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Using Relevance Theory to Enhance Students' Pragmalinguistic and Sociopragmatic Competencies in Translation: A Theoretical Perspective

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Abstract

Objectives: This study investigates the vital role Relevance Theory plays in promoting the pragmatic competence of students in translation. It seeks to probe into the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic outputs as they shape the pragmatic competence, by and large, adjust the learners' understanding of source texts, and impact their translational performances.

Methods: Through some clearly-defined and context-based examples, this study adopts a descriptive-analytical method and embraces a comparative stylistic approach to answer mainly a onefold question: How effective is the use of Relevance Theory in enhancing students' pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competencies, and in maintaining smooth intercultural communication? This tangibly makes translation, with its intricate nature in theory and practice alike, concerned since the linguistic and metalinguistic aspects interweave in it, at which the translator's linguistic competence displays pragmalinguistics while the metalinguistic competence mirrors sociopragmatics.

Results: The study yields multiple findings, the most prominent of which is that the door should be wide open for Relevance Theory to get into the translating process by providing learners with the solutions that make both their thinking and acting pertinent to the target language communicative situation/setting.

Conclusions: Thus, Relevance Theory becomes a crucial benchmark for evaluating learners' comprehensive understanding of translation prerequisites, identifying their shortcomings in conceptualization and composition, and pinpointing their urgent language usage and application needs.

Keywords: Pragmalinguistic competence, pragmatics, relevance theory, sociopragmatic competence, translation.

استخدام نظرية الملاءمة لتعزيز كفاءات الطلاب التداولية-اللّغوية والتداولية-الاجتماعية في الترجمة: منظور نظري

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ملخّص

الأهداف: تبحث هذه الدراسة في الدور الحيوي الذي تؤديه نظرية الملاءمة في تعزيز الكفاءة التداولية للطلاب في الترجمة. وتسعى إلى استكناه مخرجات التداولية-اللّغوية والتداولية-الاجتماعية بوصفها تشكّل الكفاءة التداولية على العموم، وتضبط فهم المتعلمين للنصوص المصدر، وتؤثر في أدائهم الترجمي قشره ولبابه.

المنهجية: من خلال أمثلة واضحة المعالم وسياقية الأُسُسِ، تتبنى هذه الدراسة منهجًا وصفيًا تحليليًا وتتبع مقاربة أسلوبية مقارِنة للإجابة على نحو رئيس عن سؤال واحد: ما مدى فعالية استخدام نظرية الملاءمة لتعزيز كفاءات الطلاب التداولية-اللّغوية والتداولية-الاجتماعية بغية المحافظة على سير التواصل السلس بين الثقافات؟ ذلك ما يجعل من الترجمة على نحو ملموس -بطبيعتها المعقدة نظريًا وعمليًا على حد سواء- معنية باعتبار أنّ الجوانب اللّغوية والميتالغوية تشتجر فيها؛ حيث تُظهر الكفاءة اللّغوية للمترجم التداولية-اللّغوية بينما تعكس الكفاءة الميتالغوية التداولية-الاجتماعية.

النتائج: أسفرت الدراسة عن نتائج متعددة، أبرزها أنه ينبغي أن يُفتح الباب على مصراعيه أمام نظرية الملاءمة للولوج في عملية الترجمة من خلال تزويد المتعلمين بالحلول التي تجعل تفكيرهم وتصرفهم وثيقي الصلة بالموقف/الوضعية التواصلي في اللّغة الهدف.

الخلاصة: ومنه تكون نظرية الملاءمة المعيار في الوقوف على استيعاب المتعلمين الشامل لمتطلبات الترجمة الأساسية، وتقييم نقائصهم؛ من حيث التصور والتعبير، ليتم في نهاية المطاف تحديد حاجاتهم الملحّة؛ من حيث الاستخدام والعرف اللّغويين.

الكلمات الدالة: الكفاءة التداولية-اللّغوية، التداولية، نظرية الملاءمة، الكفاءة التداولية-الاجتماعية، الترجمة.

1. Introduction

Today, translation is considered one of the most important fields of knowledge that is wholly bound up with research and academic studies. It is because translation is paramount for different trends in language treatment, which is thought to be the most vital trait of human reality. The first reason for this is the scope in which translation operates, which hinges upon many sources of knowledge; therefore, it is a meeting place for a barrage of ideas and a batch of reflections. Thus, translation's concepts and genres are always blended with a mystery along the lines of its strategies and procedures; additionally, translation has interfered with other sciences, making its scope broad and complex.

It has already been confirmed that the translation process is influenced by the linguistic and metalinguistic aspects of both the Source Text (ST) and the Target Text (TT). Unquestionably, to a significant degree, the quality of translation depends on the translator's competencies, proficiency, and sentience of several elements concerning the ST, such as the societal norms, patterns of culture, view of the world, and ethical and ideological issues, among many others. These factors profoundly impact the choices, techniques, and strategies the translator adopts to render the Source Language (SL) messages.

One of the thorny issues in translation is the sociability and pragmatism of language due to the countless disparities between the different tongues used by diverse speech communities, making texts/discourses socially and pragmatically bound by nature. Pragmatism is one of the fundamental components of language as it molds peoples' apperception and understanding of what is thought and said in different situations of communication and thus overburdens the task of translators and makes their performance hangs in the balance; simply put, the certainty of a quality-based preparedness of translators so that to move them off the linguistic errors and pragmatic faults. Besides, translation is not limited to the conveyance of pure linguistic structures but goes beyond the manipulation of the semiotic kernel, which revolves around various dimensions and goes through several coordinates; the most notable doubtless are the ideological, cultural, and social which generate, in their turn, the meaning hidden in the text and the intentionality envisaged by the author. The aspects above are deeply rooted in the pragmatic dimension of any linguistic achievement, which is aimed to uncover the speaker's intents and attitudes *vis-à-vis* the target audience that constitute the primary concern of any translation worthy of the name.

