
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Intercultural Competence in Literary Translation: Ali Al-Kasimi's Arabic Translation of Ernest Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast* as a Case Study

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the results of a research study about the aspects of intercultural competence displayed in Ali Al-Kasimi's Arabic translation of Ernest Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast*. The study attempts to determine how intercultural competence is manifested in the Arabic translation of Ali Al-Kasimi. It also seeks to identify the strategies that the translator resorted to in the translation of 50 culture specific elements in the source text. The aim is to develop an understanding of the ways in which intercultural competence can be displayed in the translation of literary texts. In addition, the main strategies that were used by the translator in translating cultural terms will be highlighted, analysed and discussed. By doing so, a comprehensive understanding of how to implement intercultural competence-based strategies in the translation of literary texts can be derived. The results of the study suggest that cultural adaptation and reframing are the two most used intercultural competence-based translation strategies by the translator.

KEYWORDS

Intercultural competence, cultural translation, literary text, cultural terms.

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1. Introduction

Translation is an interdisciplinary endeavour that encompasses a wide array of disciplines and subjects. The concept of culture is among the few concepts that any serious discussion about translation has to touch upon. The modern understanding of translation transcends its traditional view as the transfer of a message from a source text to a target text. Given the scientific, cultural, and technological advances taking place in today's world, translation is viewed as a complex discipline that goes beyond what is linguistically relevant and dives into the extra-linguistic aspects of human communication. Therefore, any translation must take into consideration the intercultural aspects and nuances of the source and target cultures.

One of the challenges in literary translation is the translation of culturally specific terms. In fact, it is crucial for the translator to be able to navigate the cultural dimensions of the source text (ST). This challenge that translators of literary texts find themselves faced with is specifically mentioned by Ali Al-Kasimi in his preface of the book. In a substantial preface of the target text (TT), while the translator explained the translation process in detail, he mentioned the difficulties that he was faced with while attempting to translate the book. Al-Kasimi attempted to translate the book into Arabic so that Arab readers could benefit from it. However, upon realising that the translation task was nearly impossible, given the fact that he lacked the necessary intercultural competence to produce an authentic translation, he decided to put the translation project on hold. Several years after realizing his lack of appropriate knowledge about the ST, Al-Kasimi decided to go to France (where the events of the book took place) and culturally immerse himself in the cultural context of the ST. Accordingly, he ate in the same restaurants, stayed in the same hotels, and spent time in the same coffeeshops as Hemingway. This cultural immersion acquainted the translator with the context of the situations Hemingway spoke about in his book. Only then did Al-Kasimi decide to resume the project of translating *A Moveable Feast*.

Ali Al-Kasimi's decision to travel to France and immerse himself in the cultural and social contexts which the author had experienced is crucial for researchers to understand how intercultural competence relates to and affects the translation process. The lack of the proper cultural, historical and social context was clearly problematic for the translator. Faced with such problems, it is only natural to question the reasons behind Al-Kasimi's decision to undertake the translation only after immersing himself in the context of the ST.

Another issue worth considering is the extent to which the intercultural competence Al-Kasimi's acquired in France affected his translation. Hence, the following relevant questions of this study arise:

What is intercultural competence in translation?

What contributes to the acquisition of intercultural competence?

How do we assess intercultural competence?

How is intercultural competence manifested in Ali Al-Kasimi's translation of *A Moveable Feast*?

What intercultural competence-based strategies did Ali Al-Kasimi use in translating the culture specific elements in the book?

What translation strategies of the Liddicoat model did Ali Al-Kasimi use in translating the culture specific elements in the book?

2. Literature Review

Intercultural competence is a key term in this study. Therefore, it is important to provide a thorough definition of this term. Although several studies have been carried out in terms of translation competence, the concept of intercultural competence still remains largely uncovered by researchers and translation theorists. Intercultural competence, as it pertains to the translator, is identified as the ability to mediate between cultures.

