Journal of Humanitarian, Scientific and Social Sciences
2nd Issue December 2016

Semantic Repetition in Translating between Arabic and English

Dr. Mohammed A AL Sharif

Faculty of Education, Tripoli

Abstract

Languages are important medium for communication between nations. They are naturally distinctive. Arabic and English are among these languages which belong to two distant language families. Arabic is a Semitic language whereas, English is Anglo – Saxon. Accordingly, they are different. Several linguistic features pose variable problems when translating between these two languages. Semantic repetition in Arabic is among the problems which encounter professional as well as trainee translators when translating from Arabic into English. Despite the attempts by many translation researchers to deal with the problems encountered translators when translating, only a few investigated the problem of semantic repetition in Arabic This paper is an attempt to shed light on this translation problem using examples to illustrate it and explore the possible techniques suggested by translation scholars to tackle this and help to produce satisfactory translation to the target language reader of English. The discussions in this paper, could provide a point of reference for many translation researches throughout the Arab world.

Introduction

Texts as a form of communication are used by people to express their feelings, exchange ideas and communicate their mutual concerns. Therefore, the structure of a text is extremely important. Rowland and

Avery (2001. 111) emphasize that "Careful structuring is essential with any piece of writing, of whatever length or subject matter and whomever it is written, whether you are writing a novel, a letter to a friend. Or a recipe, clear structuring is the key of effective communication''. They also suggest a number of considerations that influence the structuring of any material for an article, one of them and perhaps the most important is that any material must be clear, readable and comprehensible.

As far as semantic repetition is concerned, and according to Kaplan (1966) writings written by Arab students are characterized by repetion, elaborate parallelism rather than the linear arrangement. Moreover, Karama and Hajaj (1989: 185) on the other hand, claim that over assertion and exaggeration are among the characteristics ascribed to Arabic rhetoric.

Therefore, repetition is a unique phenomen in Arabic language. Arabs frequently make use of semantic repetion which is not normally used by English. To illustrate this, let us consider the following examples; the noun ***heart***for instance, is monosemous in English, it describes one single word whereas, in Arabic, it is synonymous. It describes two words. It can be translated into Arabic either as: **قلب** or **ادفؤ**. This also applied to the English word ***rain*** which may be translated into Arabic as: **مطر** or **غيث**. The unawareness of such semantic distinction in both languages no doubt can be problematic to student of translation and trainee translators.

What is semantic repetition?

Repetion is the style that can be dominant in any text. Some key words are frequently repeated to emphasize aspects that central to the overall message of a certain text. But what is meant by semantic repetion?

Semantic repetion is the "repetion of synonym or near synonym" (cf. Dickens and Watson 1999:541). But what is meant by synonym and near synonym in language? Before discussing the types of semantic repletion

and in order to understand the definition semantic repetition, it is better to begin with the recognition of the definition of the synonym and near synonym which they exist in the definition of the semantic repetition.

What is a synonym and near synonym?

The Longman English defines a synonym as" a word with the same meaning or nearly the same

meaning as another word in the same language" A slight difference in the meaning of words in either language can result in inappropriate selection of the right equivalent synonym.

Thornburg (2002:9) defines synonyms as: "words that share a similar meaning". Thus: old, ancient, antique, aged, elderly are all synonyms in that they all share the common meaning of not young/new. He also argues that synonyms are similar, but not seldom the same. Even in the case between words which are interchangeably sued, such as Taxi and Cab, or aubergine and egg- plant, one will be preferred over the in certain contexts and by particular speakers(ibid) Although synonyms have the a useful function in languages, they on the other hand, provide a real challenge to both student of translation and trainee translator.

Similarly, Griffiths (2006:26) concludes that synonymy as 'Synonymy is equivalence of sense". The nouns mother, mom, and mum are synonymous. When a single word in a sentence is replaced by a synonym – a word equivalent in sense – then the literal meaning of the sentence is not changed: My mother's / mom's / mum's family was Christie.

Types of synonyms

According to Ghazala (1995: 91) synonyms are divided into two types:

1. absolute synonym; words which are perfectly identical in meaning, i.e. words such as big, large, and huge.

2. near (or close) synonym; words which are similar to one another in meaning, i.e.

Angry

غاضب

Discomforted

ممتعض

Annoyed

متضايق

Disturbed

منزعج

It is worth mentioning in this context, that the later type of synonyms is commonplace in any language, written or spoken.

Types of semantic repetition

According to Dickens (2005:59) semantic repetition is of two basic kinds:

1. where the two words or phrases used have closely – related distinguishable meanings; an example of this is the Arabic nouns **الاستقصاء والتحليل** which can be translated into English as:

Investigation and analysis

Another example is the Arabic nouns, **التقويم والقياس** which can be translated into English as:

Evaluation and measurement

Although the Arabic nouns used in the example above have different meanings but at the same time they are closely -- related to each other.

2. where the words or phrases are fully synonymous or. At least in the context in which they are being used, there's no clear difference in the meaning. As an example of this are the Arabic doublet adjectives in the phrase:

بصورة مستمرة و متواصلة

Literally translated into English by Dickens (2005:59) as:

In a continuing continuous manner

Another example of this type of semantic repetition is the Arabic doublet verbs:

توضح وتبين

It can be translated into English as:

Clarify and explain

Semantic repetition can also syndetic and may involve the use of connective (و) or – in the case of adjectives in particular, but also occasionally in the case of using nouns and verb – it may a syndetic that may occur without the use of a connective. To illustrate this, the use of the Arabic adjectives:

الهمجي والبربري

It can be translated into English as:

Savage and barbaric

Further example of syndetic repetition is the use of Arabic adjectives:

فاتنات جميلات

It can be translated into English as:

Pretty attractive

Having discussed definitions and types of semantic repetition a key question needs to be answered which is what translation techniques can be used to translate semantic repetition when translating between English and Arabic?

