

## CHAPTER THREE

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

*Every literary unit from the individual sentence to the whole order of words can be seen in relation to the concept of system. In particular, we can look at individual works, literary genres, and the whole of literature as related systems and at literature as a system within the larger system of human culture.*

Robert Scholes (1974, p. 10)

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The present chapter sets out to discuss some theoretical issues relevant to translation strategies that are the turn of translation activity. It also presents a hypothetical collection of prescriptive and descriptive approaches to translation, with a view to identifying the intricacies of translating cultural signs.

The purpose of translation raises the question of the extent to which communication is possible from one culture to another and of what can be communicated. In this respect, translation scholars (St. Pierre, 1997, p. 423) have argued that if there are limits to translatability, and if these limits are social, cultural and historical in nature, then the translation of texts is put into question by the obligation to translate. In other words, translation is made necessary by the fact that cultures and languages differ, but it is also made difficult by this difference.

Wang (1985) affirms that the greatest difficulty in translation lies in the difference between two cultures and that even those who take a linguistic approach to translation have devoted much attention to cultural problems. Vermeer (1986), on the other hand, opposes the idea that translation is basically a matter of language: for him translation is mainly a cross-culture transfer. Hatim and Mason point out that:

Inevitably we feed our own beliefs, knowledge, attitudes and so on into our processing of texts, so that any translation will, to some extent, reflect the translator's own mental and cultural outlook, despite the best of impartial intentions. (1990, p. 11)

This indicates that translators should, therefore, be extremely aware of their own cultural identity, and for this reason translators need to understand how their own culture influences perception.

## **3.2 METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES**

### **3.2.1 DATA SOURCE**

The discussion of cultural expressions and cultural dimensions in the present study is based on the analysis of a literary text; namely, an Arabic novel along with its English translation. The novel entitled *Malhamat Al-Ḥarāfish* whose translation is *The Ḥarāfish*. This novel is written by Naguib Mahfouz (1977) and published by Maktabat Misr and consists of a total 563 pages. The novel is translated by Catherine Cobham (1992) and published by Doubleday and consists of a total 406 pages.

### **3.2.2 DATA COLLECTION**

The reasons behind selecting the above novel are numerous: (1) it represents a collision of culture and character; (2) it addresses the major ideological problems confronting the Arabs; (3) it is infused with culture-bound elements (e.g., ideological names, events, people, and intertextual references); (4) the language of the novel is a combination of Modern Standard Arabic and Dialectical Egyptian Arabic. The significance of this lies in the fact that dialectical Arabic is a genuine representation of cultural norms, which in turn are important reflections of different linguistic phenomena; (5) the novel is derived from daily life situations which are dramatised through the artistic touches of connotations and literary devices, and finally (6) Naguib Mahfouz has been the most popular and famous novelist in the Arab world. He became the centre of attention by moving the Arabic novel to the international standard, especially after his winning the Nobel Prize in 1988.

In general, Mahfouz's familiarity with the masses makes him feel at home and enables him to reveal the truth of the Egyptian society. He is a 'true' representative of cultural beliefs, cognitive attitudes, social costumes of Arab culture and paying attention to the importance of the religious factor in the life of society. This makes Mahfouz's works interesting from a translation viewpoint and an excellent material for the linguistic and cultural analyses.

To reiterate, the purpose of this study is to investigate, examine and analyse the translation of Arab cultural signs into English. As a point of departure, apparent cultural signs are identified in the translation corpus. For the sake of the study, 18 cultural signs were selected for the description and close analysis (see Appendix A). The signs are related to their conceptual meanings in Arabic before being examined as they appear in the translated text.

### **3.2.3 DATA ANALYSIS**

Semiotic and discourse analyses are used to analyse and identify the rules that govern how linguistic and cultural signs convey meanings in a particular social system. Those signs, therefore, are analysed within the framework of the Semiotic Approach to translation and within the realm of Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS) based on Toury's (1995) notions of 'adequacy and acceptability' and Hatim and Mason's (1990) Four-phase Model. In other words, if the ST norms prevail, the TT has been accepted as adequate; otherwise, if the TT norms prevail, the TT has been deemed as acceptable.

