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Translation of Culture-Specific Reference in Shakespeare's
Hamlet into Arabic

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Abstract

The research investigates the transference of culture specific references in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* into Arabic. It specifically studies the techniques adopted by the translator to translate these items for which there are no equivalent in the target language (TT). To achieve this objective, the research collects cultural specific references from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* to be compared with their renditions in the Arabic version of the play. In the analysis of the data, Venuti's (1995) model of "domestication" and "foreignization" is adopted to examine the translator's orientation. The finding of the study shows that Jabra used some source texts (ST) oriented translation strategies such as "literal translation", "calque", "functional equivalence", and "globalization" to render certain cultural specific items into Arabic. Hence, "foreignization" was achieved. In addition, some other target texts (TC) oriented strategies were used such as "cultural substitution" and "deletion". For the same purpose to achieve "domestication". It can be concluded that cultural specific items represent a thorny area in the interlingual / intercultural translation processes.

1- Introduction

Translation is the process of transferring oral and written texts from the source language to the target language. It aims to convey the original tone and object of a message, taking into account cultural and linguistic differences between the source text (hereafter SL) and the target text (hereafter TL). However, the process of conveying meaning is not always easy going as there are both cultural and linguistic problems which might hinder this process. In this regard, scholars believe that linguistic problems are easier to overcome than cultural problems. The concept of cultural problems according to Taylor, (1871) is a complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, social customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. There are many types of problems in translating culture such as: Religion, Literary, and contextual problems.

Nevertheless, cultural specific items will be the main focus of the present study that analyze the translation of items selected from Shakespeare's Hamlet from English to Arabic .

In this regard, Baker (1992) offered a number of strategies for translating the cultural specific items and the commonest one is the translation by "cultural substitution"; this strategy includes replacing the cultural specific items with the target language which does not have equivalent but may have a similar impact on the target reader.

According to Alvarez and Vidal (1996), there is a contextual translation but no textual one, so the correspondence of culture specific items between cultural pairs and linguistic engaged in the translation process may depend on the level of the similarity between languages involved.

However, Cultural specific items might not cause problem into distant cultures depending on the differences of cultural reality of the source text and the target text (Aubert, 1994).

2-Literature Review

Translation is the process of translating words or texts from one language into another. It has been acknowledged by scholars and academics such as: Harvey, Rowling, Khalaf, and Simon that the translation of culture is concerned with translating the cultural items in the SL for which there is no equivalent in the TL.

In this regard, Baker, (1992) argues that the non-equivalent at word level can be used to translate the cultural equivalent in the following issues: a- cultural specific concepts, b- the target language lacks superordinate and c- the target language lacks a specific item.

Nevertheless, in recent years there has been an increasing number of studies concerned with the competence of translating cultural terms and expressions. For instance, Harvey, (2000) defines cultural bound terms as the terms which refer to concepts and institution which are specific to the SL. He presents techniques for translating including functional equivalence and linguistic equivalence, while the third strategy is borrowing or reproducing the original terms.

Moreover, Rowling, discusses the treatment of the (hereafter CSIs) in the translation of culture. He identifies series of procedures adopted by various translators and considers their effectiveness in dealing with particular problems. He suggests that is no necessarily a clear correlation between the use of particular procedure and the degree "domestication" or "foreignization" obtained in the target text.

Furthermore, Khalaf (2014) concluded that the translator is the responsible person for the translated version of the text. In addition, Simon (1996) agrees that the translator has a wide authority over the translated text even more than the source author. At least, this can show the wide culture influence over the translators on their decision to choose the equivalent words for the cultural expression.

However, some CSIs of a religious belief or social customs might not be found in the target culture. Mاتيئو and Espiondola (2011) concludes that

the translation makes a clash between cultures and the spectator of the cultural and the power relationships held between the two

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languages/cultures. It is worth to note that all scholars agree on the importance of the (CSIs) functions in the texts; the communicative situations and the target culture expression. Finally, Al-Abdullah and Tajdin (2005) deduce that dynamic equivalent is a better approach to present literature into another language. There is a hot argument among linguistics, semanticians, translation theorists, and scholars over the strengths and weaknesses of formal and dynamic approaches to literature. This argument is expected to lead to a synthesis similar to that suggested by Hatim and Mason (1990) in which they view translation as a process involving negotiation of meaning between receivers and producers of the texts.

3-Translation Principles of Culture-Specific Items: Domestication and Foreignisation

Translation principles such as Venuti's domestication and foreignisation play an important part in CSIs translation. Discussing the translation of CSIs, Venuti introduces the corresponding terms **domestication** and **foreignisation**. According to Venuti, two translation strategies that have emerged since antiquity can be described as:

... deliberately domesticating in their handling of the foreign text, while the others can be described as foreignising motivated by an impulse to preserve linguistic and cultural differences by deviating from prevailing domestic values Venuti (2001).

In other words, the translator retains strangeness of the foreign text by foreignising it or adapts it to the target audience, i.e. domesticates it.

