| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Translating Saudi Najdi Dialect Proverbs into English: Challenges and Strategies for Preserving Cultural Meaning

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| ABSTRACT

This study explores the linguistic and cultural challenges of translating Najdi proverbs into English, focusing on strategies that preserve their cultural richness and semantic depth. Najdi proverbs are deeply rooted in the social norms, historical contexts, and metaphorical traditions of central Saudi Arabia, posing unique challenges for translators due to their idiomatic and culturally specific nature. Using a qualitative approach, the research analyzed 100 Najdi proverbs collected through interviews with native speakers and documented folklore. Each proverb was systematically translated into English, employing strategies such as dynamic equivalence, paraphrasing, and cultural substitution. The findings reveal that while literal translations often fail to capture the proverbs' intended meaning and emotional resonance, adaptive strategies enable effective communication of their core messages to English-speaking audiences. Dynamic equivalence emerged as a particularly effective strategy for preserving the proverbs' emotional and cultural impact, while cultural substitution bridged gaps where metaphors were inaccessible to the target audience. A key contribution of this study is its practical implication for creating a Najdi Proverbs Glossary. This resource would document proverbs with their translations, cultural annotations, and contextual explanations, serving as a valuable tool for translators, educators, and researchers. The glossary could also be integrated into online translation tools, enhancing their ability to produce culturally sensitive and contextually appropriate translations. Future research could expand on this work by developing digital tools for dialectal translation, conducting comparative studies of proverbs from other Saudi dialects, and analyzing the reception of translated proverbs among non-native audiences. By addressing the complexities of dialectal translation and promoting cultural sensitivity, this study supports efforts to document Saudi cultural heritage and aligns with Saudi Vision 2030's goals of preserving and sharing the nation's rich linguistic diversity with a global audience.

1. Introduction

Language and culture are inseparably linked, with idiomatic expressions serving as vital reflections of a community's identity, heritage, and worldview (Ghafoori, 2022). These expressions encapsulate shared experiences and collective wisdom, often transcending their literal meanings to convey cultural nuances (Belkhir, 2021). Among Saudi Arabia's diverse linguistic traditions, the Najdi dialect holds a unique place as a cornerstone of the cultural identity of the Najd region. Renowned for its rich oral traditions and idiomatic expressions, the Najdi dialect captures centuries of storytelling, tradition, and social interaction, making its preservation a matter of cultural significance (Ismail, 2017).

As Saudi Arabia advances its Vision 2030 goals, emphasizing the promotion of cultural heritage and the documentation of local traditions, accurately translating Saudi dialects into global languages has become an imperative (Anis, 2003). This initiative not

only aligns with Saudi Arabia's ambitions to position itself as a global cultural hub but also addresses the growing need for cultural exchange and understanding (Almjlad, 2023). In this context, translating Najdi idiomatic expressions into English plays a pivotal role in bridging cultural divides. However, these expressions, deeply rooted in local customs and metaphors, pose significant challenges to translators attempting to preserve their semantic depth, cultural resonance, and aesthetic appeal (Ahmed, 2019). Misinterpretation or overly literal translations risk distorting the cultural essence they aim to convey, potentially leading to misunderstandings of Saudi traditions (Al-Saidi, 2021).

The Najdi dialect differs markedly from Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) in phonology, syntax, and vocabulary, further complicating the translation process (Holes, 2018). Idiomatic expressions often draw upon cultural references unique to Najdi life—pastoral metaphors, historical anecdotes, or social norms—making their direct equivalents in English rare or non-existent (Ismail, 2023). While previous research has examined the translation of Arabic into English, studies focusing specifically on Saudi dialects, particularly Najdi, remain limited (Dweik, 2013; Jabak, 2022). Most existing research emphasizes theoretical frameworks without providing practical, actionable strategies tailored to the nuanced demands of translating dialect-specific expressions (Mounadil, 2023).

This study seeks to address these gaps by examining the linguistic and cultural challenges in translating Najdi idiomatic expressions into English. The research aims to propose strategies that balance linguistic fidelity with cultural accuracy, ensuring translations resonate authentically with English-speaking audiences while preserving Saudi cultural narratives (Hmaidan, 2024). Through a systematic analysis of real-world examples, this study aspires to contribute to both cultural preservation and global understanding by offering innovative approaches to dialect translation. This study is guided by the following research questions;

- What are the main linguistic and cultural challenges in translating Najdi idiomatic expressions into English?
- What strategies can be developed to address these challenges while preserving the cultural essence of Najdi idiomatic expressions?

This structured exploration aims to contribute not only to the field of translation studies but also to the broader discourse on cultural preservation and global understanding. By addressing the specificities of Najdi idiomatic expressions, the study aspires to bridge gaps in research and practice, fostering more nuanced and culturally sensitive translations. Furthermore, this research aligns with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 by supporting efforts to maintain and promote cultural diversity, ensuring the documentation and global appreciation of Saudi dialects as a vital component of the nation's rich heritage.

2. Literature Review
2.1 Defining Dialect
A dialect is a specific form of a language spoken by a distinct group of people, often defined by geographic, social, or cultural boundaries. Dialects differ from the standard form of a language in terms of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and usage. According to Trudgill (2004), dialects are neither inferior nor less systematic than standard languages but represent natural linguistic variations shaped by historical, cultural, and environmental factors. These variations carry significant cultural weight, acting as markers of identity and repositories of local traditions.

In the Arab world, dialects, including Najdi Arabic, play an essential role in preserving regional heritage. Mattiello (2005) emphasizes that dialects are dynamic and evolve over time, reflecting the lived experiences of their speakers. For example, Najdi dialect, spoken in Saudi Arabia's central Najd region, is not merely a means of communication but a cultural artifact that embodies the region's Bedouin heritage and oral traditions. Proverbs like "الطيب ما يموت" (*al-ṭayyib mā yamūt*, "Goodness never dies") encapsulate universal values through localized expressions, highlighting the cultural and linguistic richness of dialects (Alharbi, 2023).

2.2 Standard Arabic and the Najdi Dialect: A Linguistic Landscape
Standard Arabic (SA), also known as Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), serves as the formal written language across the Arab world, employed in official documents, education, and mass media. However, spoken Arabic exhibits remarkable diversity, encompassing numerous dialects that vary considerably across geographical regions. Najdi Arabic, the dialect prevalent in the Najd region of central Saudi Arabia, is a prime example of this dialectal variation. While SA and Najdi share a common linguistic ancestor, their phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexicon display significant differences.

The relationship between SA and Najdi Arabic is best characterized as diglossia, a linguistic situation where two distinct language varieties coexist and are used in different social contexts. SA enjoys prestige as the formal, literary language, while Najdi functions as the vernacular, employed in everyday speech. This diglossic relationship often leads to code-switching between SA and Najdi, depending on the specific communicative context (Ismail, 2017). For example, the Najdi proverb, "بركة عنده ما خير ما عنده اللي" (illi ma indahu khair ma indahu baraka), which translates literally as "He who has no good has no blessing." In SA, a more formal

equivalent might be "له بركة لا فيه خير لا من" (man la khair fihi la baraka lahu). The Najdi version uses simpler grammar and vocabulary, reflecting its colloquial nature. The choice of which version to translate depends on the desired register and audience.

