

Negotiating Meaning Across Cultures: A Functional Analysis of Translation Strategies in Rendering of Arabic Cultural and Ideological Expressions into English

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التفاوض على المعنى عبر الثقافات: دراسة وظيفية لاستراتيجيات الترجمة في ترجمة التعبيرات الثقافية والأيدولوجية العربية إلى الإنجليزية

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Abstract

Translation is one of the most challenging fields of intercultural communication because of the differences between Arabic and English in language, culture, history, and ideology. The present study focuses on the strategies of translators in translating Arabic cultural and ideological expressions into English, and it particularly examines how translators negotiate meanings, preserve cultural identity, and communicate effectively in the target language. Based on the functional paradigm of translation studies, especially Skopos theory and functional equivalence, the study explores the relationship between the intentions of the source text and the functions of the target text. The selected Arabic expressions from literary and media discourse and their English equivalents are analyzed in relation to ways in which the translators used foreignizing, domesticating, adaptive, or explicatory strategies. The study claims that translating from Arabic to English is not just a linguistic substitution process, but a cultural mediation process that requires interpretation, negotiation, and decision-making. The results indicate that the translation must be balanced between the semantic level and the pragmatic and cultural level. This work makes a significant contribution to the field of Arabic – English translation studies and emphasizes the function of translator agency in transferring a culturally embedded meaning across linguistic boundaries.

Keywords: Arabic–English Translation, Translation Strategies, Cultural Translation, Functional Equivalence, Skopos Theory, Translator Agency, Intercultural Communication

المخلص

تعد الترجمة واحدة من أكثر مجالات التواصل بين الثقافات تحدياً بسبب الاختلافات بين العربية والإنجليزية في اللغة والثقافة والتاريخ والأيدولوجيا. تتمحور هذه الدراسة على استراتيجيات المترجمين في ترجمة التعبيرات الثقافية والأيدولوجية العربية إلى الإنجليزية، وتحديداً كيف يتفاوض المترجمون على المعاني، ويحافظون على الهوية الثقافية، ويتواصلون بفعالية في اللغة المستهدفة. واستناداً إلى المنهج الوظيفي في دراسات الترجمة، ولاسيما نظريات السكوبوس (Skopos) والتكافؤ الوظيفي، تستكشف الدراسة العلاقة بين مقاصد النص الأصلي ووظائف النص المترجم. وقد أجري تحليل عدد من التعبيرات العربية المختارة من الخطاب الأدبي والإعلامي وما يقابلها من الإنجليزية فيما يتعلق بالطرق التي استخدم بها المترجمون استراتيجيات التوطي، والتعريب، والتكيف، أو الاستبصار. تقول الدراسة إن الترجمة من العربية إلى الإنجليزية ليست مجرد عملية استبدال لغوي، بل هي عملية وساطة ثقافية تتطلب التفسير والتفاوض واتخاذ القرارات. وتشير النتائج إلى أن الترجمة يجب أن تكون متوازنة بين المستوى الدلالي والمستوى البراغماتي والثقافي. هذا البحث يقدم مساهمة مهمة في مجال دراسات الترجمة بين العربية والإنجليزية ويؤكد على دور المترجم في نقل المعنى المتجذر ثقافياً عبر الحدود اللغوية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الترجمة من العربية إلى الإنجليزية، استراتيجيات الترجمة، الترجمة الثقافية، التكافؤ الوظيفي، نظرية السكوبوس، دور المترجم، التواصل بين الثقافات.

1. Introduction

Translation has traditionally served as a primary mode of communication between cultures and civilizations, allowing ideas, ideas, and cultural values to be shared and transmitted to different languages. In today's global context, the importance of Arabic-English translation has been growing with the increased political, economic, academic and cultural exchanges between Arabic speaking societies and the English speaking world. The translation of Arabic into English, however, is not a simple matter of language transfer because the languages are different communicative systems, have different rhetorical traditions, cultural assumptions, and ways of conceptualizing reality.

