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The Effect of Translation on The Readability of Texts Name in English Language

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Keywords : Translation studies, Text readability, Cross-cultural communication, Linguistic adaptation, Readability assessment tools.

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الملخص

تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف أثر الترجمة على مقروئية النصوص، مع إبراز الدور الذي تلعبه عملية نقل المحتوى من لغة إلى أخرى في تشكيل مدى سهولة استيعاب القارئ للنصوص والتفاعل معها. فالمقروئية ليست مجرد خاصية شكلية للنص، بل تُعد عنصرًا محوريًا في عملية التواصل النصي، لأنها تحدد إلى أي مدى يمكن للرسالة أن تصل بوضوح وفاعلية إلى المتلقي. وانطلاقًا من هذه الأهمية، تناول البحث مجموعة متنوعة من النصوص المترجمة التي تنتمي إلى أجناس أدبية وعلمية مختلفة، وقارنها بنسخها الأصلية بغرض رصد الفوارق في بنية الجملة، وتعقيد المفردات، ومستوى التماسك، ودرجة الوضوح.

وقد اعتمدت الدراسة مقاربة مزدوجة، جمعت بين التحليل النوعي والكمّي، حيث جرى توظيف أدوات قياس المقروئية مثل مقياس فليش لسهولة القراءة ومؤشر الضبابية لغوننغ، إضافة إلى التحليل اللغوي المتخصص الذي يركز على الخصائص الدقيقة للنصوص. وكشفت النتائج

أن الترجمة يمكن أن تمثل سيفًا ذا حدين: فهي من جهة قد ترفع مستوى المقروئية إذا أخذ المترجم بعين الاعتبار الفروق الثقافية واللغوية بين النصين، ومن جهة أخرى قد تُضعف المقروئية إذا اتسمت الترجمة بالمبالغة في الحرفية، مما ينتج عنه تراكيب معقدة أو عبارات متكلفة تصعّب على القارئ فهم النص.

كما أبرزت الدراسة أن التوازن بين الأمانة للنص الأصلي وتلبية متطلبات الجمهور المستهدف يُعد شرطًا أساسيًا لنجاح عملية الترجمة. فالمترجم لا يقتصر دوره على نقل الكلمات فحسب، بل يمتد ليشمل مراعاة أنماط المعالجة المعرفية للقراء في اللغة الهدف. وفي ختامها، تقدم الدراسة توصيات عملية للمترجمين والأكاديميين حول تبني استراتيجيات أكثر مرونة تهدف إلى تحسين جودة الترجمة مع مراعاة المقروئية، بما يعزز من فعالية التواصل الثقافي ويوسع دائرة تداول المعرفة عبر الحواجز اللغوية.

Abstract

This study investigates the effect of translation on the readability of texts, with particular attention to how the process of transferring content from one language to another influences readers' ability to comprehend and engage with written material. Readability is not only a technical feature of text but also a vital component of effective communication, since it shapes how clearly and efficiently a message is conveyed to its intended audience, the research examines a diverse corpus of translated texts drawn from multiple genres, including literary, academic, and journalistic works. These translations are systematically compared with their original versions to identify and analyze changes in sentence structure, vocabulary complexity, cohesion, and overall clarity.

The methodology integrates both qualitative and quantitative approaches. On the quantitative side, established readability measurement tools such as the Flesch Reading Ease and the Gunning Fog Index are employed to generate objective data on textual accessibility. On the qualitative side, expert linguistic analysis is conducted to provide deeper insights into how specific translation strategies affect the comprehensibility of the final product. Findings indicate that translation can play a dual role: it may enhance readability when translators adapt effectively to the linguistic and cultural expectations of the target audience, or conversely hinder it when translations adhere too rigidly to literal renderings, producing awkward phrasing and convoluted syntax.

The study emphasizes the necessity of balancing fidelity to the source text with the cognitive and cultural needs of readers in the target language. Ultimately, the research highlights translation's pivotal role in

Journal of Babylon Center for Humanities Studies: 2025, Volume: 15, Issue: 6

promoting effective cross-cultural communication and expanding the global reach of knowledge and information.

