

The Effect of Translation as a Means of Communication Between Cultures: Arabic Islamic Culture as an Example

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الترجمة وتواصل الحضارات – الحضارة العربية أنموذجاً

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المخلص:

للترجمة حضور فاعل في رفد عملية التطور على المستويات كافة؛ لما لها من تأثير فاعل في نقل المعارف والأفكار بين الشعوب التي تختلف في لغاتها، ومناهج تفكيرها، وأنماط حياتها. فهي حلقة الوصل بين أمة وأخرى، وقد مرت الترجمة بمراحل عدة أدت إلى تطورها، وبروزها كعلم له قواعده، ونظرياته، فالجذور التاريخية للترجمة تعود في قدمها للحضارات القديمة، إذ نشطت الترجمة في العالم القديم وسجلت حضورها منذ أيام البابليين والآشوريين والمصريين والفرس واليونانيين والإغريق.

فهذا النشاط الإنساني في حد ذاته وجد بادئ ذي بدء على شكل: الإيماء أو الإشارة أو الكلام أو الكتابة، فتبادلت تلك الشعوب المعلومات فيما بينهم وتزوجت الثقافات والحضارات فيما بينها، ولكن بعد ربح من الزمن اكتسبت الترجمة قواعدها ونظرياتها الخاصة بها وقد ظهر ذلك جلياً مع بزوغ فجر القرن العشرين.

تعد الترجمة اليوم من أهم روافد الثقافة، وقد أحرزت انتشاراً واسعاً ومتوعاً وأوجبت الضرورات القيام بها ومتابعتها، كما أن حضور الترجمة المتواصل منذ القدم والمتعدد المراكز والاتجاهات واللغات فرض أن تكون له أسباب ومستلزمات ثابتة. أهمها : دوافع وأسباب الترجمة، وتاريخ وتطور الترجمة، والتربية وتنظيم المجتمعات البشرية.

والترجمة هي بنت الحضارة ورفيقتها الدائمة، وهي النافذة التي تفتحها الشعوب المختلفة على بعضها لتستثير بنور غيرها، ولقد عرفها العرب منذ القديم، كما عرفتها سائر الشعوب. وكان لتواصل العرب بها مع محيطها المجاور، منذ الجاهلية - وهم الروم في الشمال والفرس في الشرق والأبشاش في الجنوب، ومع اليونان والصين والهند - الأثر الفاعل في إقامة العلاقات التجارية، وما سواها، كما نقل الغرب فيما بعد عن العرب لاسيما في زمن الصليبيين ثمار الحضارة العربية الإسلامية، كما نقل العباسيون عن الفرس واليونان والهند وغيرهم الكثير في مجالات الأدب والعلوم والفنون، فذلك هو هدف الشعوب القديمة من الترجمة هو التعرف على آداب وحضارة بعضها البعض والاطلاع والاستفادة مما صنعه الآخرون، ان من الصعب قيام مثل هذه الصلات الأدبية والاقتصادية دون وجود ترجمة.

الكلمات المفتاحية : الترجمة، الإغريق، العرب المسلمين.

Abstract

Translation plays a very important role in the process of development as it is the means that transports different fields of knowledge and thoughts among different cultures. The historical roots of translation is related to the ancient world as translation was known to the Babylonians, Assyrians, the ancient Egyptians, ancient Persians, ancient Greeks and the Romans.

Translation become a distinctive field of science it has its own roles and theories at the beginning of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, translation is used by human beings since their existence and then it is developed after the invention of writing. Accordingly, different cultures were introduced to each other and trade knowledge among them.

The ancient cultures used translation to transfer the knowledge of the cultures they raided employing this knowledge to develop their own culture. Translation is known to the Arabs before Islam as they communicated with the Greeks, the Chinese, and the Indians. On the other hand, the Europeans transferred many aspects of the Arabic Islamic culture through translation during the crusades. During the Abbasid period, the Arabs translated many scientific and literary works from the Persians, Greeks, the Indians and some other cultures.

Nowadays, translation is considered one of the most important aspects of culture. Sometimes, translation is urgently needed.

Translation plays an important role in finding interlocution and bridging the gap among cultures and paving the way to find global common cultural ground. Translation is the tool of the communication among nations that speak different languages. Translation helped nations communicate with each other. The oldest form of translation is the verbal interpretation which occurred before the invention of writing. It was the tool of communication between tribes and other forms of communities to facilitate trade at the time of peace and to establish treaties and agreements in the time of war. Moreover, translation helped to spread religions and literature and it was the tool of communication among the cultures of the ancient world, the Babylonians, Assyrians, Phoenicians, the ancient Egyptians, and the Greeks.