1.1. Research Rationale

Since students encounter large-scale hardships when dealing with texts from a translational perspective, teachers have to focus on pragmalinguistic (or language *use*) and sociopragmatic (or language *usage*) ins and outs for better learning outcomes and students' enhanced personal performances likewise. The remedies they prescribe should be approved based on Relevance Theory so that improvements can be made and needs can be identified, and issues interlacing with the two variables, i.e., pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic, which have been left behind, can receive the merit they deserve.

1.2. Research Significance

Through the extensive exploration of the present study on pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competencies in translation, the influence of pragmatics on translators' tasks will be unraveled, emphasized, and scrutinized. Moreover, the way these principles prevail in depicting the simple method of processing translation students must follow to avoid intercultural miscommunication will be elucidated. In addition, it will give awareness to teachers and practitioners on how using Relevance Theory might facilitate the understanding of the original messages, which undoubtedly leads to improving the quality of translations. Throughout the analysis made of some concrete examples and the overview presented in this paper, education professionals in translation will push for new paradigms which will be helpful for future discussion of the pivotal role Relevance Theory plays in promoting students' competencies, in general, and pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic ones, in particular, to enable them acting biculturally and interculturally.

1.3. Research Scope and Limitations

This study is limited to exploring the opportunities Relevance Theory in translation offers to promote students' pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competencies to prevent intercultural miscommunication. It will not extend to other factors inherent to translation practice that may affect translations both procedurally and productively, such as the nature of the languages subjected to translation, the types of texts, the specific purposes translations serve, and peculiar training programs or curricula. However, the basic theoretical and practical premises of translation will be covered.

1.4. Research Objective

The role of Relevance Theory in translation as a factor in satisfactorily generating readable versions in TL has not been widely investigated. This study aimed to understand the way pragmatics intervenes in translation, making the stress on learners' pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competencies to be reinforced by applying the findings of Relevance Theory. For that purpose, the effect of a range of criteria on understanding, analyzing, and reformulating SL messages in TL was probed over some chosen examples.

1.5. Research Questions

The research questions that the study undertakes are the following:

1. How should pragmatics be conceived in translation?
2. What do pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competencies in translation stand for? And how do they jointly operate in shaping translations?
3. How effective is it to use the Theory of Relevance to foster students' pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competencies and to keep up the smooth running of intercultural communication?

Although this study seeks to present a firm theoretical ground on the role Relevance Theory performs in translation, it pores over the actual hindrances the learners always stumble upon, thus making unsatisfactory translational settings turn into authentic environments to acquire knowledge. For the researchers in the sphere of translation, the study will help them lay bare critical issues in translation education that many of them still need to probe, hence bringing about new insights and perceptions. Further, neither purposive sampling nor specific data collection tools have been resorted to by the researcher, which may decrease the generalizability of findings.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Pragmatics

Pragmatics has long been part of the study of language and language teaching. As a constituent of descriptive linguistics, it explains how morphology, syntax, semantics, phonetics, and phonology are deployed in human language to make sense (ETiC, n.d.).

The field of pragmatics is a subfield of linguistics and semiotics (signs and meaning-making) and explains how language users avoid ambiguity and show intent. Basing their seminal research on Hymes' (1972) definition of communicative competence, Canale and Swain (1980) applied linguistic theory to language teaching to ensure that linguist assessment encompassed grammar of *rules* (linguistic competence) as well as the grammar of *usage* (linguistic performance). Research in pragmatics often draws upon other theories, such as Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Clark, 2022; Cutting & Fordyce, 2020; Cummins & Katsos, 2019; Tipton & Desilla, 2019) and Speech Act Theory (Searle, 1969; Cecchetto, 2022; Taguchi, 2019; Rühlemann, 2018; Fogal, Harris, & Moss, 2018).

Bachman (1990), expanding upon the communicative competence definition by Hymes (1972), describes pragmatic knowledge as "knowing how words and utterances can be assigned specific meanings in context and function according to the user's intentions" (p.89). Unlike semantics, which focuses on the literal meaning of words, pragmatics focuses on the inferred meaning perceived by the speaker and listener. They use the manner, place, and time of an utterance to create meaning. It exclusively connects with pragmatic competence (Hymes, 1972), which Thomas (1983) deems "the ability to use language effectively in order to achieve a specific purpose and to understand language in context" (p.92). Furthermore, Hatim and Mason (1991) claim that "pragmatics is the study of the purpose for which sentences are used, of the real world conditions under which a sentence may be appropriately used as an utterance" (p.59). For Crystal (1997), pragmatics constitutes

> the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication (p.301)

Additionally, Leech (1983) distinguishes between two components of GENERAL PRAGMATICS -which refers to "the study of the general conditions of the communicative use of language, and to exclude more specific 'local' conditions on language use" (p.10). The first is Socio-pragmatics since "the Cooperative Principle and the Politeness Principle operate variably in different cultures or language communities, in different social situations, among different social classes, etc.[11]" (p.10). The second is Pragmalinguistics which "can be applied to the study of the more linguistic end of pragmatics" (p.11).

