

Interdependent Relationship Between Contrastive Analysis And Translation

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Abstract

Contrastive studies play an important role in the field of language teaching and translation. Since the former is beyond the study of this paper, the present study focuses on the relationship between contrastive analysis (henceforth CA) and translation, i.e., how CA can serve translation and how translation can serve CA.

Therefore, the aim of this paper is to find the areas in which CA can take benefit from translation and vice versa because this use is of a great help for both fields.

The area whereby translation can make use of CA is the bilingual grammars and bilingual dictionaries which can help translators to perform the process of translation.

On the other hand, translation can serve CA by providing contrastivists with the closest translation equivalences that meet their needs in the two areas they are interested with, viz, comparison and contrastiveness, i.e., arriving at similarities or constants and differences between two or more languages respectively.

1. CA: Definitions and Aims

CA is a branch of linguistics "concerned with the comparison of two or more languages in order to determine both the differences and similarities between them" (Fisiac et al, 1978 as in Fisiak, 1981:1). The writers, in this definition, refer to the similarities and differences which CA is concerned with.

James (1980:3), on the other hand, maintains that CA deals with the differences rather than similarities between languages by pointing out that "CA is a linguistic enterprise aimed at producing inverted (i.e., contrastive not comparative) two-valued typologies...and founded on the assumption

that languages can be compared". James, in this definition, differentiates between "contrastive" and "comparative" since the former refers to the differences and the latter to similarities.

Els et al (1984:38) say that CA is a "systematic comparison of specific linguistic characteristics of two or more languages". It is of concern to the present paper that CA contributes to translation theory by showing, among other things, translational equivalence holding between a sentence in one language and a sentence in another if each item of them is an optimal translation of the other in a given context (ibid:40f). Furthermore, CA provides insights into what is called language universals and language specific characteristics. CA advocates (like Fries, 1945; Lado, 1957; etc.) have claimed that CAs of all levels of structure will enable specialists (e.g. teachers, textbook producers and translators) to predict the areas of difficulty between the source language (SL) and the target language (TL). This is, in turn, grants them the opportunity as how to handle the thorny areas in teaching, textbook-designing and translation (Schachter and Celce-Murica, 1980:120).

To carry out a contrastive study, one is required to adopt a certain model for his/her analysis (i.e., traditional, structural, transformational or functional). However, it is possible to execute a CA by putting the description of the SL and that of the TL in juxtaposition. This is due to the fact that the models already mentioned suffer from shortcomings. Thus, James (1980:64) speaks of the possibility to describe Language 1 and Language 2 independently... and then translate these two descriptions into a form which is model-neutral.

Generally speaking, in CA, there should be at least two languages involved, viz, L1 and L2 in the case of learning and SL and TL in case of translation (ibid: 4).

2. Translation: Definitions and Concepts

The notion of "translation" has widely been the interest of many scholars and linguists who do not unanimously agree on the definitions and the types of what it refers to.

According to Catford (1965: 20), translation is defined as: the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL). Catford here emphasizes the concept of equivalence in translation since it constitutes its cornerstone.

Nida and Taber (1969:12) believe that translation is concerned with reproducing in the TL the closest natural equivalence of the SL, first in terms of meaning and second in terms of style.

The above definition of translation is similar to that given by Savory (1957: 34) who understands translation as a process which involves transference of meaning and style of the SL text into TL text.

On his part, Newmark (1993:162) defines a good translation as typically a translation where the meaning given to a text by its author is conveyed appropriately and as accurately as possible.

Therefore, the purpose of translation consists in preserving the element of "meaning" across two languages, but sometimes the process of transferring meaning involves a certain amount of loss and gain. Newmark (1982:7-8) maintains that the loss of meaning stems from many factors: the first is cultural dissimilarities between SL and TL. Second, the SL and TL, in context, have different lexical and grammatical structures as well as pragmatic norms and segment many objects and concepts differently. Third, the difference between the source author's style and that of the translator. Lastly, the translator and the source author do not have the same theories of meaning neither do they hold the same values which affect the translator's interpretation of the text and then his translation.

