CHAPTER - ONE

INTRODUCTION
CHAPTER I

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1.1. The Context of the Study

The year 1962 put an end to the isolation of North Yemen from the world and the year 1967 put an end to the British occupation of the southern part. They, at the same time, have put both Yemens, (The unification took place in 1990), face to face with a heavy burden of development problems. Along with this situation, the transformation brought with it a great expansion of trade, inauguration of new programs of industrial and social development and novel attitudes toward the more developed industrial world.

Foreign languages have become essential for Yemen, as for any Arab country, for modernization requires good knowledge of foreign languages to facilitate the flow of scientific information, know-how and expertise from the West to the East. Although many reference books in various fields of knowledge have been translated into Arabic, the explosion of information in many sciences demands adequate proficiency in foreign language to enable scholars to keep up with the hurried pace of new findings (El-Araby, 1983). English in this situation, occupies the first place. It is on its way to becoming the second language of the country, although competence in it is not widespread and for effective communication one still needs to know Arabic, (British
Council, 1984). Many graduates of English medium schools and colleges have influence in commercial, professional and academic circles. Yemenies who have returned from overseas, especially from Ethiopia, East Africa, the UK, and the US and who are competent in English are also influential. In addition, English is very essential for communication with non-English speaking foreigners who work in Yemen in many different fields. It is also much needed for business, travel, tourism and for working in international English-speaking projects.

There has been a growing awareness of the importance of English in schools and universities and it also has been recognized nationally. The British Council in Yemen runs a Direct English Teaching Operation in which many learners, sponsored by their ministries or privately funded, study English. There is also the Yemen-American Language Institute, which is supported by the United States Information Services headquarters based in the Yemeni capital Sana'a. The learners in these institutes are usually candidates for training programmes in the US or the UK. There are also some other centres where English is taught outside the educational system, e.g. Yemen Airway Centre, the National Institute for Public Administration, the Defence Language Institute. Besides, there are a lot of private English medium centres and schools being opened every now and then.
1.2. Teachers of English

Yemen always faces shortage of teachers in almost all subjects. A considerable number of English teachers, both at the university and at the pre-university levels, are expatriate Egyptians, Syrians, Iraqies, Sudanies and Indians for a period of four years. By and large, the Yemeni and Arab teachers in the preparatory and secondary schools tend to be hardworking but very traditional in their methodology. Thus, there is always a need for the British Council/ Ministry of Education in-service programmes which are held regularly at the beginning of each academic year.

At present, there is only a small number of Yemeni teachers. The faculties of Education in Sana'a University, Taiz, Hodaida and Ibb Universities, etc., are responsible for training teachers of English. Many more trained Yemenies are entering the educational system as teachers of English every year.

1.3. Teaching / Learning Methodology

Apart from those private English language centres and institutions, methods of teaching English in Yemen have been subjected to a great deal of confusion that makes it hard for anyone to specify which method is actually applied. The understandable reason for this is, in addition to the problem of teachers, the instability of the educational process as a whole, due to financial, administrative, sociological and political constraints. As a result, classroom practices have not been allowed to keep pace with certain methodological principles or special theoretical tenets.
Although teachers from different backgrounds in training may have a marginal chance to individually practise one method or another in their teaching, translation as a method is practised widely and maladroitly by most of the English teachers from Arab countries in the governmental schools. It is practised not as a consciously or officially selected and designed method but as an indispensable device for carrying out the job. At the university level, new methods, like direct and communicative methods, are applied. Students in the English department, who graduate from the governmental schools, have to toil on their own to improve their English and cope with the heavy load of the syllabus that is taught in different ways. In this situation, the teachers whose mother tongue is Arabic may allow occasional use of translation in order to facilitate learning. The non-Arabic speaking teachers may recourse to what Wynburne, 1960, calls "vertical translation", i.e. translating complete English into Basic English, or translating adults' English into students' limited English. The students, at least at the early two years, often seek help in finding the texts being studied, in a translation version, or in a simplified one or in both.

