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Simultaneous Interpretation of Religious Quotes Used in Selected Speeches by Barack Obama

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Abstract
Simultaneous interpretation is a common style of translation used in media, especially in political events. It requires training, experience, and mastery of various skills, including listening, comprehension, retrieving, reformulating, and creating accurate translations. The paper analyzes English transcripts of original texts and Arabic transcripts of interpreted texts, broadcast live on Arabic TV channels. The paper focuses on two speeches by former US President Barack Obama. The objective of utilising religious terms in most political texts is not to deliver a religious message, but rather to create a rhetorical and pragmatic plan that leaves a pleasant impression in the minds of the audience. The examples of the simultaneous interpretation of utterances with embedded messages in political discourse illustrate that implicatures, which do not convey a corresponding message to listeners of interpreted texts similar to that transmitted to recipients of original texts, may result in dissimilitude between the impact of the original message and that of the interpreted one. This incompatibility may lead to differences in audiences' attitudes.

Keywords: *simultaneous interpretation, translation, religious terms, political discourse*

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INTRODUCTION

In numerous studies recently, communication has been extensively examined. People use linguistic and non-linguistic components in their discourses to achieve successful communication. However, interlocutors may speak different languages. As a result, they differ linguistically and in terms of communication. Many academics have examined the basic linguistic elements of discourse analysis, but little has been said about the communicative element that is connected to pragmatics.

The recipient's reaction to the message being delivered is typically shaped by the speaker's utterances and their linguistic characteristics. "Much of what is 'meant' when

an utterance is realized either in text or in talk is implicit, and hearers or readers have to make a certain amount of effort to interpret what might have been intended, using many contextual cues and mutually shared knowledge" (Chilton & Schaffner, 2002, p. 9). However, in the event of different languages, a third party, typically the translator, may be used to relay the message from the speaker to the recipient. In this case, it is the translator's responsibility to work on determining the intended meanings of terms by sharing knowledge with the source language's producer.

Schaffner (2012) explains how hedges and their functions can be understood from a translational perspective. She argues that the translator may face problems if the target text (henceforth TT) audience have a background knowledge different from that of the source text (henceforth ST) producer. She states that understanding the functions of hedges is what determines the accuracy of translation across cultures, for translation problems may arise if the translator is unaware of the hedging devices and the implications they have. So, she assures, the translator should have background and cultural knowledge of the ST producer and the TT audience and should try to make vague meanings explicit. She also indicates that, in the field of political discourse, all hedges have pragmatic meanings that call for explanations.

Moreover, Colluci (2011), in her case study about modalisation and pragmatics in simultaneous TV interpreting, analyses the impact that discourse modalisation has on the interpreted text. She observes that politics has its own rules and strategies especially when addressing TV audience, and interpreters are supposed to act professionally. They may add, omit, reformulate and use linguistic devices in order to convey the exact message intended by the speaker. However, these linguistic modifications may result in a change in the pragmatic level of the IT if compared to the OT. She also asserts that simultaneous TV interpreters would use modalisation markers to fulfill specific communication functions; these markers include DMs, hedges, adjectives, modal verbs and prepositional phrases. By adding these markers, a pragmatic effect may be created on the target text. Still, well-trained interpreters always try to give faithful translation that may not affect the politician's image. Concerning this, Colluci (2011, p. 77) concludes that "modalisation applied to SI of TV-broadcast presidential debates partly contributes to shape the politician's TV mediated profile".

METHOD

All the sources of data the author used in this study were downloaded for free from websites on the Internet. Solo presidential speeches are the main source of data.

The two presidential speeches are:

- US President Barack Obama's Cairo speech (CS), June 4, 2009 in the Grand Hall of Cairo University, Cairo.
- US President Barack Obama's victory speech (VS) addressing his supporters in Chicago after winning a second term, Nov. 7, 2012.

The speeches are available as videos of the original discourses with audios of their Arabic simultaneous interpretations. After downloading the videos and audios, the transcripts of these discourses have been downloaded. Moreover, the Arabic audios have been transcribed by the author because they were not available online.

