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Review Paper

The Multiple Roles of Translation in the 21ST Century: The UAE National Library and Archives Project (Translations) as a Model

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to highlight the pioneering role of the UAE National Library and Archives in empowering the translation movement locally, regionally and globally. Currently the NLA new administration has launched (TRANSLATIONS), which is a multi-lingual project aiming to invade virgin research areas in the field of translation through different approaches. First, the NLA organized and funded annual international translation conferences, which attracted the most distinguished scholars and specialists in the translation discipline worldwide, who presented a variety of the most recent studies in translation. In order to encourage researchers and experts in translation studies to participate in the NLA annual translation conference, free registration was provided in addition to decent honorariums for scholars who are interested in publishing their papers in the NLA conference peer-reviewed proceeding, which appeared in electronic and paper formats. In 2021, the NLA organized an international conference titled (Translation in the Digital Era between Modern Technologies and Challenges of Historical Texts), which attracted the attention of a substantial number of distinguished professors and translation experts from every corner of the globe and achieved unprecedented success. Simultaneously, the NLA embarked on an ambitious and wide-ranging project encompassing translation activities, which engage an extended spectrum of western and eastern languages in order to enhance the translation process and promote inter-civilizational dialogue worldwide.

The Italian writer, Italo Calvino, argues that, “without translation, I would be limited to the borders of my own country. The translator is my most important ally. He introduces me to the world.”¹ Moreover, George Steiner argues: “Without translation, we would be living in provinces bordering on silence”². In a related context, Amara Lakhous points out that “translation is a journey over a sea, from one shore to the other”³. During this journey, translators are the forgotten heroes, the anonymous soldiers who bridge the cultural gaps between different nations constructing bridges of understanding and tolerance and turning the huge globe into a small community of multi-racial/multi ethnic individuals talking to each other in a variety of universal languages. Currently, the translator is not only a reader, an interpreter and a creator, but he is more than that because translation, according to Anthony Burgess, “is not a matter of words only: it is a matter of making intelligible a whole culture” (Neubert 1999:124). Translation has become an instrumental dynamic leading to a deep mutual

¹ Calvino Italo. <https://www.trustedtranslations.com/blog/world-without-translators>.

² Steiner George. <https://boutiquelinguage.com/en/translation-centre>.

³ Lakhous Amara. <https://lithub.com/on-the-quest-to-write-in-a-third-language>.

understanding among different nations by breaking the language barriers and expanding the boundaries of trans-cultural collaborations between East and West.

The famous translation historian and theorist, Peter Newmark, demonstrates that "translation is an essential cornerstone of the cultural life of every civilized people"(Newmark 1988: 94). In fact, translation is integral to every time and place, and its transcultural output is widespread and profound. In terms of impact, translation is resembled to a cloud. Nobody knows where it began and where it ends. In the (Abu-Dhabi) National Library and Archives, and through translation, we take vigorous steps to promote cultural hybridity across different civilizations. Through translation, we promote mutual dialogues with the other. Through translation we call for brotherhood and peace, based on the teachings of all monotheistic religions. In the National Library and Archives, and on the initiative of the higher administration, we established the (NAL Translations Project), whereby we translate relentlessly and frequently into various languages due to the importance of translation in the global cultural movement during the new millennium. In the NLA Translation and Publishing Section, we mainly translate history in order to preserve the memory of our nation. We give priority to historical translations because history is part of real-life contexts and it is capable of bringing about change compared to fantasy books based on imagination and diverged from reality.

Moreover, in the National Library and Archives, we translate for the sake of possessing knowledge. We also translate in order to deploy enlightening ideas and confront thoughts of darkness in our society and worldwide. Further, we translate in order to preserve our long-standing cultural legacies. We translate in order to spread multilingualism and cultural diversity. We translate in order to introduce the world to our past and present glories. In addition, we translate in order to enrich the human heritage locally, regionally and internationally. We translate in order to inform the world of our history and cultural achievements. We translate in order to disseminate the culture of tolerance. Moreover, we translate in order to push our development process forward. In fact, we translate for more than a thousand reason. We translate because we entered the era of translation popularization and hegemony in a world overwhelmed with crowded ideas and multiple innovations, a world in which chauvinism faded away and information becomes universal.

