



The Role of Cohesion in Translation between Arabic and English with Reference to Surat An-Naba from the Noble Qur'an

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Abstract

Cohesion is one of the most important linguistic features of text development in Arabic and English. It connects, unifies ideas and leads to the full understanding of the whole text. The study tries to prove that cohesion as a crucial linguistic factor to be considered in the process of translation between the two languages. It also claims that the issue of cohesion is nearly similar in both languages, though, there are differences in minor details because of the difference in structure of the two. In order to achieve this aim, the study examines the five Hallidayan (1976) cohesive devices: (i) reference, (ii) substitution, (iii) ellipsis, (vi) conjunction and (v) lexical items. These cohesive devices techniques are identifies investigated and analyzed in one of the famous Surats from the Noble Qur'an which is Surat Al-Naba No. (78) and against its English translated version by Muhammad Al-Hilali and Muhammad Khan (1984). The two texts ST and TT both are analyzed in terms of cohesion and its devices and how they are used to overcome problems that may encounter translation. The study concludes that translators between the two languages should be fully aware of the issue of cohesion and the use of its cohesive devices in order to convey the intended meaning of the original.

keywords: Hallidayan techniques, source text, target text, cohesion



المستخلص

يعتبر الرابط اللغوي أحد أهم أدوات الربط لتنسيق النص سواء في اللغة العربية أو الانجليزية. فهو يربط الأفكار ويعمل على تماسكه وبالتالي تفهم كامل النص، حيث تحاول الدراسة إثبات أن ترابط النص هو عامل مؤثر يجب الاهتمام به أثناء عملية الترجمة بين اللغتين، كما تبين الدراسة أن هذا الربط اللغوي قد يكون متشابها ولحد كبير بين اللغتين ولو أن هناك بعض الاختلافات في بعض التفاصيل الدقيقة بسبب الاختلاف في القواعد بين اللغتين. تحاول الدراسة الوصول إلى هدفها عن طريق تحليل أدوات الربط اللغوي الخمس والتي قدمها اللغوي المشهور هاليداي في عام (1976) وهي: الإشارة، والتبديل، والحذف، والوصل، والمفردات. عرّفت الدراسة هذه الأدوات اللغوية الخمس للرابط اللغوي وحققت فيها داخل أهم سور القرآن الكريم وهي سورة النبأ رقم (78) وتفحصت كذلك النسخة المترجمة عن طريق المترجمين محمد الهاللي ومحمد خان في عام (1984) حيث تم تحليل النصين الأصل والمترجم من ناحية أدوات الربط اللغوي الخمس وكيفية تطابق المعنى بينهما والإشارة إلى بعض المشاكل التي قد تواجه الترجمة في هذا المجال. خلصت الدراسة على أن المترجمين بين اللغتين يجب أن يهتموا كثيرا بالربط اللغوي هذا وكيفية استخدام أدواته بدقة أثناء عملية الترجمة كي يتم نقل المعنى المقصود في النص الأصل إلى النص الهدف.

1.1 Introduction

Translation plays an important role in bringing the whole world together. There would be no other means that people could understand other cultures and thoughts without translation. It is mainly concerned with the linguistic activities. Catford (1965: 20) describes translation as "the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language". Therefore, it involves the transfer of meaning which contained in one language structure into another language.

Nida and Taber (1969) see that translation requires the competence use of lexicon, grammar and syntactic pattern of the two languages in question. However, translation should not be seen only as a linguistic replacement of textual material in one language into another but it should transfer the meaning of the original accordingly.

Cohesion, in this respect, plays an important textual role because translation requires much intellectual abilities and skills which include powerful analysis and



creativity. Venuti (2000) says that language is a formal set of meanings by which we express feelings, thought, ideas and record our history. It is now facts, information and emotions passing to influence people.

Halliday and Hassan (1976: 4) defines cohesion as "a semantic concept, which refers to relations of meaning that exist within a text and that define it as a text". Cohesion is the most important linguistic features which provides links and relations between different parts of a text.

2. Research Questions

This study tries to answer the following questions:

1. What are the main devices of cohesion that are used in both the original and translated version of the Surat An-Naba (78) from the Noble Qur'an?
2. How could the translator transfer the appropriate cohesive pattern of the original text to the target text to avoid faulty cohesion?

3. Significance of the Study

Cohesion is one of the most important principles of text linguistics enables the translator to render the source text by helping of cohesive devices in order to make the translation of the source language meaningful as well as equivalent to the target language, particularly, in sensitive texts such as the Nobel Qur'an.

