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Translation as an Intercultural Communication Encounter: A deconstructive Approach

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**Abstract:**

The role of the translator is not really distinct from that of the communicator in any typical intercultural communication encounter/ verbal exchange. In both instances the translator as well as the communicator is called upon to deliver what is being intended in the written or spoken linguistic code. Having said that, then the task which both of them is bound to focus on is identical or similar since it presupposes that each person possesses a high level of competence in two linguistic and cultural systems in order to accomplish the very task they are called upon to accomplish. Therefore, the primary goal of this paper is two-fold: to underscore the family resemblance or interconnection between the process of translation and that of intercultural communication encounter; and to underscore the merits of treating translation as an intercultural or inter-lingual act of communication since the constraints which face the translator are quite similar to those which the communicator encounters.

*Keywords:* Intercultural communication, translation, applied linguistics

### 1- Introduction: some theoretical grounding

If one takes a thorough look at what the process of translation involves, one is inclined to seriously consider translation to be a hyponym of intercultural communication or vice versa. The major elements or components which constitute intercultural communication are precisely those which literary constitute translation. Samovar and Porter (2003) claim that Intercultural Communication as a social science discipline is concerned about the blending of culture and communication and their overall impact on social interaction and understanding. They also claim that to understand the relationship between these two entities, that is say culture and communication, participants in intercultural communication need to be fully acquainted with a set of ‘cultural syndromes’ which Samovar and Porter (2003) defines as, “ a shared pattern of beliefs, attitudes, self-definitions, norms, and values organized around a theme” (p.4).

What this really means is that the entities –that is language and culture -which have the greatest impact on the process of translation are the same entities which exert a great deal of influence and are responsible for the success or failure of the outcome of any intercultural communication encounter. What really this involves is that participants approach the encounter of intercultural communication with some ‘cultural syndrome’ very much identical to the situation in which the translator finds himself or herself in carrying out his task. In both instances / encounters participants are destined to act based on their own cultural background or be influenced by their cultural and linguistic background. In either process there is no guarantee whatsoever that either party would not be subject to ideological biases and influences he/ she is holding whether consciously or unconsciously when confronted with any situation (Tymockzo, 2003; Schaffner, 2003; Gumperz, 1982; Thomas, 1983).

In his discussion of this social inquiry, Bennett (1998) remarks that, “the study of intercultural communication has tried to answer the question, “How do people understand one another when they do not share a common cultural experience” (p. 1)? Bennett’s

comments seem to be consistent with both Schaffner's (2003) and Tymoczko's (2003) ideas regarding translation. Both of them claim that the process of translation is ideology-driven and that the production of a target text is usually influenced by the translator's ideological background, intended purpose, and the stance which the translator assumes or holds for the target audience. They further claim that ideological influences can manifest themselves in various textual forms in the target text itself for the sole purpose of either maximizing the influence of a particular action or mitigating its impact. Such instances are pervasive whether in the act of translation or in any intercultural communication encounter.

Another translation scholar whose views on what the act of translation involves is Hans Vermeer, whom the researcher has had the privilege of becoming acquainted with before he passed away during a conference on the Role of the Translator in Interfaith Dialogue which was held at An-Najah National University in 2010. Vermeer (2010) made the following comments via e-mail to the researcher at that time and the researcher thinks that Vermeer (2010) deserves quoting due to the relevance of his ideas to the proposed claim:

*“That a translator finds himself in a situation partly known and partly unknown to him to carry out his task. He claims further that the translator feels hard pressed to translate a text whose author is partly known and partly unknown to the translator and this applies to the language and culture of the author of the concerned text. And finally, the translator finds himself while deciphering the text hard pressed to uncover the genuine intention of the target text. Therefore, the translator is clearly in a situation in which his primary concern is to produce an intelligible text consistent with the target culture and at the same time adhering to the principles of accountability and integrity as much as s/he can.” (via email)*

Other scholars from relevant discipline (see, Thomas, 1983; Trosborg, 1987; Takahashi & Beebe, 1993; House, 1996; Bergman & Kasper, 1993; Rose, 2000) attribute the breakdown of intercultural communication to a pragmatic failure due to the tendency of

some participants to misconstrue the speaker's intended meaning. According to Thomas (1983), 'pragmatic failure' can be defined as in, "the inability to understand and recognize the force of the speaker's intention" (p. 91).

Another type of pragmatic failure which participants in intercultural communication can fall into according to Thomas (1983) is 'socio-pragmatic failure', an instance which refers to 'the social conditions placed on language use'. This failure results from cross-culturally different perceptions of what constitutes appropriate linguistic behavior (p.99).

