

Cultural Differences and the Problems They Cause in Commercial Translation

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Abstract:

I attempt in this research to uncover the problems and obstacles faced by students at some Libyan Universities when translating English proverbs into Arabic and Arabic proverbs into English that relate to commercial matters. In this research, I focus on commercial proverbs whose translation cause ambiguity and misunderstanding of the proverbs, resulting an incorrect translation. I also provide some definitions of idiomatic expressions and some methods and strategies that students should use in order to avoid these problems and reach the intended meaning and a correct translation. The students were given texts containing English proverbs related to business matters. These students, were male and female, they were from various Libyan universities. They were asked to translate the English texts into Arabic within a period of week. They were instructed not to consult professional translators, but were permitted to use dictionaries and seek assistance from each other. Texts were collected from students for review, analysis and discussion students' translation and the problems they encountered in translating these texts.

Key words: translation problems, translation types, idioms, cultural expressions, idiomatic expressions

ملخص الدراسة:

نحاول في هذا البحث الكشف عن المشاكل والعقبات التي يواجهها الطلاب في الجامعات الليبية عند ترجمة الامثال الشعبية الانجليزية الى العربية التي تتعلق بالشؤون التجارية. في هذا البحث تم التركيز على الامثال الشعبية التي تستعمل في المعاملات التجارية والتي تسبب ترجمتها غموض وسوء فهم لهذه الامثال مما يؤدي الى ترجمة غير صحيحة. كما نستعرض بعض التعريفات لهذه التعبيرات الاصطلاحية وبعض الاستراتيجيات التي يجب على الطالب استخدامها لتجنب هذه العقبات وفهم المعنى المقصود والترجمة الصحيحة. تم اعطاء الطلاب نصوص تتضمن امثال شعبية انجليزية تتعلق بالشؤون التجارية وكان الطلاب من الذكور والاناث وينتمون الى جامعات ليبية مختلفة. طلب من الطلبة ترجمة النصوص الى الانجليزية خلال اسبوع، وطلب منهم عدم الاستعانة بمتترجمين محترفين ولكن سمح لهم استخدام القواميس والاستعانة ببعضهم. جمعت النصوص من الطلاب لمراجعتها وتحليلها ومناقشتها، بالإضافة الى النظر في ترجمة الطلاب والعقبات التي واجهوها في ترجمة هذه النصوص.

Introduction:

In translation in general, translators encounter many problems, including grammatical problems, problems related to words, and other types of problems such as, the problems of popular proverbs and how they differ between societies. Some proverbs exist in one society but not in another. Among these are proverbs related to business matters. If even professional translators find these proverbs difficult, imagine how much more challenging they are for those still studying translation.

In this research, I present some different definitions of popular proverbs according to some translation scholars to make it easier for the reader to know the intended meaning of each proverb, whatever it is Arabic or English.

Proverbs are personal words that have different meaning when they are combined together, and they often carry meaning that cannot be deduced from their individual components. According to Strassler (1982: 79) argues that "an idiom is a concatenation of more than one lexeme whose meaning is not derived from the meaning of its constituents". Wayne (2003: 252) suggests that idioms are "an expression whose meaning cannot be predicted from the meaning of its parts". The following some of the commercial idioms which are used in business transactions, "cash cow, belt-tightened, blockbuster, bitter pill to swallow". Therefore, students must be aware of their correct meaning and their literal translation.

Actually, it is so hard to find an exact and suitable equivalence of an idiom in the target language due to the idiom is culturally specific". Although, idioms are used enormously in almost all languages and in various speech types, they still represent a translation problem that need to be investigated.

Statement of the study

This research is an attempting to investigate the obstacles and problems that face some Libyan universities English language students specialized in translation when translate texts contain English and Arabic proverbs relate to business fields. In addition, to uncover the methods and strategies that students should use when translate such texts to overcome these obstacles.

Significance of the study:

This research is an attempt to identify and uncover the problems encountered by English language students who specialized in translation, and to understand the methods they should follow and the strategies they should use when translating commercial texts that include proverbs related to trade and business. Also, this research demonstrates to the student the importance of knowing the language and culture of the people of the text that is to be translated into the students' language. Understanding cultural differentiations enhance the abilities of translation students for choosing the suitable and the correct equivalence and the intended meaning.