The examples in the body of analysis are presented according to their types and determined by the degree of information that does not exist in the source sign, but is lost in the translated sign: (1) Cultural Expressions; and (2) Cultural Dimensions. The former, on the one hand, refers to those terms which designate objects, features and characteristics of the culture in which the ST is embedded. For example, Material

Culture: food and clothes; Social Culture: habits, customs, gestures, attitudes and manners; Ideological Culture: politics and religions.

On the other hand, the latter refers to those linguistic categories that reveal an idiosyncratic use on the part of the writer, such as, elements, expressions and terms, which have to be understood not only in the light of the culture to which the ST belongs, but also in the light of the particular situation and context in which they are uttered. The distinction between cultural dimensions and cultural expressions does not attempt to cover all unrelated culture expressions but rather to highlight cultural items which are likely to be problematical at the time of their translation into English.

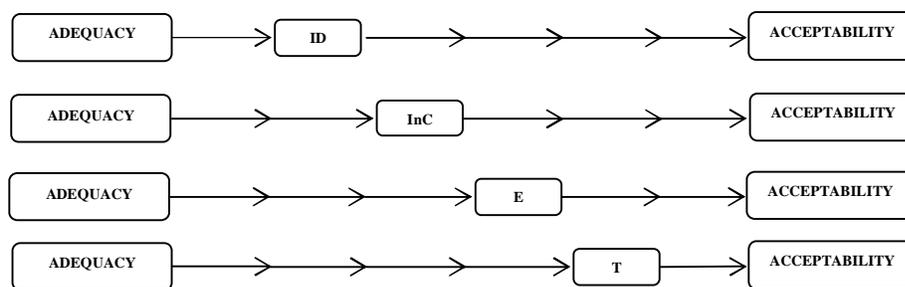
The analytical method is conducted by means of a close analysis of examples, not so much to pass judgements on the product; rather to analyse the strategies adopted by the translator and how they led to the losses. The below table (3.1) describes how the data are analysed:

**Table 3.1:** Analytical Framework

NO.	SOURCE TEXT (ST)	TARGET TEXT (TT)	SEMIOTIC VALUE IN (ST)	SEMIOTIC VALUE IN (TT)
01	وتزوج رمانة من ثانية وثالثة ورابعة حتى تجرع كأس اليأس لأخر نقطة فيه.	Rummana <b>married a second, third, and fourth wife</b> until he had drunk the cup of despair to the last drop.	Getting married to 2, 3, 4 wives together is legally permitted, religiously lawful and socially acceptable. Polygamous marriages are normal.	It is a social crime.
02	ونضا عنه ملبسه إلا ما للعودة يستر	Stripped to his <b>loincloth</b>	Islam requires men and women not to expose their parts of body to others. For men, this is from the navel to the knee. For the women, it is all of her body except the hands, feet and face.	Western culture does not have any restriction with regards to clothes as well as covering the body parts.
03	لا تستغفل الكلابشي يا ابا سماحة!	Not translated	Expression used to enhance social atmosphere among interactants and to show high respect between interlocutors.	Such expression does not exist in the Western culture. As they address people by their names.
04	دايت عجمية على صبغ شعرها بالحناء	Agamiyya went on putting <b>henna</b> on her hair	Sign of jubilation and beauty.	It is permissible and not associated with jubilation and beauty.
05	وضح المكان بالهتاف والزغاريد.	Men cheered, women <b>trilled in celebration.</b>	Expression of happiness and sorrow. Symbol of resistance. A social stereotype at freedom fighters' funerals.	Expression of happiness and sorrow.

Toury (1995) made a distinction between “**adequacy**” and “**acceptability**”, the former defined as “adherence to source text norms”, while the latter defined as “a subscription to norms originating in the target culture” (pp. 56-59). The binaries

inherited in Toury's classification do not only help study the strategies employed in line with the position the translation occupies in the target culture, but also examine whether, or not these strategies are conducive to the transference of semiotic contents of the SLT. The translation's central aim is to preserve meaning, emanating from textual stretches of language in use, hence a discourse approach helps to evaluate translation and examine the semiotic values across the languages of translation. The below figure (3.1) shows what really translators do in pursuit of a salient way of handling cultural signs:



**Figure 3.1:** Translation Orientations in Semiotic Translation

Hatim and Mason's (1990) Four-phase Model of the way translators should work in handling semiotic content. In the first phase, translators' task is to identify the source-system of the semiotic entity by means of **Identification (ID)**; second, **Informational Core (InC)** needs to be presented, whereby a suitable denotational equivalent is produced; third, **Explication (E)** is made if the equivalent is not sufficient. In this phase, translators explain concisely what meanings the sign could bear through a number of ways, such as, paraphrasing, expansion, or providing a synonymous word; and finally **Transformation (T)** whereby intentionality and the status of a sign in a text are paid due attention.