On the other hand, Nida (1964:174) believes that the gain results from the fact that if the message is to be meaningful, a certain number of semantic elements must be added to provide the message with a relatively equivalent "communication load", i.e., some redundant elements must be built into message.

As a corollary, the most important thing in translation is to establish equivalence in the TL, the absence of which may result in a kind of paraphrase and not a translation at all.

3. CA and Translation

Since translation is one of the domains that CA is concerned with, it seems quite relevant to give a clear account on the relation that holds between the two approaches, especially when this relation is interdependent.

3.1 How Can CA Serve Translation?

A translator can make use of CA to perform his/her work. To this fact, Weise (1988: 189) confirms that "the data collected along the more conventional, system oriented lines of research codified in bilingual dictionaries and grammar books of various types, is of a great help to the translator".

Weise here refers to two important sources upon which translator rely in their translation: bilingual dictionaries and grammar books. On this base the researcher will depend to show that these two sources are very useful to the translator.

As a matter of fact, grammar consists of two main branches, viz, morphology and syntax, and since morphology is related to words, the researcher will deal with morphology and lexical items as one level, i.e., lexical level and the syntactic level will be dealt with as one separate heading.

3.1.1 Lexical Level

Lexical level deals with words in isolation. The significance of words comes from the fact that people's concern, when learning a foreign language, is to learn words in order to be able to refer to things, ideas, events. qualities and so on (Krzyszowski, 1981: 133).

Each language has its own systems of word formation that are different from other languages. Thus, "lexical equivalence across languages may display a large range of differences with respect to particular means employed in the formation of words" (ibid: 137)... since, for example, "a one morpheme word in one language may respond to a compound word in another language or a complex word may correspond to a simple word and so on, in all possible combinations (ibid).

Krzyszowski (ibid: 136-7) discusses some of the formal and semantic properties of lexical units which can be the object of contrastive analysis across languages. He (ibid) distinguishes five headings for these properties:

- One-morpheme words (simple words).
- Word formation.
- Phrase logical fusions, unities and collocations.
- Semantic relations.
- Emotive and stylistic charge.

Since it is difficult to deal with all of these properties in this paper, it sounds relevant to deal with two of them, viz, word formation and one type of semantic relation, which is polysemy, in order to show how they can help the translator.

Word formation "involves derivation by means of affixation, back formation, word composition, shortening, acronymy and such minor types as sound interchange, distinctive stress and sound imitation" (Krzyszowski, 1981: 137).

As mentioned previously, the investigator may find a wide range of differences concerning word formation in any pair of languages. For example, the word 'foreign' in English is complex word (two morphemes) whereas in Arabic it is a simple word (one morpheme) which is أجنبي.

Polysemy, "the lexical item having more than one meaning" (Leech, 1974: 94), is one of the semantic relations. "The phenomenon of polysemy is among the most crucial ones in lexical contrastive studies" (Krzyszowski, 1981: 141). This is due to the fact that "polysemous items constitute complicated networks of interconnections in any sizeable bilingual dictionary: for every polysemous lexical item in L1, there exists a set of equivalent items in L2, each such item having a set of equivalent items in L1 (ibid). For example, the word "bank" in English has more than three equivalent items in Arabic: منحدر مصرف, ضفة النهر, etc.

As a result, the properties of lexical items are very important to the translator in that these properties, when contrasted across languages, will be of a great help to the translator.

3.1.2 Syntactic Level

This level is "concerned with the study of arrangement of words in sentences and of the means by which relationships are shown (Hartman and Stork, 1972: 231). Many contrastive studies have paid much attention to this level, i.e., the elements of a sentence, especially to their form and sometimes to their definition (Jakobsen and Oisen, 1988: 5).

Let us take some contrasted examples both in English and Arabic in order to show how the work of CA is useful to the translator.

Passive voice, for instance, is of two kinds in English: agentive and agentless whereas in Arabic, only one is recognized agentless (Aziz, 1989: 269).

When the translator comes up with the translation of passive voice, for example, he will be quite aware of the kinds of passive voice of both English and Arabic by consulting a bilingual grammar, e.g., English

1-The old man was helped by a young lady. (Agentive)

2- The letter will be posted tomorrow. (Agentless)

Arabic has no agentive passive; therefore, it is preferable to translate the first English sentence into:

ألرجل العجوز ساعدته احدى الفتيات.