Translation is known to Arabs since their earliest time as they took a trip for trade once in each summer and once in each winter. They were influenced by the neighboring nations like the Persians in the East, the Romans in the North, and the Abyssinians in the South. Some of the Persian words were used by the Arabs and they appeared in their poetry. Since before Islam, the Arabs had relations with these three neighboring nations which prove that the Arabs had practiced translation.

Key words: translation, Greek, Arab Muslims.

2.1 Translation

Translation is rewriting a text with a language other than its original one. Translation is as old as literature. Additionally There is an argumentation whether translation should be similar to the original text verbatim or the translator may use his own style. Some believe that translation is useless and one should read literature in its original language (Wahba, 1974: 54).

The main purpose of translation is to convey the idea of the text not the words. Consequently, understanding the idea leads to understanding the meaning of the text. Translation is not a process of changing the words of a certain text into words of another language but it must transfer the original stylistic, aesthetic, cultural, social and even the psychological aspects of the original text. Therefore, it is not an automatic process or a simple exercise but it is a science that has its own essentials and theories that guide the translator. Accordingly, translation has its own methodology represented in analyzing and understanding all the aspects of the original text, identifying the aim of the text, and studying the style of the original text. The translation should be loyal to the original text (Wahba ,ibid).

The methodology of translation has changed through out the time and it incorporate within different sciences such as linguistics, comparative literature, and anthropology. Each one of these sciences tried to deal with translation in its own approach but it is clear that all these sciences are not sufficient in dealing with something complex and branched out like translation which led the researchers to depend on divergent approach in dealing with translation that led to the rise of what is called the "science of translation"(Al-Turguman, 1992:5).

Translation is a science that has its own rules and basics. It is an art especially when it deals with none scientific texts in which the language is clear and scientific (ibid).

Translation is a science, an art, and a skill. It is a science because it demands full knowledge of the structures of the two languages: the original language of the text and the language into which the text is translated. It is an art for it demands artistic skill to rebuild the original text to a new text in another language and it should be presented elegantly to the reader who supposedly is not presented to

the original text. It is a skill for it demands the ability to convey the meaning of the text although there is no, sometimes, equivalent expressions in the target language (Al-Turguman, *ibid*).

2.2 The Importance of Translation

Translation nowadays is a global activity and it is considered essential to the communication among people that speak different languages. Translation has great importance because it is an essential factor of development. Recently, the importance of translation is increased as it helps in elevating the level of the culture.³ (the Arabic institution of education, culture, and sciences.:1985:56)

Translation, primarily, is a recreation of the original text as the translator studies the text, analyzing it and rewriting the text in the target language (Soriano, 1979:56). To produce a successful translation considered and a cultural activity, the translator should have an excellent management to the structures and vocabulary of both languages: the original language of the text and the target language (Uwad,1969 :19). The difficulty in this art comes from the existence of certain expressions in a language without finding equivalent expressions in the target language. Additionally, there are certain phrases to indicate certain aspects of the culture like moralities, feelings, and emotions (Khaloosi, 1956:13).

Literal translation may produce an ambiguous text as a result to word translation. Accordingly, it is better to the translator to translate the meaning of the text (*ibid*:22)

2.3 Translation is a Cultural Communication

Language was born in its early form when human beings were created and when man's life developed and his way of thinking became more sophisticated, language was developed too. In ancient Mesopotamia, with the rise of Sumerians' culture and the invention of writing which is the most important invention in the history, the temple became the center of the cultural life as it was in the temples of Uruk in Areedo. Writing was used in recording the income of the temple and the offerings. When the religious texts appeared, the need to translate these texts appeared as well as people were curious to know something about the religions of other nations. It seems that some of the Babylonian myths were inspired from the Old Testament (Alubaidi, 2012:3).

Translation is one of the subjects that attracted man's attention since the rise of the early cultures. The development of translation is closely related to the human beings' development as different cultures needed to share experience of life. (Salman, 2005: 169).

Before the invention of writing, Translation began with verbal interpretation of the cultural heritage which satisfied the needs of the ancients. Translation was the means of cultural establishing relations with people of other regions who spoke another languages (Uwad, 1969:13).

