CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction

Translating culture has been overlooked as a problematic issue for both novice and professional translators. Many conceptual and empirical studies have investigated such problems, paying undue consideration to finding the means of overcoming them, which reflects the underestimation of the translation process. To bridge this gap, this research devotes itself to the translation process and product by analyzing translation strategies (TSs) and translation procedures (TPs) employed by student translators in translating culture-based texts from the source language (SL), i.e., English to the target language (TL), i.e., Arabic. The study provides empirical data on the students’ use of the TSs and TPs when translating on a computer and presents insights into how to deal with such strategies and procedures, using a computational model of human translation, Translog software. In other words, the study aims to demonstrate how humans translate to diagnose the deficiencies in student competencies in an attempt to provide insights into how such deficiencies can be addressed by effectively using translation strategy analysis.

English and Arabic belong to different families of languages. Systematically speaking, English belongs to the Indo–European family of languages, whereas Arabic belongs to the Semitic family. In addition, the areas where the English and the Arabs reside differ geographically, socially, and economically (Qassem, 2010). These differences contribute to the cultural gaps between English and Arabic, which render the process or product of translation complex to the advanced student translators, particularly novice ones.
2. Rationale

Interest in translation has grown in recent years in an attempt to satisfy the need for initiating contact and achieving better understanding among nations. Communication among peoples becomes a social fabric of everyday life for millions of people worldwide because of the significant development of communication technology (Holmes, 2001). Translation is the sole alternative to facilitate communication among nations due to the difficulty, if not impossibility, of nations to speak each other’s language. Accordingly, translation training programmes are offered in universities and academic institutions. However, translator trainers follow different methods regarding the process of teaching and learning given the curriculum developers’ views on methods and topics to teach in translation training programmes. The two trends of teaching translation are objective-based pedagogy and competence\(^1\) pedagogy (Jonnaret, et al., 2007). The former trend shows that the curriculum designers set certain objectives for the language programmes to be imposed on the teaching situations. By contrast, the latter trend shows an analysis of the situations to determine the students’ and society’s needs (ibid).

The translation process is an intercultural and interlingual activity as well as a psycholinguistic one because the translator deals with at least two linguistic systems embedded in two different cultures; furthermore, it uses many strategies to solve the translation problem (Pym, 1992). This description suggests that the transfer from SL to TL requires knowledge of the system and the culture of both SL and TL, as well as the strategies of understanding and rendering the source text (ST) into the target text (TT). Such research area is the target of investigation in this study in a sense that the thesis investigates the matters that occupy the mind of the student translators when

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\(^1\) The underlying system of knowledge and skills needed to make translation possible (PACTE, 2003)
translating culture-based texts from English to Arabic. In other words, the comprehension and production strategies are at the core of this study.

At Najran University, Saudi Arabia, the Department of English offers a translation programme under the Faculty of Arts. An examination of the syllabus of the translation programme reveals that translation skills either in theory or in practice are not given the appropriate attention. Furthermore, the textbooks do not provide translation activities with the importance they deserve, which may negatively affect the competence and performance of student translators. More than this obvious concern, the selection of the textbooks are based on teachers’ experiences and intuitions, not on stakeholder and student needs.

3. Problem Statement

Translation is an activity that inevitably involves at least two languages. Each language possesses its own system, lexis, and culture. It also requires numerous skills that translators should acquire, such as extra-linguistic competence, strategic competence, and instrumental competence (PACTE, 2003). Such competencies should be represented in a translator training programme. The translation modules provide students with knowledge on translation rather than involving them in the practice that improves their skills. The students are not taught the importance of the translation process. Instead, they focus more on the product at the expense of the process.

In 1983, translation practitioners initiated a new vision with a profound and genuine view of translation training, in which translation competence pedagogy replaces objective-based pedagogy. Such translation competence pedagogy emphasizes the analysis of situations of the students when designing a curriculum or a programme. The competence-based pedagogy focuses on training students to address
the challenges of both the process and product of translation. Such pedagogy includes several competencies, such as extra-linguistic sub-competence, knowledge about translation, instrumental sub-competence, strategic sub-competence, and psychophysiological competence. Given that this study is chiefly concerned about the use of TSs and TPs in translating culture-based texts, the relevant competencies are extra-linguistic competence, (i.e. cultural competence), instrumental competence, and strategic competence (PACTE, 2003). These terms are defined in the last section of this chapter.

In Saudi Arabia, English is not the medium of instruction in schools and universities. English is only taught as a subject, starting from the 4th grade. Furthermore, it is taught structurally rather than communicatively, with focus on reading skills to prepare students for university. As for students majoring in translation, the programme is theoretical and the practice is limited. The programme exhibits the characteristics of an objective-based curriculum, in a sense that certain objectives are imposed on the translation programme. Translation skills are not prioritized in bachelor and postgraduate programmes in translation. Although skills are considered on paper, their actual practice is lacking in importance.

