

Role of Literary Pragmatics in Translation: A Personal Case Study

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Abstract

This article aims to explain how the knowledge of pragmatics, and in particular literary pragmatics as a new approach, can help the translator. More to the point, it endeavors to highlight the important part of different pragmatic backgrounds represented by the active cooperative effort that the translator should assume with the author, source text, and the target language so that he/she can succeed in transferring faithfully elements of both literary and pragmatic registers in both source and target languages. Being a translator myself, I want to inform literary pragmatists more about the experience of translation. There should exist a dialogue and a cooperative bargain between the translators as a reader, interpreter and convertor, the text to be translated, the author, and the linguist. A personal case study from my own translations undergone to prove the close dialogue and collaboration between literature, pragmatics, translation, author and translator.

Keywords

Pragmatics, Literary Pragmatics, Translation, Cooperation Principle, Dialogue, Roles of Translator and Roles of Literary Pragmatics

1. Introduction

The role and impacts of pragmatics across disciplines in regard to many fields of study have become a reality. With the development of pragmatics, a variety of disciplines have benefited greatly from the insights it offers, just as pragmatics in itself has benefited from these disciplines' findings. It is normal and necessary for disciplines to borrow from and cross-pollinate with one another, but occasionally it is useful to pause, take a distance, consider, and problematize the function of pragmatics at these lines. With the aim of enlarging and deepening our understanding of the contributions and limitations of pragmatics as such, we

need to explore the influence, relationship, and interaction between pragmatics and related or complementary disciplines of inquiry. This paper is an attempt to reveal the linguistic role and influence shared between pragmatics, literary pragmatics and translation which should lead to the emergence of new studies incorporating them together.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Pragmatics

Pragmatics in its modern birth can be considered as the youngest branch of linguistic field. Almost the majority of theoretical leaders in this field are philosophers of language. The main question raised in the beginning was: how do we infer meaning? Today a broader definition of pragmatics is almost agreed upon as being “the study of the use of natural language in communication; more generally, the study of the relations between languages and their users.” Yan Huang offers three definitions of pragmatics: “(1) Pragmatics is the study of language use in context. (2) Pragmatics is the systematic study of meaning by virtue of, or dependent on, the use of language. The central topics of inquiry include implicature, presupposition, speech acts, deixis, reference, and context, and the division of labour between, and the interaction of, pragmatics and semantics (see also Huang, 2007, 2013, 2014: p. 2, 2016). (3) Pragmatics is a general functional (i.e. cognitive, social, and cultural) perspective on linguistic phenomena in relation to their usage in forms of behaviour. [It] should be seen... as a specific perspective... on whatever phonologists, morphologists, syntacticians, semanticists, psycholinguists, sociolinguists, etc. deal with” (Verschueren, 1999: p. 7, 11, 1995: p. 12).

However, pragmatics in its modern features is a nectar of the contribution of many canonical names. We can mention Gottlob Frege’s project in his seminal paper “On Sense and Reference”. According to Frege, while the referent of a sentence or a clause is a truth-value, the sense of a sentence, or a clause -the way it presents its referent-is a thought.

Bertrand Russell (1905) and his famous essay “on denoting” published in 1905 where he introduces his theory of how we can denote the meaning “denoting phrases... never have any meaning in themselves, but every proposition in whose verbal expression they occur has a meaning.”

Alfred Tarski’s theory of truth provides mathematical definitions of semantic concepts such as truth and logical consequence. In his milestone paper, “The Concept of Truth in Formalized Languages”, Tarski sets out to demonstrate that, for many languages, one could constantly define a truth-predicate for that language, though this definition must be given in a language that is expressly richer than the original one.

