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Shifts In English- Arabic Translation

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*Accepted with considerable
notes that should be improved by
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TOPIC	Page No
Introduction	1_2
Catford's notion	2
Significance	3_4
English tenses	4_8
The notion of shift in translation	8_10
Catford's notion on translation shifts	10_18
Conclusion	18_19
References	19_20

Translation Shifts

1. Introduction

Translation is, in practical terms, an ongoing practice that never reaches completion or perfection, contrary to the popular saying "practice makes perfect". In fact, the more one practices translation, the more one realizes that translation is an open-ended learning process which always reveals new tricks of the trade, unlike probably many practical fields. One of the most intriguing and interesting translation concept is "translation shifts" which becomes blindingly obvious when the source language and the target language belong to two different families. A typical example of this case is the language pair of English and Arabic. English, on the one hand, belongs to the Indo-European family. Arabic, on the other hand, is a Semitic language. As a result of this distinct disparity, the linguistic systems of English and Arabic are as different from each other as chalk and cheese. This great difference gives rise to what John Catford (1965) terms as Translation Shifts which obviously account for translators' preference for free translation over literal translation when the source language and the target language belong to two completely different families. The present article aims at shedding some light on some translations shifts which result from the translation of English into Arabic or the other way round. It should be noted that this study is strictly

qualitative because it focuses on some selective linguistic shifts, namely word order, parts of speech, word choice, tense, number, and voice. Besides, the examples included in this paper all come from the researcher's own observations and translations which he himself has carried out from English into Arabic and/or vice versa in the course of his relatively long career as a translator.

2.Catford's Notion on Shift

Catford (1965) followed Firth and Halliday's procedures in linguistics in which he evaluates language as communication that works functionally in context and on a scope of diversified levels (e.g. lexis , grammar , graphology and phonology) and various ranks (e.g. morpheme ,word, clause, sentence) (Munday, 2002)

Catford's theory on translation shifts argued that shifts take place at both grammatical and lexical levels and therefore their examination is pursued within or beyond the sentence boundaries as a higher rank. His frame of shifts is limited to textual equality. Thus, Catford theory of shifts was built up on the notion that some translation has no formal correspondence between two languages code systems and textual equality are the speeches of translation between source text and target text

3. Significance

The linguistic translational shift is looked as a defying matter in correct translation because it can lead to change the meaning and the message of the source text. For example (from BBC news website)

1-the 6.3 size quake destroyed the city and killed 309 people

جدير بالذكر ان قوة الزلزال بلغت 6.3 درجة على مقياس ريختر. اسفر عن مقتل 309 اشخاص

2-many small earthquakes had rattled the zone in the months before the tremor that destroyed much of the historic center

وكان عدد الهزات الارضية الصغيرة قد ضرب المنطقة قبل اشهر من حدوث الزلزال الشديد الذي تسبب في الحاق دمار هائل في المدينة التاريخية

Considering that English is the source news text and Arabic is the target news text , in the translated text , three shifts of class took place)

1-the adjectival phrase 'the 6.3 size quake ' in the source text is translated into a noun phrase in the Arabic news text 6.3 ان قوة الزلزال بلغت this translation shows that the focus of message in the source text is the quake itself but in translated text is the amount of the quake size)

2-the verb killed قتل is translated into a verbal phrase اسفر عن مقتل ١.

Which means 'cause the death of ' thus the meaning and the message of source language text is changed from being the doer\agent into a reason behind the action)

3-the verb destroyed 'دمر' which is in past simple tense is translated into verbal phrase 'which is in past simple tense is translated into verbal phrase 'تسبب في الحاق دمار' which means 'cause destruction ' thus the source text message is changed . accordingly , these grammatical shifts of class have influenced the quality of the English source news message when translated into Arabic news . hence the translator has succeeded to change the quality of message when he\she changed the grammatical structure of sentence of the sentence . This study expects to explore the translation problems and solutions on an extended dimensions of linguistics , in the sense that our analysis shall include the field of grammatical shift. It will analyze the translation of English political news text (source text)into Arabic news (text target)paying more attention on shift as well as looking at the changes on the message.

4-English tenses

There are the different English tenses , the fourth tenses in which there are twelve tenses that have no accurate equals in Arabic , which includes only two tenses namely (مضارع (the present) and (الماضي (the past)) .