Intercultural communication breakdown can potentially occur in other instances which involve the performance of speech acts. According to Trosborg (1987) and El Samaty (2005) pragmatic transfer is something inevitable to occur when participants perform speech acts, they are very likely to transfer L1 norms and styles in their performance of speech acts into L2. Pragmatic failure occurs also in instances in which translators as well as communicators pay a great deal of attention to the semantic import of any communicated message at the expense of the pragmatic one and by virtue of that participants are very likely to misconstrue one another. Pragmatic failure occurs also in an instance where the speaker's interpretation or translation of a message from or into the target language is influenced by relying or using social norms and native-like strategies (see, Gumperz, 1982; Thomas, 1983; Rose, 2000).

Such ideas seem to coincide and be consistent with what Toury (2000) claims about translators and communicators. According to Toury, 'cognition itself is influenced probably even modified by socio-cultural factors' (p. 119). According to Toury, what applies to translators applies to communicators too. This means that the socio-cultural factors have great impact on communicators as well as translators to the extent that such knowledge induces them to think and interpret any particular message in a way very much consistent with one's socio-cultural knowledge.

Another important point which one should never underestimate its overall significance is the type of mistakes and errors committed by students of translation since some of these mistakes and errors are very telling and diagnostic. Therefore, the findings of students'

mistakes in translation along with the primary reasons responsible for intercultural communication breakdown, lend great support to the belief that some of these constraints which seem to undermine the ability of both the translator and communicator can be attributed to the lack of pragmatic competence in the target culture –an issue which seems to confirm Thomas’s (1983) notion of cross-cultural pragmatic failure and the importance of acquiring ‘communicative competence’, in the target culture. These constraints or impediments seem also to confirm some of the ideas of Gumperz (1982) which state that one’s linguistic system is destined to induce one to perceive any communicated message in the prism of one’s linguistic structure/ system; consequently, one is bound to misconstrue part of the intended meaning of any written or spoken message.

In today’s global world we can’t afford to pay a great deal of attention to the linguistic code as much as to the information being conveyed through it; and that is due to the fact that ‘formal translation’ proves problematic in instances particularly when dealing with rhetorical and idiomatic expressions since these types of expressions violate semantic rules; and that the meaning of such expression lies mostly in their associative rather than in their conceptual content. In addition to the fact that there are overwhelming differences among languages even among the most genetically related ones such as Germanic or Semitic languages which make the task of finding structural similarities among these languages a far reaching goal.

As an approach, ‘formal translation’ proves inadequate particularly in translating rhetorical and idiomatic expressions since the translation of such instances constitute a real challenge for students of translation on account that there is a clear disparity between their conceptual and associative meaning. For instance, the translation of the following sentences has constituted a real challenge to students of translation since the majority of them were able to account for the disparity between the conceptual and associative meaning:

1. Ali’s vehicle is a lemon.
2. Dr. Johnson is a butcher.

Based on the researcher's solicitation of students' responses and analysis of their written answers, the researcher believes that the primary cause for students' difficulty in dealing with the first sentence stems from students' inability to realize that there are two distinct meanings to both sentences. In the first sentence, the majority of students attended to the semantic meaning as expected but were unable to understand the meaning for which the metaphor stands and by virtue of that students failed to capture the second and most important meaning due to their lack of pragmatic competence in the target language.

This can also be attributed to the fact that there is less emphasis on improving and enhancing students' pragmatic competence at the college level due to the type of difficulties associated with this particular inquiry. Only a minority of students were able to construe the metaphor correctly and understand its function in both sentences. In the second sentence there was clear variation in their translation. Some of them gave one translation while others gave two different translations and thus were able to capture the complete meaning of the second utterance. Overall, the key point in all of the above sentences is that sentences such as the above continue to pose a real challenge to students of language and translation on account that such sentences require two types of competences on the part of the translator to fully capture the distinction between the conceptual and the associative meaning.

Therefore, one can easily see that the challenges which confront intercultural communication participants are not terribly distinct from the same daunting challenges which the translator encounters upon deciphering the real intention of the author of a particular text; and as a result of that, it would not be hasty to include that there is a family of resemblance between these two processes in many various ways and having said that then it probably would be conducive if we treat translation as an encounter of intercultural communication where the translator has to focus on relaying the intended meaning of any translation task. And by virtue of that, the mechanisms which should be employed in both processes have to be consistent with the type of challenges which are involved in both processes /encounters.

