

Reading as an Essential Step in Translation

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Abstract:

Reading is one of the most important skills in language learning. The full understanding of any text doesn't depend only on having a good reading skill, but also on the purpose and the reading strategy to be used for handling the amount of information in a certain text. This paper is an attempt to shed light on reading in general, and reading skills in particular, and their relation with translation. It also investigates the possible types and techniques of reading suggested by language scholars and their reflection on translation. This study also explores how the awareness of all these readings skills and techniques is extremely important for the translators as one of the factors that help them in producing satisfactory translations to the target language reader of English. The discussions in this paper could provide a point of a reference for many translation researchers throughout the Arab world.

Introduction

Text comprehension as a part of the translation process requires reading this text intensively and more efficiently in order to handle both the volume as well as the depth of information involved in the text. Therefore, it is extremely important for a trainee translator and students of translation to prepare their mind so that they are as receptive as possible to the information of that text. But what is reading and what are the reading purposes and what reading strategies that may be used to enable trainee translators as well as students of translation to comprehend the text they are translating and help them to easily conduct the macro and micro analysis of a certain text and produce a good target text (TT) translation.

What is reading?

According to Longman English Dictionary, the word read has many meanings, as a verb for instance, it means to "look at written words and understand what they mean". Accordingly, reading is the activity of looking at written words and understanding them.

Purposes of reading

As the reading purpose has an effect on the reading process, reading a textbook requires more concentration, whereas, reading a novel for instance, requires less concentration. Therefore, it is impotent to be acquainted with

the different reading purposes. In other words, why do we as human beings read?

1. Reading for knowledge. The demand for knowledge is a continuous process which has endless aims. Some people read to gain more general or specific information. The internet and its various websites are among the tools that people use nowadays for this reading purpose.

2. Reading for research.

Some people are looking for information in order to find an answer to certain questions they intend to do a research on. It may take the form of an experiment or a survey, etc.

3. Reading for enjoyment.

People reading for enjoyment are usually looking for fun and may be to get rid of stress and anxiety. They read novels, short stories and may be poetry, etc. They only read for the sake of enjoyment more or less.

4. Reading for exams and tests.

This purpose is common among students. They read as a preparation and revision for their exams and tests.

5. Reading for translation.

Translators read not for all the purposes mentioned above, but they read for another purpose which is the full understanding of the different texts needed to be rendered from one language into another- SL into TL.

Types of reading

As mentioned above, reading purpose has an influence on the reading process and pose different types of reading. As the translator reads a text mainly for translation therefore, he / she needs to select the right type of reading that serves their purpose, but let us have a look on these types of reading to decide which type of reading enables trainee translators and students of translation to satisfy their purpose and help them to accomplish the translation task.

1. Intensive reading

It is the first type of reading. The reading material designed for this type of reading is usually of a higher level it includes unfamiliar vocabulary and unfamiliar linguistic patterns. In many cases it requires reading the text thoroughly to understand the content of the text sufficiently well. Since this type of reading may contain new concepts or long and complex sentences, so it may possibly create some challenges for both the trainees and the students translators.⁽¹⁾

2. Extensive reading

The main purpose of this kind of reading is for enjoyment. It is sometimes used as supplementary for the intensive reading. The reading material may take the form of short stories or novels. Because reading for pleasure through reading enjoyable books is the target of extensive reading, it is closely related to language learning.

3. Silent reading

Although all kinds of reading aim at the understanding of a certain written material, silent reading is merely used for comprehension more than any of the other types of reading. This type of reading depends on the reader's eye span more than vocal organs. "The graphic forms are visually perceived and then transformed into meanings ideas passing through the vocal stage".⁽²⁾

Therefore, the eye span of the reader, which is the number of words a reader can catch at a glance, needs to be developed through practice in order to increase the reader's speed. "The larger the span is the faster reading can go". (ibid).

4. Oral reading

It is the antonym of silent reading; it depends completely on the vocal organs. This type of reading is mostly performed by radio and television announcers, it is also used by students in classes at schools to show their teachers their ability to read properly. Reading aloud in class always comes after silent and model reading.

