

The Problems in Translating Islamic Expressions in Religious Occasions

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to find the problems that face translation students in translating Islamic expressions in religious occasions into English language. The motivations that support the researcher to select this topic are to the causes of these problems and finding some solutions for them. The data were collected from parents, ordinary people in the Jordanian society or public places around Irbid city in north Jordan. The selected expressions were listed and provided for M.A students specialists in translation at Al-Yarmouk university in Jordan. This study found some problems that face M.A students of translation in translating expressions used by Jordanians in Islamic occasions. These problems are related to the voids in cultures, differences between both languages styles and the lack of equivalences in English language. The causes of these problems that are proposed by the findings of the study are the lack of experience in the culture of the target language users, the lack of knowledge in both languages' structures and the lack of special references for the items. In conclusion, the findings of the study suggested some solutions including training, designing materials special for in this field of translation as well as making correlations between translation students and target language users.

Keywords: Translation, Islamic, Expression, Religious, Occasion.

1. Introduction

The significant need of Translation comes from its necessity to communicate between societies. Translation is an old communicating methods between countries throughout the world. It is defined as transfer of ideas from one language into another. The transferring process must convey all the meaning prosperities that occurs in the source language to appear in the target language. Target text translation should contain the same sense, mode and semantic prosperities of the source language text (Baalbaki, 2008). The source language is the language that we translate from and the target language relates to the language we translate into. Some researchers state that translation depends on practicing since it provide the translator with necessary skills and makes proficient and able to produce the meaning in a complete and perfect manner (Abu Helwah et al, : 2014).

Since global educational revolution has already begun, translation becomes more required than the past. This is affected by many changes and development in life fields such as technology, communication, transportations, religion, politics, cultures and others. This makes the life easier than the past, particularly travelling from country to another. These issues led to the popularity of Islam all over the world which the religious of his almighty Allah and his messenger Prophet Mohammed peace be upon him. This presupposes the importance of Arabic language and culture. So, there are many Muslims around the world who use Arabic language as their mother tongue and other non-Arab Muslims who refer to other languages as their second or foreign language, but they need to understand everything about Islam as their religious. Thus, translation is the only way to convert meaning of Islamic expressions into other languages as pledge to continue the message of prophet Mohammad peace be upon him. Baalbaki (2008) states that expression is defined as a chunk of words that relate to some events to produce a meaning. It is a linguistic structure that has its own meaning as a one unit and it has a special entity in its nation or society, so it carries out and produces the identity of its users (Jaber, 2005). Wherefore, language expressions are connected with their own culture. This means that not any language user can understand them except the language native users. This is because these carry on them some cultural meaning and messages of a particular society. Therefore, an Islamic expression is a sort of idiomatic expression that is generated by muslim culture and Islam religion norms. So, some of the Islamic expressions are related to prophet Mohamed (peace be upon him) and others to both culture and religion such as الرحمن بحمى / bi hima al rahman. For example, this expression is used at travel occasion, despite the fact that it is very Islamic but still may be used in relevant occasions.

The translation of religious expression is not an easy process. It needs many skills and experiences. This is because when the translator translates any text such as art, management, pedagogical text, political text doesn't care about mistakes, in other word, this kind of texts is not explicit the way religious ones do. Religious expressions or texts are so sensitive ones because of being holy. Thus, translator have to be careful to convey the expression in its full meaning. In other hand, the meaning of the expression must carry out the same goal that it occupies in both the source language and target language. However, it is not an easy process. A translator should be aware to understand the meaning of the expression in the source language perfectly in order to keep

the sense of expression otherwise he/ she will lose the meaning of the expression. That is, using particular translating strategies may help a translator overcome equivalence problems, culture varieties, languages varieties and many items (Mehawesh & Sadeq, 2014). Islamic expressions have a special meaning that differs from any other expression. This is because they evoke the language and the heart together. This really sounds as a big obstacle for translator to consider the meaning completely and perfectly. In addition, Arabic and English languages are two different cultures where Islamic expressions are connected mainly with Arabic language and nations' culture so the task of the translator is to produce simple and concise translation that is easily understood by non Arab Muslims. Also, the task of the translator is to produce the translation of Islamic expressions in their cultural entity since they are connected with the culture and non Arab Muslim can not understand the exact meaning without referring to cultural aspects. So, this sounds very problematic for translators and makes them produce misunderstood, confused or wrong meaning translation (Dweik and Abu Helwah, 2014).