Following Hatim and Mason's Model in translating and dealing with semiotic entities, for example the religious word *عدة* – *iddah*. ID of the sign comes first, where it takes the form of transliteration; then comes the next stage InC whereby the

denotational equivalent of the sign is given, something like: 'a waiting period'. And then, E is more, or less provides something like: 'a period of waiting in which a woman should observe after the death of her spouse or after a divorce' paving the way for us to pass judgement towards which end of the cline the translation would go.

It is clear that, the translator has to prioritise acceptability over adequacy, and hence acceptable translation is more, or less realised. It ensues, then, that the procedure followed by the translator, i.e., paraphrasing goes in the direction of functional-based strategy. Yet, the semiotic value is still not realised and T is called for. In this stage, the translator could have provided something like: 'a waiting period of three months for the divorcée and four months and ten days for the woman whose husband passed away'. With these intertextual relations in mind, the translation may occupy a position on cline 4 and comes closer to acceptability.

In terms of analysis, the following assertions can be made: (1) translating from Arabic into English seems to be rather difficult without taking formal-based strategies into full consideration, for each language has a variety of images to realise cultural reality different from the other; the reason why these strategies may be considered to be an outlet for appropriate translation; (2) functional-based strategies seem to be less frequent than formal-based strategies since languages utilise different images to fulfill certain function; (3) it seems plausible to assume that functional-based strategies seem to be predictable in a translated work sponsored by a publishing house as the method of the translation could have been decided from the very beginning to suit the target reader and/or the audience; and (4) formal-based strategies can be thought of as dominant in a translated work sponsored by source-culture publishing house.

In general, translation may be understood as a decision-making and goal-oriented process with specific aims to fulfill. That is, translation is a writing practice which is fully informed by the tensions that traverse all cultural representation.

Translators must, therefore, constantly decide what cultural meaning language carries, which words belong to which language and which cultural terms can cross the linguistic border.

In the next section, it is, therefore, necessary to state the translation strategies identified and highlighted by scholars in translating cultural categories which result from the theory of culture.

### **3.3 TRANSLATION STRATEGIES FOR TRANSLATING CULTURAL CATEGORIES**

Discussing alternative treatments for culture-specific items often make the distinction between two basic goals of translation, particularly that of preserving the characteristics of the ST as far as possible which yields an exotic or strange effect, and that of adapting it to produce a TT which seems normal, familiar and accessible to the target readers or audience. Toury (1980), for instance, distinguishes adequacy from acceptability, while Holmes (1988) talks about the retention and re-creation, and Venuti (1995) talks about the foreignisation and domestication.

When translators translating any literary work for a particular readership which is not part of the author's background normally assume that their target readers or audience are unfamiliar with the setting, the references and allusions made in the original work. In fact, as Mounin (1976, p. 119) states: (1) they may choose to naturalise the literary work, in which case the setting, the reference and allusions are adapted to the readers' culture. In this case, their choice does not only result in dropping the local colour of the original but also in giving a new and different local colour to the translated text quite different from the original; (2) they may also choose to deprive the reader or audience knowledge of the local reality, to maintain the local colour of the original, in which case the setting, references and allusions of the original are translated

literally and they do not care very much whether the readers or audience understand them or not; and (3) they may decide to simply take away the local colour of the original by making it as everyday as possible.

Undoubtedly, professional translators translating literary works are likely: (1) to identify and define a translation problem; (2) to indicate all the factors that have to be taken into account in solving the problem, (3) to list all the possible translation procedures and strategies, and finally, and finally (4) to employ the most suitable translation procedures and strategies (i.e., Formal Equivalence Strategies and Functional Equivalence Strategies) which are elaborated in details in the following sections.