According to Hatim, **domestication** is "a translation in which transparent fluent style is adopted to minimise the strangeness of the foreign text". Whereas **foreignisation** is "a translation which deliberately breaks target conventions by retaining something of the strangeness of the foreign text". Hatim (2001).

3.1 Translation Procedures for Culture-Specific Items

There has been made a significant number of attempts to list translation procedures for handling with individual cases of CSIs.

Two strategies by Newmark for dealing with CSIs:

- **Cultural equivalent** is when the SL CSIs is translated into approximate TL CSIs, e.g., *espresso* – *English tea*;
- **Calque** is the literal translation of the CSIs, e.g., *backbencher* – *hinterbankler*.

It is very important to define the target audience for the translator because of a particular translation strategy is "largely determined by a awareness of a kind of addressees' profile". Shaffner and Wieserman (2001).

Davies suggests the following procedures for dealing with CSIs: omission, globalization and cultural substitution.

- **Omission** appears when problematic CSIs is left out in the translation so that the readers have no idea of its existence. According to Davies, there are three reasons. First of all, omission can be used when the translator can not find the equivalent in the TL. Secondly, omission may be used as a reasoned decision of a translator. Finally, omission is used when the translation by explanation or paraphrase gives "a prominence it did not poses in the original).
- **Globalization** is another translation procedure for dealing with CSIs is globalization. Globalization can be defined as "the process of replacing cultural specific reference with once which are more neutral or general", e.g., *mint* – *hamburgers-bonbons a la menthe* this translation procedure has many positive aspects. Globalization of CSIs makes the TT accessible to a much wider audience. Moreover, globalization conveys the essential characteristics of the translated concept and at the same time helps to avoid details that could be misunderstood by the TT readers. However, globalization frequently results in the loss of association and shades of meaning.

Thus, the strategy of globalization should as well not be overused by the translator.

- **Cultural substitution** this strategy involves replacing a cultural-specific items or expressions with a target language item which does not have the same propositional meaning but is likely to have a similar impact on the target reader. The main advantage of using this strategy is that it gives the reader a concept with which he or she can identify, something familiar and appealing.

4-Methodology

This section focuses on highlighting the approach of the study, its data collection procedure and data analysis.

4.1 Approach of the Study

The study is qualitative in nature. It analyzes cultural specific items from Shakespeare's Hamlet and their counterparts in Arabic. The adopted English translation of the play is that of Jabra Ibrahim Jabra because Jabra's translation of Hamlet is an effort to be recognized. It has provided the Arab culture with a version of the play that enables so many scholars and artists who could not read the original to have a taste of Shakespeare's thought.

This translation is selected specifically because the translator come from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This helps to identify the different strategies in translating (CSIs).

4.2 Data Collection

The data are hand picked by reading the text of Shakespeare's Hamlet. The selected (CSIs) are namely, four religious items, three cultural items, and two mythological items.

4.3 Data Analysis

The analysis of data is based on Venuti's (1995) model "Domestication" and "Foreignization". This approach focuses on studying the techniques of translating the (CSIs). The two extreme in this approach signal the translation behavior of the translator. Hence, if the translator opts for strategies that are target text / target culture (TT/TC) oriented; i.e., observing target readers' expectations, she/he is aiming at achieving domestication. Accordingly, the translated text is simplified for the target readers. On the other hand, if the translator opts for strategies that are ST/SC oriented, i.e., presence the spirit of the original text, she/he aiming for foreignization.

The following steps were followed in data analysis:

Firstly, the (CSIs) from Hamlet are presented with their counterparts in Arabic. Secondly, each items is analyzed concerning its type and finally, the translation strategies were discussed.

5-Results and Discussions

This section presents the results of analyzing the CSIs in Hamlet and its Arabic version. The analysis reveals several CSIs coming from different semantic fields such as: religion, food, mythology, and culture. These were translated using different translation strategies.

5.1 The Religious CSIs

5.1.1 By the mass

ST	TT
“And then, Sir, does he this-he does-what was I about to say?? <u>By the mass</u> , I was about to say something: where did I leave?”.	ثم يا عزيزي، يفعل هذا، اجل، يفعل هذا، ما الذي كنت اريد ان أقول؟ والله كنت اريد ان أقول شيئاً – اين كنا؟

This extract contains the religious CSIs (by the mass). It is a swear word used by the English society, but it is obscure by the target culture which is the Arabic culture. There is no equivalent for it in the TL. Jabra translated

it by using the strategy of "cultural equivalence" which involves "replacing cultural specific items or expressions with target language's items which do not have the same propositional meaning. Baker, (1992).

Jabra translated it by using a word which has the same meaning as he swears by “Allah” to be clear for the target receiver. Accordingly, he was very close to TC reader expectation. This means the “domestication” was achieved cost the expense of the spirit of the ST.

5.1.2 (Before my God)

<p>“<u>Before my God</u>, I might not this belief without the sensible and true avouch of mine own eyes.”</p>	<p>والله ما كنت لأصدقه لو لا شهادة صادقة محسوسة من عيني انا</p>
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This is another religious item. It refers to something sacred in the English culture, while generally means a swear in the Arabic culture. Jabra translated it by using the strategy of “foreignization” because such type of swear is unknown in the Arabic culture and will not be clear for the receivers.

