Translation's Language Barrier aand the Challenges of Making Sense: Case Study of A Physical Education Didactics Thesis from Tunisia

Hafsi Bedhioufi	Maher Guerchi	Mohamed Ali Hammami
Higher Institute of Sports and Physical Education, Ksar-Said, Tunis	Higher Institute of Sports and Physical Education, Kef	Higher Institute of Sports and Physical Education, Kef

Sinda Ayechi	Makram Zghibi
Higher Institute of Sports and Physical Education, Kef	Higher Institute of Sports and Physical Education, Kef

ABSTRACT *This work aims to demonstrate the encountered difficulties to have univocal interpretations of the same research spoken or written Arabic corpus where sometimes a sentence can be analyzed in a way, while by switching to another language (French and English); the same sentence takes another different, even contradictory meaning. Our study sample is the body of a thesis conducted in Football didactics among Tunisian pupils (14 years aged; n = 20). All their oral productions during 8 physical education sessions were recorded, transcribed, translated from Arabic to French and English then analyzed. A discursive analysis allowed us identifying the difficulties and particularities of transcribing and translating such a corpus.*

A deep master of the real meaning of a particular word/sentence is required to overcome intra-cultural, intercultural and contextual language barriers so we can develop, understand and obtain the real sense.

Introduction

This study identifies the language interactions in didactic situations (Bruner, 1983; Brousseau, 1998) about a confrontation in collective games (Chang et al, 2008. Gréhaigne, 2009). Pupils are invited to exchange ideas about games. Extracts of corpus are studied for show difficulties to transcribe Tunisian Arabic to French or English. We will focus more specifically on the body of a thesis conducted in Football didactics among Tunisian pupils so we can identify the challenges of making sense when we are faced by a multi-axial language barrier (Zghibi, 2009 ; Wallian, 2010).

Methodology

Eight sessions of football (effective 4h) are taught to 14 years aged pupils (n = 20). The proposed situations are based on games of 5 versus 5 in a small pitch (dimensions 40 x 20 m). Each session (session unit) has two game situations (two 10 minutes games) under the control of the teacher and separated by a six minutes sequence for the exchange of ideas and verbalization. All game situations and all verbalization sequences were recorded using a camcorder and then transcribed (written) for the aimed discourse analysis later.

The first objective is to transcribe spoken Tunisian Arabic to written Tunisian Arabic, and then to translate the speech from written Tunisian Arabic written French and written English.

After transcribing the spoken Tunisian Arabic to written Tunisian Arabic, rude words and insults were removed from the analyzed verbatim.

A discursive analysis will allow identifying the difficulties of transcribing and translating such a corpus.

We used a double transcription via the participation of a bilingual observer (woman): a teacher trained in research (university level), who has been teaching for eight years in college. This helped to overcome difficulties and gain a full picture of male and female verbalizations, the latter may use a specific vocabulary (eg case of the term "*achoummi*" used only by women). To do this, we gave this observer enough time so she becomes familiar with the tool and understand the issues and linguistic mechanisms for data processing (ad-

aptation period).

This double corpus transcription posture ensures a certain degree of fidelity and makes the inter-coder reliability valid with up to 90% agreement.

When translating the corpus, the French words used by the pupils were not spelled in French but in Arabic. In other words, these French words were transcribed phonetically with the Arabic alphabet, and not with the French alphabet.

Linguistic difficulties faced during the translation of the corpus

In this discourse analysis, the (1) internal logic of the language, (2) the context prosody (3) and non-verbal language production prevail for treatment.

It is by taking into account these three verbal parameters that we can arbitrate the affectation of occurrences. First, because technically, in the speech processing by computer, it was impossible to mix, in the same syntax, the French/English alphabet and the Arabic alphabet. Indeed, the Arabic is written from right to left, and some punctuation are reversed (mirror) ([؟/?][،/,]).

This will keep the internal logic of the Arabic script, and secondly to keep in their transcription, the authenticity of the spontaneous exchange of students.

The translation process was not neither mechanical nor literal, where the letters are similar. Example: [دزو خوه طاح في الشربا] [*Dazzou khouh tah fichorba*]

The literal translation of this phrase is «his brother pushed him, he fell into the soup,» while the real meaning is: «It's too late, it's already done, it's over.»

This process took a long time (two years) in order to refine the translation. It is an activity of continuous reflection about the analyzed corpus. The process was guided with the collaboration of an observer (woman), to make sense of what pupils said, especially girls who adopt specific opinions. As noted above, there are words that belong to the lexical trends of

women and only women, and vice versa. This is a Tunisian conversational difference that marks the specificity of the language: it is an **intra-cultural** discursive phenomenon.