In the following section, the researcher presents some of the family of resemblance between these two processes for the sake of buttressing the proposed claim and justifying it on the ground that the act of translation can potentially be considered a communicative act and it should be treated as such by both the communicator and the translator. This would probably sharpen the mechanisms being used in translation by drawing on intercultural communication concepts since the primary concern of intercultural communication is the capturing of both the semantic and pragmatic aspects of any intercultural encounter and this seems to be consistent with what several translation theorists are calling for when they talk about the question of equivalence (See, House, 1977; Baker, 1992; Nida & Taber, 1982).

## ***2. Cases of resemblance***

### **2.1. Slippery process:**

A quick glance at what both processes is likely to convince one that they are slippery, fragile, and their outcome is quite unpredictable since neither the communicator nor the translator can be consciously aware of everything primarily in terms of capturing the intended meaning of the target text or the communicated messages in the intercultural communication encounter. In the translation process, the translator embarks on an unsettled project in terms of being unable to uncover the real intention of the author or that of the text itself after the completion of the translated text. If one just examines Venuti's (1995) definition of what the translation process involves, one is destined to realize how unpredictable and slippery that process can be:

“A process by which the chain of signifiers in the target-language text that constitutes the source language is replaced by a chain of signifiers in the target-language text which the translator provides on the strength of an interpretation”

( p. 17).

My read of Venuti's (1995) quote is that he is appealing to semiotics as well as to linguistic symbols to decipher what they stand for in another language as an adequate mechanism to fully arrive at a satisfactory translation from one linguistic code to another. Furthermore, Venuti's (1995) views on translation shows that the process of translation is an indefinite one and therefore he is clearly an advocate or a proponent of the post-structuralist perspective- a perspective which entertains the belief in which culture plays a significant role in the translation of a particular text and it has much more precedence over the linguistic element due to its great influence on the translation process.

In fact, Venuti (1995) spares no efforts in expressing his remarks on how slippery the process of translation can be as one can make sense of the following comments which he expresses:

*Meaning is a plural and contingent relation, not an unchanging unified essence, and therefore a translation cannot be judged according to mathematics-based concepts of semantic equivalence or one-to-one correspondence ( p.18).*

In the above quote Venuti ( 1995) is clearly downplaying the validity and utility of our reliance on mechanisms such as 'semantic or formal equivalence', in translation and thus in so doing he is calling for a real transformation not only in our outlook and perspective but also in the tools and mechanisms translators frequently employ in performing their task. Thus, Venuti (1995) is departing from old and impractical approaches to more optimal and realistic ones in translation. To Venuti, (1995) neither linguistic nor semantic equivalence can provide an optimal approach to the process of translation on account that such approaches are not adequate enough to account for rhetorical and idiomatic or formulaic expressions and by virtue of that such approaches do not measure up to the expectations. That is to say, translators cannot appeal to semantics only in order to fully capture the intended meaning of rhetorical and idiomatic expressions. This applies to some extent to the intercultural communication encounter except that in such an encounter the communicator is being assisted by the context in which this encounter takes place in addition to the freedom with which he/she can decide on the interpretation



of the communicated message being received from the interlocutor and assisted by all the paralinguistic devices available at his/her disposal.

In this excerpt Vermeer (2010 via-email) illustrates how the perception of each individual impact on the act of translation. His illustration is designed to underscore the inevitability of the variation in our perception of any translated material.

**Hans Vermeer.**

*“All human beings, like other living creatures (organisms) are different from each other. They are individuals. Even brothers and sisters are different from each other. All grow up under different circumstances. One is older or stronger or taller or more intelligent, has different habits and interests etc. But do we not say that they are similar, in spite of their differences? They live in one family, have the same friends, go to the same school, read the same books etc. Yet, we will never say that they are identical. We distinguish two relative levels of observation: there is a ‘broad’ level of observation, where small differences do not matter, and there is a ‘close’ level of observation, where even tiny differences are noticed. (Cf. an hour and a second and a second and a nano-second.) We need both levels for understanding the world. No two persons can stand on the same spot at the same moment. Consider football players. Each one has his original place on the field and therefore his task and the positions may change, but the tasks remain different, otherwise the game cannot succeed.*

*Each individual has his or her own head with its neuro-physical apparatus and specially its brain as the all-commanding organ. No one can look directly into someone else’s brain. No one can even know what goes really on in one’s own brain on the micro-level, leave aside what happens in someone else’s brain, what he or she feels, thinks, intends to do in the next second and so on. The German social scholar Niklas Luhmann (1984/1995) speaks of humans (and other organisms) as closed systems. Taking everything together, taken all circumstances holistically, humans live all their lifelong in absolute individual loneliness. They cannot even understand each other directly. Their interactions function by “penetration” (Luhmann’s word), that is, the*

