| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Challenges in Translating Arabic Culture-Bound Words into English: The Case of Selected Plays of the Egyptian Playwright Noaman Ashour

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| ABSTRACT

This study attempts to demonstrate the mediating role the translator is entrusted with and the efforts undertaken by him/her to transcend cultural barriers. Two plays written by the renowned Egyptian dramatist Noamaan Ashour feature high on this study because they are heavily laden with culture-bound expressions that mirror the Egyptian cultural milieu. Also, the study explores the strategies formulated by the translator to address the problem of culture-bound items. These items pose a challenge to the translator since they are so deeply embedded in the source culture that the translator may find it difficult to render them into the Target Language (TL). Each translation strategy has its merits and demerits: cultural substitution is a reasonable strategy, but it entails that the translator should carefully consider equivalents and the hierarchy of correspondences so as to adapt the values of the Source Language (SL) cultural system to the values of the TL cultural system. Translation by paraphrase is another viable strategy, but it is sometimes cumbersome for the translator to break up a lexical item into several words and cover all its shades of meaning. The option of paraphrase may reduce the degree of transparency in Target Text (TT) since the addition of a paraphrase alerts the TL readers that the lexical item in question does not exist in their cultural matrix. Further, the strategy of cultural borrowing entails carrying across the meaning of cultural specifics verbatim into the TT. It thus involves the insertion of footnotes having explanatory material, and transliteration. This strategy may break the flow of thoughts of the TL readers since they will have to consult the footnotes while reading. Besides, the translator may run the risk of producing an inadequate definition of the culture-specific item in the footnote. Translation by omission is given due attention in this research as a strategy conducive to creating a smooth and readable Target Text. Translators should pay heed to the fact that this strategy is not a pretext to evade complex and awkward words and expressions; rather this strategy is justifiably adopted to prevent any degree of miscomprehension on the part of the TL readers. The strategy of compensation is demonstrated in this study. Translators are recommended to heed it since it seeks to create an understandable imitation of the Source Text.

| KEYWORDS

Translation, Culture-Bound Words, Cultural substitution, Paraphrase, Cultural borrowing, Omission.

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1. Introduction

Noamaan Ashour (1918-1987) is one of the leading writers of modern realistic drama. Since his writings are deeply steeped in local reality depicting the social conditions prevailing in Egypt, his two plays, *The House of Al-Dughry* (1998) translated by Abdel Aatty (1998), and *Give Us Our Money Back* (1994) translated by El Lozy (1988), are a good specimen of the problems the translator may stumble over when trying to find the exact equivalents of the culture-bound expressions and produce a fluent text in the receptor language. The task of the translator is both onerous and thought-provoking as s/he should winnow the expressions acceptable in the target culture milieu.

2. Culture -bound words

Culture-bound words are lexical items pertaining to one language and cannot be found in another, that is, according to Baker (2018, p. 21), "The source-language word may express a concept which is totally unknown in the target culture. The concept in question may be abstract or concrete; it may relate to religious beliefs, a social custom, or even as a type of food. Such concepts are referred to as "culture-specific." Similarly, Nord (2018) outlines the difficulties posed for translators when they come across culture-specifics and calls them "cultureme". She asserts "A cultureme is a social phenomenon of a culture x that is regarded as relevant by the members of this culture and, when compared with a corresponding social phenomenon in a culture Y, is found to be specific to culture X" (p. 34). In addition, Al-Jalahma and Gomaa (2020, p. 136) argue that "if the translator is expected within a particular culture to produce a literal translation of the original, he/she cannot opt for a non-literal translation without informing the target reader what he/she has done and why." The following examples of culture-specifics attest to the difficulties posed for the translators and the strategies adopted to come to terms with them:

(1)

السيد: "ياناسيني أنا حا أنساك."

al-ssīd: yānāsīnī anā ḥā ansāk

Assayed: "forget me and I'll forget you."

شلضم: **دقه بدقه**. كدة الأصول. ينساك وتفتكره أزاي؟! ودي تيجي؟!

šlḍm: dʾah bdʾah. kdh al-ʾaṣūl. ynsāk ūtftkrh azāī?! ūdī tīğī?!

Shaldam: **An eye for an eye.** that is the way it should be. How is she to remember him if he forgets her?
That's unthinkable?!   *(Give Us Our Money Back, I, p. 23)*

(2)

فتحيه: بالعكس!! أنت لو عرفت أنا مين وبنت مين. موش حا تصدق! أنا **فقيره دقه.**

ftḥīh: bālʾks!! ant lū ʾrft anā mīn ūbnt mīn. mūš ḥā tīṣdʾ! anā fʾaīrh dūʾh.

Fathia: On the contrary!! If you knew who I am, and who my parents are, you would not believe it! **I'm poor to the bone.**   *(Give Us Our Money Back, II, p. 65)*

(3)

سامي: (مقلدا القط) نو.. نو.. نو ..

sāmī: (mqldā al-qṭ) nū.. nū.. nū ..

Samy: [imitating a cat]: Mew…mew…mew…

عيشه: (تفزع ناظرة خلفها إذ تسمعه) بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم!! أنت إيه؟!

ʿīšh: (tfzʿ nāẓrī ḫlfhā iḏ tsmʿh) bsm al-lh al-rḥmn al-rḥīm!! ant īh?!

