

Lesson 1: Word-for-word translation

This type of translation keeps the SL word order; words are translated out of context according to their most common meaning. Such kind of translation can be used as a preliminary translation step but it is not applied in real translation tasks. The following lines are from *The Secret Sharer* by Joseph Conrad with their translation into Arabic following the word-for-word method.

On my right hand there were lines of fishing stakes resembling a mysterious system of half-submerged bamboo fences, incomprehensible in its division of the domain of tropical fishes.

Word-for-word translation will be:

على يميني يد كانت خطوط الصيد حصص تشبه غموض نصف مغمور لبامبو أسيجة غير مستوعب في تقسيمه لمجال الاستوائية الأسماك.

Such translation is meaningless to an Arab reader since neither its grammatical structure nor its semantics can help the reader make sense of what he or she reads. An acceptable translation would be:

وكانت على يميني خطوط لأعمدة الصيد تشبه نظاماً غامضاً من سياج الخيزران نصف المغمورة غير المراعي في تقسيماتها لحركة الأسماك الاستوائية.

As we can see from the above example, word-for-word translation does not take context into consideration. It might be helpful as a first step in the translation but a great deal of editing and modifications have to be made in order to convey the message to the TL reader. The translator has to make sure that the translation follows the word order of the TL and that the choice of semantic equivalents is carried out accurately. Word-for-word translation can also be called *interlinear translation*.

Exercise 1: Provide a word-for-word translation for the following excerpt, then provide an edited version.

Water and Life

If the earth were too hot, all the water would dry up; and if the earth were too cold, all water would freeze. The fact that the earth is not too hot nor too cold is important to us for many reasons, one of which is that our bodies are about two- thirds water. The water in your body is useful in many ways. It helps to carry food to your cells.

If you were without water even for a day, you would understand how much it is needed. If the water on the earth were to disappear, all animals and plants would soon die. Even the camel which can store up a week's supply would die and so would plants like the cactus.

Arabic Translation

Exercise 2: 2.1. Study the following Arabic word-for-word translation carefully and identify its problematic aspects.

John had not much affection for his mother and sisters, and an antipathy to me. He bullied and punished me, not two or three times in the week, nor once or twice in the day, but continually; every nerve I had feared him and every morsel of flesh on my bones shrank when he comes near. There were moments when I was bewildered by the terror he inspired.

جون كان لا كثيرا حب له أمه وأخواته وعداء لي . هو عذب وعاقب أنا ليس اثنان أو ثلاثة مرات في الأسبوع، ليس مرة أو اثنين في اليوم، لكن باستمرار، كل عصب أنا لي خاف هو وكل جزء من اللحم على لي عظم ارتجف عندما هو جاء قريب . كانت هناك لحظات عندما أنا كنت سيدت بالرعب هو أو حي.

2.2. Provide a translation that makes sense of the previous excerpt.

Lesson 2: Literal translation

This type of translation preserves the grammatical structures of the SL where they are translated into their nearest TL equivalents. It takes place when the SL and TL share parallel structures. Words are translated out of context paying no attention to their connotative meanings. The following example illustrates this point.

To throw dust in the eyes

يلقى التراب في العيون

The word ‘dust’ is translated literally as التراب while the equivalent expression in Arabic is يذر الرماد where ‘dust’ is translated into الرماد , ashes.

This choice could be justified by the cultural as well as ecological contexts that are different for both languages. If we take the English idiom *to throw dust in the eyes*, its associative meaning is based on the effect of dust once thrown in someone’s eyes blurring their vision and impeding their ability to see. The same sense is expressed in Arabic by using the equivalent ashes rather than dust. Dust is, therefore, not expected to blur vision and hide reality in the Arabic context. Taking the English setting into consideration, you can rarely talk about deserts or dust storms. Another point has to do with religious rituals where some dust is thrown on the buried person in the grave.

Exercise 1: 1.1. Identify examples of literal translation in the following sentences.

1. I am afraid I lost all saved data. We are back to square one.

أخشى أنني فقدت كل البيانات المخزنة . عدنا للربع الأول.

2. She decided to throw the baby with the bath water and close the shop forever because she lost few pounds.

قررت أن ترمي الطفل مع ماء الحمام وتغلق الدكان للأبد لأنها خسرت بعض الجنيهات.

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3. Hold your horses; we still have plenty of time.

أمسك خيولك، لدينا الكثير من الوقت.

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1.2. Provide correct translations for the sentences above.

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Exercise 2: Provide a literal translation for the following excerpt.

The Prisoner of Zenda

“I wonder when in the world you’re going to do anything, Rudolf?” said my brother’s wife, one morning at breakfast.

“My dear Rose,” I answered, laying down my egg-spoon, “why in the world should I do anything? My position is a comfortable one. I have an income nearly sufficient for my wants (no one’s income is ever quite sufficient, you know), I enjoy an enviable social position: I am brother to Lord Burlesdon, and brother-in-law to that charming lady, his countess. Behold, it is enough!”

“You are nine-and-twenty,” she observed, “and you’ve done nothing but—”

“Knock about? It is true. Our family doesn’t need to do things.”