Aims of the study:

The aim of this research is to study the obstacles faced by English language students specialized in translation when translating proverbs in some texts of business matters from English into Arabic and vice versa. Also, tries to limit the elements and reasons

that cause these obstacles. This research also aims to enable students, through researching and exploration, to identify methods and strategies that allow them to provide accurate translations and choose appropriate synonyms in both languages.

Hypothesis:

Since Arabic language differs from English language in several features and ways, this difference causes many obstacles and problems that are difficult for professional translators to overcome, so how can those who are still studying translation. Lack of knowledge of translation methods and techniques by students is an important cause of these obstacles in translating proverbs related to business matters. For instance, translating some proverbs literally will give incorrect meaning, unacceptable equivalence and poor translation. Therefore, students should be aware of these elements and they must have excellent master of both languages and cultures.

Research questions:

The study searches to answer the following questions: what are the obstacles that Libyan students majoring English language specialized translation encountered when translating English and Arabic proverbs? How would they response and handle these obstacles? What the strategies that they will use for choosing the correct meaning and suitable equivalence of both proverbs? In addition, texts containing popular proverbs related to commercial matters for translation from English into Arabic and vice versa.

Methodology:

This research divided into two parts, theoretical and practical. The theoretical one concentrates on the definition of proverbs by giving examples of proverbs that use in business texts, then discussing the obstacles and problems that encountered students and how they can deal with by limiting the obstacles and the strategies they used. The practical part, involves some texts that include some proverbs that are used in business field. Then, clarifying students' obstacles in rendering idioms by using data collection procedures to analyze the use students' written translation of proverbs with reference to mistranslation. The basic method of this research is analyzing data consisting of students' written translation of texts that include idioms.

Discussion and analysis of the topic

Actually, it so difficult to find an exact and suitable equivalence of an idiom in the target language due to the idiom is culturally specific. Although idioms are used enormous in almost all languages and in various speech types, they still represent a translation problem that need to be investigated. Likewise, commercial translation between small and large traders, whether these transactions are in small shapes such as kiosks or vegetables shapes, or large shapes such as markets or shops that distribute and sell goods in wholesale or retails. To avoid being lengthy and to save time, we point out three main methods that are recommended for translation in general and for translation business texts in particular. These methods are as follows: 1) Literal translation method 2) Semantic translation method 3) Functional translation method, but using literal translation will often produce odd, poor and unacceptable translation. So, in this case, explanation is extremely needed in order to convey the correct meaning. Using the semantic translation method will always convey the core

meaning, and produce the source language message into the target language. Using functional translation method will certainly produce an effective, dynamic, communicative and acceptable translation. The following business idioms are those that were distributed to students for translation: 1. (He could sell ice to Eskimo). 2. (The ball is in your court). 3. (Get down to brass tacks). 4. (He threw cold water on the plan). 5. (It costs an arm and a leg). There were five students' translation were randomly selected for analysis and discussion of the errors they made when translating these texts, which contain commercial idioms.

First student's translation of first English commercial idiom. (He could sell ice to Eskimo). The first student translated this English idiom into Arabic as following: (هو) يستطيع بيع الماء للأسكيمو. "hoa yastateea beiya alma lelaskimo". This is a literal translation and does not convey the intended and correct meaning. Through his/her translation it appears that the student is unfamiliar with other cultures and the idioms used by merchants in business matters.

First student's translation of second English business idiom. (The ball is in your court). The student translated this proverb into Arabic as the following: (القرار بيدك). It seems correct translation. Because this English idiom has more than one equivalence such as, (انا عرضت ما عندي والان دورك). (الان القرار متروك لك), (الامر لك) etc. Since this proverb has more than one synonym, the student's translation is appropriate. The meaning is correct in some cases, because the meaning of this proverb varies according to the different situations in which it is used.

First student's translation of third English business idiom. (Get down to the brass tacks). The translation of first student's of third English commercial proverb was as the following: (ادخل في الموضوع مباشرة). "odkhel vi almaothooa". The literal translation of this English proverb according to (York Dictionary of English Idioms) is get into discussion something, e.g. Get down to the real point of a discussion. Another example: We had a few minutes of polite conversation, but then he got down to the brass tacks, and asked me what salary I would want if I worked for him. From two previous examples, we conclude that the student's translation is correct. It appears that he/she knows the English people culture. I think this is way the student's translation is correct.