5.1.3 (Ay marry)

<p>“<u>Ay marry</u>. Is’t but to my mind, thou I am native here and to the manner born, it is a custom.”</p>	<p>أي والله! ولكنها في معتقدي وان اكن من مواليد هذا البلد الذين ترعرعوا عليها</p>
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Another religious item, refers to a type of swear whereby Christians swear by “marry” as it refers to something sacred in the English culture. For this item, Jabra rendered it by replacing it by the equivalent in the Arabic culture to be understood by its receivers. So he replaced the item by one which looks like familiar swearing to the target culture.

Jabra uses the strategy of “domestication” and he reached the goal of translation and transferred the meaning culturally.

5.1.4 (By heaven I charge thee)

<p>“What art thou that usurp’st this time of night, together with that fear and warlike form in which the majesty of buried Denmark does sometimes march? <u>By heaven I charge thee</u>, speak!</p>	<p>ما انت يا من اغتصبت هذا الهزيع من الليل وذلك الشكل العسكري الجميل الذي كان جلالة الملك الراحل يمشي به بين الناس؟ <u>احلفك بالسماء ان تتكلم</u></p>
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This item is a religious CSIs. It is interpreted to be a swear by God. Jabra translated it using the strategy of “functional equivalence” which means “using a referent in the TL culture whose function is similar to that of the source language SL referent. Weston, (1991), describes it as “the ideal method of translation”. This strategy according to Baker, (1992) reflects accurately the intended meaning of the source text. Jabra translated it directly because there is an alternative equivalent in the Arabic culture which is the swear by “Allah”.

5.2 Cultural CSIs

5.2.1 (Harlot)

<p>“That drop of blood that’s calm proclaims me bastard, cries cuckold to my father, brands the <u>harlot</u>.”</p>	<p>ان تكن في نقطة دم هادئة، فانما هي تعلن انني <u>ابن خنا</u></p>
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This is a cultural item. It can have two possibilities: a-adultery and b-prostitute. It is misleading and the term did not appear in modern English history. The study of this term was used by incorrect terminology, it did not appear until the sixteenth century. The use of this item no is no longer modern. Jabra rendered it accurately by using the strategy of “domestication” which is “translation in which transparent fluently style is

adopted to minimize the strangeness of the foreign text. Hatim, (2001) to give an equivalent meaning and to achieve the aim of translation.

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5.2.2 (Fishmonger)

“Excellent well, you are a <u>fishmonger</u> ”	تمام المعرفة انت <u>بياع سمك</u>
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This is another cultural item. It generally refers to one who sells fish in a shop, but its cultural meaning relates to honor. In Shakespeare’s Hamlet, the meaning of this item lies out the text. It was used by Shakespeare to mean measure for measure. Because its meaning contains a sense of ambiguity, Jabra translated it inaccurately. Generally, it refers to fishwife for female. For this item, Jabra translated it inaccurately because there s a paradox between the meaning of this word in the English societies and the same word has different meaning in the Arabic societies which mean there is no equivalent for this word in the Arabic culture.

However, Jabra Ibrahim Jabra rendered it by using the strategy of “domestication”. This item is so important because it has cultural effect and cultural meanings’ differences in different countries, cultures and societies.

5.3 Mythological CSIs

5.3.1 (Hecuba)

Hecuba	هكوبا
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This is a mythology item. Hecuba, a figure from ancient Greek who watches her husband Priam's murder of the hands of Pyrrhus. Hamlet is impressed that the actor was able to express such empathy for Hecuba to the extent that the actor's "visage wann'd". The actor is connected to Hecuba's emotion that his entire body communicates it fully even though Hecuba in reality means nothing.

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Shakespeare uses Hecuba to make a powerful dramatic work in the world. For this cultural item, Jabra translated it accurately because it reached to the aim of translation and transferred the meaning of this item from the SL to the TL.

5.3.2 (Appolo)

Appolo	ابولو
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This is another mythological item. It refers to the God of music in English society, while it is unknown in Arabic society. Shakespeare used this mythological item because there is a relationship between "Hamlet" and "Appolo"; Appolo was sacred by the English societies, in the same way Hamlet also sacred his father as Appolo. Jabra rendered it by using the strategy of "foreignization". Jabra's translation succeeded to transfer the meaning of this item from the ST to the TT. This strategy is called "transliterate".

Conclusion

This study concludes that the translation of the selected CSIs is accurate and Jabra Ibrahim Jabra used more than one strategy to transfer the meaning to the TT which are: “domestication”, “foreignization”, “functional equivalence”, “deletion”, “transliterate” and “cultural substitution”.

Jabra’s translation is very close in its effect on Arabic receiver to the ST.

An Arabic reader can fully understand what is going on Shakespeare’s Hamlet by focusing on Jabra’s translation; because Jabra uses a translated version of words and expressions that suits to the target reader. In addition, Jabra has a high value in translating texts and cultural items from an English version of a text into another translated one.

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