

Syntagmatic and Paradigmatic Axes as Parameters for Translation Accuracy: Towards Translating Images

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Abstract

This paper intends to illustrate some of the contributions that semiotics can make to the actual act of translating different texts from Arabic into English and vice versa. It seeks to determine whether or not the syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes can be used as parameters for testing the significance of the sign and, accordingly, translation accuracy. To answer this research question, ample authentic data drawn from existing translations were used. Data analysis showed that in order to reflect accurate mental images in the minds of the target-language readers, extra attention should be paid to issues such as the scope of attention and intention, causation, viewing frames and pace of events in addition to the syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations. In a political discourse, changing a micro sign or a number of micro signs which are favourable to, and acceptable in, a certain language and culture will not only create a different mental image and affect the translation accuracy, but may well promote different narratives as well.

Keywords: Arabic-English Translation, Attention, Causation, Image, Narrative, Paradigm, Intention, Semiotics, Sign & Syntagm.

1. Introduction

The translation process is envisaged here as a process of picture-taking. Translators try to do their best to reflect the original text while picturing its details. Any attempt to euphemize or dysphemize the original image/text will undoubtedly affect the resolution/quality of the picture/translation, although this may live up to the customer's expectations and be in line with the purpose of the activity under consideration. Imagine that you want to get married and you live in one of the Arab countries where some people still get married through the traditional way; that is, they exchange their photos through a family member prior to meeting and shortly before the stag/hen party, or perhaps earlier. So, you need to send your photo. What type of photo would you send? Will you be honest (honest with whom — with yourself, with your partner-to-be, with the purpose of sending it, and so forth?) and send a photo that shows up all your grey hair, wrinkles, belly, and so forth? Or, might you ask the photographer to help you hide some features? Even the act of selecting one of your photos and excluding others will be significant. All this is similar to the process of translation at its macro level. As a translation commissioner, what type of translators would you contact? Why do you select this text/author and exclude others? As a translator, why do you select this text for

translation and exclude others, why do you adopt this global strategy and exclude others, why do you adopt this local strategy and exclude others, why do you intrinsically and/or extrinsically manage the text while translating it, and so on? As such, the work of the translator, as an agent in a social game, resembles, to a large extent, the work of the photographer in his/her area — they do not work in isolation from others, but rather they work with many people and in different circumstances. The product (the target text/photo) is the result of the work of the translator/photographer according to their own skills and experiences, the client, the purpose, the tools and materials used, among others. One of the techniques that photographers may utilize to satisfy their clients is changing image resolution. Image resolution may be defined as the capability of the sensor to observe or measure the smallest object clearly with distinct boundaries. It depends upon the size of the pixel: the smaller the size of the pixel is, the higher the resolution will be and the clearer the object in the image will be. The same holds true for translation, given that translators normally deal with languages reflecting cultures. These languages are formed by a huge number of signs (be they micro signs or macro signs), and each sign has many dimensions, among which is the semiotic one, our particular focus in this study. To this end, translators sometimes carry out certain procedures in order to transfer the semiotic entity that needs special treatment under certain conditions. Hatim and Mason (1990, 105-106; also discussed in Almanna 2013, 83; Farghal and Almanna 2015, 132) suggest four stages for this purpose:

1. 'Identification', in which the translator pinpoints the source text (ST) semiotic entity that needs special treatment;
2. 'Information', in which the translator selects an appropriate target language (TL) 'denotational equivalent' for the ST sign;
3. 'Explication', in which the translator evaluates the denotational equivalent chosen in stage two to see whether it is 'self-sufficient' or not. If not, the translator should "seek to explicate by means of synonymy, expansion, paraphrase, etc."; and
4. 'Transformation', in which the translator identifies "what is missing in terms of intentionality and status as a sign".

To apply these stages on the one hand, and assess the quality of the translation from a semiotic perspective on the other, let us consider the following example quoted from Mahfuz's (1959/1986, 150) novel *أولاد حارتنا* 'Children of the Alley' and translated by Theroux (1996: 122):

(1) اسم الله على أمك ولياليها الملاح عند حمام السلطان

"Not as much as your mother, with her famous nights at the Sultan Baths!"

1. Identification: the sign that requires special treatment here is اسم الله.
2. Information: it may be translated into English as 'The name of God/Allah'.
3. Explication: the formulaic expression اسم الله is used by Arabs either to show sympathy to somebody facing trouble or ironically to let the speaker come down to earth and stop showing off — given the context here, it is used ironically.

4. Transformation: the missing information in terms of intentionality and status as a sign is the illocutionary force of the utterance and its ironic status.

