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**Difficulties of Translating the Pragmatic**

**Meaning from English into Arabic**

**The Case of 3<sup>rd</sup> Year English LMD Students at the University of  
Constantine**

**Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a Master Degree in  
Applied Language Studies**

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## Dedication

To my **Parents,**

To my fiancé, **Abed Elmalek,** for his help and patience,

To my grandmother **Mahbouba,**

To my brothers: **Kamel, Tarek and Anter,**

To my unique sister **Hanane,**

To my cousin **Nadjet,**

To my friends: **Amina, Asma and Nassima,**

To the sweetest girls **Souhila and Hanane,**

To all my relatives,

To all people who know me,

I dedicate this work.

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to have some insights about the difficulties which face Algerian students when they come to translate English pragmatic meaning into Arabic. We will try to answer the question: Are the cultural and the social concepts of the source language the main weaknesses of students when translating English pragmatic meaning into Arabic. We also aim at finding out the procedures followed by students in translating English pragmatic meaning. The study is carried out through a translation task. The results have given evidence of the students' unawareness of cultural problems. In other words, cultural and social aspects of the source language must be taken into account when it comes to translate utterances which contain pragmatic meanings.

## Table of Transcription and Symbols

The following transliteration system has been used when representing Arabic script in this dissertation. The scheme is according to Saad (1982:4)

Arabic Sounds	Phonetic Transcription	Arabic Sounds	Phonetic Transcription
<b>Consonant</b>			
ء	ʔ	ط	d
ب	b	ظ	t
ت	t	ظ	z
ث	th	ع	c
ج	j	غ	gh
ح	h	ف	f
خ	x	ق	q
د	d	ك	k
ذ	dh	ل	l
ر	r	م	m
ز	z	ن	n
س	s	ه	h
ش	sh	و	w
ص	s	ي	y
<b>Vowels</b>			
ا	ə	أ	ʔ
و	u	و	u
ي	i	ي	i

Note: the definite article will always be transliterated as/ al - / in spite of the fact that it has a hamza /ʔ/ in the Arabic system of writing.

the letter is doubled for " الشدة " in Arabic.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1. Statement of the Problem**

Translating the pragmatic meaning from one language into another is a difficult task. On the one hand, pragmatic meanings reflect specific cultural and social concepts, beliefs or environment. On the other hand, languages differ in their ways of expressing meanings.

### **2. Aims of the Study**

The aim of this research is to show what the difficulties which face students when translating English pragmatic meanings into Arabic and to shed some light on the students' awareness of the concept of pragmatics and pragmatic meanings.

### **3. Hypothesis**

We hypothesize that: If students take social and cultural aspects of the source language into consideration, they will translate the pragmatic meaning correctly.

### **4. Method**

#### **4.1. Selected Population**

The testees are thirty four third Year English LMD students from the English department. Only twenty five students have been cooperative and have translated the utterances whereas the rest have not. These students have been chosen on the following criteria:

They are supposed to have received basic theoretical knowledge about translation during the two Years of instruction. They are also supposed to be familiar with pragmatics



and translation because they actually have a course in translation practice from English into Arabic and, therefore, should have some insights about the problems of such a direction of translation.

#### **4.2. Data Collection**

The data are collected through a translation task. The students have been asked to translate thirty six utterances into Arabic. The translation task aims at obtaining active production of Arabic from the students so that we can check whether or not pragmatic meanings are part of the students' knowledge in so far as the English language is concerned.

#### **5. Structure of the Study**

The present work is made up of two chapters. Chapter one deals with the literature review which relates to the pragmatic meaning. It also deals with studies on society, culture, context and pragmatics and important issues which must be considered in the domains of Speech Acts, Cooperative Principles and Implicatures.

The second chapter is concerned with data analysis. It investigates the subjects' translation in accordance with the difficulties of converting the pragmatic meaning from English into Arabic, the origins of these difficulties, with an attempt to find out some solutions to that aspect.

## Chapter One: Sociolinguistics and Pragmatics

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **ENGLISH PRAGMATIC MEANINGS**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter deals with the relationship between language and its social context, and the cultural aspects representing the main aspect of it. To understand how language functions, relating it to its society, its culture and its context is crucial. In this chapter, pragmatics and some of its key issues namely: Speech Acts, Cooperative Principles and Implicatures are also dealt with.

#### **1.1. Sociolinguistics**

##### **1.1.1. What is Sociolinguistics?**

Holmes (2001) defines sociolinguistics as a branch which is interested in studying the relationships between language and society. He says that sociolinguists are interested in the peoples' way of speaking. He asks why people speak differently in different social contexts. Moreover, sociolinguists are concerned with identifying the social functions of language and the ways to convey social meanings.

Learning how language is used in social contexts gives a wealth of information about how language works, as well as, about the relationships in a society, and how people give signal aspects of their social identity via their language.

The definition of sociolinguistics which is given by Spolsky (1998) does not differ from other philosophers of language. Spolsky defines sociolinguistics as a field that studies the relation between language and the social structures in which the users of language live. "It is a field of study that assumes that human society is made up of many related patterns and

behaviours, some of which are linguistic” (Ibid: 03). Yule (2006:205) defines sociolinguistics as a term “used generally for the study of the relationship between language and society”.

### **1.1.2. What is Language?**

“When we study human language, we are approaching what some might call “the human essence”, the distinctive qualities of mind that are, so far as I know, unique to man” (Chomsky in Fromkin and Rodman, 1978:01).

According to Fromkin and Rodman (1978) when people meet, they play, fight or make automobiles- they talk. For them, we are living in a world of words because we talk all the time to our friends, our wives and our mothers. We talk face to face and over the telephone, and the other people responds to us with words.

In our everyday lives, we talk even if there is no one to answer, sometimes we talk to ourselves and to our animals, language is the only feature which distinguishes human from animals. They say according to the philosophy expressed in the myths and religion of many people, “language is the source of human life”. Furthermore, for some people of Africa, for instance, a new born child is a KUNTU, a “thing”, not yet a MUNTU, a “person”. Only by learning language a child becomes a human being. Thus according to this tradition, all people become “human” only when they speak at least one language (Ibid).

Trudgill (2000) goes beyond the common definition of language which is known by all people; a means of communication. He refuses to take language just as a means of communicating information between people but to talk about the weather or any other subject, because language plays an important role in establishing relationships with other people. The question here is what is the relationship between language and society, language and culture, and language and context?

### 1.1.3. Language and Society

From the point of view of Trudgill (2000), it is very common that when two persons meet, they start talking even if they do not know each other. For example, when two English persons meet in the train, they start speaking about the weather. He says that none of them are interested in analyses of climatic conditions, but, there must be other reasons for conversations of this kind.

Firstly, because it is quite embarrassing to be with a person sitting beside you without being involved in any conversation. For him, if people remain silent and no conversation is made by them, the atmosphere will become rather unnatural. But, talking to the other person about neutral topics such as the weather, you can begin a relationship without actually having to say very much.

Secondly, the first English person is subconsciously looking for certain information about the second, for example, what kind of job they do and what social status they have. Without these information, people will not be able to behave towards each other. The first person can make intelligent guesses about the second from the clothe and other visual clues; he is also able to find out certain things about the other person quite easily. These things will be learnt not from what the other person says, but from the way of saying it.

Trudgill (2000:02) says “whenever we speak we can not avoid giving our listeners clues about our origins and the sort of person we are-our accent and our speech generally show where we come from, and what sort of background we have. We may even give some indication of certain of our ideas and attitudes, and all of this information can be used by the people we are speaking with to help them formulate an opinion about us”.

The two aspects of language behaviour are very important from a social point of view. First, the function of language in establishing social relationships, and, second, the role which is played by language in transferring information about the speaker. These aspects of

linguistic behaviour are reflections of the fact that there is a close inter-relationship between language and society.