As a result, the researcher believes that there is a need for conducting this type of research to enable the rest of Muslim brothers around the world possess enough awareness about the culture of Islam. This research focuses on translating Islamic expressions in religious occasions and rites in some parts of Jordanian, particularly Irbid city in the north side of the country.

2. Literature Review

Due to the significance of translation and its contribution to language learning and transfer of cultures from generation to another and one place to another, much research has been conducted in the area of culture and translation. This section of the research provides a review of related literature on translation. Mehawesh & Sadeq (2014) state that religion language contains deep meaning more than that the speaker understands. They point out that religion language depends mainly on its realistic estimation or its prominence. Also, they argue that religious expressions are so difficult and accurate enough to be translated. This is because they are not as easy as other expressions. This may be related to their holiness. In addition, they assume that religious expressions are easier to be understood by speakers who understand slang language and related culture than those who do not. Their study concluded that, Islamic expressions are so associated with Arabic culture, so they should be regarded by the translator to reveal the varieties between both the source language and the target language.

Ghafel et al (2011) conducted a study to find equivalences in Persian language for some English idiomatic expressions within the sewing frame. They assume that translation is connected with culture and translation of cultural expressions is challenge, particularly when the translator translates between two exceptional languages spoken by two different nations. In addition to their assumptions, to translate idioms or expressions in this frame translator have to translate them connotatively. This is because there are not any equivalences in Persian for some English expressions.

Also, Shehabat and Zeidanin (2012) conducted a study to investigate translation strategies, they argue that even professional translator may face difficulties when translating cultural idiomatic expressions. They point out that approximation strategy is the best one for translating cultural – specific items or expressions. They add that sense –for – sense translation can serve more naturally and faithfully specially in texts which have many cultural expression. The writers argue that target language does not need too much experience to decode much foreignised expression, it needs to be live between its people to acquire their cultural connotation. The researchers focus on Jordanian daily discourse to infer cultural expression and translate them. They add, the cultural translation is so problematic and challenging that's related to the oddness and complexities of some expressions, where these expressions are difficult to understand even for people those have close culture.

In another study, Al Zubi (2013) assumes that Islamic expressions in holy Quran produce a deep meaning larger than that in any other book. He adds that translation of holy texts into another language makes the meaning weaker than that in the source language. This may lead to violating the original meaning. Also, he states that the most difficult problem in translating holy items is that decoding the words with the same sense without any distortion. Thus, it is problematic to produce translation with the same sense because Islamic holy expressions involve psychological, spiritual, mental and ethical senses.

Likewise, Bahameed (2014) in his research assumes that religious translation is so sensitive. It requires a translator to be more accurate than any other types of translation. He asserts that a translator should have more attention about lexical items to pick out the suitable one. The researcher claims that there is a similarity between religious text and literary ones because both of them are immersed by affections and expressiveness. Bahameed states that the translator should regard emotiveness in religious translation even in all translation types. In addition, translator should provide much effort to transfer the emotive expression meaning from the source language to the target language by applying translation strategies.

3. Statement of the Problem

Translation is taught in Jordan as one of the major of English as a foreign language in most of the academic institutions in Jordan (Al Khotaba and Al Tarawneh, 2015). M.A translation students face difficulty when attempting to translate islamic expressions from Arabic into English language. They state that it is very difficult to translate islamic expressions in other cultures or languages, particularly English language.

4. Research Objectives

This study intends to achieve the following goals :

1. To finds the problems that face translator in translating Islamic expressions .
- 2.To determine the Islamic expressions which translator face problems in translating as well as the occasions which these expressions are occur in.
- 3.To clarify some strategies skills which translator has to follow in this type of translation to overcome the difficulties.

5. Research Questions

This research paper tackles the main question that What are the problems that translator facing in translating Islamic expressions ?

This question divides into two branches :

- i. What are the Islamic expressions that translator suffers in translating them ?
- ii. What are the solutions that translator should use in translating Islamic expressions ?

