The Impact of Translation on the Moroccan Political Discourse

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Abstract

The present article investigates the influence of concept transfer and translation on the political discourse used in Morocco. It has been attested that the Moroccan political register suffers from an acute lexical gap to express a number of aspects of the modern political system. Translation from European languages has, thus, represented an important source of the political register used in the political texts and speeches. This is explained by the adoption of a modern political system which has developed in different historical and social contexts totally different from the Arab traditional communities. Yet, this transferred register is very heterogeneous as it consists of items which have been translated following different translation strategies ranging from providing native equivalents to mere transliteration.

1. Introduction

Language and politics are closely connected in the sense that the practice of politics is highly dependent on language. Discourse analysts assume, indeed that politics cannot be conducted without language and that politics itself can be defined as the use of language in the constitution of social groups. (cf. Nahrkhalaji,S. 2006: 3). The importance of language also lies in the function of politics as it aims at mobilising population, attaining reconciliations and resolving conflicts mainly through discussions and speeches. This, therefore, makes communication   central to politics. Thus political discourse as an important manifestation of political action has been an interesting subject of politicians, linguists and translators (cf. Hague et al. 1998:3-4).

The Arab political register suffers from an acute shortage of terms to express new concept and ideas which have been introduced by the European political system. This has rendered Modern Standard Arabic used in Morocco a receptive language of a flow of French and English terms to fill in the wide lexical gap.

The Moroccan traditional political system was not very elaborate with respect to its structure and organisation and didn't include all the complications of the western system (Benzakour et al. 2000, Benalazmia 2013). The political register and discourse in Morocco and in the Arab world in general has undergone a considerable change. This change is in fact a reaction to the adoption of a new and modern political system in the beginning of the twentieth century and to the massive transfer of new political concepts which require integration into the political language and discourse expressed in Arabic[i]. Consequently, the politicians and the translators resorted to different translation solutions to express these new concepts in Arabic. These solutions range from finding an equivalent in Arabic to the new concept to borrowing and arabising the term.

The present article investigates the interaction between translation as a process of concept transfer from one language into another and political discourse in Morocco. We argue, herein, that translation has had a considerable influence on the political discourse in Morocco in the sense that it has been an important source of the register used in this discourse. The transfer of this register has been undertaken through different translation strategies i.e. meaning extension, neologism, loan translation and transliteration from European languages

The remaining sections of the article are organized as follows: section 2 provides a brief review on political discourse; section 3 introduces the of political discourse in Morocco; section 4 delineates the main characteristics of political register; section 5 discusses the contribution of translation as main source of modern political terms through semantic extension, neologism, loan translation and transliteration.

2. Political Discourse Analysis

Political Discourse analysis is a branch of critical discourse analysis which investigates the different forms of political communication and language. This discourse is produced by its actors i.e. politicians. The vast majority of studies on political discourse are about texts and talks of professional politicians or political institutions at the local, national and international level (cf. Van Dijk 2000:3).

Critical political discourse analysis deals with the reproduction of political power, power abuse or domination through verbal communication, including the various forms of resistance or

counter-power against such forms of discursive dominance (cf. Fairclough 1995, Van Dijk 1993). It also investigates the opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and text and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes (cf. Fairclough, 1995: 132).

In addition, political discourse analysis views discourse not only as heavily influenced by ideology but also as productive of the latter, and considers reality as textually and intertextually mediated via verbal and non-verbal language systems. In this respect, political discourse analysts try to find out why a particular word or phrase or structure has been chosen over another. Political discourse interacts with translation in the sense that it helps explain that lexical choices and omissions may point to different ideological and socio-cultural values (cf. Schaffner, 2002).

3. Political discourse context in Morocco

The social and cultural context of the practice of politics in Morocco is characterised by a high rate of illiteracy of the Moroccan voters. A survey on the Moroccan culture variables reveals that 57% of voters are illiterates, while 19% of them have a primary school level, 17% a secondary school level and 7% a university level, (cf. Bourqia 2011; 101)[ii]. According to the same survey, the media represent the main transmitter of political information and discourse in Morocco, and that television is the most important medium of information diffusion (Bourqia: 98).