This remark of mine rather annoyed Rose, for everybody knows (and therefore there can be no harm in referring to the fact) that, pretty and accomplished as she herself is, her family is hardly of the same standing as the Rassendylls. Besides her attractions, she possessed a large fortune, and my brother Robert was wise enough not to mind about her ancestry.

Lesson 3: Faithful translation

This method maintains a balance between the literal meaning of the SL word and the TL syntactic structures. It sounds more reasonable as it takes the context into consideration, aiming at producing more precise meaning of the SL texts. Study the following quote:

‘You see things; and you say, “Why?” But I dream things that never were; and I say, “Why not?”

It can be faithfully translated as:

أنت ترى الأشياء وتقول لماذا؟ ولكنني أحلم بأشياء لم توجد أبداً وأقول لم لا؟

Exercise 1: Provide a faithful translation of the following poem:

Requiem

By Robert Louis Stevenson

Under the wide and starry sky,
Dig the grave and let me lie.
Glad did I live and gladly die,
And I laid me down with a will.
This be the verse you grave for me:
Home is the sailor, home from the sea,
And the hunter home from the hill.

Arabic translation

Lesson 4: Communicative translation

This type of translation attempts to render the exact contextual meaning of the original text in such a way that both content and language are readily acceptable and comprehensible to the reader. It is particularly suitable when translating conventional formulae or proverbs and it involves some levels of cultural approximation. Communicative translation aspires to create the same effect created by the SL text on the TL reader.

Though it is not as accurate as semantic translation which sticks to the original text, it communicates the meaning at the expense of accuracy. However, it is preferred by many translators because it resorts to concepts that are more familiar to the TL reader on cultural and social levels. It is usually used for culturally specific idioms, proverbs or clichés where the translator replaces a SL word or concept with one that already exists in the TL. Communicative translation concentrates on the message and the main force of the text, tends to be simple, clear and brief, and is always written in a natural and resourceful style (Newmark (1988: 48). For some linguists, communicative translation ‘is produced, when, in a given situation, the ST uses a SL expression standard for that situation, and the TT uses a TL expression standard for an equivalent target culture situation’ (Dickins et al. 2005: 17). Study the following examples:

Charity begins at home.

الأقربون أولى بالمعروف.

Diamonds cut diamonds.

لا يفل الحديد إلا الحديد.

Notice here that ‘diamonds’ is rendered by حديد which is equivalent to *iron* in English. Literal translation would not convey the message here. In Arabic ‘diamond’ has positive associations related to beauty and noble characteristics while iron is associated with strength and physical power. Prophet Mohammad said:

“النَّاسُ مَعَادِنُ الْدَّهَبِ وَالْفِضَّةِ، خَيَارُهُمْ فِي الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ خَيَارُهُمْ فِي الْإِسْلَامِ إِذَا فَتَهُوا”

This translates as follows: 'People are like metals such as gold and silver. The good ones before Islam are also good when converted as long as they learn about Islam.'

Diamond, then, is used in Arabic to refer to how good or bad a person is.

Iron is cut by iron

لا يُفْلِي الْحَدِيدُ إِلَّا الْحَدِيدُ

Road signs, greetings and compliments are best rendered by communicative translation as shown in the following examples.

Dead end, no exit: نافذ غير طريق

Detour: تحويلة

Bus, load/unload: تنزيل|تحميل|اباص موقف

As for everyday greetings, communicative translation is preferred, especially for colloquial phrases. For example, 'long time no see' is best rendered by:

زمان هالقمر ما با ن

Note also the differences in the following dialogue:

Kim: Hi, Ann. What's happening?

Ann: Not much. You?

The communicative translation will be:

كيم: مرحبا آن، ما أخبارك؟

آن: لا جديـد، مـاذا عنـك؟

Here the usual formula used for everyday communication was used rather than the literal translation for 'not much'.

Exercise 1: 1.1. Translate the following English proverbs using communicative translation.

1. A burnt child dreads the fire.

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2. A cat has nine lives.

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3. Don't count your chickens before they're hatched

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4. Let bygones be bygones.

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5. Marriage is a lottery.

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1.2. Translate the following Arabic proverbs into English using communicative translation.

1-عصفور في اليد ولا عشرة على الشجرة.

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2-في العجلة الندامة.

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3-غاب القط العب يا فار.

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4-الطيور على اشكالها تقع.

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5-رب ضارة نافعة.

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Lesson 5: Free translation

This strategy preserves the meaning of the original but uses natural forms of the TL, including normal word order and syntax, so that the translation can be naturally understood.

It preserves the content at the expense of the form, and it provides a longer paraphrase of the original. It is a form of idiomatic translation that favours colloquialisms and idioms which do not exist in the SL. The following is a part of *Cinderella* and its translation into Arabic:

Cinderella had a wonderful time at the ball until she heard the first stroke of midnight!

She remembered what the fairy had said, and without a word of goodbye she slipped from the Prince's arms and ran down the steps. As she ran she lost one of her slippers, but not for a moment did she dream of stopping to pick it up! If the last stroke of midnight were to sound ... oh ... what a disaster that would be! Out she fled and vanished into the night.