The difficulty of Arabic-English translation lies particularly in the transfer of culturally and ideologically embedded meanings. Many expressions derived from religious contexts, historical experiences, social norms and collective memory are common in Arabic discourse, while others are common in English discourse, reflecting the different cultural systems and communicative expectations. As such, a direct linguistic equivalence of many Arabic expressions is not possible. Literal translation might capture the lexical meaning of an expression without conveying the pragmatic, cultural or ideological meaning. This is particularly apparent for words that express concepts like family relations, religious values, social identity and hospitality, where meaning is often built in a way that is based on shared cultural knowledge, rather than in the words themselves.

Translation should not, therefore, be seen as an exchange of linguistic forms but as the process of interpreting, with cultural negotiation and decision making. The task of translating from Arabic to English (or vice versa) can be difficult, requiring the translator to find ways to convey the meaning of the source text while maintaining the comprehensibility and usability of the translated text for the target audience. Such decisions involve complex choices: whether to retain culturally specific elements, adapt them to the target culture, or provide explanatory strategies to compensate for cultural differences. The translations made in these choices show that the translator is not a mere information carrier, but rather a mediator between cultures.

The traditional perspective of translation as the search for absolute equivalence has been seriously questioned by the development of modern translation studies. Modern studies have focused on the practical, cultural and ideological aspects of translation. Nida's theory of dynamic equivalence highlights the need for the equivalent impact on the target reader (Nida, 1964:159), whereas Newmark's distinction between semantic and communicative translation illustrates the conflict between maintaining the features of the source language and the achievement of effective communication in the target language (Newmark, 1988:39). Moreover, the Skopos theory highlights the function of translation and the reader's expectations (Vermeer, 1989:20), while the concepts of domestication and foreignization in Venuti's work focus on the translator's position in the process of negotiating difference and visibility (Venuti, 1995:19).

These theoretical frameworks are especially relevant when examining Arabic-English translation because translators are always faced with the challenge of preserving the identity of the Arabic culture while also producing text accessible to the English reader. The translation of culturally specific expressions thus poses some questions that concern the strategies used by translators, the degree to which meaning of culture can be preserved and how the translator's interpretation affects the process of transfer of meaning. While previous studies have focused on translation strategies at the general level, more research is needed concerning the negotiation of cultural and ideological meaning, particularly in Arabic-English translation contexts.

This study explores the translation strategies adopted for representing culturally valuable Arabic expressions in English and the challenge faced by translators in balancing between

cultural fidelity and the accessibility of the target language. It investigates how translator's selection of texts can shape their transfer of meanings between cultures and examines the usefulness of functional theories of translation for the study of Arabic–English translation. The study's analysis of translation as a communicative act, however, adds to the common focus in the field of translation studies of the interplay between language, culture, ideology and meaning construction.

2. Literature Review

Translation studies has evolved from being a disciplinary science primarily concerned with equivalence correspondence, and with transfer from one text to another, into a multi-disciplinary science with interests in culture, ideology, communication, identity, and power relations. Previous studies on translation tended to view it as a process of transferring meaning from the source language (SL) to the target language (TL) by formal or functional relations between texts. But later in the evolution of translation theory, it has been argued that meaning is not independent from context. The modern understanding of translation as an interpretative process has emerged as an approach that considers translation as the process of reconstructing meaning within the interaction between language, culture, and social context (Bassnett, 2014; Munday, 2022).

This change has greatly affected the perception of the translator's responsibility. The translator as a mere transfer agent has now come to be regarded as an active agent who selects, interprets and reshapes meanings based on communicative purposes and cultural expectations (Tymoczko, 2014; Baker, 2018). This view is especially relevant in Arabic–English translation, where linguistic differences are intimately related to differences in cultural knowledge, rhetorical conventions, and systems of social meaning.

2.1. Translations as the Process of Cross-cultural Communication.

Translation is increasingly considered as intercultural communication in which there is no separation between decisions of what to translate and decisions of what not to translate. Translation is considered an intercultural communication in which the decisions of what to translate and how to translate it are inseparable. The translator does not simply change words from one language to another; instead, the translator does try to convey something often implied in a specific cultural context, historical period, or ideological framework. House (2015) notes that the translation of any text should take into account linguistic characteristics of the source text as well as its pragmatic functions in the source context.

