

## **Sociolinguistics and Translation**

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### **Sociolinguistics and Translation : Principal criteria proposed by sociolinguistic criticism of the Translation of prophetic revelations in Sahih Al- Bukhari.**

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Among the variety of linguistic approaches towards translation studies, sociolinguistics has attempt to achieve one of the major points in the study of language and society in which translation shows to be an intermediate discipline that joins different societies to one another and making possible the exchange of different cultures, religions and societal particularities and characteristics .

In this respect, and in the attempt of criticizing translation works and defining the different achievements that have (or have not been realized in different social contexts. Accordingly, the present paper tends to determine the different criteria suggested by sociolinguistic criticisms for the evaluation of translation. Respectively, the idea takes its background from a socially –oriented translation works that joins education, religion and language in the elaboration of texts and discourse serving humanity as a whole. The present paper deals with translated texts originally delivered in classical and standard Arabic and namely having a religious aspect; they are a collection of prophetic revelations (ahadith nabawiya) as reported by Al Imam Al Bukhari

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in Arabic and translated by the translator M. Muhsin Khan. The book content is a compilation of nine volumes and in each part the author sets the translated versions of prophetic texts in Arabic as already collected in Sahih Al-Bukhari, it was edited by Mika'il al-Almany created in 20/10/2009 and last modified in 11/10/2009.

In this respect, the present work studies some selected topics and texts as translated from Arabic into English, and attempts at criticizing the work from a sociolinguistic point of view; that is, the meaning of criticism in this paper does not outline the evaluation of the translation as whether it is good or bad. By the way, the paper aims at elaborating the parameters of criticism that can be relied on in this respect.

In the big number of prophetic revelations, the prophet Mohamed has always attempt at educating the humanity and organizing its structure as it should fit the global benefit by the determination of religious and divine limits that should be traced simultaneously as life and individuals grow up. Among the texts and revelations, Mohamed(peace be upon him) talks in one of his revelations about prayer, as being one of the obligations stated by Allah to be done and respected by everyone starting from the age of seven; though for the prophet it remains the age of awareness. A native speaker of Arabic would easily understand the discourse in Arabic as stated by Al-Bukhari or any other scholar; however, in the aim of spreading out Islam worldwide, these texts in Arabic need translation which will act as a sociolinguistic tool that joins information to society.

Consider the following translation talking about characteristics of prayer:

Book12, Characteristics of Prayer, volume 1, number 699:

*"Narrated Anas bin Malik Al-Ansari:*

*Allah's Apostle rode a horse and fell down and the right side of his body was injured. On that day he prayed one of the prayers sitting and we also prayed behind him sitting. When the Prophet finished the prayer with Taslim, he said, "The Imam is to be followed and if he prays standing then pray standing, and bow when he bows, and raise your heads when he raises his head; prostrate when he prostrates; and if he says "Sami'a-l-lahu Liman hamida", you should say, "Rabbana wa-lakal hamd."*

One of the characteristics the Imam wants to expose in this text is to pray Allah in groups headed by the Imam; he describes the way the prophet indicates prayers in groups. From a semantic point of view, an English lay person may first understand that there are many prayers that exist in Islam upon reading the expression: "... he prayed one of the prayers...". Second, the target language reader may understand that one of these prayers is done in a sitting position, while others are not. Third, the reader may also understand that this particular prayer talked about in the revelation should end with 'taslim' ; a word in Arabic that remains untranslated though a definition in English is possible, hence the description of the act as to use the expression

“peace be upon you”, and the personal pronoun “ you” should be noticed in the translation refers to angels guarding both the right and the left sides of each Muslim.

Besides, other words in the texts need also to be checked by the target language reader, these like: “ the Imam”;; and the expression :” Sami'a-l-lahu Liman hamida",and “Rabbana wa-laka-l hamd”.

The word Imam having no equivalent in English can be provided with a definition , while the two expressions should be first dealt with grammatically by identifying the exact and the full form of each word when stated alone as in a dictionary, then identifying the parts of speech in each structure as to show the personal pronoun /hu/ realized as h in the word /hamida/, and to distinguish the word /li/ from /man/ and explain the meaning of each. Hence, a proper translation for both structures remains possible through explanation. The important thing in translating via explanation is to get the message conveyed, hence the act of praying will evidently be clear and perfect when translation is effective by memorizing words in Arabic and understanding in English.

In another text, volumel, Book 12, n 700, Muhsin Khan writes:”

*“Narrated Anas bin Malik:*

*Allah's Apostle fell from a horse and got injured so he led the prayer sitting and we also prayed sitting. When he completed the prayer he said, "The Imam is to be*

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*followed; if he says Takbir then say Takbir, bow if he bows; raise your heads when he raises his head, when he says, 'Sami' a- l-lahu Liman hamida say, 'Rabbana laka-l-hamd', and prostrate when he prostrates."*

Notice in this text the word /takbir/ cannot be clear unless a definition in English is provided and the meaning of the word is made clear in Arabic;/allahu akbar/. Always within the same context, the author talks about the "Imam" and gives the following equivalent expression:

*"Narrated Malik:*

*We came to the Prophet and we were young men nearly of equal ages and we stayed with him for twenty nights. Allah's Apostle was a very kind man and when he realized our longing for our families, he asked us about those whom we had left behind. When we informed him, he said, "Go back to your families and stay with them and teach them (religion) and order them (to do good deeds). The Prophet mentioned things some of which I remembered and some I did not. Then he said, "Pray as you have seen me praying, and when it is the time of prayer, one of you should pronounce the call(Adhan) for the prayer **and the eldest of you should lead the prayer.**"*

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Notice in the text the expression in bold in which the same author talks about a leader of a prayer as described by the Prophet Mohamed.