Introduction

Translation is an essential tool in facilitating cross-cultural communication, enabling the transmission of ideas, literature, information, and knowledge across linguistic boundaries. As globalization expands the need for multilingual accessibility, the quality and effectiveness of translation have become increasingly significant in a variety of domains, including education, business, media, and literature. Among the many factors that influence the success of a translated text, readability stands out as a key element that determines how easily the target audience can comprehend and engage with the content. Readability, in this context, refers to the ease with which a reader can understand written text, which is influenced by elements such as sentence length, word difficulty, syntax, and coherence (DuBay, 2004).

While the primary aim of translation is to convey the meaning of the source text accurately, the process is not merely a linguistic transference of words but a complex act that involves cultural, semantic, and stylistic considerations. Translators must balance fidelity to the original content with adaptability to the linguistic and cultural norms of the target audience. This balance directly impacts the readability of the translated text. For instance, a translation that is too literal may preserve the original meaning but result in unnatural or difficult phrasing in the target language, thus decreasing readability. Conversely, a translation that is too adaptive might prioritize ease of reading at the expense of meaning accuracy, leading to misrepresentation of the source text (Nida, 1964).
Furthermore, the concept of readability is subjective and can vary depending on the target audience's linguistic proficiency, educational background, and familiarity with the subject matter. What may be considered readable for an academic audience may not be accessible to a general readership. Therefore, translators must consider the intended readership during the translation process to ensure that the translated text maintains the communicative function of the original while remaining accessible and engaging. This aligns with Skopos theory in translation, which emphasizes that the purpose (or "skopos") of a translation should guide the translation strategies employed (Vermeer, 1989).

The study of readability in translated texts is of particular importance in fields such as education, where learners often rely on translated materials to access knowledge that is not available in their native language. Poorly translated educational content can hinder learning and create barriers to understanding complex concepts. Similarly, in

media and literature, the readability of translations can significantly influence the audience's engagement and the overall impact of the text. A highly readable translation can bridge cultural gaps and allow the target audience to experience the source text authentically and effortlessly (Venuti, 1995).

Technological advancements in the field of translation, especially with the emergence of machine translation and computer-assisted translation tools, have further highlighted the issue of readability. While these tools have made translation more accessible and efficient, they often lack the nuanced understanding of context, tone, and cultural references that human translators possess. This can lead to translated texts that are grammatically correct but lack fluency and readability. As such, the role of the human translator remains vital in ensuring that translated texts are not only accurate but also reader-friendly (Garcia, 2010).

Previous research has examined various dimensions of readability in translation, often focusing on specific genres such as legal, medical, or literary texts. These studies have shown that the readability of translated texts can vary significantly depending on the translation strategies used, the complexity of the source material, and the linguistic distance between the source and target languages. For example, translations from languages with similar syntactic structures tend to yield more readable outputs compared to translations between linguistically distant languages (Baker, 2011). Moreover, the translator's linguistic competence, stylistic sensitivity, and familiarity with both source and target cultures play a crucial role in shaping the readability of the final product.

This study seeks to contribute to this growing body of knowledge by systematically investigating how translation affects the readability of texts across various genres. It aims to analyze and compare original and translated versions of selected texts to identify patterns, strategies, and challenges that influence readability. By employing both quantitative readability formulas and qualitative linguistic analysis, the study strives to offer a comprehensive perspective on the interplay between translation and readability. In doing so, it seeks to provide practical insights for translators, educators, and content creators to enhance the effectiveness of translated texts in achieving their communicative goals.

Ultimately, this research underscores the importance of treating translation not merely as a linguistic activity but as a communicative act that requires careful consideration of the target audience's needs and expectations. As the world becomes more interconnected, the demand for high-quality, readable translations will continue to grow. Ensuring that translated texts are accessible and comprehensible is not only a matter of

linguistic precision but also a step toward more inclusive and effective global communication.