In addition to be means of communication, language is the reason why humans are distinguished from other creatures. If one wanted to be introduced truly to a certain nation, culture, art, religion, and social system, he would learn the language of that nation. Although translation was known since the early stages of human development, the translation of written texts was not known (Sarton, 1979: 163). There is no nation that can live apart of the world and the cultural communication is inevitable (Ali, 1983:77)

The first attempts of translation were by using signals as the ancients became aware that there were other people who did not speak the same language. Translation was needed in trade and in wars especially at having negotiations and treaties and exchanging the prisoners of war. The name of the translator was mentioned in the treaty(*ibid*).

Rules were in need for these translators to translate the letters they received from other countries and to answer these letters in the same language. Then, translation becomes very important in the field of science, knowledge, literature, art, philosophy and many other fields. Accordingly, translation has its own rules. Translation becomes the transporter of knowledge from one nation to another and from culture to the other. Thus, through translation, the nation looks around through many windows rather than one and the picture looks more vivid. But to achieve the constructive translation, some points should be noticed: the translated subject should be correspondent to the values of the society and it

adds new constructive ideas and it should not be in contrast with the norms of the society which leads to unwelcomed results and the translated work would be rejected by the society(<http://www.elazhar.com/mafaheemux>).

Translation is an essential means of communication used to bridge the gap of language and culture between different nations. This vital role shows the importance of translation to developing knowledge and transporting cultures and keeping the original language and culture of their nations in the same time(ibid).

The rapid development nowadays in different fields (epistemic, cultural, military, religious, social, and, political.... Etc.) proves that translation becomes a must to cope with the world. As the world became a small village, translation became one of the most important means of communication between humans in their different colours, languages and races (ibid).

Translation is effected by different factors that play role in defining its reliability. In addition to the differences between languages and the cultural background of the native speakers, there are other factors that affect translation like the content of the text and its aim (<http://www.atinternational.org/forums/showthread>).

Translation enabling humans to exchange thoughts and ideas despite of language discrepancy. Translation has relations to philosophy, linguistics, psychology, sociology, literature, visual and acoustic arts, and cultural and ideological studies. It can be said that translation is related to the cultural field. Translation is considered to be very tough and rough when it comes in contrast with the major aspects of the society like religion, and nationality as the factor of suitability in translation differs from certain society to another (<http://www.elazhar.com/mafaheemux>).

Translation is one of the fields that witnessed development. Translators, unfortunately, do not pay attention to the prosperous Arabic history of translation. The cultural development of the Muslim Arabs led to the development of translation and therefore, led to the revival of Arabic Islamic translation movement whose effect reaches the West (<http://www.alquds.co.uk>).

2.4 The Factors that Motivate Arabs to Use Translation

In less than thirty years after the death of the prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him and his holy house hold) Muslim Arabs marched in to the South East Asia to North East Africa which was under the control of Alexander the great. The Arabs by this put an end to this great empire.

The second factor is economy. The growth of trade between the Arab Muslims with many other countries especially after the growth of the production of paper which was introduced to the Islamic world by the Chinese prisoners of war especially during the first decades of the Abbasside period which was a revolution in the world of writing and learning which led in turn to the prosperity writing books and translating them as well.

Many books in different field of knowledge were translated at that time especially from the Greek (<http://www.alquds.co.uk>).

2.5 The First Attempts of Translation In the Islamic Arabic Culture

The first attempts of translation in the Arabic Islamic culture were at the time of prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him and his holy house holy household) when he asked some of his followers to learn other languages. Zaid bin Thabit learned Hebrew and he helped the prophet to contact the Jews. Hassan also learned Persian, Coptic, and Abyssinian. This is an example of the attempt of translation in the time of the prophet and it was limited to the diplomatic side(<http://www.alquds.co.uk>).

The cultural and scientific revival of Arab Muslims encouraged foreigners to live among Muslims which led to a multilingual society, but the decision of using Arabic language as the formal language during the first century of Hijra draw the attention to translation as the formal languages before were Persian and Byzantine (ibid).

The foundation of Baghdad and the transition of the capital of the Caliphate to Iraq was a radical change that changed the whole ideology of the Islamic Arabic society. Baghdad became a multicultural society because of its population that differs both demographically and ethnically. At that time, most of

the city citizens were Christians , Jewish whose native language was the Aramaic and Persians. The Arabs, on the other hand, dwelt in the desert and they were called the dwellers of Al-Hirah. <http://www.alquds.co.uk/?p=65741>.