The same survey reveals that most Moroccans are sceptical about political parties and the utility of political action in general. Only 12,9% think that political parties in Morocco endeavour for the good of the Moroccan people. The level of political implication and affiliation is also very low: 92,3% of the surveyed people said that they have never attended any political meeting and 91% of them have never been affiliated to a labour union. Election campaigns represent the period of time when Moroccans are interested in politics most and the most important opportunity for transmitting political ideas. Paradoxically, 53,1% of the surveyed people think that politics is an interesting affair and that 72,9% of them admit that they are free in their political choices (Bourqia, 2011: 99).

Political communication revolves around a number of ideas which focus mainly on the need to believe in the utility of political action and the predominance of public interest over that of individuals. There is also a tendency to use simple symbols which have ideological and cultural connotation. These symbols help to identify and distinguish between political parties especially for the illiterate population.

Political discourse in Morocco is one of the most diffused and influential discourse types as it dominates the media in general and it is addressed to the Moroccan population in general including the illiterate rural people. Moroccan politicians use a discourse where there is a mixture of political traditional terms such as الشيخ   'the chief of a tribe', القبيلة 'the tribe', and new terms such as الديموقراطية 'democracy' and البرلمان 'the parliament'.

The language used in the political discourse is not always straightforward and uses terms and expressions that are not always accessible to the uneducated people who are typical target of political mobilisation. Moroccan politicians tend to simplify their ideas and political ideology by using common figurative language used in the Moroccan popular culture.

Yet, the majority of the terms and expressions used in the Moroccan political discourse express new concepts and have been introduced through translation especially form French. These terms are either new derivations from existing roots in Arabic, literally translated equivalents or simply transliterated forms.

4. The Moroccan Political Register

The contemporary Moroccan political register reflects the historical, social and political changes which took place in Morocco especially during the first half the twentieth century with the establishment of the modern state (cf. Bourqia, 2011: 32). This register is characterized by the use of two main categories of political terms. The first one is very limited in number and consists of the original political terms which describe aspects of the Moroccan traditional political system which have been preserved after the modernisation of the system by the French protectorate, namely the traditional rule system such as سلطان *sultan* 'king', البيعة *albay3a* 'allegiance' الرعية *arra3iya* 'the people'; and public administration such الولاية *wilaya* ' 'The wailaya administrative local territory' القائد *qa'id* 'the officer of the makhzen', الحسبة *al hisba* 'the market supervision'. Other terms of this category are listed below (cf. Bourqia: 2011: 32-38):

khilafa	' the first Islamic rule'
umma	'nation'
hizb	'party'
chura	'consultation'
dawla	'state'
siba	'dissidence, a political system where some tribes challenge the central political rule'
zawya	'sainthood, religious gathering'
qa'id	'a local governor of the Mekhzen'
Mekhzen	'Moroccan traditional central government system'
umana	'tax collectors'
Cheikh	'head of a tribe'
Dahir	'a decree enacted by the King'
Wali l3ahd	'crown prince'

The maintenance of many of these terms in the contemporary political register is explained by the fact that they describe aspects of the Moroccan political system which have been preserved after the introduction of a modernisation process by the French protectorate. Write the dates. You are writing to international readers

Some of these concepts have equivalents in French and English such as *wali l3ahd* 'the crwon prince' and *dawla* 'state' while most others, such as *makhzen* and *cheikh* do not and are transliterated as such in French and other European languages. Hence, this latter category of terms have been preserved as such in French language, through a process of transliteration, as describing authentic concepts peculiar to the social and political organisation of the traditional Moroccan state which do not exist in the French political system.

This reveals that there is a coexistence of traditional and modern political register in the Moroccan political and the Arab political discourse in general. Similarly, we should also expect that certain original terms would disappear from the contemporary political register as the concepts they stand for were dropped and not adopted. Indeed, items such as *3asabiya* *'defending a tribal identity , ta3a 'obedience', hisba 'market supervision'* are less commonly more used in the modern Moroccan political discourse*.*

5. Translation : a source of new concepts and terms
5.1.1. *Background*

Throughout the history of the contact between the western and the Arab cultures and languages there has been a mutual transfer in both directions. But, given that Arabic and European languages are not cognate languages, the process of transfer either through borrowing or translation has faced serious difficulties. Bensaid Alaoui (2014) refers to a very old case which dates back to the Abbasside era when translation into Arabic was flourishing with the establishment of Bayt Alhikma. Isaak Ibn Hanin, one of the notorious translators of that era, who translated Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics into Arabic, couldn't find an equivalent in Arabic to the terms *theatre*, *actor,* and *audience* as these concepts didn't in fact exist in the Arabic culture at that time. The closest equivalent to these terms which he could find were: theatre مكان الرؤية, audience الرائي, actor مرئي. This shows the degree of difficulty which the translator faced to transfer these new.