Although pragmatics represents the mainstay of translation in both theory and practice, many of its concepts, the way they intertwine in translation, and their impacts on the translating act are poorly understood. Some of these unexplored variables, such as pragmalinguistics, sociopragmatics, and relevance theory, are important and worthy of investigation since translation competence is an umbrella term that refers to "the ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological prowess, in work or study situations, and in professional and personal development" (Driss, 2022, p.501). Moreover, each of the major competencies in translation, namely translation service provision competence, language competence, intercultural competence, thematic competence, information mining competence, and technological competence "may be split into a set of relevant sub-competencies that determine knowledge that is supposed to be reflected in one's abilities" (Driss, 2022, p.501). Furthermore, previous research has basically and solely focused on pragmatics as the nape of translation from linguistic and metalinguistic standpoints (co-text and context). However, very little research has been done on pragmatics as a cognitive process incarnated in relevance theory.

2.2. Meaning

There are two dominant views of explicit and implicit meaning, one by Grice and the other by Sperber and Wilson. For Grice, explicit content is a set of decoded assumptions, and reversely, implicit content is a set of inferred assumptions. Sperber and Wilson (1995) reject this view and argue that no assumption can simply be decoded without inference elements (Sanatifar, 2016). According to Sperber and Wilson (1995), "An assumption communicated by an utterance *U* is *explicit* if and only if it is a development of a logical form encoded by *U*" (p.182). Thus, the concept of explicitness is more comprehensive than what has been suggested by Grice. However, implicatures are derived purely from context-based inferences. As Sperber and Wilson put forward, "Any assumption communicated, but not explicitly so, is implicitly communicated: it is an *implicature*" (p.182). Explicature for Sperber and Wilson, therefore, has degrees of explicitness, so one can define implicature as nil explicitness. They conclude that any communicated utterance which is not an explicature is an implicature, but not the other way round, i.e., any statement which is not an implicature is not necessarily an explicature.

Noveck (2018) has shed light upon the phenomena of polysemy and nuances of meaning within the frame of what she termed 'Multiple Meanings', making the stress on how difficult is the task of grasping intents. Noveck (2018) said that

Words can have several meanings or different shades of meaning. For example, the word "bank" could refer to a financial institution or the side of a river, while the word "bat" could refer to the flying mammal or the club used in baseball to hit a ball. These are homonyms and the intended meaning will usually be clarified by context. Other cases of multiple meanings arise from a word that prompts a range of overlapping – polysemous – meanings (p.6)

This problem of monosemy vs. polysemy is inherent to translation and makes students, especially beginners, confused about how properly to choose the correct equivalent when moving from SL to TL. One strategy to surpass this impediment is to guess the meaning by juxtaposing the lexical items for better interpretation, a process through which a (++) or (--) correlation between the words and their different senses, as per a given semantic field, is established. Thus, the word *burglary* should not equal pickpocketing, robbery, embezzlement, extortion, or fraud; a *horse* can also be a steed, a stallion, a mount, a jumper, and a trotter, and samely *sadness* for sorrow, melancholy, anguish, and grief. However, since language is a system made out of many subsystems (lexis, semantics, phonology, grammar, syntax, stylistics…), such hardship is likely to happen in all situations where two languages are subjected to translation.

In that regard, Searle (1980) gives a clear illustration of the intersection that exists between words from a pragmatic perspective (Noveck, 2018). It is presented through the word *cut*, which may refer to different facts, making its substitution almost impossible:

- The surgeon cut open the patient.
- The gardener cut the grass.
- The mother cut the cake.
- Macy's cut their prices in half

Besides, Searle (1980) made this more tangible when he further explained that

If someone tells me to cut the grass and I rush out and stab it with a knife, or if I am ordered to cut the cake and I run over it with a lawnmower, in each case I will have failed to obey the order. That is not what the speaker meant by his literal and serious utterance of the sentence (Searle, as cited in Noveck, 2018, p.7)

The word *cut* is repeated twice in this statement but differs from one situation to another. To fail to obey the order though the speaker cut the grass with a knife and cut the cake with a lawnmower means that he did not perform the two actions appropriately since the grass should be mowed and the cake should be cut into small pieces. This example confirms that rationality reigns over peoples' understanding and acting apart from how fluent their language is.

2.3. Pragmalinguistic, Sociopragmatic, and Translation

Pragmatics, as stated before, has received great scholarly attention from linguists working within functional frameworks, particularly, yet not exclusively, and has been deemed "a general cognitive, social, and cultural perspective on linguistic phenomena in relation to their usage in forms of behavior" (Haugh, Kádár, & Terkourafi, 2021, p.16). For many authors, incorporating the word 'social' simply means that pragmatics is a "societally oriented and societally bound linguistics" (Mey & Asher, 1998, p.724), after which two main subcomponents are to be sorted out: pragmalinguistics, i.e., "the particular resources which a given language provides for conveying particular illocutions" (Leech, 1983, p.11) that holds "pragmatic strategies such as directness and indirectness, routines and a large range of linguistic forms which can intensify or soften communicative acts" (Kasper & Rose, 2002, p.2) and sociopragmatics that denotes "the appropriate usage and selection of language in accordance with context and the ability to understand the social conventions that govern communication" (Xiaole, 2009, p.238). Since translation is a socially-stained practice where the gain vs. loss dialectic is a knotty issue and an ongoing dilemma to cope with, one may distinguish between two types of pragmatic failure: sociopragmatic failure, which "stems from cross-culturally different perceptions of what constitutes appropriate linguistic behavior [...]is concerned with miscalculation of size of imposition, cost/benefit, social distance, and relative power, which may be caused by cross-cultural differences in understanding certain social values" (Xiaole, 2009, p.238), and pragmalinguistic failure that substantially implies "a linguistic problem caused by differences in the linguistic encoding of pragmatic force" (Xiaole, 2009, p.238). This means that for the translators to be pragmatically infallible, they need to "[...]1) associate specific linguistic resources with particular meanings and functions and 2) be able to appropriately select from those resources according to an assessment of the socio-contextual factors involved" (Lam, 2016, p.128). In this vein, Roever (2009) has not only focalized on the certainty that "both aspects of pragmatic knowledge are developed and accurately mapped onto one another" (p.560) but also has drawn our attention to the unfeasibility to resort to one of them only:

If a language user has the sociopragmatic knowledge to understand that a polite request is necessary in a given situation but lacks the pragmalinguistic knowledge of modals, interrogatives, and conventionalized formulae to utter it, pragmatic failure will likely result. Conversely, if a language user has control of pragmalinguistic tools without awareness of sociopragmatic rules of usage, she or he might produce well-formed sentences which are so non-conventional that they are incomprehensible or have disastrous consequences at the relationship level (pp.560-561)

Sociopragmatics, which is related to the linguistic conventions used in different contexts of communication, and pragmalinguistics, which pertains to language articulation, are fundamental to express intents. If one is absent, the other is ill-transmitted. In the case of translation, pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics are critical in conceptualizing the first author's intentionality and re-expressing it within the boundaries of the original text and the requisites of translation quality. This is why we usually read translations that properly fit TL rules but awkwardly convey their message.

Needless to say that translators encounter many hurdles when moving interlingually and interculturally, and thus require a set of abilities, skills, and competencies which would help them surpass these impediments at all levels: lexical, semantic, syntactic, stylistic, pragmatic… The reasons behind the various hardships may vary from one situation to another and from a translator to another, yet mainly revolve around many reasons; perhaps the most prominent among them are:

(1) In different societies, and different communities, people speak differently.

(2) These differences in ways of speaking are profound and systematic.

(3) These differences reflect different cultural values, or at least different hierarchies of values.

(4) Different ways of speaking, different communicative styles, can be explained and made sense of, in terms of independently established different cultural values and cultural priorities (Wierzbicka, 2003, p.69).

As a corollary, one can assert that the pragmatic failure in translation straightforwardly springs from the "interlocutor's ability to use a language communicatively" (Al-Saidi & Rashid, 2015, p.116) and, from there, is exhaustively tied up with communicative competence, which represents the gist of the translators' profile. Lou and Gao (2011) propose the following thorough definition of communicative competence:

The knowledge of not only if something is possible in a language, but also the knowledge of whether it is feasible, appropriate or, done in a particular Speech Community. It includes, 1) formal competence --knowledge of the grammar, vocabulary, phonology and semantics of a language. 2) sociocultural competence--knowledge of the relationship between language and its non-linguistic context, knowing how to use and respond appropriately to different types of Speech Acts… knowing which Address Forms should be used with different persons one speaks to and in different situations, and so forth (pp.284-285)

Language is a vehicle that reaches the edges of the globe without having any fuel, and it is regarded as a whole made of several harmonized parts. In other words, it is a living organism; if one organ complains, the whole body will suffer fever. The purpose of language is to transmit knowledge that is the genuine chemistry made by different ingredients.

For Thomas, who was the first to throw light on pragmatic failure as a new term to be coined and a current concept to be highlighted, pragmatic failure simply means "the inability to understand 'what is meant by what is said'" (p.91). Hence, a translator worthy of that name should, inversely, be able to comprehend what is meant by what is said. Such a thing, from Miller's standpoint, is unlikely to happen since in each situation of communication, be it of translation or not, the

Most of our misunderstandings of other people are not due to any inability to hear them or to parse their sentences or to understand their words... [...] more important source of difficulty in communication is that we so often fail to understand a speaker's intention (Miller, 1974, as cited in Thomas, 1983, p.91).

2.4. Relevance Theory

Translation studies have witnessed several turns from the theoretical perspective. The starting premises notably were linguistic, functional, and literary approaches to translation. However, with the ongoing academic efforts made within the frame of translation, other theories have been adopted due to the urgent need of this nascent discipline to maturate the contributions of authors and thinkers from different areas of knowledge, with their methods and seminal works and the interdisciplinary character of translation, as an art and craft, to intersect with other disciplines' inputs and outputs alike. One of the most influential theories is the interpretative model (or Interpretative Theory), which has been considered an added value in the sphere of translation. Interpretation is not limited to this theory itself. Still, it is a ubiquitous stage/action in every translational process since translators utilize it to grasp intents and make audiences seize them too. Moreover, the translator's interpretation is reached through various mental and textual operations, where the mental ones refer to cognition and the textual ones to pragmatics, which jointly fuse to shape the outcome, i.e., the translated text. In Hickey's (1998) introduction to the essays collection *The Pragmatics of Translation*, the author mentions what follows:

In general, pragmatic approaches attempt to explain translation procedure, process and product from the point of view of what is (potentially) done by the original author in or by the text, what is (potentially) done in the translation as a response to the original, how and why it is done in that way in that context. If we return to the question of whether there is something in an original text which is carried over in its translation, a pragmaticist might suggest that something does indeed survive the process, namely (at the very least) what is potentially done by or in the original text, since the translation has the same capability [...] (p.4)

Combining cognition with pragmatics to scrutinize human communication is the principal purpose of Sperber and Wilson's Relevance Theory (RT) which represents "one of the most influential and important pragmatic models to date. It offers a full, thorough, stimulating and productive model of human communication, as shown by the vast relevance-theoretic research which has flourished over the last three decades" (Jodowiec, 2015, p.15). Furthermore, this theory exploits the long-term mental goals to allow individuals to have an accurate representation of the world. From Sperber and Wilson's point of view, an individual's cognitive environment is made out of "assumptions that are manifest to him; an assumption is manifest to an individual at a given time if and only if he is capable at that time of representing it conceptually and accepting that representation as true or probably true" (Kamyanets, 2017, p.264). Here again, the translator's outward and return heavy trip burden is to shift from one cognitive environment (of SL and ST) to another (of TL and TT), which is "Operating in different cognitive environments" (Hatim & Mason, 1990, p.93) and "are not equally equipped for the task of inferencing" (p.93). This occurs if he only makes "a certain set of assumptions manifest or more manifest [...]" (Kamyanets, 2017) to his target readership as long as "the translator may feel the need to provide additional cues" (Hatim & Mason, 1990, p.94).