Aisha: (scared; looking behind as she hears him) **Good Heavens!! What on earth are you up to?!**
                                                          (The House of Al-Dughry, I, p. 14)

(4)

عيشه: كريمه!! دا أنتى **ميه من تحت تبن**!!

ʿīšh: krīmh!! dā anti mīh mn tḥt tbn!!

Aisha: Karima, you are **such a sly person!**   *(The House of Al-Dughry, I, p. 22)*

3. The Strategies Formulated by Translators to Render Culture-Bound Lexical Items

3.1 Cultural Substitution

In the first two examples, El Lozy (1988) resorts to *cultural substitution* to communicate the content of the message. He dexterously comes up with expressions embedded in the English culture, and painstakingly retains the figurative image in the Target Language (TL). In example (1), '**an eye for an eye**' is ostensibly an equivalent to "دقه بدقه *dʾah bdʾah*; nevertheless, it, to be precise, cannot be regarded as a straightforward cultural substitute since it has some religious connotations. El Lozy (1988), in this instance, could have replaced it with '**tit for tat**'. Further, the idiom '**an eye for an eye**' is deliberately clipped by the translator in this example to tailor it to the form of the Source Language (SL). However, '*tit for tat*' can be regarded as an exact equivalent in terms of form and content. In example (2), El Lozy's (1988) attempt to come up with an exact cultural substitute pays off, as he replaces the idiom " أنا **فقيره دقه** " *anā fʾaīrh dūʾh* which is an idiom inaccessible to the English people, with the idiom "I am poor to the bone'. He, thus, introduces the target readers to an idiom familiar to them.

In the same vein, Abdel Aatty (1998) follows El Lozy (1988) demeanor and opts for cultural substitution in the third and fourth examples. In example (3), Abdel Aatty (1998) is acutely aware of the situational context, as he steers clear of the literal approach, as it is not relevant in this context and replaces "بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم" *bsm al-lh al-rḥmn al-rḥīm* with '**Good heavens**' to show that the speaker has been startled by the mewing of the cat. Had Abdel Aatty (1998) adhered to the literal approach, he would have produced an expression that is culturally odd. In example (4), Abdel Aatty (1998) replaces the Arabic figurative idiom " **ميه**

من تحت تبن "*mīh mn tḥt tbn* by '*a sly person*.' This replacement can be regarded as a near equivalent, but not an exact equivalent because he has not retained the figurative content. A more appropriate equivalent could have been '*as cunning as a fox*' as it manages to retain the image. The translator also deviates from the ST and renders "أنت إيه؟!" *ant īh?!* into '*What on earth are you up to?!*' in order to intensify the feeling of stupefaction. Baker (2018, p. 31) expounds the strategy of cultural substitution in the following terms "this strategy involves replacing a culture-specific item or expression 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 this strategy is that it gives the reader a concept with which s/he can identify something familiar and appealing."

So onerous is the strategy of cultural substitution that the translator has to ponder over equivalents and correspondences so as to acclimatize the values of a cultural system with the values of a different cultural system. The translator should have access to both SL culture and TL culture. S/he cannot be regarded as an ordinary reader, for s/he analyses, and decodes the SL in order to re-encode it. S/he should adopt a fair-minded approach in his role as a mediator so that s/he can relay the message untainted by his/her vision. Hatim and Mason (2013, p. 223) elucidate the translator's intermediary task as follows:

> The translator has not only a bilingual ability but also a bi culture vision. Translators mediate between cultures (including ideologies, moral systems and socio-political structures), seeking to overcome those incompatibilities which stand in the way of transfer of meaning. What has value as a sign in one cultural community may be devoid of significance in another and it is the translator who is uniquely placed to identify the disparity and seek to resolve it.

3.2 Translation by Paraphrase

Baker (2018) suggests another strategy in order to come to terms with the problem of cultural specific items, namely *translation by paraphrase*. The translator advisedly employs this strategy when the source item is not lexicalized at all in the target language. The translator unpacks the meaning of the source item which is supposed to be semantically complex, and expounds it in a lucid manner to the TL readers. The following example palpably demonstrates how this strategy is employed by Abdel Aatty (1998) effectively to carry across the semantically complex culture specific item to the Anglophone readers:

(5)

سيد: (ونظره مركز من لحظة خروجه على السندوتش فوق المائدة) أنا قلت الطرايبزة دي ما يتحطش عليها حاجات من دي. (وهو يقترب من السندوتش) يا ناس. يا ناس. ابعدوا عن فضلات الزمن (ويضرب بكفه المائدة مرارا) دي هيه الحاجة الوحيدة اللي باقية لي. أنا عادلي من الدنيا غيرها وغير الستر ومحبة الخالق والمخلوق. (ويمسك السندويتش) إيه ده!! حطين عليها إيه؟!