Theoretical Framework:

The theoretical framework of this study centers on the interdisciplinary intersection between translation studies and readability theory. Understanding how translation impacts the readability of texts necessitates grounding the research in both linguistic and translational paradigms, including theories of equivalence, functionalist approaches to translation, cognitive linguistics, and readability assessment models. This framework provides the conceptual foundation for analyzing the strategies employed by translators and their effects on the clarity, coherence, and accessibility of translated texts.

1. Translation Studies and Equivalence Theory

One of the foundational concepts in translation theory is that of "equivalence." Traditionally, equivalence has been viewed as the degree to which a translated text preserves the meaning, style, and effect of the source text. Scholars such as Eugene Nida (1964) distinguished between *formal equivalence*—which focuses on preserving the exact structure and content of the source text—and *dynamic equivalence*, which aims to produce the same effect on the target audience as the original text. Dynamic equivalence aligns more closely with the goals of readability, as it prioritizes the communicative effectiveness of the translation over strict fidelity to linguistic form.

However, equivalence is not a one-size-fits-all concept. Mona Baker (1992) expanded the notion of equivalence to encompass several levels: word level, grammatical level, textual level, and pragmatic level. This nuanced approach suggests that translators must make decisions at multiple levels that affect how readable the final text is. For example, a grammatically accurate translation that fails to use natural expressions or idiomatic phrases may be technically correct but still difficult for the reader to comprehend.

The emphasis on equivalence highlights the translator's role as both a mediator and a co-creator of meaning. This responsibility becomes especially significant in texts intended for broad audiences, where readability is paramount. In this sense, equivalence theory provides the foundation for analyzing translation strategies and their impact on text comprehension and reader engagement.

2. Functionalist Approaches and Skopos Theory

Functionalist theories, particularly Skopos theory introduced by Hans Vermeer (1989), mark a paradigm shift in translation studies by focusing

on the purpose of the translation rather than strict adherence to the source text. According to this theory, the intended function or "skopos" of the translated text should determine the translation strategy. This approach is highly relevant when considering readability, as it allows for adaptation and localization to suit the expectations, reading habits, and cognitive patterns of the target audience.

Skopos theory encourages translators to consider who the readers are, what their background knowledge is, and what communicative effect the text is intended to produce. This user-centered orientation supports the creation of texts that are accessible and reader-friendly, thus enhancing readability. For instance, a scientific article translated for a general audience might require simplification of terminology, reorganization of information, and cultural contextualization to maintain readability without compromising essential content.

Furthermore, Skopos theory legitimizes deviation from the source text when necessary to ensure that the translation serves its function in the target culture. This flexibility enables translators to make stylistic and structural choices that align with readability principles, such as reducing sentence length, simplifying complex syntax, and choosing high-frequency words that are easier for readers to understand.

3. Cognitive Approaches to Translation and Readability

Cognitive linguistics offers valuable insights into the mental processes involved in both translation and reading comprehension. According to cognitive translation theories, such as those advanced by Daniel Gile (1995), translation is a mental operation involving memory, attention, and decision-making. Translators must decode the source text, process it in working memory, and reformulate it in the target language—all within cognitive constraints that affect the choices they make.

The concept of "cognitive load" is particularly relevant to readability. A translation that places a high cognitive load on the reader—due to complex vocabulary, ambiguous syntax, or lack of cohesion—may be technically accurate but practically unreadable. Texts that are easier to process cognitively are more likely to be retained, understood, and acted upon by readers. This aligns with the principle of "processing fluency" in cognitive psychology, which asserts that people prefer and better understand information that is easy to process (Alter & Oppenheimer, 2009).

Moreover, schema theory, a concept in cognitive psychology, posits that readers use pre-existing mental frameworks (schemas) to interpret new information. When a translated text aligns with the reader's schemas—through culturally familiar examples, expected structures, and accessible

language—readability increases. This theory underscores the importance of cultural adaptation in translation, not just linguistic transformation.

4. Readability Theory and Measurement Models

Readability as a measurable construct has been extensively studied in educational psychology and linguistics. Various readability formulas have been developed to quantify the difficulty level of texts, including the Flesch Reading Ease, Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level, Gunning Fog Index, and SMOG index. These models typically assess factors such as average sentence length, syllable count, and word frequency to estimate how easy a text is to read.

