The Influence of Translation on the Arabic Language

The Influence of Translation on the Arabic Language:

English Idioms in Arabic Satellite TV Stations

By

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To the memory of my father, Siddig, who gave me everything but received nothing in return.

To my dear mother, Fatima, who courageously and tirelessly shouldered the burden of bringing up many young sons and daughters on her own after the untimely death of my father.

To my wife, Nazik, whose support has inspired me to hold tight to my biggest dream of furthering my studies.

To my marvellous son, Ahmed, and beautiful daughter, Lamar, for making me the proudest father alive today.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the influence of translation on the Arabic language, focusing on the issue of the translation of English idioms by journalists working at Arabic satellite TV stations, and the views of two lexicographers. A mixed-method approach (quantitative and qualitative) was used to explore the problem. A test requiring the translation of sixteen English idioms into Arabic was distributed to sixty journalists affiliated with two Sudanese satellite TV channels. Literal translation was the most frequently used strategy, and the frequency of its use differed across different categories of idiom. Participants with Bachelor's degrees tended to use literal translation strategies more than participants with Master's degrees. The high frequency of use of literal translations was associated with the failure of many idioms to appear in general-use dictionaries. The lexicographers indicated that there was room for improvement to include more idioms in bilingual and monolingual dictionaries. The influence of the media on the evolution of Arabic was confirmed. Arabic journalists and satellite TV channels must be aware of their responsibilities towards the evolution of Arabic. They should ideally take a leading role in demanding that rules be put into place to ensure that only words, phrases and terms that conform to the norms, rules and structures of the Arabic language are admitted. There should be a standard set of rules that should be met before more idioms are included in bilingual dictionaries. Specialised monolingual Arabic–Arabic idiom dictionaries should be made available, preferably thematically organised for the sake of ease of access and simplicity. English language and translation teaching in the Arab world should focus on idiomaticity as well as fluency and accuracy. This study lacked external validity because it was based on a small non-random sample of Arabic speakers. To provide data that are generalisable to the general public in the Arab world, future research on how English idioms are translated by Arabic speakers should involve more surveys using a random sample of the general public in the Arab world.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations were used in this book. The list includes abbreviations which occur in the glosses and citations of examples in the body text.

Abbreviation	Stands for …
AH	Anno Hegirae or After Hijrah
1pl	First person plural
2sg	Second person singular
3fsg	Third person feminine singular
3msg	Third person masculine singular
3pl	Third person plural
CLA	Classical Arabic
fsga	Feminine singular adjective
FUT	Future marker
lit.	literal translation
MSA	Modern Standard Arabic
msga	Masculine singular adjective
PAST	Irregular past tense
PBUH	Peace Be Upon Him

pl	Plural
sg	Singular
SL	Source language
ST	Source Text
TL	Target language
TT	Target Text
wr. grm.	Wrong grammar
wr. sp.	Wrong spelling

KEY TO TRANSLITERATION SYSTEM

	Arabic letters	Arabic letters names	Transliteration
Arabic consonants	ء	*hamzah*	*'*
	أ	*'alif*	*'a/i*
	ب	*bā'*	*b*
	ت	*tā'*	*t*
	ث	*thā'*	*th*
	ج	*jīm*	*j*
	ح	*ḥā'*	*ḥ*
	خ	*khā'*	*kh*
	د	*dāl*	*d*
	ذ	*dhāl*	*dh*
	ر	*rā'*	*r*
	ز	*zayn/zāy*	*z*
	س	*sīn*	*s*
	ش	*shīn*	*sh*
	ص	*ṣād*	*ṣ*
	ض	*ḍād*	*ḍ*

ط	*ṭā'*	*ṭ*
ظ	*ẓā'*	*ẓ*
ع	*'ayn*	'
غ	*ghayn*	*gh*
ف	*fā'*	*f*
ق	*qāf*	*q*
ك	*kāf*	*k*
ل	*lām*	*l*
م	*mīm*	*m*
ن	*nūn*	*n*
ه	*hā'*	*h*
و	*wāw*	*w*
ي	*yā'*	*y*
آ	'alif maddah	ā, 'ā
ة	tā' marbūṭah	h; t
ى	'alif maqṣūrah	á
ال	alif lām	al-
Arabic short vowels	*fatḥah*	*a*
	kasrah	*i*
	ḍammah	*u*