The extra information represents one of RT's cornerstones, in other words, context. Sperber and Wilson (1986/1995) have suggested an unorthodox definition of context, "in which the encoded content of an utterance will be processed during its interpretation" (Blochowiak *et al*., 2018, p.222) when stating that it is

a psychological construct, a subset of the hearer's assumptions about the world. It is these assumptions, of course, rather than the actual state of the world, that affect the interpretation of an utterance. A context in this sense is not limited to information about the immediate physical environment or the immediately preceding utterances: expectations about the future, scientific hypotheses or religious beliefs, anecdotal memories, general cultural assumptions, beliefs about the mental state of the speaker, may all play a role in interpretation [...] (pp.15-16)

Accordingly, two main ideas crept in: the first is that for a successful interpretation to understand meanings/intents among interlocutors, relying on internal clues do not suffice. However, other external parameters should be taken into account. Terms such as psychological, assumptions, state of the world, and mental state of the speaker show how intricate and complex is the task of uncovering intentionalities properly since a person's cognitive environment, for Gutt, "[...] includes information that can be perceived in the physical environment, information that can be retrieved from memory [...] and furthermore information that can be inferred from these two sources" (p.27). The second idea is that those engaged in any communication must choose - and not determine in advance - a particular context, among a set of other likely contexts, that better fits what is told/spoken. This selection of contexts constitutes RELEVANCE, put another way, "the quality of being directly connected with and important to something else" (Macmillan Publishers Limited, 2007, para.1). Let us consider the following example (Blochowiak *et al*., 2018):

a. Peter: *I'm going to Odeon to watch the new X-Men movie. Do you want to join me?*

b. Mary: *I've already seen it.*

From Mary's implicit response (I've already seen it = I have already watched the new X-Men movie), Peter can firmly conclude that Mary will not go with him. Although Peter has explicitly asked Mary to come along with him (Do you want to join me?) and Mary did not overtly reject his invitation, the presumption about Mary's refusal has come into Peter's mind, who may think, for instance, that watching this movie for the second time would be a dull affair for Mary (Blochowiak et al., 2018). This fundamentally paves the way for other pertinent concepts of RT, which help to assess the degrees of relevance, to emerge: the *cognitive effects* that are achieved through mental processes and the *processing effort* that is needed to understand an utterance and relies on two major factors: "[...] the form in which the information is presented (e.g., the audibility, legibility, dialect, register, syntactic complexity, and familiarity of construction), and the effort of memory and imagination needed to construct a suitable context [...]" (Noh, 2000, p.63).

On that account, a borderline that exists between the greater or lesser of cognitive effects and processing effort made in communication should be noted:

[...] On the one hand, the more cognitive effects the hearer can recover while interpreting an utterance, the more relevant the utterance is. On the other hand, the less the processing effort required, the more relevant an utterance is [...] (Rohan, Sasamoto, & Jackson, 2018, p.226). With the speaker/hearer bearing this in mind, optimality of relevance will be achieved. This latter reduces ambiguity that increases the risks of misunderstanding, which finally leads to miscommunication.

It is worth mentioning that RT owes its success to Grice's theorems in pragmatics, strictly speaking, the cooperative principle and maxims. One of the protagonists of RT, Wilson (2019), makes this plain when he delineates the boundaries of that theory:

a cognitive approach to pragmatics which starts from two broadly Gricean assumptions: (a) that much human communication, both verbal and non-verbal, involves the overt expression and inferential recognition of intentions, and (b) that in inferring these intentions, the addressee presumes that the communicator's behavior will meet certain standards, which for Grice are based on a Cooperative Principle and maxims [...](p.6)

Cooperative principles and maxims are not easy to maintain in communication since many factors intervene to make the course of interaction smooth and unbreakable. Among these factors are the speakers' and listeners' profiles (gender, age, culture, social class…), the linguistic variations such as diachronic, diatopic, and diaphasic, and the degree of formality and informality. In terms of fact, miscommunication is expected to occur between interlocutors belonging to the same culture and language yet may be compensated through some strategies other than translation which intercultural communication insufficiencies usually represent a real dilemma to surmount.

2.5. Intercultural Miscommunication in Translation

The cultural dimension is one of the most prominent aspects that characterize translation on both theoretical and practical grounds. In this vein, theorists have pointed out the need for the translator to handle the whole substance: the linguistic and metalinguistic. Besides, renderings should not be limited to abstract structures; instead, they should go beyond their underlying semiotic and cultural bottoms and to the general core of it: the author's intentionality and the message's primary purpose. It was natural, then, that culture plays a determining role in guiding the translator and influencing his decisions and choices, thereby occupying a prestigious status in translation studies.