Phonological Divergences: Najdi Arabic exhibits several phonological traits that distinguish it from SA. Certain sounds might be pronounced differently or entirely absent in Najdi. Variations in vowel and consonant pronunciation can lead to misunderstandings for those unfamiliar with the dialect (Ismail, 2017). For example, the emphatic consonants (like those found in the word "baraka") might be pronounced differently in Najdi than in MSA.

Morphological Distinctions: The morphology of Najdi Arabic also diverges from SA. Verb conjugations, noun declensions, and the use of particles show substantial variation. These morphological differences can alter the structure and meaning of proverbs, thereby complicating direct translation (Ismail, 2021). The use of shortened verb forms, common in Najdi, contrasts with the more elaborate forms found in MSA.

Syntactic Variations: Najdi Arabic syntax may differ from SA in word order and sentence structure. This can significantly impact the translation of proverbs, as the meaning might be dependent on the specific word order employed. For instance, the subject-verb-object order in SA might be altered in Najdi, necessitating careful consideration during translation (Alotaibi, 2010).

Lexical Disparities: The lexicon of Najdi Arabic includes numerous words and expressions not found in SA. These dialectal terms often carry specific cultural connotations that are not easily rendered into English (Ismail, 2021). For example, a proverb might use a specific Najdi word for "generosity" that does not have a direct equivalent in SA or English, requiring creative translation strategies. The proverb "يموت ما الطيب" (al-ṭayib mā yamūt) means "Goodness never dies" in Standard Arabic. In Najdi, however, it might be expressed differently, perhaps using a more colloquial term for "goodness" or a slightly altered sentence structure. The subtle differences in meaning and expression highlight the need for a translator to be deeply familiar with both the dialect and the standard language.

The substantial linguistic differences between SA and Najdi Arabic underscore the complexity of translating Najdi proverbs into English. Translators must possess a strong command of both SA and Najdi, as well as a deep understanding of the cultural context in which the proverbs are employed. This requires specialized knowledge of Najdi culture, its values, and its social norms (Ismail, 2017).

2.3 Najdi Dialect and Its Characteristics

The Najdi dialect, central to Saudi Arabia's linguistic heritage, has evolved through centuries alongside the region's social and economic transformations. Chrift (2003) notes that while its pre-Islamic origins remain unclear due to limited documentation, Najdi Arabic is believed to predate contemporary classical Arabic, serving as a foundational dialect in the Arabic linguistic tradition. Historically, it thrived through oral traditions such as poetry, folklore, and storytelling, with Nabati poetry playing a key role in preserving its cultural and linguistic essence.

Najdi Arabic exhibits *phonological variations* that distinguish it from Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). A defining feature is the substitution of the /q/ sound with /g/, such as in "قلب" (qalb, "heart"), pronounced "گلب" (galb) in Najdi (Holes, 2018). Variations in vowel use and stress patterns further contribute to its regional identity. Morphological simplifications also characterize the dialect, with adaptations that enhance conversational ease. For example, the MSA "أريد" (ureed, "I want") becomes "أبي" (abee) in Najdi (Behnstedt, 2009), facilitating fluency but presenting challenges in translation to languages with stricter morphological systems.

The dialect's *syntactic flexibility* allows for more fluid sentence structures compared to MSA. For instance, proverbs like " اللي يده في الماء مو مثل اللي يده في النار" (illi yaddahu fi al-māʾ mu mithl illi yaddahu fi al-nār, "He whose hand is in water is not like he whose hand is in fire") often rearrange word order to emphasize contrasting ideas, demanding careful attention during translation (Ismail, 2017).

Unique *lexical distinctions* are deeply rooted in the cultural and environmental context of the Najd region. Phrases such as " راعي الحلال ما ينام" (rāʿi al-ḥalāl mā yanām, "The caretaker of wealth does not sleep") highlight pastoral lifestyles and values like diligence and responsibility. The dialect's *oral tradition* has further shaped its evolution. Anis (2003) observes that economic shifts, particularly following the discovery of petroleum, alongside urbanization and globalization, introduced new lexical items and altered traditional speech patterns. This dynamism underscores the dialect's adaptability and its role in reflecting the region's evolving cultural landscape.

2.4 Challenges in Translating Najdi Proverbs: A Multifaceted Perspective

This section explores the challenges and strategies involved in translating Saudi Najdi dialect proverbs from Arabic into English. Najdi Arabic, spoken in central Saudi Arabia, features unique linguistic and cultural traits that create significant challenges for translators. By synthesizing existing research, this review identifies key difficulties and effective strategies, emphasizing both successes and limitations. While previous studies examine the complexities of translating proverbs broadly (Almjlad, 2023; Mubarak, 2017; Dweik, 2013; Tergui, 2024), this review focuses specifically on the nuances of Najdi proverbs.

Translating proverbs poses unique challenges due to their cultural embeddedness and figurative nature. Research highlights significant obstacles in translating Najdi proverbs (Ahmed, 2019; Obeidat, 2023; Ismail, 2021). One major *linguistic challenge* is the

divergence between Najdi Arabic and English. Najdi's unique vocabulary, grammar, and phonetic features often lack direct English equivalents (Ahmed, 2019). The idiomatic nature of proverbs complicates translation, as their meanings often go beyond literal interpretations (Ibrahim, 2024). Figures of speech such as metaphors and similes demand translators to focus on overall meaning rather than word-for-word substitution (Belkhir, 2021). Dialect-specific expressions further challenge translators unfamiliar with Najdi nuances, as even experienced professionals struggle with these subtleties (Aldhahi, 2019; Aldhahi, 2018).

Cultural challenges add another layer of complexity. Proverbs are deeply rooted in cultural values and worldviews, requiring translators to navigate not only linguistic nuances but also cultural context (Ghafoori, 2022; Al-Azzam, 2017). Najdi proverbs often include references or allusions that resist direct translation into English (Jabak, 2018). Literal translations can fail to convey these cultural nuances, resulting in a loss of meaning and impact (Al-Saidi, 2021; Hmaidan, 2024). Researchers argue that bicultural competence is essential for navigating these challenges effectively (Al-Saidi, 2021).

The *pragmatic function* of proverbs also complicates translation. Proverbs serve to convey implicit meanings, social commentary, or persuasive arguments (Ahmed, 2010; Shuhaiber, 2023). Effective translation requires capturing these functions while ensuring equivalent impact in the target language (Al-Ezzi, 2023). Context and audience are critical in maintaining the proverb's communicative intent. Literal translations often fail to achieve this, leading to misinterpretation or diminished impact (Ibrahim, 2024).

Successfully translating Najdi proverbs demands balancing linguistic accuracy, cultural depth, and pragmatic intent. Creative strategies that adapt proverbs for English-speaking audiences without losing their essence are vital to overcoming these multifaceted challenges.

2.5 Strategies for Translating Najdi Proverbs

Addressing the complexities of translating Najdi proverbs demands strategies that balance *linguistic accuracy* with *cultural fidelity*. Researchers suggest approaches such as literal translation, paraphrasing, cultural substitution, and dynamic equivalence to navigate the unique challenges posed by these proverbs (Jabak, 2022; Bajubair, 2020; Mounadil, 2023). Each strategy offers distinct strengths and limitations, requiring translators to adapt their methods to the specific demands of the source and target texts.