4. Research Questions

Many questions arise, which consequently justify the need to conduct this study. The central questions for which the study aims to provide empirical data are as follows:

1. Do the students in the master’s programme in translation in the Faculty of Arts, Najran University use strategies in translating culture-based texts from English to Arabic? If yes, what are these translation strategies (i.e., process strategies and production strategies)?
2. Does a correlation exist between process strategies (i.e., translation strategies) and product strategies (i.e., translation procedures)?

3. What problems do students encounter when using TSs and TPs in rendering the English culture-based texts into Arabic?

The first question is concerned with the use of TSs and TPs in translating culture-based texts from English to Arabic by the students of the master’s programme in translation (Najran University). This question seeks to find an answer using the Translog software, namely, keylogging (i.e., production, deletion and online dictionaries), the task time and length of segmentation (i.e. translation unit) when translating culture-based texts. The translation task intends to explore the TPs used by the students when they translate the texts, such as transference, explicitation, explanation, cultural equivalence, etc.

The questionnaire explicitly demonstrates the students' use of TSs as they have stated, thus supplementing the results of the Translog software. The second question focuses on the correlation between TSs (i.e., process) and TPs (i.e., product); the answers are obtained by applying Pearson correlation to establish the associations between the two strategies. The third question deals with diagnosing the problematic areas in the students' use of TSs and TPs when translating culture-based texts from English to Arabic; the answers are obtained by examining the strategies and procedures used by students when translating the cultured-based texts in the process of either comprehension or production.

5. Objective of the Study

This study aims to investigate the students’ use of TSs and TPs when translating culture-based texts from English to Arabic. In other words, it attempts to provide
empirical evidence for the students’ use of the TSs and TPs in the process and production of rendering the English culture-based texts into Arabic. The process and production of translation axiomatically come together. Furthermore, a good process produces a good product. Scholars confirm the degree of the relationship between translation process and product theoretically; hence, simultaneously analysing translation process and product in the study of translation is a logical approach. Therefore, this research investigates the translation process and product to determine how each aspect relates to the other. Notably, the study aims to present the strategies and procedures used by the students when translating on a computer. The computer generally assists translators in the translation process, and students must be equipped with skills in dealing with this computer-assisted translation process to achieve adequate translation with minimum time and effort. Moreover, translation on computer replaces translation on paper, thereby compelling curriculum and programme developers to consider this issue. In practical terms, this manner of translation intends to provide teachers of translation, translation course designers, including schools of translation and material writers at the postgraduate and undergraduate levels, with a graded checklist of strategies and procedures that are used by students in translating culture-based texts from English to Arabic. Subsequently, the study offers recommendations of how to deal with these strategies and procedures.

6. Limitations of the Study

The scope of this study is limited to an investigation of the strategies and procedures used in translating written culture-based texts from English to Arabic using a computer. This limitation does not imply that students will use machine translation or any software in the translation process. The study follows a
computational model of human translation in which student translations are analysed using the Translog software. This software records student activities when translating on a computer. Furthermore, the study is restricted to the problems that hinder the students of translation because of the lack of knowledge and training in using TSs and TPs for translating culture-based texts, excluding spoken discourse, literary texts and highly specialized texts.

7. Significance of the Study

This study focuses on the translation process, which is barely represented in the course books of translation. It also delves into the translation of the cultural dimension, which is rarely taught in the modules of translation and other modules in the translation programmes. The study assesses the teaching situation of translation, particularly student competence in the translation process. It contributes to a new trend of translation that focuses on the translation process and product. This trend concentrates on the procedural knowledge of translation whose major concern is training students in using TSs and TPs in different stages of translation. In other words, this trend focuses on involving students in the practical side of translation to improve practice. The product of translation is also considered in this study to provide a clear and comprehensive image of student behavior when compared with the translation process.

This study is a useful contribution to applied translation given the lack of empirical translation studies in this field. The significance of the study also lies in the use of a computational model with a human translation perspective (i.e., Translog software), which analyses student use of TSs when using a computer in the translation process. This tool exhibits a high a degree of accuracy in detecting student behaviours in the use of TSs and TPs when translating texts from a language to another.
The findings hope to provide the necessary answers to creating positive changes that improve the academic level of translation in general and the teaching of translation modules in particular. The findings address the translation programme not only in the Department of English, Faculty of Arts, Najran University but also in all universities offering similar programmes.

8. Data Collection

This section describes the data elicitation techniques, subjects of the study and procedures followed in implementing this study, while carefully considering the validity and reliability of the research. This study uses three types of elicitation techniques for extracting and analysing their output. The use of multiple techniques provides a highly accurate picture of second language learners’ output, given that each technique supplements the other. These procedures are (a) the use of the Translog software, (b) performance of a translation task (culture-based texts), and (c) use of a questionnaire. The Translog software will record the students’ translations of the translation task and analyse the text production processes used by students when translating the culture-based texts from English to Arabic. As soon as the students complete the translation of the texts on the Translog, they will be provided with a questionnaire consisting of the following two columns: the culture-based texts and the list of strategies for selecting the approach for translating the items and expression of the texts.

