This talk investigates Egyptian interrogation records as an example of one of the text types translators are faced with. More specifically, the focus is on the linguistic and textual issues translators face when translating interrogation records from Arabic to English. In other words, the talk aims at introducing the complexities of translating an interrogation record and suggesting some methods that translators could use to overcome these linguistic complexities.

Interrogations play a crucial role in any legal process because they are one of the important factors that lead to a case being referred to court or it being dropped. Thus, it has a life-changing effect on suspects’ lives because it may lead to their freedom or imprisonment (Haworth, 2006). Therefore, Linguists have focused on interrogations in the past few decades exploring concepts such as power and control (Haworth, 2006), and questioning types and their pragmatic functions (Johnson, 2008; Oxburgh et al., 2010), to name but a few.

Translating interrogations is considered a challenging task, because the translator is not only attempting to produce a translated text that bridges the gap between two languages (Alwanza, 2016), but he/she also needs to be aware of the different social, and political layers that the record went through that have led to it be in the current format. Exploring interpretation in interrogations has been widely researched in the past few decades (Taibi & Martin, 2012); however, researchers in these studies have mainly focused on the presence of interpreters with suspects and witnesses in the interrogation room or the courtroom. They have tackled issues such as suspects’ rights and their understanding of their caution or Miranda rights (Hale & Gibbons, 1999; Nakane, 2007). This talk, however, focuses on the challenges of translating the actual interrogation record in Egypt which are three-tiered.

Al Saeed (Forthcoming) argues that the first challenge is the translation of a legal text which researchers have agreed is not a straightforward task (Ainsworth, 2014). According to El Farahaty (2015; 2016), a translator faces many problems that are linguistic-based, culture specific and system based. The second challenge is that we are dealing with a written record
which is made by a clerk who takes verbatim notes of whatever goes on in the interrogation. Therefore, translators need to be aware of how transcripts and records play an important role in the legal system. He/she also has to think of what was included in the record and what might have been left out? The third and final challenge is that of semantic and lexical problems in the Arabic text such as register shift, punctuation, and the use of archaic words. The talk will discuss these three different challenges and then will discuss the strategies that can be used to overcome such challenges of translation.


References