*receiving organism must adapt what 'comes in' from outside to its own conditions, like food which must be digested to be used. We cannot directly understand another person. We must adapt what we hear (or read) to our own conditions, circumstances etc. The mathematician and philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (s. a. 2.115 § 1) explains thus: "When I say about the other that he has a toothache, I mean with "tooth-ache" something like an abstract of what I normally call "my tooth-ache". (2010, via email)*

## **2.2. The mode of thinking and speaking:**

Whorf's (1956) view on the influence of language on our mode of thinking is being made abundantly clear in his famous quotation and in which he analogically implies that the relation between one's mind and language as an organizing mechanism of that mind correlates with the type of relation which is likely to exist between a computer set and its software. Language is the organizing mechanism of one's mind without which one cannot perceive and conceive of things in a meaningful structure without language. It organizes and conditions our thinking and perception of things around us. The crucial point in all of this is that while the majority of us continue to talk about the impact of one's linguistic system on one's thinking and perception, not all of us seem to be fully aware of how to pin down or note such influence in our daily interaction.

"the world is presented in a kaleidoscopic flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds-and this means largely by the linguistic systems in our minds" (p. 89-90). Cross-cultural studies have revealed that people have lived and brought up in diverse environments and they have inculcated diverse cultural values which have a great deal of impact on their perception of things (see, Wierzbicka, 1991; Gumperz 1982; Gudykunst & Kim, 1997; Thomas, 1983). This inclines people of diverse social and linguistic backgrounds to perceive and conceive things differently. This implies that the act of interpretation initially is in and of itself an act of sheer understanding and since people from diverse ethnic backgrounds employ different communication strategies, then the likelihood is that they are very destined to perceive things to some degree distinctly and

differently and that is due obviously to the impact of one's language and mode of thinking on the interpretation of a spoken or written message.

Such impact has been reiterated by translation theorists and intercultural communication scholars. For instance Barna (1994); Gumperz (1982) and other intercultural communication scholars have claimed that the use of specific language as the medium of communication does not necessarily safe guard the outcome of any intercultural encounter or interfaith dialogue. Several studies on language use and perception have concluded that the perception of native and non-native language of English is greatly distinct and this applies to the speakers of all natural languages (see, Elsamaty, 2005; Bergman & Kasper, 1993; House, 1996; Trosborg, 1987).

There is also a potentially great possibility that participants in inter-cultural communication encounter resort to native-like strategies to interpret their communicated messages (see Thomas, 1983; Wierzbicka, 1991). Too often participants are unconscious about their employment of these native-like strategies and the likelihood outcome is that the process of intercultural communication becomes so unpredictable and exposed to the ever-changing moods of the participants engaged in the verbal exchange. This is a scenario heading for a real intercultural communication breakdown. Unless the participants are discreetly aware of these impediments, then the avenue they resort to seems to be replete with some sort of misunderstanding or distortion of the real message. To mitigate the consequences of one's style of speaking or mode of thinking on the overall outcome of any translated material or any intercultural communication encounter is very likely to result in misunderstanding and therefore it may jeopardize the sought-after goals of this process. Gudykunst and Kim (1997) are two highly prominent cultural linguists who have studied the impact of one's style of communication or thinking on either process and have cautioned against minimizing its overall impact. They both make a distinction between several styles of speaking such as "the understated" and "the elaborated style", which seem to apply cross-culturally.

The “understated style”, is a mode of speaking that uses rhetorical devices such as understatements in conversation and it is primarily used by Japanese, Chinese, and Korean. The second one is the “elaborated style”, a mode of speaking used by French, Arabs, and Latin Americans. This style of speaking involves the use of expressive language and is replete with other rhetorical devices such as exaggeration and animation.

Gudykunst and kim (1997)

report that the speaking style of Arabs contrast sharply with that of Anglophone speakers since Arabs have a proclivity to use a set of rhetorical devices such as over-statements, exaggeration, repetition which make their verbal mode of speaking imprecise and ambiguous. Both scholars claim also that the Arabs employ the elaborate style to sound more trustworthy and credible. This has contributed to their being misconstrued by others especially Anglophone speakers who consider them as devious and evasive speakers. As a consequence, Americans are inclined to perceive Arabic-speaking style as indirect, dishonest and think of them as incompetent communicators.