In the 19th century Arab renaissance, most modern political terms were introduced into Arabic; and it was thanks to the contact between the Arab scholars and the western civilization that the concepts like *al-watan* الوطن, *al- mowatana* المواطنة and *al-wataniya* الوطنية appeared in the Arabic texts as our ancestors didn't know what these stand for. Rifaa Tahtaoui (1801) , one of the first Egyptian scholars who went to study in Europe in the 19th century, also found serious difficulties in transferring some western concepts into Arabic which didn't exist in his culture. For instance, he couldn't find an equivalent to the French terms 'republique' et 'republicains' which he arabised as الحريون which is associated to the concept of freedom more than to the system of government (cf. Bensaid, 2014b).

To overcome the problem of equivalence in Arabic, Bensaid (2004b) argues in support of the option of borrowing of European words instead of finding native equivalents in Arabic. He pointed out that it is far better to borrow a foreign word which preserves all its meaning and its cultural connotations than to look for an archaic native Arabic word or coin an 'equivalent' which cannot express the cultural meaning and the historical context of the original term as some of the translators do, and as Arabic Language academies call for. Most of these terms are not accepted by language users and they do not go beyond limited translations or glossaries.

He mentioned the renaissance scholars like Khir Eddine Tounsi (1868) who directly borrowed and used items like the French 'directoire' ديركتوار which refers to the rule of the

group in France after the revolution or 'achitecture' أرشيتكتورا which were nativised later on by finding Arab words for them (cf. Bensaid, 2004b).

Bensaid (2004a) argues further that it is far worse is to mistranslate some western concepts whose meaning is clear in people minds as being based on the historical and social contexts in which they were born. While the equivalents chosen for these western concepts were born in an Arab historical and social context which is totally different. A typical example illustrating this is the use of the Arabic term علمانية as the equivalent of the English word 'secularism' and to the French 'laïcité' which isn't, in fact, an adequate translation. Both the English and the French terms have basically the same meaning and refer to the separation between the church and the state in the practice of politics. Yet, the interpretation given to these terms in Arabic is a complete separation between religion and all government institutions including non political ones. This represents a deviation from the original meaning of the terms which refer to the fact that separation occurs only in politics but not extended to other areas. Thus, the general assumption generally adopted in Arabic literature that علمانية represents a complete negation of religion in all fields is not correct both logically, based on concept interpretation, and historically. The suitable equivalent is the transliterated form of the French item لائيكية and not علمانية. (cf. Bensaid, 2014a).

The practice of transliteration has been active for the last two centuries and involves mainly technical and scientific terminology. English and French represent the source language of these terms given that they are languages of the colonial powers which occupied the Arab world. Yet, these items have not undergone the same principled processes of integration into the phonological system of Arabic, the host language viz., *barlamant*برلمان and *tiknolojya*تكنولوجيا (cf. Elmagrab, 2011).

The class of items which integrated the political register through translation is quantitatively far more significant than the native ones. It represents the set of items which describe the modern political system in Morocco. The concepts underlying these terms and expressions have been introduced into the Moroccan political system from the French system or from translation undertaken by North African and Middle Eastern scholars in the beginning of the twentieth century. As these terms have integrated Arabic through different translation strategies they can be classified according to the type of translation method adopted in their transfer into Arabic.

