Ali Alhaj

New Theory of the Holy Qur'an Translation

A Textbook for Advanced University Students of Linguistics and Translation

Every writer's writing would last
Even if his hands die and depart

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to my three daughters

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Chapter one

The Concept of Translation

Translation is as old as the art of writing or as old as history of education in general. It is occasioned by the social needs of people. Whenever, for instance, two linguistic groups interact as neighbors to each other, translation from and to each other's languages becomes inevitable if they must meaningfully communicate with each other in matters of commerce, intermarriage, education, legal issues, etc. Religious books like those that the Holy Qur'ān and the Bible have been facilitating essentially translated to numerous languages in different parts of the world.

Translation is also regarded a

s a significant key that connects the literary works of authors from diverse culture. It also plays a pivotal role in minimizing the cultural divergences. Translation has been widely practiced over the centuries in the world in general and in Arab world in particular. The founding mythology and the sacred texts of the dominant religions are all based on translations. In short, translation has been essential for development and change in literature, commerce, technology, politics, so on and so forth.

Translation mediates between languages, societies, and literatures, and it is through translation that linguistic and cultural barriers may be overcome. Traditionally, translation is considered a change of form, which is a change of surface structures from a source language into a target language. A rather simple definition of translation as "the replacement of textual material (SL) by equivalent textual material in another (TL)" is suggested by Catford (1990, p.20). In this respect, Catford is more concerned with formal language rules and grammar, rather than the context or the pragmatics of the text to be translated. Nonetheless, he stressed that:"Since every language is formally sui-generis, and formal correspondence is, at best, a rough approximate on it is clear that the formal meaning of SL items can rarely be the same"(Catford, 1990, p.36).Indeed, form is a vehicle of meaning, and translation consists mainly of transferring the meaning of the SL text into the TL. Hence, translation, according to Nida(2001,p.12),"consists of reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style". This definition reveals a notion of equivalence in translation at the semantic and stylistic levels. It views translation as a reproduction of a similar response of the TL reader by reproducing equivalent meaning and style. In other words, it favors a maximum equivalence of meaning and effect as suggested by F.E Tylor (2002, p.37):

A good translation is one in which the merit of the original is so completely transfused into another language as to be distinctly apprehended and as strongly felt by a native of the country to which that language belongs as it is by those who speak the Language of the original.

Most definitions of translation describe an aim being sought from translation. Others are instructions on how to translate, or a list of factors that should be taken into consideration when translating. Neubert (1992,p.67), for example, suggests that to translate is not only to respect the structural or linguistic meaning of a text but also the global meaning of the message including the environment, the period, the culture, etc.

Translation is an invaluable instrument to forge better understanding among countries and cultures. It is an efficient vehicle to affect a transfer of a burgeoning body of knowledge. Translation faithfully and efficiently embodies the doctrine enshrined in the Holy Quran, which exhorts people to learn from one another.

One might suggest that there are controversies among the languages of the world because of the differences in socio-cultural background that have an impact on each language; that is why some words, phrases and expressions in one language do not have exact equivalent in another language. What happens in one culture may be alien to another culture; the term "culture" in this context embraces the whole way of life of a given society including language, art, thought, customs and beliefs.

Other problems that may affect translation are semantic differentiation, lexico-semantic duplication and redundancy; all these make translation difficult. Dearth of vocabulary and inadequacy of expressions are other factors that multiply to the problems of translation. In addition, it is pertinent to mention that grammar is the life wire of every meaningful language, but grammatical structures of every language often pose problems for translators. Therefore, he must acquaint himself with the grammatical functions of the language he wishes to translate, the culture and literature aspect of languages, their socio-political organizations that allow for smooth flow of languages.

In translation, a comparative analysis of Arabic and English culture, registers, syntax etc. need to be studied. This will enable the translators to choose the equivalent expressions from the two languages, and they will understand that they do not translate word for word but they translate the message. This will convey the best possible thought, intention and meaning of the message in the target language.

A translator is a combination of the writer and linguist, a person who takes written or spoken text and converts it into the equivalent text in another language. Translators must have strong