Literal translation involves rendering the exact words of the source text without significant alteration in form or structure (Almjlad, 2023). While seemingly straightforward, this approach often fails with proverbs due to their idiomatic and metaphorical nature. Proverbs encapsulate cultural values and shared experiences that may not be apparent through direct translation (Alfaleh, 2020). A literal approach often produces awkward or nonsensical results, particularly when cultural metaphors rely on context unfamiliar to the target audience (Ibrahim, 2024; Al-Saidi, 2021). However, literal translation can preserve universal imagery when it enhances the proverb's rhetorical or poetic effect (Alharbi, 2023; Behnstdt, 2009). Despite this advantage, the method frequently misses emotional nuance, emphasizing the need for strategies like dynamic equivalence or cultural substitution to bridge gaps effectively.

Paraphrasing offers a flexible way to express a proverb's meaning using alternative wording, making it effective for addressing culturally specific elements, metaphors, or idioms without direct equivalents (Bajubair, 2020; Shuhaiber, 2023). This strategy adapts proverbs to the linguistic and cultural norms of the target audience while preserving their essence. Paraphrasing excels in conveying idiomatic expressions but risks losing brevity, rhythm, or poetic qualities (Alfaleh, 2020). Translators must carefully balance clarity with fidelity to the source's stylistic and cultural attributes to achieve effective results (Saideen, 2024).

Cultural substitution adapts proverbs by replacing culturally specific references with equivalents meaningful to the target audience (Al-Saidi, 2021). This strategy ensures that proverbs resonate while preserving their meaning, pragmatic function, and emotional tone (Jabak, 2022). Replacing unfamiliar imagery with culturally relevant equivalents bridges gaps and ensures audience comprehension (Hmaidan, 2024). However, cultural substitution may sacrifice some of the original's stylistic elements, highlighting the translator's challenge in balancing adaptation with fidelity (Mounadil, 2023).

Dynamic equivalence focuses on preserving the intended meaning and emotional resonance, allowing the target audience to experience the text similarly to the original audience (Nida, 1964). This approach is particularly effective for translating culturally embedded expressions, enabling translators to adapt figurative language and references to align with the cultural norms of the target audience (Almjlad, 2023). By prioritizing communicative effect, dynamic equivalence preserves both emotional and pragmatic impacts, ensuring the translation resonates with its audience (Dickins et al., 2016). However, this strategy requires careful calibration to maintain cultural authenticity while ensuring comprehension (Saideen, 2024). Dynamic equivalence remains one of the most effective strategies for translating idiomatic expressions, blending creativity with cultural sensitivity to bridge linguistic and cultural divides.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach enriched by systematic procedures to explore the linguistic and cultural challenges of translating Najdi proverbs into English. The qualitative approach facilitates an in-depth exploration of the nuanced meanings and cultural embeddedness of Najdi idiomatic expressions. By leveraging data collection methods such as interviews, focus groups, and document analysis, the study systematically analyzes the intricacies of these proverbs. A thematic and comparative analysis of the collected data ensures a rigorous understanding of the challenges and strategies involved in translating these culturally rich expressions.

3.1 Data Collection Methods & Participants

The study involved 15 participants who were native speakers of the Najdi dialect. This group included 8 women and 7 men, ensuring a balanced representation of gender to capture a comprehensive collection of proverbs and their contextual meanings. Participants were drawn from diverse age groups, ranging from 30 to 80 years old. This age range was chosen to include individuals who are old enough to have substantial familiarity with traditional proverbs and their cultural significance, while also encompassing younger participants who might offer insights into contemporary usage and interpretations. This demographic diversity ensured the study reflected a broad spectrum of social, cultural, and generational perspectives, enriching the dataset with varied experiences and understandings.

Semi-structured interviews were employed as a key data collection tool, enabling participants to share proverbs and elaborate on their meanings and usage. The interviews included open-ended questions such as, "Can you share a traditional proverb you often use or hear in the Najdi dialect?" and "What does this proverb mean, and in what context is it usually applied?" Additional questions explored the cultural or historical significance of the proverbs and any variations encountered. To ensure reliability and depth, the same proverbs were discussed with multiple participants to cross-check their structure, interpretation, and contextual application. This cross-validation process enhanced the linguistic and cultural authenticity of the findings, ensuring the data accurately represented Najdi proverbs across diverse social and gender backgrounds.

To complement the interviews, documented folklore and literature provided additional data sources. Proverbs were identified in traditional stories, oral poetry, and anthologies of Saudi cultural heritage, particularly Nabati poetry. These written sources enriched the study by offering historical context and cultural depth, validating the proverbs shared during interviews. This dual approach of interviews and literary documentation ensured a holistic understanding of Najdi proverbs, bridging their historical origins with contemporary relevance and providing a robust foundation for the analysis of their linguistic and cultural intricacies.

3.2 Data Collection & Analysis

This study documented and analyzed a total of 100 Najdi proverbs through a rigorous data collection and translation process. Each proverb was translated into English using a systematic methodology that integrated the researcher's expertise, specialized resources, and collaborative validation. The initial translations were conducted by the researcher, who holds a BA in Translation, as well as an MA and PhD in Applied Linguistics. With extensive professional experience as a translator and educator in translation-related courses, the researcher brought a deep understanding of linguistic intricacies and cultural nuances to the translation process.

Specialized e-resources, such as tailored online translation platforms and cultural databases, were consulted to ensure that the translations captured the unique cultural essence of the proverbs. To validate the translations' linguistic accuracy and cultural resonance, two experts fluent in Najdi dialect reviewed the initial translations. Their insights ensured that the translations were faithful to the source material. Additionally, the translations were evaluated by a native English speaker with expertise in cross-cultural communication. This step ensured that the translated proverbs conveyed the intended meanings naturally and effectively to English-speaking audiences. Based on feedback from these experts, revisions were made to refine the translations and achieve culturally sensitive and accurate renderings.

Challenges and problematic issues encountered during the translation process were systematically documented for each proverb. These issues were recorded in a detailed table that included columns for the Najdi proverb (in Arabic), transliteration, literal translation, accurate translation, challenges encountered, and strategies used to resolve them. This table provided a comprehensive reference for analyzing the linguistic and cultural hurdles inherent in translating proverbs and the methods employed to address them.

After finalizing the translations, the proverbs were thematically grouped based on the strategies applied to overcome translation challenges, such as paraphrasing, dynamic equivalence, or cultural substitution. These thematic groupings illuminated the effectiveness of various strategies in navigating specific issues. To ensure the reliability of the thematic analysis, a second review was conducted after a period of time to verify consistency in categorization and interpretation. This approach reinforced the study's validity while offering valuable insights into preserving the cultural integrity and linguistic essence of Najdi proverbs in English translations.

3.3 Validity and Reliability

The study implemented multiple measures to ensure the validity and reliability of its findings. Triangulation was employed by drawing on diverse data sources, including interviews, folklore documents, and expert feedback, to validate the proverbs and their translations comprehensively. Linguistic and cultural experts were engaged to review both the original and translated proverbs, offering critical insights into their authenticity and accuracy. Additionally, a native English speaker was involved in the validation process to ensure that the translations resonated with the target audience and effectively conveyed the intended meanings. To further enhance reliability, the thematic analysis was revisited after a time interval, confirming the consistency of categorizations and interpretations. By integrating these rigorous methods, the study provides a robust framework for understanding the linguistic and cultural challenges of translating Najdi proverbs and evaluating the effectiveness of various strategies. This approach not only

strengthens the reliability of the findings but also contributes significantly to the broader discourse on dialect translation and cultural preservation.