Ludwig Wittgenstein (1921) proposition in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* that “the picture is a model of reality” therefore we get meaning through the images that the words raise in our brains to sum up the world outside. The later

Wittgenstein (1953) in his *Philosophical Investigations* proposes that “the meaning of a word is its use in the language” and that despite the strict grammatical rules that govern any natural language we can play so many “language games” -to use his terms- such as reporting an event, or speculating about an event, establishing and testing a hypothesis, making up a story, reading it, play-acting, singing, guessing riddles, making a joke, translating, asking, thanking, and so on. Translation here and how literary pragmatics can help is our major concern in this respect.

Richards (1936) drew our attention in his frequently overlooked book, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, to an important matter: the risk of misunderstanding, or what he calls also bad communication in any discourse. He also mentions the importance of context in any speech event “Now for the sense of ‘context.’ Most generally it is a name for a whole cluster of events that recur together—including the required conditions as well as whatever we may pick out as cause or effect.” Richards at the end of his book focuses on metaphors as tools that help the reader in understanding the real conveyed meaning.

Rebecca Tipton refers also to “the work of Charles Morris (1938) who developed a typology of syntax, semantics and pragmatics within a general science of signs (semiotics). Within this triad, syntax ‘is considered to be the study of the formal relations of one sign to another’, semantics concerns ‘the relations of those signs to objects in the outside world’, and pragmatics focuses on the ‘relation of signs to those who use the signs’ (Mey, 2006: p. 51). The emphasis Morris places on the relation between signs and their interpreters lies at the heart of pragmatic research, but the nature of the relationship has been subject to vastly different interpretations over time because of many disciplinary influences.”

John Langshaw Austin (1962) in a simultaneously effort offered through speech act theory another approach to the study of language. Austin sketches a difference amongst speech act types, and distinguishes between locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary acts—roughly, the distinction between saying anything at all, saying something with a specific power (e.g., making a request, a statement, asking a question), and the additional effects of saying something with a specific power.

Paul Grice started his works in 1957 and spent all of his life in dealing with the notion of meaning though all of his essays were summed up in one book only after his death and succeeded to set many theories among them we can mention: the principle of cooperation that says that in any discourse there is a collaboration between the participants in that discourse. With Grice we began to see the clear shape of pragmatics with notions like “utterance” instead of sentence, “implicate” instead of implying, and so many new concepts from his own neologism. Grice was systematically the first to account for conversational implicatures and describe how they arise and how they should be understood. The Cooperative Principle and associated maxims (maxims of quantity, quality, relation and manner) play a central role in the pragmatic field.

Cooperative Principle. Contribute what is required by the accepted pur-

pose of the conversation. (Davis, 2019)

- **Maxim of Quality.** Make your contribution true; so do not convey what you believe false or unjustified.
- **Maxim of Quantity.** Be as informative as required.
- **Maxim of Relation.** Be relevant.
- **Maxim of Manner.** Be perspicuous; so avoid obscurity and ambiguity, and strive for brevity and order.

H. P Grice cooperative principle and maxims.

Building upon Grice a neo-Gricean school was born where prominent linguists have sought to improve on Grice's design of the conversational principles and provided a solution to instances of indeterminacies and clashes between earlier theories. Among neo-Gricean theories we can mention the "Relevance theory" introduced by Wilson and Sperber (1986) who say: "We have proposed a definition of relevance and suggested what factors might be involved in assessments of degrees of relevance. We have also argued that all Grice's maxims can be replaced by a single principle of relevance—that the speaker tries to be as relevant as possible in the circumstances—which, when suitably elaborated, can handle the full range of data that Grice's maxims were designed to explain." Sperber and Wilson introduced the similar term explicature to mean what is "explicitly communicated"

In 1972, Saul Kripke published his seminal book *Naming And Necessity*, which altered many abstract formal possibilities fundamentally into common sense suggesting that names are not covert definite hidden descriptions, nor are they rigid firm designators, but are obstinate rigid designators, in the sense that a name refers to the same object relative to every possible world, including worlds in which that object does not exist.

