

OVERVIEW OF TRANSLATION- JAHIZ

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ABSTRACT

This research tries to contrive Jahiz's stands and ideas in translation which he has discussed in his two books named "Al-Bayan Wal-Tabyeen" and "Al-Haiwan". As it was known this issue of translation was emergence since long period of time, and there was no need toward translation, however, after Arabian and Persian assembled with Greek philosophers had increasingly the need and concerned on Religion Sciences and others, for instances: Mathematics, Medicine, Logic, Engineering, Business and others which were existed during that time. The translation movement had gone by several stages in the different periods and being developed during Abassid period for example, the works of "Hanan Ibn Ishaq" and his own school which the translators had faced difficulties and problems in their translation. To summarize, this research has found a number of results that the "Jahiz" was precedence than others who had stated the conditions of translation before 12th century ago. Besides, these conditions appropriate till nowadays, he had also pointed these conditions cannot be applied in translation of literature texts and holy texts because its might be obliterated the savoir faire. "Jahiz" had looked through this issue seriously, he tried to help translators in this area and he had stated in his famous books the conditions of translation and he had given his ideas toward translation benefited from his previous experience in translation the ancient philosopher's books from Persian to Arabic. Though, the readers could benefit his ideas in translation generally and for the translator specifically, also his books became as a heritage references and cannot be neglected at all in translation work.

Keywords: Translation, al-haiwan, translation conditions, translator.

INTRODUCTION:

-Jahiz's Personality and its Relation with Translation Discipline

Abu Usman Amro Ibn Bahr Al Kanani famous as "Al Jahiz" Born in the year 150 AH in city of Basra in the succession of Al Mahdi the third Abbasi Caliphs, and died in succession of Al Muhtadi Billah in the year 255 AH (Al Hajery , 1976 , p. 100-115).

Al Jahiz had received his Arabic studies in Al Basra city in Iraq, and became one of the most prominent philosophers of his time. Among his famous books "Alhaywan" which includes excerpts from animals' anecdotes, it is a mixture of facts and fiction. His book "Scrooges" considers a psychological acumen of humanity, one of the best books that revealed the Arabs personality of that time. Al Jahiz was passionate with science and hard to be convinced unless strong arguments were presented (Al Hajery, 1976, p. 108).

Once he was a young boy, Al Jahiz used to sell breads and fish in Al Basra market, thereafter; he began to receive various sciences from famous philosophers of that time. For instance, he received the science of Arabic literature from "Al Asmai", "Ubo Obaideh" and "Ubo Zayd Al Ansari" and studied the science of syntax and semantics from "Al akhfash" and then expanded his knowledge in theology on the hands of "Ibrahim Ibn Syar Ibn Hana Al nizam Al basri". Al Jahiz used to be in Marbid AL Basra to take the language orally from the Bedouins and discusses with "Haneen Ibn Ishaq" and "Salmoyeh" to be familiar with Greek culture. Al Jahiz also used to read for "Ibn Almokafa'a" to be connected with Persian culture, moreover; he used to hire calligraphers' shops and spends all nights there reading all various translation books to combine all the prominent culture that time from Arabic, Persian, Greek and Indian culture (Al Hajery, 1976, p. 113).

Al Jahiz wrote almost 360 books in the disciplines of his time (Al Hajery, 1976, p. 115). Among the most famous books were "Albayan Waltabyeen" and "Alhaywan". These books consider as the last books he wrote, a book in literature which compose of diverse topics include written topics about prophets, preachers, scholars and princes. Moreover these books include topics about rhetoric, tongue, silence, poetry, speeches, respond to populism, melody, news of fools, commandments of the Bedouins and their asceticism and others.

The book "Alhaywan" one of Al Jahiz's last books, the first book that was written as a collection to in zoology. This is in fact because writers such as "Alasmay", "Ubo Obayda", "Ibn Alkalby", "Ibn Alaraby" and "Sajastani" were taking one animal to write about such as camel, bees or birds and their interests were in the first and most priority in linguistics aspects and not in science aspects. Whereas, Al Jahiz's interest were besides linguistics aspects and pottery with the nature of animals' instincts, habits and conditions (Al Hajery, 1976, p. 116).