4. Aims of the Study

The study seeks to achieve the following:

1. Cohesion is one of the main linguistic features in both English and Arabic.
2. There are some cohesive devices involved in the translation between the two languages need to be studied thoroughly.
3. There are similarities and differences between the two languages in the use of the cohesive devices should be given special consideration.



5. Literature Review

Several studies have dealt with cohesion as a network of relations that connect and organize the text. For instance, cohesive devices in the ST have a guiding function for the source language readers. They guide the readers in interpreting ideas in the text, in connecting ideas with other ideas, and in connecting ideas to higher level global units for example, the relationship between a thesis and a substantiation in an argumentative text. In short, cohesive devices support and speed up the cognitive processes by which a reader constructs the overall meaning of linearly incoming textual information (Multhaup, 2003:2)

Aziz (1998) also sees language patterns as constructions and combinations of words in clauses and sentences inside a text that consists more than one sentence, therefore, there must be some form of link between them. He (1998) has studied the main types of cohesive devices in English and Arabic and briefly discussed the differences in their uses and concluded that both languages use these devices in a similar way but they sometimes differ in the use of the subtypes.

Baker (1992) states that cohesion is the network of lexical, grammatical, and other relations which provide links between various parts of a text, for instance, by requiring the reader to interpret words and expressions by reference to other words and expressions in the surrounding sentences and paragraphs. She (1992) explains that language is not made up of a large number of words which can be used together in free variation, but words have a certain tolerance of compatibility. There are various ways of structuring and combining words in clauses and sentences from which we make the language we speak and write. This reflects the variety of thought and attitudes among people.

Hervey and Higgins (1992) state that the text is a unit of meaning where must be some forms of links between the sentences otherwise it will have no meaning. A new text begins where the new sentence has no relation with the preceding one. Neubert and Shreve (1992) similarly, see that all languages have



patterns in the ways of linking sentences and have elements that hold the text together like the surface cohesion connectors which help to build and understand texts.

Toury (1990) argued that each language has a number of ways in which sentences can be linked together and has rules which govern this linkage. There are cohesive devices organizing and connecting sentences in the text such as the use of pronouns, the repetition of key words and the use of conjunction or other lexical items.

The shifts in cohesion are investigated in relation to two language differences, namely topic-prominence and subject-prominence; parataxis and hypotaxis. The conclusions highlight the fact that Chinese discourse coherence is not always achieved by means of explicit cohesive devices, but by way of implicit cohesive mechanisms. In a study dedicated to the investigation of the language of interpreting, but extendable to that of translation, Shlesinger (1995) observed that there are shifts in cohesion materialized in the replacement of substitution and ellipsis with the repetition of lexical items or synonyms thereof. This observation rests on the analysis of discourse interpreted from English into Hebrew and the other way round. Shlesinger (ibid.) further mentions that this finding can be used as an explication hypothesis and can be extended to written translations and that, “regardless of the languages concerned, the interpreter tends to render implicit forms more explicitly” (Shlesinger 1995: 210).

6. Methodology

This study will investigate the five Hallidayan (1976) cohesive devices which are: (i) reference; (ii) ellipsis; (iii) substitution; (vi) conjunction and (v) lexical items for translating Surat An-Naba (78) from the Noble Qur'an. The study will also examine the practical use of these devices in both languages that may cause problems to the translator.



7. Halliday's Techniques

Halliday (1976) describes five ways by which cohesion is created in any language.

7.1 Reference

Reference is a semantic relation between sentences which is expressed by means of grammar. Aziz (1998) states that there are four subtypes of reference: (a) the definite article: (the ال) as in *The golden age* العصر الذهبي, (b) the demonstratives: (this, these, that and those) as in *That man is my friend* ذلك الرجل صديقي, (c) the personal pronouns: (I, we, you, he, she, it and they) as in *They are happy* إنهم سعداء and (d) the comparison: (comparative and superlative) the comparative as in *Ali is taller than Adel* علي أطول من عادل and the superlative as in *Sami is the strongest* سامي هو الأقوى.

7.2 Ellipsis

Halliday and Hassan (1976: 142) postulate that "ellipsis is simply substitution by zero". According to the Oxford English Dictionary (1996: 439), the word (ellipsis) means the omission of words from a sentence needed to complete a construction or sense or the omission of a sentence at the end of a paragraph.

Ellipsis also has three subtypes:

(i) nominal ellipsis which is the omission of the head word of the nominal group, for example:

Is there any water? Yes there is. هل هناك ماء؟ نعم هناك.

(ii) verbal ellipsis which is the omission of the main verb in the verbal clause as a sign of cohesion, for instance:

Do you like reading? هل تحب القراءة؟
Yes I do. نعم أحبها.