The translator, being aware that relying on the TL denotational equivalent of the ST phrase اسم الله *'The name of God/Allah'*, without any sort of explication or intrinsic management, would seriously affect the intentionality of the ST sign and, accordingly, the overall image, has decided to intrinsically manage the text to bring it in line with the linguistic and stylistic norms of the TL.

It is obvious that the components (micro signs) of the idiomatic expression *'not as much as your mother'* are different from those of the original expression اسم الله على أمك. However, the idiomatic expression *'not as much as your mother'* as a unitary sign in the TL signifying system effectively reflects the sign's functions, particularly the indexical and symbolic functions, achieved by the original expression اسم الله على أمك in such a context.

2. Analytical framework

Before proceeding to a discussion of the selected examples, an attempt is made in this section to outline the research question, the objectives of the study and the methodology adopted.

2.1 Research question

This paper sets out to determine whether or not the syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes can be used as parameters for testing the significance of the sign and, accordingly, translation accuracy. So, it is an explorative research question as it seeks to find out whether or not these axes can be used to determine the translation accuracy. Explorative studies are conducted to have a better understanding of the existing problem or phenomenon, but will not provide the reader with conclusive results.

2.2 Objective of the study

The aim of this work is to shed light on some of the contributions of semiotics to the actual act of translation between languages that are culturally distant, such as Arabic and English. It also intends to examine the importance of using the syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes for testing the significance of the sign and, accordingly, translation accuracy.

2.3 Methodology

As this study requires imagination in analysing the examples used in this study, qualitative research methodology was utilized here to understand such a certain socio-cultural phenomenon in its natural setting, rather than from an external perspective. In this respect, Williams and Chesterman (2002, 64) hold that qualitative research methodology can lead to "conclusions about what is possible, what can happen, or what can happen at least sometimes". But it does not lead to conclusions about the generality, regularities, tendencies, or frequencies of a given socio-cultural phenomenon or feature. In analysing the examples in

this study, I relied on my socio-cultural experiences, understanding, encyclopedic knowledge and intuition; therefore, this study fits the interpretive paradigm of qualitative research (Creswell and Clark 2007). Inductive data analysis, which is commonly associated with qualitative research, was followed in this study.

3. Testing the sign's significance and translation accuracy

As stated above, this paper intends to ascertain whether or not the syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes can be used as parameters for testing the significance of the sign and, accordingly, translation accuracy. To answer this research question, ample authentic data drawn from existing translations were used.

Applying a semiotic approach, Peirce (1931-1958 cited in Almanna and Al-Shehari 2019, 34) holds that the connotative meaning of any word or expression can be sub-divided into three kinds:

- a meaning that resembles the signified, labeled an 'iconic sign'
- a meaning that has associations and inherent connections with the signified, labeled an 'indexical sign'
- a meaning that is reliant on individual connotation, labeled a 'symbolic sign'.

These three types of sign are also labeled functions. These three functions of sign, that is, the iconic, indexical and symbolic, do not have to function independently from one another as they sometimes function as an icon, an index and a symbol, or any combination of these (cf. Al-Shehari 2001; Stam et al. 1992; Nöth 1990). According to de Saussure (1916/1983), there are two ways in which signs are organized into codes: syntagmatic and paradigmatic (for more details, see Fiske 1990, 56; Al-Shehari 2001, 159-173; Almanna 2016, 175-180). The two ways of organizing signs into codes are described as two 'axes': the vertical axis is paradigmatic and the horizontal one is syntagmatic. While the main concern of paradigms is the selection of some signs and exclusion of others, syntagms focus on the combination of the selected signs. Further, these two ways can be used as an approach to testing the sign's significance on the one hand, and the translation accuracy on the other. By way of explanation, let us consider these two examples quoted from Salam Aboud's story *مطر أسود* cited in and translated by Pragnell and Sadkhan as '*Black Rain*' (2011, 95-6):

(2) رفع يده المتعبة وضغط على جرس الباب. انتظر بضع ثوان. تذكر أن التيار الكهربائي مقطوع. دق بكفه على الباب. وانتظر متكئا على حافة الجدار الملطخ ببقع داكنة، جراء المطر الأسود الذي هطل يوم أمس.

He raised his weary hand and pressed the door bell. He waited for a couple of seconds before he remembered that electricity was cut off. He knocked on the door with the palm of his hand and waited, leaning against the edge of the wall stained with dark blotches made by the black rain that had poured down yesterday.

As stated above, a paradigm is a set of signs from which the one used is chosen. In the first part رفع يده المتعبة وضغط على جرس الباب, two material processes *he raised his weary hand and pressed the bell of the door'* are chosen from a set of possible signs. These two material processes

are conjoined by the additive connector و 'and', thus indicating that there is no time lapse between the act of raising his hand and the act of pressing the bell.