5. Model reading

Similarly, this type of reading is generally used by language teachers at schools. Teachers in this case will be examples to be listened to and imitated by students when they read aloud. As we have said earlier this type of reading is preceded by silent reading.(ibid:77).

6. SQ3R reading

This type of reading is also performed at schools and universities. Textbooks are the usual material in which SQ3R is used. ⁽³⁾, states that SQ3R consists of five steps:

- (a) Surveying (S). The student begins surveying the book he/she intends to read.
- (b) Questioning (Q). After surveying, the student sets some questions to guide him/her during the reading process.
- (c) Reading (R). After setting the main questions, the student reads the text.
- (d) Reciting (R). The student in this phase can recall what he/she has read earlier.

(e) Reviewing (R). This process will be as a guide to the student and helps him/her to concentrate upon any weakness in recalling the information he/she already read in a text.

Reading Stages

Classroom reading in general, and reading for translation in particular, normally go through three reading stages; pre-reading, reading and post-reading:

- (1) Pre-reading, in stage, student of translation and trainee translator prepare themselves to read a certain material, recognizing new or challenging vocabulary or any new patterns appears in the text.
- (2) Reading, after the preparation performed in the pre-reading stage, students as well as trainee translators are ready to silently read the text for comprehension.
- (3) Post-reading, after silent reading and comprehension of the text, student of translation and trainee translator may start rendering the source text (ST) into the target text (TT) and make the translation draft.

Reading skills

In reading a text, students need to able to do various things. They should be able to scan, skim or read a text for more detailed comprehension. A mixture of reading material and activities should be offered to students to be able to practice their reading skills which are as follow:

(1) Scanning

The term scanning is used when the reader of a certain text needs to find specific piece of information quickly. When we scan we simply allow our eyes to quickly run over the surface of a text looking for some key words relating to the information we are looking for. Scanning does not require reading the whole text. If the reader for instance, is looking for a certain date or address all he/she needs to do is to efficiently look and decide which part of the text is most likely to contain the information he /she is looking for.⁽⁴⁾

(2) Skimming

Skimming is another reading skill that helps to handle a large amount of information involved in the reading process. The term skimming is sometimes interchangeably used with the term survey. Unlike scanning, skimming is used when the reader of a certain text wants to get an over view of the content of that text. Skimming allows readers to identify whether a text

is relevant or which parts of a text are most relevant, gain an over view of the writer's argument,

and prepare themselves to intensive reading. Skimming can be done in many ways, depending on the type and length of a text. To skim a single paragraph for example, begin by reading the topic sentence as it is most likely to state the topic of that paragraph. (ibid: 57-58).

(3) Reading for detailed comprehension

This reading skill should entail looking for detailed information. Students during using this reading skill should read something different from the above mentioned reading skills.

Reading principles

suggests six important reading principles. They are as follows:

Principle 1: Encourage students to read as often and as much as possible.

According to this reading principle, students should be encouraged to read intensively and extensively. The more they read, the better.⁽⁵⁾

Principle 2: Students need to be encouraged with what they are reading.

When students are doing extensive reading outside their class room, they should be involved in joyful or in what is known as reading for pleasure. Students in this case should try to have as much pleasure as possible. While inside their class room or during the lessons, they should be fully engaged with the topic or the text they are reading as well as the activities they are asked to do while dealing with that text materials.

Principle 3 : Encourage students to respond to the content of a text (and explore their feelings about it), not just concentrate on its constructions.

No doubt, that each text has a message to deliver. In other words the intention of the writer of the text . Therefore, students reading a certain text should be given the chance not only to study the things related to language use, such as grammar, vocabulary or punctuation marks, but also show their response to the content of that text and express their feelings about the topic.

Principle 4: Prediction is a major factor in reading.

Prediction and expectations are very important in reading. Book covers, photographs, headlines

etc. are good clues when reading. They hint at what the text is about. Once we get such clues our brain starts to predicting what are we going to read. In class, students should be given "hints" so that they have the chance to expect what is coming.