Yarosh (2015) defines intercultural competence in terms of the role that translators take as mediators whose principal task is to communicate as well as mediate meaning from one culture to the other. Kelly (2005) and Katan (2009) provide a more comprehensive definition of intercultural competence, in which they make the terminological distinction between the concepts of cultural, intercultural and cross-cultural.

Promoting Intercultural Competence in Translators (PICT) is a project that was developed in 2010 by a group of six European universities. The PICT group makes the argument that intercultural competence has to be conceptually defined in a more consistent and explicit way. According to PICT, the primary task of the translator is to "mediate between cultures" (2012a). It is precisely this element of cultural mediation that breeds the need for the translator to acquire a clearly and consistently defined intercultural competence. This clear, consistent definition of intercultural competence in translation differentiates it from a more general cultural studies-based view (Yarosh, 2015, p. 161).

PACTE provides a comprehensive model for translation competence that includes several sub-competences. PACTE places intercultural competence under extra-linguistic competences. Still, within the European academic context, the European Masters of Translation (EMT) framework divides intercultural competence into socio-cultural and textual elements, whereby intercultural competence is considered a socio-cultural element (Gambier, 2009).

Compared to PICT, both PACTE and EMT frameworks tend to take a traditional approach to defining intercultural competence. While PICT defines intercultural competence as a set of interdisciplinary skills and attitudes that go beyond the linguistic and extra-linguistic levels, EMT and PACTE seem to ignore the interpersonal and interdisciplinary aspects of intercultural competence.

The concept of intercultural awareness is also highlighted by Kelly (2005), who stresses that translators need to develop knowledge of their own culture as well as that of a foreign one.

There are several approaches to intercultural competence that are relevant to this study. The communicative approach, for instance, maintains that understanding the cultural context in which the text is produced is crucial to gaining a better understanding of the text itself and, hence, deriving appropriate translation strategies. This ability to understand the cultural context of the text is referred to as adaptability. Schäffner, who is a major advocate for the functionalist communicative approach, views translation as a communicative process that primarily aims at the production of a target text that reflects the situations and context of the original text (1996, p. 118). Similar to Schäffner, Witte maintains that intercultural competence involves the conscious experience and awareness of one's culture as well as the other's culture (2008, p. 143).

The cognitive approach of Yarosh and Muies' investigates the cognitive approach as a viable strategy for developing intercultural competence. The central argument in the cognitive approach is that the cognitive variants are central to the development of

intercultural competence in translators. Simply put, achieving intercultural competence needs to go through a studious cognitive process that involves the conscious awareness of the similarities and differences between source and target cultures.

Katan's (2004) intercultural communication approach views the "cultural filter" as a major component in translation. The interpretation of the world goes through four filters: physiological, cultural, individual, and linguistic. Among these four filters of interpretation and understanding, the culture filter seems to carry the most relevance to the translation process. Scholars like Newmark maintain that the cultural filter cannot account for all translation situations and contexts since culture itself has been "over-emphasised" at the expense of other variables that affect the translation (Katan, 2009).

Liddicoat (2015) argues that it is of major significance to give more thought to the actual process of cultural mediation in translation. In other words, translation researchers and scholars should concern themselves with what takes place during the processes of intercultural mediation that occur in translation. Similarly, the effectiveness and success of intercultural mediation or the lack thereof, can be better understood if we have a better understanding of the nuances associated with the process of intercultural mediation.

The acquisition of intercultural competence is another theoretical component that this study attempts to investigate. The National Center for Cultural Competence (NCCC, 2006) proposed a framework within which cultural competence can be acquired. Value diversity, self-assessment, difference management, cultural knowledge acquisition, cultural context, and adaptability are the necessary skills for the acquisition of cultural competence.

Finally, although the assessment of intercultural competence in translation is still not a potent area of research, several attempts have been made to derive models for the assessment of cultural competence. Meyer (1991) maintains that there are three levels to cultural competence assessment (monocultural, intercultural and transcultural) that translators must possess. Bahumaid (2010) designed a translation-specific cultural competence test that measures the translation knowledge of target cultures and languages. The test can demonstrate the political, cultural and social knowledge of the targeted culture.