According to Wardhaugh (1992:10) “sociolinguistics is interested in the relationships between language and society. If we start off by defining ‘society’ as an organized group of people and ‘language’ as the way they communicate with each other, we have already set up one relationship between the two concepts. A society speaks a language. But there are other, more complex, relationships that might result”. Wardhaugh suggests four possible relationships between language and society.

The first is that social structure can either influence or determine linguistic structure and or behaviours. For example, the age-grading phenomenon, in that young children speak differently from older children and children speak differently from mature adults. Some studies show that the varieties of language that speakers use in their daily lives reflect their regional social or ethnic origins and even their sex. Other studies say that particular ways of speaking, choices of words are determined by certain social requirements.

The second possible relationship is directly apposed to the first; linguistic structure and or behaviour may either influence or determine social structure.

The third possibility relationship is that the influence is bi-directional; language and society may influence each other. One variant of this approach is that this influence is dialectal in nature i.e. speech behaviour and social behaviour are in a state of constant interaction and that material living conditions are an important factor in the relationship.

A fourth possibility is to assume that there is no relationship at all between linguistic structure and social structure and that each is independent of the other. Normally, people who speak the same language tend to share the same language conventions and any violation of these conventions would result in communication breakdowns. The language people use

reflects all aspects of life of a particular speech community including beliefs, customs, activities, objects, etc.

People, who belong to different speech communities and languages, express different attitudes, patterns of thought, behaviours and objects. All these differences make people understand things differently with reference to their social background. Lévi-Strauss in Alessandro (1997:337) says “to say language is to say society”. This is illustrated through the function of language as a means of social interaction.

#### **1.1.4. Language and Culture**

##### **1.1.4.1. The Concept of Culture**

The term culture refers to all the knowledge, beliefs, customs, and skills that are available to the members of a society. It refers to the way of life of people. Culture has been studied and defined in many ways by different scholars. One of the clearest definitions of culture is provided by New mark in Ghazala (1995:194) “I define culture as the way of life and its manifestation that are peculiar to community that uses a particular language as its means of expression”.

Adler (1997:15) has synthesized many definitions of culture she says:

Culture is something that is shared by all or almost all members of some social group- something that the older members of the group try to pass on to the young members. Something (as in the case of moral, laws and customs) that shapes behaviours, or structures one’s perception of the world.

Culture is a framework to our lives, according to levo-henriksson (1994), culture covers the every day way of life as well as myths and value systems of society. The behaviour of individuals and groups influences the culture of the society. There is no culture in society without people’s behaviour .Every culture has distinct characteristics that make it different

from any other culture. Unlike animals, man has culture because he is the only creature capable of making symbols. These symbols represent different concepts and serve the communication of higher ideas. The word “scales” is a symbol which is used to refer to justice. This is why the picture of scales may be put on the door of court. Animals may be used to stand for different concepts depending on people’s cultures and social conventions .A “lamb” may refer to innocence in one culture, but in another culture it may not symbolize the same concept .In Eskimos’ culture, the “seal” is used to refer to innocence. Moreover, beliefs and feelings change from culture to culture. The colour “white” may represent purity and “black” evil in one culture, but they may not connote the same thing in another culture.

Culture is a representation of the world, a way of making sense of reality by using it in stories, myths, proverbs and so on. To understand that culture is communication, a person must be careful that every sign expresses people’s conception of the world. However, sometimes people understand the world differently; the result will be breakdowns in communication. Communication will be better with people whom we share meanings and experiences because whenever they are different, difficulties in communication emerge.

#### **1.1.4.2. The Relationship between Language and Culture**

According to Kramsh (1998:03) “the words people utter refer to common experience. They express facts, ideas or events that are communicable because they refer to a stock of knowledge about the world that other people share. Words also reflect their authors’ attitudes and beliefs, their point of view, which are also those of others. In both cases, language expresses cultural reality”.

The shared experience of people shape the way they understand the world. Any linguistic community has its particular universe which determines its particular culture and activities including linguistic ones –Each culture have its specificities which make it different from other cultures. Lexical distinctions express sociocultural characteristics of a linguistic group. People’s culture is reflected by the language they use.



The way people behave linguistically in a particular situation is affected by their culture. For example, in English there are different expressions to reply to thanks such as: not a all, do not mention it, that's all right, it's a pleasure, you are welcome, etc, but in standard Arabic thanks are replied to by saying “ لا شكر على واجب ” /lā shukra calā wājib/ (no thanks for duty) or “عفوا” /cafwan/ (spontaneously). This example shows us that different languages do not have equivalent linguistic structures to respond to a given situation.

In his dissertation, Agti (2005) says that the Arabic language has many words or names for “horses” like “حصان” /hisān/ (male horse) “فرس” /faras/ (male or female horse), “جواد” /jawād/ (a race horse), “أدهم” /adham/ (male or female completely black horse) and “أغير” /aghbar/ (male or female horse with a white patch on the forehead), “كُمَيْت” /kumayt/ (male and female black and red horse. It may be noticed that in Arabic the distinction between the different types of horses is based mainly on colour and sex, while in English, the distinction is made with reference to age and sex of the horse. “Filly”: female foal, “foal”: young horse, “stallion”: uncastrated fully-grown male horse kept for breeding, “colt”: young male horse up the age of 4 or 5, “mare”: female horse. Different languages classify reality in different ways. For instance, many words are used to refer to different types of snow in Eskimo.

The ways in which the world is divided up by different speech communities are often culturally specific. Fowler in Evelyn and Brown (1985:116) states that “the vocabulary of a language could be considered a kind of lexical map of the preoccupations of a culture”. That is to say, language is tied to cultural notions that only the members of the same linguistic group can make sense out of them. At the same time, there are many concepts that could be called universals because they are shared by all people regardless of their different cultural backgrounds. The major problem faced by a translator attempting to translate cross-cultures lies not in the universal concepts but in culture -specific terms and notions. For example, there

is no problem in translating concepts such as love, hatred, peace, etc. But when it comes to translate notions like: “honour” “dignity”, “courage” and so on, many terms could be used in different cultures. In the Algerian context, “dignity” could be expressed by “نيف” [nif] and an English person would literally translate it into (nose). Languages do not only differ in the number of terms they use for concepts, but the range of meaning of each term may cover the concept in different ways. “Drink” is restricted to liquids in English, but in colloquial Arabic the word “drink” is also used with cigarettes, for instance, “يشرب الدخان”/yashrub al-duḫān/ (he smokes cigarettes), literally “he drinks cigarettes”.

Since the social worlds in which people live differ, so there are differences in words for certain concepts. English has many words for different types of dogs like poodle, spaniel, collie, etc and Arabic has many words for the sea such as “يم” /yam/, “عباب” /cubāb/ and “لجة” /lujja/.

### **1.1.5. Language and Context**

The concept of context of situation originates from Malinowski. In his article, “the problem of meaning in primitive languages” (1923) he studied the interaction between culture and meaning. As an anthropologist and ethnographer, he was interested in how discourse functions in a particular situation. From his research on particular languages and cultures, he concluded that one can not understand the meaning of utterances without taking into account the social -cultural situation in which they are uttered. An utterance has no meaning except in the context of situation. Such a view can be referred to as a pragmatic-and hence as a contemporary one. Earlier, and following Malinowski, Firth (1956) was among the very first linguists to stress the importance of meaning in the study of language. For him, language was only meaningful in its context of situation. According to Firth, the linguistic description must begin with the gathering of a set of contextually defined homogenous texts; while the aim of

such a description is to explain how the sentences or utterances are meaningful in their contexts.