Principle 5: Match the task to the topic when using intensive reading texts. Based on the students level and after deciding and selecting the text to be read by students, we need to choose the reading tasks – re-reading, reading, and post-reading activities, the kind of questions to be asked. Boring and inappropriate reading tasks may undermined any interesting and useful text.

Principle 6: Good teachers exploit reading texts to the full.

As any reading, a text is usually full of new vocabulary (words) , sentences, phrase, expressions, ideas descriptions etc, good reading comprehension teachers need to integrate all these elements in a interesting lesson sequences by using different reading tasks and a range of reading activities to bring the text to life.

Reading strategies:

Simply, reading strategies are “plans that we carry out to achieve certain reading goals.” According to Williams.⁽⁶⁾ Regardless of the reading strategy they use when reading texts, people read texts in order to understand their content. Moreover, some of us use reading strategies without even the realization of using this or that strategy. This is particularly true when we are doing something important such as translation, but what reading strategies are used?

(1) Strategy of dealing with unfamiliar vocabulary:

Vocabulary is one of reading comprehension problems; the knowledge of adequate words helps translators grasp the meaning of lexical items in a text. The appearance of many unfamiliar words in a certain text makes it difficult and may be impossible to comprehend. It is often better for translators to guess the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary from the context before checking the meaning of the new word in the dictionary. However, if the translator still cannot understand enough of the content to guess the meaning, they can use the following alternative strategy:

(2) Strategy of dealing with unfamiliar concepts:

Unfamiliar concepts and unfamiliar vocabulary are often interrelated. Dealing with unfamiliar vocabulary clarifies unfamiliar concepts in the text. However, sometimes understanding words meaning in certain text doesn't help in the understanding of the key ideas in the passage. We may not sufficiently understand some terms simply because they don't make sense in the text. To explore the meaning of any difficult concepts of any text,

Williams suggests doing some more reading through using accessible reliable sources of information. (ibid)

(3) Strategy of dealing with long and complex sentences

Long and complex sentencing (a complex sentence contains one subordinate clauses as well as a main clause) can be a challenge that makes students lost in a text. To make the sense of any long or complex sentence and get the main clause(the group of words that contains at least a subject and a verb, and can stand alone as a complete sentence), students need to break the sentence down parts and highlight the main subject, verb, and object, then read the text in full focusing on how the highlighted points are modified or connected.

Reading, meaning and translation:

Most of us perhaps agree that every text is supposed to have a meaning derived from the text which should be uncovered by the translator.

As it has been mentioned earlier, reading can be used for different purposes and therefore into different schemata. Different readers may understand a text differently. This means that those readers have different meanings of the same text and some of them may even go far from the real meaning of a text, especially when reading controversial texts. Therefore, the real issue concerned with meaning (the real meaning) of a text, but what is meaning?.

What is meaning?

Nuttall claims, that, to understand a text as fully as possible and be able to get the message of a text, we would need to understand every sentence included in the text, but what meaning that should be understood.⁽⁷⁾

Ghazala defines meaning of a text as " a complicated network of language components which are of course; Grammar, Vocabulary, Style and Phonology." Each of which includes several points. According to him, meaning is the product of all these language elements, taken together in a certain type of text and context.⁽⁸⁾

Gaber on the other hand, indicates that the meaning of a text is " What we understand from a text when we read it". It includes its *subject* (the idea or ideas the text talks about), *function* (the writer's intention), *tone* (the writer's attitude towards the subject), *format* (the form in which the writer's intention was presented), *style* (the way the writer puts the words and phrases together to make a text).⁽⁹⁾

Types of meaning

Nutall suggests four types of meaning that can be distinguished as follows:⁽¹⁰⁾

1- Conceptual meaning:

The conceptual meaning is the meaning that a word can have on its own.

2- Prepositional meaning:

The prepositional meaning is the meaning that a sentence can have on its own.

3- Contextual meaning:

The contextual meaning is the meaning a sentence can only have in certain context.

