A Critical Study of Translating Some of Poe's Selected Poems by the EFL Students of Translation Department

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Abstract

The paper aims at presenting a critical study of five translations of Poe's poems by the students of Translation Department at Isra University. To conduct the study, the researchers chose five of Poe's well-known poems and divided the sample of the study into five groups. Thirty students participated in this study. The researchers asked the participants to translate the given poems expressing the difficulties they faced as well as the solutions and the strategies that they followed to overcome these difficulties. The study took place in the first semester of the academic year 2021/2022. The results showed that the presence of odd and old words as well as the difficulty of guessing the intended meanings, were the most difficulties that the students faced. As for the strategies, the analysis showed that using different dictionaries to get the intended meaning and depending on the context to guess the meanings of odd words were the most common strategies that the participants followed in their translation tasks. It is expected from this paper to provide some recommendations for the students who study translation in different universities and the lecturers who teach translation to students at different academic levels on how to deal with such difficulties and the best methods to overcome such problems.

Keywords: translation, Poe's poems, critical study, translation difficulties, translation and solutions

1. Introduction

Nobody could ignore the importance of translation in the world. Translation, as a process, helps in transferring the meaning of different topics from their source language (SL) into different target languages (TL). Countries depend on translation to translate different topics from their SL into TL to use them in different disciplines such as medicine, economy, and education. In this aspect, Catford (1965, p. 1) looked at translation as an "operation performed on languages: a process of substituting a text in one language for a text in another." Translation gains its importance because it is a matter of concern for linguists, students, and teachers all over the world.

Catford (ibid, p. 7) asserted this idea when he said that "translation is an activity of enormous importance in the modern world and it is a subject of interest not only to linguists, professional and amateur translators, and language-teachers, but also to electric engineers and mathematicians." Ghazal (2008, p.1) defined it as "all the processes and methods used to render and/or transfer the meaning of the source language text into the target language as closely, completely, and accurately as possible."

To transfer the exact meaning from SL into TL, the translator must adequately convey the intended meaning. To create the same equivalent when translating from one language into another one, translators should have a good experience in the field of translation and they must have a good command of two languages as well as the two cultures. In this context, Bassnett (1980, p.21) believed that ″Translation involves the transfer of meaning contained in one set of language signs into another set of language signs through competent use of the dictionary and grammar; the process involves a whole set of extra-linguistic criteria also.″ The translator must be able to differentiate between the SL and TL in an excellent way in order to succeed in his/her translation task.

Translation is described as a human activity, consequently, it is expected to face many difficulties in the field of translation. Some of these difficulties could be attributed to the translator's lack of experience while others could be attributed to the difficulty of these texts. One could agree that if the translator has a good experience and knowledge

in the domain of translation, then he/she may be able to translate the text under translation as natural as the original. In the translation process, translators are after the meaning, so if they invest their experience, they will be able to translate the texts properly. Otherwise, they may fail in translating these texts adequately and naturally.

Translators are not allowed to change the meaning of any given text in the source language (SL) when translating it into an equivalent close one in the target language (TL). In this regard, Neubert and Shreve (1992, p. 2) believed that "it is completely wrong for the translator to change the text from its natural surrounding and changing it into a different linguistic and cultural atmosphere, simply because it will lose a lot of its value and effect on the reader or listener's response." In doing so, the translator will distort the meaning of the original text and at the same time he/she will lose what we call the faithfulness of his/her work in the field of translation.

One may say that it is impossible to create or find the absolute meaning when translating from one language into another one, but it is required from the translator to find the close and the exact meaning he could. Waard and Nida (1986, p. 42) supported this idea by saying that "There is no doubt about the fact that absolute communication in translation is impossible", but they advise the translators to do their best to create the accurate natural equivalence in the TLT.

Translation is described as a human activity, so translators may face a lot of difficulties in their tasks when dealing with different types of texts. It is said that literary translation is considered the most difficult type of translation because of many different reasons such as the cultural as well the linguistic differences between the languages. To succeed in the translation process, translators should have good experience and an excellent background in the field of literary translation.

This paper aimed to present a critical study of five translations of Poe's poems. To conduct the study, the researchers chose five of Poe's well-known poems; The Haunted Palace ″ (1839), ″The Conqueror Worm ″ (1843), ″Lenore ″ (1845), ″The City in the Sea ″ (1845), and ″For Annie ″ (1849).