### **3.3.1 FORMAL EQUIVALENCE STRATEGIES**

In his online Translation Glossary, Leman (2009) defined Formal Equivalence as “a translation approach that attempts to maintain the original language forms as much as possible during translation process, despite whether they are the most natural way to express the original meaning”. Even though it has some weaknesses in terms of readability, it is helpful in understanding how meaning was expressed in the original text. It is also helpful in seeing the beauty of original idioms, rhetorical patterns and how individual authors used certain vocabulary terms uniquely. It is hard to appreciate these factors when reading idiomatic translations, as these factors are related to form. While losing the original form is to maximise the understandability of the ST original meaning. The following are some of the Formal Equivalence Strategies:

#### **3.3.1.1 LITERAL TRANSLATION**

Literal translation is the direct transfer of a SLT into an appropriate TLT where translator’s task is focused on observing the adherence of the TL linguistic constrains.

Theoretically, literal translation is very common when translating any two languages of the same family and share the same culture, e.g., French and Italian.

However, the occurrence of literal translation between those two languages is due to common meta-linguistic concepts in revealing physical coexistence with the conscious or unconscious imitation which concerns certain intellectual or political prestige.

Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) point out that literal translation occurs when “there is an exact structural, lexical, even morphological equivalence between two languages [...] and this is only possible when the two languages are very close to each other” (as cited in Venuti, 2000, p. 84).

### EXAMPLE (3.1)

فتتبع الأصوات:  
من ينكر الشمس في السماء؟  
هل تعلو العين على الحاجب؟ (نحيب محفوظ، ١٩٧٧، ص. ٢١٥)

### TRANSLATION OF EXAMPLE (3.1)

Random voices answered him: “Who would challenge the sun’s place in the sky?”  
“**Is the eyebrow beneath the eye?**” (Cobham, 1992, p. 149)

The highlighted proverb هل تعلو العين على الحاجب – *hal ta’alu al-a’in a’la al-hajib* is an instance of literal translation. In the SL, the proverb culturally and metaphorically refers to people who have certain levels and one should honour that. It also indicated that people should know and respect their place in life. Furthermore, the proverb carries rich information about Arabic society as well as its habitat. This proverb ‘Is the eyebrow beneath the eye?’ alternatively ‘the eye cannot rise above the eyebrow’ is said to show respect and modesty when one places himself in the place of eye and to place and put the second party in the place of eyebrow, mainly, in a rank higher than himself. The analysis of translation shows that it not only overlooks the wisdom conveyed by the proverb, but also causes a gap in the socio-cultural reality of the source culture. The translator could have better translated the above proverb into ‘above one’s station’ or ‘having airs and graces’ as the closet semantic meaning.

### 3.3.1.2 TRANSLITERATION

Odisho (2005) defined transliteration as taking words from one language, written in one alphabet, and putting them in another language with another alphabet. In other words, it involves retaining the linguistic forms of a language while translating into another. Such a strategy is equivalent to Arabicisation which is a kind of naturalisation that takes place at the second level where SL spelling and pronunciation are converted into Arabic ones. The problem here lies in the fact that the connotations of the source item being transliterated are unlikely to be aptly realised in translation.

From semiotic point of view, many connotative meanings are lost in transliteration. Shunnaq (1993), remarks on the geographical names and peoples' names that "they constitute a difficulty in translation because it is difficult, in most cases, to convey their emotive overtones" (p. 54). He (1993) concludes that "numerous translators wrongly assume that proper names have only denotative meaning" (p. 60). In fact, transliteration was rejected by many scholars, since it relies on transcription rather than searching for the cultural and semantic equivalent word in the TL.