According to Widdowson (2007:19) “contexts can be thought of as situation in which we find ourselves, the actual circumstances of time and place, the here and now of the home, the school, the work place, and so on”. For him, when people speak to each other they make reference to what is present in such situation, present in the sense of both place (here) and time (now). He gives these examples:

-The chalk is over there.

-Pass me the tape measure.

-There is a page missing.

-I like the look of that.

-Is that the time? (Ibid).

He says that people in these examples make sense of what is said by making connection between the language and the physical context of the utterance.

-Over there-----on that table by the window.

-The tape measure-----the one you have in your hand.

-Is that the time?-----five past two, as shown by the clock on the wall.

“Language serves to point out something which is present in the perceived environment, and the listeners can only understand what the speaker means by the utterance by making the necessary connection” (Ibid: 20). For him, when such utterances are isolated from the shared situation, they have nothing to point to, and so lose their point. (Over there) could be anywhere, the time could be anytime. But, later he says, to be with the listener in the same situation does not mean that the listener will make the required connection: they may

still fail to identify just what is being indicated; over there....what do you mean? , (I like the look of that....the look of what?) (Ibid) “The context of an utterance cannot simply be the situation in which it occurs but the features of the situation that are taken as relevant. In other words, the context is not an external set of circumstances but a selection of them internally represented in mind”.

Hymes (1966) introduces the concept of communicative competence and later modified by himself (1974) and then by Gumperz (1982). This concept can be defined in general terms as a speaker’s knowledge which enables him to use language appropriately in a given social situation in a given speech community. Grammatically is not enough for language to be correct, as the following example from Labov (1970:24):

A: What is your name?

B: Well, let’s say you might have thought you had something from before, but you

Have not got it.

A: I am going to call you Dean.

## **1.2. Pragmatics**

### **1.2.1. Views and Definitions**

There are many philosophers of language that have a long dated to the field of pragmatics, such as Austin (1962) and Searle (1969). It was only later that R.lakoff (1989) and Ross (1972) decided to develop this field. So, there is no exaggeration to say that pragmatics grew and developed first in the territory of philosophy before it become a discipline. According to the philosophical classification made by C.Morris, R.Carnap and C.Peirce, pragmatics is listed next to semantics and syntax. Levinson (1983) wanted to

incorporate pragmatics as a separate component, in general linguistic theory. The structuralists seem to share the same view, but the generative grammarians insist on excluding pragmatics.

At the beginning, Chomsky recognized only one type of competence, namely grammatical competence. But after the development in linguistic in the late 1960's and early 1970's, he started to talk about what he calls "pragmatic competence". He says in the following quotation:

For purposes of inquiry and exposition, we may proceed to distinguish "grammatical competence" from "pragmatic competence", restricting the first to the knowledge of form and meaning, and the second to knowledge of conditions and manner of appropriate use, in conformity with various purposes. Thus we may think of language as an instrument that can be put to use. The grammar of language characterizes the instrument, determining intrinsic physical and properties of every sentence.

The grammar thus expresses grammatical competence. A system of rules and principles constituting pragmatic competence determines how the tool can effectively be put to use. (Chomsky, 1980:242).

"places language in the institutional setting of its use, relating intentions and purposes to the linguistic means at hand" (ibid: 225). Although many "pragmatic" books and articles have been written recently, there seems to be no total agreement among pragmatists "as to how to do pragmatics, or as to what pragmatics is, or how to define it, or even as to what pragmatics is not" (Mey, 1998:716).

Jaszczolt (2002:03) defines pragmatics as "the study of how hearers add contextual information to the semantic structure and how they draw inferences from what is said".

According to Yule (1996) pragmatics is the study of meaning as it pronounced by the speaker or writer and how the listener or reader understand it. For him, pragmatics has more to do with the analysis of what people mean by their utterances than what the words or

phrases in those utterances might mean by themselves. From his point of view “pragmatics is the study of speaker meaning” (Ibid: 03).

### **1.2.2. The Difference between Semantics and Pragmatics**

Semantics and Pragmatics are different branches, the major thing differ in is meaning. Widdowson (1996:61) says “Semantics is the study of meaning in language, it is concerned with what language means. This is not the same as what people mean by the language they use, how they actualize its meaning potential as a communicative resource. This is the concern of pragmatics”.

According to Jaszczolt (2002) semantics is interested in the meaning of utterances, or the meaning of the speaker. For him, pragmatics focuses on the speaker and the hearer, whereas semantics focuses on linguistic expressions. Pragmatics is interested much more on how hearers draw inferences from what is said. However, in semantics people are interested in the relation between linguistic units such as words and sentences, and the world.

Semantics and pragmatics are also different in their meanings. While semantics deals with the meaning of linguistic units, words and sentences; pragmatics is interested in the meaning conveyed, negotiated, and interpreted by the participants in the process of communication. From a pragmatic point of view, meaning always requires world knowledge, contextual information and shared background knowledge and presuppositions. Words and sentences are often produced with many different interpretations.

Grice (1989:395) suggests a clear division of the study of meaning: semantics accounts for what is said, pragmatic principles accounts for conversational implicatures. Grice, Hawley (2002:972) believe in the “priority of literal” since, understanding what is implicated seems to require, first, understanding what is said. While semantics focuses on context independent meaning, i.e. on literal meaning or what is said, pragmatics goes beyond

this conception of meaning and concentrates on what is meant, i.e. on utterance meaning and on speaker's intended meaning. These meanings are communicated through conversational implicatures and speech acts.

### **1.2.3. Speech Acts**

The basic idea with the notion of a "speech act" is that when we say something, we are always also doing something. This point was made by the philosopher J. Austin (1962). Austin distinguished first "Performative", those utterances which perform a particular action in and of themselves, as for example, when apologizing or when promising: the utterance "I apologize" is itself an apology, and "I promise" means a promise has been made.

Jaszczolt (2002:294,295) gives these examples:

1. How are you?
2. Enjoy yourself.
3. Do not touch it!

He says that these sentences do not express an idea or something else, they "do things", so to speak. For him, they are already "acts of doing something through speaking, or speech acts". According to him speech acts are like physical acts (hitting a ball) and also like mental acts (imagining hitting a ball).

Two remarks can be made about such performative utterances: first, they can only be used in the first person and in the present tense, excluding such utterances as "I apologized yesterday" or "I know he is now apologizing" because the speaker is not making an apology. The second remark is that utterances of this kind cannot be true or false, excluding the response "no you do not" to the statement "I apologize" since the latter utterance is itself an apology.

Austin distinguished another kind of utterances which is called “Constatives”. They are proposition-making utterances. Later on, such utterances are also considered by Austin as the performance of some act by the speaker. For example, the utterance “it’s raining” contains a proposition which may be true or false; but we also have to determine what the speaker intends to do by uttering it, and how it is supposed to be taken by the hearer. It may be limited to the statement of a fact about the world, or it could be functioning as an indirect request for an umbrella.

says that Austin during the course of his lectures “how to do things with words” “abandons the performative and constative dichotomy in favour of three types of speech acts: Locutionary, the act of speaking; Illocutionary, the act of declaring a fact, asking, etc; and Perlocutionary, exerting an influence on the hearer” (Ibid:297). Austin (1962:101,102) gives this example:\* Shoot her! In this example the locution is the act of saying “shoot her” and meaning shoot by “shoot” and her by “her”.

### **1.2.3.1. Illocutionary Meaning**

The illocution or illocutionary meaning.i.e. The “force” or the utterance, what is meant by the speaker, as for example, an assertion, a request, an apology, or a promise? The illocutionary meaning according to Austin “is the act of urging, advising, ordering the addressee to shoot her”

### **1.2.3.2. Perlocutionary Meaning**

The perlocution or perlocutionary meaning is the effect on the hearer and his reaction. For example, when we say “it’s raining” the reaction of the hearer or the perlocutionary effect is providing an umbrella. More attention has been focused on the question of how we decide on the illocutionary force of a given utterance. That force is explicit with performatives such



as “I promise you”, “I bet you” or “I apologize”. When the illocutionary force of the speaker is not explicit, the implicit meaning is to be found in the utterance itself; thanks to context.