*sīd: (ūnẓrh mrkẓ mn lḥẓï ẖrūğh 'li al-sndūtš fūq al-māʾidï) anā aūlt al-ṭrābīẕh dī mā ītḥṭš 'līhā ḥāğāt mn dī. (ūhū īqtrb mn al-sndūtš) īā nās. īā nās. ab'dwā 'n fḍlāt al-ẓmn (wyḍrb bkfh al-māʾidï mrārā) dī hīh al-ḥāğh al-ūḥīdh al-lī bāqīh līh. anā 'ādlī mn al-dnīā ğīrhā ūğīr **al-str** ūmḥbï al-ẖālq wālmẖlūq. (wymsk al-sndwytš) īh dh!! ḥṭīn 'līhā īh?!*

Sayyed [looking fixedly at the sandwich on the table] : I've told you several times not to put things like these on this table. [coming closer to the sandwich] You people, you people…stay away from these temporal things [beating on the table with his hand several times], there is nothing left me in this world except **God's protection**, love of the Creator and the created beings. [Holding the sandwich] What is this? What on earth have you put on the table?
(The House of Al-Dughry, I, p. 23)

In example (5), the lexical item "الستر" *al-str* is paraphrased by Abdel Aatty (1998) as '*God's protection*,' for there is no one-to-one correspondence with it. Abdel Aatty (1998) takes notice of the fact that this culture specific item is a superordinate and manages to come up with an equivalent superordinate, that is, a more general word that encompasses the overall meaning. However, "الستر" *al-str* in the Arabic culture has more associative meanings than the English '*God's protection*'. "الستر" *al-str* encompasses robust health, financial security, and the availability of sustenance. These shades of meaning of the "الستر" *al-str* are undoubtedly lost in the word '*protection*'. As far as transparency is concerned this paraphrase mars the translation, as it has yielded a resistant expression that stands out as culturally odd. The whole passage sounds idiomatic and fluent with the exception of this alien expression. A more appropriate replacement could have been '*the grace of God*' since the word grace, like the word "الستر" *al-str* sounds all-encompassing. To this effect, Beekman and Callow (1986, p. 132) exhort translators to pay heed to the implicit meaning embedded in texts. They maintain:

> In every text that one may want to translate, there will be information which is implicit; that is, it is not stated in an explicit form in the text itself. Some information or meaning is left implicit because it has already been included elsewhere in the text, and some because of shared information in the communication situation. However, the implicit information is part of the meaning which is to be communicated by translation, because it is part of the meaning intended to be understood by the original writer.

The demerits of paraphrase that can be extrapolated from the instance at hand are that, in some cases, associative meanings and nuances of meanings can be overlooked. Further, it is sometimes cumbersome for the translator to break up a lexical item into several words and cover all its shades of meaning. The option of paraphrase may reduce the degree of transparency in TT since the addition of a paraphrase alerts the TL readers that the lexical item in question does not exist in their cultural matrix.

3.3 Cultural Borrowing

Dickins, Hervey, and Higgins (2017) propose the strategy of *cultural borrowing* as a means to carry across the meaning of cultural specifics verbatim into the TT. This strategy involves the insertion of footnotes having explanatory material, and transliteration. The following examples attest to the fact that both Abdel Aatty (1998), and El Lozy (1988) have adopted cultural borrowing as a strategy to transfer the meaning of cultural specifics into the TT.

(6)

مصطفى: هاودني واخرس.

mṣtfi: hāūdnī wāḫrs

Mustafa: I'm telling you, shut up…

حسن: وإذا ماخرستش.. تدخلني **بيت الطاعة**؟

*ḥsn: widā māḫrstš.. htdḫlnī **bīt al-ṭāʿh**?*

Hassan: What would happen If I do not shut up? …Will you put me in **an Obedience House**?

(The House of Al.-Dughry, I, p. 45)

(7)

أمين: من فضلك. (في يده العود)

*amīn: nn fḍlk. (fī īdh **al- ʿūd**)*

Amin (Holding **Oud**) excuse me.   *(Give us our Money Back, I, p. 21)*

In example (6), Abdel Aatty (1998) opts for cultural borrowing to highlight the sardonic wit and humor emanating from Hassan's words since '**Obedience House**,' as he explains in the footnote, is according to Islamic law, a husband's house to which a woman, in case of unlawful desertion, must return. The lay Anglophone reader easily comprehends, and reacts to the humorous words of Mustafa because of the explanatory footnote. The literal rendering since '**Obedience House**' apparently mirrors the perceived intentions of the ST author, as it manages to generate the same impact on both SL and TL readers. In the same connection, El Lozy (1988), in example (7) justifiably employs a footnote to explain to the TL readers the musical instrument of the Oud, which does not exist in their cultural milieu. Hatim and Mason (2013, 231) view the TT as a product of communicative transaction and argue that" the translator makes choices at the level of texture in such a way as to guide the TT reader along routes envisaged by the ST producer towards a communicative goal. That is, items selected from the lexico-grammatical resources of the TL will have to reflect the overall rhetorical purpose and discoursal values which have been identified at any particular juncture in the text."

Adopting cultural borrowing as a strategy to translate cultural specifics underlines the fact that the translator is convinced of the fact that each language has its 'genius', according to Nida and Taber (2006), each language possesses certain distinctive features which mark it off from the other languages. Also, this strategy manifests that the translator respects the cultural specificities of the SL. Similarly, Lefevere (2014) contends that a TT should accentuate the cultural other of the ST, rather than naturalizing it. He even views the translation strategy which deliberately conceals the intrinsic cultural features of the SL as an act of cultural narcissism. More to the point, he argues "a translated text should be the site where a different culture emerges, where a reader gets a glimpse of a culture other…placing a premium on transparency and demanding a fluent strategy, can be viewed as cultural narcissism" (Lefevere, 2014, p. 306).