For example, the expression [ما متكرّزنيش] «metkarriznich» is commonly used by men, but never used by women. It is a word that has its roots in the word «testicle» and in Tunisian culture, it should not be mentioned, because it is considered as well as any word with sexual or genital connotation as taboo. The meaning of this word ما متكرّزنيش in Tunisian Arabic has no relationship with this term (testicle). Thus, the translation by meaning of this phrase is: "avoid making me angry, stop annoying me!!!". Here, it's the racine of the word (karriz) [كرّز], which is ethimologically close to the word "testicle" (korza) [كرزة]. Because of their approximate phonetic similarity, only the boys use this expression, and outside the family and school context. Thus, even in the context of a lesson at school, in a session of natural sciences, for example, the teacher is careful to never use the word testicle (korza) in Tunisian Arabic, and favors the use of the French word (testicule), even if the pupils don't understand it. In view of the Tunisian culture, especially in Kef city (where the study is conducted), there is resistance on the use of this word, which gives a bad opinion about the person that employs it who looks vulgar and lacks of respect in what concerns his manner of expressing himself.

Otherwise, the term [آه شومي !] «Achoumi!» is used by women, and only women, and most often between them. The translation of this word means "what a shame!" and refers to the person using the word, who attributes to himself the idea of "shame", or even "regrets" about some acts he/she committed. Since boys' narcissism and pride and power balance between them and with women, they choose to avoid such terminology.

For the same words, used in Tunisian arabic and Arabic, there may be different meanings. To translate them, it requires a big effort to differentiate both languages and especially the two cultures: it is an **intercultural** phenomenon.

The word [والله] "Wallah" which is literally translated to "and God" is a word full of meaning, and so can take on different meanings depending on the context, the way the person who will use it express it (tone, facies and gestes). Although this word appears regularly in our corpus, it was deemed useful to give an example away from the corpus, and about a situation of daily life. This choice can be justified by the fact that this example from the same context, the same conversation, between the same two persons and at the same moment can reveal the different meanings that can have this word.

The husband: - I bought you a digital camera. [rani chritlek camera.] [راني شريتلك كاميرا] The wife: - **Really**? [Wallah!?] [والله] The husband – **Yes, it›s true**! [Wallah!] [والله] The wife: - Stop, you›re kidding, **you didn't buy it did you?**! [yizzi milfadilka, gool Wallah chritlik!] [يزّي ميّ نم قول والله شريتلك] The husband: - **I swear**, I bought it. [Wallah, chrithelik.] [والله شريتلك]. «

From this example, it is possible to see the different meanings of the word «Wallah» in the same conversation. To successfully translate this word, it was necessary to understand it via the dialogue sentences, understand its meaning through a particular context, because it is impossible to give a single literal translation meaning. In fact, this word is used to reinforce a sense, support an idea about, give certain strength of conviction but it takes a different meaning depending on how it is expressed, and the moment in which it is stated. It may mean «is it true?» in the sense of astonishment, or «yes, it is true!» in the sense of confirmation, or «gool Wallah» in the sense of a verification request to confirm or «I swear» in the sense of a real confirmation of a guarantee (the truth). It's enough to just change a prefix to no more find the expres-

sion nor the same meaning.

On the other hand, there are letters in the Arabic alphabet that do not exist in the French or English alphabet. This adds an additional difficulty in the translation work. These letters are (ق and ع). Sometimes you have to use two letters of the French or English alphabet to translate a letter from the Arabic/Tunisian Arabic alphabet, due to a very particular sound of this language. This is the case of «kh» (خ) and «th» (ض).

Therefore, to be able to understand the meaning of a particular word, we must consider all of these characteristics, or even difficulties.

However, these characteristics/difficulties can't exclude in any case that there may be similarities or complementarities of a cross-cultural perspective. Indeed, the corpus reveals, through the transcript, that to express themselves, pupils use sometimes some French concepts (touch, one-two, marking, in the interval, tackles, sir, pass etc..) and concepts used in football field (corner, goal, penalty etc..).

Since pupils use concepts that not belong to their own language, they find it difficult to express themselves in the language that is theirs and therefore use technical concepts used in other languages, namely the French language. Paradoxically, the education programs received by all pupils from the beginning of their schooling are given through the learning of literary Arabic. This proves that the Tunisian pupils opt for the language that allows them to express themselves in the most simple and the most relevant way depending to each context.

Conclusion
During the collection and analyze of the corpus, we encountered several problems. Data processing by computer was blocked by the impossibility of mixing the Arabic and Latin alphabets. Moreover, it happens that the same sentence uttered by a pupil has several meanings; same propositional content can express a request, or an order or a reproach. Another problem may be related to the translation of the corpus, since the sentence translated to French or English has not sometimes the same sense exactly as the authentic sentence produced in Tunisian Arabic which is a variety of Arabic with its own internal logic, and intra-cultural conversational specificities.

The same words, used in Tunisian Arabic and Arab, don't have the same meanings and univocal translation requires more effort to differentiate both languages. Such a difficulty in the analysis is noticeable with the connectives. Indeed, sometimes the same connectives in French/English have a different and even contradictory direction comparatively to their counterparts in Arabic.

It is a dual linguistic mastering: firstly to master intra-cultural discursive specificities (Tunisian oral language), and secondly to master intercultural discursive specificities (spoken Tunisian versus French/English). Moreover, the explanation of the true meaning of sentence is only possible using the particular context of its enunciation and even non-verbal language productions as well as the accompanying prosody and mimogestuality.

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