6. Methodology

To achieve this study aims which are stated above, researcher follows the method of analysis and diagnosis . That is, the population of this study consists of 23 M.A translation students at the Department of Translation at Al Yarmouk university (Irbid –Jordan) during the fall semester for the academic year 2015- 2016. The sample of the study included participants of different nationalities such as Jordanian and Algerians who are basically muslim in religion. The sample of the study was selected conveniently and purposively comprising 15 male and 8 female participants. After having the participants learnt about the objectives of the research, they were encouraged to translate a number of Islamic expressions collected from the suburbs of Irbid city. They also requested to mention the difficulties that they faced during the process of translation as well as to list the most difficult expressions to be translated. The researcher used two instruments including a Translation test and a Comparison List. The data were analysed by referring to the students translations in the test depending on the scale of translation. The scale consists of four degrees, adequate translation, semi – adequate translation, Inadequate translation and no translation. The data were divided in their usage into four religious occasions they are The Month of Ramadan, Eid Occasion, Death (condolences) and Marriage Occasions.

7. Discussion and Findings

Based on the findings of the analysis, the percentage of all students translations of all occasions expressions: the frequencies of the adequate translation (28.70 %), semi-adequate translation (24.50 %) , inadequate translation (40.10%) and no translation recorded (6.10%). As shown in these percentages, the findings of the study show that there were a lot of problems in translating Islamic expressions specially those in marriage occasion. That is, most of the translators indicated that cultural voids, equivalence and languages styles were most of the problems and difficulties that faced them when they attempted to translate islamic expression in occasions such as marriage. The following section provides the translation of some expressions in different occasions conducted in a muslim culture such as that of Irbid society/Jordan. The data are discussed separately according to four different occasions as following:

- i. **Ramadan Occasion Expressions:** during the month of Ramadan muslim use different islamic expressions to meet the ritual demand of the month. This may include the following:

1. رمضان شهر الرحمة والمغفرة " transliteration / Rammadan shahr al- rahama wa al magferah / translation . " "Ramadan is the month of mercy and forgiveness " .

All translators translated it. Only 34 % of students produced adequate translation, they produced the sense of the expression perfectly. 21% of the students produced semi adequate translation , some of them translated the words الرحمة والمغفرة " " as a one unit in word " forgiveness " and / or the word " remission " , while inadequate translation is the highest it recorded 43% whereas many students did not produce the suitable meaning such as the word "softness" and " friendliness".

2. مبارك عليكم الشهر " " transliteration / Mubarak a la ikum al-shahr / translation " Be bless in Ramadan " . Four

student did not provide translation to this expression. This is because the that students did not have enough experience or knowledge in the source language idioms. The word " Mubarak " has two meanings whereas if it is pronounced " mabrok " it produces negative meaning but in the second aspect if produced as " Mubarake " it produces positive meaning. Also, some students did not understand the meaning of this word such as Algerians students. The percent of adequate translation was the lowest. It was 21.7 % .

3. اعانكم الله الصيام والقيام " transliteration / a'ankum allah a'la a'seem wa al- kiam / translation " may Allah help you fast and perform voluntary night prayer ". Only 30% of the student could illustrate the closest meaning for this expression, 43 % produce semi –adequate answers and 8.6% of the students never produced translation, .the majority of the student face problem finding an equivalence for the word "Al qiam" القيام . The problem here is generated from the lack of equivalence in the target language. Also, many of the translators translated the noun " Allah " to god, so some students lack for semantic meaning.

4. لا حرمكم الله الاجر "" transliteration / la haramakum allah al- ajr/ translation " May Allah provide you reward " . All participants (students) transferred the idiom , but the mistake where in negation" la". In this type of idiom that starts in negation, translator has to invert the negation of the idiom in TL , so the mistake of students was syntactic. some answers were like " God has not forbidden wage " other changed the meaning such producing" sanctuary" which means" refuge " to be the meaning for the word / hramakum / that means there are voids in the culture of Arab people themselves. The researcher argues that some expressions were not understood by some students. Here, the problem is that misunderstanding the words causes ambiguous translation and confusion. Thus, the translator has to understand the expression before beginning to translate. However, the percentage was 26% for adequate translation and 39% inadequate translation.