Actually, the transcripts of both the videos and the audios are the basic data for analysis in this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Most political texts contain religious terms; however, the purpose of using them is not conveying a religious message but it is a rhetorical and pragmatic plan that leaves positive impression in the audiences' minds. This is very clear in Obama's speeches especially in Cairo, an Islamic city, in which he uses the Islamic greeting in addition to mentioning verses from the Holy Qur'an and quotations from other holy scriptures. This is intentionally done to affect the audience and be closer to them. The following phrases are examples about this notion:

Original text	Interpreted text	Back-translation
a) God bless you. And may God bless the United States of America. (VS)	بارك الله فيكم وبارك الله في الولايات المتحدة	May God bless you and bless the United States of America.
b) (…) and a greeting of peace from Muslim communities in my country: assalaamu alaykum. (CS)	والسلام عليكم	And peace be upon you.
c) "Be conscious of God and speak always the truth." (CS)	يجب أن تكونوا واعيين إلى الله ودائماً تحدثوا الصراحة	You should be conscious of God and always speak frankly.
d) The Holy Koran tells us, "O mankind! We have created you male and a female; and we have made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another." (CS)	القرآن الكريم يخبرنا بأنا خلقناكم شعوباً وقبائل لتعارفوا بينكم	The Holy Qur'an tells us that We have created you into nations and tribes so that you get to know one another.
e) The Talmud tells us: "The whole of the Torah is for the purpose of promoting peace." (CS)	والتلمود يخبرنا أيضاً بأن جميع الخليقة هدفها تعزيز السلام	And the Talmud tells us that all creatures aim at promoting peace.
f) The Holy Bible tells us, "Blessed are peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." (CS)	التوراة المقدسة تخبرنا أ*** أ*** مقدسون أولئك الذين يع*** يصنعون السلام لأنهم س*** جميعاً سيطلق عليهم أبناء الرحمن	The Holy Torah tells us a*** a*** that they are blessed those m*** that make peace because they sh*** all shall be called sons of the Most Gracious.
g) And may God's peace be upon you. (CS)	وليباركم الله	And may God bless you.

Concerning quoting sacred texts in political speeches; Soliman (2006: iv) concludes:

When verses from a sacred discourse such as the Holy Qur'an are quoted and are manipulated purposefully to implicate ideation, static translation fails to deliver the cultural or ideological message of such a deviation. It is the translator's job, then, to start a level of manipulation to satisfy such a distortion.
In b, Obama passes greetings from American Muslims to Egyptian ones. Here, he utters the greeting of Islam in Arabic "assalaamu alaykum" to be close to the audience and impress them. Later on in c, d, e, and f, he uses quotations from the three sacred books the Holy Qur'an, the Bible and the Talmud. These quotes can all help the speaker to win the sympathy and support of the audience. However, the interpreter fails to recognize the exact words of the quotations. This is something natural especially if the texts are from scriptures of religions other than the interpreter's. In e, "the Torah" in the original text is replaced by "all creatures" in the interpreted text which is not related at all. Then in g, Obama concludes his speech using the Islamic way by saying assalaamu alaykum but in English. Still, the interpretation is different, and it would be better if the interpreter used the same Islamic leave-taking expression which Obama uses to imply reconciliation with Islam. In f, "the Bible" is translated as "the Torah"; this mistake in translation may affect the Christian audience's attitude because they may think that Obama does not quote from the Bible and excludes them for some reason. What is apparent from Obama's quotes of the Holy Qur'an is that the president is telling his mostly Muslim audience that terrorists violate moral principles taught by Islam and the Qur'an. Additionally, quoting the Bible, the Talmud and the Torah has two indications; first, Obama is trying to satisfy all the audience who may belong to different religions; second, he is showing that quoting the Qur'an does not mean that he is a Muslim because a lot of people wonder about his religious background.

CONCLUSION

Interpreting religious quotes is very complex and difficult since it is not allowed to change the original meaning, especially of the scriptures. It is almost impossible to deliver perfect translation of religious quotes in the field of simultaneous interpreting, but it is possible in written translation where the translator has the time to look up ambiguous and religious terms and to check the interpretations of the embedded meanin

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