Arabic long vowels	أَ	*ā, 'ā*
	و	*ū*
	ي	*ī*
Arabic diphthongs	أي	*ay*
	أو	*aw*

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

This study focuses on the problem of how translation influences the Arabic language, with particular emphasis on the translation of English idioms. The influence of translation on the Arabic language is not necessarily a problem in the strictest sense of the word, but rather an important current issue for debate. The word "problem" is therefore used throughout the current research to mean "issue" or "topic" in all similar contexts. The research positions itself first and foremost in the field of translation studies, and more specifically translation of the news. The reason for choosing the transference of idioms as a research problem was that a literature review revealed an inadequate understanding of this intriguing part of the development of the Arabic language. Although previous studies have provided some insights into the problem, the factors that contribute to the influences of English translation on Arabic are difficult to identify. A small number of researchers (e.g., Asfour 2007; Abu-Ssaydeh 2004; Holes 2004), based on qualitative case studies and empirical observations, have suggested that recent developments and changes in the Arabic language may be attributed largely to the influence of the media. The researcher therefore became interested in investigating the problem of the translation of English idioms in Arabic satellite TV news production, based on a belief that the impact of broadcast media on Arabic speakers is more instant, wider and farther-reaching than that caused or triggered by any other branch of mass media, including print, outdoor and digital media. To the knowledge of the researcher, however, no previous empirical quantitative studies have been conducted to measure the influence of Arabic TV news production on the Arabic language. The overarching research question guiding this study was therefore: How does the translation of English idioms into Arabic in the broadcast media (specifically TV news) have an influence on the Arabic language? The majority of the participants who provided the data for this study were TV news broadcasters because they were believed to hold the key to providing

a better understanding of the research problem. Participants were affiliated to two Sudanese cable TV channels; namely, Sudan TV and Ashorooq TV. The study also drew upon the knowledge and experience of two Arabic lexicographers: Dr Ramzi Baalbaki and Professor Abdul-Fattah Abu-Ssaydeh.

The remainder of this introductory chapter includes discussions of (1.2) the review of the literature, (1.3) theoretical framework, (1.4) the differences between English and Arabic, and (1.5) the evolution of language, followed by presentations of (1.6) the statement of the problem, (1.7) the purpose of the study, (1.8) the significance of the study, (1.9) the limitations of the study, and finally (1.10) the structure and organisation of the study.

1.2 Review of the Literature

This section reviews the literature relevant to this study. It is divided into three sub-sections. The first (1.2.1) considers the role of translation in news production and discusses the extent to which news translation is covered in academic research. Sub-section (1.2.2) reviews the influence of globalisation on translation. Sub-section (1.2.3) deals with the significance of language diglossia.

1.2.1 Translation in the News

Translation forms an integral part of today's news production. "Global TV channels now transmit news bulletins to millions of people day and night, with regular updates throughout a twenty-four-hour period" (Bielsa & Bassnett 2009, 10). Bielsa & Bassnett (2009) also confirm that translation in the news is a regular part of a journalist's work. Similarly, Van Doorslaer (2010, 181) states that "translation forms an integral part of journalistic work: a complex, integrated combination of information gathering, translating, selecting, reinterpreting, contextualising and editing". Palmer (2009, 186) underlines the importance of studying news translation, "because it can be considered an articulation of discourse which produces its own range of effects, particularly the change of meanings that may occur as a result of the act of translation". Valdeón (2012, 66) argues that postindustrial society has put special emphasis on the entertaining value of news events, and, as a result, news has become just another commodity that large news corporations have to localise for various international markets.

As a mediator between languages and cultures, news translation plays a key role in facilitating the worldwide community of debate and opinion, and it has become the key to achieving international impact and reach in media organisations (Gutiérrez 2006; Salzerg 2008). Brook (2012) argues that translation is a keystone in the success of international news as a marketable product because translation is a common practice for the gathering, trading and dissemination of international news between media outlets.