A case in point is what happened on the *opposite Direction Program* show on Al-Jazeera T.V, station. This TV show is considered an excellent forum particularly when the host of this show invites guests from foreign cultures, one can easily note that there is a great deal of misconstruing; and the debate becomes terribly heated to the extent that some participants would refuse to carry on the dialogue or would ask the host to be excused as a result of feeling offended so they would attempt to walk out without permission because they would feel that their self-image was being tarnished.

This interview was aired on T.V., on 19<sup>th</sup> of Feb, 2007, and in which Faisal Al-Qasim hosted two guests: Indic Larson, the former American ambassador in Jerusalem and the Egyptian scholar, Bayumi. The show has shown the type of debacle which has resulted from the speaking style and mode of thinking of both the host Al-Qassim’s numerous interjections and Bayumi’s verbal attack on the US ambassador in contrast with their American counterpart. Their style of debate and line of reasoning have undermined the

listening/viewing public from having a constructive, unbiased, and impartial interfaith dialogue.

Both participants felt offended by each other and did not have a chance to express their point of view in a clear-cut and unimpeded way. While one can note that both of them have had two distinct views on the purpose of interfaith dialogue; however, their style of speaking and mode of thinking have certainly marred and spoiled the overall outcome of this T.V. encounter.

It is obvious to the viewing/listening public that this T.V. interview stands as a real testimony of the type of impediments which we are likely to see happening in any convention of inter-cultural dialogue. There is no denying that had the participants been aware of such striking differences in their style of speaking or mode of thinking, they would have been more sensitive to these differences and would have been more prepared to accommodate and be considerate of one another as professionally as expected.

Mindful of the fact that this interview has violated some of the regulations which govern the type of institutional talk that Heritage and Greatbatch discuss (1991), it is, indeed, an excellent case since it epitomizes a genuinely real life situation in which the cultural patterns of two distinct cultures have literally drawn into a collision route and have manifested themselves in the speaking/thinking style and the use of para-linguistic devices that each one was resorting to in order to interpret each other communicated message. They both have misconstrued each other's primary point due to that fact that one participant refused to turn down the floor to the other participant and in so doing he has deprived the other participant of his institutional rights.

Heritage and Greatbatch (1991) claim that there is a set of regulations which participants are obligated to abide by them; however, the viewing audience has noted that the participants have to great extent violated some of these regulations primarily the host Al-Qassim and his guest, Bayumi in their constant interruption and interjections and by virtue of that they have deprived the other party the right to stage his argument. It is indeed insightful and revealing on the ground that it does account for some of the most

interesting testimonies of cultural differences and the impact of these differences on the overall outcome of the act of interpretation /intercultural dialogue.

Several studies on language use and perception have concluded that the perception of native and non-native language of English is greatly distinct and this applies to the speakers of all natural languages ( see, Thomas, 1983; El-samaty, 2005; Bergman & Kasper, 1993; House, 1996; Trosborg, 1987).

The whole process requires the engaged participants to be distinctly keen on the undermining constraints and be highly sensitive to these deep and thorny pitfalls because once one falls into them, misunderstanding is inevitable and this is destined to spoil the whole outcome of any inter-cultural dialogue and have some impact on the translation of any task.

### **2.3. *Ethnocentricity:***

Like any intercultural communication encounter, the process of translation is replete with instances of ethnocentrism and transgression of other cultural or ethnic-related matters. Some of these instances of violation and transgression are being committed wittingly or unwittingly since the translator/communicator is not always aware of committing such violation (see, Venuti, 1995; Bennett, 1998; Barna 1994).

Studies have shown that participants in international conventions have a tendency to pass judgment affected by the background knowledge that they have about the foreign culture they are dealing with (See, Bennett, 1998; Barna, 1994). There is no denying that the process of inter-cultural communication resembles that of translation. What this implies is that the act of translation which the translator engages in is identical to the same act which the communicator engages in in any intercultural communication. They are bound to face the same daunting challenges which the translator faces upon deciphering a particular text. Accordingly, some of the obstacles which stand in the way of having smooth and successful inter-cultural communication are visible and transparent to the participants; however, other obstacles can potentially be covert and implicit; and

therefore it seems as if one needs to have a great deal of competence to vigorously and effectively deal with some of these obstacles

According to Venuti (1995) translators are vulnerable to falling prey into the trap of ethnocentricity whether this happens intentionally or unintentionally. Venuti claims that the act of translation is both context and culture bound. To clarify his points further, Venuti (1995) provides a keen distinction between two types of translation strategies adopted by translators in general: the first one which he calls “Domestication” strategy used when the translator attempts to cater to his target audience, she/ he is inclined make certain changes in the foreign text so that it measures up to the values, and conventions of the target –language culture. This implies that the foreign text has to undergo some sort of transformation to be consistent and amenable to the values and beliefs of the concerned culture. It has been noted that this strategy is replete with instances of “ethnocentricity”.