One of the major consequences of subjective and non-oriented translations is to make the target language

reader confused by the variety of translated texts that by the end tackle the same idea. In this case, the reader cannot always realize equivalence between the word "Imam" and the expression "the eldest person leading the prayer", unless the reader nearly deals with all the translated versions concerning prayer in Islam.

The core element that the criticism of a translation work wants to reach is to define the extent to which the message of the translated text is clear mainly when the translation has an informative function. Another aim of criticizing translation is to know the degree of compatibility between the source text and the target text in terms of meaning. Then, when someone is to translate the prophetic revelations, the major aim is to make known Islam and the guiding path to civilization, peace, organization, solidarity, etc. It is then of primordial importance to focus on the content rather than on form. To say that even if the number of persons reporting the prophet sayings about the same idea is great, it is now more important to shed light on one translation which includes details and unified terms to explain a given idea as administered by the prophet Mohamed.

Consider again the following version:

*"Narrated 'Abdullah:*

*The Prophet led us in Zuhr prayer and prayer five Rakat. Somebody asked him whether the prayer had been increased." He (the Prophet) said, "And what is that?" They (the people) replied, "You have prayed five Rakat."*

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*Then the Prophet offered two prostrations (of Sahu) after he had finished his prayer with the Taslim."*

If a target language reader wants to tackle this version he should necessarily have a previous and a clear idea about the context of the idea structured here. Otherwise, it will not be possible for him to grasp the meaning of the word "increased" especially when talking about a prayer; in fact it is the number of the prostrations which is increased not the prayer itself. In the same token the "new" concept of /sæhw/ in Arabic and the additive prostration act in the words of the prophet need to be explained in more detailed text, since the word /sæhw/ is not part of expressions repeated in each prayer beside Surates and Q'uranic verses, it is a general word that can be replaced with a parallel translation or interpretation.

The major idea obtained from sociolinguistic criticism in the evaluation of translation is the importance of the communicative approach stated by Nida (1964), who mentions three different criteria in this regard, starting with *dynamic equivalence* which states that "the manner in which receptors of the translated text respond to it must be equivalent to the manner in which the receptors of the source text respond to the source text".

Another criterion is the comprehension of intent; absolutely, when the source text writer elaborates a text he must have a definite intention that has to influence the reader; accordingly, the translator of the same text should develop the same intention to realize equivalence in the perception of the text in target language.

Another important criterion should be referred to in the study of translation works which relates to the choice of words according to common understandings and context, in other words the pragmatic of the translated text is very important in the statement of the original idea ; the target language reader should be provided with the context in which a given prophetic revelation has taken place, and the occasional events should be explained as to their particular function in a given situation. It is approximately the case of the following revelation where explanation is important in the underlined sentence and it has been effectively provided by the translator:

. Volume 9, Book 92, Number 385:

*"Narrated Jabir bin 'Abdullah:*

*Some angels came to the Prophet while he was sleeping. Some of them said, "He is sleeping." Others said, "His eyes are sleeping but his heart is awake." Then they said, "There is an example for this companion of yours." One of them said, "Then set forth an example for him." Some of them said, "He is sleeping." The others said, "His eyes are sleeping but his heart is awake." Then they said, "His example is that of a man who has built a house and then offered therein a banquet and sent an inviter (messenger) to invite the people. So whoever accepted the invitation of the inviter, entered the house and ate of the banquet, and whoever did not accept the invitation of the inviter, did not enter the house, nor did he eat of the banquet." Then the angels said, "Interpret this example to him so*



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*that he may understand it." Some of them said, "He is sleeping." The others said, "His eyes are sleeping but his heart is awake." And then they said, "The houses stands for Paradise and the call maker is Muhammad; and whoever obeys Muhammad, obeys Allah; and whoever disobeys Muhammad, disobeys Allah. Muhammad separated the people (i.e., through his message, the good is distinguished from the bad, and the believers from the disbelievers)."*

However, notice in the example the choice of the words which is not intentional, that is the translator focuses on the original text words and not meaning, the case of the words, invite, inviters, his example, etc in which the writer means to call people for the right path (invite), and he resembles, he looks like, ( his example)...

Hence another criterion that can be relied on in sociolinguistic studies of translation works is the translator's ability in finding solutions to the problems of terminology, style, genre, as mentioned by Janis Silis:

"In a social context of this character translators and interpreters must find an optimal solution to the problems like terminologically and stylistically adequate reproduction of the specific language ...."

**Bibliography:**

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