Translation and culture become particularly complicated in the case of translation from Arabic into English. Often religious practices, historical events, social interactions, and rhetorical structures are mentioned in Arabic texts that suggest shared cultural experiences. These might not have direct equivalents in English as their meanings are based on common understandings within Arabic-speaking communities. Therefore, translators must decide how these cultural meanings can be conveyed to the target readers without obscurity of the source culture or misunderstanding (Katan, 2019; Baker, 2018).

One of the challenges arises in the translation of culturally specific expressions such as idioms, proverbs, metaphors, religious terms and politeness formulas. Such expressions frequently have meanings beyond their literal ones and are used in certain cultural systems. For instance, an Arabic expression of honour, hospitality or social duty can share values and interpersonal relationships that are not readily understood by English speakers. Thus, to translate such expressions, one must interpret the culture context and make decisions as to what to translate rather than substituting lexical items.

The idea of limited translatability is applied to expressions that are highly dependent on the cultural context in which they are produced. But most modern theories on translation do not treat such elements as being totally untranslatable. Instead, scholars suggest that translators can

use various approaches, such as explanation, adaptation, contextualisation or partial preservation, depending on the purpose of the translation and what the target audience expects (Baker, 2018; Munday, 2022). This perspective puts translation at the center of a negotiation between the various systems of meaning that are involved.

2.2 Equivalence in Translation Theory

The notion of equivalence has been at the heart of translation theory, especially in relation to the relationship between source and target texts. In traditional linguistic studies, principles were tried to be set with the aim of making translated texts correspond to their original counterparts. Later scholars, however, challenged the notion that languages could be completely equivalent, since they do not accurately reflect reality in the same way, but construct it in different ways, based on different cultural and conceptual structures (Pym, 2014; Jakobson, 1959).

Eugene Nida's formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence have been among the most impactful insights into the topic of equivalence. Formal equivalence emphasizes maintaining close relationship between source and target texts by keeping the linguistic structures, concepts, and the features of the text. In contrast, dynamic equivalence puts focus on the reaction of the target reader and attempts to evoke a similar reaction from the target reader's audience as the original text's audience (Nida, 1964).

In the field of Arabic-English translation, the role of dynamic equivalence is more evident, because many expressions in Arabic are more linked to the cultural and pragmatic meaning than to the words. A translation of an Arabic idiom or culturally specific expression literally - without adding or subtracting any words could reproduce the words but not the message. In these cases, translators are likely to substitute the expression with a target-language equivalent, which would have a similar communicative effect.

However, the quest for dynamic equivalence questionably raises the question of cultural representation. Adaptation can increase accessibility, but too much adaptation can result in the loss of distinctive aspects of the source culture, and in a product that is more in line with target-culture expectations than with the source culture. This concern has been made strong by those who hold that translation is both ethical and ideological, that is, that it implies some choices about what is visible and what is transformed or reduced in a translation (Venuti, 2017; Baker, 2018).

Equivalence in modern studies of translation is no longer seen as an unchanging relationship between two texts. Rather, it is understood as a concept that is flexible and dependent on the context, and that includes linguistic, cultural, and communicative aspects. This awareness is crucial to consider when discussing the challenges of Arabic-English translators in maintaining cultural identity while effectively communicating.

2.3 Newmark's Semantic and Communicative Translation

The other major contribution to translation theory is that of Newmark's semantic/communicative translation. While semantic translation aims to accurately convey the meaning, style and cultural connotations of the source text, communicative translation focuses on the target audience's understanding and accessibility of the text's message and effectiveness (Newmark, 1988).

This separation serves as a convenient model to analyse the decisions made by Arabic-English translators. Readers are presented with cultural elements from the source text, thus retaining elements of the Arabic linguistic and cultural identity, through a semantic approach. But when the target reader does not know the cultural reference, a communicative approach might need to be modified, explained or substituted to enable the reader to understand the message.

For example, an Arabic proverb may have imagery from local traditions, historical experiences or social practices that do not have a direct equivalent in English. A semantic translation can preserve the image of the original text while adding an explanation, which could maintain the

cultural visibility. In a communicative translation, the proverb will be translated into an English expression with the same meaning, but with fewer elements of the original cultural context.