The second strategy which Venuti (1995) talks about is called “Foreignization”. This strategy is being adopted by some translators who are inclined to translate the work as it is for the sake of preserving the foreign text without making any changes and by virtue of that, they might break some taboos of the other culture and being accused of some sort of ethnocentrism.

The deadlock and impasses encountered by the participants in most inter-cultural/faith dialogues have often resulted from the uncompromising stance which participant members hold on the basis of one’s ethnic background. Most often we hear that the exchange of accusations and allegations have marred and spoiled the outcome of any interfaith/intercultural dialogue. The reason was and has frequently been attributed to ethnic-related issues or such issues have been the primary cause or have a key role in the impasses of such dialogues. A case in point is the unprecedented controversy which Huntington's book, *the Clash of civilization*, has engendered in the Muslim world. A book which epitomizes the concept of ethnocentrism due to the fact that it has

underscored and widened the cultural gaps among peoples/ nations instead of bridging such gaps.

It has been reported that participant members find it extremely difficult not to hold firmly on matters pertain to their ethnic background and by virtue of that, they are compelled to be uncompromising in their views. Another important instance is that the majority of held interfaith dialogue conferences have frequently turned into political conventions with an intense exchange of accusations and allegations due to ethnocentric views, uncompromising political agendas, and attitudes. Therefore, it would be detrimental and counterproductive to mitigate the impact of one's ethnic background on the overall outcome of any task be that translation or an intercultural encounter. According to Venuti (1995) translators are vulnerable to falling prey into the trap of ethnocentricity whether this happens intentionally or unintentionally.

#### ***2.4. World view and Ideology:***

There are several scholars who have written extensively on the influence of one's ideological convictions and world view on one's translation or interpretation of any verbal exchange (see, Eagleton, 1996; Eco, 1992 ; Hatim and Mason, 1990; Venuti,1995; Bakir, 2004; Le fevere, 1992; Gumperz, 1982; Bennett, 1998; Barna, 1994) This is a situation where the translator and the communicator find themselves whether consciously or unconsciously being influenced by the ideological convictions they subscribe to in translating or in interpreting the intended meaning of a communicated message.

According to those scholars instances like these occur so often with little consciousness on the part of the translator/communicator involved in these situations. Whether to satisfy their own ideological convictions or to tailor their translated works to the type of audience they have in mind remains the heart of the problem which confronts both the translator and the communicator. Therefore, it would be counterproductive to argue that the outcome of the process of translation or that of any intercultural communication encounter is free from the influence of ideological convictions. For instance Eagleton (1996) is a prominent translation theorist who cautions against the consequences resulting



from the interference of the translator's ideological biases and prejudices in carrying out his/her task. On this account, Eagleton (1996) has made the following comments on the impact and consequences of one's ideology and conviction on both processes:

“ ideologies like to draw rigid boundaries between what is acceptable and what is not, between self and non-self, truth and falsity....central and marginal, surface and depth” (p.115).

This shows that the act of translating any text is subject to the ideological conviction and the biases of the translator/communicator regardless of one's ability to be able to discover the pitfalls and impasses with which the translated text implanted. This seems to lend some truth to the proposition that the translated work is replete with suppression and addition which are harmonious and consistent with what the translator believes and regardless whether the intention of the text is being translated and deciphered honestly and faithfully (see, Bakir, 2004; Lefevere, 1992; Eco, 1992). It also appears that this process is subject to the biases and ideological convictions of the translator which he/she holds and cherishes and not those of the author of the text. This certainly underscores the validity of the assumption that the task of the translator as well as that of the communicator is not only identical but also as fragile and as slippery as one can conceive of. Therefore, translators and communicators are called upon to acquire the type of cultural and linguistic literacy which helps them minimize the consequentiality of these challenges on the overall intercultural communication encounter at the same time they are obligated to remain open-minded and to adopt a neutral stance when dealing with their task.

Bakir (2004) claims that the translation process is replete with all types of censorship whether it is “external” or “internal”. Bakir (2004) provides an excellent example to point out the type of censorship which translators are compelled to make. Bakir claims that Stephen Pinker's book, “the Language Instinct”, translated into Arabic in 2000, is a good exemplar of such instances where the author leaves, changes, and suppresses textual materials to cater to his/her target audience.