Translation poses a severe problem in transmitting cultural shipment (or shipments), which sit behind the corridors of linguistic structures because languages differ in the form and the recipes of arranging it. Still, they also differ in how those affiliated express their ideas and perceptions towards what they are surrounded with of various representations belonging to all areas of life. The fact above has been confirmed through many studies, which showed that the translator should hold the cultural dimension first before working on the linguistic one. Moreover, he should pay great attention to the satisfying ways to convey the text culturally to TL. In not doing so, the translating process will engender disastrous consequences at the communicative scale that fall within intercultural miscommunication. For Zhang, Luo, Zhang, and Lee (2020), intercultural miscommunication takes place "when there is a breakdown in communication between speakers of two different cultures and languages due to cultural differences and/or sociolinguistic transfer" (p.1). Given that intercultural, cross-cultural, and multicultural realms interlace in translation via the overlap of messages, texts, and discourses to convey, another term arises here: the *critical incident* that the history of translation abounds with countless illustrations of it. Snow probed into this term and put forward what is to come:

The term 'critical incident' is used in a number of fields to refer to an event that is seen as important by one or more of its participants, and 'as having significant, non-trivial impact on their lives' [...]. CIEs have been used by intercultural trainers since early 1960s [...]. As used by intercultural trainers, all critical incidents include two basic elements. The first is '…essentially a story involving two or more well-meaning characters from different cultures' which results in some kind of misunderstanding, puzzlement, or problem [...]. The second element consists of one or more questions which require learners to consider the cause of the problem or misunderstanding [...](p.287)

As far as translation is concerned, critical incidents make things worse for the translator, especially with the many conflicts the world is witnessing. That being the case, translation is not only involved and its role well established in the bilaterally and multilaterally international relations that translation has enduringly contributed to solving the instantaneous pitfalls speech communities worldwide face but is also required as a language service provider in all domains of activities. Diplomacy is a prominent example where relations between diplomats' country and the country of accreditation interweave. Since, in most cases, various states do not share the same official language, resorting to translation or interpreting becomes an absolute necessity to facilitate communication and avoid misunderstanding. The notion of misunderstanding, which "tends to be used interchangeably with "miscommunication", both capturing all manner of problems at the production and reception ends" (Dynel, 2017, p.60), correlates with cross-cultural pragmatic failure, which is portrayed as the "pragmatic failure between people from different speech communities" (Nouichi, 2014, p.38). One illustration of this can be the "American speaker of Japanese interprets the answer "that will be a little difficult" as an acceptance for his/her request whereas this answer refers to a refusal in the Japanese culture" (Nouichi, 2014). For Dorodnych and Kuzio (2012), this is due to people being unaware that others may use different speaking rules, cultural scripts, or contextualization cues. Such a situation undoubtedly generates pragmatic errors, which can mainly be observed in neophytes whose translations are afflicted with sociopragmatic inconsistency between SL and TL. As Riley puts it, "pragmatic errors are the result of an interactant's imposing the social rules of one culture on his communicative behavior in a situation where the social rules of another culture would be more appropriate." (p.234).

Throughout the history of translation, there has been no time scholars have overlooked to stress the importance for the translator to possess the intercultural competence (hereafter IC) that permits him to mediate culturally but linguistically too. Katan (2009) is one of those who have brought forward the principle of communication in translation that hinges on cultural frames. From Katan's stance, IC "addresses the motivation, the values and the beliefs involved when participating in another community. Hence it is the intercultural skills which will constrain or promote the imminent communicative abilities [...]In short, intercultural competence means being able to perceive and handle difference" (p.284). This idea of difference, as reported by Yajima and Toyosaki (2015), represents one of the crucial dialectics of translation, videlicet selfhood vs. otherness, which does not only define translation as it should properly be seen but also displays the hidden practices that undermine it, such as belonging, sway, and manipulation:

Translators who (1) narrate their cultural identity, (2) situate their cultural identity in history, and (3) see their cultural identity as a site of possible transformation, can no longer see their professions as merely replacing text in one language with the text of another. [–] Reflexive translators come to know how their cultural identities are implicated in the process of translating and world-making; that is, participating in the global hegemony of languages, global economy, global circulation of knowledge. In narrating their coming to know, reflexive translators can identify both the good and the bad and that which sits between (p.101)

Accordingly, we cannot speak about translators' mediation without raising the question that grips the quite merit of The practice, i.e., identity and its components which travel between the different flanks and make the intercultural exchange possible. If carefully observed and cautiously utilized, reflexivity will open itself to the giving vs. offering dialect that sets up the cultural patterns, political modes, and literary systems worldwide, making those affiliated with different languages live as cosmopolitan citizens.

3. Using Relevance Theory to Enhance Students' Pragmalinguistic and Sociopragmatic Competencies in Translation

The present section is devoted, through some translational examples, to discussing the role of relevance theory in assisting students to overcome the hardships related to the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic components and subcomponents from interpreting, understanding, and translating perspectives.

Example 01

- Less bread. No jam. (Yus, 2016, p.311)

The present is an advertising slogan made by London Transport. For many translators, rendering that slogan may seem so easy that a literal translation would be a ready-made choice. One of the translations written into Arabic can be the following:

السفر مع وسائل النقل في لندن: قليل من الخبز ولا مربى -(Kouider, 2018, p.13)

This may be understandable since (bread) means (خبز)and (jam) refers to(مربى), and the translator thinks that the company is offering passengers a sort of snack made of bread and marmalade. However, what has been suggested above is one context among many others. While interpreting the utterance, the translator should process as follows: considering all the available assumptions and then selecting the one that matches the setting, relying on his inference. Here comes the role of RT that ends the perils of translation mistakes. Besides, the above translation makes readers exert much effort for fewer cognition effects since they will not rightly understand the purpose of his advertising slogan. As stated earlier, the processing effort required to comprehend a given utterance combines form (or structure) with the action of memory. Hence, as far as legibility is concerned, the translator should observe the polysemy of the words; as a result, neither (bread) will mean (خبز)nor (jam) will denote (مربى), but the informal, old-fashioned *money* for the former and *traffic jam* for the latter. The meaning conveyed through the utterance is that "If you travel by London Transport, it will cost you less than traveling by car, and you will not suffer in traffic jams." (Yus, 2016). Notwithstanding the more mental effort needed from the translator here because of the pun, what the reader is supplied with goes hand in hand with the principle of relevance, making the target audience spare little processing effort to grasp the meaning beyond the slogan. The translation from the relevance-theoretic angle would be:

سافر بأقل الأسعار وبدون ازدحام مع خطوط النقل في لندن -(Kouider, 2018)

Example 02

- John is going to lead the discussions with the rival companies. He deserves to represent the company; he is an owlish man. (Kouider, 2018)

The following Arabic version has been given to the sentence above:

-. سيتولى السيد جون إدارة المفاوضات مع الشركات المنافسة. إنّه جدير بتمثيل شركته فهو شخص ذو طبع حاد وصعب (Kouider, 2018)

The statement speaks about one person called John whom his company delegated to head discussions with other competitors because he is 'an owlish man'. This nominal phrase 'an owlish man' was translated into (شخص ذو طبع حاد وصعب), which means a peppery, sharp-tempered, and thus irritable person who is generally difficult to deal with. This personal trait is usually seen as derogatory and not as ameliorative. The translator's assumption was made based on a wrong interpretation, leading him to set up a reference that hinges on the physical features of the nocturnal bird of prey, namely the owl's large eyes, facial disc, hooked beak, and loud hooting. This literal translation profits nothing to the reader since it alienates him from the actual context, thus not achieving the principle of relevance. Besides, RT stipulates that any relevant assumption must carry out positive cognitive effects when being processed. According to the COBUILD Advanced English Dictionary, an owlish person "looks rather like an owl, especially because they wear glasses, and seems to be very serious and clever" (HarperCollins Publishers, n.d.). What is intended from the original sentence is that John deserved this privilege because he seems wise and has common sense. The translator, therefore, should reconsider the situation and opt for a translation that best transmits the cultural dimension of the original saying, and this only by finding its cultural equivalent in the TL, i.e. (شخص يتحلى بالحكمة)in the present case. A revised translation according to the relevance-theoretic outputs may be the following:

- سيتولى السيد جون إدارة المفاوضات مع الشركات المنافسة. إنّه جدير بتمثيل شركته فهو شخص يتحلى بالحكمة. (Kouider, 2018)

Example 03

- He has been gone through a harrowing experience. He was as cool as a cucumber. (Kouider, 2018).

This sentence has been translated into:

- لقد مرّ بتجربة مريرة ومع ذلك مازال مثل الخيار الطازج. (Kouider, 2018)

Based on a hasty and rudimentary interpretation, the translator's Arabic version did not equal the original sentence since the figure of speech 'cool as a cucumber' has been translated literally. The simile that compares this person's agonizing, distressing, and painful experience and the coolness of the cucumber is irrelevant to the target reader as it fails to transmit the idiomatic meaning. 'Cool as a cucumber' is an idiom that means a "very calm; self-possessed" (HarperCollins Publishers, n.d**.**) person, i.e., relaxed, not excited, and in control of his emotions. Besides, the translator had paid close attention to the relationship that exists between the two clauses of the first utterance (harrowing experience vs. cool cucumber) when he used (مع ذلك)that conveys the contrast (or discrepancy) from a linguistic perspective but has meanwhile miscarried to show it in his translation from a semantic standpoint. For a translation

fitting the principles of RT, the translator should adequately find out the correct equivalent of the idiom that explains the fact that although the terrible and bitter experience this person has undergone, he was able to endure serenely. One of the possible remakes of the first translation is:

-. لقد مرّ بتجربة مريرة إلا أنّه واجهها برباطة جأش (Kouider, 2018)

Example 04

- ""[...] I am fined one guinea. And with that I wash the ashes out of my hair."*" (Lawrence, 2005, p.29).

This excerpt is taken from David Herbert Lawrence's (May 1930) novel *The Virgin and the Gipsy*, which has been translated into Arabic by Khaled Haddad and Zaki Al Ustah.

-. أنا محكوم بغرامة جنيه وبذلك أنفض الرماد عن شعري (Kouider, 2018)

The above Arabic version of Khaled Haddad is a literal translation that needs to meet the principle of relevance. It drives the target reader to make considerable processing efforts to grasp the intended meaning. The problem with this translation lies in rendering 'I wash the ashes out of my hair', which is a scriptural reference that means penance, self-mortification, or penitence. Translating for a Muslim audience, the translator should have borne in mind the unfamiliarity of this latter with such a religious-cultural reference, albeit the verb (أنفض عن)implicitly gives an idea about someone who cleanses. Zaki Al Ustah gave the below translation of the same excerpt:

أتغرم جنيها واحدا وبذلك أكفر عن ذنبي -. (Kouider, 2018)

As opposed to Khaled Haddad's translation, Zaki Al Ustah's fulfills the principle of relevance as he managed to render the intent of D.H Lawrence. In fact, 'to wash the ashes out of one's hair' means (أن يكفر المرء عن ذنبه), and a revised version of the above translation may look like this:

لقد غُرمت بجنيه واحد، وإني بذلك أكفر عن ذنبي وأغسل حوبتي. -(the researcher's translation)

Accordingly, this translation makes the target readers gain significant contextual effects by processing less cognitive effort as they will quickly understand the original scriptural reference, thanks to RT form and content prerequisites.

Example 05

- Oh, je suis inquiet pour Alambix. Je vais passer une nuit blanche! (Yus, 2016)

This extract is taken from the widely known French comic series *Astérix*. The scene depicts Astérix and Obelix sleeping on a black heap of coal, contrasting Astérix's word *Blanche* and the scenery. The following is the English version of the statement:

[*Oh, I am worried about Alambix. I am going to spend a white night!*]. (Yus, 2016)

Since French and English belong to the same language family and culture, a ready-made procedure consisting of literal translation must be resorted to. However, a nuance of meaning in terms of usage creeps in here: "*passer une nuit blanche means to spend a sleepless night in French*" (Yus, 2016) and not 'a white night'. In comparison with Spanish, an analogous idiom is within reach, making its translation easier than:

"¡Estoy inquieto por Alambix! ¡Creo que voy a pasar la noche en blanco!