The holistic analytical assessment is an eclectic approach to measuring cultural competence. In this assessment model, the text is assessed based on an assessment rubric of the translation, including the elements of the translation that display cultural competence (Eyckmans, p. 9).

The Calibration of Dichotomous Items (CDI) method claims that it comes as a solution to the subjectivity and lack of reliability of the previously discussed intercultural assessment approaches. In this model, the translation performance is based on translation "items," items being elements of the text that allow the measurement of the ability and skills of the translator.

3. Methodology

This qualitative study aims to understand how intercultural competence is negotiated in the Arabic translation of Ali Al-Kasimi's Ernest Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast*. A qualitative method of analysis will be applied as the primary analysis method for the data. In other words, the analytical approach of cultural terms (CT) present in the ST. The CTs will then be analysed in terms of the translation strategies used to translate the CTs into the TT. I shall draw on the cultural approaches of translation in the analysis of the data for this research. These approaches can also be significantly applied to understanding the strategies that the translator followed to mediate cultural terms. This understanding of the CT translation process will then help us pinpoint the significance of the strategies followed by Ali Al-Kasimi in the translation of culture specific items in the book according to the Liddicoat model of intercultural competence translation.

The primary sources consist of الوليمة المتنقلة: the second edition of Ali Al-Kasimi's Arabic translation of *A Moveable Feast* and the 1996 edition of Ernest Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast*. Data consists of 50 cultural terms (CT) mentioned in the source text. The translations of the CTs are sorted into four groups (food & drinks, places, cross-cultural references, and others). Each CT will be individually analysed following primarily the Liddicoat model of intercultural competence translation in addition to other cultural models of translation. The strategies used to translate cultural terms will then be measured and discussed in terms of their relevance to intercultural competence translation strategies. The languages targeted are English, Arabic and, occasionally, French (given the French cultural references in the ST).

3.1 Data Description and Analysis

The data of this study consists of 50 words that have cultural connotations relating to the historical and cultural context of 1920s Paris, which is the spatial setting of the source text. The words in question also relate to the culture of the author, Ernest Hemingway. These cultural items are represented in a comprehensive table that organizes the items in terms of number, location in the text, source text version, and target text translation.

Table 1: Cultural Terms

Cultural Term Number	Item Location in the Text (chapter)	Source Text Version (English & French)	Target Text Translation (Arabic)
1	1	Cafe des Amateurs	مقهى الهواة
2	1	The women drunkards were called poivrottes. Which meant female rummies	تدعى النساء المخمورات باللغة الفرنسية poivrottes
3	1	Squat toilets	مراحيض
4	1	Small twigs	خشب الوقيد
5	1	Lycee Henri Quatre	مدرسة هنري كواتريه الثانوية
6	1	Café au lait	قهوة بالحليب
7	1	Rum St James	شراب الرّم سانت جيمس
8	1	Rum Martinique	شراب الرّم المارتيني
9	1	Montagne Ste-Genevieve	مونتني سانت جنيفيف
10	1	Kirsch	ماء الكرز
11	1	Quetsche	الإجاص
12	1	A peasant woman	امرأة فلاح
13	1	inaccrochable	Inaccrochable لا يمكن تعليقها
14	1	Saturday Evening Post	ذي ستردي إيفننغ بوست

15	1	Eau-de-vie	نبيذ ماء الحياة
16	1	Homosexuality	المثلية الجنسية (اللواط)
17	3	Closerie des Lilas	مقهى بستان الليلك
18	3	The sawmill	المنشرة (معمل نشر الخشب)
19	3	Delirium	سكرات الموت
20	3	Don't read too fast	لا تقرأ حتى الصيام
21	3	I did not knock on wood	لم أدق على الخشب
22	5	The Tour d'Argent restaurant	مطعم البرج الفضي تور دارجان
23	5	Friture	سمك مقلي
24	5	Home	جنة
25	5	The outsider	ضئيل الحظ في الفوز
26	5	Bathtubs	(البابنو)
27	5	Toilets that flushed	المرحاض العصري
28	5	Jockeys / jockey	الجوكي - فرسان
29	5	A rubber tube connected to a hot-water bottle	قنينة بلاستيكية