4- Pragmatic meaning:

The pragmatic meaning, is the meaning that a sentence only has as a part of the interaction between the writer and the reader. This type of meaning reflects the writer's feeling, and attitudes. It also includes the intended effect of the utterance on the reader. (Ibid).

The question which imposes itself in this context, whether the translator needs to be aware of all these things suggested by scholars above. The answer of this question is simply yes, as the knowledge of these points will enable them to be able to re-produce them in the target language text (TLT).

Reading comprehension and the translation process

Reading and translation are interrelated to one another. Although students of translation need to be able to scan or skim a certain text. They also need to read for more detailed comprehension as they initially using reading for the sake of translation and not for any other reading purposes. In the light of all what we have discussed earlier, it is obvious that students of translation as well as trainee translators, do not only need to look for bits of information in a text or just cast their eyes over its surface, but they also need to understand the text in order to produce satisfactory translation. As language is the process of meaning construction, the translation process on the other hand, is the art of rendering the meaning of a text from one language into another, no doubt that the comprehension of any text requires a proper reading of this text, the incorrect reading of this text will definitely lead to misunderstanding of the text and the production of imperfect or weak translation. Therefore, reading comprehension is an essential and important part in the framework of translation methodology. Newmark (quoted in Yowell et al)⁽¹¹⁾ states, "Any good translator should have reading comprehension ability in a foreign language". Moreover, Gaber on the other hand, states that "A translator cannot translate a text without understanding the meaning(s) of that text). In

order to fully comprehend source texts and produce a satisfactory version in the target language text (TLT), translators need to read SL text carefully (at least twice) to produce a perfect satisfactory version in the TLT. The first reading is a general reading. It is known by translators as general analysis. In the general reading, the translator needs to know the format or the form in which the writer presented the ideas of the text, subject or the idea or ideas the text talks about, function or the writer's intention, and the tone of the text to the writer's attitude towards the subject of the text. The second is a close reading known among translators as a linguistic analysis. In the close reading, translators need to be aware of the style or the writer's choice of words, sentences as well as the punctuation marks used in the SL text. (ibid). Therefore, through the analysis of the (SLT) reading comprehension becomes a vital step during the translation process. Being aware of both general and linguistic analysis, the translator doesn't only understand SLT completely, but also has the ability to produce good and accepted translations by the target language reader TLR. Reading comprehension is a very complex skill that involves many language elements, such as vocabulary, grammar, style, etc. each of which may be problematic for readers in general and translators in particular. Hence, translators need to be aware of such reading problems especially the one related to the content or a different foreign culture of a certain text. As for the content, the existence of difficulty or strangeness of content may lead to misunderstanding or even not understanding at all. But for culture, the appearance of cultural specific words or phrases in a reading comprehension text may require adequate grasping of meaning, especially when the foreign culture is unfamiliar to language learners as well as students translators.⁽¹²⁾

Conclusion:

To conclude, the comprehension of a text is extremely important. To guarantee good translation communication, texts need to be fully understood by the translator. The knowledge and the awareness of the types, skills, and techniques of reading, is a vital factor and plays an important role in the production of acceptable target language texts. Bad reading as well as misunderstanding of the source text by the translator, represents certain problems when translating between Arabic and English and vice versa. Therefore, reading and understanding a certain text require special attention and help to produce good and satisfactory translation. Despite the various issues of translation between Arabic and English, little effort has been

devoted to the translation problems in translating between Arabic and English. Furthermore, limited attention and effort have been given to addressing the problem of reading comprehension when translating between Arabic and English. As stated in the introduction, the main aim of this paper is to examine the appropriate reading strategy when translating between Arabic and English. To achieve this goal, we have discussed the different types of reading, reading skills, and reading techniques used before starting the translation process of any text. This paper also introduced a number of reading strategies suggested by some translation scholars to help the translator to fully understand the text that needs to be translated. Finally, this study also shows that more research need to be conducted especially with those related to the general and linguistic analysis of texts.

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