According to Austin what is perlocution in one culture can be an illocution in another. For him, illocutions are conventional, perlocutions are not.

#### **1.2.4. Cooperative Principles**

The originator of this idea is another language philosopher, P. Grice (1975), who suggested that when people interact with one another, a cooperative principle is put into practice. This principle is “to make your contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged” (1975:45). The cooperative principle is divided into four maxims: Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner.

##### **1.2.4.1. Maxim of Quantity**

- Make your contribution as informative as is required.
- Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

This means do not provide more or less information than is necessary. According to Widdowson (2007) there is no need to give information by means of language if it is already common knowledge. He says “If they underestimate how much context is shared and so over-textualize by producing too much language then what they say will be heard or read as pointlessly wordy, or verbose. If, on the other hand, they overestimate the extent of shared contextual knowledge, and so under-textualize, then what they say will be heard read as obscure” (2007:57). He also says that some genres need a quantity of language which would be inappropriate in another. He gives examples of contracts, insurance policies or the small

print on the back of an airline ticket. These things need more details because it serves the purpose of this genre to do so.

#### **1.2.4.2. Maxim of Quality**

- Try to make your contribution one that is true.
- Do not say what you believe to be false.
- Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

Yule (1996) says that the importance of the maxim of quality for cooperative interaction in English may be measured by the number of expressions which we use in our conversation to show that what we are saying is not totally accurate. He gives these examples:

A- As far as I know, they are married.

B- I may be mistaken, but I thought I saw a wedding ring on her finger.

C- He could not live without her, I guess. (Ibid: 38 ).

The initial phrases of A and B, and the final phrase of C are notes to the listener regarding the accuracy of the main statement.

#### **1.2.4.3. Maxim of Relation**

- Be relevant

According to Widdowson (2007:61) relation is “to make what you say relevant to the topic or purpose of the communication”. For him, in order to illustrate this maxim is by reference to how adjacency pairs work in turn-taking. He gives an example of a husband and wife getting ready to go out for an evening. The wife asks the husband: How do you like my new hat? If the husband wants to be co-operative, comply with the relation maxim and his turn relevant, he would recognize that the purpose of the question is to elicit an answer, and

the answer should have a relation with the hat. The following answers would all count as relevant, for example, the husband says: very much, looks nice, well, not sure it is quite your colour. But, if the husband refuses to be cooperative and chooses not to comply with the maxim – the answer would be as follows: It's ten past eight already. This answer is irrelevant on two counts: it does not function as an answer to the question and it has no relation with the topic of hat.

#### **1.2.4.4. Maxim of Manner**

- Avoid obscurity and ambiguity.
- Be brief (avoid unnecessary proximity)

Widdowson (2007) says that the violation of this maxim can have comical consequences as in the following examples of ambiguous newspaper headlines:

-DRUNK GETS NINE MONTHS IN VIOLIN CASE.

-RED TAPE HOLDS UP NEW BRIDGE.

In the above examples the quantity maxim is appropriately applied in newspaper headlines because too much information is delivered by few words. These expressions are not normally grammatically possible (phrases without determiners) or not normally appropriate (simple present tense used to refer to past events as in: Gets, Holds in these headlines. We can see from the ambiguity in these examples, avoiding the violation of the quantity maxim can lead to the unintentional violation of the manner maxim.

These maxims are not rules that conversationalists are required to obey. Rather they are rational and logical principles to be observed for a coherent and efficient communication of meaning by cooperation between interactants. Grice is only referring to the kind and degree of cooperation that is necessary for people to make sense of one another's contributions.

In some occasions, interactants may decide to flout some of Grice's four maxims, to be uninformative, evasive, irrelevant or obscure. Still, their ambiguous behaviour is itself intended to be meaningful, and is going to be inferred as meaningful by the recipient "Implicature". Grice (1975:32) says "If the maxims are breached, or ostentatiously flouted, the hearer infers that the speaker must have something else that is that speaker must have had some special reason for not observing the maxims". He says flouting the maxims also leads to implicatures, and he gives these examples:

- 1- If he comes, he comes.
- 2- Tom has wooden ears.

The first example, the sentence is uninformative; in uttering it the speaker flouts the first maxim of quantity. The hearer infers that the speaker meant something more informative as in this example: You never know if he is going to turn up so there is no point worrying about it. In the second example, the sentence is obviously false; in uttering it the speaker flouts the second maxim of quality. Thus, the hearer infers that the speaker meant something more informative, for example: Tom does not appreciate classical music so we should not invite him to the concert. According to Jaszczolt (2002:212) "Metaphor and irony are standard examples of the flouting of the maxim of quality".

### **1.2.5. Implicature**

Another important pragmatic topic which helps define the field of pragmatics is the notion of implicature. The originator of this idea is the language philosopher P. Grice (1975). He began with a theoretical distinction between saying and implicating, which derives from the intuitive distinction between conveying something literally and directly, and suggesting or hinting it. The belief is that, in some way, what is implicated depends on what is said since the hearer in a conversation needs to use what is said to determine what is implicated.

P. Hawley (2002:969) is giving the example of a room getting darker because the sun is setting. A direct way of asking for the light to be turned on could be “I want you to turn on the light”. More indirectly, using hints or suggestions, I may say “It’s getting dark in here” or “I can’t see you anymore!” the difference here is between rudeness and politeness. But, there is another difference: when something is said literally and directly, understanding the words implies understanding the speaker. But, in hinting or suggesting, the words alone do not tell what is meant.

Grice’s well-known example is about a philosophy professor writing a job recommendation letter on behalf of one of his students. The professor writes: “the candidate is prompt and has excellent penmanship”, and nothing more, i.e. no reference to the philosophical abilities of the candidate. Clearly, what is said literally is different from what is conveyed, which is that the candidate is bad at philosophy. The distinction between what is said and what is implicated is best revealed in conversational implicature, because hearers presume that speakers are rational and cooperative. Hence, hearers draw conclusions about what a speaker is implicating. As Grice puts it:

What is conversationally implicated is what is required that one assume a speaker to think in order to preserve the assumption that he is observing the cooperative principle (and perhaps some conversational maxim as well) (Grice, 1989:86)

A first condition is its dependence on what is said: what is implicated is calculated by the speaker from what is said, but together with other features of the context of utterances. Grice adds a further condition on conversational implicature: The speaker must believe that hearers are in a position to recognize the implicature. In Grice’s own words:

The presence of a conversational implicature must be capable of being worked out; for even if it can in fact be intuitively grasped, unless the intuition is replaceable. By an argument, the implicature (if present at all) will not count as a conversational Implicature; it will be a conventional implicature.(Grice, 1989:31).

The latter implicature is associated with particular words such as “but”, “therefore”, “manage”, in such sentences as: “Fido is a dog, but / and he is quite intelligent”. It is intuitively plausible that the meaning of contrast inherent in “but” is relevant for the semantics in the previous example. The difference, at times ambiguous, between what is said -semantics- and what is implicated-pragmatics-, as well as between conversational and conventional implicature is explained and clarified in the following way:

The difference between “conversational” and “conventional” Implicatures. At the level of sentences lies in the nature of the conventions involved both are semantic conventions, but only the former are first - order conventions. The Contrastive implication is part of the meaning of “but”. The nonuniversal Implication is not part of the meaning of “some” .W.A.Davis (1998:157).