1.4. Foreign Language Learning: Some relevant issues

Foreign language study expands the linguistic area of experience by affording linguistic comparison. It also offers insights into another culture and as such is concerned with the human and social area of experience. There is, in brief, a general feeling that education is not complete without a foreign
language, be it English, French or any other language. This is because of the "knowledge explosion" to which we have become particularly sensitive in the twentieth century, and as a result of the extension of schooling to almost all the economic classes in the society, (Byram, 1989).

Learning a foreign language, however, is not always an easy and enjoyable experience. The learners have to face many problems because learning a foreign language is, as rightly put by Kohli, 1970, "... an artificial process. It is not the same as the natural process by which a child learns its mother tongue". The learner in a nonsupportive environment is continually surrounded by the mother tongue which not only keeps interfering with the learning of the foreign language, but also limits the time and chances of the learning activities. In some contexts, such as the Yemeni context, the difficulty in foreign language learning is greatly a function of the relationship between the two languages rather than being inherent in the languages themselves. Furthermore, learning a foreign language is a painful process and requires a lot of practice without which accuracy and competence over the language cannot be achieved.

Apart from considerations relating to foreign language learning difficulties, the design of programmes for foreign language education involves other important questions which need to be answered. Among those questions are those related to the cultural background, the criteria adopted for the planning of the language course and organization of the cultural and linguistic
content of reading and instructional material and determining which methodology should be applied. Each of these factors and others which have not been mentioned, needs to be studied independently and separately. As far as the present study is concerned, the emphasis is being placed on (a) to what extent the Arabic language can be useful in the English class in terms of (when, how and why), and (b) the distance between the mother tongue and English language and how to employ it constructively without allowing the linguistic hegemony of one over the another.

1.5. Language and Translation

Interlingual and intercultural communication, in the form of oral as well as written translation, is as old as mankind. Translation as a didactic method in foreign language teaching has been traditionally discussed within applied linguistics. Therefore, it might be useful to draw a dividing line between these two kinds of translation and, at the same time, point out possible areas of contact. In the first one, translation serves the purpose of facilitating communication between people who do not share a common language and/or culture. The task calls for a high level of proficiency in both languages and requires cultural knowledge as well as other specific abilities, (Newmark, 1985, Vasandani, 1990, Singh, 1993). The position of translation didactics as a discipline independent from foreign language teaching has been consolidated and a growing number of translator and interpreter schools and academic institutions the world over have set up new curricula and teaching and testing methods in
order to develop in their students a translational competence that must be seen apart from mere linguistic competence.

In the second kind, translation is used to achieve various didactic ends related to learning the target language itself. It is carried on all levels of proficiency and in both directions. Written to written, written to oral, oral to written and oral to oral translations are prevalent (Widdowson, 1979, Titfor and Hieke, 1985, Atkinson, 1981, Rivers and Temperly, 1978 and Duff, 1989).

The areas of contact between translation used in foreign language teaching/learning and the communicative translation required of the professional translator, as seen by Buhler, 1985, are related to the fact that at least some language learners will aspire to becoming professional translators. In fact, this is not completely true. The foreign language learner learns the target language mainly in order to be benefited later when she/he is engaged in professional or nonprofessional translation activities as well as in his or her own life in general. Adequate command of a foreign language is not, and should never be, an artificial and tongue twisting experience. It is rather an ability of conveying or converting smoothly and naturally the messages or knowledge in any given situation. It is acknowledged that translation is an essential world-wide means of communication and it has also an important place as an objective and technique in foreign language teaching, (Newmark 1985, see also Belyayev, 1963 and Dagut, 1986). Translation as argued by Ulrych, 1986, enhances students’
awareness of the different stylistic and registral variations of both languages. The ability to synchronize the source language and target language requires a comprehensive syntactical, lexical, morphological and stylistical knowledge of L1 and L2 as a precondition of translation. Translation is a means to both explore and develop such knowledge. And, as stated by Stiener (1975: 47) "... inside or between languages, human communication equals translation". (Further discussion of these two types of translation is found in Chapter 2 and 3 respectively).