A syntagm, on the other hand, is the linear arrangement into which the signs, which are chosen from paradigms, are combined. So the paradigmatic signs:

الباب	جرس	على	ضغط	و	المتعبة	يده	رفع
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are combined to formulate the syntagm:

رفع يده المتعبة وضغط على جرس الباب.

In the actual act of translating, translators normally rely on the syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes to produce the final shape of the target text (TT). Any change in these two axes will undoubtedly create a different mental image. In رفع يده المتعبة وضغط على جرس الباب, it is asserted that the hand was raised and the bell was pressed, that is, the extent of causation is greater than the scope of intention. When it is translated, for example, into *'He raised his weary hand in order to press the bell'*, the scope of intention will be greater than the extent of causation, thus imposing different content specifications on the scene. Similarly, when a different narrative presentation is resorted to through translation, as in *'He pressed the bell with his weary hand'*, the act of raising his weary hand is backgrounded in attention, while the act of pressing the bell is foregrounded in attention, thereby creating a different mental image.

In the second part انتظر بضع ثوان. تذكر أن التيار مقطوع. دق بكفه على الباب, certain combinations of syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes are chosen from a set of possible signs. To begin with انتظر بضع ثوان *'he waited for a couple of seconds'*, the act of waiting is chosen from a set of possible acts. The emphasis is placed on the completion of the act of waiting which is characterized by atelicity, that is, having no natural finishing point, but rather the person who waits has to decide not to wait anymore. Further, بضع ثوان *'a couple of seconds'*, which is employed by the writer as a location circumstance construing the extent of the unfolding of the process of waiting outside in time, indicates that there is no time interval between the acts of raising his hand and pressing the bell on the one hand, and the act for waiting outside on the other. In تذكر أن التيار مقطوع *'he remembered that electricity was cut off'*, a mental process is employed by the writer where the implicit pronoun هو 'he' is the senser filling the theta role of experiencer, تذكر *'to remember'* is the process of sensing, and أن clause أن التيار مقطوع *'that electricity is cut off'* is the phenomenon of the process filling the theta role of theme. Such a combination of syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes suggests that the power had been cut off before the act of remembering, thus emphasizing the whole period that began in the past and is seen as relevant to the act of remembering which is in the past. Here, as one may observe, the translators have decided to turn a blind eye to the lexical item تيار literally meaning *'current'* in their

rendering. Having taken into consideration the symbolic level of the phrase, i.e. the agreement that the TL readers have concerning the use of the word '*electricity*' in such a context, they have opted for using the lexical item '*electricity*' to stand for the whole phrase, i.e. التيار الكهربائي '*electric power*'. To elaborate, this surface structure تذكر أن التيار الكهربائي مقطوع '*he remembered that electricity was cut off*' can be cognitively put this way: the senser's consciousness experienced an image of a town without electricity. In دق بكفه على الباب, the act of knocking, which is chosen from a set of possible acts, is also characterized by atelicity, that is, having no natural finishing point, but the agent has to stop knocking, and بكفه '*with his palm*' is a manner circumstance construing the way in which the process is actualized and presented, i.e., means filling the theta role of instrument. This scene, which is presented narratively, is dynamic as the act of knocking refers to an iterated multiplexity of the component hit/strike (with his palm) and the verb to hit or to strike refers to just one of these components. Further, the act of knocking on the door (theme) with the palm of the hand (instrument) evokes in our mind a sound caused by the act of knocking — we hear this in our mind's ear as it is in our scope of prediction. It is worth noticing that the writer has psychologically speeded up the pace of events when opting for the use of full stops as well as the additive connector و '*and*'. Here, as can be noticed, the translators have resorted to adding the lexical item يد '*hand*' to the phrase بكفه '*with his palm*'. However, such an addition does not change the mental image conjured up in our mind as knocking on the door with his palm indicates implicitly the palm of his hand. In the third part, انتظر متكئا على حافة الجدار, المملخ ببقع داكنة جراء المطر الأسود الذي هطل يوم أمس متكئا على حافة الجدار, the act of waiting is chosen again. المتكئا على حافة الجدار المملخ ببقع داكنة '*leaning against the edge of the wall stained with dark blotches*' is a manner circumstance construing the way in which the process is presented, i.e., quality. Another act, that is, هطل '*to pour down*' is chosen from a set of possible acts. By the effect of the time marker أمس '*yesterday*', the emphasis in the act of pouring down is placed on its completion. It is characterized by non-causation, thus specifying an autonomous event. The use of the lexical item هطل '*to pour down*' rather than نزل '*to fall*' or تساقط '*to fall*' can be attributed to the author's diction, i.e. his style of writing. Unlike نزل '*to fall*', the lexical item هطل '*to pour down*', or تساقط '*to fall*', still enjoys its literary status, thus developing a certain tone in the work. Approached from another perspective, hearing or reading the lexical item هطل evokes in the mind of the hearer or reader different frames and scenes. نزل/تساقط (المطر) and هطل (المطر) denote what seems to be 'the same act', but against different frames. هطل (المطر) emphasizes the way in which the rain falls heavily and presupposes a sequence of events while نزل/تساقط (المطر) describes how water falls in small drops from the clouds/sky. To put this differently, there is a diagnostic component that distinguishes the lexical item هطل from its synonyms or near-synonyms in the same semantic domain, such as نزل or تساقط, which is