5.1.2. *Equivalence through semantic extension*
This refers to translation which opts for a literal equivalent of a political term already existing in the target language, Arabic, but which is attributed a different meaning from the initial literal one. The term is thus introduced to the political register in Arabic through semantic extension. For instance, the word 'left' or 'la gauche' was literally translated as yasar يسار. Then, its meaning has been extended to refer the leftist political movement. Semantic extension equivalence is also shown in the following terms:

French term	Arabic literal equivalent	Political meaning
organes	'أجهزه'	'political bodies'
mouvement	'حركة'	'political movement'

camarade	'رفيق'	'a politician with a socialist affiliation'
référendum	استفتاء'	'referendum'
la droite	اليمين	"right political movement"
la gauche	اليسار	"left political movement"'

The terms yamin and yassar are typical Arabic items which are used commonly and literally to refer to two opposing space directions. They also have religious and cultural connotations in Arabic with yamin referring to the positive and the good and yassar to the less positive and the wrong. Yet, and even though they have been part of the basic vocabulary of Classical Arabic they weren't assigned any extended political meaning until the borrowing of the these political denotations from the western political system.

The same thing can be said about the terms rafiq رفيق haraka حركة and istiftaa استفتاء which are common Arabic items which have acquired a new political meaning because of the presence of certain common semantic features between the literal meaning of these Arabic words and that of their French equivalents. Other western political concepts have been transferred through neologism.

5.2.Equivalence through neologism

Neologism is defined as 'newly coined lexical units or existing lexical units that acquire a new sense." (Newmark, 1988: 140). This translation strategy opts for generating a new word from an existing root which has common semantic features with the newly borrowed concept. The word *jam3iya* جمعية for instance the equivalent of 'association' was derived from the Arabic verb jama3a 'collect'. Similar terms which have been derived from existing roots to serve as equivalent to a new political concept are listed below:

French	Arabic equivalent	Arabic root	English
Citoyen	مواطن	وطن	'citizen'
Elections	انتخابات	نخبة	'elections'
Gouvernance	حكامة	حكم	'governance'
Socialisme	الإشتراكية	شارك	'socialism'
Reactionaire	رجعي	رجع	'reactionary'
Association	جمعية	جمع	'association'
Communiste	شيوعي	شاع	'communism'

The term *watan* وطن was used in the Arab ancient political discourse and it referred to the same meaning as it does today 'the country' but the terms *mowatin* مواطن 'the citizen' *mowatana* مواطنة 'being a citizen' didn't exist in the ancient political discourse and are in fact derivations from the root *watan* to refer to new political concepts originating from western civil political

culture. If we compare the roots of citoyen to its equivalent *muwatin,* we can infer that they refer to two different space entities i.e. cité which originates from the ancient Greek's city and *watan* which is also an old Arabic word for country. This shows that Arabic adopted a similar process of neology as French in deriving new political concepts and words from one basic root referring to a spatial and political entity.

Derivation in Arabic is a highly productive process and is allowed by the flexibility of the language's morphological system. This also offers a wide possibility to generate extended predictable meaning on the basis of the meaning the root words. Most of these derivations such as ichtirakia اشتراكية, choyou3i شيوعي and hakama حكامة were never attested in the Classical Arabic and would sound rather odd though they are theoretically possible derivations.

5.3. Equivalent through loan translation

This refers to the case where Arabic borrows a political concept such as 'civil society' but there is no original equivalent word or expression for this concept. This case provides a literal translation of the foreign terms. The item 'civil' here is translated as *madani* مدني and 'society' as *mojtama3* مجتمع. The following phrases have also been transferred thorough loan translation.

French	Arabic	English
Opinion publique	الرأي العام	'public opinion'
Culture politique	الثقافة السياسية	'political culture'
Approche du genre	مقاربة النوع	'gender approach'
Politiques publiques	السياسات العمومية	'public policies'
Droit de l'homme	حقوق الإنسان	'human rights'
La langue de bois	لغة الخشب	'waffling language'
Reforme politique	إصلاح سياسي	'political reform'
La guerre froide	الحرب الباردة	'the cold war'
Le tiers monde	العالم التالت	'third world'

The literal meaning of most of these equivalents would sound odd with respect to the contexts in which they are used. For instance, the phrase الرأي العام means some kind of general opinion and not the opinion of the public. While in Classical Arabic there is use of العامة to refer the public عامة القوم. This, in fact, makes the phrase رأي العامة closer to the intended meaning in Arabic than the adopted equivalent الرأي العام. Similarly, the term إصلاح was used in the old Arab political register in the singular form in collocations such as إصلاح شأن الرعية and إصلاح الحكم. Some of these equivalents are literally vey odd hybrid collocations as in تصويت الأقلية 'the vote of the minority'. The term تصويت 'voting' itself is a recent derivation from the noun صوت 'the voice', which stands as a literal translation of the French 'la voix', commonly used in expressions such as 'donner sa voix' 'give one's vote' literally translated as أعطى صوته.