4. Results

The findings reveal a rich array of linguistic and cultural challenges encountered in translating Najdi proverbs into English, alongside the strategies employed to overcome these challenges. Each proverb analyzed exemplifies unique cultural, metaphorical, and linguistic intricacies, requiring careful adaptation to preserve its essence while ensuring comprehensibility for an English-speaking audience. The following analysis demonstrates the practical application of these strategies, emphasizing their role in bridging cultural and linguistic gaps.

4.1 Dynamic Equivalence

Proverb 4.1.1: كل تأخيرة فيها خيرة
Transliteration: *Kul taʾkhīrah fīhā khīrah*
Literal Translation: Every delay has goodness in it.
Accurate Translation: *Good things come to those who wait*
Translation Strategy: Dynamic Equivalence with Annotation

This proverb embodies optimism, expressing the belief that delays or setbacks can ultimately lead to positive outcomes. The literal translation, "Every delay has goodness in it," captures the original meaning but lacks the idiomatic fluency required for English-speaking audiences. While the concept of associating patience with eventual rewards is universal, the phrasing may seem awkward or overly literal in English. The suggested translation, "Good things come to those who wait," uses a familiar English idiom to convey the same optimism, emphasizing patience and positivity in a way that resonates naturally with the target audience.

The main challenge in translating this proverb lies in bridging the cultural gap between the specific phrasing of the Najdi dialect and the broader English-speaking context. To address this, *dynamic equivalence* was employed to prioritize the emotional and philosophical essence of the original expression over a direct linguistic rendering. By adapting the proverb into a widely recognized English idiom, the translation preserves its core message while ensuring clarity and relatability. This approach successfully maintains the proverb's optimism and cultural essence, making it accessible and impactful across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

Proverb 4.1.2: من كبر لقمته غص
Transliteration: Min kabbar luqmatuh ghaṣṣ
Literal Translation: He who takes a big bite chokes.
Suggested Accurate Translation: Don't bite off more than you can chew.
Translation Strategy: Dynamic Equivalence

This proverb uses the metaphor of taking a large bite and choking to caution against overambition or overreaching. In Najdi culture, food often symbolizes abundance and ambition, making the imagery relatable and effective within its cultural context. However, directly translating the proverb into English as "He who takes a big bite chokes" risks being misinterpreted as a literal warning against overeating rather than a figurative critique of greed or excessive ambition. The challenge lies in conveying the metaphorical intent without losing the cultural nuance embedded in the imagery. Additionally, the direct reference to food might fail to resonate with English audiences unfamiliar with its symbolic role in Najdi culture.

To address these challenges, *dynamic equivalence* was employed, resulting in the translation "Don't bite off more than you can chew." This adaptation replaces the culturally specific metaphor with an English idiom that conveys a similar cautionary message about the dangers of overreach or taking on more than one can handle. By aligning with a widely recognized English expression, the translation preserves the moral lesson while ensuring it is accessible and impactful for the target audience. The use of dynamic equivalence allows the translator to maintain the essence of the original proverb while bridging linguistic and cultural gaps, ensuring that the translated proverb resonates effectively without losing its intended meaning or tone.

Proverb 4.1.3: اللي يبينا عيت النفس تبغيه
Transliteration: Illi yibīnā ʿayet al-nafs tabghīh
Literal Translation: Those who want us, we don't want; the one we want, fate won't bring.
Suggested Accurate Translation: *The things we desire eludes us, while the things we ignore seeks us.*
Translation Strategy: Dynamic Equivalence

This proverb reflects a universal emotional struggle with unattainable desires and the paradoxical nature of human wants. It captures the Najdi worldview of destiny and longing, where fate plays a central role in shaping human experience. The original

phrasing is deeply poetic, embodying both cultural significance and emotional depth. However, a literal translation into English risks verbosity and potential dissonance, making the proverb less accessible and impactful to non-Najdi audiences.

To bridge this gap, dynamic equivalence was employed to distill the emotional and philosophical complexity into a succinct and relatable phrase: "What we desire eludes us, but what we ignore seeks us." This adaptation retains the original's introspective and poignant tone while ensuring clarity and resonance for English-speaking audiences. By rephrasing the proverb into concise and universal terms, the translation effectively communicates the sense of longing and irony embedded in the original.

Dynamic equivalence is particularly appropriate here as it emphasizes the emotional and philosophical impact over a direct replication of structure or phrasing. This strategy allows the proverb's intrinsic value and message to transcend cultural boundaries, making it relatable while preserving the integrity of its Najdi roots.

Proverb 4.1.4: حدر جبل ولا تحدر طبع

Transliteration: Hadir jabal wala tahdir tabʿa

Literal Translation: You may change a mountain but not a nature.

Suggested Accurate Translation: You can change a mountain's course, but not a person's nature.

Translation Strategy: Dynamic Equivalence

inherent habits or character. In Najdi culture, this imagery resonates deeply, reflecting societal values that regard personal nature as steadfast and resistant to external influence. The vivid comparison to a mountain highlights the strength and permanence associated with innate qualities, making the proverb a poignant commentary on human behavior.

However, translating this proverb into English poses challenges due to differences in metaphorical conventions and cultural contexts. A literal translation, "You may change a mountain but not a nature," might preserve the structure but fail to convey the intended philosophical and rhetorical weight. The metaphorical use of "nature" as a symbol for personal traits may not align with English linguistic norms, risking confusion or loss of impact.

To address these challenges, dynamic equivalence was employed to adapt the proverb into "You can change a mountain's course, but not a person's nature." This translation modifies the expression to align with English syntax and idiomatic usage while maintaining the metaphor's strength. The choice of "change a mountain's course" emphasizes the improbability of altering inherent traits, preserving the philosophical undertone of the original. By bridging the cultural and linguistic gap, dynamic equivalence ensures that the proverb's message resonates with English-speaking audiences, capturing its rhetorical power and timeless wisdom.

Proverb 4.1.5: ما حك ظهرك مثل ظفرك

Transliteration: Mā ḥakk dhahrek mithl dhafrek

Literal Translation: No one scratches your back like your fingernail.

Suggested Accurate Translation: If you want something done right, do it yourself.

Translation Strategy: Dynamic Equivalence

This proverb underscores the value of self-reliance and personal initiative, encapsulating the idea that individuals are best equipped to address their own needs and challenges. The metaphor of scratching one's own back with a fingernail conveys the intimate understanding and effort required to solve personal problems. In Najdi culture, this imagery highlights the societal emphasis on individual responsibility and the futility of overly relying on others for assistance.

A literal translation, "No one scratches your back like your fingernail," though faithful to the original wording, risks misinterpretation by English-speaking audiences. The imagery of scratching one's back might seem peculiar or overly literal, detracting from the universal lesson the proverb seeks to impart. It could obscure the deeper cultural significance and intended pragmatic meaning.

Dynamic equivalence was applied to bridge this cultural and linguistic gap. The suggested translation, "If you want something done right, do it yourself," rephrases the proverb into a widely recognized English idiom that captures the same moral lesson. This approach ensures that the cultural essence of self-reliance is retained while adapting the expression into a form that resonates clearly with the target audience. By prioritizing meaning over form, dynamic equivalence effectively conveys the proverb's core message in a way that aligns with English linguistic norms and cultural expectations.