[HEAVINESS]. This has been taken into account by the translators when they resorted to using *'to pour down'*, thus reflecting a similar mental image.

The scene of rain is excluded from the main scene, that is, the scene of waiting as there is a time lapse between the act of raining and the act of waiting. In this scene, *المطر الأسود 'black rain'* assigns a causer theta role as it is directly involved in the causation of these dark blotches on the wall. The interaction in this particular scene is construed as unidirectional based on an asymmetrical action schema where the transfer of blackness flows from the agent/causer *'the black rain'* to the affected participant *'wall'*, resulting in dark blotches. Having given full consideration to these different combinations of syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations employed by the writer along with the pace of events, theta roles and the characteristics of each lexical item, phrase, and so on, the translators have managed to produce an adequate translation, thus creating accurate mental images in the minds of the TL readers.

Following is the second example:

(3) قادته من كفه ووضعته أمام حوض الغسيل. أحضرت إبريق ماء، فاحنى رأسه طائعا من دون أن تقول له ذلك. صبت الماء على رأسه وراحت تفرك وجهه بالماء والصابون، كما كانت تفعل له حينما كان طفلا صغيرا.

She led him by the hand to the clothes' sink; she brought a jug of water and he bent his head obediently without her asking him to do so. She poured the water over his head and started to rub his face with water and soap, just as she used to do when he was just a small boy.

Here, a number of acts, such as *قاد 'to lead'*, *وضع 'to put'*, *أحضر 'to bring'*, *أحنى 'to bend'*, *صبّ 'to pour'* and *فرك 'to rub'*, are chosen by the writer from a set of possible acts.

→ *'she led him by the hand'* is a material process where the emphasis is put on the completion of the act of leading characterized by both atelicity and duration. The act of leading in such a context has a force-dynamic value of forcing the goal that tends to be hesitant to move, thus indicating the actor's being-able-to-do (authority). Here, as can be seen, the translators, having given full consideration to such issues as readability, acceptability and naturalness at the expense of accuracy, have opted for the lexical item *'hand'* rather than *'palm'*. Native speakers tend to say *'by the hand'* rather than *'by the palm'* when they conceptualize such an experience.

→ *'she put him in front of the clothes' sink'* is another material process where the emphasis is placed on the completion of the action. It is also characterized by having a force-dynamic value of forcing the goal that tends towards moving to stop moving. Such a characteristic has been reflected in the TT.

→ *'she brought a jug of water'* is a material process, indicating that there are two implicit processes, i.e., she went somewhere (material process) and he waited for her (behavioural process).

Here, a close path is utilized where the final portion of the path is foregrounded in attention while the initial portion and medial portion of the path are backgrounded in attention. Had the writer opted for different combinations of syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes, such as *ذهبت إلى المطبخ لتحضر إبريق ماء* 'she went to the kitchen to bring a jug of water', he would have imposed different content specifications on the scene where the scope of intention will be greater than the extent of causation.

