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Think–Aloud Protocols:
Translating Proverbs

APPLYING THINK-ALOUD PROTOCOLS TO HADHRAMI
PROVERBS: TOWARDS A DESCRIPTIVE MODEL OF THE
TRANSLATION PROCESS

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Acknowledgment

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LIST OF TRANSLITERATION SYMBOLS

Consonants

' = ء
b = ب
t = ت
th = ث
j = ج
H = ح
kh = خ
d = د
th = ذ
r = ر
z = ز
s = س
sh = ش
S = ص
D = ض
T = ط
Z = ظ
? = ع
gh = غ
f = ف
q = ق
k = ك
l = ل
m = م
n = ن
h = هـ
w = و
y = ي

Vowels and Diphthongs

a = ◌َ   فتحة
i = ◌ِ   كسرة
u = ◌ُ   ضمة
aa = آ   الألف الممدودة
ii = ي   الياء الممدودة
uu = و   الواو الممدودة
a: = أو as in arm *a:*m
o: = أو as in saw s*o:*
ai = آي as in five f*ai*v
au = آو as in now n*au*
ei = أي as in play pl*ei*

Based on Hatim (1997: XI), Al-Ani (1970: 20, 30), and Hornby (1974: vi-vii)

Preface

Think–Aloud Protocols: Translating Proverbs is the first monograph published by Sayyab Books to meet the need for a specialist-publishing house. The aim is to enhance translation studies by providing the reader with high-quality books and monographs in the field of translation in general.

The present title is one in a series of titles prepared by Sayyab Translation Group (STG) founded by Sayyab Books in 2008. Its author applies think-aloud protocols (TAPs) to the translation of Hadhrami proverbs and concludes with a translating model, which describes the cognitive processes that influence the translator's decision-making. In fact, applying TAPs as a method of investigating translation as process is by no means new. Ali Darwish (1997) in his doctoral thesis "Translation as Decision Making Process under Constraints" also utilizes TAPs as a method of examining the cognitive strategies employed by translators in order to make decisions while translating a text under the condition of uncertainty.

It is hoped that this monograph together with other forthcoming titles dealing with translation-related issues will help to fill a gap in this field and fulfil professional and academic interests.

I am grateful (as is the author) to Ali Al-Manna', founding director of Sayyab Books/ translation studies, for arranging the initial contacts and to Sayyab Books for taking this initiative.

Professor Alya' Al-Rubai'i
University of Baghdad

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Introduction

This study aims at investigating how Hadhrami proverbs could be translated. This is highlighted in view of describing the processes concerned with the translation of these proverbs into English.

Chapter One
Think-Aloud Protocols (TAPs)

1. An Overview

The issue of distinguishing between translation as product or as process shows that dealing with text as product entails understanding the process that ultimately leads to this product creation."The distinction cannot give the scholar leave to ignore the self-evident fact that the one is the result of the other, and that the nature of the product cannot be understood without a comprehension of the nature of the process" (Holmes, 1978: 81). TAPs represent recent research trends in the field of translation that stand out over the last three decades. It is a new trend in the sense that it is process-oriented, rather than the prescriptive product-oriented, aiming at providing reliable models for data collection and analysis in translation studies. "The old prescriptive discussions of translation have become a thing of the past, as has the tendency to devise arbitrary rules for the production of 'correct' translations" (Hatim, 2001: 10). It is quite remarkable that research design using TAPs is increasingly attracting the attention of investigators whose recent studies produce interesting findings about mental activities during the process of translating. It is the description given by the translator about his/her thought or behaviour while performing his/her task. Researchers want to get closer and observe the human mind at work through the translator verbalising whatever comes to his mind. The translator can give general account of how he goes about translating a certain text and how he introspectively goes through the steps applied in carrying out a particular strategy so that he can justify why the translation output has taken its final shape that way.

Furthermore, Krings (2001: 75) distinguishes between two TAP data collection methods of process-oriented studies: Think-Aloud (TA, or verbalising at the same time), and Post Think-Aloud (Post-TA, or verbalising some time later). Despite the concurrent effectiveness of the former in disclosing translation difficulties, the latter, which is also called Immediate Retrospection (IR) (Fraser, 1996), is looked at as a superior method that could reveal issues relating to the cultural aspects of the text as a whole (Hatim, 2001). In relevance with this, Flick (2002: 75) declares, "[t]o increase

Chapter Two
Research and Data Requirements

1. The Research Setting, Sample and Corpus

The research is carried out at Hadhramaut University of Science and Technology in the district of Hadhramaut in the Republic of Yemen. This University was chosen because it has translation courses and therefore translation students are available. This makes it easy to do the study and to obtain objective peer advice. This university is the only place in Hadhramaut where one can find a greater probability for the sample to be homogenous in understanding the cultural heritage of this area of Hadhramaut.

Purposeful non-random sampling is the chosen technique to select sample elements where, for the students, only respondents who met the inclusion criteria are selected. This is because the nature of the topic under study is likely to be influenced by cultural and educational factors and as such, there is a need to discriminate respondents in order to attain a higher validity. The criteria to set this are as follows:

- Respondents needed to be fourth year students. The justification for selecting these students is that they already have a relatively good command of English, i.e. they are able to write and speak English without difficulty besides their Hadhrami Arabic (mother tongue). They also have integrated skills in translating texts from Arabic into English and *vice versa*. They have attended translation courses so as to gain the necessary translation skills, which could help them access the written information in their field of study. These criteria are necessary to examine both their written and oral performances.

