Translation and Chaos in the Arab World: Situation & Remedy

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Abstract

Translation is regarded to as a positive means in society due to the communication facilitation it afford, whereas it can be sometimes negative device mainly in the Arab non knowledge productive world. Chaos in vocabulary and notably terms is most of the time if not always due to translation in the Arab world. Arabs arrive to a stage of not being able to communicate successfully, and understand each other due to the differences in their sources of translation, because Arabs of the Middle East essentially, and of the east at large, translate from English and coin their words and glossary from the English worldview. Whereas those of the Maghreb translate prominently from French language and consequently coin their words and their glossary from the French worldview, and consequently a chaos should be clearly observed in the use of terms between the east and west of the Arab world, to which translation contributes with generosity. The dare of calling it a chaos is catered by the fact that the phenomenon does not only touch merely words but concepts as well, and as a result, polluted communicative environment might be implanted by time. This paper shall investigate the chaos made by translating from different linguistic sources mainly in specialized fields and try to explain the situation and suggest solutions.

Keywords: *translation, glossary, chaos, Maghreb, Middle East.*

Introduction

Generally, it is agreed that translation solves many communication problems. Indeed translation intervenes when the communication between sender and receiver in a communication process is hampered due to language divergence, difference or response difficulties. Therefore, translation is used or adopted as a mechanism providing solution to a situation par excellence since it enables removing parasites hindering communication between two parts and enables likely the conclusion of an agreement or at least producing an outcome out of that two-part meeting.

1.   Translation in the past

Translation in the past mainly and even now was par excellence used to show the need of international communication. Human beings had recourse to translation since the old antiquity and most of the world ancient civilizations used translation to activate communicating with the other. Almost all civilizations in the past used to translate .

According to Genesis, the old stories of translation date back to the antiquity in Babel when the descendants of Noah tried to go to heavens, so they constructed a very high building in an attempt to reach the sky, God then punished them by scattering them and

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diverged their languages to hinder communication between them to disable them undertaking common actions, so they had recourse to interpreters to enable communicating and likely understanding. This phenomenon is since then known as Babel and Babel remained to be a term referring to languages confusion mainly nowadays.

In the antiquity as well, the Hieroglyph pharaoh civilization practiced translation, Sumer and Mesopotamia and even the Arabs in a later stage used to translate to confirm their existence in this world. One of the first translations made in the Middle East for instance was the translation of Gilgamesh epic that was translated at that time from Sumerian into two of major languages of that time namely Hittite and Hurrian to enable communicating with many peoples. In the Mesopotamia for illustrative purposes the code of Hammurabi was written on a stela that was ordered to be translated as well into two major languages of that time namely Akkadian and Hurrian to enable again a large communicative impact of the code amongst peoples of the area. In the Ancient Egypt or Egypt of the Pharaoh era, translation as well was practiced and one of the signs witnessing to this is Rosetta Stone that was written as well in three major languages of that time namely Hieroglyph, Demotic and Greek to widely be able to communicate.

The Arabs have as well translated to communicate along with other purposes. The Arabs also used to translate mainly into Arabic from major languages of that time. During the Ommiad and Abbasid periods, the Califs used to send their messengers to bring manuscripts from the Byzantine empire to get them translated into Arabic mainly books of Medical treatment, astrology, mathematics and physics along with sciences. It is said that the original manuscripts disappeared then the west has recuperated them translating back the Arabic translations, thus, Arabic translations saved a world heritage from loss.

From the overview made above, it is to understand that translation was since the antiquity used to solve the problem of communicating between peoples via different forms; interpreting or translation in writing aiming most of the time at transmitting information of knowledge to the other or to themselves. Translation is accordingly so far a source of organization and development as it is indeed supposed to be.

2.   Difficulties of translation into Arabic

One of the prominent difficulties facing translation into Arabic since long time is the term generation or coinage while trying to produce an equivalent . During translation into Arabic of sciences and new knowledge at large, many new concepts were introduced and there were no coined terms to express their meaning with the same charge, translators used then to have recourse to the nearest term already existing in Arabic language or likely they have recourse mandatorily to transliteration, nevertheless they state that this term is temporarily used in order to produce a full translation, then the term can be later on reviewed or changed by those in charge of terms generation and coinage.

2.1 Nowadays translation into Arabic problems.

Unlike other languages such as English, Arabic is seen to be one, and unified. English for instance is full of varieties such as American English, British English, Australian and others whereas in Arabic theoretically speaking, this phenomenon is not there. But practically speaking, the phenomenon in Arabic is all there.

Translation causes differences between Arabic used in the Middle East and that of the Maghreb and sometimes even between nearby countries. The west being remarkably developed is a big dense source of translations into Arabic mainly French language and English. Generally, Maghreb countries translate from French language while Middle-eastern and Gulf countries translate often from English and this leads to some differences if not divergences in the coined terms, word or expressions between the east side of the Arab World and the West side of it and here translation which is supposed to be source of organization becomes source of chaos.