In his book "Alhaywan", Al Jahiz extended his work to some of the natural and philosophical knowledge. He spoke in the policy of individuals and nations and conflicts between linguists and other religious communities, furthermore, he did mention in his book "Alhaywan" topics related to geography, medicine, and the habits of the Bedouins and some issues of Jurisprudence along with abundant poetry and humor to level of promiscuity and even obscenity. Al Jahiz also mention a topic which is related to this research "Al Jahiz's opinion in translation of the Alhaywan's introduction", in two places: No. 44, "the difficulty of poetry translation", and No. 45 "translation rules" (Al Jahiz, 2002, 1st chapter, p. 54).

Al Jahiz was attached with reading books and various translations, the bad ones and the good, therefore; his ideas were formed in fabulous and professional way since it was contemplative impressions in the translated book in front of him. As a result, his theory of translation emerged.

And because Al Jahiz was a prolific scientist and exposed to the cultures of his days, his reviews extended to Koran, Hadith, Torah, Bible, saying of sages and poets, Greece science, Persian literature, and the wisdom of India. In addition, Al Jahiz extended his work to include his experiences, observations and his own notes in science in the time of contemporary translation movement of Greek.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

This paper discusses about Jahiz and his ideas towards translation discipline in his famous book al-haywan. He discussed a wide range about translation even though he lives at last 14 decades behind us. He is a pioneer in discussing about the translation either bilingual or multilingual. These papers will figure out all Jahiz's translation science through his book named al-haywan and discuss all his views in-depth, finally do comparison to the translation ideas presented by Dr. Sami Droubi in this latest century. This study will goes through library research and comparative research between two scholars. This paper tries to show the similarities and differences of the views from both. Also to get the result how is the latest scholar benefited from the previous in this area.

DISCUSSION:

-Al Jahiz contributions in translation

The translation of human knowledge which Al Jahiz suggested, and his definition about translator while he was searching for the theory of translation, gave translation science a broader definition and more general application (Abdul Hamid, 1979, p. 49).

Translation is not easy task, as any human cannot do so without any prior knowledge with its tools, indeed, translation is complicated science where human cannot reach without knowledge, culture, tradition and beliefs of the target languages.

Is it possible that we could be bilingual? Is it possible that we could master both of these languages? Does proficiency level would be the same as in both languages? If a human cannot control all the aspects of a single language, then how about two or more languages? And how to shift from one language into another? How to deal with both of these languages? And how to manage on-going translations that translator practices? Prescribed rules has been emerged in the book of “Albayan Waltabyeen” that translation is impossible task to be accomplished and what was being done was inevitably insufficient.

I will try to discuss one aspect of these questions depending on “Al Jahiz” who we still not sure whether he mastered a language other than Arabic. Although in his works there were signs that he was not unaware of Persian language.

When he was talking about the translation of Greek philosophy, he offered two reasons for its failure and shortcomings. He says: “some of the poem supporters say that translation does not convey what a poet says in the level of characteristics of meaning, realities of his doctrines, accurate quotations, and hidden borders. In other words translation cannot give the exact meaning of the poem in its original language, so how the translator would be able to translate and deliver the right meanings without being involved culturally in that language and be exposed to every single linguistic aspects of that language. It is like the author of the book, in that when Allah’s mercy upon them “Ibn Albatriq”, “Ibn Noamah”, “Ibn Qara”, “Ibn Fahrez”, “Thefel”, “Ibn Wahely”, and “Ibn Almokafa” like Erstatalis?!! And when Khalid was like Plato?!! (Al Jahiz, 2002, p. 1-45).

This means that the translation is incomplete since translation science without philosopher’s sciences, no matter what translator reaches of knowledge and understanding the whole texture of the book, the translator remains unable to catch up by the author.

Al Jahiz had indicated in his book “Al haywan” for this particular shortage in translation as he said “it is imperative for the translator to possess specialty knowledge of translation in a way to be the most knowledgeable person in the target language and another one as well so that both languages would be transferable emotionally, meaningfully and linguistically. Moreover, the translator should master these both languages in written and oral forms because each language attracts, quotes, and contracts another in different ways through translation process (Al Jahiz, 2002, p.1-54).