This is done in order to control consistency in the range of students capacity to work operatively and solve translation problems. In addition, being the last year in the academic life at Hadhramaut University, fourth year brings issues related to translation into the fore and this puts students in better situations to discuss and uncover

Chapter Three
A Descriptive Model for Translating Hadhrami Proverbs

The data analysis which was carried out throughout the translators' transcribed data (textual units), and followed by constant comparative process, makes the blur gradually vanish and the image of the result get clearer. This analysis process continued back and forth to cover all the translators' data, making kinds of meaningful regularities appear respectively in the form of the patterns: (1) meaning units, (2) themes, (3) sub-themes, and (4) elements (Figure 2).

The pattern (3) of the sub-themes that contained the crucial concepts was noticeable to have potentiality that can say something more and take us beyond mere observation. They establish translation patterns that are considered the basic concepts that could offer cognitive description for the mental processes experienced by the translators while translating Hadhrami proverbs. Thus, continuous processing and analysing with constant comparative method of these sub-themes in the direction of coding or classifying them into categories (Figure 1) constitute the foundations pertaining to the cognitive processes that have made a model emerge over a time.

The constant comparative method undergoes continuous refinement throughout close relationship of the process of data collection and analysis to feed back into the categorizing process. In this method, data is recorded, classified, and compared across themes, sub-themes, and categories. Thus, relationship discovery begins with the analysis. While patterns are constantly compared with one another, new topological dimensions, as well as new relationships, are explored. Therefore, the study data that was collected, analysed, compared, and categorised is proposing the following descriptive model.

1. Hadhrami Proverbial Translation Model

Chapter Four
Conclusions

This study is the first research on the folklore of Hadhramaut focusing explicitly on translating such local expressions as proverbs. The central purpose of this study is to describe the translating processes pertaining to these linguistically and culturally challenging expressions. This is achieved by taking a closer look at the translator's mind at work in an effort to examine and assimilate the cognitive processes to realise what kind of difficulties faced, what makes such difficulties come to surface, and how such difficulties are tackled. These are compatible with the recent process-oriented translation researches of TAPs which shift translation research and give room to focus on translation as process rather than product (Gerloff, 1987; Li, 2004; Lörscher, 2005). Indeed, assimilating the process is a helpful aid into better understanding with the aim of coming up with proper solutions for these translation difficulties. By and large, the findings are as follows:

1. The translators' mental conscious processes and the way of thinking take specific direction depending on the kind of translation mismatch caused by the nature of the proverb.

2. Translators sway for a while among different strategies in view of the unconscious moderators, which include educational system, personal beliefs and attitudes, before they take a decision to present their final output. The observed translating processes leading to the use of particular equivalences are characterised with regulations by the school teaching rather than by free will. However, not many are those translators who attributed the manner they go about the process of translation to the educational system as a normative authority for their conduct as translators.

    The equivalences used for translating HPs into English are literal translation, proverb-for-proverb translation, and paraphrase. The paraphrase was the most applicable technique. It occupied the first position (40.36%), the possible explanation for this is that the translators preferred

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Appendix

CLASSIFYING THE RESPONDENTS' TRANSLATION INTO
AN APPROPRIATE TECHNIQUE

Questionnaire Proverbs in Arabic	Literal Translation	Proverb-for-proverb translation	Paraphrasing the idea of the proverb
1. المخلّفات لها آفات	Rubbish has blights	Cleanliness is next to godliness	Dirtiness is harmful
2. أوزن الكَلمه قبل قَولها	Weigh the word before saying it	Speech is silver, but silence is gold	Think carefully before you speak
3. ضَيف و مُشاغب	Guest and naughty	Beggars cannot be choosers	A guest shouldn't be disturbing
4. الرّاضَه من الرّحمن والعَجَله من الشَيطان	Slowness is from Al-Rahman and the haste is from the devil	More haste, less speed	Do not be in a hurry
5. كُل قُرصَك و أدخل خُلصَك	Eat your bread and enter your hole	—	Be peaceful
6. الزّوج الأعور و لا التَرَمّل	One-eyed husband is better than widowhood	Half a loaf is better than no bread	A little is better than none
7. ما حَد يأخذ حيّف الطّلاّب	None takes the bread of the beggar	—	Do not beg the beggar
8. قايس عشر و قطع مرّة	Measure ten and cut once	Better be sure than sorry	Do not be hasty
9. ما شي بَلاش الاّ نطّاح الكِباش	Nothing is free but the butting of sheep	There is no rose without a thorn	Nothing is free
10. السّناوَه وَ لا جاوَه	Pulling up water from wells is better than travelling to Java	East or west, home is best	Do not emigrate
11. مَن بَغاه كلّه فائه كلّه	He who wants everything, loses everything	Grasp all, lose all	The greedy loses everything
12. مَن حَاذر بنت عمّه ما حبلت له	He who feels shy of his cousin, will not make her pregnant for him	—	Do not be so shy

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