3.   Translation as source of chaos

With the divergence of source languages of translation, translation into Arabic might be a source of chaos. For the same concept, Arabs may use different words or forms of words, terms or expressions. This may create a mess in words that some peoples or even researchers may consider this a wealth and richness in a language, in this case, it is by some to be considered richness in Arabic language. I strongly believe that it is neither a wealth nor richness but a mere chaos as it is to be considered a wealth if terms, words or likely expressions are used with unanimity in all the Arab world parts, however if used by some in limited particular parts and almost boycotted by some others or at least not used at all in certain regions, the multitude of terms shall serve as chaos simply because some terms or words may look strange or non-understood by some Arabs though the words are in their language.

The work "internship" for example is translated in the eastern side of the Arab World into "تدريب" « whereas in most region of its western side into "تربص" . The two words in Arabic look completely different but technically speaking each region uses that term to confirm the mentioned concept. One region may furthermore accuse the other of committing mistake translating it into "تربص" because the meaning of this word when set back in its original verb might seem clearly unsuitable though it is used in Algeria for instance as ideal translation for the French word "stage".

This phenomenon will set a linguistic conflict between Arabs in different regions due to source language of translation which might least into a chaos by time if no remedy is sought now.

Another example of translation as source of chaos can be obviously seen in the translation of the French word "Cadre" which is translated into "الكوادر" in almost all the middle east adopting transliteration of the French word which is a bit unclear as French usually is neither the source language in translation nor the language having its first influence in the middle east. Whereas in the Maghreb the mentioned French word is translated "إطار" which is a bit in doubt zone by Middle East region claiming that this translation means « tires » in English which is to be used exclusively with "wheels ». Indeed, another translation can be suggested to moderate both words, it is "موظف سامي" for example which is clear and acceptable and mainly sound Arabic. Here again the linguistic conflict is set to lead to chaos although this problem can be fixed if more attention should be given to the way translation is conducted and notably coordinated with specialist of words, terms and expression generation.

Moreover, even in geography particularly in maps, names of some countries in the same language may have slightly different spelling, for instance all Arab countries having English as their second language write in their maps "تشاد" without definite article whereas in the Arab world countries having French as their second language instead of English may write it "التشاد". This can be simply explained by referring to the source language of translation, English uses "Chad" while French uses "Le Tchad", English then does not use any definite article and it is expressed in the Arabic of the East nevertheless French uses a definite article before it and it is expressed clearly in the Arabic used in the Maghreb surprisingly as if referring to a different country. Here translation plays par excellence the role of source of chaos, if they were two different languages, this can be receivable but in one language and dealing with one county, this is I bet not acceptable at all. Accordingly, translation is confirmed to be a source of chaos sometimes in the Arab world.

Furthermore, in the east side of the Arb world the word or expression "غسيل الأموال" is used meanwhile in the Maghreb, another word or expression is used for this same concept, it is "تبييض الأموال" . Again and simply this multitude of words or expressions is the result of difference of departure language of translation; in French "blanchiment d'agrent" is used and in English "money laundering". Each region consequently coins its

terms, word or expression following the example of its departure language of translation to produce at the end a mess mainly when the concept is new and one particular and clear.

The word expressing the communication device "facsimile" is as well a source of conflict, some mainly in the Maghreb translate it adopting the transliterated word in Arabic "فاكس", however in many Middle eastern Arab countries, they tend to use the word "ناسوخ" instead of transliteration which is most of the time regarded to as a language weakness which is not the case of Arabic. It is a mere mismanagement indeed.

Many other examples might be the outcome of research in translation being source of chaos mainly into Arabic for several reasons. One of the major reasons of translation as source of chaos in the Arab World while it is expected to play developmental roles is the difference of source languages nevertheless this should not be considered as a real reason or claimed to be the motivator of the problem but it is due to the mismanagement of translation process and lack of respecting specialty. For instance, translator or translation in charge organism should not take the initiative coining or adopting a term until investigated by competent language organism then to be adopted by all the Arab World countries with unanimity.

4.   Solutions of chaos

The cause of translation to cause chaos is the neglection therefore fighting against it will produce solution. Fighting against neglection might be achieved by the implementation of some mechanisms to be followed in order at least to mitigate the impact of translation causing chaos in Arabic, these mechanisms consist principally of the following:

4.1 Implementing proofreading policy

Implementing proofreading policy would contribute to the improvement of quality of translation. Translation is not all the time made by specialists, sometimes it is made by traders who do not care about what would happen to the language neither to what would happen to the nation as result of their bad behavior towards translation and eventually the language. Implementing a policy of proofreading mandatorily before submitting any translation would tremendously serve putting end to the commercial and neglection behaviors and likely protect translation practice, language and eventually the nation.

4.2 Implementing language coordination offices

Implementing offices charged with coordinating the language expressions might fight strongly against chaos. These offices should be in charge of coordinating between language entities in all Arab world to first provide solutions to translation problems raised by translators or others. These offices should work to study the suitability and appropriateness of words and expressions with the Arabic language first and with all the countries and societies to guarantee unanimity in the use of the word or expression and likely promote the situation of the language at large and accordingly translation to turn into productive of organization and development instead of chaos.

Conclusion

Translation might be a source of chaos mainly in vocabulary in the Arab World if not well monitored. Translation needs to be well monitored by policies in order to mitigate the risks resulting of its practice with no coordination neither organization this is from one side and from another side language coordination offices need to be implemented and activated to highly take care of the translatorial and translational process, language and eventually the Arab Nation.

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