The strategy of cultural borrowing is adopted with regard to honorifics, that is, terms of address. Arabic abounds with terms of address that cannot be approximated or adapted in English. These terms pose such a serious difficulty for the translator that s/he has had to borrow them from Arabic and integrate them into English. The following examples of honorifics throw light on the difficulty encountered by the translator to render them into English:

(8)

عيشه: حسن.. حسن. أنت كنت معلق هدومك على موبيلية سي سيد؟

*ʿīšh: ḥsn! ḥsn! ant knt mʿlʾ hdūmk ʿlā mūbīlīī **sī** sīd?*

Aisha: Hassan! Hassan! Were you hanging your clothes on **Si** Sayyed's Furniture?

(The House of Al-Dughry, I, p. 7)

(9)

أحمد: عمره ما شافه. دا تمن الشهرة. **الحاج** جمعه غاوي كورة بيقف يتفرج على حسن في الملعب ولا القرموط الصاحى اللي لسه طالع من الميه.

*aḥmd: ʿmrh mā šāfh. dā tmn al-šhrh. al-**ḥāǧ** ǧmʿh ǧāwy kūrh bīqf ītfrǧ ʿli ḥsn fī al-mlʿb ūlā al-ʾarmūṭ al-ṣāḥi al-lī lsh ṭālʿ mn al-mīh.*

Ahmed: He never saw them…that's the blessing of fame, lady…**Hag** Gomaa is a football enthusiast…he always stands up to watch Hassan at the stadium, like a living catfish that has just come out of the water.

(The House of Al-Dughry, II, p. 105)

(10)

سمير: أرجوكم!! عاوز هدوء!! يا عم شافعي! حا أطلبكم حالا (يدخل)

smīr: arǧūkm!! ʿāūz hdūʾ!! īā ʿm šāfʿī! ḥā aṭlbkm ḥālān (īdḫl)

Samir: Please! I want silence! **Mr.** Shaffei! I'll call for you in a moment. (He returns to his office)

(Give Us Our Money Back, I, p. 31)

In the example (8), Abdel Aatty (1998) has adapted the honorific "سي" *sī* and provided a footnote explicating its usage to the Anglophone reader. In the footnote, Abdel Aatty (1998) has stated that "سي" is an informal term of address or reference to a man (among the lower classes or between intimates). It is also used to establish familiarity with the person being addressed. What Abdel Aatty (1998) forgot to mention is that this term is used by women to confer a degree of respect upon their husbands. Therefore, this footnote can be regarded as inadequate. On the other hand, in example (9), Abdel Aatty (1998) furnishes the TL readers with an adequate explanation of the term "الحاج" *al-ḥāǧ*, as he deftly defines it as "a title of, and form of address or reference to, a pilgrim. Also, it is used as a polite form of address to an older man." Conversely, El Lozy (1988), in example (10), puts the term "عم" *ʿm* into English as "Mr." This can be regarded as a deficient and inadequate translation as the word "عم" in Arabic suggests that the addressee is not educated while the English term "Mr." suggests that the addressee can be either educated or not. Therefore, terms of address pose a potential problem area for the translator.

Two options are open for the translator: either to find their near equivalent but the translation would be inadequate or to adopt the strategy of cultural borrowing which can be regarded as a reasoned strategy as it enables the TL readers to savour the flavour of the Arabic culture. Baker (2018, p. 34) favours the strategy of cultural borrowing saying "this strategy is particularly common in dealing with culture-specific items, modern concepts and buzz words. Following the loan word with an explanation is very useful when the word in question is repeated several times in the text. Once explained, the loan word can then be used on its own; the reader can understand it and is not distracted by further lengthy explanations."

3.4 Translation by omission

Baker (2018) and Dickins et al. (2017) put forward the alternative of *translation by omission* as a viable option to produce a fluent and smooth TT. The rationale behind adopting this option emanates from the widely held belief that translators should not endeavour to "remake a language", that is, they should not attempt to force a concept or a lexical item upon the TL or target culture lest their translation should be regarded as a distortion. Similarly, Nida and Taber (2006) advocate omission as a reasoned option. They assert that "the priority of the audience over the forms of the language means essentially that one must attach greater importance to the forms understood and accepted by the audience for which a translation is designed than to the forms which may possess a longer linguistic tradition or have greater literary prestige" (31). The following examples adequately illustrate the reasoned employment of translation by omission to render the TT fluent and comprehensible to the TL readers:

(11)

سمير (مهددا): بقا شوف أما قولك!! إذا كنت أنت إبراهيم الدسوقي!! أنا السيد البدوي!

*Smīr: (mūhddā) bʿa šūf amā aūlk!! **iḏā knt antā ibrāhīm al-dsūqī**!! anā al-sīd al-bdwy!!*

Samir (threateningly): You listen to me! **You won't pull that holy man stunt on me!**

(Give Us Our Money Back, I, p. 101)

(12)

شلضم: وشرف أمك جاي. مش مصدقني!! بلاش أمك!! وحياة أم هاشم جاي!! أيه!! أسمعي!! فيه خمسه وعشرين قرش تحت التليفون. شيلي التليفون تلاقيهم!! هاتي اللي تجيبيه!! ما تخوتينيش امال!! أنا عندي شغل. حطي السماعة. أوعى ودنك. ابعدي ودنك!! أهه!! قفلت!! (ويغلق السماعة بعنف وشدة) (والكل صامت يتتبع حديثه الشيق في التليفون).

