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The issues of cultural expressions untranslatability from Iraqi Arabic into English language

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Abstract:

This study aims at explore the cultural untranslatability for expressions found in Iraqi culture. Different expressions have been chosen from Iraqi environment, which are widely used in Iraqi tongue, as a sample of the research. The researcher tries to show the cultural dimension for each expression and then explain why these expressions are untranslatability. The study found out that some Iraqi expressions are unable to translate due to the religious, ethical, psychological, and tribal dimensions that effect on the Iraqi people life to produce such expressions. The study showed that the impact of such dimensions is limited to Iraqi cultural aspects, because it has no similarities in other cultures.

Keywords: untranslatability, culture, translation, expressions, source language, target language

1. Introduction:

In the theoretical field of translation, there is general debate over the problem of untranslatability. In one hand, it has been widely conceived that translation is not impossible. All the cases prove that language is of course translatable to extent while we should not neglect the basic fact that there are still a lot of phenomena showing that untranslatability can be seen and exist especially in case of cultural communication. Catford (1965:94) pointed out that it is possible to make distinction between linguistics untranslatability and cultural untranslatability. Linguistics untranslatability results from the difference between the source language and target language. Cultural untranslatability is absent in the target language of relevant situational features.

Untranslatability is a property of a text of any utterance in one language when there is no equivalent text or utterance in another language (Cui, 2012 cited in Mohammadi & Keshavarzi ,2016:140). Booker (1996), however, asserts that poets are not comparable since they are all distinct. Translation is merely necessary for pedagogy; it is impossible.

the interpreter is to capture "the mood or state of being (stato d'animo) of its author."

Translation is seen nowadays as an important human action and the translator as a mediator between cultures. That is why many scholars have asked how or if culture can be eventually translated

into another language. Translation is always placed at the core of the intercultural aspects, so that the study of the translation goes along with the cultural studies (Durdureanu,2011:51).

The idea of equivalent plays a great role to make translation between source language and target language easy to recognize. There is essential difference between eastern and western cultures, therefore, the study of untranslatability comes as a result to these essential differences between Iraqi Arabic which belongs to eastern culture and English culture which belongs to western culture and also When translating or interpreting significant texts or expressions with cultural overtones, translators may have to shoulder a great deal of responsibility (Cymbalista, 2003). A wealth of material on loss in translation is provided by Nida (1984), specifically regarding the challenges translators have when dealing with terminology or concepts from source language (SL) that do not exist in target language (TL). Additionally, Newmark (1981) has already discussed the translation discrepancy in passing.

This paper is an attempt to explore the phenomena of untranslatability through analyzing the Iraqi expressions which cannot be translated into English. Different expressions have been chosen from Iraqi community which are widely used in Iraqi tongue.

This study is important to student who are interested in translation field especially in the classroom where people are practice themselves with such expressions, it is also very important to translators who are interested with translation as job they can use this analyze as guide.

2. Literature Review:

The main function of translator is to convey a message from source language to a target language. When expressions /words have no relevant meaning with target language, this issue confronts the translator and it is called Untranslatability. Catford (1965:94) states "that translation fails or untranslatability occurs -when it is impossible to build functionally relevant features of the situation into the contextual meaning of target language text. "

There are two types of Untranslatability, the cultural untranslatability and linguistics untranslatability. Catford (ibid) pointed out that it is possible to make distinction between linguistics untranslatability and cultural untranslatability. Linguistics untranslatability results from the difference between the source language and target language. Cultural untranslatability is absent in the target language of relevant situational features. It is completely absent from the culture of the target language such as "the names of some institutions, clothes, foods and abstract concepts among others". Cultural untranslatability refers to a situation where the relations of expressing in the source text does not find adequate rendering in the target culture.

According to Cui (2012:827) there are two sources which causing cultural untranslatability, first is culture gap, which causes untranslatability, includes material culture, traditional culture, religious culture. It occurs when an item in one culture is nonexistent in the other culture while culture conflict occurs when connotations of a word or an item and expression in one culture are quite different from its connotations in another culture.

Jayasimha (2013 cited in Mohammed & Keshavarzi, 2016:140) discusses cultural translation through a cognitive approach and focuses on the possibilities of analyzing complex cultural symbols that have been found difficult for translation by many translators while Mohammadi & Keshavarzi (2016) indicate that major challenges faced the translators is translating the cultural symbols. Every culture has some peculiarities as well as rigid complexity based on its geographic, historical, anthropological, and sociological conditions that have no way to build connecting with target language symbols.