In the current digital age, translation tasks have multiplied, and the translator's job has undergone radical changes. In the digital era, the technological development in both automated media and telecommunications sectors has contributed to maximizing the global tendency toward translation. This tendency made the great Italian philosopher and thinker "Umberto Eco" to consider translation as the reason for the cultural, linguistic and civilizational enrichment of the old European continent and the source of the renewal of its imminent historical legacy.

Apparently, the history of translation in Europe and America intersected with the history of the West as a whole, as various concepts of translation emerged in different periods of time. In the digital age, the international community has become more aware than ever before of the civilizational stakes rooted in translation, and from now on we can say that whoever sows the wind will reap the storm, and whoever spreads translation will reap tolerance and peace.

Pushing the boundaries of Translation

The Empowerment of Local Legacies and Cultural Heritage

The UAE historical, popular and cultural heritage constitutes an intellectual stream flowing over time, embodying an unparalleled national epic that captures in a high-caliber style the tremendous developments the country has witnessed since the ancient eras, which formed the existential pillars of the contemporary Emirati society. Translation (in the National Library and Archives) aims to preserve the extended historical heritage that has its roots in the pre-state era through the foundation stage after the founding fathers located the cornerstones of the state into the post-oil stage, where the journey of progress and growth began and ended with the current stage in which the UAE occupies a prominent position at the regional and global levels.

Historically, the world's attention has focused on the Arab Gulf region since time immemorial as a strategic crossing point between East and West, and this interest gradually increased until it reached its climax recently in the wake of the geopolitical challenges facing the countries of the regional neighborhood. In addition to archiving history and the ancient Emirati past linguistically, the National Library and Archives translation projects aim to pay tribute to the current and modern

Emirati civilizational works and accomplishments that exceeded expectations by transferring them to many foreign languages. In the National Library and Archives, we translate all literature written about the UAE and its surroundings in order to chronicle a history entrenched in transformations and vicissitudes and tidal waves of civilization and a heritage that formed a culture, which since time immemorial, opened its arms to the world, transcended the borders of the sea, desert and mountains and exceeded the horizons until it reached recently the higher planets and the spheres of heaven.

In the National Library and Archives, we translate ancient history and contemporary history because the UAE has become a safe oasis and a sanctuary for people from all over the world who search for work, stability, investment, education, tourism, entertainment, treatment.....etc. Thanks to the wise policies of the state, the UAE has become a cultural beacon for the dissemination of science, knowledge and literatures and an important center for stimulating global trade exchange. Unequivocally, the whole world witnessed the magnificence of the innumerable and incalculable civilizational achievements contributed by the UAE in various fields throughout the procession of progress and giving that Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, may God rest his soul, laid its foundations, and preserved by his successors, His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the UAE President, H.H. the Crown Prince and their brothers, the Emirates rulers. In the National Library and Archives, we translate history because every great nation has its own history, heritage, and writers who immortalize its glories just as Mallarme who praised the glories of France and Whitman who glorified the emerging American civilization.

In the National Library and Archives, we translate history because the UAE has its own historians who chronicled its history and eternalized its glories, its heritage, its folklore, in the past and at present. Through these writings, the UAE historians made the world hear the tangles of its winds, the songs of its desert and sea, the chants of its palm trees, and the dews of spring falling down on the eye-lids of Hafit⁴ Mountain who does not sleep. In the National Library and Archives, we translate our contemporary history to document the prominent civilizational and humanitarian role played by the UAE at present, as the UAE is taken as a model to be emulated in economic, intellectual and educational progress, peaceful coexistence, tolerance, human communication, cross-civilizational hybridity and intercultural dialogue.