This leads to some difficulties and problems for translators (Ghazala 2008)
the following is a debate based(Ghazala 2008) to supply some insights
regarding the translation of English tenses into Arabic

4.1-The present and past perfect tenses

The present and past perfect tenses have no tense-to-tense equivalent in Arabic but, some translators proposed translating the present perfect as (قبل قليل) and (للتو) to refers present perfect and (قبل مدة من الزمن) to indicate the past perfect .yet, this is a facultative translation (Ghazala,2008). Moreover , Ghazala (ibid) proposed that both tenses (i.e the present and past tenses) are translated into the past simple with or without (لقد and قد) as indicated in the following example :

1-we did our homework (past simple) ادينا واجباتنا المدرسية

2-we have done our homework(present perfect) قد ادينا واجباتنا المدرسية

3-we had done our homework (past perfect) لقد ادينا واجباتنا المدرسية

4.2-Present and past progressives

The present and the past progressives have no accurate equivalent in Arabic thus , it becomes a problematic issue for translators when they stratify verbatim shift. Thus the present progressive (am\is\are +ing) is proposed to be translated into the present tense in

Arabic. Ghazala (ibid) proposed to utilize (الان)now) (to refers the present progressive .e.g. the students are studying now الطلاب يدرسون الان but, few other situations are proposed to be translated as theme or suspension e.g.(students are leaving the class) الطلاب مغادرون الفصل However ,an example such as 'he is dying ' is proposed to be translated as ' انه ' which refers that he is still breathing and may become well again since (هو\انه\ميت) refers that he is no longer alive. Furthermore , the past progressive (was\were +ing) is suggested to be translated as (كان + the present simple)in Arabic e.g.' he was studying English' is translated as 'يموت' in Arabic كان in which 'verb to be ' is translated as كان in Arabic 'يموت' 'كان يدرس الانكليزية'

4.3-Present and Past Perfect Progressive Tenses

Present perfect progressive tense (has\have + been + ing) and past perfect progressive tense (had +been +ing)are proposed to be translated into Arabic كان plus the present simple of Arabic e.g. the student has been studying all day ' is translated into كان الطالب يدرس طول اليوم and the teachers had been teaching all day ' is translated into كان المعلمون يدرسون طوال اليوم

4.4Translation of Future Past

The future past (would have) is proposed to be translated into three possibilities

1-The real possible future in present (Arabic if + past\will + present) e.g. if you finish study early, I will give you a present ' سوف ,إذا انهييت دراستك اعطيك هدية

2-The unreal past (Arabic :if + past + past) e.g. if you finished study early, I would visit you ' لزرتك in which the letter لزرتك replaced would

3-Impossible unreal past (Arabic: if + past +(ل) +past of + (كان past)e.g. if you have finished study early , I would have visited you :

4.5-The future progressive

The future progressive (will \shall +be + ing) is said to be translated into translations :verb be ' in the present + the present participle of the main verb or into present in which (سوف \س in both situations is preceded e.g. ' I shall be studying 'is translated into سوف اكون الدرس سوف ادرس

4.6-The future perfect

The future perfect (shall \will + have +p.p) is proposed to be into قد + past \ (قد انتهى) followed by a prepositional phrase (+ (noun e.g. many students will have finished study ' انتهوا من الدراسة

سوف يكون الطلاب قد نهوا دراسة

Finally ,to summarize the above discussion , the English tenses and their Arabic correspondences : the English present simple and present progressive are translated into the Arabic present , the past simple + present perfect and past perfect are translated into the Arabic past . The past progressive , present perfect progressive and the past perfect progressive are translated into Arabic were + present (Ghazala ,2008)

5.The notion of shift in translation

Catford (1965) and Darbelnet's and Vinery (1965) are used to analyze the translation between two languages (Munday 2008) in that time the classical model of Vinery and Darbelnet (1958) suggested a taxonomy in the stylistic which compares between French and English. Catford's (1965) introduced the term of translation shifts. As he discusses the notion of translation shifts and its influence on the evaluation in books. vinery and Darbelnet discussed translation shift under the term transposition. Additionally , Catford did a remarkable work in distinguishing between formal correspondence and textual equivalence in translation of source language into target language. For catford, a formal correspondence is a category of the TL (such as element of structure , unit ...) which fills in almost the same place and function in the TL which the ST category serves in the SL. However, a textual equivalent is a TL text or part of a text is seen in a specific occasion

and it is considered as an equivalent to a given SL text or part of a text. Hence it is noticed that textual equivalent is assigned to a specific ST-TT pair, while a formal correspondent is a general system – based on roles between any pair of languages. Consequently, translation shifts are said to happen when the two notions differ "translation shifts are small linguistic changes happening in translation of SL to TT" (Munday, 2008 :55). Catford defined translation shifts as "departure from formal correspondence in the process of going from the SL to the TL (Catford, 1965:73)