*šlḍm: **ušrf aūmk ǧāī**. mš mṣdʾini!! blāš aūmk!! **ūḥīāẗ aūm hāšm ǧāī**. aīh!! asmʾī!! fīh ḥmsh ūʾšrīn arš tḥt al-tlīfūn. šīlī al-tlīfūn tlāʾīhm!! hātī al-lī tǧībīh!! mā tḫūtīnīš aūmāl!! anā ʾndī šǵl. aūʾī ūdnk. ḥṭī al-smāʾ.̌ ḫā aqfl. abʾdī ūdnk!! ahūh!! qflt!! (wyǵlq al-smāʾh bʾnf ūšdh) (wālkl ṣāmt īttbʾ ḥdīṯh al-šīq fī al-tlīfūn).*

Mr. Shaldam: (carrying on) **I swear on your mother's head**, I am coming!! you do not believe me? Forget your mother, I swear on anything. What!? Listen, there are twenty-five piasters under the phone. pick up the phone, you will find them. bring anything you want! Stop bugging me!! I am busy. Watch out for your ear. put down the receiver. I'm going to hang up! Take your ear away! There! I hung up!! (He puts the receiver down violently. Everyone is silent; they've been following the interesting exchange over the phone.)   *(Give Us Our Money Back, I, 30)*

In example (11), El Lozy (1988) deliberately omits the names of holy men because they will sound vague to the TL readers. Had he adhered to the ST literally, he would have come up with names that will be confounding to the readers. El Lozy (1988) deftly steers a middle course in rendering the sentence at hand by preserving the content and coming up with an idiom familiar to target recipients. Admittedly, the details of the message are overlooked, but this has been done for the sake of intelligibility and fluency. The translator has adopted the communicative approach which places a premium on the TL readers and has managed to mitigate the omission by inserting "holy man" in the idiom. Baker (2018, p. 26) seconds translation by omission as a reasoned option by stressing that:

> It is neither possible nor desirable to reproduce every aspect of meaning for every word in a source text. We have to try, as much as possible, to convey the meaning of key words which are focal to the understanding and development of a text, but we cannot and should not distract the reader by looking at every word in isolation and attempting to present him/her with a full linguistic account of its meaning.

Example (12) bears a heavy imprint of the Egyptian culture; hence it poses a real challenge to the translator. Though the word "honour" exists in the English lexis, the English do not swear by it. The female honour is not accorded the prime importance, and reverence it has in the Arab societies. This can be attributed to the fact that Western societies are relatively permissive while Arab societies are conservative. El Lozy (1988) has obviously realized that putting "وشرف أمك جاي" ***ušrf aūmk ǧāī*** literally into English would produce a resistant expression since it contravenes the English cultural context. El Lozy (1988) takes liberty in effecting a semantic adjustment to the text in order to render it comprehensible to target recipients. He dexterously omits " وحياة أم هاشم جاي" ***ūḥīāẗ aūm hāšm ǧāī***, who is a holy lady, for it would not make sense. This omission does not entail that it is beyond his ability to render this expression rather he fears that sticking to actual words of SL would detract from TT comprehensibility. Baker (2018, p. 18) highlights the difficulty posed for the translator in selecting the right translation strategy for culture specifics by saying:

> The choice of a suitable equivalent in a given context depends on a wide variety of factors. Some of these factors may be strictly linguistic. Other factors may be extra-linguistic. It is virtually impossible to offer absolute guidelines for dealing with the various types of non-equivalence which exist among languages. The most that can be done in this…is to suggest strategies which may be used with non-equivalence 'in some contexts'. The choice of a suitable equivalent will always depend not only on the linguistic system or systems being handled by the translator, but also on the way both the writer of the source text and the producer of the target text, i.e. the translator chooses to manipulate the linguistic systems in question.

Translation by omission does not mean that the translator is at liberty to choose what he renders into the TL and what he excludes because of its complexity and difficulty. This strategy of translation is justifiably employed when the translator strongly believes that his /her rendition will sound unidiomatic and resistant if s/he is bent on transferring every shade of meaning. The widely held conviction that languages are fundamentally different in terms of structure and culture entails a degree of loss and omission and furnishes the translator with a good reason to adopt omission as a reasoned option. Nord (2018, p. 73), who is a proponent of omission so long as it is warranted for, states "untranslatability thereby ceases to be the translator's nightmare, because an apparently untranslatable rhetorical figure can be rendered by another device serving the same purpose, and even the omission of an untranslatable or counterproductive element becomes justifiable when the function is guaranteed by other means." The following two examples underline the fact that translators sometimes tend to overdo omission as a translation strategy principally because they fail to come across an equivalent.

(13)

شلضم: إذا كانوا سوا سوا.. لازم يقيم عليهم الحد.. ومن غير ملايه ...

سمير: حد مين يا غبي؟!

شلضم: علي حسب الشرع يا أستاذ سمير. ما هي دي زي حكاية أبو فصادة اللي في حتتنا. ما قدرش يقيم الحد.

šlḍm: iḏā kānwā swā swā.. lāzm īqīm 'līhm al-ḥd.. ūmn ġīr mlāīh ...

smīr: ḥd mīn īā ġbī?!

šlḍm: 'lī ḥsb al-šr' īā astāḏ smīr. mā hī dī zī ḥkāīẗ abū fṣādẗ al-lī fī ḥttnā. mā adrš īqīm al-ḥd.

Shaldam: If they are doing it together, **it must be witnessed by the prescribed number of people**…and without sheets…

Samir: **What are you talking about**?