2.6 Translation and the Arabs During the Middle Ages

Translation played an important role in transferring the Greek sciences to Arabs without changing the originality and the ideology of the Arab nation. Since before Islam, the Christians played a very important role in translating the Greeks knowledge and sciences to Aramaic, their native language at first, and they also translated from Persian. After Islam, Muslims were open to other cultures such as Persian, Byzantine, and Indian. Since Islam encouraged gaining knowledge, Muslim philosophers and scientists studied what other cultures had. When talking about Arabic Islamic culture, we meant the different branches of knowledge Muslims translated from other cultures (Abbassa, 1999:53).

The Arabic Islamic culture was in great prosperity in the fields of sciences and philosophy but then it was attacked by vicious invasion which led to the destruction of this great culture (Fawaz, 1991: 308).

When we talk about the Arabic Islamic culture and ideology and their development during the middle ages, we talk about the translation movement of the western sciences and arts to Arabic (Merja, 1998:223)

Translation is essential to the cultural and ideological revival of people. The cultural revival began during the early Islamic period when the caliphs realized the need to translation. Arabs were the first who made translation as one of the formal institutions which had a high status. Translation played arole in introducing other sciences from other nations like the Greek, Byzantine, Pertains, and Indians which were unknown to Muslims and these sciences were called the sciences of the ancients like philosophy, astrology, geometry, and arithmetics (Al- Isa, 1999:5). Accordingly, translation played a very important role in the development and the spread of the Arabic Islamic culture(Al-Jumaili, 1982: 7). The Arabic Islamic culture reached and effected Europe(Al-Gunaimi, 1995: 40)

History did not witness conquests such as those of Alexander the great. His conquests played an important role in introducing the Greek culture to the world which led in turn to mix up between the Greek culture and the other cultures which came under the control. Under such conditions, translation played as a means of communication and that role continued during the Hellenistic period that followed the death of Alexander the great 323B.C (ibid).

Arabs made contact with the neighboring nations like Persians and Romans, their cultures effected Arabs and Arabs effected them. The commercial transaction played an important apart in binding these different cultures by establishing relations that can be found in the languages and the cultures of these nations which prove that translation played an important part to enhance such relations. We can find in Arabic some Persian and Roman words as there are some Arabic words in both Persian and Roman languages. Arabs paid great attention to translation before Islam, then, during the early Islamic period, during the Orthodox Caliphs period, Umayyad period when Khalid bin Yazeed bin Moa'awiya bin Abi Sufyan paid attention to translate the official records from Roman. The interest in translation grew bigger during the Abbasside period because of the spread of Islam to the east and west and it became necessary to establish relations to these nations who converted to Islam. During the reign of Haroon Al-Rasheed and his son Al-Ma'amoon, translation were paid great attention (www.wata.cc/forums/showthread.php?100450).

Translation is a science and an art at the same time. Arabs paid attention to translation even before Islam because they had commercial relations with Persians, Romans, and Abyssinians so they needed translation although these attempt were primitive. The primitive attempts of translation continued throughout the following periods reaching to the Umayyad period where translation took more improved form.

During the early Islamic period, the contact with other nations was merely verbal but during the Abbasside period, the movement of translation grew stronger with the reign of Al-Mansur when he encouraged the movement of translation (Al-Doori, 2003: 90).

At the beginning of the Umayyad period, Khalid bin Yazeed Bin Mua'awiya sent an expedition to Alexandria in a quest for some books in chemistry and medicine to be translated to Arabic from Serianic, Coptic and Greek. Khalid bin Yazeed Bin Mua'awiya is considered the first translator in Islam. It was during his reign when the first book was translated from Greek to Arabic in medicine. It was written by Ahren son of A'ayan and translated by the physician Maserjoway who lived in Basra. The most famous translator during this period was Jacob Al-Rahawi who translated many Greek books to Arabic. But in this period, translation was individual attempts as the Umayyad caliphs were fanatic to Arabic language. While during the Abbasside period, translation movement flourished as Iraq and Syria were familiar to Greek since before Islam. Secondly, the Abbasside caliphs encouraged translation since the society of Baghdad consists of different cultures, religions, and races. Many books in philosophy were translated to Arabic from Greek and Siryanic. Also, some books in Persian and Indian were translated as the Arabs were interested in the literature of these cultures. at the same time, the Europeans had little knowledge about the Greek culture and they were introduced to it from the Arabic translations of the Greek books during the Umayyad period in Andalusia. Throughout the eleventh century, the Christians translated Greek books from Arabic. This deed was welcomed by Christian kings and unwelcomed by some fanatic clergy (ibid).