However, to understand clearly the phenomena of untranslatability, it is necessary to delight on the question of what the culture. Then it could be able to know the dimensions which untranslatability

deals with it .In fact, there are different definitions to the culture which concentrates on number of cultural features such as social heritage, beliefs, customs morals, tradition and language. Greats (1957 cited in Chona, 2012:7) defines culture as a historically translated of pattern of meaning which embodied in symbols a system of inherited conception expressed in symbolic form by means communicate. Taylor (1957:19 cited in Ochs, 1988:5) gives this definition to Culture as "culture or civilization taken in its wide anthrographic sense is that complete whole which include knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, custom and other capabilities and habits acquired by a members of society."

Cultural expressions can be classified into many aspects according to Taber classification. Ecology which includes flora, fauna, winds, hills, downs and etc. Material culture (artifacts) which includes food, clothes, transport, houses and towns. Social culture work and leisure. Organization, customs, activities, procedures, concepts, political and administrative, religious, artists, Gestures and habits (Taber,1969, cited in Whyudi,2016).

Cui (2012:827) regards that language is an important aspect of culture and he considers culture as ground where language grows and develops. Languages are the product of the culture as well as of the nation. Culture has long historical background and various cultural connotations. The history, social system, natural environment, religion and customs are all shown vividly in their culturally-loaded words, proverbs, idioms, and so on. Nida (2004 cited in Panou, 2013:1-6) points out that getting successful translation, the translator should be familiar with two cultures is even more important than mastering two languages, because the language has its meaning only in the cultural background.

3. Data analysis and results:

This section focuses on analysis of each expression used by Iraqi Arabic speakers. A researcher tries to explain the meaning of each expression in detail according to the Iraqi culture.

1. الله بلخير

The expression "الله بلخير" which is used in greeting visitors. In case of (Greeting utterance). It is part of Iraqi tradition when the owner of house says to the guest as sign of welcome (greeting) after having a sit. Directly, the guest hears the word as "الله بلخير" and he should reply "صبحكم الله بلخير" to show respect and politeness and there is a hidden meaning behind using this expression which the owner of house can understand it (the guest still has no food) when the reply come as "مساكم الله بلخير" in morning time.

The cultural gaps caused by different aspects of societies, surely it deals with different natural types of Iraq society and English community, this expression belongs to south Iraq community. Therefore, translator finds difficult to hold same expression in English culture, due to limitations or different of dealing with gusts in the same way as in Iraq community, therefore, there is no equivalent expression in the English culture in which they greet and welcome the guests. The translator seeks to substitute in the target language but this expression is untranslatable because there is a hidden meaning in the case of "الله بلخير"

2. النهوة

This expression belongs to Iraq community from a long time. It is used to prevent the girl from her right to get married from the man but she can marry one of her relatives only, thus one of her cousin of the girl comes to prevent / stop her to complete the marriage/ engagement ceremony even if her cousin has wife. Sometime her cousin used this way because the girl may be rejected him when he asked her hand before or may try to get money from the suitor. This expression looks like alarm

form beginning with big problem which leads to fighting that is why both of the family try to solve issue peacefully.

Iraq culture has a specific ethical system which is most of Iraqis build their relationships with member of community in the life, so the translator aims to convey the expression "النهوة" into target culture, but he cannot realize the meaning of "النهوة". The main issue is English culture which belongs to different ethical and here facing ethical gap between ethical system society. Thus, absolutely, Iraq ethnical system is different from English system. So, the deeply reason which stands behind difficult is to hold a suitable expression in the target language. It is the big difference in ethical system. According to the difference between Iraqi and English ethical make the translator in critical situation to find equivalent item of "النهوة".

3. العيدية

One of the most interesting examples in Iraqi Arabic is "العيدية". This expression comes to tell us the meaning of giving money, sweet or gift to the kids after ending Ramadan month (Eid). It is considering as one of Islamic tradition annual. The goal behind this activity make the children happy and sometimes the people used to support the poor family.

This expression comes as a result of a specific event to the end of Ramadan month which already is not available in English culture. The translator is aware of this expression which has no equivalent one in English culture. Because it is not familiar and available in English society. For this reason, it cannot be translated.

4. الهربه

This expression used in happiness occasion "الهربه". It means the money which is given to the groom or his family as a gift or helping him preparing to his new life. It is traditional habit which could be exchanged among families in Iraq community.

The expression of (الهربه) is not available in the target language that is why the result of process of equivalence can be zero because there are differentiate between Iraqi and English societies. The expression is untranslatable because there is no equivalent term/expression to be translated.

5. رش الماء بعد المسافرين

This expression donated case when one of member family as mum flaws the water behind any one from her family who has gone to travel somewhere. This tradition carries a lot of strange meaning, such as wishing help and success in journey and hoping going back safely. The relationship between relatives and families pushes them to believe in something to do this process, even if is not real. it is rarely find the same believe in target culture. it is normally the translator to pick up the same expression to the different tradition and culture such as Iraq tradition of English tradition

6. لعبه المحبب

It is tradition game in Ramadan month in Iraqi community. The idea of this game builds on finding the Ring. It means there are two teams with two leaders one leader tries to hide the ring in the first of his teams hands and the researcher would call this game as "Guessing where the ring is". The second leader tries to find the ring by guessing in which hand. This game occurs between the people who live in different distracts. It looks like a challenge among the distracts and it includes tradition song, sweets in which the loser pays to the winner.