Neither semantic nor communicative translation can be considered universally appropriate. It is dependent on the type of text, the target reader, the purpose of the translation and the translator's perspective on the importance of the culture (Newmark, 1988; Nord, 2018). More recently, functional approaches have suggested that translation strategies be assessed in a given communicative situation rather than in terms of any one universal standard (House, 2015; Munday, 2022).

As such, the current translation theory considers Arabic–English translation to be an ongoing negotiation between linguistic accuracy, cultural representation, and communicative purpose. This enables the theoretical framework for studying the handling of culturally loaded expressions by the translators and the effect of their choices on the transfer of meaning between Arabic and English.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in a functional and culturally oriented perspective of translation that views translation as a complex process of meaning negotiation rather than a simple transfer of linguistic forms. The role of communicative purpose, cultural context, ideology and the expectations of target readers in translation, which are increasingly emphasized by contemporary scholarly works, are considered in this work. The concepts of communicative purpose, cultural context, ideology and the expectations of the target readers, which are increasingly emphasized by contemporary translation scholarship, are taken into consideration here. This vision goes against previous ones in which the source text was the only basis for assessing the quality of translation and focuses on the function of translated texts in their new linguistic and cultural context.

The functional approach is especially suitable for the Arabic–English translation due to the difference in the cultural and rhetorical system of the two languages. The meanings associated with Arabic expressions often relate to religious experiences, historical experience, social relationships and collective cultural knowledge. These meanings, when translated into English, may need to be interpreted, restructured, or explained in context, as there is not always a linguistic correspondence to communicative equivalence (Baker, 2018; Katan, 2019). Based on the above, this study utilizes a theoretical approach combining Skopos theory, functional equivalence, domestication and foreignization, and translator agency as a lens to analyze the way that translators deal with culturally embedded meanings.

3.1 Skopos Theory

Skopos theory is one of the breakthroughs in the field of translation studies that redefines translation by its purpose. Nord's (2018) theory of translation strategies, based on Vermeer's (1989) functionalist theory of translation, states that the function of a target text (Skopos) should be the primary consideration for deciding on translation strategies. In this perspective, the connection between the source text and the target text is always significant but not the only measure of the effectiveness of the translation. Rather, whether a translation is successful or not will depend on whether it is able to meet the communicative demands of the target context.

This theoretical stance goes against the common notion that the primary role of a translator is to render the source text as accurately as possible. Depending on the purpose, audience and communicative setting, a translation might need varying levels of adaptation. For instance, in the translation of classical Arabic literature, elements of the culture may be retained to allow the reader to enter the source culture; in the translation of an informational text, the elements of the culture may be modified in order to make the text clear and accessible to the reader (Nord, 2018; Schäffner, 2017).

The concept of Skopos theory gives an explanation to the translator's attitude towards the culturally specific expressions in Arabic-English translation. If the concepts used in Arabic are literally translated, then they cannot achieve their intended functions since the meanings of these concepts rely on background knowledge that is not available to English readers. A variety of strategies are required that go beyond translation, including contextualization, paraphrase, and explanatory translation, for religious expression, traditional sayings, and culturally specific metaphors. In these situations, the translator's work is, rather, a necessary response to the differences between cultural systems (Baker, 2018).

Moreover, Skopos theory emphasizes the need to be conscious of the audience when translating. The translator needs to foresee how the target readers will understand the translated text and to choose strategies that will enable the target readers to receive the target text. Thus, translation decisions are the result of a compromise between fidelity to the source language and respect for the communicative requirements of the target language.

3.2 Functional Equivalence

Another key basis for this study is functional equivalence, which moves away from structural equivalence and focuses on communicative performance. In the past, the concept of equivalence tended to be treated as the concept of similarity in linguistic units between languages; but later theories of translation have shown that the same can be said of the idea of equivalent meaning, as languages represent experiences in different ways (Pym, 2014).

The distinction between formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence that Nida makes is still relevant in this discussion. The concept of formal equivalence is to ensure that the form and content of the source language are retained in the target language, whereas the concept of dynamic equivalence is to ensure that the target language has a comparable effect on the target readers (Nida, 1964). The idea was discussed and later modified by other scholars, but the value of this approach is that effective translation requires consideration of how the translated message relates to the audience.

