Abstract

Apart from the universal principles of politeness which drive different people to be courteous, generous and cooperative, there is an under layer of behaviour governed by deeply seated 'unexamined', 'routinized' and 'unselfcritical' commonsense assumptions that make every culture what it is. These cultural specificities do not just predispose us to divide reality in different ways, they also allow us to link different parts of reality in different ways (Williams, 1992, p.90). This, in turn, renders the task of translation relatively difficult. Politeness is culture specific and failing to translating it accurately, would give rise to a great amount of stereotypes, good or bad, about different people and nations. Can we, thus, translate politely? According to Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), communication is riddled with face threatening acts that require redressive strategies. For fear of losing the meaning of the source text through “foreignising” or domesticating, the view presented in this paper offers that the translator should assess the threat and redress it using the appropriate politeness strategy through three independent and culturally sensitive variables: Cultural distance (D), power (P) and ranking of imposition (R).

Keywords: Translation, Cooperative Principle, Politeness, FTA, Arabic.