But not:

ألرجل العجوز تم مساعدته من قبل احدى الفتيات.

Sentence (2) is translated into:

سترسل الرسالة غداً

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The Arabic sentence here is agentless like the English one. It can be noted that sentence (1), when translated into Arabic, becomes active not passive.

Number, to take another example, in English distinguishes between singular and plural whereas Arabic makes a three-way distinction: singular, dual and plural (Aziz, 1989: 118), for example:

Book: books (SL) - (TL) كتاب: كتابان و كتب

He (ibid) affirms that, in English, there is number agreement between the subject and the verb: a singular subject takes a singular verb; a plural subject takes a plural verb as in the following example:

The boy is reading.

The boys are reading.

But there is no such agreement between the noun head and the modifying adjective:

The clever boy.

The clever boys.

He points out that number agreement is more complicated in Arabic by saying that the verb is used in the singular if it precedes the subject:

ذهب الولد /الولدان/الاولاد

But there is number agreement if the verb follows:

الاولاد ذهبوا / الولدان ذهبوا / الولد ذهب

There is also such agreement between the noun head and the modifying adjective (ibid):

الفتاة العاقلة /الولد العاقل

Thus, the translator can make use of such bilingual grammars and bilingual dictionaries provided by contrastivists to do his/her work in the field of translation. All these sources and data, altogether with the translator's skill and intelligence, can make translation a complete and successful work.

3.2 How Can Translation Serve CA?

Since CA is concerned with both similarities and differences between languages (Fisiac et al, 1978 as in Fisiak, 1981: 1), it seems better to consider on what criteria CA depends in these similarities and differences. James (1980: 169) calls the former "constants" and the latter "variables", confirming that in the theory of CA, the constant has been known as the 'tertium comparationis' (ibid).

3.2.1 Criteria of Comparison

Three criteria of comparison have been proposed (ibid):

3.2.1.1 Surface Structure

Surface structure is "the relation which exists between elements of an actually produced sentence as a result of the linear sequencing of these elements" (Hartman and Stork, 1972: 227). Stockwell et al (1965: 2 as in James, 1980: 169) mentions four such elements or devices:

- Word order.
- Intonation.
- Function words.
- Affixation.

James (ibid) points out that the scope of surface structure is limited if these four were the only grammatical categories. He (ibid: 171) confirms that "the main objection to using surface structure as the TC is that it leads to interlingual equations that are superficial and insignificant". Therefore, surface structure is an unsatisfactory TC.

3.2.1.2 Deep Structure

It is the grammatical relationship inherent in the elements of the phrase or a sentence but not immediately apparent from their linear sequence (Hartman and Stork, 1972, 58-9). James (1980:171) points out that deep structure can be interlingual, i.e., language specific, and interlingual, i.e., language independent as in:

The question is difficult to answer.

It is difficult to answer the question.

The two sentences above are intralingual paraphrase, whereas the following two sentences are interlingual paraphrase:

The question is too difficult to answer.

السؤال اصعب من ان يجاب عليه

Nevertheless, James (ibid) criticizes deep structure by saying sentences of the same or of different languages with a common deep structure are not necessarily communicatively equivalent, i.e., deep structure conveys only ideational meaning and overlooks interpersonal and textual meanings as Halliday (1970) calls them.

3.2.1.3 Translation Equivalence

The concept of "equivalence" is one of the cardinal and controversial issues in the field of translation due to the fact that establishing equivalence in the TL occupies the central basis in the process of translation and the absence of which results in a kind of adaptation or paraphrase in the TL and not a translation at all.

Catford (1965:49) holds that translation aims at reproducing in the TL the closest equivalence of the ST. he went on saying that the general condition for achieving equivalence is the relationship of the SL and TL text or item to at least some of the same features of situation substance (Ibid:50).

Translation equivalence is one of the most important and useful criteria of comparison upon which contrastivists rely. Translation equivalence is synonymous with the sameness of meaning. According to this view, the contrastivists should equate pairs of sentences of L1 and L2 which "mean the same" (James, 1980: 175).