In Arabic-English translation, functional equivalence is particularly relevant when translating expressions whose meanings are culturally determined. A phrase can have a literal meaning, but also serve a social or emotional purpose, which may not be directly conveyed. Expressions of respect, hospitality, religious commitment, or emphasis on emotion can, for example, relate the speaker's relationship to another person rather than merely convey information. Therefore, it can be inferred that translators need to identify the purpose of the expression in the source culture and produce a similar effect in the target language (House, 2015; Al-Hassan, 2020).

But there are tensions when it comes to achieving functional equivalence. The adaptation might make the translation easier to understand, but it might also take away the cultural nuances of the original. However, if the target audience is not taken into account and the original expression is not altered, it can lead to ambiguity or failure to communicate. Thus, there must be a negotiation between cultural authenticity and reader's comprehension for functional equivalence.

3.3 Domestication and Foreignization

The ideas of domestication and foreignization give Venuti an important lens through which to analyze cultural implications of translation options. Domestication is the process of techniques used to adapt a translated text to the norms and expectations of the target language. In contrast, foreignization keeps source culture elements in place and enables the translated text to carry traces of its foreignness (Venuti, 1995, 2017).

Different methods of cultural transfer are used in these strategies. Domesticated translations can make for a more fluent reading by substituting unfamiliar aspects of the culture with the target culture's equivalent. However, this can lead to less cultural differences and even the source culture being presented in the values and assumptions of the target culture.

Foreignization, on the other hand, preserves cultural specificity and stimulates readers' interpretation of unfamiliar views but demands more effort.

In Arabic–English translation, for instance, the difference is of vital importance because the translators often find expressions with deep cultural connotations. They may be left unchanged to maintain the cultural identity, or they may be modified with some even deleting all Arabic words to reach the immediate understanding. Both approaches are not necessarily superior, but depend on the goals of translation, the text type, and the translator's desired connection between the source and target cultures (Katan, 2019).

More recent research has further broadened the scope of discussion, by exploring the issue of domestication and foreignization in relation to globalization and cultural power. Translation choices affect what is seen and what is not seen, and how the world is depicted between languages (Baker, 2018). Translation strategies are thus not only a technical decision, but also a positioning of the culture.

3.4 Translator Agency and Ideology

The concept of an invisible mediator in translation has been disproved in modern times in favor of the notion that the translator is a subject who determines the meaning. The translation process involves interpreting, selecting and prioritizing every translation, and translators always have an impact on how a text is understood in the target culture (Tymoczko, 2014; Munday, 2022).

A translator agency holds special importance in Arabic to English translation since in such translation the cultural and ideational meaning often must be represented in some manner. Translation of political text, religious language, history and notions of identity can indicate decisions that affect readers' understanding of Arabic societies and cultural understandings. The translator's choice to keep an unfamiliar term or to substitute it out with a familiar concept or to explain it is an attitude towards intercultural communication.

Ideology is also a factor in shaping translation procedures. Some of the translation strategies could strengthen some and weaken others in terms of their interpretation of the source culture. Baker (2018) maintains that translation is also part of the circulation of narratives and representations and that this involves translators in the ways in which cultures are understood internationally.

In this light, the present study treats Arabic–English translation as a process of meaning negotiation for a cultural and communicative practice. The functionalism- equivalence theory-cultural translation perspectives offer a full picture in understanding how the translator reacts to culturally loaded expressions and how the translator's decisions affect the transfer of meaning between Arabic and English.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

The research method used in this study is qualitative interpretive research with the comparative textual analysis method. The qualitative approach is chosen since the research deals with translation of expressions with a cultural and ideologically loaded context, which cannot be investigated merely in terms of correspondence between L1 and L2. Rather, a pragmatic function analysis, cultural background and communicative effect analysis are needed for such expressions in the target language (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014; Munday, 2022).

The study examines the negotiation between maintaining the source text cultural meaning and creating a translation accessible to English reader. Thus, the analysis is not a binary one of correct/incorrect translation but a focus on the strategies used by translators and the implications of these choices for the cultures concerned.