In this historical juncture, the role of the National Library and Archives emerges with its various cultural initiatives, particularly the (Translations project), which aims to make a paradigmatic and qualitative shift in the translation domain by exchanging information and knowledge with partners, cultural makers, famous authors, historians, and the most important publishing houses in the world, where translation plays a crucial role in civil society and in various aspects of political, social and economic life. Currently, the National Library and Archives translations contribute to the dissemination of linguistic and cultural diversity at the regional and international levels. In the National Library and Archives, we translate because translation has become the essence of contemporary human civilization. Furthermore, translation is explicitly considered in many regions of the world as an essential gateway to scientific, economic and technical progress and development.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that translation constitutes the vital nerve capable of effecting vital communication between peoples in hostilities, and bridging the gaps between conflicting nations, if used properly for these purposes. The Arabs in the early Abbasid era were aware that they achieved enormous advancements in the spiritual arena but their knowledge about the spiritual fields was not sufficient to convince the other of what they possessed. Thus, they turned to translating the Greek and Roman history books and the philosophical theories of Plato and Aristotle. By translating Greek philosophy, the Arabs were able to strengthen an early civilizational dialogue with the other. Through the translation of Greek philosophy, the Arabs were able to overcome many of the existential problems inherent in their thinking. On the other hand, the translation of the books of medicine, pharmacy and agriculture solved many problems for them in their daily life.

Throughout history, the Arabs were not satisfied with possessing what the others have, but adding to what was translated to them extra-ordinary contributions, confirming that they were not a burden on the life of others but rather a part of life's movement and continuity, which made them worthy of it, and made the others in dire need of their production and knowledge. The others translated the books of Jabir ibn Hayyan, Ibn Sina, Ibn Rushd (Averroes) and al-Farabi, and Ahmad bin Majid's studies on maritime navigation. We translate books, which are able to speak to humans more than provide partial

⁴ A mountain located in Al Ain in the eastern region of the Emirate of Abu-Dhabi on the borders with Oman.
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specialized knowledge because the Arab reader wants to communicate with others, and at the same time, he does not want more confusion and complexity in this communication.

The value of translation is not contingent upon the propaganda and media boasting of publishing houses or other parties concerned with the translation of huge numbers of books. The central issue is based on the extent to which the Arab mind needs what is translated. Flooding our markets with translated books, and overcrowding our periodicals with translated articles, will be counter-productive unless we realize the importance of selecting what we translate from the cultures of others. Translation into Arabic is not the only path to intercultural dialogue. Currently, most of these translations are presented to the self on behalf of the other, and not to the other on behalf of the self. Certainly, this kind of translation strengthens within us the need to integrate with the Western Other to meet our needs while turning a blind eye to a long history of Western offences to the East. But we need to make a gigantic breakthrough inside the culture of the Western other, and this will be achieved by creating a kind of balance between what is translated into Arabic and what is translated from Arabic into other languages especially English.

The unilateral strengthening of dialogue will remain ineffective at all paradigms since the level of comparison between the translations that reach us and the translations that reach the other is still very scanty. Therefore, we must convey through translation the bright aspects of our heritage in order to enhance the civilizational dialogue with the other on compatible basis. The current absence of coordination among Arab translators, due to the absence of a bibliographic base handled by an official party via the Internet, will lead to the loss and dispersion of efforts. Unfortunately, there are multiple translations for the same books in different parts of the Arab world, and a mess of terminology, which will generate problems whose solutions are complicated and far-fetched.

The strategy of establishing a dialogue with the West based on translation cannot be very effective, unless it is combined with other factors, including setting up bibliographic databases of valuable literature in the Arabic language or what has been translated from it. This step should be taken, so that the Arab reader feels that in his dialogue with the other, he/she stands on solid ground. The Arab reader needs to feel that he/she leans on a great legacy of heritage and traditions which deserves glorification and honor. The Arab reader needs to take pride in his history and civilization and promote them in the cultural territories of the other.

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