1.6. Translation and the Arabic Language

The first actual and productive contact between Arabic and other languages was during the Abbasid Caliphate (750-1250 AD) where a large number of books of all kinds of knowledge were translated from Greek, Syrian, Persian and Sanskrit into Arabic. Naturally, those translations were far from being accurate. The translation was more literal than semantic. Translators, however, came to know that "meaning had to be transposed in any second language in preference to and even at the cost of its beauty, form, idiom and phraseology", (Rahman, 1993: 8). Reading, for example, some of Al-Jahedh's opinions describing the process of translation and its requirement, one feels as if he is reading Nida or Newmark, (see in this connection Khorshid, 1983 and Rahman, 1993).

This early activity of translation contributed greatly to the flourishing and enriching of the culture, thought and life.
Arabic responded well and had developed, by the 13th century into a great language of literature and science. Unfortunately, this did not last for a long time because of political or non-political reasons. During the decline of the Arab Islamic Empire from the fourteenth to the nineteenth centuries, the language passed through a corresponding period of stagnation, (Dhaif, 1966).

The second contact between Arabic and foreign languages was triggered by contact with Western European languages and cultures in the 19th century. Arabic again showed remarkable response to this new linguistic and cultural stimulus and struggled to stabilish itself as a vehicle of modern expression in all spheres of knowledge. Translation was one of the first linguistic results in a situation of contact. Scholars who were sent to European countries to specialize in different fields became directly or indirectly instrumental in translating into Arabic, materials on different sciences including literature. European works of modern literature were translated into Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) using the modern idiom, phraseology, symbolism, and style adopted from European languages (Abdulaziz, 1986).

1.7. The Problem for the Study

Employing translation in English language teaching/learning as a foreign language is apparently ignored, shunned or practised with hesitation and discomfort. It was the keystone of learning and testing processes in the grammar-translation approach. But methods such as direct or communicative, etc. seem to have
demolished the use of translation as a learning device of a foreign language. However, although its role in foreign language teaching has been open to a great deal of criticism, it is gradually reestablishing itself as a useful and legitimate didactic tool, (Ulrych, 1989, Murphy, 1987-88, Duff, 1989, Rinvolucri, 1990 and Wolff, 1993). And when the discussion of the place of translation in language learning has been, according to Rivers and Temperly, 1978), "at cross-purposes, since the kind of translation and its function in the learning process have not been specified", translation has remained largely unchanged and unchallenged in practice, (Dodson, 1972, Stern, 1983, Guttam, 1988, and Marathe, 1995). For some English teachers, translation has fallen out of favour, for many it is still a part of their everyday teaching and a very worthwhile one at that.

1.8. Hypotheses

(i) Foreign language teaching/learning in a non-supportive environment involves translation activity in one form or another by both the teacher and the learner, i.e. it is not only necessary but also an inevitable fact.

(ii) Translation is an effective and facilitative means in English language teaching/learning as a foreign language in Yemen.

(iii) Translation has its own problems, e.g. the absence of linguistic and culture elements, untranslatability and the differences of world view. In addition, inadequate use of translation, e.g. exceeding use of literal translation in classroom practice, could be an obstacle and hinderance to effective English language education.
The employment of translation in ELT/ELL can be affected by the level of the students, the teacher's experience and the type of the faculty in which the students are placed.

1.9. The Significance of the Study

First of all, although translation is widely and maladroitly practised in ELT in Yemen for a long time, there has not been a single study made to address the problem. Second, translation in the teaching of foreign languages is considered either an accepted factor or a controversial doctrine of compromise.

What is found, at least in the available literature, is either theoretical arguments of what is good and bad about translation, or advice, mostly from the practitioners, of how it should or should not be applied. This study is a modest attempt to both theoretically and experimentally address the subject.