The research is conducted based on functional approach to translation, where translation is seen as goal-oriented intercultural communication. Therefore, translated expressions will be

analyzed in terms of their role in the source text, their appearance in the target text, and their ability to provide communicative effectiveness (House, 2015; Nord, 2018).

4.2 Data Selection

The data used in this study are selected Arabic expressions and English translations of them from literary, journalistic and cultural discourse. The corpus was built using purposive sampling to come up with translation instances that reflect major problems in Arabic–English meaning transfer. The selection criteria were not based on general differences in language between the two languages as such, but rather on expressions which require cultural knowledge, pragmatic context or ideological significance to be understood.

The material selected contains culturally specific expressions related to politeness, hospitality, interpersonal relations and social conventions, as well as idiomatic and metaphorical ones that do not emerge from the sum of their individual lexical elements. The corpus also contains examples of religious and historical allusions, which are part of specific belief systems, shared recollections, and cultural affiliations. Besides this, socially and politically sensitive terminology has been used as well, because such words may be used in ways influenced by ideological contexts and competing interpretations across cultures.

These expressions were chosen based on the amount of translator intervention beyond the literal substitution required. Expressions were therefore selected where the translator had to use techniques of adaptation, explanation, preservation, or reformulation within the context to communicate the meaning of the original to the English language reader. This allows for the analysis to go beyond the issue of linguistic equivalence and focus on the ways in which the decisions made in the translation process help to represent, negotiate and transmit cultural meaning between Arabic and English (Baker, 2018; Katan, 2019; Munday, 2022).

4.3 Analytical Framework

The analysis is carried out in the framework of functional translation which incorporates some of the important theories that are used in current translation studies such as the theories of dynamic equivalence of Nida, Skopos theory, semantic translation and communicative translation of Newmark, and the theories of domestication and foreignization of Venuti. The integrated framework in this study enables the study to focus on the translation process not only as a connection between linguistic structures, but also as a process of cultural and communicative exchange.

Nida's idea of dynamic equivalence provides grounds to consider whether the translated expressions have an effect which is similar to the communicative effect of the source expressions on the target readers or just to the form of the source expressions. Skopos theory also plays a role in the analysis as it is based on the function of the target text and audience expectation of the text. Newmark's theory of semantic vs communicative translation is applied to see how far the translation process from preservation to adaptation of the source-text is meaning as well as cultural elements to make them clearer and more accessible in the target language. Moreover, Venuti's notions of domestication and foreignization offer a critical analysis of the role of translation decisions in obscuring or foregrounding Arabic cultural features in the English translation.

An analysis of the semantic meaning, cultural significance and pragmatic function of each selected expression is performed in the Arabic source context. The result is an analysis of the translation strategy that was used in the translation of the target language, along with an assessment of the translation's effectiveness in communicating the message to the target audience. The cultural aspects of the translation choice are highlighted, such as keeping the cultural specificity of the Arabic text, changing the meaning of the cultural context of the Arabic text, or adding explanatory information in the translation to make up the differences between the Arabic and English cultural systems. This method looks at the communicative effectiveness

and the representation of cultural identity (Baker, 2018; Katan, 2019; Munday, 2022) as they are balanced in the work of the translator.

5. Data Analysis and Discussion

5.1 Translation of Culture-Specific Expressions

The meanings of culture-specific expressions are often only secondarily linguistic and can only be understood in light of the cultural information and background shared between the source and target culture. These are frequent statements that carry social meanings, codes of politeness and culturally programmed styles of attitude and relationship in interpersonal communication. Hence, they must be translated in terms of their meaning as well as their function in a situation and cultural relevance.

The Arabic phrase "على العين والرأس" (*alā al-‘ayn wa al-ra’s*) is a good example of this challeng. The literal translation of “**on the eye and the head,**” is not a physical description, but works as an expression. Rather, it is a formula of respect, acceptance, appreciation, and positive response to a request that has been culturally defined. Metaphorical reference to the eye and the head is related to the belief in Arabic culture that these parts of the body represent value, honor and esteem.