Students’ translations of the culture-based texts from English to Arabic will present empirical evidence on their use of TPs (linguistic shift), which will reflect whether or not the students are equipped with the procedural knowledge of translation. Moreover, the Translog software will record the students’ use of TSs to solve the comprehension and production problems through its recording of skimming,
drafting, post-editing time and keylogging (i.e., text production, text elimination, navigation, mouse events, miscellaneous events, and system events). By keeping track of such keystrokes, Translog can supply important information regarding the efficiency with which a subject produces texts (Translog Manual, 2012). Finally, the questionnaire will reveal the students’ conscious use of the strategies in translating each item and expression, which will supplement the processes recorded by the Translog software. Those techniques will assist in measuring the correlation between TSs and the TPs the students use to render the culture-based texts into Arabic. In other words, the correlation between TSs (i.e., mental strategies) and TPs (i.e., linguistics shifts) will be explored.

The subjects of the study will be selected from the second year master’s students of translation, Faculty of Arts, Najran University, Saudi Arabia. Forty students will be randomly selected from that population to ensure the representation of the sample. Data collection will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

9. Definitions of Terms

This section provides the definitions of the terms and concepts used in this study. Such terminologies require special attention because they are highly specialised terms in translation in general and process-oriented translation in particular.

1. Translation strategies: Translation strategies are mental processes that occupy the minds of students in solving translation problems, such as using the context, searching the memory, revising, re-reading, and using a dictionary.

2. Translation procedures: These procedures pertain to the linguistic shifts introduced by translators in changing ST items into TT items, such as transference (i.e., loan, literal translation), explicitation, explanation, omission, and cultural equivalence.
3. *Extra-linguistic sub-competence*: This sub-competence predominantly pertains to declarative knowledge, both implicit and explicit. It comprises general world knowledge, domain-specific knowledge, as well as bicultural and encyclopedic knowledge (PACTE research, 2003).

4. *Instrumental sub-competence*: This predominantly procedural knowledge is related to the use of documentation resources and information, as well as communication technologies applied to translation, among them are types of dictionaries, encyclopedias, grammar guidelines, style books, parallel texts, electronic corpora, search engines, etc. (PACTE research, 2003).

5. *Strategic sub-competence*: This procedural knowledge guarantees the efficiency of the translation process and solves the problems encountered. An essential sub-competence controls the translation process. Its function is to plan the process and implement the translation project (selecting the most appropriate method); evaluate the process and the partial results obtained in relation to the final purpose; activate the different sub-competences and compensate for any shortcomings; and identify translation problems and apply the appropriate procedures to solve them (PACTE research, 2003).

6. *Psycho-physiological components*: These elements connote different types of cognitive and attitudinal components and psycho-motor mechanisms, including cognitive factors (i.e., memory, perception, attention, and emotion), attitudinal aspects (i.e., intellectual curiosity, perseverance, rigor, and critical thinking), and abilities (i.e., creativity, logical reasoning, and analysis and synthesis) (PACTE research, 2003).
7. **Culture-based texts**: These texts of expressions denote any material, ecological, social, religious, political, linguistic, or emotional manifestation that can be attributed to a particular community (Gonzalez and Scott-Tennen, 2005).

8. **Translation**: This term refers to the product of translation.

9. **Translating**: This term denotes the process of translation.

10. **Translation competence**: It refers to the underlying system of knowledge and skills required to make translation possible (PACTE research, 2003).

11. **Computational model of human translation**: This model deals with analysing the behavior of translators during the translation process, using a computer software to achieve its purpose. Among the major software followed by this model is Translog, a software programme used for the remote control of computer users logged onto a server. Translog consists of two versions, namely, Translog user and Translog supervisor. The Translog user is employed by students in translating texts from SL to TL. By contrast, the Translog supervisor records all of the student activities, such as keystrokes, pauses, deletions, additions, and usage of online dictionaries and encyclopedias.

12. **Text production keystrokes**: These keystrokes are used in creating new texts (e.g., a, b, c, enter, etc.).

13. **Text elimination keystrokes**: These keystrokes are used in deleting already written texts (typically backspace and delete). They stand for online revision (students translate and edit a text at the same time).

14. **Mouse events**: These events pertain to mouse clicks used for navigation.

15. **Miscellaneous events (editing)**: Miscellaneous events include copy, paste, and cut operations across the clipboard.
16. *System events*: They are Windows events produced by the software. The most important systems events are 'Start' (records the time when students start drafting process), and 'Stop' (records the time when students complete the drafting process).