Contemporary pragmatic thinking tends to have two orientations: the first led by P. F. Strawson, David Kaplan, Hilary Putnam, and David K. Lewis, caring on the contextual constraints that influence the meaning of utterances, and how such thinking is very active, leading to a sort of consensus in favor of "contextualism". The second significant orientation is linked to the revival of "inferentialism" like that advocated earlier by Frege (1892) as a method of shaping the meaning of sentences and their constituents.

2.2. Literary Pragmatics

Mikhail Bakhtin in the beginning of the 20th century insists in his *Dialogic Imagination* on dialogism. Human beings are not monads, or closed units, they are free, open, loose, tangled, unfinalized: they are "extraterritorial" and "non-self-sufficient". According to Bakhtin, dialogue exists not only between words inside the text but shape the whole being for "to be means to be for another, and through the other for oneself. A person has no sovereign internal territory, he is wholly and always on the boundary; looking inside himself, he looks into the eyes of another or with the eyes of another." Seen from this pers-

pective, language is inextricably bound to the context in which it exists, the intention of the speaker, and the intentions of other speakers of the same language: “Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker’s intentions; it is populated -overpopulated- with the intentions of others.”

Roman Jakobson in parallel highlights the aesthetic function of language. It is true communication is based on: 1) context, 2) addresser 3) addressee, 4) contact, 5) common code, 6) message. In practical terms, the message is sent by the addresser (a sender, or enunciator, or in our case an author) to the addressee (a receiver, or enunciate, in our case the translator). Such a message cannot be grasped outside of a context. A “Code” should be conventional-fully or at least partially to both participants. A contact which is physical channel and psychological connection between addresser and addressee is necessary for both of them to enter and stay in communication. The seminal impulse of poetic function as propounded by Roman Jakobson in his much-cited article, “Linguistics and Poetics”, depicts that when a verbal message focuses on the verbal message itself, in other words it is language that calls attention to language.

There was a growing interest in literary texts by Wolfgang Iser, best known for his reader-response criticism (1967), together with Hans Robert Jauss as founder of audience reception theory. Van Dijk (1978), with other contributors, announced that literary study can be a genuine discipline only if it applies linguistic analysis to literature.

Mary Louise Pratt (1977) discussed in her seminal book, *Toward A Speech Act Theory Of Literary Discourse*, how it is inadequate to construct a linguistic theory of literature on the basis of the traditional structuralist opposition between poetic and nonpoetic language. According to Pratt “The contributions of these schools to our understanding of specific literary texts have been enormous and valuable, but their point of departure, the poetic/nonpoetic opposition in its various guises, has indeed been, as Roger Fowler says, “one of the greatest sources of confusion and error in poetic aesthetics” (Fowler, 1971: p. 9). My aim in this study is first to make a few suggestions about where the ‘confusion and error’ in the ‘poetic language’ approach lie and second to show how more recent developments in linguistics can be used to correct that approach.” Pratt explains that the endeavour to build the aesthetic/common, or the poetic/ordinary binary opposition into “linguistic theory has given rise to a number of widely held misconceptions about the relation between literature and the rest of our verbal activities.”

The literary pragmatic project started in 1988 with the efforts of the British Council, The Research Institute of the Åbo Akademi University and the Academy of Finland’s newly established Literary Pragmatics Project which sponsored a successful symposium that gathered papers from different disciplines on various aspects of literary pragmatics. Interdisciplinary is part of this project and similar efforts carried on the same aim. Yet, these efforts still lack a unified theory to

make them a sound field of research. Part of the problem according to Mey lies in the lack of use of this approach and the possible overlap between literary and pragmatic analysis. Yet, despite these constraints there exists a strong assumption that these have something in common as they both have to do with language users and how meaning is conveyed.

Sandy Petrey's (1990) book *Speech Acts and Literary Theory* (Routledge), elucidated Austin's theory and explained the difference between constative and performative language and drew a distinction as well between saying and doing, then gave instances where saying can equal doing.