Literature Review

Hariyanto (2003) indicated that the difficulty of translating poetry stems from the fact that it is full of aesthetic and expressive notions. He added that the translator may face many difficulties due to ″the linguistic, literary, aesthetic, and socio-cultural problems.″ He stated that linguistic problems occur because of collocation and obscured syntactic structure. As for the aesthetic and literary problems, they appear due to the poetic structure, sounds, and metaphorical expressions. He adds that the socio-cultural problems appear when the translator faces some phrases and expressions that contain a group of categories such as: ideas, ecology, behavior, and products.

Yousef (2012) discussed the difficulties that faced students in translating literary texts. He divided these difficulties into three categories: linguistic, cultural, and human. He claimed that the difficulty of linguistic type is due to the difficulty in dealing with phonological, syntactic, lexical, semantic, stylistic, and pragmatic issues as the literary texts are full of figurative language. As for the second type, he mentioned that the difficulties appear because of cultural differences between Arabic and English. As for the last type, it was because of many reasons such as students' poor literary training, language, and cultural differences between the two languages.

Al Belushi & Ben Zid (2016) carried out a study to investigate the problems of translating Arabic literary texts in general and Omani poems in particular from the perspective of translation students. To achieve the purpose of the study, an interview, as well as a questionnaire, that was distributed among 35 students at Sultan Qaboos University, were used to achieve the purpose of the study. The researchers, in their study, presented some recommendations and suggestions on how to deal with literary poems.

Taamneh (2018) conducted a study to investigate the problems faced Saudi students in translating selected Arabic literary items. To achieve the purpose of the study, the researcher prepared a translation test that included 20 items. These items were chosen from Naguib Mahfouz's novel ″The Thief and the Dogs″. The participants of the study consisted of 15 English-majored university students in the academic year 2017/2018 at Tabuk University. The researcher adopted the qualitative and the quantitative approaches. The test was divided into three groups: terms of address, lexical, and cultural ones. The findings of the study showed that the students' achievement in translating the terms of address was the best compared with their results in the other two groups.

Tong (2019) investigated Vietnamese EFL students' habits of using dictionaries in the process of translation practice. Seventy-five participants took a part in this study. They were in their third year at Vietnam National University. Two instruments were used to apply the study: a survey and some questionnaires. The findings of the study pointed out the participants' positive attitudes towards the importance of using the dictionary in the translation process.

Vishnupriya (2019) carried out a study to investigate the challenges and the problems facing the translators when translating poems from English to Tamil. He found that these challenges stem from the fact that some of the words were classical ones that were difficult to be translated. Moreover, he found that the cultural differences in terms of proverbs and sayings between English and Tamil are considered a real challenge for translators when dealing with poetry.

Kuznetsova (2019) investigated the importance of the interaction between the context and the meanings of the words in different contexts. In the study, the researcher tried to study the translation of some English words into Russian. The results of the study pointed out the role of context in facilitating the translation process by the Russian students. Moreover, the findings showed that texts cannot be out of their contexts as words without their contexts are meaningless and senseless,

In another study which was conducted by Dan (2021), he tried to investigate the difficulties in poetry translation. He discussed translating the difficulties in terms of linguistic features, poetic features, poetic spirit, and cultural connotation. He tried to discover that in terms of translating some ancient Chinese poems into English. He found that the difficulties in translating poetry due to the presence of rhythm, metrical rhythm, emotion, sensuous emotion, and the increasing use of figures of speech.

The above studies indicate that translating literary texts may create real problems due to the communicative poetic function that these texts include. Translators should be flexible and creative to create the intended meaning in the SL and convey it successfully and appropriately into the TL.

2. Questions of the Study

The paper tries to find answers to the following two questions:

1-What are the most difficult translational problems that faced the students in translating Poe's poems?

2-What are the most common strategies that students followed to overcome these difficulties?

3. Statement of the Problem

Translation, as a human activity, is not an easy task for most of those who work in the field of translation even the experienced translators. The situation is the same for the students who study translation in different colleges and universities.

The researchers, while teaching different translation courses in different universities, have noticed that many students face such difficulties due to the cultural and the linguistic gaps between Arabic and English. Literary texts are considered one of the most difficult texts that students may face while trying to render them from English into Arabic.

4. Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study was to investigate the most translational problems that faced the Jordanian students in translating these poems. Moreover, it aims at exploring the solutions or the strategies that they followed to solve these difficulties in translating the five poems.

This paper tries to present a critical study of the difficulties and problems that face students in translating some of Poe's poems which were written between 1843 and 1849 by a group of students who study translation at Isra University. The study also attempts to explore the strategies and the solutions that they use to solve these difficulties. Moreover, it tries to focus on the most difficult statements that faced the students while translating Poe's poems from Arabic into English.

5. Significance of the Study

The significance of the study stems from the fact that it tries to give a clear picture of the difficulties as well as the challenges that face the students from their points of view. Moreover, it tries to shed the light on the students' abilities in using different strategies to overcome these difficulties. In addition, it also helps the lecturers, in their tasks, by providing them with the most workable strategies that students could depend on to solve any future difficulty or a challenge while translating the literary texts.

6. Methodology

This paper is a quantitative as well as a qualitative analysis of a translation of specific literary texts. The number of these literary texts was five poems which were written by the American author and poet Edgar Allan Poe between 1843 and 1849. Therefore, the researchers will follow these steps to conduct the study:

A-The participants were asked to translate the poem that was assigned to each group. The participants were divided into five groups. Each group consists of five students. The poems that were chosen are the following:

1-"The Haunted Palace", was published in 1839. It talks about a king "in the olden time long ago" who is afraid of the evil forces that they look at them as a real threat to him and to his palace. The poem serves as an allegory.

2- "The Conqueror Worm". It was written in 1843. It talks about the mortality of humans and the inevitability of death.

3-"Lenore". It was published in 1845. According to Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, the poem presents a clear proper decorum in the wake of the death of a young woman. One of its major themes was the death of a beautiful woman.

4- "The City in the Sea", was published in 1845. According to Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, "The poem tells the story of a city ruled by a personification of death using common elements from Gothic fiction." It talks about a city that is located in the west.

5- "For Annie". It was published in 1849. The poem talks about a disease from which Richmond helped Poe recover. The reason behind this illness was a fever that was called 'Living' which was finally conquered, and Poe was able to end his "moaning and groaning" and his "sighing and sobbing."

The source: (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lenore_(poem)

B-The researchers gave the participants enough time to do the task (Time: 2 Hours).

C- The participants were allowed to use their English-Arabic dictionaries in their tasks.

D-The data or the participants' translations will be analyzed and classified according to certain criteria.

E-The researchers asked the participants to talk about the strategies that they use to overcome the difficulties that they may face in their tasks.

6.1 Participants of the Study

To conduct the study, 30 students (males and females) who study translation at Isra University participated in this study. The study was conducted in the first semester of the academic year 2021/2022. All participants were studying literary translation and they were in their fourth academic year.

Table 1. The Distribution of the Participant's Sample Accordance to their Gender,

Frequency and Percentage

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	12	40%
Female	18	60%
Total	30	100%

6.2 Instrument

To achieve the purpose of the study, a translation test was distributed among the participants.Five poems were chosen for this study. The poems were divided into five groups. Each group consists of 5 students. The participants were asked to divide the sections of each poem into 5 parts to suit the number of students in each group.

7. Results and Discussion

Findings related to the first research question

The first question of the study was: What are the most difficult translational problems that faced the students in translating Poe's poems?

To answer the first question of the study, a content analysis was made by the researchers to find out the most difficult translational problems that faced the participants in translating Poe's poems as presented in table 2.

Table 2. The Most Difficult Translational Problems that Faced the Students in Translating Poe's Poems