Proverb 4.1.6: يا من شراله من حلاله عله

Transliteration: Yā man sharālah min ḥalālah ʿillah

Literal Translation: He who buys trouble from his own wealth.

Accurate Translation: He brought trouble upon himself.

Translation Strategy: Dynamic Equivalence

This proverb encapsulates the idea of self-inflicted harm, often stemming from mismanagement, poor judgment, or unintended consequences. The imagery in the original Najdi expression suggests the act of using one's own resources to invite harm,

emphasizing personal responsibility and accountability for negative outcomes. In Najdi culture, this reflects a common societal critique of imprudent actions or decisions that lead to self-created difficulties.

A literal translation, "He who buys trouble from his own wealth," accurately mirrors the wording of the source proverb. However, the phrase might confuse English-speaking audiences who are unfamiliar with the metaphorical use of "buying trouble." The imagery of purchasing harm might not resonate universally and could obscure the proverb's underlying lesson.

Dynamic equivalence provides a more effective approach to translating this proverb. The suggested translation, "He brought trouble upon himself," eliminates culturally specific references while maintaining the proverb's core moral and pragmatic message. By prioritizing the intended meaning and adapting the expression into clear, relatable language, dynamic equivalence ensures that the proverb's lesson is accessible and impactful for the target audience. This strategy preserves the universality of the theme, making the translation resonate across cultural boundaries without losing the essence of the original proverb.

Proverb 4.1.7: الله الساخر لام المناخر
Transliteration: *Allāh al-sākhir lam al-manākhir*
Literal Translation: Allah makes things easier for the lazy.
Revised Suggested Translation: *God favors the helpless with extra care.*
Translation Strategy: Dynamic Equivalence with Cultural Adaptation

This proverb humorously describes a situation where a lazy or seemingly helpless wife gains more love and support from her husband, as her perceived vulnerability prompts his care and effort. It reflects traditional marital dynamics within Najdi culture, where humor and hyperbole are often used to address social norms affectionately. However, directly translating this phrase into English poses several challenges, particularly due to differences in cultural and linguistic norms.

The first challenge lies in the cultural specificity of the proverb. It is deeply rooted in Najdi humor, which includes gender-specific roles and norms that may not resonate with or be well-received by English-speaking audiences. Without careful adaptation, the phrase risks being misunderstood or even perceived as offensive. Additionally, the term *manākhir* (nostrils) in the original carries no metaphorical weight in English, making a literal translation not only confusing but also ineffective in conveying the intended humor.

Another challenge is the tone and humor of the original. Humor, especially when tied to cultural norms, is notoriously difficult to translate without losing its impact. The proverb's playful tone needs to be preserved while ensuring accessibility and relatability for a broader audience.

To address these challenges, Dynamic Equivalence with Cultural Adaptation was employed. This strategy allows the core meaning of the proverb to be conveyed while modifying its expression to suit the target audience. The translation "*God favors the helpless with extra care*" effectively communicates the idea of divine support for those perceived as less capable. By generalizing the context and removing gender-specific references, the translation becomes more inclusive and relatable while retaining the affectionate and humorous tone of the original.

The phrase "extra care" reflects the notion of assistance and love elicited by helplessness, aligning well with the intent of the original. Similarly, "God favors" maintains the divine aspect inherent in the proverb, ensuring that its cultural and emotional essence is preserved. This adaptation balances fidelity to the source material with linguistic clarity and cultural relevance, making it suitable for an audience unfamiliar with Najdi societal nuances. The dynamic equivalence approach ensures that the proverb's humor and message are accessible without compromising its original charm.

Proverb 4.1.8: سخنا الماء وطار الديك
Transliteration: *Sakhannā al-māʾ wa ṭār al-dīk*
Literal Translation: We heated the water, and the rooster flew away.
Accurate Translation: *A fruitless effort*
Translation Strategy: Dynamic Equivalence

This proverb reflects the frustration of investing effort and resources in a task only for it to yield no result. The metaphor of heating water for a rooster that escapes is rooted in Najdi culture, where such scenarios evoke exasperation over wasted labor. While the imagery is relatable and vivid for a Najdi audience, a literal translation, "We heated the water, and the rooster flew away," risks confusion for English-speaking readers. The rural specificity and cultural context tied to the rooster are not easily interpretable without additional explanation, making the literal rendition impractical for conveying the proverb's intended meaning.

To overcome this challenge, *Dynamic Equivalence* was employed to adapt the proverb as "A fruitless effort," a concise phrase that captures the core message without relying on culturally specific imagery. This translation maintains the emotional resonance of wasted effort while ensuring accessibility for English-speaking audiences. By stripping away the rural metaphor and focusing on the universal concept of futility, the adaptation bridges cultural gaps, making the proverb meaningful and relatable. This approach emphasizes clarity and cross-cultural comprehension while preserving the essence of the original saying.

Proverb 4.1.9: ديمة ويقول السيل يدربيه
Transliteration: *Yadrībih al-sayl wa yaqūl dīmah*
Literal Translation: The flood washes him away, but he calls it a drizzle.
Suggested Accurate Translation: *He's drowning but says it's just a splash.*
Equivalent English Proverb: *Burying your head in the sand.*
Translation Strategy: Dynamic Equivalence

This proverb metaphorically critiques someone who downplays or trivializes significant problems, even when faced with overwhelming circumstances. The vivid imagery of being overwhelmed by a flood yet calling it a drizzle reflects a refusal to acknowledge the gravity of a situation. This behavior, rooted in cultural norms of stoicism or denial, is universally understood, but the specific metaphor of water-related disasters might not resonate equally with English-speaking audiences.

The challenge in translating this proverb lies in preserving the metaphor's impact while ensuring clarity for an audience unfamiliar with Najdi cultural references. A literal translation, "*The flood washes him away, but he calls it a drizzle,*" might seem overly specific and lose the critical tone of the original. Moreover, cultural context is key here, as the imagery of floods and drizzles carries different connotations depending on the cultural backdrop.

Dynamic equivalence is the most effective strategy in this case, allowing for an adaptation that focuses on the proverb's underlying meaning rather than its literal wording. The suggested translation, "*He's drowning but says it's just a splash,*" maintains the water metaphor while aligning it more closely with English idiomatic phrasing. It retains the critique of underestimating critical issues while making the imagery accessible and impactful for English speakers. Additionally, the equivalent English proverb, "*Burying your head in the sand,*" provides an alternative that captures the same denial or avoidance of reality, though without the vivid imagery of water. This flexibility ensures the proverb's meaning and emotional tone are conveyed effectively across cultural boundaries.

4.2 Paraphrasing
Proverb 4.2.1: شيخ العمامة لبس من كل ما
Transliteration: Mā kul men labas al-ʿimāmah shaykh
Literal Translation: Not everyone who wears a turban is a sheikh.
Accurate Translation: Clothes don't make the man.
Translation Strategy: Paraphrasing

This proverb delivers a pointed critique of superficial judgments, highlighting the disconnect between outward appearances and true qualities or capabilities. The imagery of a turban—a symbol of wisdom, leadership, or authority in Arab societies—serves as a metaphor for social or professional status. The proverb asserts that merely adopting the appearance of a respected figure does not necessarily confer the associated qualities, such as intelligence, skill, or integrity.