First student's translation of fourth English business idiom. (He threw cold water on the plan). He/she translated English proverb into Arabic into (سكب الماء على الوثائق التي كانت معه). "sakapa alma alla alwathaeq alti maaho". This is incorrect translation. It seems that the student did not comprehend the text that contains this proverb and did not have knowledge of the culture of the people of this proverb. To understand let see the following example: Ahmed presented his boss a plan to explore their business into Tunisia, but he threw cold water over his plan and told him to just concentrate on developing business in Libya. By reading the text and looking at the content and according to several sources, such as, the Internet, the correct translation of this proverb is "He neglected his plan and did not make any attention to it.

First student's translation of fifth English business idiom. (It costs an arm and a leg). The translation of first student of this English idiom into Arabic was as follows: (كلفته يده ورجله). "klafatho yadho wa reglho". This is literal translation. It does not convey the

intended meaning of this English proverb. It seems that the student did not look well at the content of the proverb, due to in commercial transaction, people deal with money and financial assets, not with hands and legs. The correct translation of this proverb is "It costs a very high price".

Second student's translation of first English business idiom. (He could sell ice to Eskimo). The second student's translation of the first English business idiom was as the following: (لديه قدرة ومهارة كبيرة في البيع). "ladeih qodurah wa maharah cabeerah vi albeia". In this translation, the meaning is clear. The translation is correct according to many resources such as Internet and Gazala book. It seems that the student is familiar with the culture of people who use such proverbs.

Second student's translation of second English idiom. (The ball is in your court). The student translated this English proverb into Arabic as follows: (انا عملت عملي والان دورك). (ana amlto amali wa alan daorok leitokmel albaqi). This is an informal translation, but it conveys the intended meaning and appropriate synonym. This English proverb has recently become very popular in Arab countries, but in its Arabic version. It seems that the student is familiar with this proverb and knows its meaning, and has therefore provides a suitable translation.

Second student's translation of third English proverb. (Get down to the brass tacks). Second student translated this English proverb into English as follows: (انزل الى مسامير). (النفاس). "enzel ela masameer Annohas". This is literal incorrect translation. It seems that the student took the meaning from the dictionary without comprehending of the intended meaning of the proverb. It is clear that the student was unable to focus on the meaning of the proverb or its intended meaning. It also seems he/she overlooked the fact that most literal translations do not provide a true equivalent or an accurate and precise translation. The correct intended meaning according to York Dictionary of English Idioms is "get down to the real point of a discussion".

Second student's translation of fourth English proverb. (He threw cold water on the plan). The translation of second student of this English proverb is as follows: (سكب الماء على الخطأ). (sakaba allma ala alkgetah). This is a literal and an incorrect translation. The second student's translation of this English proverb is similar to his/her previous colleague's translation, meaning he/she poured cold water on the plan, but it is incorrect. The student is either weak in translation or unfamiliar with English culture, as he/she translated the proverb literally, even though it is well-known to most students that literal translation does not give an accurate translation or a suitable synonym.

Second student's translation of fifth English proverb. (It costs an arm and a leg). This student's translation of this English proverb was as (كانت غالية جدا لدرجة انه دفع يده ورجله). (ثمنها لها). "kant ghalia geden ledaraget annho dafaa yadaho wa reglaho thaman laha". It is wrong translation. That it is very expensive is true, but that he paid with his leg and hand is not true. The student seems to have grasped the proverb, but his/her interpretation was exaggerated, as no one would willingly sacrifices his/her leg and hand for anything, no matter what. However, the student's translation is incorrect.

Third student's translation of first English proverb. (He could sell ice to Eskimo). The student's translation of this English proverb into Arabic is as follows: (عندما وصل الى).

(سكان الاسكيمو استطاع ان يبيع لهم الثلج). "endama wasala ela soka Aleskimo estatta-a an yabeia lahom athaleg". Let us retranslate the student's translation literally into English, (when he arrived to Eskimos, he could to sell for them the ice). When we read the student's translation, we find that someone went to the Eskimos and was able to sell them the ice. This is a literal incorrect translation, wrong equivalence. The intended meaning was implicit meaning. The proverb was expressing how skilled and capable this person was of selling in all circumstances, as he was described metaphorically as being able to sell ice to those who live in the ice. Therefore, the intended meaning, in short, is that he has the ability and competence to sell in all situations.

