

WORD LEVEL NON-EQUIVALENCE: PROBLEMS AND SOURCES

Younes Ashuhail, Lecturer, Department of English, University of Hail, Hail. Saudi Arabia

Abstract: *Non-equivalence at word level is a widely recognized translation problem especially for translators who translate from Arabic as a source text ST into the target text TT which is English. The present study tries to highlight with examples the non-equivalence problems and the different sources for such words. The present study finds out that Arabic Language is full of non-equivalence words, so that translators has to deal with this problem when translating from Arabic into English. The problems include source text not lexicalized in target text, cultural specific context, the source and target languages make different distinctions in meaning, the source-language word is semantically complex, loan words' use in the source text and the lack of a specific term in the target language (hyponym).*

Keywords: *Translation Problems, Equivalence, Translation from Arabic into English Source Text ST, Target Text TT.*

Equivalence and non- Equivalence are very critical concepts in translation studies. Equivalence is of different levels, and the lowest level is word level equivalence. Although translators usually do not translate word-for-word equivalence, this study will work as the bass investigating the problem of non-equivalence in the source text.

Problems of Non-Equivalence in Translation:

The local dialects and the uses of Arabic in many translations are the main difficulty that faces translators ascribed to word level non-equivalence in the translation of the text into English from Arabic, so the main problem is that the target text does not have an equivalent for a word that has occurred in source text. Here we list the difficulties of non-equivalence classification a translator may face while translating from the ST, with reference to the classification provided by Baker:

(a) Culture-specific concepts:

Baker 2018 says that “The source-language word may express a concept which is totally unknown in the target culture”. This concept is of two types concrete or abstract; here is a list of culture-specific concepts from Arabic language as most translators find difficult to translate into English:

- Aqi:qa : food in honor of a new born
- Baptism: purification from a sin
- Zaka: 2.5% paid in donation
- Odheyeh: Sacrifice in a holiday
- Wudu': A purification condition before prayer
- Communion: Sharing the blood of Christ
- Faza3a: A group of people who protect each other's interest in times of individual needs
- Jaha: The gathering of family members or tribe members for the purpose of a wedding proposal
- Atweh: The gathering of family members or tribe members for the purpose of seeking forgiveness for a mistaken murder
- Mansaf: Yoghurt with meat
- Mlokhiyyeh: Cooked green leaves

- Msakhan: Bread with onions and sumac

(b) The source-language concept is not lexicalized in the target language:

Baker 2018 again claims that “The source-language word may express a concept which is known in the target culture but simply not lexicalized, that is not 'allocated' a target-language word to express it”. Here we list a group of words that are not lexicalized and most translators find difficult to translate:

- Nostril فتحة الانف
- Uncle عم/خال
- Charity زكاة/صدقة
- Toe اصبع قدم
- Bookshop/library مكتبة
- Hoodie معطف
- Aunt عمّة/خالّة
- Pencil قلم رصاص
- Gangster رجل عصابات
- Turkey ديك رومي
- Fishing صيد اسماك

(c) The source-language word is semantically complex:

Bolinger and Sears 1968 claim that “The source-language word may be semantically complex. This is a fairly common problem in translation. Words do not have to be morphologically complex to be semantically complex”.

1) قراءة فاتحة

As Muslims, when people (couple) wants to get married the first step that they do. They read *surret al fateha*. (Which means that they are together in front of family and friends.

2) كتب الكتاب

They are officially married, but then they have to do the wedding to announce their marriage.

3) العقيقة

When a baby is born, the baby’s parents slaughter a sheep.

4) جاهة

When a guy’s family and male relatives ask the girl’s family and male relatives for their daughter.

5) العدة

It’s the period, when a woman must wait after her husband’s death or after a divorce during which she may not marry another man. It lasts 4 months and 10 days for the widow, and 3 months for the divorcee.

(d) The source and target languages make different distinctions in meaning:

Baker 2018 states that “The target language may make more or fewer distinctions in meaning than the source language. What one language regards as an important distinction in meaning another language may not perceive as relevant. For example, Indonesian makes a distinction between going out in the rain without the knowledge that it is raining (kehujan) and going out in the rain with the knowledge that it is raining (hujan-hujan). English does not make this distinction.” An example on that is one mentioned by Alruzzi and Yunus 2019 stating that English has no distinction between the two words “Gaith” and “Matar”.

(e) The target language lacks a specific term (hyponym)

Baker 2018 says that “More commonly, languages tend to have general words (superordinate) but lack specific ones (hyponyms), since each language makes only those distinctions in meaning which seem relevant to its particular environment.”

Words that are missing from the lexical set in one language but not in the other:

- المثنى والجمع .. they put S instead in English
- الحواضر .. breakfast
- تسالي او المكسرات .. Different kinds of nuts
- قواعد الاعراب
- بحور الشعر
- حركات الاحرف .. diacritics
- مجموعة احرف توضع في بداية الكلمة لتغير المعنى
- مجموعة احرف توضع في نهاية الكلمة لتغير المعنى
- Past participle
- Present perfect
- Past perfect
- Complementizers (if, whether, that, for)
- ان واخواتها

(g) The loan words' use in the source text

Baker 2018 claims that “The use of loan words in the source text poses a special problem in translation.” Quite apart from their respective propositional meaning, loan words such as *au fait*, *chic*, *Auf Wiedershen* and *alfresco* in English are often used for their prestige value, because they can add an air of sophistication to the text or its subject matter.

Results and Recommendations:

The present study clearly shows that the problem of non-equivalence is clearly significant as there are many word level non-equivalence examples in Arabic language as the source text. These words level non-equivalence are of different classifications.

The researcher recommends the following:

1. More detailed studies to be conducted on the difficulties related to non-equivalence faced by translators especially those who tend to translate between Arabic and English.
2. More detailed studies to be conducted investigating the strategies used by translators to overcome these difficulties and problems related to non-equivalence.

References:

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