1.10. Aims and Objectives of the Study

The main aim of the study is to find out the potentialities of translation in ELT/ELL as a foreign language in Yemen and to clarify the misconceptions held for and against translation due to either the absence of enough empirical support or the subjective impression of the individuals concerned, i.e. learners, teachers, course designers and decision-makers. That is to say, the study intends to seek answers to the following questions:

- What is translation and how is it related to ELT/ELL?
- What is involved in translation and what are the essential aspects inherent to it?
- How is translation practised in ELT/ELL and how can it be improved?

- To what extent are Arabic and English lexically, syntactically and stylistically similar or dissimilar and how does this affect the learning as well as teaching of English?

- To what extent can translation be used as a means of developing the learners’ sensitivity to the meanings expressed in a stretch of discourse in the learner’s own language and to the different linguistic mechanisms used by Arabic and English to convey these meanings?

1.11. Methodology and Procedures

(a) A general survey of definition of translation from different points of view is made and various relevant sources for the development of concepts and issues involved in translation in general and translation in ELT/ELL are reviewed.

(b) Identification of some problematic areas in both Arabic and English through contrastive studies. (Certain areas of language will be probed and identified for their possible attributes and implications to our topic, i.e. ELT/ELL.

(c) Instruments in the form of teachers’ and learners’ questionnaires for collecting data about the need for translation, its effectiveness and its problems related to its application in ELT/ELL.

(d) Finally, conclusion and recommendations will be drawn based on the findings of the study.

1.12. The Utility of the Study

The present study is expected to offer the following potential contributions:
the theoretical knowledge related to the fundamental issues permeated in translation in general and in translation in ELT/ELL, to the English language teachers and English course designers in Yemen.

- evidence of the degree of rationality of the use of translation in ELT/ELL, i.e. why, when and how to use it.
- empirical support for constructing practical techniques for employing translation fruitfully in a systematic way.
- the framework to assess personal strengths and weaknesses of the Yemeni teachers of English in respect to their application of translation for the sake of bettermenting their performance.

1.13. Limitations of the Study

(a) Although the study is concerned with teaching English as a foreign language to Arab learners, it is basically limited to the Yemeni context. But it does not mean that its applicability is only restricted to this context. Arab teachers of English as a foreign language can also make use of it as well.

(b) The university level is under special consideration while designing the instruments for the field study.

(c) The study only partially, takes into account English language teaching and learning at all levels in the Yemeni government schools. Private institutions in which English is taught as a second or native language are not considered.

(d) The variety of the two languages concerned is standard modern Arabic and standard modern English.

1.14. The Structure of the Study

The present study consists of seven chapters described briefly as follows:
The first chapter is an introductory chapter by nature which highlights the context of the study, states its problem, the hypotheses, its significance, scope, aims and objectives and procedures and methodology applied in it.

The second chapter concentrates on a number of essential issues related to translation in general in order to shed some light on the relationship between translation and foreign language teaching and learning. Those issues are: definition of translation, types of translation, the importance of translation, processes of translation, translatability and untranslatability, translation equivalence, adequacy of translation theory and development of translation theory.

The third chapter is concerned with the use of translation in ELT/ELL. It gives a brief account of the translation method and discusses why translation is important in the discipline, what is objectionable about it and how we can make better use of it.

The fourth chapter is devoted to the contrastive study of six areas of language in both Arabic and English. These areas are compared, contrasted and exemplified in order to examine to what extent translation affects the learners' strategy of learning English and accordingly to deduce pedagogical implications for teaching and learning of English.

The fifth chapter details the research instrument of the field study, i.e. the teachers' and students' questionnaires used for collecting data about the teachers' and students' perception of employing translation in ELT/ELL.
The sixth chapter analyses and evaluates the data collected from the field and presents a summary of the major results.

The seventh chapter gives a summary and conclusions of the study along with the recommendations and suggestions for further research.