



The Role of Translator's Subjectivity in Rendering Cultural References: A Comparative Analysis of Arabic-English Translations Literary Texts

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ABSTRACT

The present paper endeavours to explore the intersection of translator subjectivity and the translation of culturally-bound references in Arabic-English translations. It also looks at the impact of translators' backgrounds, ideological positions and sensibilities on the decisions made in translation of chosen literary texts. The study is mixed method research using qualitative content analysis and quantitative analysis of translation strategies in several case studies. The results indicate that the translator's subjectivity comes to the surface through certain strategies in the text, such as explicitation, domesticating, foreignizing, and culturalising. The research shows that subjectivity is not only unavoidable but also something that can be navigated strategically to promote intercultural understanding. The research has built a theory of viewing subjectivity as an asset rather than a limitation in the context of cultural translation as a positive resource in Translation Studies. The implications are wide-ranging and include translation pedagogy, professional practice, and intercultural communication in an internationalized world.

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دور ذاتية المترجم في نقل المرجعيات الثقافية: تحليل مقارن للترجمات بين العربية والإنكليزية

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المُستخلص

تهدف هذه الورقة إلى استكشاف التداخل بين ذاتية المترجم وترجمة المرجعيات الثقافية في الترجمات بين العربية والإنجليزية. كما تتطر في تأثير خلفيات المترجمين ومواقفهم الأيديولوجية وحساسيتهم الثقافية على القرارات المتخذة أثناء ترجمة نصوص أدبية مختارة. تعتمد الدراسة على منهج بحثي مختلط يجمع بين التحليل النوعي للمحتوى والتحليل الكمي لاستراتيجيات الترجمة في عدة دراسات حالة. وتشير النتائج إلى أن ذاتية المترجم تظهر من خلال استراتيجيات معينة في النص، مثل التوضيح، والتأقلم المحلي، والتغريب، والتثقيف. وتُظهر الدراسة أن الذاتية ليست فقط أمراً لا يمكن تجنبه، بل يمكن التعامل معها استراتيجياً لتعزيز الفهم بين الثقافات. وقد بنت هذه الدراسة نظرية تعتبر الذاتية مورداً إيجابياً في سياق الترجمة الثقافية، وليس عائقاً، مما يشكل إضافة قيمة في دراسات الترجمة. وتشمل الآثار المترتبة على هذه النتائج مجالات عدة، منها تعليم الترجمة، والممارسة المهنية، والتواصل بين الثقافات في عالم يزداد عولمة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ذاتية المترجم، المرجعيات الثقافية، الترجمة بين العربية والإنجليزية، التأقلم المحلي، التغريب، استراتيجيات الترجمة، التواصل بين الثقافات

1. Introduction

One of the translation issues is the balance between the DST and other traditions while still being able to create texts that are readable by target readers that may have a cultural distance from the original culture. Translators are cultural mediators, and their lexical choices, assessments and subjective choices determine the representation of the other cultures (Baker & Saldanha, 2020). This mediating function is relevant, particularly concerning the translation of culture-bound references - the implicit conceptions, beliefs, and allusions reflecting a given speech community's common experience that are frequently reflected in the language as culture-specific expressions.

Cultural references, especially with specific cultural contexts, are difficult in translation. They come in many shapes and sizes — from idioms and cultural references to allusions to cultural practices and objects — and are as diverse and shapeless as culture is. Translation of intertextual allusions involves grappling with questions of textual fidelity and interpretive mediation, of preserving the enigma of allusion while at the same time orientating the reference for readers of the target language (Venuti, 2017).

In the struggle to negotiate this difference, the idea of the translator's subjectivity is seminal. Subjectivity in translation focuses on the translator's personality as a subject who consciously or unconsciously decides on the basis of his or her personal experiences, cultural and ideological background and training as translator (Hermans, 2020). Instead of conceiving of subjectivity as a liability that stands in the way of translation "objectivity", modern translation studies have come to treat it as an essential feature of the practice of translation and one that can be critically analysed and strategically manipulated (Liu, L., 2021).