In this example, the verb أحب (like) in the reply English sentence is elliptic to enhance cohesion. However, it is repeated in the Arabic sentence for the same reason.

And (iii) clause ellipsis which is a cohesive device that depends on the omission of a complete clause in the text in order to make cohesion possible. For example:



هل تستطيع السباحة؟
Yes. (I can play soccer).
No. (I cannot play soccer).

7.3 Substitution

Halliday and Hassan (1976: 88) say that "substitution is the replacement of on item by another". In this regard, Aziz (1998) postulates that substitution is generally used to give cohesion a way to emphasize information, avoid lexical repetition and make the text well-organized. Also, as in ellipsis, there are three types of substitution:

(i) nominal substitution such as (one /ones, and the same) which are used as heads in the nominal groups to avoid repeating said words. For example:

Which apples do you like? أي التفاح تحب؟
I like the red ones. أحب الأحمر منه

(ii) verbal substitution which is mainly the use of the verb (do) in English whereas in Arabic, because of the difference in structure, it is used in different way mainly by using the main verb which is derived from the three radicals (ف ع ل) of the action that is already mentioned in the first sentence. For instance:

Do you like your job? Yes I do. هل تحب عملك؟ نعم أحبه

And (iii) clause substitution which is not the substitution of a word but rather the whole clause. In English and Arabic, the whole clause in a sentence can be substituted similarly by words like كذلك (so) and ذلك (that). For example:

It is going to rain soon. ستمطر قريباً
I think so, and because of that I will take my umbrella. وكذلك أعتقد أنا ولذلك سوف آخذ مظلي.

7.4 Conjunction

Aziz (1998) adopts three main types of conjunctions from Halliday (1994): elaboration, extension and enhancement. the conjunction types are classified according to their cohesive semantic roles with a number of subdivisions, where



Aziz (1998) sees that most of these semantic relationships have their equivalents in Arabic in which Arabs make frequent use of them to build their texts. Therefore, we enlist these subdivisions as the following:

(i) elaboration: it is subdivided into expository and exemplifying. (a) expository is the use of conjunction devices slightly opposing the previous construction but at the same time exposing meanings in different words to provide cohesion by using expressions like (in other words, by the way and that is to say), and (b) exemplifying which is slightly opposing the previous construction and elaborate further to give examples that help understand the text by using expressions like (for example and for instance).

(ii) extension: There are three types of extension. (a) additive which consist of elements like (and, also and in addition), (b) adversative which consist of adverse expressions like (but, yet and on the other hand), and (c) variation which are three subtypes: (1) replative (on the contrary), (2) exception (apart from that), and (3) alternative (alternatively).

(iii) enhancement: a cohesive device that expresses ideas inside the text, in accordance to a sequence of times or events. The main two kinds that contribute to cohesion as conjunction devices are: (a) temporal that help determine when an event happens first and connect sentences according to time and / or to the sequence of events.

Translations usually depend on the above devices or techniques to enhance cohesion of ST for example, the use of (at once, soon, next, and then); and (b) casual or the conditional relation which function as cohesion devices to enhance cohesion both used in Arabic and English similarly. The translator should consider these textual roles carefully during in the process of translation, for example, the expressions of (so, then, therefore, accordingly, and otherwise). They should depend on them as important semantic linkage between sentences inside the text because they indicate equivalence between the ST and the TT.



7.5 Lexical Items

Lexical items is also a major cohesive device in both Arabic and English. Halliday (1976) sees it as the use of lexical items inside the text that really enhances cohesion through the selection of vocabulary between sentences and clauses which occur in the same environment in order to achieve the cohesive effect. Lexical coordination for example is the compound sentences used to express nearly equal ideas and thoughts to provide cohesion whereas lexical subordination expresses unequal ideas where both are sometimes joined by conjunction devices. The following sentences show the difference between coordination and subordination lexical items:

- (i) coordination: The team won the match and was given a sum of money. and (ii) subordination: When the team won the match, they were given a sum of money.

8. Data Collection and Analysis

8.1 Data Collection

The data collection of the study was taken from the Nobel Qur'an. It was translated by Muhammad Al-Hilali and Muhammad Khan into English in 1984. Qualitative method was applied in this study since the data and the analysis were explained descriptively. By applying qualitative method, this study described and investigated the analysis of Halliday's techniques (1976) in the translated version.

8.2 Data analysis

The following is the applications of the five Halliday's techniques (1976) on the two versions of Surat An-Naba (78) in order to see whether the translator has succeeded in conveying the intended meaning of that in the ST into the TT.