Translation shifts were the subject of study in Czech's works Levy (1969) in which he argued that in translating some text features categories have to be kept such as the concept, syntax, sound repetition, stylistic arrangement and denotative meaning in order to achieve an equivalent translation. Miko (1970) discussed the shifts of expression and style and he stated that translators' main goal is to preserve the style and the expressive characteristic of the ST. Thus he proposed a stylistic analysis within classification such as subjectivity, affectation, iconicity, operative salience and contrast. Furthermore, Popovic stated that an analysis of the shifts of expression can be applied to all levels of the text, and will bring to illumination the general system of the translation with its control and subordinate elements (Popovic 1970 : 85)

accordingly, Popovic's work stressed on the importance of shift concept in translation which is also considered as significant development in the field of translation shifts. Popovic's analysis of shift refers to the purpose of the analysis of translation shifts which is to describe the translation by analyzing and classifying the changes that can be observed by comparing ST-TL pairs "

6.Catford's notion on translation shifts :

Catford (1965) followed Firth and Holliday steps in linguistics to evaluate languages communication that act functionally in context and on domain of different levels (e.g. lexis , grammar , graphology and phonology) and varied rank (e.g. morpheme, word, clause and sentence) (Munday ,2001) . Furthermore, Catford defined translation shifts as " departure from formal messaging in the process of going from the SL to the TL (Catford , 1965 :73)

Catford's definition has been criticized upon the distinction between textual equivalence and formal messaging. Textual equivalence is any TL text or part of text which is observed on a specific occasion to be the equivalent of a given SL text or part of text (Ibid : 27) while on the contrary , formal messaging is any TL category (unit , class , structure , element of structure , ..) which can be said to occupy , as nearly as

possible , the same place in the economy of the TL as the given SL category occupies in the SL. (ibid :27) .

Ha also divided shifts into two main types (1) level shift and (2) category shift.

These shifts are explained below:

1- Level shifts

This type of shift happens when an SL item has an equal TL translation by which variation at the linguistic level emerges. Catford points out that the only possible shifts in translation are from grammar to lexis, or vice versa. In other words , level shift is a shift that happens when an utterance can be presented by grammar in a language and lexis in another one . In traditional grammar, words are grouped into grammatical sorting (known as parts of speech) based on their semantic features (i.g. word – order in a sentence structure) . Accordingly, some of words which belong to the similar category, have a number of semantic , morphological and syntactic features in common (Rod Ford,2009) . Traditionally there are two varied kinds of words, that are: content words (a word that has substantive lexical content) and function words / functions (a word basically manifest to present grammatical features) . The dissimilarities between the two can be shown in contrast to a contentive such as "Van"

with a function such as the. . A noun such as Van has substantive lexical content in that it refers to object which 64 characteristically has four wheels and engine, and simply the one can draw a picture of a typical Van : however , a pronoun like "them" would not be easy enough to describe its content (e.g. the one can't draw a picture of them) , yet it is a function which purely marks grammatical (i.e. person number and case) features thus it is a third person plural nominative pronoun . Furthermore the central lexical / substantive classifications found in English are verb (e.g. eat , sing , pull and resign) , nouns (e.g. boy , money , dress , horses) adverb (e.g. badly , well , sadly) , adjective (e.g. tired , happy , ill , conscientious , cruel , red , old and preposition (e.g. on , in , off , outside , inside , above , under , below) . Besides the five lexical /substantive categorization mentioned above English also has a number of functions. These categorizations include determiners (e.g. that , his , those , these) quantifiers (e.g. some , all ,any , no , very , each , many , much , , most) pronouns (e.g. me , I , us , we , he , you) and auxiliaries (e.g. may , might , can ,could , shall , should , will , would) . For instance English and Russian introduce some examples of level shift in the translation of verbal aspects. Both have varied aspects, the translation of the Russian perfective aspects along with the English verb "to achieve". This shows the translation of grammatical aspect has been done by the use of a word and in this manner we can find a level shift from grammar to lexis.

2- Category shift :

In Catford's definition to category shift, he referred to two kinds of translation , namely , unbounded translation and Rank – bound translation . The first refers to a kind of translation in which the translator is free to translate an SL grammatical unit of certain size by a TL equivalent of varied size. Rank – bound translation refers to special cases where equivalent is deliberately limited to ranks, thus leading to bad translation (Catford , 1965) . In rank –bound translation: an equivalence is sought in the TL : for each word or for each morpheme encountered in the ST. Classify shifts are divided into four kinds : structure , class , unit , and intra-system shifts.

a) Structure – shift

Language expresses a noticeable amount of differences in two axes : (1) the existence of the structure type in two languages and (2) the realization of structure which is similar between these languages .