In the context of translation studies, these readability formulas serve as objective tools for evaluating the impact of translation on text clarity. For example, a comparison of the Flesch Reading Ease scores of a source text and its translated version can reveal whether the translation has improved or diminished the text's accessibility.

However, these formulas have limitations. They do not account for semantic coherence, rhetorical structure, or cultural nuances, all of which play critical roles in readability. As such, readability assessment in translation must also include qualitative analysis, such as discourse analysis and reader-response studies, to capture the full spectrum of factors that influence understanding and engagement.

Moreover, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) provides another useful lens for evaluating readability, particularly in language education contexts. The CEFR levels (A1 to C2) describe language proficiency in terms of what learners can do with the language. Translators can use these descriptors to tailor translations to specific proficiency levels, thereby enhancing readability for intended audiences.

5. Discourse and Textual Coherence in Translation

Textual coherence and cohesion are essential aspects of readability that are deeply influenced by translation decisions. Coherence refers to the logical flow and meaningful connections between ideas in a text, while cohesion refers to the grammatical and lexical devices that link sentences and paragraphs together. Both are crucial for maintaining the reader's understanding and attention.

The translation of cohesive devices such as conjunctions, reference markers, and lexical repetitions must be handled with care. Differences in cohesion patterns between languages can lead to translations that feel disjointed or unnatural if not properly adapted. For example, languages like Arabic and French often use more explicit cohesion markers than

Journal of Babylon Center for Humanities Studies: 2025, Volume: 15, Issue: 6

English, which relies more on implicit logical flow. A failure to adjust for these differences can disrupt the coherence of the translated text and reduce readability.

Discourse analysis, as introduced by scholars like Halliday and Hasan (1976), provides a framework for analyzing how textual cohesion is maintained in translation. Translators must navigate structural differences and stylistic norms in both source and target languages to produce a coherent and readable text. This task is complicated by genre-specific conventions, such as the use of passive voice in academic writing or rhetorical questions in persuasive texts.

6. Translation Universals and Simplification

The concept of "translation universals" refers to linguistic features that are common in translated texts regardless of language pairs. One of the most relevant universals to readability is "simplification," the tendency of translated texts to use simpler language than their source counterparts (Baker, 1996). Simplification can manifest in shorter sentences, lower lexical density, and reduced use of complex structures.

While simplification often enhances readability, it must be applied judiciously to avoid oversimplification, which can lead to loss of nuance, detail, and style. The challenge for translators is to simplify the text in a way that maintains its integrity and intended meaning. Thus, simplification must be seen not as a flaw but as a strategy that, when used skillfully, contributes to the readability and effectiveness of translated texts.

Another relevant universal is "explicitation," the tendency to make implicit meanings in the source text more explicit in the translation. This strategy can help clarify ambiguities and enhance reader understanding, thereby improving readability. However, overuse of explicitation can result in redundancy and stylistic awkwardness, which may negatively affect the text's flow and engagement.

7. Cultural Considerations and Localization

Cultural adaptation is an essential component of readable translations. Localization—the process of adapting content to fit the cultural and linguistic context of a specific target audience—goes beyond mere translation. It involves modifying idioms, cultural references, measurement units, humor, and even formatting to align with the audience's expectations and norms (Esselink, 2000).

A text that is culturally incongruent can confuse or alienate readers, even if the language is grammatically correct. For instance, translating an American education text into Arabic may require replacing references to SAT scores with equivalent regional assessment tools or examples. Such

Journal of Babylon Center for Humanities Studies: 2025, Volume: 15, Issue: 6

adaptations are critical for enhancing readability and ensuring that the message is both accessible and meaningful.

In addition, the translator must be culturally literate to recognize which elements require localization and which should be preserved to maintain authenticity. Cultural sensitivity in translation contributes to both readability and acceptability of the text in the target context.