8.2.1 Reference

Reference, although this device holds the semantic relation between the sentences but it is has various grammatical tools inside them.



Example One

ST "عَمَّ يَتَسَاءَلُونَ (1) عَنِ النَّبَأِ الْعَظِيمِ (2) الَّذِي هُمْ فِيهِ مُخْتَلِفُونَ (3)"

TT "What are they asking one another about? About the great news, About which they are in disagreement"

In the above sentences ST and TT, the reference device (they, هم) plays a cohesive role in bringing up the semantic relation referring to people who have a disagreement about the news of the major secret of the Creation. Now, the personal plural pronoun (they, هم) in both languages as a reference to those who ask such questions and not yet get the right news.

8.2.2 Ellipsis

It is the omission of words in the sentence whether (i) nominal, (ii) verbal or (iii) clausal ellipsis.

Example One:

ST "كَلَّا سَيَعْلَمُونَ (4)"

TT "Nay, they will come to know..."

Here, the cohesive device is a nominal ellipsis of "the great News" which they are in disagreement about is omitted for the purpose of cohesion that the reader can negotiate and relate the omitted noun to the previous sentence and that enhances understanding.

Example Two:

ST "وَالْجِبَالُ أَوْتَادًا "

TT "And the mountains as Pegs"

In the above example, the verbal ellipsis in the sentence is the omission the verb (made) that was mentioned in the previous sentence to impose the idea of who



made the mountains as Pegs for the purpose of cohesion and to introduce the higher purpose which is the idea of creation of such huge mountains.

Example Three:

ST "كَلَّا سَيَعْلَمُونَ (4) ثُمَّ كَلَّا سَيَعْلَمُونَ (5)"

TT "Nay, they will come to know...! Nay, again they will come to know..."

In the above examples, both ST and TT practice a complete clausal ellipsis by the omission of a clause referring to the idea of knowing who creates those major things which will be mentioned later, though the omitted clause would be "who creates the following major things"

8.2.3 Substitution

Substitution is the replacement of an item by another in order to add more cohesion, emphasizing on important ideas and then avoid a repetition or redundancy inside the text. There are also (i) nominal, (ii) verbal and (iii) clausal substitution.

Example One:

ST "وَخَلَقْنَاكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا (8)"

TT "And we have created you in pairs"

In the above examples, the ST nominal words (male, female) are substituted by one word (pairs), even though in the TT, the translator verifies these pairs and add more words such as (tall, short, good, and bad) for more cohesive purposes.

Example Two:

The verbal substitution of verbs that are used in previous sentence will enhance cohesion and provide comprehension inside the text. Look at these examples:

ST "وَبَنَيْنَا فَوْقَكُمْ سَبْعًا شَدِيدًا (12) وَجَعَلْنَا سِرَاجًا وَهَّاجًا (13)"

TT "And we have built above you seven strong (heavens) And we have made (therein) a shining lamp (sun)"



In the above examples, there is a clear verbal substitution between the verbs (built and made) in the two sentences both in ST and TT. this is for the purpose of referring to actions mentioned previously.

Example Three:

The clausal substitution means the substitution of a whole clause in order to refer to an important ideas inside the text for the purpose of cohesion and let the reader experiences his own comprehensibility.

ST "إِنَّ يَوْمَ الْفَصْلِ كَانَ مِيقَاتًا (17)"

TT "Verily the Day of Decision is a fixed time"

Here, above we have a complete clause substitution of when Allah, the Creator decides who are the right people and the wrong people and separate between them in the day of judgment by a phrase in Arabic (يوم الفصل) and in a successful equivalent in English (Day of Decision).

8.2.4 Conjunction

It is another semantic relationship which used similarly in Arabic as well as in English in order to build the text and show more cohesion in the texture. According to Aziz (1998) there are three main types of conjunction: (i) elaboration, (ii) extension, and (iii) enhancement in relation to their semantic roles.

Example One:

The elaboration conjunction as a cohesive device slightly opposing previous constructions to expose meaning in different ways, enhance cohesion and elaborate understanding the whole text. Let us look at the following examples:

ST "وَسَيِّرَتِ الْجِبَالُ فَكَانَتْ سَرَابًا (20)"

TT "And the mountains shall be moved away from their places and they will be as if they were a mirage"

This conjunction (as if) will elaborate further meaning by giving an example of "mirage" "سرابا" in order to elaborate the picture or the view of such mountains in



the day after in which they become like (mirage), a familiar view in the Arabian desert.