For English-speaking audiences, the literal translation, "Not everyone who wears a turban is a sheikh," may seem overly specific or culturally distant, potentially requiring additional context to be understood fully. The cultural significance of the turban as a marker of authority or wisdom is not as readily recognized in English-speaking contexts, and the metaphor may lose its intended impact. Paraphrasing offers an effective solution by replacing the culturally specific metaphor with a more universal and accessible one. The translation, "Clothes don't make the man," encapsulates the core lesson of the proverb—that appearances can be deceiving—while aligning it with an English idiom that conveys a similar critique. This strategy preserves the critical tone and moral message of the original while ensuring that it resonates with the target audience. By adapting the metaphor into culturally familiar terms, the translation achieves clarity and maintains the proverb's relevance across cultural boundaries.

Proverb 4.2.2: سنامه عوجة يشوف ما الجمل
Transliteration: Al-jamal mā yashūf ʿawajat sanāmuh
Literal Translation: The camel doesn't see the curve of its own hump.
Accurate Translation: People often fail to see their own flaws.
Translation Strategy: Paraphrasing

This proverb highlights the human tendency to overlook one's own shortcomings while often being critical of others. The metaphor of the camel, central to Najdi culture due to its historical significance as a symbol of resilience and practicality, effectively conveys the idea of self-awareness and introspection. The camel's inability to perceive the curve of its own hump serves as a vivid visual representation of this moral lesson.

However, for English-speaking audiences, the cultural relevance of the camel and the metaphor's visual imagery may not resonate as strongly, potentially obscuring the intended message. A literal translation such as "The camel doesn't see the curve of its own hump" could confuse readers unfamiliar with the symbolic role of the camel in Najdi culture or fail to evoke the intended reflection on personal flaws.

Paraphrasing provides an effective solution by distilling the meaning of the proverb into a universal concept that transcends cultural boundaries. The translation, "People often fail to see their own flaws," removes the culturally specific imagery while retaining the core moral lesson. This approach ensures that the proverb's message is accessible and relatable to English-speaking audiences. By prioritizing clarity and simplicity, paraphrasing allows the proverb's critique of self-awareness to be effectively communicated without requiring additional cultural explanation. This strategy successfully bridges the cultural gap while preserving the essence of the original message.

Proverb 4.2.3: يتهوشون على مربط البقرة
Transliteration: Yatahāwashūn ʿalā marbaṭ al-baqara
Literal Translation: They quarrel over the cow's tether.
Accurate Translation: They argue over trivial things and ignore the bigger issues.
Translation Strategy: Paraphrasing

This proverb criticizes those who focus on minor or inconsequential matters while neglecting more pressing and significant issues. The phrase uses pastoral imagery, referencing a cow's tether, to symbolize a minor detail that becomes the center of a dispute. This imagery is firmly rooted in Najdi culture, reflecting its historical ties to rural and agrarian life, where cows and their tethers would have been familiar and practical symbols. The vividness of the original metaphor resonates with native speakers familiar with this cultural backdrop.

However, this cultural specificity poses challenges for translation. For English-speaking audiences who may lack familiarity with the symbolic role of cows and their tethers in rural Najdi life, the literal translation, "They quarrel over the cow's tether," might fail to communicate the intended criticism effectively. It risks being taken too literally or being misinterpreted as a statement about agricultural practices rather than as a metaphor for misplaced priorities.

Paraphrasing offers a solution by distilling the core message into a universally relatable form. The translation "They argue over trivial things and ignore the bigger issues" maintains the proverb's critical tone and highlights its broader meaning without relying on culturally specific references. This approach ensures that the moral lesson remains clear and impactful for English-speaking audiences, transcending cultural boundaries. By focusing on the universal concept of prioritizing the wrong issues, paraphrasing effectively bridges the cultural and linguistic gap, preserving the essence of the original proverb while making it accessible and meaningful to the target audience.

Proverb 4.2.4: الطول طول نخلة والعقل عقل صخلة
Transliteration: Al-ṭūl ṭūl nakhlah wa al-ʿaql ʿaql ṣakhlah
Literal Translation: His height is like a palm tree, but his mind like a goat's.
Accurate Translation: *Big in size, small in mind.*
Translation Strategy: Paraphrasing

This proverb juxtaposes physical stature with intellectual capacity, employing vivid imagery that compares a person's height to a palm tree (symbolizing grandeur) and their intellect to that of a goat (symbolizing foolishness). While this metaphor resonates deeply within Najdi culture, it presents significant challenges in translation. The cultural associations of palm trees as symbols of height and importance and goats as symbols of simplicity or lack of sophistication are not universally recognized. A literal translation, "His height is like a palm tree, but his mind like a goat's," risks confusion or misinterpretation among English-speaking audiences unfamiliar with these cultural connotations. The challenge lies in preserving the critical and humorous tone of the proverb while ensuring clarity and relatability in the target language.

To address these challenges, *Paraphrasing* was used to adapt the proverb as "Big in size, small in mind." This strategy eliminates culturally specific references while maintaining the proverb's critique of disproportion between physical and intellectual attributes. The adapted translation focuses on the universal concept of contrasting external grandeur with internal shortcomings, ensuring the message resonates with the target audience. Paraphrasing allows the translator to reframe the original metaphor in terms that align with English linguistic and cultural norms while preserving the proverb's evaluative tone. By employing this strategy, the translation achieves clarity, relevance, and accessibility, ensuring the proverb's core message is effectively communicated across cultural boundaries.

Proverb 4.2.5: الخطبه لي والعرس لشما
Transliteration: Al-khuṭbah lī wa al-ʿars li-Shammā
Literal Translation: The engagement is mine, but the wedding is for Shamma.
Suggested Accurate Translation: *I do the work, but someone else gets the reward.*
Equivalent English Proverb: *All the glory, none of the work.*
Reported Strategy: Paraphrasing

This proverb reflects frustration over situations where one individual puts in effort and initiates a process, only for someone else to reap the benefits or take credit. In Najdi culture, the specific imagery of an engagement and a wedding adds a layer of cultural depth, symbolizing effort (engagement) and reward (wedding) in a relational context. The cultural reference is deeply tied to social norms, where significant effort and preparation often go unnoticed while others enjoy the outcome.

The main challenge in translating this proverb lies in the culturally specific imagery. The mention of "engagement" and "wedding" may not carry the same metaphorical weight for English audiences and could lead to misinterpretation. A literal translation, *"The engagement is mine, but the wedding is for Shamma,"* would require additional context to explain the relational dynamics and the critique embedded in the proverb.

Paraphrasing is an appropriate strategy here, allowing the proverb's meaning to be communicated directly and effectively. The revised translation, *"I do the work, but someone else gets the reward,"* simplifies the expression while maintaining the underlying message of unfairness and frustration. Additionally, the equivalent English proverb, *"All the glory, none of the work,"* succinctly captures the same sentiment with a touch of humor, mirroring the critical tone of the original. This approach ensures that the emotional resonance and social critique embedded in the Najdi proverb are preserved while making the expression relatable and impactful for an English-speaking audience.

Proverb 4.2.6: غزال والشر زال
Transliteration: *Ghazāl wa al-sharr zāl*
Literal Translation: The deer is fine, and the harm has gone.
Suggested Accurate Translation: *You're recovering; the worst is behind you.*
Translation Strategy: Paraphrasing

This phrase is a motivational expression often said to someone recovering from illness, intended to uplift their spirits and encourage optimism. The metaphor of a "deer" symbolizes grace and vitality, while "the harm has gone" reflects the hope that the worst of the situation has passed.