[*Oh, I am worried about Alambix. I think I am going to spend a night in white!*].

[*pasar la noche en blanco* means *to spend a sleepless night* in Spanish]" (Yus, 2016).

The suggested English translation above did not observe all the linguistic and metalinguistic components that may help provide the reader with a clear-cut view of the actual meaning (usage) and not the original idiom's virtual one (use) since the same does not apply in English. Again, giving credit to RT in translation will help to get rid of the crocked versions at all levels, and this will promote the mediating role of the translator, both lingually and culturally.

4. General Discussion of the Findings

The above section shows how much RT lends a helping hand to translators in concentrating on the very gist of the utterance and dropping out the superfluously related information. In examples 01 and 03, RT proves that for a translation to serve the purpose of faithfulness to the ST, statements should not be brushed aside from both their type (standard or idiomatic language) and the context they would occur. Although (قليل من الخبز ولا مربى) and (مازال مثل الخيار الطازج) may represent a legitimate choice for many translators to be resorted to, unless a semantic translation is intentionally aimed at, these translations do profit nothing to the target audience given that (Less bread. No jam) and (as cool as a cucumber) metaphorically connote another fact, making the communicative translation required. In examples 02 and 04, the question of how wrong assumptions that are cognitively made yet superficially conducted to understand messages resulted in inappropriate interpretations, which further the translator far from the intended meaning, is raised. Again, the irrelevant translations (شخص ذو طبع حاد وصعب) and (أنفض الرماد عن شعري), which do not materialize the two vital criteria of RT in naturally establishing positive cognitive effects when processed and compulsorily making readers not striving to grasp intents, as respectively compared to (he is an owlish man) and (I wash the ashes out of my hair), is underlined. The set references have unrooted the sayings from their original setting, which has, by turn, engendered decontextualizing translations, making the translation in (04) shoddy and almost quasi-ambiguous. As for the example 05, another important fact is outlined, which pertains to the nuances of meaning between lexical units among different languages, in other words, the slight variance of significances at the semantic level. Needless to say, that word-for-word translation represents a common procedure that is more pertinent among languages belonging to the same family and culture, as the case may be for the Indo-European languages, by way of illustration French to English (j'ai laissé mes lunettes sur la table en bas = I left my spectacles on the table downstairs), English to French (it goes without saying that = il va sans dire que), Spanish to French (la casa de Maria es blanca = la maison de Marie est blanche) French to Spanish (un homme m'a arrêté dans la rue pour me demander l'heure = un hombre me detuvo en la calle para preguntarme la hora) et cetera.

Nevertheless, the word-for-word translation would be difficult to utilize when translating from languages that do not share the same linguistic and cultural properties as Arabic into French, English, or Spanish because the former is a Semitic language that differs in conceptualizing and composing realities. The facts above should not be considered as a self-evident truth since it would happen that the translator may judge literal translation to be unacceptable due to many reasons, among them are: (1) it has no meaning and (2) it does not have an equivalent expression within the metalinguistic experience of the TL. The translation in example 05 (I am going to spend a white night!) has no meaning as claimed in (Je vais passer une nuit blanche!) in that it accords more priority to the linguistic frames through which the structure of the original locution is blindly and ideally duplicated, still overlooks the metalinguistic ones. The translator, subsequently, has to probe into TL for the translation that incarnates the same metalinguistic experience of the SL, which is definitely (to spend a sleepless night).

From the moment that translation is "an arduous job that mortifies you, puts you in a state of despair at times" (Delisle, 1981, as cited in Gerding-Salas, 2000), such translational hampers with word-for-word, in general, and calque, in particular, usually lead to another serious linguistic problem named false friends, or "false cognates, false pairs, false equivalents, deceptive words, deceptive cognates, treacherous twins and belles infidelles" (Boumali, 2010, p.12), which Chuquet and Paillard (1989) defined them as "mots qui sont, […] proches par la forme mais partiellement ou totalement différent par le sens" (p.224). False friends infiltrate because of the interference (also called *negative transfer*) between the various codes, a phenomenon that "we experience when linguistic structures that we have already learnt interfere with our learning new structures. Interference between two languages exists in all areas – for example, in pronunciation and spelling" (Gutknecht, 2003, p.698).

5. Conclusion

This study was conducted to examine the decisive role Relevance Theory can play in serving students boost their pragmatic competence in general and the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic ones in particular, as they are connected to the linguistic and metalinguistic competencies which constitute the means for any translator, to render texts appropriately. As the quality of translations is one of the goals teachers, translators, and practitioners aspire to, highlighting the importance of pragmatics and its impacts on understanding original texts and re-conceptualizing the authors' ideas, views, opinions, and intents should be the foremost objective in learning translation. Moreover, identifying learners' pressing needs, testing their skills, and assessing the knowledge they have attained should hinge on the Relevance Theory's paradigms which minimize the risks of deceiving authors and misleading readers likewise. Through the different examples that have been chosen for this purpose, interpretation was a key concept in conveying the intended meanings, and this by considering the contextual and extra-contextual cues, suggesting different assumptions and eventually selecting the one that suits the sense to communicate. In so doing, understanding translations will be an easy task for TL readers since they will spend less processing effort and will gain great cognitive effects. In a nutshell, the door should be wider opened for Relevance Theory to steadily get into the curricula to grant learners better educational environments with invaluable outcomes, among them notably uplifting learners' pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competencies and fostering their translational performances.

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