Moreover, in these sentence structures, the agreement between the head of the sentence and its modifiers is an observed state in some languages. For example the agreement of number and gender in between noun and adjective in the Arabic nominal sentence yet , in English sentence structure, there is no restrictions of agreement between noun and adjective

but between articles and nouns . Therefore, structure shifts in translation realize in such cases.

b) Class – shifts

Class is defined as the items which have or similarly have the same function and can be said, form a group of units. It is a shift in which one of the SL parts of speech is changed to another one in the TL. In other words, class shifts take place when the target text has an equivalence item to the source language text but from different class. . Class shifts can take place from noun to adjective , verb to noun , adjective to verb , for example , Catford (1965) illustrated that there is a shift in class between the English "a medical student" and the French "metudiantenmedecine in which the English adjective medical which modifies the noun , student " is translated by an adverbial qualifying phrase "enmedecine" . Moreover , the following is an example from Ghazala (2002) presents class shifts between Arabic and English .

a. Sl text : الفهم سهلة الانجليزية

TL text : English is easy to understand .

b. Sl text : status quo

TL text : الوضع الراهن

(Ghazala , 2002 , 57)

In the above example, we notice that a class shift occurred between Arabic and English when the Arabic noun (الفهم) was translated into a verb "to understand" in the English TL text . Furthermore a class shift took place , when the English SL text "status quo " noun + adjective is translated in Arabic as noun + noun (الوضع الراهن) . Accordingly, the meaning of the SL is not changed in the TL and the quality of the SL message is sustained.

c) Unit – shift.

It is a shift in that the SL rank is translated to another one in the TL under consideration of translation equivalence. The word "rank" in this state refers to the linguistic units (e.g. morpheme, word , group , clause and sentence) which are arranged in layers according to rank for example , the morpheme "im" in the English SL impossible " was translated into a word "tide" in the Indonesian TL "tida" nungkin . Another example of unit shifts is when the Arabic word (يصافح) was translated into the English in two words "shake hands" one more example shows unit shifts from Arabic into English is the translation of the three words (على نحو سريع) to one word quickly (Ghazala , 2002)

d) Intra – system shifts :

This kind of shift takes place when two languages have almost the same corresponding systems. However, the TL text contains a noun –

corresponding term of the SL . In other words , intra – system shifts are changes that happen within a language system Intra-system shifts take place when a change happen at the language's numbers , deixis , articles .. etce.g when a singular noun is translated into a plural noun for example :

SL text : ناطق حيوان الانسان

TL text : man is a speaking animal

SL text : المفضلة مادتي الفلسفة

TL text : Philosophy is my favorite subject .

(Gazala 2002)

In the above examples, the Arabic noun (الانسان) and (الفلسفة) are definite and they present a genitive reference . However, their translation equivalences, "man" and "philosophy" respectively are in definite and then they show a generic reference.

Examples of Translation Shifts Resulting from English/Arabic Translation or Vice Versa

To begin with, the most obvious translation shift, or linguistic change, that results when translation is carried out from English into Arabic or vice versa is word order. In English, the word order follows the pattern of subject + verb + rest of the sentence; whereas in Arabic the word order follows the pattern of verb + subject + rest of the sentence. When translation from English into Arabic, or the other way round, is carried out,

attention must be paid to this established fact, or else there will be mistakes in translation. The following simple examples illustrate this point very clearly:

ST : Jack loves Mary.

TT : يحب جاك ماري

(The literal translation of the English sentence which is not acceptable in Arabic is “ جاك يحب ماري ” which keeps the word order of the source text)

ST : يعمل محمد في البنك

TT : Mohammad works at a/the bank.

(The literal translation of the Arabic sentence which is not grammatical in English is “Works Mohammad at the bank.” which keeps the word order of the source text)

Another interesting point which is related to translation shifts is the change in the translation of parts of speech from English into Arabic or vice versa. For example, an English verb can be translated into a noun in Arabic without affecting the meaning of the sentence in which it is used. It is worth mentioning that in Arabic there are only three parts of speech which are verbs, nouns and particles (Yahya Ould Mohamed El Hadj, Imad Abdulrahman Al-Sughayeir and Abdullah Mahdi Al-Ansari 2009), unlike the various parts of speech in English. Let us examine the following English sentence with its two possible Arabic translations:

I want to meet him now.

أريد مقابله الآن.

(The word "مقابله" is a noun and it is the Arabic equivalent of the English verb " to meet")

أريد أن أقابله الآن.

(The word "أقابله" is a verb and it is the Arabic equivalent of the English verb " to meet")

Sometimes an adjective in English is translated into a verb in Arabic, especially when it is used predicatively. Let us look at the following English example with its possible Arabic translations:

I am afraid of the dark.

أنا خائف من الظلمة.

(The word "afraid" is an adjective and its Arabic equivalent "خائف" is a noun.).

7.Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that translation shifts are an important feature of any translation as they are unavoidable, especially if the source language and the target language belong to two different families such as English and Arabic. It is also very clear that such shifts result when translation is carried out from English into Arabic or vice versa. As the

paper has shown, some selective linguistic shifts, namely word order, parts of speech, word choice, tense, number, and voice have been duly elaborated on in an attempt to make the concept of translation shifts more intelligible and more practical. In fact, translators, in general, may readily and inadvertently apply this concept whenever they translate because languages do not have one and the same linguistic system.

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