Translating this proverb literally into English as *"The deer is fine, and the harm has gone"* would confuse readers unfamiliar with the cultural association between a deer and good health or recovery. Paraphrasing was employed to render it as *"You're recovering; the worst is behind you."* This translation prioritizes the intended message over the exact wording, ensuring the proverb is understood and meaningful in the target language. By focusing on the emotional tone and intended encouragement, the translation conveys the same supportive sentiment in a way that resonates universally. The challenge in translating this proverb lies in capturing the hopeful and encouraging tone while avoiding imagery that may lack cultural relevance for English speakers. Paraphrasing works well here as it allows for the simplification and adaptation of the original imagery to maintain the proverb's core purpose.

4.3 Cultural Substitution
Proverb 4.3.1: أسفرت وأنورت واستهلت وأمطرت
Transliteration: Asfarat wa anwārat wa istahallat wa amṭarat
Literal Translation: It shined, it brightened, it began, and it rained.
Suggested Accurate Translation: You've brought light, delight, and skies so bright.
Translation Strategy: Cultural Substitution with Poetic Adaptation

This proverb is a poetic and celebratory expression used to welcome a loved one, often emphasizing the joy and blessings their presence brings. In Najdi culture, rain serves as a positive metaphor for renewal, abundance, and divine grace, adding a spiritual and emotional dimension to the phrase. However, in English, rain is often associated with gloom or sadness, leading to a cultural dissonance that could misrepresent the intended tone of the proverb.

To address this challenge, cultural substitution was employed. The suggested translation, "You've brought light, delight, and skies so bright," replaces the culturally specific "rain" with "light," a metaphor more universally understood as representing positivity and renewal. This adaptation preserves the emotional and celebratory essence of the original while ensuring clarity and relatability for English-speaking audiences. Additionally, the use of rhyme mirrors the lyrical and poetic qualities of the original proverb, maintaining its stylistic charm.

By focusing on universally recognized themes of joy and brightness, cultural substitution bridges the cultural gap and ensures the proverb's warmth and hospitality resonate with the target audience. This approach prioritizes accessibility while preserving the original message's celebratory and welcoming tone.

Proverb 4.3.2: أمسك قردك لا يجيك أقرد منه
Transliteration: *Amsik qirdak lā yajīk aqrad minhu*
Literal Translation: Hold onto your monkey, lest a worse one comes.
Accurate Translation: Better the devil you know than the devil you don't.
Translation Strategy: Cultural Substitution

This proverb conveys a cautionary message, advising contentment with existing troubles or challenges to avoid encountering potentially worse situations. The metaphor of a "monkey" in the Najdi context symbolizes a problematic or burdensome issue. Within Najdi culture, the image of the monkey aligns with its characterization as mischievous or troublesome, effectively communicating the need for pragmatism and acceptance.

However, the metaphorical use of a monkey does not carry the same symbolic weight in English and might even be misinterpreted as humorous rather than cautionary. A literal translation, "Hold onto your monkey, lest a worse one comes," would likely confuse English audiences, failing to convey the intended moral. The challenge here lies in preserving the metaphor's pragmatic function while ensuring cultural relatability for English-speaking audiences.

To address this, cultural substitution was employed, replacing the monkey metaphor with the idiomatic expression "Better the devil you know than the devil you don't." This phrase is widely recognized in English and conveys an equivalent meaning: the wisdom of enduring known challenges rather than risking unknown and potentially greater ones. By substituting the culturally specific imagery of the monkey with a functionally similar expression, the translation ensures that the proverb's cautionary tone and practical advice are accessible and impactful.

Cultural substitution is particularly apt for this proverb as it emphasizes the proverb's pragmatic essence over literal fidelity. By aligning the translation with an existing English idiom, the strategy facilitates audience comprehension and resonance, preserving the moral lesson without requiring additional cultural explanation. This approach successfully bridges the cultural gap, ensuring the proverb's relevance and accessibility for English speakers while maintaining its original advisory intent.

 Proverb 4.3.3: كلن يحوش النار لقريصه
Transliteration: *Kullin yuḥawwish al-nār li-qurayṣah*
Literal Translation: Everyone pulls the fire to their own bread.
Accurate Translation: Everyone looks out for their own interests.
Translation Strategy: Cultural Substitution

This proverb critiques self-serving behavior, emphasizing how individuals often prioritize their own needs and interests over collective or altruistic concerns. The metaphor of "pulling the fire to their own bread" is deeply embedded in Najdi culture, where bread is a symbol of sustenance and the act of pulling fire signifies focusing energy or effort toward personal gain. The vivid imagery in the original proverb reflects a context familiar to Najdi audiences, where communal resources or shared efforts are often exploited for individual benefit.

However, this cultural metaphor might not resonate with English audiences. The connection between "fire" and "bread" as a representation of self-interest may appear obscure, potentially diminishing the impact of the proverb's critique. The challenge lies in preserving the moral lesson about self-centeredness while adapting it to an English-speaking audience unfamiliar with the metaphor's cultural underpinnings.

To address this, cultural substitution was used to translate the proverb as "Everyone looks out for their own interests." This adaptation replaces the culturally specific imagery with a straightforward and universally understood expression that conveys the same critical tone. By focusing on the universal concept of self-interest, the translation ensures that the proverb's meaning and moral critique remain clear and impactful for the target audience.

Cultural substitution is an appropriate strategy here as it prioritizes the functional equivalence of the proverb, ensuring its relevance and accessibility. This approach bridges the cultural gap by aligning the proverb's essence with a familiar expression in English, allowing the critical perspective on self-interest to resonate effectively with a broader audience.

Proverb 4.3.4: لا فات الفوت ما ينفع الصوت
Transliteration: *Lā fāt al-fawt mā yanfaʿ al-ṣawt*
Literal Translation: When time has passed, shouting is useless.
Accurate Translation: It's no use crying over spilled milk.
Reported Strategy: Cultural Substitution

This proverb emphasizes the futility of lamenting lost opportunities or irreversible mistakes. The original phrase uses imagery and rhythmic repetition that enhance its impact in Najdi Arabic, but these features may not translate effectively into English. The literal translation, "*When time has passed, shouting is useless,*" would convey the meaning but lacks the idiomatic quality that makes the original so effective. Cultural substitution is therefore the ideal strategy for translating this proverb. By adapting it to the widely

recognized English idiom "*It's no use crying over spilled milk,*" the translation aligns with the cultural expectations of the target audience while preserving the moral lesson. This substitution also ensures the proverb resonates with English speakers without requiring additional cultural explanation. The strategy balances fidelity to the source text with linguistic and cultural accessibility, successfully maintaining the tone and didactic purpose of the original.

The findings highlight the complex interplay of linguistic and cultural challenges in translating Najdi proverbs, showcasing strategies like dynamic equivalence, cultural substitution, paraphrasing, and functional equivalence. These approaches successfully adapt meaning and cultural essence for English-speaking audiences. The discussion now explores the broader implications of these strategies, evaluating their effectiveness in preserving cultural identity while ensuring clarity and resonance.