30	5	Café creme	قهوة بالحليب
31	10	Horse chestnut	حدوة حصان
32	11	Negre de Toulouse	مطعم زنجي تولوز
33	11	Une demi-blonde	نصف غرافة من الجعة
34	11	My legitime - My reguliere	رفيقتي الشرعية-رفيقتي المعتادة
35	12	More Christian	أكثر تديّنا
36	12	Left hook	لكمة خاطفة
37	12	La Boheme	المشردين
38	12	Bel Esprit	حب الأدب
39	12	A salon	ندوة أدبية (صالون أدب)
40	12	Major Eliot	ميجر إليوت ميجر اسم علم بالإنجليزية و تعني كذلك ضابطا عسكريا
41	16	Dying	يلفظ أنفاسه
42	17	Limey	بحار إنجليزي
43	17	Perrier	ماء فوار
44	17	A cult	صنف من العبادة

45	18	Hangover	خمار السكر
46	20	Baby-sitter	جليس أو جليسة أطفال
47	20	Cage bed	الفراش القفصي
48	20	Pilot fish	الطُعم
49	20	By God	والله
50	20	Hutte	هوتة

The comprehensive look at the data allows for further thematic categorization of the 50 cultural terms that constitute the data for this study. The cultural terms are organized into four thematic fields. These four thematic fields are:

- a. Food and drink
- b. Places
- c. Cross-cultural references
- d. Other

The rationale behind focusing specifically on the four themes is as follows:

Food and drink: The theme of food and drink is recurring throughout the text. It is represented in the form of specific dishes and drinks that require a great deal of knowledge of the source culture of the original author as well as the French culture of the 1920s since that is the time period and location where the events of the novels take place. Accordingly, several food and drink items are mentioned in the source using their original French names. Another point worth mentioning is that the title of the novel is *A Moveable Feast*. As the term "feast" entails the presence of food and drink in abundance, food and drink terminology is omnipresent throughout the novel.

Places: General and specific places are omnipresent throughout the text. The events of the novel take place primarily in Paris, France, where the names and descriptions of numerous streets, bars, restaurants, hotels, and addresses are mentioned. The setting of a couple of chapters, namely chapter 17, "Scott Fitzgerald", and chapter 20 "There Is Never Any End to Paris", take place outside of Paris. Chapter 17, "Scott Fitzgerald", takes place in Lyon, whereas Chapter 20 "There Is Never Any End to Paris", takes place in Austria. The places are paramount for the author to establish the spatial and cultural context. For the translator, the importance of the places is reflected in his decision to visit most of the places mentioned in the source text in order to experience them directly.

Cross-cultural References: Cross-cultural references are terms borrowed from a different language and used by the author as cultural representations. In other words, cross-cultural references are primarily French and German words used by Hemingway to account for a cultural representation either for lack of an equivalent in English or for stylistic reasons such as keeping the originality and cultural impact of the foreign language term. Cross-cultural references are present throughout the text.

Other: This category includes the terms that do not belong to the previous three categories. These terms could be lexical items that seem to be challenging for the translator, or they could be phrases that carry cultural meaning, such as proverbs and sayings.

56% of the cultural items of this study belong to the thematic category "other". The items of this category are less specific than those of the other categories. Among the items of this thematic category are proverbs, similes and other stylistic items that express

cultural meanings. The second most represented category is food and drink (20%). As mentioned before, the time and cultural setting of the text require a great deal of cultural representations that involve food and drink. 10% of the items represented in this study belong to the "cross-cultural references" category. Finally, 14% of the cultural items describe places. Although "places" is a less represented category, 14% still remains a significant percentage given the specific place settings described throughout the text and how important they are to the overall spatial and cultural representations.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 The Liddicoat model and intercultural competence

The chart below represents the use of the three strategies of the Liddicoat model of cultural term translation. The terms that were translated using different translation strategies are represented in the "other" category.