Lefevere, (1992) another prominent translation theorist, stresses the impact of ideology on translation. He claims that ideological beliefs determine what can be translated. Therefore, he believes that a dominant culture can exercise some sort of censorship on what gets translated. Thus confirming what other scholars have reiterated concerning the impact of one's ideological convictions on the overall outcome of the translation process or the interpretation of any intercultural encounter.

And finally, support for such a perspective is being drawn from the views of another prominent scholar in semiotics and translation whose views on the same subject seem to lend a great deal of support to the proposed assumption about the constraints which confront both the translator and the communicator alike. Eco's (1992) views seem also to confirm the validity of the proposition which purports that some interpreters think they are translating a specific text when in fact they are using it and designing it to suit their specific purpose.

Eco's (1992) remarks in the following quote are likely to shed light on the question of translation and the task of the translator:

***“In some of my recent writings I have suggested that between the intention of the author (very difficult to find out and frequently irrelevant for the interpretation of a text) and the intention of the interpreter who (to quote Richard Rorty) simply ‘beats the text into a shape which will serve for his purpose’, there is a third possibility. There is an intention of the text”. (p. 25)***

Other prominent scholars who claim expertise on the same subject are Hatim and Mason (1990) who claim that the translator is usually constrained by his/her ideology- this amount to saying that the translator's cultural and ideological background would have an influence on his interpretation of a specific text. Therefore, one can conclude that the challenges which the competent translator is destined to face are very much similar to those faced by participants in any intercultural communication setting.

Some of these challenges are insurmountable on the ground that sometime these ideological transgression and biases are being committed consciously and unconsciously.

Therefore, translators and communicators are called upon to acquire the type of cultural and linguistic literacy which helps them minimize the consequentiality of these challenges on the overall intercultural encounter.

### **3. Paradigm Change: Translation as an Intercultural communication Encounter**

In the following section, the researcher attempts to provide his own rationale for the merits of adopting the proposition of why it is more adequate and practical to consider or treat translation as a hyponym of intercultural communication encounter (see, Nazzal, 2011). The researcher's rationale for such a claim comes from various but highly salient reasons one of which is the existing heated debate which has been taking place among translation theorists over the optimal approach of equivalence in translation (see, Nida and Taber, 1982; Jakobson, 1959; Catford, 1965; House, 1977; Baker, 1992).

This heated debate has underlined the fact that there is no real equivalence in translation and that the act of translation is clearly an act of communication (see, Schaffner, 2003; Vermeer, 2000; Farghal, 2009; Nazzal, 2011). Therefore, the optimal approach, in the researcher's opinion, is an approach which takes into account not only the semantic and pragmatic implications which seem to account for most of the problems encountered in either process but also to account for the importance of catering to the target audience along with the potentially instrumental role of the translator's intervention in the act of translation.

The debate over the interpretation of a linguistic code is an interminable question when all of us know well that there isn't a precise pair of synonym in any natural language including English which can provide an exact and precise meaning of its synonym. To illustrate this point further if one takes the adjective 'deep', and its synonym 'profound', one is destined to realize that while they are synonymous, there are not always interchangeable. One can say for example that X's thinking is 'deep' or 'profound' but one cannot say that the pool is '*profound*' instead of '*deep*'. Such an instance is pervasive in any natural language and it requires a fresh and panoramic view of what matters mostly in the act of translation.

A calculating look at the state of affairs that has been taking place in translation equivalence is likely to induce one to see that there is some sort of a genuine shift of focus from 'translation equivalence', (see, Nida 1964; Catford 1965; Newmark 1988; House 1981) to 'skopos' theory (Schaffner 2003; Vermeer 2000). This shift, in the researcher's opinion, parallels the one from 'E-language to I-language' which Chomsky (1986) talks about in *Knowledge of Language* (p.24). This shift represents or can be construed as the culmination of the heated debated which has been taking place concerning the approaches on translation equivalence; and thus it has given way to the evolution of other theories which might be considered more adequate for such a task. Such a state of affairs has resulted in the evolution of what is called 'skopos' theory (See, Schaffner, 1998, 2003; Vermeer 2000).

This shift of translation approach from equivalence to a functionalist approach or skopos theory in and of itself can potentially be considered a 'paradigm change' since it calls for the treatment of the act of translation as a communicative act with an intended purpose which has to be conveyed as intelligibly as possible to a specific audience.