Proverb 4.3.5: الجح يدربي القرع
Transliteration: Al-jah yadribi al-qaraʿ
Literal Translation: The watermelon teaches the gourd.
Accurate Translation: The blind leading the blind.
Translation Strategy: Cultural Substitution

This proverb critiques the irony of one ill-equipped individual attempting to guide or advise another equally uninformed person. The metaphor of a watermelon "teaching" a gourd, both of which are agricultural items with no inherent capacity for knowledge or instruction, humorously emphasizes the futility and absurdity of such a dynamic. Rooted in the rural traditions of Najdi culture, the proverb reflects the agrarian context in which these crops were familiar symbols, lending relatability and humor to its intended lesson. However, the literal translation of this proverb risks misinterpretation by English-speaking audiences, who may interpret it literally as an anecdote about fruit rather than a metaphor for mutual incompetence.

To make the message accessible to a broader audience, the English equivalent "*The blind leading the blind*" has been used. This idiom captures the same critique of two unqualified individuals attempting to navigate a situation, leading to inevitable confusion or failure. The imagery of blindness effectively mirrors the lack of awareness or capability in the original. This culturally substituted translation preserves the humor and critical tone of the proverb while ensuring its meaning is understood across linguistic and cultural boundaries. By replacing the culturally specific metaphor of the watermelon and gourd with a universally recognized English idiom, the translation maintains the original proverb's essence and intent, offering clarity and impact for the target audience. This approach exemplifies cultural substitution, balancing fidelity to the original meaning with cultural adaptation to ensure effective communication.

5. Discussion

The study has highlighted the complex interplay between linguistic and cultural challenges in translating Najdi proverbs into English, offering insights into effective strategies for overcoming these obstacles. The findings reveal the intricate nature of Najdi idiomatic expressions, deeply rooted in cultural metaphors, social norms, and historical contexts, which often defy direct translation. Comparing these findings to existing literature further underscores the uniqueness of Najdi dialect translation challenges and the value of adopting flexible, audience-centered strategies.

One significant challenge is the idiomatic and metaphorical richness of Najdi proverbs, which often rely on culturally specific imagery to convey universal truths or moral lessons. For instance, the proverb "يدربيه السيل ويقول ديمة" (Yadrībih al-sayl wa yaqūl dīmah), translated as "He's drowning but says it's just a splash," required the use of dynamic equivalence to capture its critical tone. While a literal translation might have preserved the surface meaning, it would fail to communicate the proverb's underlying critique of denial or trivialization of serious issues. This finding aligns with Nida's (1964) concept of dynamic equivalence, which emphasizes the importance of preserving the effect of the original text on the target audience. Similarly, the equivalent English idiom "Burying your head in the sand" provides an alternative cultural adaptation, aligning the proverb's meaning with a familiar English expression.

Cultural embeddedness presented another layer of complexity, particularly in proverbs such as "أسفرت وأنورت واستهلت وأمطرت" (Asfarat wa anwārat wa istahallat wa amṭarat), where rain symbolizes joy and blessings in Najdi culture. Translating this proverb as "Your arrival brings light, delight, and skies so bright" employed dynamic equivalence with cultural adaptation to replace "rain" with "light," aligning the imagery with English cultural norms. This approach reflects Vermeer's (1989) Skopos theory, which prioritizes the functional purpose of the translation over strict adherence to the source text. Such adaptations ensure that the target audience understands the emotional tone and cultural resonance of the original, bridging the gap between distinct cultural frameworks.

Other proverbs required paraphrasing to address the challenges of culturally specific references and unfamiliar imagery. For example, "الخطبة لي والعرس لشما" (Al-khuṭbah lī wa al-ʿars li-Shammā), translated as "I do the work, but someone else gets the reward," simplifies the original expression while preserving its critical tone. The equivalent English idiom "All the glory, none of the work" adds a layer of humor and critique, enhancing its relatability for English-speaking audiences. Similarly, " ما حك ظهرك مثل ظفرك" (Mā ḥakk ẓahrek mithl ẓafrek), rendered as "If you want something done right, do it yourself," uses paraphrasing to distill

the core message while aligning it with a universally recognized expression. Dickins et al. (2016) highlight the value of paraphrasing in translating idioms with no direct equivalents, emphasizing its role in preserving the original's pragmatic meaning.

The findings also illustrate the importance of cultural substitution in translating expressions with deep cultural ties. In " أمسك قردك لا يجيك أقرد منه" (Amsik qirdak lā yajīk aqrad minhu), translated as "Better the devil you know than the devil you don't," the original imagery of a monkey was replaced with a culturally neutral metaphor familiar to English speakers. Baker and Malmkjaer (2001) and Alharbi (2023) argue that cultural substitution is particularly effective for translating culturally dense proverbs, ensuring that the target audience grasps the intended meaning without requiring extensive background knowledge.

The findings extend existing research by focusing specifically on Najdi proverbs, a dialectal subset that has received limited attention in translation studies. While previous studies, such as Ismail (2021) and Al-Majed (2020), emphasize the challenges of translating Arabic idioms broadly, this study highlights the distinctiveness of Najdi proverbs, including their unique linguistic features, such as phonological shifts, morphological variations, and syntactic peculiarities. By addressing these nuances, the study underscores the need for translators to possess not only linguistic competence but also cultural and contextual knowledge of both source and target languages.

6. Conclusion

This study has highlighted the significant challenges and effective strategies involved in translating Najdi proverbs into English. The primary challenges include the deep cultural embeddedness and metaphorical richness of Najdi expressions, which often lack direct linguistic equivalents in English. These complexities are further compounded by cultural differences between source and target audiences, necessitating careful adaptation to preserve the proverbs' meaning, emotional resonance, and cultural essence.

To address these challenges, strategies such as dynamic equivalence, paraphrasing, and cultural substitution have proven essential. These approaches enable translators to prioritize the functional meaning and cultural relevance of proverbs, ensuring clarity and relatability for English-speaking audiences. Dynamic equivalence effectively maintains the emotional and cultural impact of proverbs, while paraphrasing and cultural substitution adapt culturally specific imagery and idiomatic expressions to align with the target audience's context.

The findings of this study have practical implications for both translation practice and education. Translators are encouraged to adopt flexible and adaptive strategies, prioritizing intended meaning and audience comprehension over literal fidelity. Additionally, translation training programs should include culturally specific idiomatic expressions, offering students practical exercises that enhance their ability to navigate the complexities of dialectal translation.

A key innovation inspired by this study is the development of a *Najdi Proverbs Glossary*. Such a resource would serve as a repository documenting Najdi proverbs, their transliterations, literal translations, accurate translations, and cultural annotations. This glossary could support translators by providing culturally sensitive equivalents, assist educators in teaching dialectal and idiomatic translation, and facilitate researchers in conducting comparative studies. Furthermore, the proposed glossary could be seamlessly integrated into online translation tools, enhancing their ability to produce accurate and culturally sensitive translations. This innovation would bridge cultural gaps and ensure that the richness of Saudi traditions is effectively communicated to global audiences.

Future research should explore the reception of translated Najdi proverbs among English-speaking audiences to assess the effectiveness of applied strategies. Comparative studies of other Saudi dialects could further enrich the understanding of regional linguistic and cultural diversity. In conclusion, translating Najdi proverbs into English is a rewarding yet intricate endeavor, requiring a balance of linguistic accuracy and cultural adaptation. This study not only contributes to the discourse on translation studies but also supports the broader goal of documenting and preserving Saudi cultural heritage, aligning with the vision of promoting global understanding through cross-cultural communication.

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