In this text Al Jahiz did not exclude any of the impossibility of translation, unlike what he did in “Al bayan Wal tabyeen” when he excluded “Mousa Bin Sayar” the Quran interpreter and considers him one of the marvels in the world (Al Jahiz, 1961, 1st chapter, p.71). The translation of philosophy characterized in all cases with inferiority and failure. Then, he was not trying to hide his disparage with who translated from Greek and even he did not hide his contempt for them once he said “When Khalid was like Plato?” Here we can only express our surprise of this saying in how Al Jahiz did reach to this fact that Khalid inferior to Plato in order to issue this judgment in a way he should be familiar with the work of both, and he should be familiar with both Arabic and Greek languages. Al Jahiz does not pretend this fact but it is obvious from his words that someone is able to make this comparison and prove the superiority of Plato over Khalid and that someone who is able also to pay attention to the gaps of their translation and thus seeks to correct and revise these gaps? Is it enough to correct these deficiencies and bring to a large extent between the translated text and the original text?

Before mentioning the translation of Greek philosophy, Al Jahiz referred to the issue of poetry translation “Arabic poetry”. If we believed in Al Jahiz once he mentioned that “poetry cannot be translated and it is not permissible to be transferred and once poetry translated definitely will lose its versifications and its rhymes and fell into exclamation”. (Al Jahiz, 2002. p.1-53).

The fact that poetry is hard to be translated stemmed from its rhymes characteristics. Once poetry being translated, these rhymes will be demolished and faded. Remarkably, in this text Al Jahiz did not accuse translators of inferiority and he did not justify the failure of the translation of Greek philosophy to the fact that they are unfamiliar with both languages. Even if we assume the existence of an ideal translator, the problem will remain regarding the poetry. Failure to translate the Greek philosophy refers to the lack of knowledge in philosophy among translators and unfamiliarity with both languages; Arabic and Greek. Al Jahiz considers

poetry impossible to translate whatever the versatility of translators, poetry refuses to be transferred into another language and if happens then it will lose its value and becomes useless without feeling and meaning and further distorted (Abdul Hamid , 1979 , p 46) .

In this regard, Mustafa Abdel-Hamid indicates that “the position of Al Jahiz from poetry and prose translation emphasize the second trend of translation itself which is the translation of the content of the text faithfully” (Abdel-Hamid, 1979, p 45).

Why Al Jahiz alleged that poetry is limited to the Arabs? While it is true that he did not completely exclude others than Arabs from poetry since they are able to say poetry but they should learn Arabic language and organize it. Perhaps he was thinking of the poets from Persian descendants who were amazing in Arabs poetry. From this perspective, the poetry is linked to Arabs as a race as it is linked to Arabic language. Bu that does not diminish our surprise in that “Al Jahiz” knows that poetry is a common denominator between all of Arts. Yes he was familiar with this fact and the proof has been found in his book “Albayan Waltabyeen” and “Alhaywan”. Desemus one of Greeks scholar mentioned that he has been asked once “what about Desemus teaches people poetry and he cannot say it? Said: like a sword sharpener able to sharp but cannot cut” (Al Jahiz, 1961. P. 1-71). We might say that “Al Jahiz” words came in the context of bragging between peoples and between the various components of the kingdom of Islam at that time. In the context of a long and complex dispute between different cultures, Al Jahiz had intervened in this conflict and had written several books including “Al arabs wal mawaly” and “Al arab Wal ajam” in these publications we might understand Al Jahiz’s argument once he announced that poetry one of the prominent glories of Arabs, this art is limited to them. But this neither justifies this contradiction nor warranties it.

It is more surprising that Al Jahiz after his confirmation that the virtue of poetry is limited to the Arabs, he adds the following “I quoted the books of India, translated the rule of Greek and translated Persian literature, some became well and some not” (Al Jahiz, 2002. P. 1-46). Translating the wisdom of other nations remains in the same level and does not diminish anything and may become better that the original. This is something contrary to the above mentioned statement about the impossibility of translation of Greek philosophy. How Al Jahiz says that sometimes these translations of wisdom distort it and in another time that these translations may enhance it with better ways?