James (ibid) says that this definition leads to a problem on how to determine whether an L1 and L2 sentences do mean the same. He (ibid) believes that one way to define translation equivalence is in terms of deep structure. Since deep structure is insufficient to be a good criterion of comparison, i.e., it only conveys the ideational meaning, it is better to adopt translation equivalence because "for two sentences from different languages to translationally equivalent they must convey the same ideational and the interpersonal and the textual meanings"(ibid: 178).

According to Halliday (1970:143), language has an ideational function, i.e., it serves for the expression of one's experience of the world; an interpersonal function, i.e., it serves for the expression of one's attitudes and for the influence upon the behaviour of others; and a textual function, i.e., it serves for the creation of texts.

For example, the English sentence:

Jack is a good friend.

may have its equivalent in Arabic as:

جاك صديقٌ مخلصٌ

Both L1 and L2 sentences have the same deep structure, but is the Arabic sentence equivalent to the English one?

In order to achieve an optimal equivalence in the L2, the translator cannot be satisfied with conveying ideational meaning only; he should look for the context in which the L1 sentence was produced. Suppose that there was a previous discussion before the L1 sentence was produced as in:

Tom: I went to Jack as you advised me.

John: Did he lend you the money you need?

Tom: Although he is rich, he did not help me. Jack is a good friend.

Here, Tom means exactly the opposite of what he said, i.e., irony. Therefore, it is best translated into the opposite meaning. If we apply deep

structure to the L1 utterance, we will fail to achieve the intended meaning by the speaker.

Furthermore, translation equivalence can help CA in the above utterance by looking for the textual devices of this utterance like coherence and cohesion.

By so doing, translation equivalence serves CA in achieving the three functions of language mentioned above, which contrastivists need in performing their work. For this reason, James (1980: 178) confirms that translation equivalence is the best available TC for CA.

3.2.2 Criteria of Contrastiveness

In order to perform his work in contrastiveness, a contrastivists "must choose what elements from each of the languages he is studying to juxtapose to and contrast with specific elements from the others and he must decide what sort of equivalence should exist between those elements. His initial choice is based upon hypothesis that the two elements he selects are equivalent in a sense important to his study" (Bouton, 1976: 144).

Bouton (ibid) adopts translation equivalence as the most widespread criterion of contrastiveness "each element chosen is mutually translatable ... with those with which it is to be contrasted" (ibid).

Bouton (ibid) refers to four models of contrastiveness adopted by some contrastivists relying on translation equivalence as an important criterion in this process, but for the sake of brevity, one model will be mentioned in order to show how translation equivalence is useful for CA: viz, Harris' (1954) model of contrast.

Harris (1954: 267 as in Bouton, 1976: 144) introduces a transfer relation between each sentences of A and its translation in B. This means that each sentence in A was analyzed in terms of its differences from its translation in B.

Let us take an example in which Harris' (ibid) model is applied to show the importance of translation equivalence in contrastiveness:

I hear you have won the first prize. (A)

سمعت أنك ربحت الجائزة الأولى. (B)

(Aziz, 1989: 52), (A) and (B) are Harris' symbols.

Contrasting the two sentences, some differences are recognized thanks to translation equivalence. For example, the word order of A is S +V whereas that of B is V + S (S here is ت), A can express the perfective aspect by its construction (S + have/has + P.P) whereas B expresses it by the past simple tense since B has no present perfect like A. the adjective of A is post-nominal whereas that of B is pre-nominal, and so on.

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Thus, translation equivalence proves its successfulness once again in the domain of CA, without which the work of CA is incomplete and ambiguous.

4. Conclusions

Having tackled the relationship between CA and translation, it can be concluded that both CA and translation make use of each other in their work.

Translation can make use of CA since the latter can provide the former with many data that usefully help the translator. CA can provide the translator with bilingual grammars and bilingual dictionaries that, to a large extent, constitute a great pillar to the process of translation.

CA, on the other hand, can make use of translation in attempting to find the optimal translation equivalence which can help it in the criteria of comparison and contrast between two languages. Translation equivalence has been proved to be the most important criterion upon which contrastivists rely in performing their work.

By corollary, the relationship between CA and translation is a mutual one to the extent that they cannot be dispensed with each other.

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