Long Arabic structures used in the Moroccan political discourse are also simple calquing of French expressions. 'Les rèves et aspirations des peoples' 'the dreams and aspirations of the peoples' was calqued as أحلام وتطلعات الشعوب in Arabic. Yet, the preferred syntactic structure in Arabic is أحلام الشعوب وتطلعاتها. The expression سياسة العصا و الجزرة is also a case of loan translation of the French 'la politique du baton et de la carotte' 'policy of the stick and the carrot'. Structures which exhibit compound adjectives such as الحوار الأوروالمتوسطي and التعاون العربي الإفريقيare not common Arabic structures and are in fact loan translations of the expressions 'dialogue Euro-Méditerranéen' and 'la cooperation Arabo Africaine'.

5.4.Equivalence through transliteration

There are cases in which more radical solutions are opted for in which French terms are simply transliterated. In cases where no equivalents are available in Arabic and when it is difficult to proceed through meaning extension or through neologism, the translator resorts simply to transliteration or to an arabized form of a foreign word and adopting the word as it is and transcribing it with equivalent Arabic letters. It is quite common in the Moroccan political discourse to come across items such as ديموقراطية, برلمان and إديولوجيا. In the leftist discourse of the socialist and communist parties the terms بورجوازية and فيودالي بروليتاريا are also quite common. . Other terms of this category are listed below:

French	Arabic	English
Parlement	برلمان	'parliament'
Libéralisme	ليبيرالية	'liberalism'
Idéologie	إديولوجيا	'ideology'
Impérialisme	إمبريالية	'imperialism'
Démagogie	ديماغوجية	'demagogy'
Prolétariat	بروليتاريا	'proletariat'
Féodale	فيودالي	'feudal'
Bourgeoisie	بورجوازية	'bourgeoisie'
Stratégie	استراتيجية	'strategy'
Mécanismes	ميكانيزمات	'mechanisms'
Technocrate	تقنوقراطي	'technocrate'

These items stand for not only loan concepts but also whole borrowed words which have preserved their original sound structure. These terms refer back to the tendency opted for by Rifaa Tahtawi and supported by Bensaid that transliteration can be a solution to the filling of lexical gaps in Arabic and transfer of new concepts while preserving all their connotative social and historical connotations. Some of these have alternative equivalents in Arabic which are sometimes used interchangeably such as بروليتاريا and الطبقة العاملة, فيودالي and إقطاعي .

6. Conclusion

The Moroccan political discourse makes use of two distinct categories of political registers one which is traditional, original, and limited in number and a modern western register which is quantitatively more important. This latter category has integrated the Moroccan discourse thorough translation which in fact has heavily affected the Moroccan political discourse by providing the majority of the register used by politicians.

We have seen that translation has considerably enriched the political register used in this discourse by introducing new concepts and filling a large number of lexical gaps following from the adoption of the western political system. The heterogeneity characterizing this translated register is due to the different transfer strategies adopted in the course of translation. This variation in translation strategies can in turn be attributed to the priorities of the translators themselves. On the one hand, there are those who were more concerned with preserving the identity of the host language and they attempted to find native equivalents to foreign terms. But on the other hand the focus of other translators was more on preserving all the semantic aspects of the foreign terms including those pertaining to its historical development and social and cultural backgrounds.

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[i] An important characteristic of this borrowed register is that its use is not limited only to the Moroccan political discourse but also in the Arab political register in general used different Arab countries and in different periods of time which started from the Arab renaissance era in the 19th century.

[ii] This is based on the Arab Democracy Barometer and Afro-Barometer; a survey undertaken in 2005 by the Institute for Social Research of the University of Michigan. See www.afrobarometer.org. The data used here are those related to the survey about Morocco undertaken in 2006.

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