Al Jahiz spoke about the translators’ condition (Al Jahiz, 2002. 44/1-45) “it is imperative for the translator to possess specialty knowledge of translation in a way to be the most knowledgeable person in the target language and another one as well so that both languages would be transferable emotionally, meaningfully and linguistically. Moreover, the translator should master these both languages in written and oral forms because each language attracts, quotes, and contracts another in different ways through translation process.

This is what we say in the book of geometry, astrology, arithmetic and musicology. How if these books, books of religion and tell about Allah the Almighty including permissible and non-permissible to him. Even speaking about meaning correction in complexions which is connected to monotheism.

Al Jahiz puts in this section the necessary conditions for translation in order to consider satisfied to some extent (In his French translation for this text itself. This term is used in translation theory in accurate way which indicates that the translation move the units of shape and meaning). Al Jahiz points out to the rule of translator in two levels:

First: level of knowledge in the subject, as the translator should be familiar with the doctrine of the writer who translates for him.

Second: Level of mastery of the target language and minute abbreviations because translation if the art of language and idea usage.

Al Jahiz focuses on the phenomenon of overlap between languages where every single language takes, contradicts and attracts another. And these interventions never happened due to lack of lexical knowledge in the target language or due to lack of understanding in the context or the source of language but due to frame attraction to the context or source.

In general, the risk of overlap is unlikely to happen between divergent languages especially Arabic language because its morphology and grammar are totally different from other languages such as French or English which their morphology and grammar do not play a real role of attraction.

We can mention here that the development that happened at the level of Arabic language particularly with regard to the rank of words which reproduce the same rank of English and French language (Subject+verb+object). This is obvious in printed media where second factor enter to focus on the Subject and highlight it. Indeed, if Arabic language wishes to start the phrase with the verb, thus the subject will be shown at the top of the phrase when we want to emphasize it as we can notice from the following examples:

اللغة الإنجليزية

1- He goes to school every day by bicycle.

2- I used to be afraid of dog

اللغة العربية

1- يذهب إلى المدرسة كل يوم بالدراجة الهوائية.

2- كنت خائفة من الكلب.

In previous examples, a problem in translation has been revealed in morphology, grammar and words. But I tried to translate it into Arabic from context of meaning while we cannot translate it literally or stylistically because all the languages in the world are subject to fixed rules. We shall follow these rules in order not to overlap the language's meaning, significance and context.

Al Jahiz adds at the level of the language another problem that translator faces which we can call it in the framework of meaning theory "framework error". It is the lack of parity between all languages which translator often faces when there is no doubt with the ability of translator. It happens when translator aims to translate philosophical knowledge in the whole text from language to another such as Greek philosophy.

Al Jahiz's notes about the hierarchy of languages fall within the framework of wider debate cares about superiority of one culture on another and described it as "Ibn Hayan Altawheedy" described it in the 10th century in his book (Altawheedy, 1939. P7—129):

FIRST: TRANSLATION, LANGUAGE AND SUBJECT KNOWLEDGE:

Al Jahiz puts as first rule "equal knowledge for the translator in both languages" he expresses clearly that "it is imperative for the translator that his knowledge should be in same subject (Al Jahiz, 2002 p. 1-51)". From another perspective, the translator should know how to hide behind translation in keeping the original context's meaning and linguistics characters as well. But is there any neutral translation? It is vital for the translator in order to finish his translation to analyze the text so that he can extract the meaning which is intended to be transferred to another language. And this increasingly becomes necessary when it comes to the so-called literature text rather than functional texts that are not available in fact. It is not possible for the translator to be faithful to some extent to the translated text nor can any translation be perfectly objective. Al Jahiz was fully aware of the fact that translation is not only a matter of languages, and no only with the nature of poetry. Translation is not merely limited to the knowledge of vocabulary and the subject only but extends to know surroundings. For example, translation of the sacred texts that relate to a wider field of interpretations, rhetoric and language. So as not to contain translation errors which are more dangerous?