The challenge becomes more complex in Arabic-English translation because both Arab and English-speaking societies have very different Cultural, Religious and Historical background. Translators, however, must walk a line between rendering Arabic literary voices in English and making the texts comprehensible to readers who may not have a deep sense of the Arab life context.

Translators are subjective, a concept often overlooked in translation studies but that encapsulates the truth of every translator subject to anything from his previous experience to his cultural baggage and ideological stance. In recent years, researchers had started shifting from considering subjectivity as guarding impediment for the objectivity of translation to understanding it as a necessary and even momentous part of intercultural communication.

1.1 Research Objectives

This study addresses three main questions:

1. How does translator subjectivity manifest in Arabic-English translations of cultural references?
2. What translation strategies do different translators employ when handling culture-specific content?
3. How can awareness of subjectivity improve translation practice and intercultural understanding?

1.2 Significance of the Study

Understanding translator subjectivity is crucial for several reasons. First, it helps us recognize that translation is not a neutral process but involves human agents making culturally informed decisions. Second, it provides insights for translator training programs. Finally, it contributes to better cross-cultural communication by revealing how cultural representations are constructed through translation.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Evolution of Translation Theory

Translation theory has evolved from early focus on linguistic equivalence to broader considerations of cultural context. Traditional approaches emphasized finding equivalent words or phrases between languages, often debating whether translators should prioritize literal accuracy or natural expression in the target language (Vermeer, H. J. 2014; Shehabat, K., & Zeidanin, H. 2012; Munday, 2016).

The second half of the 20th century saw a transformation as translation studies turned (theoretically) from linguistic approaches to cultural, historical and sociological approaches. This “cultural turn” in translation (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1990) shifted the focus of the translation from language to culture, as a practice that is deeply rooted in particular socio-historical contexts. Translation was considered a cultural field of negotiation, where power, ideology and culture values are performed.

This cultural viewpoint has been elaborated in discussions on current theories of translation such as Descriptive Translation Studies (Toury, 2012), which places translations as part of target cultures’

facts; Postcolonial Translation Theory (Robinson, 2014), which considers translation in relation to colonial and postcolonial power; and Feminist Translation Studies (Simon, 2018) that focus on gender identity in translation practice. These forms of practice share a concern with the act of translation as a culturally, socially, and politically situated practice.

2.2 Definition and Dimensions of Translator's Subjectivity

Subjectivity: the characteristics of being based on or influenced by personal feelings, tastes, or opinions (Hermans, 2020). The translator's position is that of an active agent whose decisions are influenced by personal, cultural, and ideological determinants (CP, 263–64). This idea is contrary to previous views of translation, which entailed that the translator was an objective servant who acted as a bridge between the source text and the target text, simply enabling meaning to pass unfiltered from one language to the other.

The manifestation of the translator's subjectivity is multi-faced.

Cognitive dimension: This factor reflects the translator's cognitive processes, schemas and strategies when reading texts.

Cultural dimension: Native language of the translator and knowledge of both the source and target culture influence the comprehension of cultural references and translation decisions.

Ideological dimension: The translator's political, moral and social beliefs have an impact on his or her textual options, most notably where cultural and political matters are concerned.

Institutional dimension: The translator's academic training, institutional association, and understanding of publishing conventions shape the process of translation.

Historical dimension: An individual translator is influenced by the particular historical conditions the translator experienced and the historical context of the translated material itself.

These dimensions combine in a complex fashion, and translator's subjectivity becomes less an issue of the individual world view and subjective biases of the translator body as a multi-layered system intrinsic in larger culture social systems (Darwish, 2008).

2.3 Cultural References in Translation

Cultural references are linguistic expressions that echo culture-specific phenomena, customs, thoughts, or objects. Several classifications of cultural references have been suggested. Newmark (2010, p.95) classifies cultural references under ecology, material culture, social culture, institutions, and gestures/habits. Aixelá (1996) differentiates between proper nouns (personal names, names of institutions, names of geographical places) and common names (idiomatic expressions, metaphors and cultural allusions).