Another condition for conversational Implicature to work efficiently is that interlocutors share some background knowledge. When they do not, some kinds of unintentional implicature are more likely to occur as in cross-cultural contexts. The message can be misconstrued since the addressee does not share the same common ground-as in cross-cultural situations-, but also because no addressee has a direct access to the speaker’s intentions.

## **Conclusion**

Finally, it can be said that using language properly requires being aware of the social norms that governs its use. Social norms influence the choice of linguistic forms. Language use reflects people’s patterns of thought and behaviour. In the theoretical chapter, five main concepts have been dealt with. These concepts help define the field of pragmatics. They are Meanings, Contexts, Speech acts, Cooperative principles and Implicatures.

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## **Chapter Two**

### **Students' Production of English Pragmatic Meaning**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter aims at testing our hypothesis: Whether the Algerian LMD students of English respect or aware of the cultural and social backgrounds of the source language (English) when translating the pragmatic meaning to the target language (Arabic).

#### **2. The Test**

##### **2.1. The Sample**

The testees are thirty four Third Year English LMD students from the English department. Twenty five students were very cooperative, whereas the rest gave back blank papers.

##### **2.2. Description of the Test**

The data are collected through a translation task, the students are asked to translate thirty six utterances into Arabic. I have chosen just seventeen utterances which deserve analysis on the basis of pragmatic meaning.

##### **2.3. Data Analysis**

###### **2.3.1. Cultural Problems**

###### **2.3.1.1. Utterance N° 01**

Shall I compare thee to a summers' day?

Thou art more lovely and temperate.



Twenty two subjects destroy the pragmatic meaning of the poem; they translate it literally because of their ignorance of the source culture. “A summer’s day” in the Arab world is very hot, whereas in England “a summer’s day” is lovely and temperate. It would be strange for a person in the Arab world to compare his beloved to a summer’s day. The season which is lovely and temperate in the Arab world is spring. So, the subjects fail to connect the meaning of the source text into the target one. The three subjects have not translated the poem at all because they are aware of the cultural aspects of the poem and thus, they avoid literal translation.

Being aware of the source and the target culture is a good skill to avoid using word-for – word translation.

### 2.3.1.2. Utterance N° 02

-A hamburger is a hamburger.

**Subjects:** 01,02,03,04,05,06,07 and 08 translate the pragmatic meaning as:

فسر الماء بالماء.

/fasara al-mā? bilmā?/

تفسر نفسها بنفسها.

/tufasiru nafsahā binafsihā/

It can be noticed that the subjects understand the pragmatic meaning of the utterance and are able to translate it into Arabic. The subjects know that the example above and other pointless expressions like “business is business” or “boys will be boys” are called tautologies, and when they are used in a conversation, the speaker intends to communicate more than is

said. So, the subjects know that the speaker intends to communicate something more than just what the words mean.

**Subjects:** 10, 11 and 12 translate it as:

من شب على شيء شاب عليه.

/man shabba calā shay? shāba calayh/

**Subject:** 13 translate it as:

الذهب ذهب و الفضة فضة.

/al-dhahab dhahab w ifida fida/

**Subject:** 14 translate it as:

الأحمق أحمق.

/al-?ahmaq ?ahmaq/

The subjects are aware of the fact that tautologies are culture-specific, and thus, they are trying to give an equivalent in Arabic, but it can be noticed that the meanings of the tautology which are translated by the subjects are far from being the same as the English meaning.

**Subjects:** 15, 16 and 17

الهمبورغر هو الهمبورغر.

/al-hambūrghar hūwa lhambūrghar/

**Subject: 18**

الأكل هو الأكل.

/al-ʔakl hūwa lʔakl/

The subjects are not aware of the cultural aspect of the tautology. This is why they follow a word-for-word translation.

**Subject: 20**

انه شهبي أريد واحد.

/ʔinahu shahiy ʔuridu wāhid/

This subject does not even translate the linguistic meaning. He only tries to guess what the tautology means. However, it should be noted that a cultural meaning cannot be known by the meanings of the words.

**Subjects: 21,22,23,24 and 25:**

They have not translated the utterance at all, because the word which is expressed in the source language is unknown in the target language. The source language word expresses a concept which is not known in the target culture (Arabic). Baker (1992:21) says “the concept may relate to a religious belief, social custom or even a type of food. Such concepts are often referred to as ‘culture-specific’ ”. In other words, the word “hamburger” is not part of the Arabic culture or a kind of food which is widespread in the social life of people in the Arab world.

It can be seen that the majority of subjects are not able to translate the pragmatic meaning of the utterance. They try to give an equivalent idiom in Arabic, but their translation is still far from the English one.

### 2.3.1.3. Utterance N° 03

-She is like an owl.

**Subjects:** 01,02,03,04,05,06,07,08,09,10 and 11

إنها منحوسة.

/ʔinahā manhūsa/

The subjects do not have the pragmatic meaning of the source utterance (English), because two words in two languages may have the same denotation but a different connotation, for example, ‘owl’ and ‘بوم’ [bum] have the same denotation; they point to the same class of birds, but they have different connotations. ‘Owl’ occurs in the English literature as a symbol of ‘wisdom’; in the Arabic literature and even its daily use, it symbolizes ill-omen. So, the subjects translate the pragmatic meaning of the idiom as in Arabic ‘منحوسة’ because they don’t know the English culture very well, and also idioms of this kind are difficult to translate as Aziz and Lataiwish (2000:33) say “connotation is often culture-specific and is the most difficult part of meaning to translate”.

**Subjects:** 12, 13,14,15,16 and17

إنها كالبومة.

/ʔinahā kalbūma/

The subjects translate the idiom literally and thus, the pragmatic meaning of it is not translated, because the subjects do not know the English culture and the Arabic one.

**Subjects:** 18, 19,20,21,22 and 23

إنها لا تنام الليل.

/ʔinahā lā tanāmu al-layl/

The subjects translate the pragmatic meaning of the idiom into Arabic as ‘a woman who does not sleep at night’ because in the Arabic culture and in the Arab society, we refer to a woman who has bad morals as ‘an owl’. The owl appears just at night and in the Arab society, it is forbidden for a woman to stay outside at night. So, the subjects know the Arabic culture and the Arabic customs and traditions.

**Subjects:** 24 and 25

إنها جد حكيمة.

/ʔinahā jidu hkima/

The subjects have managed to translate the pragmatic meaning of the idiom into Arabic. The owl is translated into its equivalent in Arabic ‘حكيمة’/hakima/. The two subjects know that in the English culture ‘owl’ symbolizes ‘wisdom’, whereas in Arabic it symbolizes ‘النحس’/al-nahs/ (bad luck) and thus, they have managed to infer and translate the pragmatic meaning of the idiom.

#### **2.3.1.4. Utterance N° 04**

-Do not count your chickens before they are hatched.

**Subjects:** 01, 02, 03 and 04

لا تحسب الدجاج حتى يفقس البيض.

/lātaḥsub a-ldajāḡ hata yufqis lbayd/

**Subjects:** 05 and 06

لا تقم بحساب دجاجاتك قبل أن يفقس البيض.

/lātaqum biḥisābi dajāḡātika qabla ?an yafqis lbayd/

The subjects are not aware of the cultural and religious aspects of the proverb, and hence, they translate the proverb literally. Proverbs reflect the cultural values and environment from which they arise. According to Wikipedia, the Electronic Encyclopedia (2007) Island cultures such as Hawaii have proverbs about the sea, Eastern cultures have proverbs about elephants, American proverbs are about the importance of hard work in bringing success, and Arabic proverbs are generally about Islamic values.

**Subject:** 07

لا تعد ما ترى حتى تملكه.

/lātaḥud mātarā hatā tamlīkuhu/

**Subject:** 08

لا تفرح قبل رؤية النتيجة.