- *he bent his head obediently without her asking him to do so* 'فأحنى رأسه طائعا من دون أن تقول له ذلك' is a behavioural process representing bodily postures and pastimes where the act of bending along with the manner circumstance *طائعا* 'obediently' indicates the behavior's willing-to-do (submission) and not-willing-not-to-do (powerlessness). As regards the non-finite verb *قال* 'to say' employed by the author in the above example, it has been rendered by the translators into the non-finite verb 'to ask', thereby creating a different mental image. To explain, the verb 'to ask' is different from the verb 'to say' as the former, unlike the latter, indicates not only the sayer's desire to be nice, tactic, modest and the like, but her awareness of the addressee's public self-image, i.e. to be independent. In terms of performativity, the verb 'to say' is representative, i.e. it commits the sayer to the truth of the expressed proposition. Syntactically speaking, it can be replaced by another framing verb, such as *أضاف* 'to add', *ذكر* 'to mention', *صرح* 'to declare', and the like. By contrast, the verb 'to ask' is directive by which the asker tries to get the addressee to take a particular action. As such, the verb 'to ask' is purposeful and its denotative meaning is more specific, compared with the denotative meaning of the verb 'to say', which is wider and less specific and can be both purposeful and non-purposeful.
- In *she poured the water over his head*, 'صبّت الماء على رأسه', the emphasis is put on the onset of the act of pouring characterized by atelicity and duration. It is worth noting here that the writer opts for using whole-part ways of seeing when utilizing *رأس* 'head' to refer to *شعر* 'hair', thus viewing the entity 'head' as a whole with its parts, including 'hair' and 'face'. In this regard, Croft and Cruse (2004, 137) comment that ways of seeing "represent different ways of looking at the same thing".
- *she started to rub his face with soap and water just as she used to do when he was just a small boy* 'وراحت تفرك وجهه بالماء والصابون كما كانت تفعل له حينما كان طفلا صغيرا' is a material process simply meaning *to rub* where the emphasis is placed on the continuity of the act of rubbing in a specific period in the past. The act of rubbing evokes in the mind of the reader an *effort*-frame comparing with other semantically related verbs, such as *غسل* 'to wash', thereby excluding the possibility of touching her son's face gently. Further, it presupposes in its frame a prior unclean state of the entity which may well change its state by the process of rubbing. *just as she used to do when he was just a small boy* is a manner circumstance/comparison construing the way in which the process is actualized. In this manner circumstance, another material process is utilized by the writer where the implicit pronoun *هي* 'she' is the actor, *فعل* 'to do' is the process of doing used as a cohesive

device to substitute the act of فرك 'to rub', له 'for him' is the client of the process filling a theta role of benefactor, and حينما كان طفلا صغيرا 'when he was a small boy' is a location circumstance/temporal construing the extent of the unfolding of the process in time. It is worth noticing that the emphasis in this context is placed on the repetition of the act of rubbing her son's face over a period of time in the past, thus triggering off a habitual interpretation. This invokes in the mind of the reader/translator a number of similar images in which the actor/agent was younger and the client/benefactor was a small child. Had the writer added, for instance, the phrases 'as usual', المعتادة أن 'as usual', and the like, as in ... كما كانت معتادة أن تفعل... or ... كما كانت في العادة تفعل... 'just as she usually used to do', he would have conjured up in his readers' minds similar images. Here, as one may notice, the lexical item طفل 'child' has been translated as 'boy'. In English, these two terms are not synonyms. To explain, the lexical item 'child' is normally used to refer to a person, male or female, usually under the age of ten while the lexical item 'boy' is normally used to refer to a male child probably at the age of ten or under, but not always. Had the translators given serious consideration to the diagnostic and supplementary features of these semantically related words, they would have opted for 'child' rather than 'boy'.

In what follows, an attempt is made to discuss some politically-charged signs. We will try to identify the impact of changing the lexical items/expressions as micro signs used to form a macro sign or many macro signs in a given political discourse on the translation accuracy.

4. Politically-charged signs

We have seen from the discussion of the above examples that any attempt to change the micro signs through translation will create different mental images. The degree of the difference (slightly or dramatically) will determine the translation accuracy; that is to say, how close to, or far from, the original text it will be. Being accurate does not mean that the translator should adhere to the superficial level of the language at the expense of the symbolic level.

The question that springs to mind in this respect is: "What will happen if the sign is political?" Let us now try to illustrate how politically-loaded texts are structurally constructed on these two axes, viz. syntagmatic and paradigmatic, to form wide-ranging micro political signs that form macro political ones. What make some of these micro and macro political signs favourable to, and acceptable in, certain languages/cultures while not in some others? To make a start, let us consider the following political example along with its official translation extracted from *Al-Riyadh Newspaper* published daily in Saudi Arabia (April 3rd, 2015):

(4) عبرت الأمانة العامة لهيئة كبار العلماء عن تقديرها لما تقدمه قوات المملكة العربية السعودية في عاصفة الحزم التي انطلقت
 نصره لإخواننا في اليمن الشقيق ضد فئة باغية منحرفة تريد الاستئثار باليمن ومصادرة قراره وخدمة جهات خارجية.

The General Secretariat of the Council of Senior Scholars has expressed its appreciation for Saudi forces taking part in the Determination Storm Operation launched to support brothers in Yemen against a deviant aggressive group which wants to seize Yemen and its decision and serves foreign parties.