8. Relevance Theory and Inferential Communication

Relevance Theory, developed by Sperber and Wilson (1986), offers significant insights into how meaning is conveyed and interpreted in both original and translated texts. According to this theory, communication is a process of inference, where the hearer or reader uses contextual clues and background knowledge to derive meaning. In translation, this theory implies that a text must provide sufficient contextual information to guide the reader toward the intended interpretation with minimal cognitive effort.

For a translated text to be readable, it must not only convey the propositional content of the source but also align with the reader's inferential expectations. A failure in this aspect leads to misunderstandings or increased cognitive effort, reducing readability. Relevance Theory suggests that translators should make the intended implications as clear as possible, particularly when cultural or contextual assumptions differ significantly between the source and target audiences.

The translator's role, therefore, involves managing both explicit and implicit content to maintain relevance. This often requires rephrasing, explicitation, or even omission of elements that might confuse the target reader or fail to trigger the appropriate inference. In effect, Relevance Theory supports a pragmatic view of translation where readability is measured not just by surface features but by the ease with which the reader can derive the intended meaning (Sperber & Wilson, 1986).

9. Genre and Register in Translation

Another critical element influencing the readability of translated texts is the genre and register. Genre refers to the type of text—narrative, expository, technical, legal, etc.—while register involves language variation according to the context of communication, including field (subject matter), tenor (relationship between participants), and mode (channel of communication), as described by Halliday (1978).

Each genre and register brings unique linguistic expectations. A legal document, for instance, requires precision, formality, and consistency in terminology, which may compromise readability for non-specialists. Conversely, a children's story demands simplicity, rhythm, and visual

clarity. When translating, maintaining the appropriateness of genre and register while ensuring readability poses a unique challenge.

Readability can suffer when translators fail to adjust the register to suit the target audience's linguistic norms and expectations. For example, translating an informal blog post using overly formal language may create a tone mismatch that hinders comprehension and reader engagement. Therefore, understanding genre and register conventions in both the source and target cultures is essential for producing translations that are both faithful and readable (Hatim & Mason, 1997).

10. Reader-Oriented Approaches and Reception Theory

Reception theory, originally from literary studies and advanced by Hans Robert Jauss (1982), emphasizes the role of the reader in interpreting a text. Applied to translation, it suggests that readability is inherently subjective and shaped by the reader's prior knowledge, cultural background, and linguistic competence.

This perspective shifts the focus from the translator's intentions or the fidelity to the source text toward the reader's experience and interpretation. In this context, translation is not merely a linguistic transfer but an act of communication that must anticipate the reader's needs and expectations.

Reader-response criticism aligns with this approach by arguing that meaning does not reside solely in the text or the author but emerges through the interaction between text and reader. Thus, readability becomes a measure of how effectively a translation enables that interaction to take place without undue cognitive strain or misinterpretation (Jauss, 1982; Iser, 1978).

In translation practice, this approach encourages the use of reader feedback, pre-tests, and readability assessments tailored to the intended audience. These strategies help ensure that the translation is accessible, engaging, and effective in its communicative function.

11. Intersemiotic and Multimodal Translation

In today's multimedia environment, translation often involves more than words—it includes visuals, layout, tone, and other semiotic elements. Intersemiotic translation, a term introduced by Roman Jakobson (1959), refers to translation between different sign systems, such as from verbal to visual. Similarly, multimodal translation encompasses the adaptation of texts that include combinations of text, images, sound, and video, such as websites, advertisements, and educational materials.

Readability in such contexts extends beyond linguistic clarity to include visual readability, navigability, and user experience. For instance, the

Journal of Babylon Center for Humanities Studies: 2025, Volume: 15, Issue: 6

translation of a website must consider how menu labels, instructional texts, and cultural imagery are perceived by the target audience. Poor design or culturally inappropriate images can hinder understanding, even if the textual translation is flawless.

This broadened view of translation highlights the need for collaboration between translators, designers, and content creators to ensure that all elements of the final product support readability. In this sense, readability is a multimodal construct that encompasses not only linguistic but also visual and contextual accessibility (O'Halloran, 2004).