Dickens (2005:59-61) suggests a number of translation techniques that can be used during the translation of semantic repetition from English into Arabic. They are as follow:

1. Merging the semantic repetition of the Arabic doublet in the sentence.

The two Arabic words are combined in one English word. This translation technique is likely to be an appropriate strategy when there is no clear difference in the meaning between the two Arabic words. Thus, the semantic repetition of the Arabic words **صارمة وقاسية** in the Arabic

phrase **إجراءات صارمة وقاسية**. The two Arabic Adjectives **صارمة وقاسية** merged into one English Adjective ***severe*** to repeat one single concept.

Further example of using this technique in translating semantic repetition into English, is the Arabic nouns **تحديث وعصرنة** merged into one English noun ***modernize***.

2. Employing grammatical transposition.

This translation technique is used when the semantic repetition clearly has different meanings i.e. the Arabic nouns **القيم الاخلاقية** in this case the Arabic

noun doublet has been transposed by an – adjective – noun phrase: ***moral values***.

3. Semantic distancing.

Another technique for translating semantic repetition into English is called semantic distancing. In this translation technique, two words give two sets of meaning. It also involves relaying both elements of the Arabic doublet by different words in English whose meanings more distant than their Arabic counterparts. (Dickens 2005:60). The Arabic doublet **يدهش ويذهل**"for instance, is a good example of this type of repetition. The phrase **منظرها يدهشه ويذهله** has been translated into English by St Jones 1999:5) as:

Her appearance had both astonished and alarmed him

Itis worth mentioning here that the semantic differences in the English words *astonish* and *alarm* is greater than the Arabic doublet **يدهش ويذهل** .

As far as sematic repetition is concerned it also possible to combine semantic repetition with grammatical transposition. A good example of this perhaps the extract taken from the Lebanese politician attitude towards his party when he said:

أنا مستمر ومتمسك أكثر من أي وقت مضى بمشروع التوحيد والتجديد

This was translated into English by Jones (1999: 7) as:

I remain committed more than ever to the project of unification and reform

In this example, the Arabic adjectives(Active participle) **مستمر ومتمسك** has been transposed to a verb - adjective(past participle) English doublet ***remain committed*** in the sense of the Arabic doublet **مستمر ومتمسك** have been distanced more in the English translation.

4. Maintaining the same form of repetition

The final technique can be used in translating Arabic semantic repetition into English is to maintain the same form of repetition – the repetition in the English version carries the same character and force as Arabic does. The following example illustrates this:

السلوك الحضاري الراقي

It can be translated into English as:

This civilized and high class behavior

It is obvious in the example above that the repetition in the English translation carries the same emphatic – and emotive force as it does in Arabic.

Conclusion

To conclude, a structure of a text is extremely important. To guarantee good communication, texts need to be well-structured. The contrastive knowledge and the awareness of Linguistic differences between languages specially the one concerned with rhetoric in general, and style in particular, is a vital factor and plays an important role in the production of acceptable target language texts. Due to the sharp linguistic differences between Arabic and English, Semantic repetition in Arabic for stance, represents certain problems when translating between Arabic and English and vice versa. Therefore, semantic repetition in Arabic requires special attention to overcome this difficulty in translation.

Despite the various issues of translation between Arabic and English, little has been devoted to the translation problems in translating between Arabic and English. Furthermore, limited attention and effort has been given to addressing the problem of semantic repetition when translating between Arabic and English. As stated in the introduction, the main aim of this paper has been to examine the semantic repetition when translating

between Arabic and English. To achieve this aim, we have discussed this translation problem that encounters both student of translation as well as trainee translators when translating between Arabic and English. Taking the differences between Arabic and English into consideration, and because bilingual dictionaries (Arabic / English) are not always appropriate for handling this problem, the paper also introduced number of techniques suggested by some translation scholars to tackle this translation problem. Finally, this study also shows that more research need to be conducted especially those with cultural nature – so that any other cultural problems that this paper did not revealed can be uncovered.

References

1. Avery. and Roland. D. (2001) 'Styles of journalism'. In Stott. and Avery.(ed)Writing with Style. London, UK: Longman Group Limited, pp. 105-126.
2. Dickens, J. and Watson, J.C.E (1999) Standard Arabic Course. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
3. Jones, L. (1999) Translation of الحاج رئيسا للكتائب بفارق سبع اصوات (from النهار newspaper 2. March. 1999). BA Translation Project: University of Durham
4. James. D. Hervey. and Higgins. I(2005) Thinking Arabic Translation: Course in Translation Method: Arabic to English .London Routledge.
5. Kaplan, R.B. (1966) Cultural thought patterns in Intercultural education in Language Leaning, XVI (1- 2). Pp 1-20.
6. Karama. N. and Hajaj. A. (1989) Errors in English among Arabic Speakers: Analysis and Remedy. London: Longman.
7. Ghazala. H. (1995) Translation as Problems and Solutions: A course book for Students and trainee translators.
8. Scott Thornbury (2002) How to teach vocabulary. Series editor: Jeremey Harmer. Pearson Longman.