/lātafrah qabla ru?yat ?lnatiḡa/

**Subject: 09**

لا تعد شيء لم يوجد بعد.

/lātacud shay? lamyūjad bacd/

**Subjects: 10,11,12,13 and 14**

لا تستبِق الأحداث .

/lā tastabiq ?l?ahdāth/

**Subject: 15**

لا تحلم كثيرا.

/lā tahlum kathiran/

It can be noticed that the subjects have understood the pragmatic meaning of the proverb and thus, have translated it into Arabic. But they have not related it to the Islam religion may be because they lack religious culture. The best translation should be ‘تقلن إني ولا’ walātaqulanna ?inni fācilun shay?un ghadā ?ilā ?an yashā?a al-lahu/

**Subjects: 16 and 17**

فات الأوان.

/fāta ?l?awān/

**Subject: 18**

من يحسب كثيرا يخسر كثيرا .

/man yahsab kathiran yaxsar kathiran/

**Subject: 19**

عصفور في اليد أفضل من عشرة في الشجرة.

/cusfūr filyadi ʔafdal min cashratin fi shajara/

The subjects are aware of the cultural aspect of the proverb. This is why they avoid word-for-word translation. They try to give an equivalent proverb in Arabic, but the meaning of it is far from the meaning of the English proverb.

**Subject: 20**

لا تقلن إني فاعل شيء غدا إلا أن يشاء الله.

/Lātaqūlanaʔini fācilun shayʔ ghadā ʔilā ʔan yashāʔa lāhu/

It can be noticed that the Arabic proverb differs totally from the English one in terms of words, because they express different cultural points of view. This translation falls into the Arabic culture and the Islamic religion, and also the English culture, because the pragmatic meaning of the proverb is rendered by its equivalent in the Quran. If we take, for example, the literal translation of the Arabic proverb which is “and do not say I shall do something tomorrow unless God wills” we find that it does not work in the Western culture. Most English proverbs show that since Western people are materialistic and secular, they express the idea of avoiding calculating things before they happen by using a concrete example of chickens, whereas the general tendency of Muslims who believe in God, they do not decide to do anything unless God wills. Baker (1992) says that an English proverb may have a similar one in the target language, but its context of use may be different. In other words, two proverbs may express the same idea but used in different situations i.e. pragmatically different. As in the above example, both proverbs have the same meaning but they are used in different contexts.



**Subjects:** 21,22,23,24 and 25

They have not translated the proverb may be because they know that the proverb needs some cultural and religious knowledge of the target language. They know that if they translate it literally they will distort the meaning of the proverb and thus, they prefer not to translate it to produce nonsense.

Being aware of the cultural and religious aspect of the target language facilitate translating proverbs of this kind.

#### **2.3.1.5. Utterance N° 05**

-It made my blood boil.

Twenty subjects have managed to translate the pragmatic meaning of the idiom as 'الغضب' /al-ghadab/ (anger) because they know the source culture, and also they have an idea or background knowledge about this idiom. The five subjects that remain are not aware of the cultural aspects of idioms and thus, have translated the idiom literally.

It is very clear that the majority of the subjects are aware of the English culture and just few of them ignore it.

#### **2.3.1.6. Utterance N° 06**

-His heart is as black as ink.

Twenty one subjects translate the idiom literally 'قلبه أسود كالحرير' /qalbuhu?aswad kalhibri/ because they are not aware of the English culture and the Arabic one. In the Arabic culture, the equivalent word of 'ink' is 'الفحم' /al-fahm/(coal) we say 'قلبه أسود كالفحم' /qalbuhu ?aswad kalfahm/ but even if the subjects translate it as 'قلبه أسود كالفحم' the pragmatic meaning of the idiom is still not translated. It is very difficult for the subjects to translate between

languages because they are not able to reach the same sensitivity that native speakers seem to have. Baker (1992) says that it is preferable for translators to work into their language of usual use or mother tongue. A support for this idea is given in the code of usual Professional Ethics of the translators Guild of Great Britain:

Cases this may include a second language) of which he has native Knowledge. 'Native knowledge' is defined as the ability to speak And write a language so fluently that the expression of thought is Structurally, grammatically and idiomatically correct. (Quoted in Baker, ibid: 65).

The remaining four subjects translate the pragmatic meaning of the idiom as 'حقوق' /haqūdun/ because they know the English and the Arabic culture well.

Ignorance of the source and target culture leads the subjects to follow word-for-word translation.

### 2.3.1.7. Utterance N° 07

-We are going to see Shakespeare in London.

**Subjects:** 01,02,03,04,05,06,07,08,09,10,11,12,13 and 14

نحن ذاهبون لرؤية شكسبير في لندن.

/nahnu dhāhibūna liru?yat shikasbir fi lundun/

The subjects translate just the linguistic meaning of the utterance because they have no background knowledge, and also they lack adequate knowledge of the English culture.

**Subjects:** 16, 17, 18 and 19

نحن ذاهبون إلى لندن لمشاهدة مسرحية لشكسبير.

/nahnu dhāhibūna ?ila lundun limushāhadat masrahiya lishikasbir/

It can be noticed that the subjects translate the pragmatic meaning of the utterance correctly, because they understand that the Shakespeare example suggests that there is a conventional (and potentially culture-specific) set of entities that can be identified by the use of a writer's name as Yule (1996:20) calls it "things the writer produce".

**Subjects:** 20 and 21

نحن ذاهبون لنرى كتب شكسبير في لندن.

/nahnu dhāhibūna linarā kutub shikasbir fi lundun/

**Subjects:** 22 and 23

نحن ذاهبون لنرى متحف شكسبير في لندن.

/nahnu dhāhibūna linarā mathaf shikasbirfi lundun/

It is clear that the subjects understand the pragmatic meaning of the utterance as something has relation with Shakespeare, for example, 'متحف' /mathaf/ (monument) and 'كتب' /kutub/(books). The subjects are aware of the cultural aspect of this utterance and thus, they are trying to give a translation to the pragmatic meaning of the utterance. But, the meaning which is given by them is not the same as the English utterance means.

**Subjects:** 24 and 25

They have not translated the utterance may be because they know that the utterance or in other words, the name 'Shakespeare' is culture-specific and certainly has an interpretation far from the linguistic meaning of it. So, they prefer to leave it without translation than translate it literally. Names of writers, artists and musicians are generally culture-specific. The translator must know the culture of the source language in order to be able to translate the pragmatic meaning of utterances which include names.

Some subjects translate the pragmatic meaning of the utterance correctly, others understand it and try to give some interpretations, and the others, because they are aware of the cultural aspects, they do not want to translate it literally.

#### **2.3.1.8. Utterance N° 08**

-I have read all of Chomsky.

Twenty three subjects translate the utterance as:

قرأت كل كتب تشو مسكي.

/qara?tu kulu kutub tshumski/

The pragmatic meaning of the utterance is inferred by the majority of subjects because they have some background knowledge about this utterance and thus, they have managed to translate it into Arabic.

**Subjects:** 24 and 25

Because they know that the name ‘Chomsky’ is like ‘Shakespeare’ culture-specific, they don’t want to translate it literally or to give a wrong translation.

Most subjects are able to translate the pragmatic meaning of the utterance because they have some cultural background knowledge about the utterance.

#### **2.3.1.9. Utterance N° 09**

-She is a ball of fire.

**Subjects:** 01, 02, 03,04,05,06 and 07

إنها شديدة الغضب.

/ʔinahā shadidat lghadab/

**Subjects:** 08, 09,10,11,12 and 13

إنها غاضبة جدا.

/ʔinahā ghādiba jidan/

**Subject:** 14

إنها كتلة من الغضب.