5. رمضان كريم " transliteration / rammadan k'reem/. It has two translation. The first "May generously bless your month " or Ramadan is a time for giving " the meaning depends on the context. "May people be so generous in rammadan or in rammadan. This is because it is a holy month and every thing is nice where people love each other. This was easy for students to translate, the percentages were 30.4% adequate answer , 47% semi-adequate answer and 21% inadequate answer. The problem was with this expression; is involving a various senses and no equivalence in TL found. The mistake was in translating the expression word by word which means (literal translation).

6. تقبل الله صيامم " transliteration / takable Allah siamakum / translation " May Allah accept your fasting . as a preceded one it is easy where as 65% adequate T, 21% semi adequate T and 13% inadequate T.

7. حج مبرور وسعي مشكور وذنبنا مغفور وتجارة لن تبور " transliteration / hajj mabrour wa s3i mashkur wa danban magfur wa tejaratan lan tabour / translation " May Allah accept your pilgrimage, forgive your sins and never perish your good deed ". The problems faced by students are what do we mean by " mabrour" and what is the connotative meaning of the word s3i ? . Also, the biggest problem was with the phrase " tejaratan lan tabour . The majority of the students translated it literally whereas they distorted the authentic meaning. The problem here is that English language does not contain the same word order of Arabic language. Thus, every sentence in English must involve a verb but Arabic is permitted to produce sentence without verb. On the other way, formal English does not involve the litter wa " و " between idioms. The mistakes of students' translation to the word " hajj" was transliterating the word pilgrimage. The phrase "تجارة لن تبور" in /trade will never fail/. The problem of this expression is that it is not used in the target language and is not available in their culture. So, the problems are languages styles, grammatical and cultural styles as well. The percentage of translations was 17% adequate T, 13% semi-adequate T, 39 inadequate T and 30% no translation. A considerable amount of students said this expression is untranslatable .

2. Eid Occasion Expressions: This includes the following expressions:

1. مبارك عيدكم " transliteration /Mbarak eidkum/ translation " wish you blessed feast ". It is as expression very problematic to find a close word in TL for the word " Mubarak " and transliteration for the word "Eid " . Some students translated it as " Eid Mubarak " .

2. عساكم من السالمين "" transliteration / Asakum min AL-aslimean / translation " hope you are safe ". The problems, here is that the students ignored the interpretation of the semantic meaning of the expression . Every religious expression entails hidden meaning. This meaning needs to be interpreted before translation. Some students translated the word " Salimeen " as "fit " but fit does not convey the whole meaning and sense. In other word, the same word " Salimeen " to be translated by students as " survivors " . However, the percentages were 21% adequate T, 30% semi adequate T and 47% inadequate T.

3. "تقبل الله طاعتكم" Transliteration / takabal Allah ta3atakum / Translation " May Allah accept your obedience . The frequent error is transferring the word as "God" instead of " Allah " such as "god accept your obedience " . Dadat (2015) states in Islam and Arabic language it is impossible to plural the name "Allah" and impossible to produce the word Allah in both genders it is just a male gender, thus it is taboo but in English it is possible in all cases. So, the translation of Allah as God is wrong translation. This is because it does not convey all characters, emotive and senses.

3. Condolences Expressions. This includes the following:

1. "عظم الله اجرکم" transliteration / 3dama Allah ajrakm/ translation " may Allah make your reward great " the percentage were, 28% adequate T, 13% semi-adequate T, 43% inadequate T and no translation 8%. The translation mistakes committed by the translators were related to culture. Some students assumed that the translation of expressions in foreign culture such as " I am sorry " , " god bless his sole " or " god reward you" may be used for showing condolences but in fact these expressions are not fit for conveying Islamic expression . This is because these expressions do not entail the cultural and islamic sense of "عظم الله اجرکم" . The frequent error was in the word " اجرکم " , some students translated it as "far, wage , rent " . All these words were used by students but none of them is related to the source idiom .

2. "شكر الله سعيتكم" Transliteration / shakara Allah sa'ikum/ Translation " May Allah reward you well " . This shows that it is the person who prays to Allah to make the parents or the family of the person who died to be patient and to reward them instead of their soreness and calamity, but in this expression the response from the parents or family also is praying Allah to reward the first person on his condolence. The students mistakes were in translating both the word شكر and the word سعيتكم . Some translations were as " Thank God for your quest " , " I am sorry too " and "thanks for Allah for your coming " . This translations changed the real semantic meaning . In other hand, they did not produce the exact meaning. The problem is that some of the students are not able to produce the shades of the meaning of the idioms. This means they ignored the strategies that are used in these cases of translation such as approximation strategy.