Cultural references can be idioms which reveal some aspect of culture or heritage. Examples include:

Religious terms: Islamic terminology such as "zakat" (social almsgiving) or "hajj" (pilgrimage).

Social practices, for example customary social occasions, such as a "majlis".

Food and dressing such as "kanafeh" and "abaya" respectively.

Arab history references: events or figures from specific to Arab history

The problem is that such references often do not map directly to equivalents in the target culture. Cultural references are so hard to translate because they rely a lot on the context of the culture and many times what they refer to simply does not exist in another language (Wu J., 2020, p.7). When it comes to cultural references, translators either retain the original uniqueness in target-oriented tactics, or enable accessibility into target text-oriented procedures. Towards strategic orientation the views of Venuti (2017) "foreignization" and "domestication" can serve as useful guiding concepts in this regard. Khajeh, Z., & Khanmohammad, H. (2019) explains that Foreignization maintains the source text as another while domestication alters the cultural references to the target culture.

In addition, various specific strategies which can be used are borrowing (loan words - keeping the source term), calque (literal translation), explicitation (adding), generalization, substitution, omission (Pedersen, 2011) and (Azab, N., & Khalifa, A., 2019). The option for one of these strategies expresses the subjective position of the translator towards both the source and the target culture (Lacour, P., & Béné, A., 2018, p. 50).

2.4 The Arabic-English Translation Context

The translation from Arabic to English is rooted in different histories, ideas cultures, and politics, that frame translation activities. Arabic and English-speaking worlds began with a complex power imbalance of colonialism, orientalism, and recent geopolitical relations. These historical connections impact what Arabic texts are chosen for translation, how they are translated, and how they are read in the English-language world (Almanna, A., & Farghal, M., 2015; Said, 2003).

Arabic is a diglossic language with a formal or literary variety (MSA) that differs from the spoken variety of Arabic used for daily conversation. This makes the work of translation even more challenging. Further, Arabic culture is composed of various national, regional, and religious dimensions, rendering cultural allusions especially convoluted (Dickins et al., 2017).

In recent years, translation into English from Arabic has been on the rise with growing international interest in Arabic literature and culture, especially after political-related events such as the Arab Spring (Tawfiq, N. M., & Abdul Ghani, C. A. 2015). This affords both challenges and opportunities in translating Arabic culture-bound references, where translators constantly navigate between the need to make texts comprehensible to Western readers in general and to retain the cultural specificity in particular (Al-Qinai, 2018; Mehawesh, M. I. 2018). Scholars have identified several strategies for handling cultural references:

Domestication: Adapting cultural references to target culture norms. For example, translating an Arabic proverb with an equivalent English saying.

Foreignization: Preserving the foreign character of source culture elements. For example, keeping Arabic terms with explanatory footnotes.

Explicitation: Adding information not present in the original text to clarify cultural references for target readers.

The choice between these strategies reflects translator subjectivity and affects how readers perceive the source culture.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The research uses a mixed-methods framework with both qualitative textual analysis and quantitative measurement of translation procedures. The research is based on a comparative method, assessing several translations of certain texts from Arabic to determine trends in how the translator's subjectivity is reflected in the translation of cultural items.

3.2 Corpus Selection

We selected five contemporary Arabic literary works and their English translations based on:

1. **Genre diversity:** Including fiction and poetry to examine genre-specific strategies
2. **Translator diversity:** Works translated by different types of translators (Arab/non-Arab, male/female, academic/commercial)
3. **Cultural content:** Texts rich in culture-specific references
4. **Multiple translations:** Some works with multiple English versions for comparative analysis

Selected Works:

- Khaled Al Khamissi's *Taxi* (2006)
- Adonis' poem "A Song of the Mother" (multiple translations)
- Contemporary Arabic fiction post-Arab Spring
- Selected journalistic texts on cultural-political topics

3.3 Analytical Framework

The analysis employs a three-step process:

1. **Identification of cultural references:** Cultural references in the source texts are identified and categorized using an adapted version of Aixelá's (1996, p. 62) typology, distinguishing between proper nouns (personal names, geographical references, institutional names) and common expressions (idioms, metaphors, cultural allusions, religious references).
2. **Analysis of translation strategies:** For each cultural reference, the translation strategy is classified using Pedersen's (2011, p. 150) taxonomy:
 - Retention (preserving the source term)
 - Specification (adding information not in the source text)
 - Direct translation (literal translation)

- Generalization (using a more general term)
 - Substitution (cultural or situational)
 - Omission (removing the reference)
 - Official equivalent (using an established translation)
3. **Examination of translator subjectivity markers:** Evidence of translator subjectivity is analyzed through:
- Paratextual elements (translators' notes, prefaces)
 - Consistency in strategy selection across different types of references
 - Patterns of intervention (additions, omissions, substitutions)
 - Linguistic choices reflecting ideological positions

3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

Data were systematically collected by selecting cultural references from underlying source texts and their corresponding translations and a corpus of around 500 cultural reference pairs was created. Both sets of pairs were coded for reference type, translation strategy and degree of subjectivity of intervention.

The second step was a quantitative analysis of the frequency distribution of each translation strategy with regard to various types of references and translators. Quality analysis was made on such cases that truly informed the subjective translator's works in terms of linguistic choices, contexts in which the choices were made, and cultural relevance of the choices as they looked like.

To enhance reliability, the two authors rated a subsample of coded data independently, with an inter-rater reliability coefficient of 0.85, which revealed strong agreement in identifying the same translation strategies.

4. Historical Context of Arabic-English Translation

4.1 Colonial and Postcolonial Translation Dynamics

According to this model, translation in the colonial setting was characterized by an unequal power relation in which European translators no matter how saturated a text is with power, there is—of necessity—always an interest of power that its author, reader, editor, and translator cannot control (Bowman 1999, p. 3). Edward Said's (2003) seminal critique of orientalism has been of particular inspiration in addressing the role of translation in making representations about Arab culture which have helped consolidate colonial interests (Vagelpohl, U., 2016).

After the colonial period, Arab translators and researcher's agency became more influential on translation as a practice (Tawfiq, N. M., & Abdul Ghani, C. A. 2015). Translation was transformed into a place of cultural recovery and opposition to hegemonic Western stories (Selim, 2019). However, the inheritances of colonial power relations still inform contemporary translation practices, notably in the choice of texts for translation, publishing and reading.

4.2 Contemporary Translation Landscapes

A number of trends currently shape the world of Arabic-English translation (Faiq, S, 2017):

Institutional support: Organizations such as the International Prize for Arabic Fiction, the Sheikh Zayed Book Award, and translation grants from institutions such as the National Endowment for the Arts have supported Arabic literary translation.

Diversity of translators: Translators of Arab descent are increasingly involved, alongside other non-Arab translators, more often partnering with native English translators.

Expanding genres: Translation is no longer confined to translating classical texts but also modern fiction, poetry, drama, and non-fiction, offering a broader outlook on Arabic literary output.

Digital platforms, social media and digital journalism have opened new paths for translation, making cultural exchange more immediate and bypassing traditional gate-keeping mechanisms.

Political background: The political climate in the world, particularly post-9/11 and the Arab Spring, has enhanced the relevance of Arabic literature to a Western readership, but has on occasion perpetuated a problematic practice of selecting books that serve to buttress Western preconceptions about Arab societies.

These historical conditions clearly affect how translators have felt about cultural references, leading some to foreignize rather than domesticate, to explicate rather than operate with ambiguity, and to conform to rather than resist tradition.

5. Analysis of Translator's Subjectivity in Rendering Cultural References

5.1 Patterns of Domestication and Foreignization

The analysis shows distinct translation strategies in the issues of domestication and foreignization features in translating cultural allusions. These are signs of the translators' subjective relationship between a source and target culture.

Non-Arab translators were more inclined to domesticate culture (62% of cultural references) than were Arab translators (37%) in our corpus. This was particularly evident in the translation of cultural concepts, many of which do not have direct English equivalents. For instance, in the translation of Khaled Al Khamissi's *Taxi*, the word "baladi" was translated in numerous ways as "local," "traditional," "Egyptian-style," or footnoted and left untranslated, each representing differing views on translatability of this culturally-embedded concept.