Shaldam? **That's what the law says**, Mr. Samir. This is like what happened to Abu-Fasada, our neighbor. He could not provide the prescribed number of witnesses…   *(Give Us Our Money Back, I, p. 38)*

(14)

عيشة: (تضع الحقيبة على الأرض) سايبين باب الشقة البراني مفتوح على آخره.

كريمة: (وهي تتقدم ناحيتها) حسن اخوكي.. عمره ما يقفل وراه باب.. عيشة.. سيد شيخ.. أنا أتجوزت ولي من أولياء الله الصالحين.. شافك في الحلم ليلة أمبارح وقال حتيجي.. **لسه قايلها بعضمة لسانه من ربع ساعة**. (تتوقف) ولا أكونش في حلم أنا كمان؟ (وتتقدم نحوها تحضنها) أنتي عيشة!! (وتتحسس جسدها) **والنبي عضم ولحم عيشة بصحيح**.

'īš: (tḍ' al-ḥqībẗ 'li al-'arḍ) sāībīn bāb al-š'aẗ al-brānī mftūḥ 'li aḥrh.

*krīmh: (ūhī ttqdm nāḥīthā) ḥsn aḥūkī. 'mrh mā ī'afl ūrāh bāb. 'īš. sīd šīḥ. anā atǧūzt ūlī mn aūlīā' al-lh al-ṣālḥīn. šāfk fī al-ḥlm līlẗ ambārḥ ū'āl ḥtīǧī. **Ish aīlhā b'ḍmẗ lsānh mn rb' sā'h**. (ttūqf) ūlā akūnš fī ḥlm anā kmān? (ūttqdm nḥūhā tḥḍnhā) antī 'īš!! (ūttḥss ǧsdhā) **wālnbī 'ḍm ūlḥm 'īš bṣḥīḥ**.*

Aisha: [putting down her suitcase on the floor]: You've left the front door wide open…

Karima [moving towards her]: Your brother Hassan never shuts it when he goes out …Aisha…Sayyed has a prophetic soul …I've married a holy man …he saw you in a dream last night and he said you would come…**he's just said it in a quarter of an hour ago**. [Stops] Perhaps I'm dreaming too? [Embraces her] Are you Aisha? [Feeling Aisha's body] **It's you no doubt**.   *(The House of Al-Dughry, p. 127)*

In Example (13), El Lozy (1988) completely obliterates the features of the SL, as he omits the words "الحد *al-ḥd* and "الشرع" *al-šr'* on the pretext that they cannot be replicated in the TL. He even takes great pains to expound the lexical item 'al had', but he digresses from it by adding 'the prescribed number of witnesses'. He even renders الشرع as law without explaining to the target readers how it differs from 'law'. This omission could have been reduced had the translator seriously sought a translation that closely approximates the TL. A suggested translation can be as follows:

Shaldam: If they were caught sleeping together in bed, the husband could **take the law into his hands**, and kill them.

Samir: **What law**?

Shaldam: **Islamic law**, Mr. Samir. This is like what happened to Abu-Fasada, our neighbor. He could not provide the prescribed number of witnesses to take the law into his hands.

In the above-mentioned suggested translation, an attempt is made to mitigate the loss of SL features, and at the same time drive the message home to the TL readers. In so doing, '*caught sleeping together in bed*' can be employed instead of El Lozy's (1988) '*if they were doing it together*' to stress the act of infidelity and to furnish the husband with a good reason to exact his punishment. Also, it is better to omit the phrase '*without sheets*', for it can be understood implicitly from the text. In addition, the idiom '*to take the law into one's hands*' can be employed to render the TL fluent since it sounds familiar to the TL readers. Further, '*What law*?' can be employed instead of El Lozy's (1988) '*what are you talking about*?' to underline the difference between law and Islamic law. Dickins et al. (2017) advocate idiomizing a translation so that it can be familiar and fluent. They maintain that "by an idiomizing translation, we mean one that respects the ST message content, but prioritizes TL "naturalness" over faithfulness to ST detail, it will typically use idioms or familiar phonic and rhythmic patterns to give an easy read, even if this means sacrificing nuances of meaning or tone" (p. 18).

In example (14), Abdel Aatty (1998) does not manage to come up with idioms corresponding with the Arabic; therefore, he opts for omission. The process of finding corresponding idioms merits a great deal of consideration: the translator should figure out an idiom which has the equivalent impact in the target language. In rendering "لسه قايلها بعضمة لسانه من ربع ساعة *Ish aīlhā b'ḍmẗ lsānh mn rb' sā'h* as "*he's just said quarter of an hour ago*", he obliterates the Arabic figurative idiom though there is an equivalent English figurative idiom, namely "*it was on the tip of his tongue quarter of an hour ago*." In the same connection, Abdel Aatty (1998) also disregards the Arabic figurative idiom "والنبي عضم ولحم عيشة بصحيح" *wālnbī 'ḍm ūlḥm 'īš bṣḥīḥ* by rendering it into English as "*are you Aisha? It's you, no doubt*." He could have replaced this figurative idiom by a corresponding figurative idiom, namely "*this is Aisha in the flesh*!". Using idiomaticity undoubtedly maximizes the degree of fluency and transparency in the TT, but it requires a translator that possesses a well-rounded background in the TL. Dickins et al. (2017) advise translators to mitigate the loss of the SL features rather than obliterate it wholly. They contend that "once one accepts the concept of inevitable translation

loss, a TT that is not, even in all important respects, a replica of the ST is not theoretical anomaly, and the translator can concentrate on the realistic aim of reducing translation loss, rather than the unrealistic one of seeking the ultimate TT" (p. 21).

