Toward an Optimal Theory of Translation

May Al-Shaikhli, Amman Arab University, Jordan

The European Conference on the Social Sciences 2018
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

Ambiguity is a natural feature that exists in all languages. Stylistically, it varies in degree from one domain to another .It simply means a state of having more than one possible meaning. Lexical and cultural ambiguities are interrelated phenomenon since lexical ambiguity is sometimes culturally determined. Thus, what is lexically ambiguous in one society may not be such in another .This study will tackle the close relation between language and culture because language reflects the ideas ,attitudes and other cultural aspects of a community . In addition to that the lexemes of a language manifest many cultural significant areas whether religious, aesthetic or social etc... This study will focus also on the impact of these two important features (lexical and cultural) on translating English and Arabic texts.

Keywords: Optimal, Translation, culture

Theoretical Studies

There are many theories preceded our field. Against the Source-Oriented approaches, there are target-oriented and norm-based descriptive approaches. Focusing on the importance of social constraints, these approaches tried to ignore the translator as thinking being. Thus, social factors are important, but the translators, anonymous though they may be, who make choices and manufacture and decide the result of the translations. Our approach tried to realize how translators achieve their translations.

Pym (1992) describes translation competence as follows: "generating and selecting between alternative texts" This means that translation competence is applicable to intralingual translation, however he but others have approached this matter such as Chesterman (1997) when he pointed out that translation is a "shift" via "strategy". But this strategy is label to a criticism because it is based on.Ambiguity simply means the state of having more than one possible meaning. This state can be clue to the presence of a certain word in the sentence itself. Moor's (2000:4) said: "ambiguity occurs when a language element has more than one meaning".

    I go for a run every morning.
    The tail-end batsmen added a single run before lunch.
    The ball player hit a home run.

Saeed says these different meanings of "run" denote ambiguity if each expresses a different sense. If they share the same sense, then "run" is merely vague between these different uses.

Saeed, one the other part distinguishes between vagueness and ambiguity. The context in the example of vagueness "can add information that is not specified in the sense, but in the example of ambiguity the context will cause one of the senses, to be selected (saeed, 1997:61).

    Let us have other example. The lexeme'العصر' in the Qur'anic verse
"والعصر, ان الانسان لفي خسر , الا الذين امنوا وعملوا الصالحات وتواصوا بالحق و تواصوا بالصبر ''
(سورة العصر: 1-3)
    May denote the following senses:
    - Afternoon.
    - Time (in the general sense).
    - Age (or era).
    - The afternoon payers (Cited in Ilyes, 1981:174)

This lexeme poses problem for translators. Let us consider the following renderings by different translators from different cultures:

    1-Sale (1877) (By the afternoon)
    2-Rodwell (1978) (I swear by the declining day) palmer (1942) (by the afternoon).

3-M.Ali (1963) (consider the time).
4-Picthall (1982) (by the declining day).
5-Bell (1937) (by the afternoon).
6-Arberry (1980) (by the afternoon).

Sale adopts sense (1) in his translation, but mentions (2) and (3) as well in his footnote. Rodweel,Palmer , Pickthal,Bell and Arberry opt for option (1).M.Ali employs (2) in his rendering.

The commentators' expositions are different.Katheer and Tabari support sense (2).Zamakhshari

Is in favour of (4).Jalal Al-Deen and Abi Hayyan (cited in Ilyas,1981:174) mention (1), (2) and (4).Baidhawi mentions (2), (3) and.Razi suggests (1), (2), (3) and (4),cited in (Ilyas,1981:174).

(Frequently abbreviated OT) is a linguistic model proposing that the observed forms of language arise from the interaction between conflicting constraints. Moreover, Optimality theory is usually considered a development of generative grammar, which shares its focus on the investigation of universal principles, linguistic typology and language acquisition (source). it is often called a connectionist theory of language, because it has its roots in neural network research, though the relationships is now largely of historical interest. It arose in part as a successor to the theory of Harmonic Grammar, developed in 1990 by Geraldine Legendre, Yoshiro Miyata and Paul Smolensky.

If we apply all the above mentioned on translation, thus, the input is the text (the translator has to translate) and the process of translating is achieved by evaluating and generating candidates (the generating component produces candidate TTs) and the evaluating component assesses the problem-solution process.

Universals and Units of Translation

Optimality Theory is taken to be universal. Universal of translation can be described usefully on a basic theoretical consideration saying that constraint violation indicates a marked state of affairs. Laviosa (1998:288) stated that universals of translation are "Linguistic features which typically occur in translated rather than original texts and are thought to be independent of the influence of the specific language pairs involved in the process of translation" This description corresponds with the notion of recurrent dominate constraints in this approach. But Laviosa pointed out that these universals are not 100% sure because these seems a certain violability of these universals**.**

The nature of constraints

The basis for constraints is that faithfulness constraints demand a certain relationship between input and output features, and that markedness constraints demand a certain feature in the output, regardless of whether or not it is present in the input.