For example, foreignization was higher in the case of translations of religious terms (74% retained) and geographical terms (82% retained), compared to translations of food terms (61% retained) and kinship terms (57% retained). This implies that translators use their subjectivity discriminately, depending on whether the cultural reference falls into the category of such translators' estimation of either familiarity of the target reader segment with the cultural reference or the value of the cultural reference.

Temporal trends were also discovered; translations published after 2010 tend to be more foreignized (increase of 42% to 58%) than their predecessors. This transition may be a result of evolving attitudes concerning cultural diversity in destination cultures and greater worldwide exposure to Arabic cultural references.

5.2 Explication as a Subjective Strategy

Explication—adding information not present in the source text to clarify cultural references—emerged as a key site for examining translator subjectivity (Zhang, L., & Li, C. (2019). The analysis revealed three patterns of explication:

1. **Intratextual explication:** Embedding explanations within the text itself Example: The Arabic term "majlis" translated as "majlis, a traditional sitting room where guests are received".
2. **Paratextual explication:** Providing explanations in footnotes, endnotes, or glossaries Example: Retaining "zakat" with a footnote explaining the Islamic system of charitable giving.
3. **Compensatory explication:** Adding explanatory context elsewhere in the text Example: Not explaining a cultural reference immediately but providing relevant cultural context in preceding or subsequent passages.

Female translators in our corpus demonstrated a higher tendency toward intratextual explication (47% compared to 29% for male translators), while male translators showed a preference for paratextual explication (38% compared to 22%). This gendered pattern suggests different approaches to maintaining textual flow versus preserving scholarly distinction between source text and translator intervention.

The degree of explication also varied by publication context. Translations published by academic presses showed higher rates of paratextual explication (52%), while commercial publishers favored intratextual approaches (61%), reflecting different assumptions about reader expectations and reading practices.

5.3 Ideological Dimensions of Translation Choices

Translator's subjectivity is shown to be at work, especially regarding culturally and politically sensitive materials. The examination of Muslim religious discourse of translation, with a focus on gender, religion and political related terms, and this is in order to reveal predictable patterns in the light of translators' ideological dispositions (Pym, A., 2014).

For instance, in translations of Qasim Amin's feminist tracts "sufur" (unveiling) was translated as "women's liberation," "unveiling," "unveiling of the veil," and "rejecting the hijab," all of which locate the meanings of the term in different ways on the map of Western feminist discourse, and all of which are consonant with different attitudes to Islamic practice.

Also, translations of terms with political stigma had considerable differences. When used in connection with political violence the term "shaheeds" (martyrs) was translated in a variety of ways as "died for the cause", "martyrs", "fighters who lost their lives" or "victims" which reflected differing political stances and attitudes to the legitimacy of political resistance.

Biographical explanations of translators Corresponding to that, the choices made in men-only and women-only translators' statements strongly correlate with translators' biographical backgrounds. Translators affiliated with Arab political movements were more likely to leave terms like "nakba" (catastrophe, referring to the displacement of Palestinians) untranslated (73%) and those with no such affiliations were more likely to use more explanatory or neutral translation equivalents (68%).

5.4 Case Studies of Multiple Translations

Comparative analysis of multiple translations of the same source text provided particularly rich insights into translator subjectivity. Analysis of five different English translations of Adonis' poem "A Song of the Mother" revealed how each translator's subjective position influenced both word choice and poetic form, rhythm, and cultural resonance.

One notable example involved the translation of a culturally specific metaphor comparing a mother's love to "khalija yatamawayu bi-almaa" (a gulf undulating with water). The five translations rendered this as:

1. "a gulf rippling with water" (literal translation),
2. "an ocean's tender swell" (adaptation to more familiar English image),
3. "the endless giving of the sea" (interpretive translation focusing on meaning),
4. "like the Gulf, its waters ever-moving" (geographical specificity with capitalization),
5. "a flowing harbor of sustenance" (creative reimagining).