Figure 1: The Liddicoat Model Strategies Usage



Within the Liddicoat model of cultural term translation, the most used translation strategy is reframing. Reframing is a translation strategy that revolves around the reframing of the ST structure of the cultural item, either by adding or deleting words or reformulating the structure altogether in order to account for the culture of the target audience. The translator resorted to reframing to translate 9 cultural terms. The second most used Liddicoat model strategy is explanation. Explanation or expansion is a translation strategy that includes an explanation of the translated item in order to explain the cultural context of the ST item. 5 words were translated using an explanation. Finally, 3 words were translated using the replacement strategy. The remaining 33 words were translated using different translation strategies (other), including calque, adaptation, literal translation, and so on.

To achieve the effective transfer of cultural items to the TT, the translator has to display a level of competence in the source and target language. With challenging and culturally multifaceted texts such as *A Moveable Feast*, translators need to possess not only the stylistic knowledge to deal with the literary aspect of the text but also multi-cultural competence. For example, the text in question (*A Moveable Feast*) is so culturally complex and rich that it requires the translator to possess knowledge of French culture within the specific historical context of the 1920s. In addition, the translator must be knowledgeable of the author's American culture. Finally, a thorough knowledge of the Arab target audience culture is instrumental for the translator. Therefore, it is a complex and daunting task to translate such culturally rich and stylistically challenging work. The translator, Ali Al-Kasimi, displays the necessary intercultural/multicultural competence to mediate the ST message and transfer it to the TT. In fact, in the preface of the work, Al-Kasimi mentioned how difficult and almost impossible it was for him to translate Hemingway's book based only on his knowledge and study of the latter's stylistic work when Al-Kasimi had travelled to the United States, where he had been exposed to American culture. In addition, Al-Kasimi felt the pressing need to travel to Paris to experience French culture. He went as far as to visit the same places that Hemingway mentioned in the ST. Therefore, Ali Al-Kasimi's approach to acquiring intercultural competence seems to be an effective way that must be reflected in the translation strategies he opted for in the translation of the work in question.

4.3 Intercultural competence-based translation strategies

For the purpose of this study, the focus was primarily on the three translation strategies (reframing, explanation and replacement) that are central to Liddicoat's model and how they relate to the overall dynamics involved in the translation approach of *A Moveable Feast*.

Reframing is the translation strategy that was the most used by the translator (18%). The purpose of reframing is to ultimately successfully transfer the semantic components from ST to TT while minimizing any semantic losses that might occur in the process (Fernandez Guerra, p. 9). The excessive use of reframing as a translation strategy seems to stem from the translator's awareness of the cultural variety of the source text cultures (French and American). The ST includes several cross references, names of places, cultural representations, and names of drinks and dishes, reframing the ST terms in order to mediate them and ultimately transfer them in such a way as to make them understandable to the target audience.

The second most used strategy within Liddicoat's model is expansion/explanation. The terms that were translated using this strategy are mostly specific terms that belong to specific registers. A case in point is CT38 "Major Eliot", whereby the translator details an explanation of the military term "major" to make it more familiar to the target audience.

Replacement is the least used Liddicoat model strategy used by the translator. Replacement involves the replacement of the ST item by a culture specific term. Replacement was used in three examples, one of which is the replacement of the borrowed word CT6 "questsche" (prune) is replaced with "الإجاص" (pear), which is a different fruit.

The number of cultural items that were translated using the three strategies that constitute the Liddicoat model was 17 (34%). The remaining 33 (66%) cultural terms were translated using a variety of other techniques. The strategies used in the translation of the 50 cultural terms are represented in the table below.