In the original text, a number of signs are chosen out of a set of possible signs, for example:

- عبّرت instead of أدانت, استنكرت, رحبت, نددت, etc.
- عن شكرها, عن استغرابها, عن حزنها, عن أسفها instead of عن تقديرها etc.
- العدوان السعودي, الجيوش السعودية instead of القوات السعودية
- القضاء, تحرير, اعتداء instead of نصرّة
- حلفاؤنا, أعداؤنا instead of إخواننا
- عملاء, مخربين, متمردين, مرتزقة, مجموعة متمردة instead of فئة باغية منحرفة
- إبادة اليمن, محو اليمن, تخليص اليمن, تحرير اليمن instead of الاستئثار باليمن
- إيصال صوته, مصادرة حقه, تغييب صوته instead of قراره مصادرة
- خدمة أجنادات غربية, خدمة جهات غازية, خدمة جهات معادية instead of خدمة جهات خارجية

Each lexical item or expression selected above has a certain profile in a certain semantic frame; therefore, in a political domain, عبّرت عن تقديرها, for instance, is profiled in a frame where it contrasts with عبّرت عن حزنها, عبّرت عن أسفها, and the like. In عبّرت عن تقديرها there is an *approval*-frame that evokes in the mind of the translator certain image schemas grounded in his/her imaging system of structural schematization (cf. Tamly 2000; Almanna and Al-Shehari 2019). In these framing strategies, the language user, including the translator, is then able to make certain areas of knowledge conceptually salient while suppressing others.

So, the paradigmatic signs:

عبّرت - الأمانة - العامة - لهيئة - كبار - العلماء - عن تقديرها - لما - تقدمه - قوات - المملكة العربية السعودية - في
 - عاصفة الحزم - التي - انطلقت - نصرّة - لإخواننا-في - اليمن - الشقيق - ضد - فئة - باغية - منحرفة - تريد -
 الاستئثار - باليمن - و - مصادرة - قراره - و - خدمة - جهات - خارجية.

are combined to formulate the syntagm:

عبّرت الأمانة العامة لهيئة كبار العلماء عن تقديرها لما تقدمه قوات المملكة العربية السعودية في عاصفة الحزم التي انطلقت نصرّة
 لإخواننا في اليمن الشقيق ضد فئة باغية منحرفة تريد الاستئثار باليمن ومصادرة قراره وخدمة جهات خارجية.

Being influenced by their own accumulated value systems and/or certain conventions and norms formed over time for selecting, producing and consuming news items, the news producers (be they senior

scholars, news editors, translators, and so on) have opted for certain lexical items and expressions (micro signs), such as

→ نصرَة '*support*'

→ إخوان '*brothers*'

→ فئة باغية منحرفة '*a deviant aggressive group*'

→ الاستتار باليمن '*seizing Yemen*'

→ خدمة جهات أجنبية '*serving foreign parties*'

As can be observed, there are five main participants in this scene, namely

→ الأمنة العامة لهئية كبار العلماء referring to a number of religious scholars representing a larger number of religious scholars in Saudi Arabia. Here, part-whole ways of seeing are utilized where هيئة '*body*' is used to represent all religious scholars in Saudi Arabia, thus viewing the entity 'body' as a whole with its parts.

→ القوات السعودية '*Saudi forces*'.

→ اليمن '*Yemen*' along with its people.

→ فئة باغية '*a deviant aggressive group*' referring to the opposition forces in Yemen that want to seize and have control over Yemen, thus exhibiting a force-dynamic pattern.

→ جهات أجنبية '*foreign parties*' referring to other countries, such as Iran.

In this scene, two locations, viz. المملكة العربية السعودية '*Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*' and اليمن '*Yemen*' are introduced. The Saudi forces are narratively presented in motion in a specific period of time, and the scene's beginning point (Saudi Arabia) and end point (Yemen) are at different locations in space. Added to this, the use of the lexical items عاصفة '*storm*' and انطلق '*to move off*', which evoke in the reader/hearer's minds a *movement*-frame, injects the scene with dynamism: our attention can move across the scene. Here, an open path with windowing over the initial portion of the path is utilized whereas the other gapped portions, i.e. the medial and final portions, are backgrounded in attention. This could be to direct the readers' attention away from these two phases in which there might be a lot of casualties.

This dynamic attention is reflected in the TT by virtue of the lexical items '*storm*' and '*to launch*'. The use of these lexical items metaphorically dramatizes "the opposition between different participants" (Semino 2008, 100). Further, opting for the phrase خدمة جهات أجنبية '*serving foreign parties*' clearly shows that the on-off relationship between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran is once again uncertain in the context of the evolving political environment of the Middle East.