In example (14), Abdel Aatty (1998) does not manage to come up with idioms corresponding with the Arabic; therefore, he opts for omission. The process of finding corresponding idioms merits a great deal of consideration: the translator should figure out an idiom which has the equivalent impact in the target language. In rendering "لسه قايلها بعضمة لسانه من ربع ساعة" *lsh aālhā bʿḏmẗ lsānh mn rbʿ sāʿh* as "*he's just said quarter of an hour ago*", he obliterates the Arabic figurative idiom though there is an equivalent English figurative idiom, namely "*it was on the tip of his tongue quarter of an hour ago.*" In the same connection, Abdel Aatty (1998) also disregards the Arabic figurative idiom "والنبي عضم ولحم عيشة بصحيح" *wālnbī ʿḏm ūlḥm ʿīšh bṣḥīḥ* by rendering it into English as "*are you Aisha? It's you, no doubt.*" He could have replaced this figurative idiom by a corresponding figurative idiom, namely "*this is Aisha in the flesh*!". Using idiomaticity undoubtedly maximizes the degree of fluency and transparency in the TT, but it requires a translator that possesses a well-rounded background in the TL. Dickins et al. (2017) advise translators to mitigate the loss of the SL features rather than obliterate it wholly. They contend that "once one accepts the concept of inevitable translation loss, a TT that is not, even in all important respects, a replica of the ST is not theoretical anomaly, and the translator can concentrate on the realistic aim of reducing translation loss, rather than the unrealistic one of seeking the ultimate TT" (p. 21).

Translation by omission is thus viewed as a tenable strategy provided that the translator does not employ it as a pretext to evade awkward and complex situations. The translator adopts it as the last resort to produce a readable and smooth translation that appeals to the TL readers. The translator should, on no condition, adopt it because s/he fails to find correspondences. The translator also should exert his utmost to mitigate the loss induced by omission as much as s/he can to make it sound warranted for rather than unnecessary. Baker (2018, p. 42) maintains " it is therefore advisable to use this strategy only as a last resort, when the advantages of producing a smooth, readable translation clearly outweigh the value of rendering a particular meaning accurately in a given context."

3.5 Compensation and Resistancy

Compensation means to attempt to produce a maximally faithful imitation of the source text; however, in creating such imitation, the translator lays much emphasis upon target culture receivers, or targeteers, and attempts to adjust the TT to their needs and expectations. Dickins et al. (2017, p. 41) elucidate the principle of compensation "mitigating the loss of important ST features by approximating their effects in the TT through means other than those used in the ST. In other words, one type of translation loss is palliated by the deliberate introduction of another considered less acceptable by the translator." The following example amply shows how compensation is dexterously employed by the translator to deliver the meaning and content of the message:

(15)

شافعي: لا والله يا شلضم ما أنا فاهم..

شلضم: **أنت في نعمة** ما أنتاش حاسس بيها. مع السلامة يا أستاذ راجي وفوت عليك الليلة أن شاء الله..

šāfʿī: lā wāllh īā šlḏm mā anā fāhm...

*šlḏm: **ant fī nʿmh** mā antāš ḥāss bīhā. mʿ al-slāmh īā astāḏ rāǧī ūhʾafūt ʿlīk al-līlẗ an šāʾ al-lh.*

Shaffei: To tell you the truth, Shaldam, I don't understand anything at all.

Shaldam: You're **in heaven** and you don't even know it. Good bye, Mr. Ragui. I'll come by your place tonight.

(Give Us Our Money Back, I, p. 20)

In the example at hand, El Lozy (1988) replaces the Arabic figurative idiom "أنت في نعمة" *ant fī nʿmh* with the English idiom 'you're in heaven'. He has departed from the literal words and come up with an idiom that has a similar effect on the TL readers. Using a corresponding idiom results in fluency, but it also denies the TL readers access to the SL world. Employing this idiom is virtually correct, but not entirely since this idiom suggests living happily and realizing this happiness. The translator could have used 'you live in fool's paradise' without having to add 'you don't even know it' since the meaning is conveyed implicitly.

Translators, on the other hand, may adopt the principle of compensation to create a replica of the SL without bearing in mind that they may come up with expressions incomprehensible to the TL readers. The following example is a case in point:

(16)

فتحية: غير طريقتك وأنت تأكل شهد.. حقا أنا كنت منك!!

ftḥīẗ: ǧīr ṭrīʾatk ūʾant t.ʾakl šhd. ḥqā anā lū knt mnk!!

Fathia: **Change your ways and you will eat milk and honey!** Really, if I were you.