Ramadan month represented as Islamic activity in source language, and this game consider as part of Ramadan activities, here surly the game is absent in target language, Ramadan activities absent in English society surly here the target language do not have Expression to this game .

7. المضيف

One of expression that relate to the hospitality is expression "المضيف". It is a place where people from different places or tribes come together to discuss something and listen and solve their problems...etc. This place looks like the public hall made usually from reeds especially in south of Iraq. In fact, the place has good function receiving the guests, it considers as symbol to power and hospitality. The relationship between the people and place is so complex and different from one community to another community. Therefore, it rare to find the same view to the place in English community. The target language has no expression such as above.

8. البخت

"البخت" considers as one of the supernatural power that Iraqi people community have believed indirectly. This expression is used many times in Iraqi dialogues. This expression of the البخت that there is invisible spiritual power. It words to protect a person from outside effects save him or her from unexpected dangers.

This expression belongs to cultural heritage in Iraqi community. In this case, the translator faces difficulty to catch the expression which has cultural heritage, consequently its untranslatable

9. رقصة الجوبي

It is classical and tradition dance in middle and south Iraq .it consist from five to ten men who strand together by put their hand together as line in semi half circle. first man in the line leads the dance on the sound of drum and song and engage the others to preformed the dance in perfectly. This process has especial songs, as well as using flute and drums. It is a way to celebrate or express happiness in special occasion.

Dance represents as good way to express cultural values and traditions so each community has different way to show their happiness. here it is easy to sign that it is not necessary to find the same away in target language (English community). The translator doesn't find expression which can give the same meaning to رقص الجوبي in target language .

10. الفصلية

This expression refers to the woman. Iraqi consider this expression unlovely name which gives to a woman when her father or her brother except to marry her with other family which previously made a problem with it, like (killed a person or big fighting) She becomes as a tool to solve the problem between two families. English society have different view to woman as well as to solve the problem like (killing) that is why this expression is absent in target language

11. رفة العين

The idea of this expression mixed between the tradition and myth. On other hand Iraqi believes that abnormal movement of eye lid has given different interpretations like, bad lucky, un expected guest or sometime an accident will happen in the future. Here,

it is possible to say that the English community does not have the same interpretation to movement of lid, so the translator finds difficult to understand the meaning of this abnormal movement into English language and also to find this expression in target language.

12. جينا ما جينا

This expression refers to the group of kids who are gathered clapping and walking as group using the song of جينا ما جينا in Ramadan month, asking for the sweet or something as gift. The kids and song represented maxed between folklore and Islamic heritage.

It is rare to meet with different community such as Iraq and they share with same folklore with all this different the translating process has on result

13. التسيوره

This expression refers to a short visit at night. In other words, a person who visits his/her friend and spends good time with them nightly this time called as "التسيوره" This expression doesn't have specific translation because it is one of the habitual visiting of Iraqi culture and it cannot find the same reference in English community

14. التحشيش

This expression is a part of people communication process, especially among the youngsters who make fun or commitment between them. It is mixed between satire and fun or the vocabularies which share with pronunciation and different In meaning. The expression of " التحشيش " is used for mention this style of conversation as a kind of fun dialogue and giving joke.

Therefore, it is too much hard to convey the meaning of fun or joke to English with big difference in pronunciation and the meaning on a word which so related to it. It means here even if speakers play in the function of a word or relation of a word to Iraq culture background, both of the speaker and listener knew exactly the meaning of the concept " التحشيش ". Therefore, the translator finds out himself unfamiliar with culture and social setting in target language the reason which stand on this complex problem is cultural gap between English and Iraq. It's really difficult to translate the " التحشيش " carrying a word which belongs to social setting /Iraq culture

15. زواج كصه بكصه

It is arranged marriage in Iraqi society. This kind of marriage happens under rules which put together by the families of married couple. It occurs when a young proposal to a girl, but in opposite he has to agree to make his sister agree to gets married from the brother of a girl that he wants to marry her.

The responsibility of translator investigated about the expression which can be suitable to the same expression in target language or where he can find semi activity which carry the word to the same image of marriage in the Iraq community. Sometimes, the equivalence in translation process came with nothing, that means it finds no equivalent expression to the same activity in target language. That is really what happens in this case of in target language. By going back to legal dictionary to pick up a word which may be close relate to the idea of this expression, it is easy to say that the dictionary just gives clearly definition to the word of the legal marriage

16. المسحراتي

This expression refers the person who works to wake up the people (Muslim) to eat in Ramadan Month .It looks like a job which the Muslims called for the person who help them to wake up in Ramadan nights and he used the damn or flout when he walks from one street to another and some time he uses some tradition song .Surly,

each community belongs to specific religion which has different types ritual sand number of community always eager to make it perfectly so the job " related with Muslims community in opposite side English community has no ritual of fasting simply because the English people belongs to Christian religion.