The need of including pragmatics in the literature with its major genres-prose and poetry-is of paramount importance due to the fact that many literary theories excluded from their terminology some pragmatic notions that link any text with its communicative context. Leech for instance criticizes how Russian Formalist mainly focused on what they call "the literariness of the text" or the poetic function of the language as Roman Jakobson puts it and did forget about the melting of the sociocultural, aesthetic, and linguistic criteria in any literary text. In the light of this analysis all the pragmatic theories mentioned in this article will be of supreme help to fulfill this endeavor.

Monika Fludernik (1993) offers a detailed analysis of how speech and thought are represented in fiction. Developing upon the insights of Ann Banfield's *Unspeakable Sentences*. She profoundly broadens Banfield's model to adapt evidence from conversational narrative, non-fictional prose and literary works dating from Chaucer to the present. Later, Fludernik (1996) merges insights from literary theory and linguistics, combining the historical and the theoretical to provide a challenging new theory of narrative.

Jacob L. Mey highlights that the pragmatic study of literary texts "focuses on the features that characterize this dialectic aspect of literary production: the text as an author-originated and -guided, but at the same time reader-oriented and activated, process of wording." The translator in this respect as a reader by him/herself will face the constraints of the complexity of the literary text and the difficulty to dive in "the proper textual universe, one that is consonant with the broader contextual conditions that mark the world and times in which the reader [and translator] lives."

Roger D. Sell suggests that there should exist a dialogue, or what he calls a Literary-communicational theory as developed within the Åbo network, that may engage people in a communication where "Literature is seen as consisting of all those texts which, by a very large number of people, and over a long period of time, have de facto been awarded the literary cachet. Intelligence and sensitivity in the handling of materials, plus a duly welcoming attitude towards audiences, will always have played their part here. But these qualities of mind and behaviour are by no means peculiar to literary communication, and even if they are necessary preconditions for a text to achieve literary status, they are not sufficient preconditions."

2.3. Role of Literary Pragmatics in Translation

The influence of pragmatics on translation studies and its considerable role was huge to the extent that by 1985 we began to talk about communicative approaches to translation. Works in SFL inspired [Hatim and Mason \(1990, 1997\)](#) whose influential work stressed the interdependence of pragmatics and semiotics in helping translators (and interpreters) to grasp the ‘full communicative thrust’ of an utterance (1990: 101) in the process of text analysis. Their approach draws attention to the ideational and interpersonal metafunctions of Halliday’s model of discourse analysis, in addition to the textual function; they propose a semiotic dimension as a refinement to earlier approaches to register analysis in translation studies.” Knowledge of literary pragmatics helps the translator include elements related to: context because as Mey suggests that in order to understand any utterance, one has to know the circumstances in which such an utterance was delivered.

It is only through an active cooperative effort, shared between the translator and author, that the interplay of voices can be successfully created and recreated. Translating is a cooperative act; the pragmatics of literary texts spell out the surroundings for this collaborative effort, without which the translated text would not properly exist as a new text. Only through a pragmatic act of reading, interpreting, and translating can the translated text be realized; without such an act, and its corresponding actor, the translator, then the reader as a consumer, the “letters of literature” will forever be dead.

The benefit of practicing translation via literary pragmatics is that the translator will be able to know about authors’ implicated meanings, their assumptions, their purposes or goals, and the kinds of actions (for example, the message they want to convey to their audience) that they are performing when they speak. Robinson highlights that the pragmatic awareness could help to improve the pragmatic competence to ensure fewer pragmatic failures that translators might fall in. Therefore, such knowledge and awareness can improve the translators’ judgement.

In a departure from SFL, Ernst-August Gutt marked a first attempt to bring cognitive pragmatics to bear on the growth of a theory of translation in an approach that turned away from semiotics towards an inferential paradigm of communication. In a more recent development, [Massimiliano Morini’s \(2013\)](#) pragmatic theory of translation foregrounds performative, interpersonal and locative dimensions in seeking to build on descriptive approaches, rather than to develop a new paradigm. He argues that “the translator not only reacts to a source text but also acts on a text.”