/ʔinahā kutlat mina al-ghadab/

**Subjects:** 15, 16 and 17

إنها عصبية جدا

/ʔinahā casabiya jidan/

It can be noticed that many subjects understand and have managed to translate the pragmatic meaning of the English utterance as ‘الغضب’ /ʔ Lghadab/ because they have some background knowledge about this utterance.

**Subjects:** 18, 19, 20 and 21

إنها كرة من نار

/ʔinahā kura min nār/

The subjects translate the pragmatic meaning of the utterance literally because they have no cultural knowledge about the utterance or in other words, they are not aware of the cultural aspect of the utterance.

**Subject: 22**

إنها كتلة من الحماس.

/ʔinahā kutla min al-hamās/

**Subject: 23**

إنها جميلة جدا.

/ʔinahā jamila jidan/

**Subject: 24**

إنها ذكية تحسن التصرف.

/ʔinahā dhakiya tuhsin al-tasaruf/

**Subject: 25**

هي جملة من المشاكل.

/hiya jumla mina al-mashākil/

The subjects are trying to give an equivalent idiom in the target culture, but their translation still not as the English idiom means.

Many subjects have managed to translate the pragmatic meaning of the idiom because of their awareness of the source and the target culture.

### 2.3.1.10. Utterance N°10

-Kim is a block of ice.

**Subjects:** 01, 02, 03,04,05,06 and 07

كيم كتلة من الجليد.

/kim kutla mina al-jalid/

Because they are not aware of the cultural aspect of the idiom, the subjects follow word-for-word translation.

**Subjects:** 08,09,10,11,12,13,14 and 15

كيم بارد الأعصاب.

/kim bārid al-ʔacsāb/

The pragmatic meaning of the utterance is translated by the subjects, because they have good cultural knowledge of the source language.

**Subject:** 16

كيم جد متعنت.

/kim jidu mutacanit/

**Subjects:** 17, 18 and 19

كيم ليس لديه مشاعر.

/kim laysa ladayhi mashācir/

**Subjects:** 20 and 21

كيم قاس كالجليد.

/kim qāsi kaljlid/

**Subjects:** 22, 23 and 24

كيم متحجر القلب.

/kim mutahajir al-qalb/

The subjects are trying to translate the pragmatic meaning of the idiom into Arabic, but they fail to give an equivalent one may be because they are deceived by the words of the idiom i.e. they try to translate it according to its words. Baker (1992:66) says “Some idioms are ‘misleading’; they seem transparent because they offer a reasonable literal interpretation and their idiomatic meanings are not necessarily signaled in the surrounding text”.

**Subject:** 25

كيم رجل ييب.

/kim rajul tayib/

The subject has not understood the idiom, he tries to give a translation for it but its meaning is far from the meaning of the English idiom.

The majority of the subjects have not managed to translate the pragmatic meaning of the idiom may be because the words of the idiom mislead them or may be they are thinking in Arabic. The best translation should be ‘كيم أعصابه من حديد’ /kim ?csābuhu minhadid/.



### 2.3.1.11. Utterance N° 11

-Harry is a real fish.

**Subjects:**01,02,03,04,05,06,07,08,09,10,11,12,13,14,15 and 16

هاري سباح ماهر.

/hāri sabāh māhir/

The subjects have managed to translate the pragmatic meaning of the idiom maybe because the words of the idiom are clear and it is possible to infer its meaning from its words.

**Subjects:** 17, 18 and 19

هاري سمك حقيقي.

/hāri samak haqiqi/

Maybe their ignorance of the target culture pushes them to translate the idiom literally.

**Subjects:** 20 and 21

انه صيد ثمين.

/?inahu sayd thamin/

**Subject:** 22

هاري كالقرش.

/hāri kalqirsh/

The subjects know that the English idiom must have an interpretation in Arabic, so they try to translate it, but their translation still not the desired one.

**Subject: 23**

أنا لا أمزح.

/ʔanā lā ʔamzah/

This subject has not understood the idiom and for that he has not managed to translate the pragmatic meaning of it.

**Subject: 24**

إنها فتاة فاتنة تشبه سمكة حقيقية.

/ʔinahā fatāt fātinat tushbihu samaka haqiqiya/

This subject translates the pragmatic meaning of the idiom as 'فتاة فاتنة' /fatāt fātinat/ maybe because he is thinking in Arabic i.e. people in the Arab world refer to a beautiful girl by 'a fish'. The subject does not keep the original meaning of the idiom and gives a translation maybe does not exist in the English culture.

**Subject: 25**

إن هاري جبان.

/ʔina hāri jabān/

The subject translates the pragmatic meaning as 'جبان' /jabān/ (stupid) maybe he knows some knowledge about the history of some Western countries; how it was fish a symbol of stupidity.

The idiom is somehow easy because it is possible to infer its pragmatic meaning from its words and this is why, the majority of subjects are able to translate it correctly.

### 2.3.1.12. Utterance N° 12

-This soup is a bit bland.

**Subjects:** 01,02,03,04 and 05

هذا الحساء ليس لذيذاً.

/hadhā al-hasā? laysa ladhidh/

**Subjects:** 06,07,08,09 and 10

هذا الحساء لا طعم له.

/hadhā al-hasā? lātucma lahu/

**Subjects:** 11, 12, 13 and 14

لا يوجد شيء يميز هذا الحساء.

/lāyūjadu shay? yumayizu hadhā al-hasā?/

The subjects translate just the linguistic meaning of the utterance because they have not managed to translate the pragmatic meaning of the utterance out of its context.

**Subjects:** 15, 16 and 17

هذا الحساء لذيذ.

/hadhā aal-hasā? ladhidh/

**Subject: 18**

لا يوجد طماطم في هذا الحساء.

/lāyūjad tamātim fi hadhā ?lhasā?/

**Subject: 19**

هذا الحساء غير كاف.

/hadhā al-hasā? ghayr kāfi/

These subjects have not understood the utterance, so they have not managed to translate even its linguistic meaning correctly.

**Subject: 20**

لم تأت بجديد يذكر.

/lam ta?ti bijadid yudhkar/

This subject understands the linguistic meaning of the utterance and thus, tries to translate it into Arabic but his translation is far from the pragmatic meaning of the English utterance.

**Subjects: 21,22,23,24 and 25**

They have not translated the utterance maybe because they are aware of the importance of the context in translating such utterances i.e. they know that the utterance needs a context.

It can be noticed that all subjects have not managed to translate the pragmatic meaning of the utterance into Arabic. They try to translate it but they fail to connect the meaning of the

source language with the meaning of the target language, maybe because they find it difficult to translate such utterance without knowing the context where it is said. Fish (1980:310) says “It is impossible even to think of a sentence independently of context”. The best translation of this utterance should be ‘أعطني قليل من الملح’ /?actini qalil mina al-milh/ (pass the salt).

### 2.3.1.13. Utterance N° 13

-That car looks as if it might go!

**Subjects:** 01, 02,03,04,05,06,07,08 and 09

هذه السيارة تبدو وكأنها ستسير.

/hadhihi al-sayārat tabdū wka?anahā satasir/

Being unaware of the cultural aspect of the utterance, the subjects follow word-for-word translation.

**Subjects:** 10, 11 and 12

هذه السيارة معطلة.

/hadhihi al-sayārat mucatala/

**Subjects:** 13 and 14

أسرع قبل أن يفوتك القطار.

/?asric qabla ?an yafūtaka al-qitār/

**Subject: 15**

أظن أنه سوف يبيع تلك السيارة.

/ʔazunu ʔanahu sawfa yabic tilka al-sayāra/

**Subject: 16**

تلك السيارة تبدو متهرئة.