GROUP NO.& THE NAME OF THE POEM	THE DIFFICULTIES
Group (1) **"The Haunted Palace"**	1-Understanding the poet's style and personality. 2-The difficulty in conveying the poetic meaning due to the different poetic rules in each language. 3-Difficulty in arranging the poetic verses to get in harmony with the original text. 4-Some dictionaries do not provide the students with enough meanings for some odd words. 5- The presence of figurative language in the poems.
Group (2) **"The Conqueror Worm"**	1-Guessing the intended meaning in the original text. 2-Some words have many different meanings. 3-Some parts in the poem need a lot of concentration to comprehend the intended meaning. 4-Choosing the right lexical item. 5-The presence of some odd words. 6-Trying to translate the stanza out of the context is a challenge. 7-The differences between the two cultures. 8-The difficulty of understanding the Arabic dictionary meaning such as "الهوام والساروف"
Group (3) **"Lenore"**	1-The dominance of poetic function in literary texts such as "a saintly soul floats on the Stygian river". 2-The presence of figurative language in the poems such as similes, metaphors, and personification. 3-Lack of good knowledge in the TL. 4-The presence of unfamiliar words in the poem. 5-Some words belong to Old English. 6-Choosing the appropriate and the most suitable meaning among many meanings. 7-The presence of some Latin words in the poem.
Group (4) **"The City in the Sea"**	1-The presence of some ambiguous words. 2-The difference in sentence structure between Arabic and English. 3-The difficulty in choosing the right synonyms. 4-The repetition of some words or phrases causes confusion for the students. 5-The difficulty in understanding the poet's message. 6-The difficulty of conveying the poet's feelings and emotions from SL into TL properly as Poe is considered a romantic poet.
Group (5) **"For Annie"**	1-Choosing the most appropriate meaning because the same word has many different meanings in the dictionary. 2-Keeping the balance of meaning to keep their meanings close to the original text. 3-The ambiguity of some phrases. 4-The presence of some old English vocabulary. 5-Lack of translation courses is a big challenge. 6-Lack of training on how to use the different types of dictionaries properly. 7-The presence of figurative language in the poems.

Table 3. The Percentages and the Frequencies for the Most Repeated Difficulties from the Students' Point of Views

No.	The difficulty	Frequency	Percentage
1	Understanding the poet's style and personality.	**2**	**6%**
2	Difficulty in conveying the poetic meaning.	**2**	**6%**
3	The problem of using the dictionary.	**3**	**9%**
4	The difficulty of guessing the intended meaning in both languages.	**6**	**18%**
5	The presence of some odd and old words.	**9**	**28%**
6	The presence of figurative language in the poems.	**3**	**9%**
7	Lack of good knowledge in the TL.	**2**	**6%**
8	The difference in sentence structure between Arabic and English.	**3**	**9%**
9	Lack of translation courses.	**1**	**3%**
10	Lack of knowledge on how to use the dictionary.	**1**	**3%**
	Total	**32**	**100%**

The above table shows that the most difficult translational problem faced by students in the translation task was the presence of some odd and old words in translating Poe's poems. It comes in the first rank and with a percentage reached 28%.

An example of the presence of odd and old words are the following words "gala, Lo!, gore, sob", which appear in

"The Conqueror Worm" and "Sabbath song, Waft" that appear in "Lenore". The difficulty of these words stems from the fact that they may have Latin or Greek origins. Another reason could be attributed that they belong to old English and that the students do not use such these words before.

As for the second one, it was the difficulty of guessing the intended meaning in both languages. It comes in the second rank and with a percentage reached 18%. The presence of some difficult and odd words creates a challenge for students in the process of translation. These difficulties could be attributed to the student's lack of vocabulary or because they are used as old words that students hear for the first time.

The second difficulty could be attributed to the student's poor experience in guessing what is intended in this word or that. In addition, the student's lack of care for the importance of the context in determining the meaning is considered another problem that causes a real challenge in determining the meaning of some odd words such as "waft, paean, Sabbath song, Waft." and as they were reported in the participants' reports. The table also shows that "The problem of using the dictionary.", "The presence of figurative language in the poems.", and "The difference in sentence structure between Arabi and English." were considered real difficulties in the process of translation.

Findings related to the second research question

The second question of the study was: What are the most common strategies that students followed to overcome these difficulties?

To answer the second question of the study, a content analysis was made for the participants' strategies that they followed to overcome the challenges they faced while translating these literary texts as presented in table 4.

Table 4. The Most Common Strategies that Students Followed to overcome the Difficulties that they Faced in Translating Poe's Poems