Such an approach ought to take into account that the act of translation is pure communicative and that the importance of function over form has taken precedence over the approaches of 'linguistic or semantic' equivalence on account of their being not adequate enough to account for the type of associative meaning that some expression might manifest in their textual content.

'Paradigm change' is a concept originally coined and founded by the prominent linguist, Kuhn (1996); and that such paradigm change is justified and warranted on ideological, conceptual, and other pertinent constraints embedded in the process of translation. In his book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*, Kuhn talks about 'paradigm change' and the circumstances which are responsible for the occurrence of such a change. Kuhn (1996) remarks that, "a Paradigm theory is meant to define the problem and provide a stable solution to it" (p.28).

A great deal of support for the merits of treating translation as a communicative act comes also from Vermeer's (2000) Skopos's theory, Schaffner (1996) and Farghal (2009). The proponents of 'skopos' theory do not subscribe to the notion that the act of translation is an act of trans-coding a linguistic term from one language to another. The same ideas concerning the act of translation have been underscored by Farghal (2009) who considers translation a communicative act involving the relaying of meaning as it relates to the context in which it is being produced. Therefore, translation shall bear no fruitful results unless it relates to the social context of the target audience.

The arrival of the functionalist approach came as a result of the fact that the primary purpose of the Target Text (TT) is what really matters about translation and this has induced translation scholars to adopt a functionalist approach to translation and pay less attention to what is known as 'linguistic equivalence approach'. To those translation scholars who adopt the functionalist approach over the linguistic equivalence strongly believe that translation is a communicative act and what is at stake in this transaction is the conveying of the intended message as intelligibly as possible rather than finding consistency in two linguistics codes (see, Schaffner, 1996, 2003).

A great deal of support for the adoption of this proposition comes from Carbonell's comments regarding meaning. Carbonell (1996) claims that meaning is both culture and context-bound. Carbonell(1996) claims further that, "since the nature of the context of signification in both the source and target culture is heterogeneous, meaning changes unavoidably in the process of translation and there will be always possibility of contradiction between the author's intentions and the translator's" (p. 98). This implies that it would be safer for the translator to deal with the act of translation as an act of communication since the process is not only fragile but also unpredictable.

Time and again the findings of translation studies underlie the fact that relying on old approaches might not prove as optimal as one is inclined to believe. For example, relying on the linguistic or semantic equivalence approaches has become unsound due to the type of problems translators encounter in accomplishing their tasks. Such

equivalence approaches might be adequate at some linguistic level; however, they prove to be inadequate to account for nonlinguistic meanings as presented in the introductory part of this manuscript. Therefore, they are not any more acceptable nor are they practical at a time when the role of the author has become less relevant as that of the translator/communicator.

#### **4. Conclusion:**

This research paper has underscored the family of resemblances in the tasks of both the translator and the communicator along with the type of constraints encountered in both tasks and consequently treating translation as an intercultural communication encounter would probably sharpen the mechanisms being used in translation by drawing on intercultural communication concepts since the primary concern of intercultural communication is the capturing of both the semantic and pragmatic aspects of any intercultural encounter and this seems to be consistent with what several translation theorists are calling for when they talk about the question of equivalence (See, House, 1977; Baker, 1992; Nida & Taber, 1982).

Therefore, it makes great sense to seriously consider the proposition that if we deal with translation as an intercultural communication encounter, the task ahead of us would probably be more manageable on the ground that intercultural communication involves and calls for the discovery of the intended meaning and purpose of any communicated or written message. This is very likely to save us a lot of effort and spare us the process of addition and suppression and all forms of censorship which is associated with translation.

This research paper has also underscored the impact of ideological or cultural constraints on both processes. A case in point is the type of mistakes that translation students commit in translation. In addition, the type of instances of communication breakdown which occur in cross-cultural communication or interfaith dialogues among people of diverse ethnic backgrounds stand as a genuine testimony of the impact of cultural or ideological constraints which seem to undermine the ability of participants from reaching a real understanding. Therefore, acquiring literacy in the target culture

and knowing one's target audience members are exceedingly essential to account for some of the problems encountered in the interpretation/translation of spoken or written messages.

Support for the proposition which the researcher has tried to back up in this paper comes mostly from several sources primarily the findings of translation studies which indicate that relying on traditional linguistic equivalence would not help translators overcome the obstacles undermining their way for the accomplishment of their task satisfactorily. The validity of the adopted proposition is being confirmed time and again by the arguments adopted by many translation theorists who call for the adoption of a semantic and pragmatic approach, which is the same approach being used in intercultural communication encounter (see, House, 1977; Baker, 1992; Nida & Taber, 1982).

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