3. "يرحم ما فقدتم" Transliteration / y'arham ma faqadtum/ Translation "may Allah be merciful to him " . The percentage were 21 % adequate T, 34% semi-adequate T, 39% inadequate T and 4% no translation . The mistakes were committed in literal translation whereas many students translated them literally. Thus, literally translation makes the meaning without coherence and misunderstood by the listener. Some students performances were used by machine translator to produce translations as " Ruthless what you lose " , pity for your died " . The problem here is syntactical one. This is because the translators dropped the subject . This may be related to the variation between both languages in linguistic properties and other problems are lexical and cultural . There is lack of dictionaries specialist in these items.

4 & 5. Expression 4 and 5 are related to the same meaning or close together. As a result, they are discussed under one section. This involves expressions such " اخلفكم الله في مصيبتكم " transliteration / akhla fakum Allah fi musibaticum/ translation "May Allah substitute your calamity for bestowal " and " الله يعوض عليكم " Transliteration /Allah e'wed al'aikum/ Translation " May Allah reward you greatly " . The mistakes were committed in translating the words مصيبتكم / اخلفكم / يعوض. Some students dealt with "مصيبتكم" in luck as translation "unfortunately " , " I hope god change and enhance your luck " . So, the problem was to deal with the idioms or expressions as a group of words not as one unit conveying a meaning such as " God compensates you " translation word by word without hidden meaning. The challenge is how to transfer the meaning with all aspects of the idiom to be understandable by the foreign listener. It needs knowledge in culture, lexical items , languages varieties, perfect knowledge in the interpretation of the expression of source language.

6. "نسال الله له الجنة" transliteration / na'sal Allah lahw al-janah/ translation " May Allah make him abode in paradise " . some students translations were as " we ask god to put him in paradise " , "we ask god to mercy him " or god forgive him. The percentages were 34% adequate T, 30% semi -adequate T , 34% inadequate T. All students translated this expression. The highlight problem in linguistic prosperities, that appears in pronoun " we " , but the explanation for this expression is that it doesn't translation as grammatical unit whereas every item should be translated , it deals as a concept involves request from Allah. Its explanation should be translated not as the string of words .

7. "انا لله وانا اليه راجعون" Transliteration / en'a l'lah wa en'a elaih'e raj'un / Translation " Surely we belong to Allah and to him shall we return " . The percentages of translation were only 17% adequate T, 21% semi-adequate T , 52% inadequate T, and 8% no translation . some students translation were " to God we belong and to him we return " , "we are the prosperity of Allah and "he returns us after death " , "we are for Allah and we are to him will

be returned ". Considerable amount of the performances of the students were word by word translation . This means that this type of idiom is difficult to be coordinated and structured.

8. " الله ما اخذ والله ما اعطى " Transliteration / l'lah ma ax'ad wa l'lah ma '3ta / Translation " there was ' for Allah is what he took and also for him what he gave " some students dectored the meaning such as " God is taking what he want and what God gave" , " for Allah what he takes and for him what he give" and " every thing for Allah ". The percentages of translation were 13% adequate T, 17% semi-adequate T, 56% inadequate and 13% no Translation . Frequent errors as the preceded ones.

9. " البقاء لله " Transliteration / al baqa' l'lah / Translation "only Allah lasts forever "

Percentages : All the students translated this idiom and the majority of performances were acceptable . However, 60 % adequate T, 26 % semi-adequate T and 13% inadequate T.

10. " قدر الله وما شاء فعل . " Transliteration / kadar Allah wa ma xa'a fa'al/ Translation " Allah has decreed and what he wills , he does ". The frequent mistake was found in the translation of the word قدر " some students transferred it to " estimated ". This means (an approximate calculation or judgment of the value) which is not suitable. This is because any one can estimate but not anyone can be prescient. The percentages of translation were 26 % adequate T, 34 % semi-adequate T, 34% inadequate T and 4% No translation.

4. Marriage Occasions Expressions. This includes a number of common islamic expressions used by Jordanian Muslims as displayed below.