Third student's translation of second English proverb. (The ball is in your court). The third student's translation of this English proverb into English was as follows: (الامر لك) "allamro matrok laka". This English proverb has more than one equivalent, depending on the situations and circumstances in which is used. The following are some Arabic equivalences of this English proverb: (القرار بيدك) "Alqarar bei yadoka", (الان دورك ان تقرر), "allan doroka ann toqarer" etc... This English proverb is used in most Arab countries and seems to be almost universally known in Arabic society, as we find that almost all students have translated it correctly.

Third student's translation of third English proverb. (Get down to brass tacks). The student translate this English proverb into Arabic as follows: (انزل الى مكان النحاس), "Anzel ela makan hgkphs". This is wrong translation. It seems that the student did not grasp this English proverb. Based on his/her translation, the student's English is weak and he/she is unfamiliar with English culture, even though he/she is required to be knowledgeable about English culture and language as he studies the language as a specialist. Since the subject of our study relates to commercial translation and its problems, the correct translation of this English proverb is, according to the Atlas Dictionary p. 163, as well as the York Dictionary p. 64 " to discuss the issue or the topic seriously and firmly.

Third student's translation of fourth English proverb. (He threw cold water on the plan). This student's translation of this English proverb into English is as follows: (لم يكن مهتم بالخطه فسكب عليها الماء). "Lam yaken mohtam bei allkhetah fa sacaba alliha allmaa". It is literal translation. It is incorrect translation. The correct translation is that he/she neglect the plan and focused on other intentions related to the matter. In this proverb, the meaning is implied and not literal. Pouring water here is an expression of indifference, a figurative expression.

Third student's translation of fifth English proverb. (It costs an arm and a leg). The student translated this English proverb into Arabic as follows: (كلفته كل ما يملك), "kallafathow koll ma yamliko". This is almost correct translation. What this English proverb means is that the cost was very high. The phrase "cost him/her everything he/she owned" is a figurative expression by which the student means that the cost was so high that he paid with all his/her savings. In my opinion as a translator, the meaning is very close to, or even accurate and appropriately synonymous with this proverb.

Fourth student's translation of first English proverb. (He could sell ice to Eskimo). The student translated this English proverb into Arabic as follows: (يستطيع ان يبيع الماء للناس) (في الاسكيمو). "yastatteea ann yabeea allma gelleskimo ". It is incorrect translation, and unsuitable equivalent. It clear from the translation that the student either did not understand the text of the proverb or is not familiar with the other cultures that he/she should be exposed to, as he/she will become a translator in the future, since he/she is a student studying English and his/her major is translation. However, dear reader, the intention behind this proverb is to demonstrate a person's ability and competence in selling in all circumstances, not that he/she went to the Eskimo and managed to sell ice even though they live in ice, to show the ability that a certain person possesses.

Fourth student's translation of second English proverb. (The ball is in your court). The student has translated the English proverb into Arabic as the following (انا قررت والان) (anna qarrarto wa allan ga daoroka vi ann toqarrer". We can consider the translation of the student to be correct, because this proverb has more than one synonym in the Arabic language, all of which are correct. The following are some of the Arabic equivalences of this English proverb (the ball is in your court), "الان", "القرار يدك", "دورك". As I mentioned in the translation of the previous proverb, this proverb is known in Arab societies and is often used by people, whether at formal or informal occasions. Therefore, most students have provided correct translation of this English proverb.

Fourth student's translation of third English proverb. (Get down to the brass tacks). The fourth student's translation was as the following: (انزل حيث يوجد النحاس), "enzel haeitho youged annohas". It is a wrong translation, not even close to being accurate. The student seems very weak in English language and unfamiliar with English culture, despite being a translation student. All translation students are required to be familiar with English culture because they will encounter idioms and many popular English proverbs that demand a good understanding of these expressions. Upon examining the meaning of the proverb, we find that it is implicit and indirect. The intention is to get straight to the point and not waste time, but the student may have not grasp the proverb or lacked familiarity with other cultures, leading to an incorrect translation.