Let us compare the news item along with its translation discussed above with another version offered by *Al-Sabah Al-Jadid Newspaper* published daily in Iraq (April 3, 2015) on the same event:

(5) تعرضت الأراضي اليمنية لقصف مدفعي وصاروخي لأول مرة منذ بدء تدخل عسكري بقيادة السعودية في اليمن.

Here, those involved in the process of producing such a news item are subject to a different authority along with different dispositions acquired by individuals through experiences and accumulated history. Such a positioning, along with the forces external to the field, has made the news producers opt for lexical items (micro signs) such as:

→ تعرض *'be subject to'*

→ قصف مدفعي وصاروخي *'cannon and missile bombing'*

→ تدخل *'intervention'*

thereby creating a different mental image and a different narrative from that adopted by those supporting Saudi forces.

As can be noticed, the act of bombing, which is backgrounded in attention, is scanned summarily, but the overall scene can be easily scanned sequentially with the aid of the verb *تعرض* *'to be subjected'*. It is a dynamic scene along with a fictive motion where missiles filling the theta role of instrument are conceptualized as if flying high in the sky and falling down in another area — we see this in our mind's eye. Here we have an open path where the missiles are in motion in a specific period of time, and their beginning point and end point are at different locations in space. However, the text producer, being influenced by his/her own accumulated value system and/or certain conventions and norms formed over time for selecting, producing and consuming news items, opts for emphasizing the end point only when utilizing an open path with windowing over the final portion of the path. As such, we see two main locations: one is foregrounded in attention (*الأراضي اليمنية* *'Yemen territories'*) and the other is backgrounded in attention. Here the interaction between the two countries in the scene is construed as unidirectional, based on an asymmetrical action schema where the transfer of energy flows from the agent (unspecified but can be evoked as it is in our scope of attention and prediction) to the affected participant (Yemen territories). Here, part-whole ways of seeing are utilized, thus viewing the entity *الأراضي اليمنية* *'Yemen territories'* as a whole with its parts, but with the focus on the war zone only. Such a structural configuration imposes on the scene certain content specifications and a particular image-schematic representation.

The phrase *بقيادة* *'led by'* indicates that there are many countries involved which are excluded from the scope of attention. Further, the act of leading construes the situation as having a force-dynamic value of having control over others, thus indicating the actor's being-able-to-do (authority).

Taking into account the syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations along with their structural configuration, scope of attention and viewing frames, one would suggest a translation like this:

Yemeni territories have been exposed to cannon and missile bombing for the first time since the beginning of the military intervention led by Saudi Arabia against Yemen.

To further demonstrate how removing some elements/signs from the message will create a slightly or completely different mental image, let us consider these two *Reuters* news items touching on the same topic (one in English and the other in Arabic; April 7, 2015):

(6) *The United States is speeding up arms supplies and bolstering intelligence sharing with a Saudi-led alliance bombing a militia aligned with Iran in neighboring Yemen, a senior U.S. diplomat said on Tuesday.*

(7) قال أنتوني بلينكين نائب وزير الخارجية الأمريكي يوم الثلاثاء إن الولايات المتحدة تعجل بإمدادات الأسلحة للتحالف الذي تقوده السعودية ضد المقاتلين الحوثيين المعارضين للرئيس اليمني عبد ربه منصور هادي.

As can be seen, the tension between the two countries (Saudi Arabia and Iran) has been explicitly expressed by *Reuters* in its English version while it has been reduced in its Arabic version. In the phrase '*a militia aligned with Iran*', for instance, the word '*Iran*' is given a front seat while in the Arabic version the word is backgrounded in attention. Further, the speaker in the verbal process is clearly identified in the Arabic version as أنتوني بلينكين '*Antony Blinken*' while it is left implicit in the English version, viz. '*a senior U.S. diplomat*'. Such additions and omissions have created not only different mental images, but promoted different narratives as well.

To reinforce this point, let us consider these two BBC news items talking about the same topic (one in Arabic and the other in English; November 30, 2014):

(8) كشف تحقيق أجرته الحكومة العراقية في شأن الفساد بالجيش أن هناك 50 ألف "جندي شبح" في قائمة الرواتب التي تدفعها الحكومة العراقية لقواتها.