Faithfulness constraints clearly prohibit the relationships that Pym identifies between textual quantity and semantic material: deletion, abbreviation, addition and expansion (Pym 1992). It must be noted thought that, in context, constraints are violable (to satisfy more highly ranked constraints), and so in effect they keep these relationships under control, ensuring that there is the lowest deletion, addition etc. possible to achieve the TT's aims. Markedness constraints on the other hand, do not explicitly provoke deletion, abbreviation, addition and expansion since these are ST-TT relationships, and markedness constraints take into account not ST features, but rather TT structures.

Issues

Context is usually classified into two types: linguistic and non-linguistic. The linguistic context or co-text usually refers to sentential relations that help clarifying what is vague or ambiguous. It is defined by Yule (1985:98-9) as the set of other words used in the same phrase or sentence. A familiar example is:

I went to the <u>bank</u>
The meaning of bank can be clarified by adding a phrase like to cash some money.
The meaning of bank can be clarified by adding a phrase like to cash some money.
It seems that Yule is not quite exact in stipulating that such additions appear in the same sentence:
I went to the <u>bank</u>. I was in need of some money.

A brief case study

Lexical ambiguity has many connotations .As for Katz (1966, 300), it is called (vocabulary ambiguity), while Chomsky (1977:67) it is (idiosyncratic ambiguity)
Saeed (1997:67) also talks about lexical interesting example:
Duffy discovered a <u>mole.</u>

This lexical ambiguity results from the fact the word mole means either (that small animal) or that (dark brown mark on the skin) or (a unit of measurement).

Lexical ambiguity is sometimes culturally determined that is what is lexically ambiguous in one society may not be paid attention to in another society:
He visits his <u>cousin </u>every Friday.

Such a sentence may not an English man to cheek whether this cousin is male or female. An Arab listener or this sentence on the other hand will not remain quiet: he will try to investigate whether this cousin is male or female and whether he comes through the father or the mother. In other words this type of lexical ambiguity is culture-bound.

Furthermore lexical ambiguity is divided by some scholars like Su (1994:31-2) into categorical lexical ambiguity and pure lexical ambiguity.

The first type occurs when a certain word is used as different parts of speech:
  -He <u>will</u> go to Mosul tomorrow.
  -He wrote his <u>will</u> yesterday.

Needless to say will is auxiliary in the first sentence and noun in the second sentence. Pure lexical ambiguity is more semantic than the previous one. It appears when the concerned word function more than once within the same part of speech:
  -She spoke about the import of this matter.

This sentence can be distinguished through its context:
A) She spoke about the <u>import</u> of this matter from Japan.
B) She spoke about the <u>import</u> of this matter to our present.

Like the context of situation the concept of lexical field can be helpful in solving the problems of ambiguity to a limited extent at least:

        The word <u>peak</u> is lexically ambiguous by itself but it is nearer to <u>summit</u> when we are talking about a <u>hat</u>.

From these entire examples one may realize that lexical ambiguity takes place because certain words in the sentence are either polysemous or homonymous.

Homonymy results in sharper ambiguity than polysemy does. Lexical ambiguity however is either intentional or unintentional. Unintentional ambiguity results from having polysemous or homonymous words quite casually and spontaneously. A pun however is usually intentionally built on lexical ambiguity.

Purely technical terms:

Original	Translator (A)	Translator (B)	Translator (C)
(بموجب وكالة) منظمة لدى كاتب العدل	Vide a power of attorney duly regulated by the Notary Public	According to power of attorney authenticated by the Notary Public	According to power o attorney with Bethlehem Notary Public
من البناء القائم على قطعة الأرض	Of the building erected on the plot	Of the building instructed on a land piece	Of the Building raised on the lot of land
وقف نوع	endowment	Kind of endowment	Of type: "endowment"
إبراء ذمة	Lessee shall be discharged	The lessee must get a discharge	Discharging the tenan

References

Chesterman, Andrew. (1997). *Memes of translation.* Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Holmes, James S. (1968). "Forms of verse translation and translation of Verse form". In James S.Holmes. (1988). *Translated! Papers on Literary Translation and Translation Studies.*Amsterdam: Rodopi. 23-34

Kiraly, Donald. (1995). *Pathways to Translation.* Manchester: St Jerome.

Koster.Cees.(2000).*From World toWorld: An* Armamentarium *for the Study of poetic Discourse in Translation.* Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Laviosa-Braithwaite, Sara. (1998). "Universals of translation". In Mona Baker (ed.) *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies.*London: Routledge. 288-291.

Leuven-Zwart, Kitty van. (1989). "Translation and original: Similarities and dissimilarities, I". *Target* 1 (2): 151-181.

Prince, Alan, and Paul Smolensky. (2002). *Optimality Theory: Constraint Interaction in Generative Grammar*. Retrieved from: http://roa.rutgers.edu/view.php3?id=845 . Last accessed May (2007).

Pym, Anthony. (1992). *Translation and Text Transfer*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang. Retrieved from: http://www.tinet.org/~apym/publications/text_transfer/cover.html . Last accessed May(2007).

Pym, Anthony. (1998). *Method in Translation History*. Menchester: St Jerome.

Toury, Gideon. (1995). *Descriptive Translation Studies and beyond*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.