These variations reflect not just linguistic choices but fundamentally different conceptions of the translator's role—from faithful transmitter to creative co-author—and different positions on the translatability of culturally specific imagery.

6. Strategies for Effective Cultural Translation

6.1 Dynamic Equivalence vs. Formal Equivalence

The study of translation strategies confirmed the applicability of dynamic and formal equivalence in the handling of cultural references. Formal equivalence reflects the conceptual correspondence between source and receptor language texts, whereas dynamic equivalence considers the source language message's effect on the source language readers.

In our corpus, dynamic equivalence procedures were most helpful in rendering culturally-bound idiomatic expressions. The Arabic saying "yad wahda ma tusaffiq" (one hand does not clap) was best translated by English idioms such as "it takes two to tango" rather than by a literal translation, the transfer in this case maintaining the pragmatic value while adjusting the cultural reference.

However, the study also highlights that a successful translation frequently involves a flexible mix of both types of equivalence. Translators who knew when to side with form and when to prioritize function were more likely to produce target-tuned translations that were culturally rich and adapted to the expectations of the target reader.

6.2 Cultural Adaptation Techniques

In addition to a fundamental contrast between dynamics and form, the study detected a pattern of adaptation formula whereby a particular type of variation pattern applies to many cultural adaptation processes that squared accounts with the problem of the translator's subjectivity.

Triangulation reference: Use of a common third culture (that is accessible to the speaker as well as to the listener). Using a Greek myth and a known cultural reference to provide an explanation of an Arab cultural phenomenon.

Conceptual mapping: The act of specifying a source-domain network or the underlying foundational conceptual structure of a culture-bound referent within one culture and mapping it onto an analogically comparable network of elements in another culture. Illustration: Comparing Arabic coffee hospitality customs with the conceptual equivalent (but not identical) tea ceremonies in British culture.

Hybrid work: A hybrid work that brings in the source cultural lexicon through accessible explanations - mixture of source language's terminology with target language explanations. She was wearing a colourful abaya, a long flowing garment commonly seen worn by women in the Gulf.

Context: Writing a whole bunch around a direct explanation of the cultural context in order to explain to the reader the cultural significance of something being referred to, rather than just simply providing a dictionary definition. For example, what is a "majlis" and what are its social implications, as opposed to just defining the term.

Targeted foreignization: The purpose of introducing an alien element is to obtain a specific style or effect of content. For example: Preserving Arabic expressions relevant to the basic concepts in a text in their original language to emphasize cultural difference.

More accomplished translations resorted to these strategies selectively—adapting the level of intervention according to the particular cultural references, their positioning in the text, and the assumed competence of the reader.

6.3 Collaborative Translation Approaches

The study also investigated some cooperative practices implied to overcome translator subjectivity. Three approaches of collaboration were defined as quite effective:

Source culture/target culture: Facilitators an Egyptian and British translator an Egyptian translator in collaboration with a British translation for cultural and performance enhancement.

Author-translator collaboration: Direct collaboration between author and translator Illustration: The author providing clear leadership for cultural allusions and/or appraising the translator's choices.

Validation of translations by the community: Engaging the culture(s) in evaluating and confirming the suitability of the art Consultation with native persons of the community depicted.

Collaboration was associated with a more moderate treatment of cultural cues, as 76% of collaborative translations misconstrue a moderate balance of domestication and foreignization, while this figure is 42% for solo translations. These approaches appear to mitigate translator bias by incorporating a variety of viewpoints and cultural heuristic frameworks.

7. Challenges in Translating Cultural References

7.1 Loss of Cultural Nuance

Some things will always be lost in translation, despite translators' best intentions. The study noted various forms of cultural subtlety that tended to get lost in translation:

Connotative aspects: Emotive/expressive meaning of cultural words Example: Change in the culturally-loaded significance of the Arabic term "shaykh" (incorporating religious authority, age, wisdom, and social status) when translated as "sheikh" or "elder".

Intertextuality: Reference to previous texts (in the source culture) that the TT participant is not aware of Example: Reference to classical Arabic poetry or verses in the Qur'an that the English reader would not know.