There were two distinctive stages in the development of translation during the Abbasside period: the first was during the reign of the second Abbasside caliph, Abu Ja'afar Al-Mansur. The most prominent translators of that time were: Yahya bin Al-Batreek, Jurjus bin Gabreail ,the physician, and Abdullah bin Al-Mukaf'a. Most famous books in Persia literature were translated during that period. Also, Aristo's Reason was translated at that time. The second stage of the development of translation was during the reign of the seventh Abbasside caliph Al-Ma'amoon who established Bayte Al-Hikma (the House of Wisdom) (Brokilman, 1974: 201). Al-Ma'amoon sent expeditions to Europe especially to the Roman empire to search for rare books. It was known about Al-Ma'amoon that he paid generously for good translations which encouraged translators from Iraq, Syria, and Persia to work for him as he paid with gold the same weight of the book (Katford, 1983: 7). In addition to that, Al-Ma'amoon gave every Tuesday awards to the best translated book. Also, the award was the same weight of the book gold. The most famous translators of that time were Hunain bin Izak, yahya bin Uday, Matti bin Yonos, Sinan bin Thabit Al-Humsi, Abdul Maseeh who translated many books in Reason, medicine, philosophy, and politics (ibid).

There were two methods in translation: the first is adopted by Yahya bin Al-Batreek and Ibin Na'ima which was word to word translation. This method was weak because there is no direct translation to all the words in the target language. Accordingly, many Greek words remain the same in the translated books. Additionally, such translations created problems in understanding and translating the metaphors as every language has its own ones (ibid: 8).

The second method was adopted by Hunain bin Izak and Al-Jawhari which depended on translating the meaning of the text. This method is more accurate in translation as it conveys the meaning of the text (ibid).

The Muslim translators work in the translation schools in Europe even after the fall of the second Umayyad Caliphate in Spain in (1085 A.D.). Moreover, many Arabic books translated to Latin by the Christian Arabs played a role in introducing the Arabic knowledge and sciences to the Europe (Young, 1979: 120).

The Muslim Arabs translated most of the Persian books in language, literature, history, geography, astrology, medicine, moralities, traditions, art, and mythology (Lobon, 1979: 526).

The movement of translation played an important role in enlivening and enriching the Islamic Arabic culture by making possible for Arabs to have an idea about other cultures and their knowledge.

Also, it contributed in enriching the Arabic language by some modern scientific terms (Al-Isa,1999: 210)

2.7 Al-Jahid and Translation

There is a lot of concentration on the modern western theories in translation passing over the fact that the Arabic Islamic philosopher Al-Jahid, Abu Outman Amru bin Bahr bin Mahboob Al-Kinani Al-Basri, born in Basra in 159 H. during the reign of Al-Mahdi, the third Abbasside Caliph and died in Basra in 255 H. during the reign of Al-Muhtadi Billah. He lived during the golden age of the Abbasside caliph. In his book Al-Haywan (Animal), he established the first theory in translation as he considered it as a science and put some conditions to be a translator (<http://www.wata.cc/forums/showthread.php?100450>).

3. Results

- 1- The aim behind translation is not to convert words from one language into another. It is actually aims of conveying the meaning of a certain text to the target language.
- 2- Language as a means of communication may obtain new words as a result to the nonstop development.
- 3- Translation should be paid a lot of attention as it is the means of communication between different cultures. Translation is indispensable to any culture to communicate other cultures.
- 4- Translation is one of the most important fields of knowledge and its development is connected to the development of humanity itself.
- 5- Translation is the companion to the cultures right through time and place. It is known to the Arabs since the commencement of their culture.
- 6- Recently, translation is one of the most important fields of knowledge that feeds our culture with knowledge as it becomes worldwide activity and a very important means of communication to bridge the gap among different cultures.
- 7- Translation was the main source that introduced the Arabic Islamic culture to Europe and its philosophy, religion, and literature.
- 8- Although translation was known to the ancient cultures, it was not considered as a field of knowledge.
- 9- Translation plays a very important role in the growth and the progress of all cultures as it is the main pier of the ideological development of all cultures.
- 10- Translation affects the cultural heritage of humanity in all the fields of knowledge like literature, philosophy, and science.
- 11- Translation is one of the factors that facilitate cultural communication through which the knowledge of one culture is introduced to another. For example, Muslim Arabs were introduced to the Greek different fields of knowledge by translation.
- 12- During the middle ages, the European dramatists, poets, and scientists were affected by the Islamic Arabic knowledge as they were introduced to it by translation.
- 13- Translation was paid great attention during the Umayyad and the Abbasside periods as translation was considered the key to knowledge which is , in turn, the key to build a strong nation.

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