Fourth student's translation of fourth English proverb. (He threw cold water on the plan). The student translated this English proverb as follows: (لم تعجبه الخطة فسكب عليه) (الماء), "lam taageebaho alkh ettah vasakaba alleiha allma". This is a mistranslation, not even close to a literal translation. The meaning of this English proverb is implicit not literal. If we consider the proverb's meaning, we find that it is unreasonable to pour water on documents or work plans simply because you do not like them. If the student has paused and thought it through, he would have realized that it is illogical for any manager to pour water on their employees' plans. The meaning, however, is that the manager neglect the plan and focused on other matters.

Fourth student's translation of fifth English proverb. (It costs an arm and a leg). The student translated this English proverb into Arabic as follows: (دفع ثمن البضاعة رجله و) (يده), "dafaam thaman albeethaa roglahe wa yadahe". However, the translation is incorrect, and the Arabic equivalent of this English proverb does not convey the intended meaning. It seems the student began translating without considering the

meaning of the proverb or the context in which it was used. Clearly, he/she took the literal meaning of the words and presented this incorrect translation. This student, or anyone translating a text, should reflect and focus on its true meaning. Only after understanding the intended and comprehending the text should they offer their translation.

Fifth student's translation of first English proverb. (He could sell ice to Eskimo). This student provided an accurate translation; his/her translation was as follows: (لديه قدرة) , "ladeeh qodarah wa maharah kabeerah vi albeeeaa". This is correct translation and good and suitable synonym. It appears that the student understood and grasp the intended meaning of this proverb, and provided a correct and appropriate translation.

Fifth student's translation of second English proverb. (The ball is in your court). This student's translation is correct. It is as follows: (الان انا انتظر دورك ان تقرر) , "alan anna antather doroka ann toqarira ". As we learned previously, after reviewing several dictionaries and consulting a number of British people, it become clear that this English proverb has more than one equivalent in the Arabic language. Therefore, the student's translation is correct, and the equivalent is correct and appropriate.

Fifth student's translation of third English proverb. (Get down to brass tacks). The student's translation of this English proverb into Arabic is as follows: (ادخل في الموضوع) , "adkhol vi almodooaa la todiaa aloaqto". After reviewing some dictionaries, including, for example: Atlas Dictionary of English Idioms, York Dictionary of English Idioms and Gazala Book. It was clear that the student's translation was correct and that the equivalent was appropriate for this English proverb, based on these dictionaries.

Fifth student's translation of fourth English proverb. (He threw cold water on the plan). The student's translation of this English proverb was as follows: (لقد اهمل الخطة) , "laqad ahmla alkhota wa ahtama bei aamal okhrah ". Based on some resources including Internet, the student's translation of this English proverb is correct and the Arabic equivalent is correct and suitable. Through his/her translation of the proverbs, this student appears to be well versed in English culture and also proficient in the English language, as all his/her translations were largely accurate.

Fifth student's translation of fifth English proverb. (It costs an arm and a leg). The student translated this English proverb into Arabic as follows: (كلفته ثمنا باهظا جدا) , "kalafatho thamanan baheithan gedan". According to many sources such as, Atlas Dictionary of English Idioms, York Dictionary of English idioms, and Gazala Book, the student's translation is correct and the equivalent is appropriate.

Conclusion

After reviewing the students' translation and discussing the mistakes they made during the translation process of the English idioms, it became clear that most students were not aware of the true meaning and intent behind saying these proverbs. It also became clear that the students were not familiar with English culture, and as a result of these facts, they provided an incorrect translation and incorrect synonyms that were not even slightly appropriate, except one student whose translation was

correct and appropriate for all the English proverbs. When the student was asked, how his translation was correct and appropriate, he told that he lived with his family in Britain, that he studied primary and secondary school in that country's schools, that he was involved in some clubs, had relationships with many British families, and attended many social events and other occasions. From the student's question and answer, we can deduce that he lived in Britain, interacted with people, attended social events, and became familiar with the country's customs and traditions. This highlights the importance of understanding about different cultures for translators, particularly the proverbs and sayings used in various situations, whether social, commercial or otherwise. With the widespread availability of the internet, it has become essential for translation students and others to explore other cultures and learn their languages.

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