أمضت سنديلا وقتا في غاية المتعة في حفلة الرقص حتى سمعت دقات الساعة تعلن حلول منتصف الليل فتذكرت ما قالته الجنية فانسلت من غير لسلام ولا كلام بخفة من بين يدي الأمير ونزلت الدرج بسرعة . وبينما كانت تركل سقطت منها إحدى فردي الحذاء لكنها لم تتوقف ولم تحدث نفسها حتى بالتوقف لأنها إن فعلت ذلك فيها ويلها يا سواد ليها فركضت مسرعة واختفت في الظلام.

Notice that we have longer expressions in the TL. For example, 'a wonderful time' is translated into ممتعة instead of المتعة غاية في المتعة. Colloquial expressions are also used as illustrated in the following examples.

Without a word of goodbye:

من غير لسلام ولا كلام

What a disaster would that be!

يا ويلها يا سواد ليها

Exercise 1: Identify the features of free translation.

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.....
.....

Exercise Solutions

Lesson 1:

Exercise1 :

الماء والحياة

لو كانت الأرض حارة أكثر من اللازم لنضب الماء كله و لو كانت الأرض باردة أكثر من اللازم لتجمد الماء كله، ذلك أن كون الأرض ليست مفرطة الحرارة و لا البرودة كذلك هو أمر مهم بالنسبةلينا لأسباب كثيرة، منعاً أن أجسامنا مكونة منها من الماء. فالماء في جسمك مفيد من نواح كثيرة، انه يساعد على نقل الغذاء الى خلاياك، كما أن الماء هو واحد من الحاجات اليومية لحياتك.

فلو أنك بقيت من دون ماء يوماً واحداً أدرك الحاجة اليه، و لو قدر أن ينضب الماء الذي على سطح الأرض لماتت جميع الحيوانات و النباتات سيعا. بل ان الجمل ذاته الذي يستطيع احتزان مؤونة أسبوع من الماء يموت كذلك. و كذلك تموت النباتات كالصبار.

Exercise 2 :

لم يكن جون يحب أمه وأخواته كثيراً، كما كان يحمل عداءً لي. فقد عذبني و عاقبني، ليس مرتين أو ثلاثة في الأسبوع، و لا مرة أو مرتين في اليوم، و لكن باستمرار. فكل عصب لدى كان يخافه و كل جزء من اللحم فوق عضامي ارتجف كلما اقترب مني. و كانت ثمة لحظات شعرت فيها بالحيرة من شدة الرعب الذي يوحى به.

Lesson 2:

Exercise 1:

- أخشى أنني فقدت كل البيانات المخزنة ~~عند المربع الأول~~. عدنا إلى نقطة البداية
- قررت أن ~~ترمي الطفل~~ مع ماء الحمام ترمي المليح مع القبيح وتغلق الدكان للأبد لأنها خسرت بعض الجنيهات.
- لمسك حيولك أصبر / تمهل قليلاً / اكبح جماحك، لدينا الكثير من الوقت.

Exercise 2:

سجين زنا

قالت لي زوجة أخي ذات صباح و نحن على مائدة الإفطار:- رودلف .. هل ستبقى هكذا طوال حياتك دون أن تفعل شيئاً ما؟

قلت: عزيزتي روز .. لماذا أفعل شيئاً ما؟ إن وضعني مريح جداً، لدى ما يكفي من المال أو ما يكاد يكفي حاجاتي (فلا أحد يكفيه تماماً كما تعلمين) ، كما أنتي أتمتع بمركز اجتماعي ممتاز ، فأخي هو اللورد برسدون ، وزوجة أخي تلك السيدة الساحرة. وفي هذا ما يكفي بالتأكيد!

قالت:- أنت الآن في التاسعة والعشرين .. و لا تفعل سوى ..

قلت مكملاً:- أسافر هنا و هناك؟ هذا صحيح .. إن أسرتنا لا تحتاج أن تفعل شيئاً !

لا بد أن هذه الملاحظة ضايفت روز، لأن كل أحد يعرف أنها رغم جمالها البالغ إلا أن أسرتها ليست على عراقة أسرة راسنديل.. ولكنها إلى جانب جمالها الأخذ تملك ثروة كبيرة، وقد كان أخي روبرت، لورد برسدون، حكيمًا بما فيه الكفاية فلم يهتم بمدى عراقة أسرتها.

Lesson 3:

Exercise 1:

تحت سماء رحبة مرصعة بالنجوم
لتحفُّر قبري وتدعني أستنقى
سعيداً عشت وسعيداً أموت
ومعي أرققت وصية
فلترثُيني بهذه الأبيات
عاد البحار لبيته، عاد من البحر
والصياد من التلال

Lesson 4:

Exercise 1:

1. (اسأل مجرّب) الولد الذي يحرق يديه يخاف من النار.
2. القلط له سبع أرواح
3. لا تعد صيصانك قبل أن تقص
4. عفا الله عما سلف / اترك الماضي للماضي
5. الزواج قسمة و نصيب

1.2.

1. A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush
2. Haste makes waste
3. When the cat is away, the mice will play
4. Birds of a feather flock together
5. Blessing in disguise