1. " بارك الله لكما وبارك عليكما وجمع بينكما على خير " Transliteration / bakaka Allah l'akuma wa Baraka al'aikuma wa 3ama'a bain akuma al'a kair/ Translation " May Allah bless your marriage , make your marriage life happy and keep you both united . The percentages of translation were 21% adequate T , 17% semi-adequate T , 52% inadequate T and 8% No translation. The problems here were in translating the word بارك . There is not appropriate equivalence in English language for it whereas it conveys the meaning of agreement, bless or accord some students answer it in " bakaka" and other did not answer . Another problem appears in the comprehension of the expression برك عليكما . So, the problems are to comprehend the expression and finding the equivalences .

2. " بالرفاه والبنين " Transliteration / bi'al' rafah wa al-ba'neen / Translation " be blessed with harmony and children " . The percentages were 8% adequate T, 13% semi-adequate T, 69% inadequate T and 8% no translation . The problems were as the preceded ones is found in the equivalences for the word الرفاه and the comprehension of it. Some students translated it such as simple life, richness, luxury or happy life where these words do not produce the connotative meaning or the hidden meaning. This expression needs to be comprehended before the translation. It has the meaning of the relationship between husband and the wife. It is nice emotion and harmony.

3. " اسأل الله لكم الذرية الصالحة " Transliteration / as'al Allah lakum Al-dureah AL-salih'h / Translation " May Allah provide you with righteous descendants " . The percentages of translation were as following 4% adequate T , 26% semi-adequate T , 47% inadequate T and 21% no translation.

The problem is the same as with the preceded two examples with regard to the equivalences issue for the expression الذرية الصالحة . Only 4% of the students could produce the closest meaning but the rest produced answers like good sons, obeyed sons and daughters, believed family. A considerable number of students did not answer. This is because they could not find suitable words in English language. According to them, this expression is untranslatable or unfindable expression. Thus , it is a big problem .

In previous section , the data analyses and discussion answers the question that asks about what are the problems. The answers of this question came from the students themselves ,they were asked after the finishing of translating by the researcher . In also the researcher asked professionals translators they are professors teach translation for MA and BA students . The sum up of both, the replies answer the causes of these problems relate to the following :

1. The students lack of experience in translation Islamic cultural expressions, 2. The students lack of experience in target language society culture, 3. The cultural voids that are occurred between both languages, 4. The students could not be able to comprehend some source language words and idioms , such as برك , برفاه والبنين , عليكما and others, 5. The lack of equivalences in target language whereas these expressions are not used in the culture of target language users, 6. The linguistic differences between both Arabic language (SL) and English language (TL), 7. There are no specialists materials in this type of translation, 8. There are no specialists dictionaries for Islamic cultural expressions .

According to the students and professionals translators opinions , the solutions for these problems , to answer the third research question are that :

1. Students should be trained on these type of expressions by their teachers .
2. Supply students with materials in both languages styles and prosperities .
3. Supply students with the methods that make improve their knowledge about Target language culture such as watching films ,reading stories , contact on internet reading magazines .etc .
4. Design a specialist material about cultural Islamic expressions .
5. Design a specialist dictionary to be reference for students in translation as these expressions .
6. Teach students about the strategies should be used in Islamic cultural expressions .

Researcher provides two benefit strategies in this type of translation :

1. Transcription with little illustration : It is supposed by Newmark (1988) to produce the concept as it is in the source language but in the letters of target language , the concept contain the same phonetic prosperities and then explain it in target language such as the word "الحج" / Alhajj/ (visit to Macca) .
2. Paraphrasing
It is supposed by Newmark(1988) to convey the same sense in source language but it produce in different words to simplify the term to be understood by target language reader . such as "مبارك" / Mubarak / (congratulation , make your life happy with this something) .

8.Conclusion

According to what has been mentioned previously, this study reveals some challenges which face students translation in translating Islamic expression in religious occasions. The researcher suggested that the highlighted problems that are revealed by the study findings are related to three primary items. The first is cultural voids between Arabic and English. This problem which is the most difficult to be overcome and solved .. The second is the minority of equivalences in the target language for Islamic expression. The third is the varieties between both languages specially in syntax. The study concluded some causes for these problems such as the lack of experience in culture of target language users , the lack of knowledge in both languages structures and the lack of specialist references for the items . Some solutions are suggested by the study such as training , design materials specialist in this field of translation, and make correlations between translation students and target language users .

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