News translation is a recent form of language evolution that has been defined in different ways. According to Brook (2012, 38), news translation is unique because of (a) the invisibility of both the texts and the agents involved, and (b) its placement in the category of "open" or "reshaping" translation, which is loosely understood as any verbal, visual or auditory text in another language that is adapted to a new readership, explicitly according to ideological reasons mediated by editors. Bassnett (2006, 6) views the process of news translation as "not strictly [being] a matter of inter-lingual transfer of text A into text B, but also [necessitating] the radical rewriting and synthesising of text A to accommodate a completely different set of audience expectations". Williams and Chesterman (2002, 1) argue that what multilingual news writers produce "is very different from the traditional perception of a translation as being a text in one language which is produced on the basis of a text in another language for a particular purpose". Brook (2012, 36–37) also argues that "direct transfer between source and target languages is not generally seen as a key feature of the production of international news that is written for an English-speaking readership. It is this that sets media translation apart from other branches of the translation profession and, from a non-expert rather than from an academic research perspective, is likely to account for the principle reason why many multilingual journalists do not immediately consider translation per se to be part of their professional role". Brook (2012, 40) provides a definition that he considers most aptly represents the cross-paradigm commonly referred to as "news translation" as follows: "The gathering, modifying and synthesising of information from numerous spoken, written and visual sources from one language, to then be used by journalists in the production of news reports in another language". Brook further explains that it is the consideration of the agents involved and the numerous sources, many non-written, which sets "news translation" apart from other branches of the profession. The agents concerned are journalists involved in the production of international news as opposed to professional translators.

Holland (2013, 336–41) points out a number of constraints affecting news translation. These include time pressure, resources, linguistic constraints and the pervasiveness of English as a world language. Time pressure is caused by the market-driven nature of the capitalist society in which the various media compete to release information quickly, provided that it is perceived as relevant for the target audience. Also, not all news media have the same resources; some may rely on correspondents while others may resort to news wires. Additionally, different cultures have different conventions, so news producers need to consider what is acceptable in the target culture. The pervasiveness of English is particularly relevant in news production, as news wires are increasingly produced in English for a global market and then adapted for local audiences.

Bassnett (2006) and Bielsa (2007) argue that many of those engaged in news translation do not even see themselves as translators, but rather as journalists. News writers, who routinely translate from other languages, even if they are not language specialists (Gambier 2010, 16), do not regard their work as translational activity (Holland 2013, 337–38). In fact, for many modern-day journalists, translation is a second-rate activity, carried out by journalists as part of the news writing process (Gambier 2010, 16), often in an invisible manner (Valdeón 2010, 157). Brook (2012, 40) contends that neither news agencies nor newspapers see themselves as translation organisations in the sense understood by some current researchers in the discipline of translation studies. They also argue that translation is subsumed in news agencies within the journalistic tasks of writing and editing, and that texts are translated by journalists who do not normally have any specific training as translators.

Venuti (1995) argues that translation is invisible in international media, as it is elsewhere, because it is integrated into other duties and overshadowed by more high-profile functions. This explains why Arab multilingual journalists may not have specific training in translation as such, although they are often experts in news translation, being able to produce fast and reliable translations on a wide range of subjects that are covered in the journalistic medium (Bielsa & Bassnett 2009). The current researcher agrees with these arguments and strongly believes that they hold true regarding satellite TV stations. Translation in satellite TV stations, as in news agencies and newspapers, is not conceived as separate from the journalistic tasks of writing up and editing. The basic skills required for a BBC Arabic Broadcast Journalist job include the ability to write, adapt and translate with accuracy, clarity and style appropriate to differing audiences and forms of media. Applicants for BBC Arabic journalist vacancies are required to attend assessment tests, which contain an English-into-Arabic

translation exercise, in addition to a news writing exercise and an Arabic grammar exercise. Academic qualifications in translation are not required.