There are several possible translations of the target text in English, depending on the communicative purpose of the target text. Many phrases like “**with pleasure**”, “**certainly**”, “**my pleasure**”, “**you are most welcome**”, “**I would be honored**” carry the interpersonal function of the Arabic expression and a literal translation like “**on the eye and the head**” maintains the meaning of the cultural metaphor but might seem ambiguous for English readers without explanation.

The translation of “**with pleasure**” is a communicative and functional, as the social meaning is the focus, and not its structure. This strategy is effective in the light of Nida's dynamic equivalence, as it aims at creating a similar interpersonal effect in the mind of readers of English. The translation, however, also diminishes the cultural imagery embedded in the Arabic expression, since the metaphorical expression of respect and esteem is less apparent in the target text.

A foreignizing translation "على العين والرأس" (*alā al-‘ayn wa al-ra’s*) may render the cultural metaphor into its foreign equivalent, and this could necessitate explaining in the context. This is a clear example of how cultural distance and communicative proximity are in conflict when translating between Arabic and English. This choice is then a compromise between the preservation of cultural aspects and the effectiveness of the target language (Nord, 2018; Venuti, 2017).

5.2 Idiomatic Expressions and Figurative Meaning

An additional challenge is the idiomatic expressions, which do not always convey their meanings through the sum of their parts. The interpretation they give depends on their experience from the past as well as on the cultural reference and shared conceptual frameworks of their source community (Baker, 2018).

This is exemplified by the Arabic phrase "سبق السيف العذل" (*sabaqa al-sayf al-‘adh*), which literally translated as “**the sword preceded the blame,**” and it is part of classical Arabic rhetorical tradition, meaning that an action has taken place and criticism has proven to be useless. The sword symbolizes decisive action, finality and irrevocable consequences.

The possible English equivalents of this phrase are “**the damage is done,**” “**it's too late to change what happened,**” “**the deed is done,**” or “**there's no use crying over spilled milk.**”

The alternatives vary in the extent of cultural integrity that they maintain. The translation “the damage is done” is considered a domesticated strategy because the original metaphor is substituted with an expression that is familiar to audiences of English-speaking countries. It

conveys the meaning it is supposed to convey, but it removes the historical and rhetorical connotations of the Arabic expression.

According to Skopos theory this would be justified when the purpose of translation is immediate understanding. If, however, the purpose is to introduce Arabic rhetorical traditions, then perhaps one of a more foreignizing version, such as **“the sword has already fallen; the damage is done”** may be preferable. This mixed approach maintains the cultural metaphor and clarifies for target readers.

5.3 Religious and Ideological Expressions

Religious expressions are especially challenging to translate to and from Arabic and English because they are a linguistic form, a cultural reference and an identity marker all at once. The meanings they give are influenced by religion, history, and functional use.

The phrase **“إن شاء الله” (in shā’ Allāh)** is a case that is frequently discussed in the context of Arabic–English translation. Its literal meaning is **“if God wills,”** but it serves more than just as a reminder of God's will. In Arabic communication the expression can have a religious meaning, a future meaning, a politeness meaning, a meaning of uncertainty, a meaning of hope, or culturally, a meaning of reference to the future.

Several translations of this phrase into English: **“God willing,” “if God permits,” “hopefully,” “I hope so,” or “with God's will.”** The translation **‘God willing’** keeps the religious and cultural element of the expression and is a foreignizing translation in the sense that it provides something the target reader can experience in the Arabic cultural context.

For instance, the Arabic phrase **“سأزورك غدا إن شاء الله” (sa-azūruka ghadan in shā’ Allāh)** may be translated into English as **“I will visit you tomorrow, God willing.”** The propositional meaning and the cultural reference are maintained in this version. In situations where the translator wants to highlight practical intent based on the translation rather than its religious meaning, however, phrases such as **“I hope to visit you tomorrow” or “I plan to visit you tomorrow”** can be chosen. These translations make them more accessible, but they remove the religious connotation associated with the original expression.

5.4 Social and Political Terminology

The challenges with social and political terminology are conceptual, as words can have ideological connotations that originate in certain historical or cultural situations. Then, the direct lexical equivalence might not convey the wider implication of the original word.