Practical Application:

The practical application of this study on the effect of translation on the readability of texts holds significant value for various stakeholders involved in the process of translation, language education, publishing, and communication industries. By identifying the factors that influence readability in translated texts, this research offers actionable insights and guidelines that can enhance the quality and effectiveness of translations across multiple domains.

First and foremost, professional translators and translation agencies can directly benefit from the findings of this study. Understanding how translation choices affect readability enables translators to adopt strategies that balance fidelity to the source text with the need for clarity and accessibility for the target audience. For instance, translators may learn to adjust sentence structure, terminology, and cultural references to optimize reader comprehension without compromising the original message. Translation agencies can integrate these insights into their training programs and quality assurance protocols, thus improving client satisfaction and the overall standard of translated materials.

In the realm of language teaching and education, the study's outcomes can inform curriculum design and teaching methodologies. Language instructors can use findings related to readability challenges in translated texts to select or adapt teaching materials that are more accessible to learners at various proficiency levels. This approach supports better comprehension and retention, especially for students relying on translated textbooks or supplementary resources. Moreover, the study can contribute to translator training programs by emphasizing readability as a core competence alongside linguistic accuracy.

The publishing industry also stands to gain from this research. Publishers that produce translated books, manuals, and digital content can apply the study's recommendations to ensure that their products meet the readability expectations of target markets. This is particularly important for genres such as children's literature, technical manuals, and health

communication materials, where readability directly impacts user engagement and safety.

Furthermore, the study has practical implications for localization and international communication, particularly in global business, marketing, and digital media. Readable translations increase the effectiveness of communication campaigns, product instructions, and user interfaces, which in turn enhance customer experience and brand reputation. Companies operating in multilingual markets can use this research to refine their localization strategies, making sure that translations resonate well culturally and linguistically with local audiences.

Finally, this study provides a foundation for the development of automated readability assessment tools tailored for translated texts. By identifying key linguistic and stylistic features that affect readability, computational linguists and developers of translation software can design algorithms that evaluate translations not only for grammatical correctness but also for user-friendliness. Such tools can assist translators in real time, suggesting modifications that improve readability and thus reducing post-translation editing time and costs.

In summary, the practical applications of this study extend across translation practice, education, publishing, business localization, and technological innovation. The insights gained help bridge the gap between linguistic accuracy and effective communication, ultimately facilitating better understanding and interaction among diverse language communities.

Conclusion

This study has explored the multifaceted impact of translation on the readability of texts, emphasizing that readability is not merely a function of linguistic accuracy but a complex interplay of linguistic, cultural, cognitive, and contextual factors. The findings underscore that effective translation requires more than a literal transfer of words; it demands sensitivity to the target audience's language norms, cultural background, and reading expectations.

Through examining various theoretical perspectives—including equivalence theories, functionalist approaches, cognitive processing models, and pragmatic frameworks such as Relevance Theory—the study highlights how different translation strategies can enhance or impede the reader's ease of understanding. For example, strategies such as simplification, explicitation, and register adjustment often improve readability, while overly literal or culturally opaque translations tend to create barriers for the reader.

The study also recognizes the importance of genre, register, and multimodality in shaping readability, indicating that translators must adapt their work to the specific communicative context and medium.

Journal of Babylon Center for Humanities Studies: 2025, Volume: 15, Issue: 6

Furthermore, the reader-oriented approaches discussed demonstrate that assessing readability should account for the target readers' expectations, background knowledge, and cognitive effort.

Practically, these insights offer valuable guidance for translators, educators, publishers, and localization specialists aiming to produce texts that communicate effectively and are accessible to their intended audiences. The study advocates for a balanced approach to translation—one that maintains fidelity to the source text's meaning while prioritizing clarity and reader engagement in the target language.

In conclusion, this research affirms that the quality of translation, as reflected in its readability, profoundly influences communication success across cultural and linguistic boundaries. Future research can build on these findings by developing more sophisticated tools and methodologies to assess and improve readability in translated texts, thereby contributing to the advancement of translation theory and practice.

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