A number of scholars argue that news translation is a grossly under-researched area. Palmer (2009, 186), for instance, argues that there are numerous studies on news language, but most of them largely ignore the role of translation in news production. Brook (2012) suggests that the principles governing translation processes in the production of international news have received limited attention from researchers, possibly because such processes are not aligned with conventional translation theories. Bani (2006) asserts that translation has traditionally occupied a background role in international media despite its pivotal role in facilitating the flow of global news. Schäffner (2004, 120) also draws attention to the absence of research on translation in political text analysis. She points out that translated information is made available across linguistic borders, and that reactions in one country to statements made in another country often "are actually reactions to the information as it was provided in translation". Bielsa and Bassnett (2009, 62–63) highlight that "approaches to news translation, a topic which has hardly been tackled in translation studies, are scarce". They point out that the recent contributions to research consist mainly of descriptive accounts (García Suárez 2005; Hursti 2001; Tsai 2005; Vidal 2005), and that there is a need to systematically trace the implications of existing translation practices in diverse organisations. Darwish (2005) also argues that despite its crucial role in news making, little research has been conducted on the effects of news translated into other languages, particularly into the Arabic language. The major publications (including 115 books) in both media and translation studies have neglected this area. Darwish (2005) and Clausen (2003) only lightly touch upon language import through news. Furthermore, a survey of more than 370 codes of ethics and codes of practice adopted by different media outlets around the world shows a serious lack of attention to translation. With the exception of the code of ethics adopted by the Press Foundation of Asia (enshrined in the Principles on Reporting Ethnic Tensions, which evolved from a nine-nation journalism conference held in Davao City, Philippines in 1970), none of the surveyed codes highlighted translation as a principal factor in ensuring accuracy and objectivity. Furthermore, none of the United Nations' fifty-one founding member states cite translation in the codes of ethics of their media and journalism associations. This lack of attention to translation further confirms that the role it plays in framing domestic and international news is severely underrated. The impact of news translation is seriously under-researched, providing a rationale and direction for the current study.

There is a growing interest in the field of news translation in print, television and internet-based media. Valdeón (2015, 634) argues that translation studies is a young discipline, and news translation research is in its infancy. In the 1990s, a small number of articles, published in proceedings and specialised journals, opened the way for an expansion of the discipline. For example, Fujii (1988) explored the features of translated news in Japan. He argued that the role of the journalist/translator went beyond "controlling the quantity of message" (Fujii 1988, 32) and suggested that this role was more that of a gatekeeper. Stetting (1989) coined the term *transediting*[1], a concept that tried to encapsulate the various intra- and interlinguistic processes that affected international news production. Stetting defined terms related to transediting as follows: adaptation to a standard of efficiency in expression was called "cleaning-up transediting", adaptation to the intended function of the translated text in its new social context was dubbed "situational transediting", and adaptation to the needs and conventions of the target culture was labelled "cultural transediting" (1989, 377). News stories also served as the basis for linguistic research in the 1990s: (Schäffner 1991; Sidiropoulou 1995); (Pan 2014; Tapia Sasot de Coffey 1992; Vuorinen 1997).

Since the mid-2000s, journalistic translation research (JTR) has become a popular area of research within the larger umbrella of translation studies and has indeed gained a place within the discipline (Valdeón 2015, 640). Most research into news translation has been published in the twenty-first century. The proceedings of the Warwick conference marked to some extent the subsequent boom of JTR, but they followed a special issue of the journal *Language and Intercultural Communication*, published in 2005, which covered the specifics of news translation in a global context, and a long chapter of Maria Sidiropoulou's *Linguistic Identities through Translation* (2004).

The first edition of the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (1998) included only occasional references related to the transformation of information in news outlets, as in the entries devoted to dubbing and subtitling (Baker & Hochel 1998, 76; Gottlieb 1998, 246). The second edition of this influential reference work, which came out ten years later, included an entry by Jerry Palmer about "News gathering and dissemination" (2009, 186–89). The *Routledge Handbook of Translation Studies* (2013), edited by Carmen Millán-Varela and Francesca Bartrina, devoted a chapter to news translation as part of its section on specialised

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[1] The notion of news transediting involves both news translation and editing, and includes such strategies as selection, deletion, addition, synthesis, abridgement, retopicalisation and restructuring (Stetting 1989).

translation. The *Handbook of Translation Studies* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins) includes two entries related to news translation.