(Give Us Our Money Back, II, p. 64)

In the instance under consideration, El Lozy (1988) has attempted to mimic the ST by replacing the Arabic figurative idiom "وأنت تأكل شهد" *ūʾant t.ʾakl šhd* with '*to eat milk and honey*'. This replacement has produced an idiom alien to the TL culture since it

does not exist in its cultural matrix. El Lozy (1988) has attempted to come up with a corresponding idiom that is consistent verbally with the SL idiom. He has thus overlooked the fact that the form of the ST idiom is reflective of the SL social mores, but so much at odds with the TL norms that rendering the form would inevitably obscure the message. It is evident that El Lozy (1988) in the instance at hand has prioritized the form over the content. El Lozy (1988) could have used the idiom "change your ways and you will be rolling in money' to convey the meaning appropriately. This example attests to the fact that a faithful translation does not represent the words of the original; rather a successful translation seeking to address itself to the native audiences should place a premium on culture rather than the separate words of the ST. Nida and Taber (2006, p. 106) argue that:

> Another personal problem is simple ignorance of what translation is all about. Because the average person naively thinks that language is words, the common tacit assumption results that translation involves replacing a word in language A with a word in language B. And the more conscientious this sort of translator is, the more acute the problem. In other words, the traditional focus of attention was on the word. It was later recognized that this was not a sufficiently large unit, and therefore the focus shifted to the sentence. But again, expert translators and linguists have been able to demonstrate that the individual sentence in turn is not enough. The focus should be on the paragraph, and to some extent on the total discourse.

Compensation does not entail that translation should be source-oriented rather it entails that the translator should painstakingly seek to find the points of convergence between the source culture and the target culture and rule out the points of divergence. To put it simply, the translator should harmonize the source culture with the target culture bearing in mind the variations existing between both of them. The intermediary role of the translator entails that he/she should effect changes, if necessary, to integrate the ST into the TL culture without sustaining a great deal of loss. Landers (2007) alerts translators that the success of the translation is largely contingent on the TL public. He maintains "most translators judge the success of a translation largely on the degree to which it 'doesn't read like a translation.' The object is to render Language A into Language B in a way that leaves as little evidence as possible of the process. In this view, a reader might be unaware he/she was reading a translation unless alerted to the fact" (p. 49).

The following example demonstrates how the translators' eagerness to imitate the source culture could result in a diminishing degree of fluency and transparency:

(17)

شافعي: أنت مش بتحب تقرا؟! علشان تعرف انه تعبان بصحيح زي ما أنت قلت!!

šāfʿī: ant mš btḥb tqrā?! ʿlšān tʿrf anh tʿbān bṣḥīḥ zī mā ant aūlt!!

Shaffei: You like to read, don't you? Read this, and you'll find out that he's really a serpent like you said.   (*Give Us Our Money Back*, III, p. 117)

El Lozy (1988), in the above-mentioned instance, has mistakenly opted for the same image employed in Arabic, as he wants to imitate the ST. Ostensibly, the image is acceptable, but he could have opted for the figurative idiom "*a snake in the grass*" to render the text fluent and idiomatic. Translators are saddled with the task of sifting idioms so as come up with appropriate and meaningful equivalents that compensate the ST. compensation entails that the translator attempts to imitate the ST while putting into consideration the inter-cultural differences. It exhibits the translator's competence as it shows how s/he can impart the flavour of the original to the TLT, but this is without foisting upon the TL public values and concepts it cannot assimilate.

4. Conclusion

In this research, an attempt is made to weigh up the merits and demerits of some widely used translation strategies adopted by translators to transcend cultural barriers. Cultural substitution is a reasonable strategy, but it entails that the translator should carefully consider equivalents and the hierarchy of correspondences so as to adapt the values of the SL cultural system to the values of the TL cultural system. Employing this strategy requires having the translation commissioned to a translator that has a near-native competence. Though this translation strategy is likely to produce a fluent, readable TT, it will not impart the flavor of the source culture. Translation by paraphrase is another tenable strategy, but it is sometimes cumbersome for the translator to break up a lexical item into several words and cover all its shades of meaning. The option of paraphrase may reduce the degree of transparency and fluency in TT since the addition of a paraphrase alerts the TL readers that the lexical item in question does not exist in their cultural matrix. However, it is a viable option to enable the target recipients to savor the flavor of the source language and culture. Further, the strategy of cultural borrowing entails carrying across the meaning of cultural specifics verbatim into the TT. It thus involves the insertion of footnotes having explanatory material, and transliteration. This strategy may break the train of thoughts of the TL readers since they will have to consult the footnotes to comprehend the meaning while reading. Also, the translator may run the risk of producing an inadequate definition of the culture-specific item in the footnote. It is, nevertheless, another viable option if the translator earnestly seeks to enable the target readers to savor the source language and culture with their peculiarities. Translation by omission is put forward as another option, but it does not mean that the translator is at liberty to choose what he renders into the TL and what he excludes because of its complexity and difficulty. This translation strategy is justifiably employed when the translator strongly believes that his /her rendition will sound unidiomatic and resistant if s/he is

bent on transferring every shade of meaning. The widely held conviction that languages are fundamentally different in terms of structure and culture entails a degree of loss and omission and furnishes the translator with a good reason to adopt omission as a reasoned option. The study at hand suggests working out the purpose which the translation seeks to fulfil before the translator sets about his/her task as this will help him/her arrive at a decision on the optimal strategy: if the purpose is to produce a fluent text, cultural substitution can be the optimal strategy. However, if the translator seeks to impart the flavor of the source language and culture, s/he has to weigh the options of translation by paraphrase and cultural borrowing. The study attempts to establish the fact that paraphrase is a more viable option since it does not break the train of thoughts of target recipients, the meaning of the culture-specific item is inserted within the sentence; thus it spares them the trouble of consulting footnotes or glossaries. The study underlines the importance of the mediating role of the translator as an agent who has to palliate the loss sustained in cross-cultural communication and compensate for it.

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