Giving attention to pragmatic principles can enhance the understanding of the source text and improve the quality of translation. Awareness of the context, either the immediate or mediated, the target audience, the genre of text tackled, cultures of both source and target language are but few elements in a long list that should be taken into consideration. The translator should be aware that

he/she is not only dealing with a text constructed with linguistic components but should also take into consideration the pragmatic and cultural elements involved in it. I learned that two chief approaches govern translation and genre studies: those based on the work of systemic functional linguists namely Halliday and Hasan, and those based on the work of John Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993) and others. The first approach is based on a sociocultural and semiotic perspective on language description (Hasan et al., 1989) whereas the second is maybe more eclectic in its vision of the notion of genre. Both perspectives however identify lexico-grammatical and structural elements in texts and make accounts describing the patterning of these elements. What was beneficial to me is the trial to find a common ground that is shared by various genre orientations: (i.e.) conventional knowledge, the versatility of the generic descriptions, and the propensity of any genre for innovation.

K. Bhatia Vijay (1997) in his article “Genre analysis today” defined well all three mentioned above concepts. He summed up conventional knowledge in three major points: “(a) recurrence of rhetorical situations, (b) shared communicative purposes, and (c) regularities of structural organization.” His reference to rhetorical situations is very suggestive hinting at Lloyd Bitzer’s (1968) famous seminal article “The Rhetorical Situation” where he states that any discourse has a context, an exigence, and an audience. Bhatia highlights that every communicative event happens in conventionalized communicative settings, in other words, there is a standardization process that happens behind every genre. The second most vital feature of genre theory is its versatility, to show the link not only between text and context, people’s choices of jargon, and how they use their terminologies but also between language and culture in general. The last discussed element is the propensity of any genre for innovation. Despite the constraints of the rhetorically situated, and the highly institutionalized nature of genres, they are open to change and innovation.

This shows the dynamic aspect of translation. A satisfactory translation is not merely concerned with transferring the propositional content of the source language text, but also with its other literary pragmatic features. The main purpose of a worthy translation is to “communicate the meaning of the original accurately and clearly to the readers of translation”.

3. Personal Case Study

This article focuses on how translation in practical way may benefit from literary pragmatics. Three case studies taken from my own published translated works, from both Arabic into English and English into Arabic, as well will illustrate how the translator conducts a pragmatic dialogue between literature and translation.

3.1. The Translator as a Literary Pragmatic Reader

Before translating the source text, the translator should conduct an extensive reading about everything related to such text for instance: read about the author

and previous works by the same author, the whole literature relevant to the topic of such text and gather as much data that can help in grasping the core of the discussed themes. A reading about the context in which such text saw light, the exigence, and the whole rhetorical situation behind its birth is also of paramount importance. Reading previous translations if there are any and critics can help as well.

My first experience with translation started with translating the magnum opus of Abubakar Mohamed Ibn Yahya Alsayagh, known to Arabs as Ibn Bajja or Avempace to Europe, “Tadbir Al-mutawahid” a book which focuses on the state of solitude and its positive role as a creative strategy in a corrupt society. The whole project took me three long years because I faced two major issues: the direct challenge was the absence of the original text. What I was in front of is what his disciples had reported to us from what they knew from their teacher. We are lucky, however, because Ibn Bajja’s writings were translated into Latin. The second difficulty lies in the fact that the text of “Tadbir Al-mutawahid”, as I discovered through my extensive research, was imperfectly translated, therefore wrongly interpreted. I found for instance that many books translated the title as “the biography of the solitary being” as if the book is giving a definition of being solitary and offering us his autobiography. Some French Books translated the title as “la conduite de l’isolé” or the conduct of the isolated being as if the book refers to the conduct as done by a secluded being. Other suggestions like “the rule of the solitary” “Lonely Regime” or “the governance of the solitary” with restricted limited political connotations, whereas the book is mainly philosophical and deals with all the details of solitariness. There are also many traces that show that translating, summarizing, and publishing this text started so early in the middle ages for instance, Mūsa an-Narbuni offered a Hebrew paraphrase of the text around 1349 AD. Don Miguel Asin Palacios published *Tadbir al-mutawahhid* in 1946. There is also the publication of D. M. Dunlop, “Ibn Bajjah’s *Tadbir al-mutawahhid* (Rule of the solitary),” in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (Dunlop, 1945). I think that such translations are far from the original text and its meanings in relation to the lonely elite, the ideal solitary per se. To better understand the pragmatic meanings of solitariness and solitude that the book discusses, I find myself compelled to give my personal translation of the book a deeper reading that would suit such a thesis. My translation is based on the Arabic text of [Tadbir al-mutawahhid] and I translated it into English. Ibn Bajja is writing about solitude as a positive condition where the thinker is left to decide the path of reason. The author is trying to answer the following question: how can the ideal being with the help of a genuine mind survive in a corrupt filthy place full of evils that do not fit within the rational realm? In such a situation, the author suggests that we are left with only a few options:

- Go back to the past for nostalgia.
- Escape forward through an imaginary utopia.
- Advocating violence against corrupt cities.

- The Sufi and the mystic road based upon the separation between the corrupt reality and the home of the clean spirit.
- The choice of solitude, as a mental temporary choice where self-awareness and self-evaluation are established.

Ibn Bajja chooses the last option, and from this step, we start to talk about the responsible ideal solitary per se. This reading helped the translator to take better decisions with regards to the title and the whole book.

3.2. The Translator Is in a Collaborative Dialogue with the Author

Paul Grice first theory claims that there is a cooperative act built between participants in any linguistic utterance. The translator leads a dialogue not only with the text but also with its producer. The advent of technology has helped me in translating *Why Love Hurts: A Sociological Explanation* by Eva Illouz. We discussed in depth so many issues via emails and that helped me so much. Further dialogues were conducted with other authors like the fruitful emails I conducted with Todd McGowan while translating his book: *Capitalism and Desire: The Psychic Cost of Free Markets*, same with Colin Hay and his book *Why We Hate Politics*. Besides to the instances of exchanged politeness and respect from here and there a collaborative experience has led to a successful smooth translation.

3.3. The Translator as Interpreter of Speech Acts in a Literary Text

The translation of *Forest of the Gods* (Lithuanian: *Dievų miškas*) categorized as a novel but in practice it is a personal memoir of the Lithuanian poet, playwright, critic, and literary theorist professor Balys Sruoga, informed me so much about his experiences in the Nazi Stutthof concentration camp. It was recorded as one of the first memoirs in Europe about Nazi camps where the absurd performative act of torturing people by the hand of the Nazis is shown in a very painful manner. According to the author, the title is the local name of the marshy wooded area in which the German camp was established but it is full of mythological and symbolic meanings. The narrative instances though mixed with humour and irony show how language is powerful when Fuhrer's orders turn to be a reality.

Let us consider this sample that describes a ludicrous scene in the novel where Gestapo soldiers are beating arrested Lithuanian youths to make them fit inside small trucks. The translator should be aware here how rhetoric works, and the violence involved in the absurd act of beating bodies, therefore transfer the whole scene as it is seen in the present:

“Gdansk’s Gestapo now emerges as creatures of an entirely different species. They themselves don’t seem sure if they are humans or just some two-legged malformations; certainly, they don’t view us as humans. They begin stuffing us into trucks with many other prisoners. The trucks are small, the people are

many. Not everyone fits. The Gestapo pursues those who can't squeeze in with foul words, then bludgeon them with clubs to slim them down.

The club—always the club: a hard but necessary thing. Due to its efforts, room is found in the trucks. So, what if one's legs get tangled with another's head like sardines in a can, so what if one's stooped and snorting, another's riding on his back; so, what if one's panting, another's screaming? Everybody fits.”