A number of conferences and seminars were held in recent years with the aim of investigating the multifaceted nature of news translation. In April 2004, a conference was held at the University of Warwick to seek to discover how media translators are trained. The conference attracted a host of academics and leading media and press figures. In June 2006, another international conference on global news translation was held at the University of Warwick. Translation of discourses of terror, a key question of global significance, was also the theme of two seminars; the first was held at the University of Aston in April 2005, and the other was held jointly with the Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation at the University of Warwick in November 2005. A seminar was also held at the University of Aston in 2007 to address the issue of political discourse and the news.

Recent research activity has been devoted to the study of the influence of English upon other languages via journalistic translation. Hursti (2001, 10) expressed concerns over the "powerful influence that translated news language exerts on Finnish". Gottlieb (2010) analysed the impact that the events of September 11th had on Danish journalistic discourse, notably the importation of a number of Anglicisms by the media. McLaughlin (2011) and Al-kuran (2014) studied syntactic borrowing in French and Arabic, respectively.

The role of translation in television news production has received some attention in the last fifteen years, as the complexity of these multimodal texts poses additional difficulties that may make the analysis of television reportage a challenge (Valdeón 2013). Tsai (2005), van Doorslaer (2012) and Darwish (2010) have covered television in Taiwan, in Belgium and in the Arabic channel Aljazeera, respectively. Tsai reported on her five-year experience in a newsroom in Taiwan, where news production relies heavily on foreign material.

All in all, this sub-section has shown that the role of translation in the news nowadays is more indispensable than ever. It has also revealed that news translation research, although now attracting more interest than formerly, is still a neglected area.

1.2.2 Translation and Globalisation

Globalisation is a contentious issue. According to the *American Heritage Dictionary*, the term globalisation means "to make global or worldwide in scope or application". Shiyab (2010, 1) suggests that

globalisation means transforming things, no matter what they are, from local or regional into worldly, international or global. Shiyab also argues that globalisation can also involve people becoming one global community in which their economic growth, social prosperity, political forces and technological advancements turn out to be common to the whole globe. He further contends that globalisation can also mean elimination of boundaries, implying that there are no longer restrictions on all kinds of exchanges between nations. Cronin (2003, 77) claims that theoreticians do not always agree as to what is understood by the term globalisation. Robertson (1992, 8) argues that globalisation refers both to the "compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole". Friedman (1995, 73) claims that globalisation is about "processes of attribution of meaning that are of a global nature". Pym (2013, 7) describes globalisation as an economic process, impacting the social role of translation. Pieterse (1995, 47) argues that the modernity/globalisation approach is a "Theory of Westernisation" by another name, which replicates all problems associated with Euro-centrism—a narrow window on the world, historically and culturally. Chomsky refers to globalisation as follows:

> The term "globalisation", like most terms of public discourse, has two meanings: its literal meaning, and a technical sense used for doctrinal purposes. In its literal sense, 'globalisation' means international integration. Its strongest proponents since its origins have been the workers movements and the left (which is why unions are called "internationals"), and the strongest proponents today are those who meet annually in the World Social Forum and its many regional offshoots. In the technical sense defined by the powerful, they are described as 'anti-globalisation', which means that they favour globalisation directed to the needs and concerns of people, not investors, financial institutions and other sectors of power, with the interests of people incidental. That's 'globalisation' in the technical doctrinal sense.[2]

Globalisation has an impact on translation and translation studies, simply because globalisation necessitates translation. This argument is supported by many scholars. According to Cronin (2003, 72), globalisation is frequently identified as a negative factor in language maintenance. Various sources describe the unchecked spread of market-based ideologies, the global economic and political influence of translational corporations, the emergence of international tourism, the dominance of Western scientific

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[2] Chomsky, Noam, "Noam Chomsky chats with Washington Post readers". *The Washington Post*, March 24 (2006).