Table 2: Usage Percentages of Translation Strategies

Translation Strategy	Number of Cultural Items	Usage Percentage
Adaptation	11	22%
Reframing	9	18%
Calque	4	8%
Explanation/expansion	5	10%
Generalization	2	4%
Particularization	1	2%
Replacement	3	6%
Literal translation	3	6%
Borrowing	5	10%
Equivalence	1	2%
Description	6	12%

Adaptation (Newmark's cultural equivalence) is the translation technique that has the highest usage frequency percentage of 22%. This means that adaptation was used to translate 11 of the 50 cultural terms. Adaptation, also referred to as cultural substitution and cultural equivalence, involves the mediation and transfer of the ST cultural elements into the TT language and cultural situation (Newmark, 1988, p. 83). According to Fernandez Guerra, the main aim of adaptation is to achieve "a similar effect on the TL readers, 'domesticating', in a way, the cultural terms." (p. 7). Although the ST is in English, it includes a large number of borrowed French words as well as cultural and historical references. In addition, the time and place settings of the text in the 1920s Paris mean that cultural and historical references must be mediated to the target audience, which belongs to a different time, place and cultural

context. The translation of the cultural item "horse chestnut" CT37 is an example whereby cultural adaptation was used by the translator to mediate meaning and cultural context. The horse chestnut is an object that is associated with good luck in the ST culture. In the target culture, however, the same object has no meaning. Therefore, the translator resorted to adaptation to substitute the source cultural element with an element which has a similar effect on the target audience. Thus, "horse chestnut" was replaced with "حدوة حصان" (horse shoe).

5. Conclusion

Translators assume several roles, among which the most important one may be that of cultural mediators. To achieve their roles as cultural mediators, translators must possess certain skills that allow them to navigate different linguistic systems and cultural paradigms. Since the role of the translators transcends that of the transfer of linguistic elements from one language to the other, it is paramount to possess what has come to be known as cultural competence. There have been several definitions of what cultural competence is. Cultural competence seems to be a major component in the translation of dynamic texts that relate to multiple cultural aspects. Literary texts, including the one this study deals with, tend to be pregnant with meaningful cultural and cross-cultural references that challenge the translator's competencies in terms of mediating cultural meaning. Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast* is an example of a literary text that is culturally complex and multifaceted and requires the translator to display a high level of intercultural competence. The acquisition of such competence enables the transfer of the cultural nuances and meanings of the source text in a way that allows the transfer of the same semantic and cultural effect on the target audience. *A Moveable Feast*'s complexity stems from its unique historical, cultural and linguistic makeup. It is not only set in the 1920s in Paris, France, which means that it has countless specific references to the culture of that time; the text is also written in English. The translator Ali Al-Kasimi embarked on a journey to Paris, France, in order to acquaint himself with the food, drinks, places and Hemingway's references. The trip to France, in addition to the translator's linguistic competence, helped him produce a translation that is judged by many editors and readers as a faithful, effective and excellent translation of Hemingway's book.

Naturally, this study has limitations. One main limitation of the study is that it focuses primarily on Liddicoat's model of translation. This model seems rather minimalistic since it includes only three translation strategies, namely reframing, expansion and replacement. Further research might take a different approach by using a different model or an eclectic model of cultural translation that draws from multiple models such as Liddicoat, Newmark, and other models of translation. In addition, the conclusions above remain tentative and limited in nature mainly because the data is limited to 50 cultural terms. It could be argued that the findings could be more generalised if we increase the quantity of the analysed cultural terms to 100 or more terms.

Finally, the subject of cultural competence (whether cross-cultural, intercultural, or multicultural) remains largely an unexplored territory. This is mainly because of the lack of references and theoretical literature that deal specifically with cultural competence since cultural competence is still considered a sub-competence of translation. This lack of research and studies about cultural competence made the task of searching for specific references that deal with this subject quite difficult and, at times, frustrating. Therefore, I highly recommend researchers who are interested in the fields of literary translation, translation competence, and intercultural communication to further contribute to the study of the promising and fascinating subject of cultural competence in translation.

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