Here it is interesting to mention that the concept of fasting has different details in Ramadan month in compare with Christian fasting which don't follow same procedures. It is normal for translator who faces really problem to find equivalence word to same job "المسحراتي" in English in other word None equivalence at word level can occur because the absent in target culture finally un translating it's not new issue in translation process because translator deals with expression which represent specific culture or region community

17. ايشور فيك

It is a local religious concept in Iraqi community imaginary that has deeply related to thoughts especially in prophet Mohamed's family or their sons .it is defined as Metaphysical revenge as a punishment against anyone who abuses or misbehave with person who belongs to prophet Mohamed. The translation process must convey all properties of meaning that occurs in the source language to appear in the target language but as we have seen above this expression has no equivalence in target culture

18. نعيما

This expression has some a special usage in the Iraq community. Iraqis are used to say this expression to the person who had come out after taking bath or shower. It is considering such as applause.

In this expression the translator does not hold suitable expression in the target language simply because the English community does not have this expression that can used for the person who come out after take a shower therefore, there is not such expression in the target language (English) to this expression .

19. المفطح

It is one of expression that refer to food in the Iraq community. It is usually prepared to the guests in an occasion such as (wedding). also, (المفطح) always consists of (the rise and too much meat/half body of the sheep). It is considered as a way to show hospitality to the guests. The difference between English and Iraqi culture to see or understand the hospitality make the translator in confusion to find a suitable expression in the target culture That is why this expression is not translatable simply because English kitchen don't have this type of food

20. الكوامة

This expression represents the threat/caution from one person or group to the family or tribe due to a fight or quarrel. the Iraqi tribes use this way as alarm to solve the problem among them. this is why translating process can find same expression in target language.

In fact, there is big difference to solve the problem in English community from the Iraqi community consequently, this expression does not have a way to hold an expression in the target language.

21. العراضه/الهوسات

This expression refers to the one of the habits in the Iraqi community. It refers to the unity among the tribes or showing the support in special events by delivering some poems. This expression represents the situation where some people who belong to one tribe when they are gathering to announce their support to another the tribe in special occasion such as the death of sheikh of tribe or facing some problems.

The translator is unable to find the expression in a target language that can carry the same meaning in the English community. the translator always looks for expression to make the equivalence but in this case the expression has no equivalence

22. الدكة العشائرية

It is considering as way to threat person or family from another person due to abusing or troubling between them. the person come to stand in front the home and using the gun to shouting the house as threatening and then both of relatives' number families come together to find the compromise between them peacefully. Translators don't have the expression who can be suit to this case here the translating come to be answer to solve the absent this expression

23. غسل عار

This expression refers to the savage crime (killing) against the girl who has relation with man outside the marriage bounds (sexual relation). in deep sense, this kind of relation considers as shame to the family in Iraq society that is why, it noted that one of the sons of the family enforces to kill the girl which causes the shame to the family by this savage behavior the family thinks that cleans the shame.

English community don't think about the relationship between the man and the girl in the same way which Iraq community thinking. this different in thing process can give the translator imagery about if this expression can be available in target language thus it is easy to say if the idea is not being in thinking of target language community surly there is not space to this expression in target language الوير 24.

The expression represented one case in Iraq society. it refers to the person who insist to pay the money instead of his friend in restraint. he considers as show the hospitality and respect. Each community has interesting behavior according to values or culture. Iraq community has this expression to express about his values so it is not correct to try to find same expression and same meaning because the values are different issue from Iraq community to English community. here the translating process can't help the translator to find the expression with this big different in values of cultures

Conclusion:

The results of this study reveal that there are a lot of expressions cannot be translated literally. there is hidden meaning behind each expression. this meaning can be convey phased on the inter oration of each expression using the Iraqi culture as a medium to explain what they mean for this reason, when translator tries to translated them to target language (English) need to make culture takes place in his /her translation consequently.

The untranslatability expression is a theory by J.C Catford . The research is concerned on the cultural untranslatability the researcher uses none –translating idea to observe the cultural untranslatability expressions. the researcher s intention is to find out the cultural untranslatability expressions then analysis it depended on J.C Catford .it based on the date finding.

In this case, if finding the cultural untranslatability expressions, the translator has to choose whether will be oriented on source language or target language. if translator choose to source language emphasis, he just lets the real expression into target language to reveal concept of source culture and create real situation.

If translator choose target language emphasis, he changes the real expression into target language culture to make easier to the reader understand message.

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