My translation into Arabic:

وبدا جنود الشرطة السرية النازية في مدينة غدانسك الآن كمخلوقات من أنواع مختلفة تمامًا. فهم بدورهم لم يبدو متأكدين مما إذا كانوا بشرًا أو مجرد مخلوقات مشوهة ذات رجلين؛ وهم بالتأكيد أيضًا لم يكونوا ينظرون إلينا كبشر. ثم حشرونا في العربات مع العديد من السجناء الآخرين. لقد كانت العربات صغيرة جدًا، أما أعداد الناس فكانت غفيرة، ولا أحد استطاع ان يتأقلم مع الوضع. أما أعوان الشرطة السرية النازية فكانوا يصيرون جام غضبهم بكل ما اوتوا من الكلمات البذيئة على أولئك الذين لم يستطيعوا الضغط ليتلاءموا مع المكان، ثم انهالوا بالهراوات لجعل الجميع يتراص ويتكدس وانهالت الهراوات على الجميع وازداد استعمال الهراوت دائمًا: وهو لعمرى شيء صعب ولكنّه ضروري وبفضل الجهود التي وظفت في استعمال الهراوة خُلِق الفضاء الكافي داخل العربات ليتسع للجميع. فما المانع لو كانت أرجل المرء متشابكة مع رأس إنسان آخر مثلما يحدث في علب السردين؛ وما العيب لو انحنى المرء وخار كالثور، وركب آخر على ظهره؛ وما المانع لو كان أحدهم يلهث، والآخر يصرخ؟ فالجميع كان مدفوعًا ليتلاءم مع المكان.

It is true the translation into Arabic seems lengthy in comparison with the source text, but this is due to the pragmatic equivalents that are embodied in modifications, additions, and deletions that should be present in the target language text. Arabic as a language cares a lot about details. The Arabic system of inflection together with the wide repertoire of word choice pushes the translator to deeply read in order to select the appropriate diction.

3.4. Challenges Facing the Translator

There are many practical constraints that face the translator. Perhaps the most challenging restraints are those related to the lack of updated dictionaries for instance when I translated *Why Love Hurts: A Sociological Explanation* by Eva Illouz I encountered a difficulty in translating gender terminology. The same remark was noticed by David Glover and Cora Kaplan “gender role or gender identity are in fact relatively new. Before the Second World War they didn't exist and other closely connected expressions—such as gender-bender—did not appear until the early 1980s. The Oxford English Dictionary did not begin recording these linguistic innovations until as late as 1989, though its entry for gender includes examples that date back at least to the days of Chaucer.” Dictionaries most of the time does not update in a synchronous manner. Arabic dictionaries, particularly those specialized in certain domains like philosophy, sociology, medicine and the like, are scarce. The translator find him/herself rely on his own coinage.

The second challenge is when I translate idiomatic expressions and some cultural bound terms. The equivalent counterpart in the target language is not that easy sometimes especially in cases of dialects. I resort to transferring the same meaning but with another form or paraphrasing the idiom, given that the main

objective of translation is concerned more with conveying the meaning of the original text.

Eventually the real challenge I face is when I deal with classical texts. It took me a week to perfectly master translating one page from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* into Arabic for I had to take into consideration that it is a poetic and dramatic text, let alone if I try to translate the whole play it will be a big project then. Translating poetry is very complex because it needs knowledge of formal elements in poems, namely rhyme patterns, rhythm, and prosodic features.

4. Conclusion

There is an undeniable influence of literary pragmatics on translation. In order to improve the quality of translation, the translator must take into consideration many literary pragmatic maxims. My personal experience has shown to me that the translator must conduct a dialogue with the source text pre, while and post translation with the author, and his/her previous works: the translator must primarily be a good reader, reading before, while and after translation. The second responsibility includes building an interactive literary and pragmatic dialogue with the text and its author. Eventually, the translator is required to be aware of major issues in pragmatics. Translation involves like any other field many challenges that the translator should find strategies to overcome and at the core of these challenges there is the pragmatic awareness that should be given priority.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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