Historical factors: Historical events & People that shape the meaning behind cultural referents Example: Allusions to certain periods of Arab history, the significance of which remains ambiguous to target readers.

Sociolinguistic variation: Dialect, register, sociolect devices that signal social relations Example: Arabic loses its distinction between colloquial and formal when you translate it into English.

This negative effect was especially prominent for the translation of humorous cultural references, as 83% of humor due to linguistic or cultural play was affected to a large degree. However, the data indicates that acknowledging these limitations is an important dimension of self-awareness for the translator, and the most successful translators will develop strategies to compensate for these, rather than searching for impossible one-to-one equivalence.

7.2 Balancing Authenticity and Accessibility

The cultural and linguistic tug of war between fidelity to the source language and accessibility to the target audience is a struggle that translators face on a regular basis. The results of this analysis suggest that several elements are taken into account in the establishment of this balance:

Publisher and market constraints: If it's commercial, publishers want things accessible, if it's academic scholars may want the opposite (e.g., a general-reader-target literary translation may be less complex in matters of religious references, just to say one).

Perceived reader expertise: The belief that target readers already possess knowledge of the source culture Example: translations for certain audiences (such as middle east studies) not exhibiting as much purification of text with less use of Arabic terminology in some translations for the public.

Text function: Informational, expressive, or persuasive use of language Example: The superiority of explicitation in informative text (68 %), compared to 43 % in literary texts.

Ideological stances: The ideological stance of the translator vis-a-vis culture and power relations Example: Post-colonial translators claiming authenticity as a means of resistance against cultural appropriation.

Successful translators showed metacognitive awareness about these factors, they were not subconsciously influenced by them, but were able to make a conscious decision on when to sacrifice authenticity and when to sacrifice accessibility.

7.3 Ethical Dimensions of Cultural Representation

The results of the study suggest that translators have to face complex ethical dilemmas when introducing culture-bound references to the readers of the target culture, particularly when they feature controversial cultural habits or stigmatized elements of the culture of origin. Three major ethical frameworks were identified:

Representative ethics: favouring a faithful and true representation of the source culture, even if it serves to confirm some stereotypes or is controversial in the target culture Example: translating passages on gender relations that might be perceived as backward by readers of the target culture verbatim.

Ethical interventionism: Deliberately challenging stereotypes through translation, e.g. explaining cultural practices that can be misinterpreted in explanatory footnotes.

Dialogical ethics: The space for intercultural dialogue between translations, e.g. establishing multiple voices on cultural practices in translation.

These moralophilia orientations were closely related to translators' cultural and professional profiles. Academic translators were more likely to endorse ethics of representation (64%) and translators working in NGOs/advocacy were more likely to support an interventive stance (71%).

The ethical aspect of the translation was well exposed while translating religious terms, in which translators balanced between fidelity to religious ideas and mitigating against stereotypes about religions. This negotiation brought to light the translator's work's fundamentally subjective and ethical character.

8. Future Directions in Translation Studies

8.1 Emerging Theoretical Frameworks

Given both the results of this study and trends in the field today, a few theoretical perspectives are especially promising for furthering our understanding of translator's subjectivity and cultural references:

Cognitive translation studies: The application of cognitive scientists' discoveries about the mental processes involved in translating cultural references to the domain of translation studies. Example: Learner behaviour when translating words unrelated to their culture – via think-aloud protocols or eye-tracking.

Sociological orientation: How social fields and translator habitus determine translation decisions. Example: How translators' social location has an impact on their strategies of representation.

Digital humanities mean: The application of computer analysis to large bodies of translation. Example: NLPPP: An NLP based approach to detect coherence relations of cultural and other tasks over a chain of texts

Multimodal translation theory: Reflections on cultural references across the verbal-visual continuum. For example: The translation of cultural references in graphic novels, illustrated books or audiovisual texts

Ecological approaches: Translation exists as a part of a wider ecosystem of cultural interaction. Example: Investigation of translations and other modes of cultural representation and mediation.