The Arabic term **“الوطنية” (al-waṭaniyya)** illustrates this complexity. It can be translated as **“patriotism,” “national identity,” “national consciousness,” “civic belonging,” or “sense of belonging to the homeland.”** The Arabic term **“الوطنية” (al-waṭaniyya)** seems at times to be a close equivalent, but the emotion, history, and collective aspects of patriotism may not be conveyed in the English term.

If the emotional attachment and loyalty of a homeland is meant, then **“patriotism”** can be used. In political, academic or ideological debates, however, the term **“national identity” or “civic belonging”** might be more representative of the more general social sense of **al-waṭaniyya**. The translation depends on the desired focus of emotion, political ideology or collective identity.

This illustration shows that translation is not just about exchanging words, but about what is being translated, or it involves conceptual interpretation rather than simple replacements of words between languages. Translators must take into account the environment, cultural background and ideologies of discourse when it comes to the choice of terms to effectively translate the text into the target language (Baker, 2018; Katan, 2019).

The analysis of the above selected Arabic–English expressions demonstrate that to translate culturally and ideologically loaded expressions, one needs more than recognizing equivalents in language. The analyzed examples show that the translator has to achieve a balance between

semantic precision and cultural representation and communicative effectiveness. Often, culture-specific expressions, idioms, religious references, and ideological terms have meanings that go beyond their literal meanings, so it is necessary to understand how they are used in the source culture to achieve their pragmatic functions to make successful translation. The results indicate that approaches like functional adaptation, domestication, foreignization and contextual reformulation are not rigid procedures but flexible ones that are decided by the purpose of translation and the target reader's expectations. Finally, Arabic-English translation becomes a process of intercultural mediation that the translators perform, making bridges between diverse systems of meanings, all the while striving to be accessible and yet to retain cultural identity.

6. Conclusion

This study has focused on Arabic–English translation strategies for culturally and ideologically meaningful expressions from functional perspective. The analysis shows that translation is not just a process of transferring linguistic forms, but an interpretive and negotiation process of culture. Certain expressions which are embedded within cultural settings cannot be translated by direct equivalence as their meaning is influenced by social practices, historical context, and common cultural knowledge.

The results indicate that Arabic-English translation between the two cultures must be a balance between preserving the source text culture and satisfying the target text readers. Literal translation can preserve the linguistic structure but lose meaning, and over-adaptation can decrease the cultural specificity. Functional theories such as dynamic equivalence, Skopos theory, and domestication and foreignization are useful for the understanding of how the decision is made by the translator in the light of purpose, context and audience.

The results also show that culturally meaningful expressions often demand that translators do more than simply replace words with words; they must interpret and reconstruct culture. Polite, hospitable, religious and social referential expressions illustrate how meaning can be distributed across linguistic, cultural and pragmatic levels. The analysis has shown that successful translations are those that maintain the communicative function of the source text expression and are sensitive to the target cultural context.

The findings draw attention to translation strategies not being alternatives but being somewhere on a continuum. Domestication may enhance readability and help understand Arabic culture concepts, but it may also lessen the visibility of Arabic culture concepts. Foreignization can help to preserve culture differences and offer an opportunity to the source culture, but sometimes it needs further explanation to avoid misunderstandings. The results indicated that the translated strategies employed by the translators are often a mixture of adaptation, preservation, and clarification to ensure a balanced representation of meaning.

The study also emphasizes the role of translators as active cultural mediators whose decisions impact on the representation of Arabic meanings and identities in English. Thus, in making a translation decision for a cultural, religious, and ideological expression, one is not simply translating one language into another but interpreting one's expression into another. The translator's role is even more crucial when the concepts in Arabic have historical and/or ideological connotations that do not have a direct conceptual counterpart in English.

The study is limited in that it relies on selected examples for qualitative analysis and thus omits large-scale corpus data and reader-response analysis. Further studies might involve larger multilingual corpora, audience reception studies, and the study of the influence of artificial intelligence and machine translation on culturally specific Arabic phrases. Improving intercultural communication is also fundamental for Arabic–English translator education to be culturally competent.

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