GROUP NO. & THE NAME OF THE POEM	THE STRATEGIES
Group (1) **"The Haunted Palace"**	1-Using different dictionaries to get the intended meaning such as Atlas, Oxford, and Al-Mawrid dictionaries. 2-Reading the poem many times to comprehend the topic and the meaning of some difficult words. 3-Depending on the context to predict the meaning of some unfamiliar vocabulary. 4-Checking the meaning of some vague words in different dictionaries.
Group (2) **"The Conqueror Worm"**	1-Reading the stanzas many times to understand the intended meaning. 2-Searching the net to understand some unfamiliar words. 3-Retranslate some lines many times to reach for the most suitable meaning. 4-Looking for some further information about the poem. 5-Watching a video clip on YouTube to understand the poem in a good way.
Group (3) **"Lenore"**	1-Depending on various dictionaries (such as Collins Dictionary) to find the most appropriate meanings for the unfamiliar or difficult words. 2-Reading the poem many times to understand it perfectly. 3-Depending on the context to guess the meaning of ambiguous words.
Group (4) **"The City in the Sea"**	1-Using different dictionaries to get the intended meaning such as Longman and Oxford dictionaries. 2-Translating the poem many times until reaching the final version. 3-Trying to understand the theme or the main idea for the poem facilitates the translation process. 4-Depending on the context to guess the meaning of some ambiguous words.
Group (5) **"For Annie"**	1-Checking different dictionaries to get the intended meaning. 2-Surfing the net to know more about the poem and the reason behind writing it. 3-Concentrating on the title of the poem to understand it adequately. 4-Depending on the context.

Table 5. The Percentages and the Frequencies for the Most repeated Strategies that Students Followed

No.	The strategy	Frequency	Percentage
1	Using different dictionaries to get the intended meaning.	5	25%
2	Reading the poem many times to comprehend the topic and the meaning of some difficult words.	3	15%
3	Searching the net to understand some unfamiliar words.	3	15%
4	Translating the poem many times until reaching the final version.	2	10%
5	Watching a video clip on YouTube to understand the poem in a good way.	1	5%
6	Depending on the context.	4	20%
7	Concentrating on the title of the poem.	2	10%
	Total	**20**	**100%**

The above table shows that the strategy that got the highest percentage is the first strategy ″Using different dictionaries to get the intended meaning.″ with a percentage of 25%. Using the dictionaries by students of translation is an effective strategy that they tend to use when they face some difficult words. Students at the beginning of each academic semester are advised by their instructors to buy the suitable dictionaries to help them in the translation courses. Students through their studying at the Translation Department at Isra University study different translation courses such as media, legal, economic, and tourism courses. In all these courses they need different kinds of dictionaries to do well in these courses. The importance of using dictionaries in the translation process is supported by Al Belushi & Ben Zid (2016) and Tong (2019).

The second strategy is ″Depending on the context.″ with a percentage of 20%. It is known that words without their contexts are meaningless and senseless. In this context, Baker (2006, p. 321) indicated that "the notion of context has been extensively invoked but rarely critiqued and elaborated in the study of translation and interpreting″. Words do not work or give meaning in isolation; they have to be linked with other words to give us meaning. According to Virgilio (1984, p. 115), he stated that "it is certainly important to establish that context is needed in a sense for-sense translation.″

In the dictionary, a word may have multi meanings which creates a real problem for the translators and even for the students. To overcome such a challenge, they must depend on the context to capture the intended meaning in the SLT.

Dimitriu (2015, p. 5) talked about the importance of context, in understanding the meanings of unfamiliar words, by saying that ″in the last couple of decades, "context" has become an increasingly important parameter according to which research is carried out in almost every field of knowledge″. Kuznetsova (2019) supported this importance for the notion of context in the field of translation.

As for the fifth strategy ″ Watching a video clip on YouTube to understand the poem in a good way ″, it comes in the last rank and with the lowest percentage (5%).

The results of this study go in complete harmony with other studies that were conducted by Hariyanto (2003), Taamneh (2018), Tong (2019), Vishnupriya (2019), Kuznetsova (2019), and Dan (2021) who all agree that translating the literary texts create real challenges for students because of many reasons such as the cultural differences, poor literary training, the concept of the context, and the presence of figures of speech.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

The present study seeks to provide a critical study of five translations of Poe's poems by the students of translation department at Isra University. It tries to investigate the most common difficulties that they faced in the process of translation as well as the strategies that the students used to overcome them.

The results of the study showed that the presence of some odd and old words in addition to the difficulty of guessing the intended meaning in both languages were the most challenges the students faced while translating the poems. The study indicated that the most frequent strategies, that the participants used to overcome the difficulties, were using different dictionaries to get the intended meaning, and depending on the context to guess the meanings of odd words.

This study presents the evidence for the importance of using dictionaries in facilitating the students' tasks in the translation tasks. Moreover, it shows the importance of depending on the context, as a valuable strategy, to guess the meaning of ambiguous words.

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