Al Jahiz kept himself busy with understanding the text which intended to be translated, absorption of meaning which stems from language, and everything that exists outside these meanings and connotations such as probable content those words carry and which is linked to material knowledge that does not necessary available with translator. Thus the one who intend to do good translation his knowledge should exceed the level of mastery in language to the level of interpretation of the whole language and its culture as well.

SECOND: THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF TRANSLATING THE SACRED TEXTS.

Al Jahiz was interested with translations which have been done from Greek and he spent great effort in intellectual access. So if the foregoing provisions are related to technical texts such as physics or philosophy, the question concerns here with the impossibility of Quran translation which Al Jahiz considers errors in this type of translation a fatal mistake that cannot be done. There is behind these reservations a theological and philosophical issue. In this context, Abudl Rahman Badawi calls to note that these concerns were caused by the fact that "Mautazela" who reject naïve faith might think of translating Quranic text into various languages of the Islamic nation. Al Jahiz on the other hand, was defending Arabic language movement against the identity of open countries (populism) and Persian in particular, and against the entry of Greek philosophy into Arabic world (Abdulrahman, 1965. P, 25).

When we talked about the problem raised by translation of sacred books, translator may commit a mistake where we cannot neglect or deny the divine speech. Al Jahiz argues this problem at the level of interpretation because the simplest mistakes that interpreter could commit can lead to a serious sin, thus this mistake considers more dangerous than mistakes which could happened in mathematics, physics or other sciences.

I have decided the theory of Al Jahiz across the one who translate and I would imagine Al Jahiz with his knowledge was not separate from human society and his environment. The proof could easy be elicited from his various books. (Abdul Hamid, 1979, p. 50).

Al Jahiz was one of the first early pioneers and theorists to the rule of translation. In that he placed the

foundation stone in determining the direction of translation which crystalized among Arabs researchers following him in time. Al Jahiz theory has emerged as a crafted theory argued by Alsalah Alsafadi (Abdual Hamid, 1979, p.50) in the early of 18th century.

I have depended on the research written by Dr. Ismael Droubi and his views about translation where he talked about the rules that translator should possess. He says “translation scientifically is easy process, as well as the translation of philosophy, sociology, and psychology but to be a translator you should possess these three: (Al Droubi, 2006, p 10).

1. Mastery of foreign language.
2. Mastery of Arabic language.
3. Mastery of the material that it is the subject of the book or research.

As for literature, literature taste should be possessed by translator and this skill could be refined, but if the seeds already not exist so how can this skill grow?

Dr. Sami Droubi sees that mastery of the Arabic language means read what “Al Jahiz”, “Almotanaby”, “Almary” and other giants in Arabic literature. And mastery of other languages means read what philosopher of that language had written as well.

CONCLUSION:

Finally I can say that the concept of translation for Al Jahiz is a complex material and needs focus ingenuity, ability and cultural knowledge worthy of the title of translator. Al Jahiz asserts that translator should be bilingual in both languages in a perfect way, and he sees that those who blend in their words between two languages are not trustworthy since they are not fluent with both. Furthermore, Al Jahiz stresses the need to properly cast the content in secured Arabic method.

In despite the fact that “Al Jahiz” view for translation came in 9th century, but it is still valid to the present day. After ten centuries the Russian philosopher “Plekhanov” (1856-1918) put a condition for a good translator similar to those conditions set by “Al Jahiz” as confirmed by Dr. Sami Droubi (1921-1976) in the second half of 20th century.

Al Jahiz had different views in poetry translation as well; he argued that in translation poetry will lose a lot of its beauty and its merits. This does not mean that Al Jahiz was against translation in general. But he sets restricted rules for a good translation so that translator will never fancy that his translation will be equal to the original text in meaning and feeling as well. However, if the translator was genius, creative and qualified, Al Jahiz precedes all philosophers by setting the vital rules for a good translator, and these rules could not be changed by any philosopher. He made it essential rules in translation, and these rules do not fit translation of literature and sacred texts. I hope that this research helps me and benefit other readers of science lovers.

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