Example Two:

The extension conjunction is the use of addition, adversative or variation tools such as (and, but, or, and except) in order to extend ideas further and enhance cohesion. Look the example below:

ST "لَا يَذُوقُونَ فِيهَا بَرْدًا وَلَا شَرَابًا (24) إِلَّا حَمِيمًا وَغَسَّاقًا (25)"

TT "Nothing cool shall they taste therein nor any drink except boiling water and dirty wound discharge"

The above extension cohesive devices (nor, except, and) all express an equivalent roles in both ST and TT to build the text and provide more cohesion.

8.2.5 Lexical Items

The lexical items as a major cohesive device pushing up more words items to enhance cohesion via the use of further vocabulary that occur in the same semantic environment whether in (i) coordination to express clearly equal ideas or in (ii) subordination to express unequal ideas for more comparison in order to enhance cohesion through providing more lexical items in the text. For example:

Example One

ST "إِنَّ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ مَفَازًا (31) حَدَائِقَ وَأَعْنَابًا (32) وَكَوَاعِبَ أَتْرَابًا (33) وَكَأْسًا دِهَاقًا (34)"

TT "Verily for Muttaquin, there will be success (Paradise) – Gardens and vine yards – And young full-breasted (mature) maidens of equal age – And a full cup (of wine)"

In the above sentences, the coordination of the word "مفازا" (success) would be enough for describing paradise living, but more selections of other lexical items are



used to enhance cohesion in the text even though they all express nearly equal ideas of success and having pleasure in the day after.

Example Two

ST

"لَا يَسْمَعُونَ فِيهَا لَغْوًا وَلَا كِذَابًا (35)"

TT "No Laghw (dirty, false, evil talk) shall they hear therein, nor lying"

In the above sentence, the subordination of expressing unequal ideas to join such cohesive devices to add more cohesion to the text through the selection of vocabulary that occur in the same environment.

9. Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations

9.1 Findings

Investigating the role of Cohesion in Arabic and English and also the translation between the two, we find that both languages use its devices to built, develop and organize ideas inside the text. The five Hallidayan (1976) cohesive devices are used in both languages approximately in the same way in which translators should be full aware of.

The findings can be summarized in the following points:

1. All the five Hallidayan devices are used approximately the same way in both languages.
2. The main differences between the two languages in terms of cohesion are due to the differences in the structure between the two.
3. Arabic language depends much on repetition as a major device for achieving cohesion in comparison to other lexical items in the text.
4. The number of the connectors in the original text is more than in the translated version, particularly the use of conjunction (الواو) and, but (لكن).



5. The main difficulties that the translator has apparently faced when rendering meaning in Surat Al-Naba from a cohesive prospective is that the Noble Qura'n as a direct speech from Allah is known of its compact sentences that carry a lot of ideas which need a lot of processing, explaining and verifying.

Therefore, cohesion in translating from the Noble Qura'n should not be defined in terms of equivalence but rather as an approximate rendering.

9.2 Conclusion

Arabic and English languages use the cohesive devices in nearly similar way. However, there are some differences that may confuse the translator when choosing the proper cohesive item that best helps convey the intended meaning of the original.

The study has shed some lights on the existence of some similarities and differences that the translator should consider carefully when translating sensitive texts such as Surats from the Noble Qura'n.

The study concluded that the translator can never achieve a complete rendering of an equivalent cohesive effect of the original in such sensitive texts as Surat of the noble Qura'n.

Some indications that have been reached at after the above investigating of the ST and TT data prescribed, should be considered as an aspect of the nature of the translation process. But still remains what to be verified by prospective researchers in future.

9.3 Recommendations

In translating sensitive texts such as Surat from the Noble Qura'n, translators should consider cohesion as important linguistic feature of Arabic and English languages. They should study and have enough knowledge of the five Hallidayan



(1976) cohesive devices in both languages. They should analyze them carefully because sometimes they seem to be nearly similar but the translators still need to use different cohesive items in order to render the intended message.

1. The translator should first determine the proper cohesive device that better convey the intended meaning between ST and TT and provide equivalence.
2. The translator should not stick to the form of ST literally to avoid faulty cohesion but he should find out proper cohesive devices that have the approximate meaning of the original.
3. The translator should first read the original text thoroughly and repeat reading it carefully in order to draw a full picture of the intended message. then he should establish the relationships between sentences determining the proper cohesive item which be able to convey the original message.
4. The translator should acquire the differences between form and content of the ST to determine the best connector that reconstruct and develop ideas inside the TT.
5. The translator during the processes of translation may need to replace some of the cohesive devices used in ST by other different or nearly different devices in TT despite their similarity in meaning in order to reach the proper effective ties between the two.



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