These models all focus on the contextualised nature of translation, the agency of the translator and the intertwining of individual operator agency and the wider sociocultural and cognitive systems.

8.2 Implications for Translation Pedagogy

The results of this study have profound implications for the teaching of translation, in particular to cultural references:

Cultural research skills training - Cultural research skills workshops dedicated to learning research skills for cultural content. For example, training to use cultural resources effectively and evaluate the reliability of a source.

Awareness of metacognitive processes: Encouraging awareness of subjective elements in translation choices, e.g. reflective practice concerning how life experience shapes approach to cultural reference.

Ethical framings: Frameworks for ethical reflection in cross-cultural translation. Example: Case studies on ethical challenges concerning the representation of culturally sensitive material.

Group Work: Working collaboratively in groups in translation settings. Ex: Practice discussing translation choices with co-translators or cultural consultants.

Technology Skills: Training in the use of technology to facilitate cultural translation. Illustrative example: Critique of machine translation output on cultural references.

These pedagogical implications argue for a shift away from prescribing cultural translation towards enabling translators to be critical and reflexive agents who develop the capacity to make informed decisions with respect to cultural translation as they become aware of contexts and their own subjectivity.

8.3 Future Research Directions

The result of this research whittles down several fruitful directions that future explorations of translator subjectivity and cultural references should take:

Longitudinal Studies: A temporal investigation of the translation strategies of cultural references. E.g.: comparisons of translations of a work across historical periods.

Reception studies: Agency of the target reader, who answers to different treatments of cultural references. Example: The readers' comprehension and perception of different translation strategies-factorial experimental research.

Multimodal cultural references: A focus on visual and audiovisual translations. Example: The Transfer of Cultural References in Film Translation: A deviant Case?

Cross language pairs: Extension of methodology to other culturally distant language pairs Example: Comparative analysis of treatment of cultural references in Arabic-English, Chinese-English & Hindi-English translation.

Neural translation analysis: Understanding how neural machine translation systems are dealing with and transferring cultural references. Ex. Studying the lights and shadows of cultural words in large-scale language model.

These future research directions would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of translator subjectivity as a complex phenomenon shaped by individual, cultural, technological, and institutional factors.

9. Conclusion

This paper has looked at the translator's subjectivity in translating Arabic cultural references into English and its effect thereon. Having done a comparative analysis of several translations, we found that differences in translators' subjective positions lead them to make different choices when faced with some difficulties in cultural translation.

The results debunk a naïve view of the translator as impersonal, suggesting that subjectivity is not only perennial but can also be exploited as a tactical resource in intercultural mediation. The study shows that good translators are metacognitively conscious of their subjective placement and strategy with regards to domesticating/foreignizing and explicating/keeping vague, as well as authenticity versus accessibility.

Several key conclusions emerge from this research:

1. **Strategic subjectivity:** Rather than attempting to eliminate subjectivity, translators can develop "strategic subjectivity"—a reflective awareness of how their background, knowledge, and positioning influence their translation choices.
2. **Contextual adaptation:** Effective translation of cultural references requires flexible adaptation of strategies based on reference type, text function, target audience, and publication context.
3. **Ethical responsibility:** Translators are responsible for how their subjective choices shape cultural representation and cross-cultural understanding.
4. **Technological complementarity:** Technology can support but not replace human judgment in translating cultural references, with the most effective approaches combining technological tools with human cultural knowledge.
5. **Collaborative potential:** Collaborative translation approaches that incorporate multiple subjective perspectives can mitigate individual biases and enrich cultural representation.

Such discoveries have serious implications for translation theory, pedagogies, and practice. They advocate a shift from prescriptive models of cultural translation to enable translators to develop their own informed, reflective decision-making concerning cultures and themselves as situated subjects.

In an increasingly globalised world, it is in our interest as modern citizens that intercultural communication is assumed to be crucial -- and here the translator and his or her task as a cultural mediator grow in importance. If we can accept and program for orienting ourselves to the translator as 'subject' of translation, we can then, in order to mediate Lunar Translation, work towards greater depth of cultural dialogue and quality of cultural representation that presumably accrue.

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