contract between translation (as woman) and original (as husband, father, or

author)" (Bassnett 140). Barbara Godard asserts her right to shape and manipulate the source text and she states "Women handling the text in translation would involve the replacement of the modest, self-effacing translator" (Bassnett 157).

Translators are never 'innocent.' They have the power to create an image of the original, which can be very different from the original's intention insofar as the original textual reality can be distorted and manipulated according to a series of constraints: the translators' own ideology; their feeling of superiority/inferiority towards the language into which they are translating; the prevailing "poetical" rules of the target culture; the expectations of the dominant institutions and ideology; the public for whom the text is intended.

The translator as an invisible entity

The question of the translator's identity emerges when the status of a translator in a translated work is considered. Some of the critics opine that he should disappear in the work and should not stand between the reader and the original author. He should achieve the extinction of his personality. He is perhaps most successful when he is least visible, and hence "most visible too" (Singh, 1996). Translation is like entering another body, which entails its own challenges and ordeals. This feeling is parallel to what Venuti refers to as *simpatico*, i.e., "the translator should not merely get along with the author, not merely find him likeable; there should also be identity between them ...the voice that the reader hears in any translation made on the basis of *simpatico* is always recognized as the author's, never as the translator's, nor even as some hybrid of the two" (274). For him, *simpatico* is a form of "cultural narcissism," identifying only the same culture in foreign writing, the same self in the cultural other.

Conclusion

Translation occurs by way of a series of decisions made by the translator in considering the requirements of the ST and source culture on the one hand, and those of the TL and target culture on the other in view of intercultural communication. A source-oriented translation makes far greater demands on the reader, but is of great value to some of the

readers. Whereas a target-oriented translation helps the first readers in maintaining their enthusiasm throughout their reading, the placement of the translator into the various possible realms of the translation process problematizes the dynamics of SL and TL texts' relations in the discourse of Translation Studies. What is being proposed here are only the possibilities before the translator and the shifting bases on which he tries to reach out to the target culture.

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