THE TRANSLATABILITY
OF ARABIC TAUTOLOGICAL EXPRESSIONS
INTO ENGLISH

By

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THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN TRANSLATION
AT YARMOUK UNIVERSITY

Supervisor

Dr. Mohammed Farghal
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Thesis Committee:
Dr. Mohammed Farghat Chairman
Dr. Abdullah Shunnaq Member
Dr. Mohammed Sarairah Member
Dedications
To my Father
To my Mother
To my brothers and sisters
To my Wife and daughter
The Translatability
of Arabic Tautological Expressions
into English

By

Monthir Mohammed Battah

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the translatability of Arabic Tautological Expressions into English and to address the pragmatic, linguistic, and cultural problems that may face the translator and lead to the distortion of the message conveyed.

The material of the study consists of twenty-five tautological expressions identified by the researcher as involving difficulties to translators. These tautological utterances were selected from books, periodicals, publications and the spoken language. Fifteen MA students enrolled in the translation program at Yarmouk University and thirty English Majors (3rd year) who were then having a course in translation volunteered to be subjects of the study. They were asked to give their own translations of the given Arabic tautological expressions.
The researcher identified the failures into three main categories; pragmatic, linguistic, and cultural. Many issues were discussed under each category so as to investigate the cause of failure in rendering these utterances appropriately.

The main finding of the study was the obvious indication that the students' lack of competence and knowledge in pragmatics, linguistics, and culture of both the source language and the target language led to the distortion of the message as most of the students opted for literal translations.
Abbreviations

SL: Source Language.
TL: Target Language.
p → p
CP: Cooperative principle.
PP: Politeness principle.
MQ: Maxim of Quantity.
NI: Notion of Implicature.
Nsg: A noun which is singular.
N(adj): Adjective.
N poss: A possessive noun or pronoun.
Npl: A noun which is plural.
V past: A verb in the past.
V present: A verb in the present.
Rel V past: a relative pronoun followed by a past tense.
Rel V future: a relative pronoun followed by a future tense.

Transliteration Key

' glottal stop
t voiceless, dento-alveolar, emphatic plosive.
ð voiced, dento-alveolar, emphatic fricative.
d voiced, dento-alveolar, emphatic plosive.
θ voiceless, interdental fricative.
š voiceless, plato-alveolar fricative.
h voiceless, pharyngeal fricative.
y palatal glide.
w bilabial glide
v long vowel.
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Abstract in Arabic
Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

Preview:

Translation is the process of rendering a text from Source Language (SL) into a Target Language (TL). This process helps people speaking different languages and having different cultures to communicate with each other. So, the role of the translator is to look for an equivalence in the TL for the texts translated from the SL. In fact, the work of the translator is not easy since he encounters different types of problems some of which are attributed to language. Therefore, it is of great importance to highlight the problematic areas that may face the translator and help him by facilitating his job through trying to overcome these obstacles.

One of these problematic areas that may lead to the distortion of the message is Arabic tautological expressions. Arabic tautological expressions have been a neglected area in Arabic despite the fact that they are an important phenomenon in our daily spoken language. Therefore, the researcher intends to shed some light on this topic in an attempt to highlight linguistic, cultural, and pragmatic problems that create vagueness in the assimilation of their meanings in the TL.

This Thesis is divided into four chapters. The first one introduces objectives of the study, statement of the problem, and types of Arabic
lautological expressions focusing on the functions of these utterances, and finally the procedures for translating them appropriately. The second chapter is a review of related literature. The third chapter deals with the methodology. The fourth deals with analysis and discussion of tautological utterances. Finally, the fifth provides conclusions and recommendations.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

This study aims to examine Arabic tautological expressions and the translation of these expressions into English. It is an attempt to highlight the difficulties that face translators in rendering them into English.

The New Standard Dictionary (1988) defines tautology as “that form of Pleonasm in which the same word or idea is unnecessarily repeated”. The New Webster (1980) defines tautology as “A useless repetition of the same idea or meaning in different words.” However, such definitions are insufficient because tautological expressions may consist of two constituents $p \rightarrow p$, but the second $p$ is pragmatically loaded. In this spirit, Ward and Hischburg (1992) define tautological utterances as “Those utterances whose semantic representations represent formal tautologies i.e., valid statements in propositional logic.”
Grice (1975) defines language use as “A cognitive act aiming at achieving cooperation between both the speaker and the listener.”

The researcher will try to identify lexical, grammatical, and cultural errors in translating Arabic tautological expressions committed by MA students of translation and senior English majors. Then, he will classify them into categories, finding out their frequencies. He also intends to determine the degree of acceptability of these errors and the extent to which they violate and distort the message conveyed. This study also aims at finding out the degree of agreement on the acceptability of the students’ translations.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

This study is meant to examine and analyze Arabic tautological expressions from a translational perspective by investigating the linguistic, cultural, and pragmatic problems which translators may encounter in this area. In fact, in addition to working competence in the SL and TL, translating Arabic tautological expressions into English requires an adequate cultural and pragmatic competence on the part of the translator.

By way of illustration, consider the translatability of (1) and (2) below which were quoted from Farghal (1992):