/tilka al-sayāra tabdū mutahariʔa/

The subjects are aware of the cultural aspect of this utterance and for that, they try to give an equivalent pragmatic meaning in the target culture, but the meaning is not the same as the English utterance.

**Subjects: 17, 18,19,20,21,22,23,24 and 25**

They have not translated the utterance maybe because they don't want to give a wrong translation, and also they know the importance of the context i.e. the utterance needs a context in order to translate it correctly.

To be in the same place with the speaker is very important in order to be able to translate the pragmatic meaning of the utterance. The best translation of this utterance should be 'سيارة رياضية عالية' /sayāra rayādiya ghāliya/ (an expansive sport car).

**2.3.2. Social Problems**

**2.3.2.14. Utterance N° 14**

English student: When is Taxi?

Arab student: sorry! Do you want me to call a taxi for you?

English student: No. Forget about it.

Because they are not aware of the social aspect of the discourse, eighteen subjects translate it literally. The subjects are not from the same society i.e. they don't share the same social knowledge or the same rules and patterns this is why, they have not understood each other. Yule (1996:4, 5) says "people tend to behave in a fairly regular ways when it comes to using language. Some of that regularity derives from the fact people are members of social groups and follow general patterns of behaviour expected within the group". In other words, within a familiar social group, it is easy to say appropriate things and also able to understand people. Seven subjects have not translated the discourse because they are aware of the social aspect of this conversation.

It can be noticed that it is very difficult for an outsider to understand what people mean by their utterances, as in the above example; the English student means by 'Taxi' a kind of series 'مسلسل' /musalsal/, whereas the Arab student understand 'Taxi' as 'سيارة الأجرة' /sayārat al-ʔujra/ so, the answer of the Arab student convey the meaning that he was a social outsider who answered in an expected way. In order to be able to translate pragmatic meanings, the person must share social knowledge with the speaker.

### 2.3.2.15. Utterance N° 15

A: what sort of poetry do you write?

B: Name me six poets (said aggressively).

**Subjects:** 01, 02, 03,04,05,06,07,08,09 and 10

They translate the pragmatic meaning of the discourse literally as 'سم لي ستة شعراء' /samili sitat shucarā?/ because they are not aware of the social and cultural aspects of this discourse.

**Subjects:** 11, 12, 13 and 14

They have managed to translate the pragmatic meaning of the discourse, because they have some cultural and social background knowledge. The subjects understand that B's contribution implicates that A's question is not worth answering because 'A' knows nothing about poetry.

**Subjects:** 15,16,17,18,19,20,21,22,23,24 and 25

They have not translated the pragmatic meaning of the discourse maybe because they know that the discourse needs some cultural and social knowledge in order to translate it correctly.

Lack of social background knowledge makes subjects unable to translate the pragmatic meaning of utterances and discourses.

### **2.3.2.16. Utterance N° 16**

A: Do you like ice-cream?

B: Is the Pope Catholic?

**Subjects:** 01,02,03,04,05,06,07,08,09,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19 and 20

وهل تسخر مني.

/wahal tasxar mini/

The subjects know some knowledge about the American society; they know that Americans have two or three stock expressions which are used by them as answers to obvious questions such as 'Do bagels wear bikinis', 'Do chickens have lips?' and so on. B's response does not provide a 'yes' or 'no' answer. 'A' must assume that 'B' is being cooperative. The



nature of B's response implicates that the answer to the question was 'obviously, yes!' An additional conveyed meaning in such a case is that, because the answer was so obvious, the question did not need to be asked.

### 2.3.2.17. Utterance N° 17

A: Do you know the Queen of England?

B: I know the Prince of Wales.

**Subjects:** 01,02,03,04,05,06,07,08,09,10,11,12,13,14,15,16 and 17

لا، أعرف أمير ويلز فقط.

/?acrif ?amir wilz faqat/

The subjects understand the pragmatic meaning as 'no' i.e. the opposite of the original pragmatic meaning, because they are not members of the same society and they have not social background knowledge about this discourse.

**Subjects:** 18 and 19

دعك من السخرية.

/dacka mina ?lsuxriya/

**Subjects:** 20 and 21

هي غنية عن التعريف.

/hiya ghaniya cani al-tacrifi/

These subjects understand the pragmatic meaning of the discourse maybe because they have some social and cultural background knowledge.

**Subjects:** 22, 23, 24 and 25

They have not translated the pragmatic meaning of the utterance maybe because they are aware of the social and cultural aspects of this discourse.

It can be noticed that the majority of subjects have not managed to translate the pragmatic meaning of the utterance because they lack social and cultural knowledge.

### **Conclusion**

Finally, we recognize that our study is limited in many aspects; that the results only for a small number of students and a small group of utterances. However, we hope that this small quantity of data has given evidence of the students' difficulties when translating the pragmatic meaning from English into Arabic. Lacks of cultural and social knowledge of the target language are the main weaknesses that Arabic English student should be help to defeat.

## **General Conclusion**

The present study has dealt with the difficulties of converting pragmatic meanings from English into Arabic. Being cultural and social, the pragmatic meaning remains always problematic for students of English in the sense that it has nothing to do with its words. That is, the words mean something while its real meaning is something else.

To prove that difficulty, a test has been administered to 3<sup>rd</sup> year students of English at Constantine University. The test is a collection of utterances- all carry a pragmatic meaning. The aim behind that was to check whether 3<sup>rd</sup> year students of English manage to find out the right equivalents in Arabic or not.

After examining the results, it was perceived that most translations produced by the subjects did not take into account the cultural aspects specific to the source language.

Word-for-word translation has been adopted and, hence, mistranslations and distortions of the source text emerged.

To overcome this problem, some suggestions have been brought by the end of the dissertation. Exposure to the English culture has been strongly emphasized.

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## Appendix

I will be very happy if you will be cooperative and translate these utterances into Arabic.

Your translation of the utterances will help me in my dissertation.

1- Shall I compare thou to a summer's day?

Thou art more lovely and temperate.

.....  
.....

2- A hamburger is a hamburger.

.....

3- She is like an owl.

.....

4- Do not count your chickens before they are hatched.

.....

5- It made my blood boil.

.....

6- His heart is as black as ink.

.....

7- We are going to see Shakespeare in London.

.....

8- I have read all of Chomsky.

.....

9- She is a ball of fire.

.....

10- Kim is a block of ice.

.....  
11- Harry is a real fish.

.....  
12- This soup is a bit bland.

.....  
13- That car looks as if it might go!

.....  
14- English student: When is Taxi?

Arabic student: sorry! Do you want me to call a taxi for you?

English student: No. forget about it.

.....  
.....  
.....  
15- A: What sort of poetry do you write?

B: Name six poets (said aggressively).

.....  
.....  
16- A: Do you like ice-cream?

B: Is the Pope Catholic?

.....  
.....  
17- A: Do you know the Queen of England?

B: I know the Prince of Wales.

.....  
.....



## الترجمة إلى العربية:

1. هل أقرنك بيوم من أيام الربيع فأنت أجمل منه و أكثر اعتدالا.
2. لم تأت بجديد يذكر.
3. هي حكيمة.
4. لا تقلن إني فاعل شيء غدا إلا أن يشاء الله.
5. جن جنوني.
6. هي حقودة.
7. إننا ذاهبون لمشاهدة إحدى مسرحيات شكسبير.
8. لقد قرأت جميع مؤلفات تشو مسكي.
9. إنها سريعة الغضب.
10. كيم أعصابه من حديد.
11. هاري سباح ماهر.
12. ناولني الملح من فضلك.
13. هذه سيارة رياضية غالية.
14. متى يبدأ مسلسل تاكسي.
15. أنت لا علاقة لك بالشعر.
16. وهل في هذا نقاش.
17. أعرفها و أعرف ابنها.

These utterances are translated by a teacher with some modifications.