(9) *An investigation into corruption in the Iraqi army has revealed that there were 50,000 false names on its payroll.*

As can be seen, in the Arabic version, the news editor has opted for certain signs, such as

كشف - تحقيق - أجرته - الحكومة العراقية - في شأن - الفساد - بالجيش - أن - هناك - 50 ألف - "جندي شبح" - في - قائمة الرواتب - التي - تدفعها - الحكومة العراقية - ل - قواتها

Here, the doers of the actions كشف '*to reveal*', جرى '*to carry out*', دفع '*to pay*' are clearly identified, viz. تحقيق '*investigation*', الحكومة العراقية '*Iraqi government*' and الحكومة العراقية '*Iraqi government*' respectively, thus creating certain images in the TL readers' minds. However, in the English version, the doers of the second action أجرى '*to carry out*' and the phrase لقواتها '*its troops*', which semantically speaking fills the

role of benefactor, have been removed, thereby creating a different viewing frame. Excluding the doers from the scope of attention therefore directs attention away from the good behaviour exhibited by the current government compared with the bad behaviour displayed by the previous government.

Further, we have an example of profile shift where the phrase الحكومة العراقية 'the Iraqi government' in the first clause كشفت 'it reveals that ...' is different from الحكومة العراقية 'the Iraqi government' in the second clause تدفعها 'it pays ...'. The evidence for this is not found in the syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes, but is rather derived from our socio-cultural experiences and encyclopedic knowledge. The meaning of الحكومة العراقية in the first clause is الحكومة العراقية الحالية 'the current Iraqi government' and in the second clause is الحكومة العراقية السابقة 'the previous Iraq government'. In this regard, Almanna (2016, 202) holds: "Removing any element or participant in a given narrative, then provides the reader with a different interpretive frame that would guide their interpretations and responses to the narrative at hand".

Had the translator or trans-editor given serious consideration to the combination of the syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes employed by the writer or editor of the original text along with their structural configuration, scope of attention and viewing frames, s/he would have suggested a rendering like this:

(10) *An investigation into corruption in the Iraqi army carried out by the current Iraqi government has revealed that there were 50,000 false names on its payroll.*

5. Conclusion

This clearly shows how using different syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes dramatically changes the mental image conjured up in the mind of the hearer/reader, thus affecting image resolution and translation accuracy. Data analysis shows that in addition to giving full consideration to the syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes employed by the writer, issues such as the scope of attention and intention, causation, viewing frames, pace of events and the like should be taken into account in order to reflect an accurate mental image. Any attempt, whether it is on purpose or by accident, to change the micro signs along with their functions through translation will create different mental images. The degree of the difference (be it subtle or considerable) will determine the translation accuracy. Accuracy does not mean that the translators should stick to the surface level of the language at the expense of the symbolic level of the culture. Rather, they need to give undivided attention to the overall image conjured up in their minds and start to weigh out the differences between the interfacing languages/cultures prior to adopting certain local strategies that would reflect the signs' functions, viz. iconic, indexical and symbolic. Translating between culturally distant languages requires the translators to make every possible effort to reconcile any cultural clashes by transferring most, if not all, semiotic properties of the ST micro and macro signs "under certain equivalence conditions to do with semiotic codes, pragmatic action and general communicative requirements" (Hatim and Mason 1990, 105).

At times, removing, adding or replacing a politically-charged sign which is favourable to, and acceptable in, a certain culture will not only create a different mental image, thus affecting the translation accuracy, but may well promote a different narrative as well.

توظيف المحورين الأفقي التركيبي والعمودي المفرداتي في تحديد دقة الترجمة

علي المناع

قسم دراسات الترجمة، جامعة حمد بن خليفة، قطر

الملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تسليط الضوء على ما يمكن أن يقدمه علم السيمياء لعمل المترجمين الذين يترجمون بين لغات متباعدة ثقافياً، مثل اللغة العربية واللغة الإنكليزية؛ إذ إن الدراسة تسعى إلى معرفة فيما إذا كان يمكن استخدام المحور الأفقي التركيبي والمحور العمودي المفرداتي في تحديد دقة الترجمة. وللإجابة عن هذا السؤال البحثي، استخدمت الدراسة أمثلة من نصوص أصيلة أخذت من مصادر مختلفة وقارنتها بترجمات المنشورة. وأظهر تحليل البيانات أنه بالإضافة إلى المحورين المقترحين في هذه الدراسة، فإن هناك جملة أمور ينبغي أن تولى أهمية، منها مديات النية، ومدى تحقق الفعل، ووتيرة الأحداث، والزاوية التي نتناول الحدث منها. وبيّنت الدراسة أيضاً أن تغيير العلامة أو بعض العلامات في الخطاب السياسي قد يؤثر تأثيراً سلبياً في دقة الترجمة، إذ إن ذلك، من ناحية، قد ينتج عنه صورة ذهنية مغايرة، ومن ناحية أخرى، فإنه يسرد الحدث سرداً مختلفاً عن الوارد في النص الأصلي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الترجمة، المستوى المفرداتي العمودي، المستوى التركيبي الأفقي، الصورة، السيمياء، دقة الترجمة.

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