#### EXAMPLE (3.2)

وعند مشارف الغورية رأى عيوشه الدلالة وهي تشير إليه فتوقف. تبين له أنها بصحبة سيدة أخرى. سيدة ذات بهاء يلفت الأنظار بملاعقها الكريشة وعروس برقعها الذهبية، وعينها المكحولتين الجميلتين وجسمها المدمج الريان. (نجيب محفوظ، ١٩٧٧، ص. ١١١)

#### TRANSLATION OF EXAMPLE (3.2)

On the outskirts of the quarter of al-Ghuriyya, he saw Ayyusha, the door-to-door saleswoman, signalling to him. He stopped and noticed another woman with her, a splendid creature who was attracting the attention of the passerby: she wore a wrap of fine crepe material and a face veil with a gold nosepiece; her beautiful eyes were outlined with **kohl** and her body was firm and succulent. (Cobham, 1992, p. 75)

Transliterating the source word كحل – *kohl* (a fine powder used as eyeliner) causes a loss to the semantic components and the pragmatic effects. The problem, in transferring the

cultural word *kohl* as it is in its source form, lies in the fact that the SL is basically alien to target audience who may, or may not be familiar with the source-culture word. In this case, the translator is caught between the need to capture the local flavour of the SL, and the need to be understood by the audience outside the cultural and linguistic situation.

### 3.3.2 FUNCTIONAL EQUIVALENCE STRATEGIES

It may be reasonable to argue that functional equivalence strategies are good solutions for easing communication between two languages. In order to avoid any misunderstanding on the part of the reader, it will be useful to spell out these strategies.

#### 3.3.2.1 TRANSPOSITION

Newmark (1988) defined transposition as “a translation process that requires replacing one word/phrase with another without changing the meaning of the original message” (p. 86). Translators may possibly choose to use transposition approach if the translation fits better into the utterance, or allows a particular style refinement to be retained. It aims at naturalising the structural level when word class shifting occurs in the course of translation, for instance, change from singular to plural, the change required when a specific SL structure does not exist in the TL, change of an SL verb to a TL word, and/or change of an SL noun group to a TL noun.

In translation there are two distinct types of transposition: (1) **Obligatory Transposition:** where it must be made if the SL structure of the utterance does not comply with the grammatical rules of TL. In other words, it is made due to the differences between the lexical and grammatical systems of the two languages (without them the translator would produce semantically or grammatically ill-formed sentences); and (2) **Optional Transposition:** where it is performed over and above the obligatory transfer options.

In short, transposition involves changes in grammatical categories during translation. Thus, it is very common approach used by translators, since it offers various possibilities that help avoiding the untranslatability problem. Moreover, translators mainly use transposition intuitively, while looking for ways when transferring the ST into the TT.

### 3.3.2.2 PARAPHRASING

Newmark (1988) believes that paraphrasing is “the last translation procedure which simply irons out the difficulties in any passage” which can be achieved by “an amplification or explanation of the meaning of the segment of the text”. However, this strategy should be “the translator’s last resort” (p. 90). Farghal and Shunnaq (1999) speak of “descriptive translation” as a strategy that an expression in the SL is paraphrased by describing it conceptually and often “occurs when the translator comes across a referential or cultural gap where the SL concept is completely missing in the TL culture” (p. 27).

Translators are not encouraged to use paraphrasing when translating the text unless necessary, otherwise the translation would be judged as different from the original. As a matter of fact, Arab translators may possibly encounter a few lexical items in Arabic language having no equivalents in the TL and do not exist in the TL culture. Such items are usually considered culture-bound terms.

#### EXAMPLE (3.3)

فسأها بخشونة مصطنعة:  
عم تسالين يا ولية؟ (نجيب محفوظ، ١٩٧٧، ص. ١١٢)

#### TRANSLATION OF EXAMPLE (3.3)

“What are you talking about, **woman?**” he said, pretending to be harsh. (Cobham, 1992, p. 76)

The highlighted term يا ولية – *ya wuliyah* is used to address a woman, normally lower social status. Specifically, the term has been pulled towards the centre of the extreme continuum; hence lost its pragmatic value. This includes status relationships marked by such variables as solidarity and power. The example illustrates how translation causes a serious alteration to the speaker's attitude; where it neutralises the derogatory implication meant by the speaker. This, in turn, implies significant alterations to the interpersonal dimension of the discourse. In a conservative culture such as Arabic, men are considered superior, dominant and powerful. Therefore, they reflect this image of superiority through language use.

### **3.3.2.3 ADAPTATION**

Adaptation is a translation strategy whereby translators replace a social, or cultural, reality in the ST with a corresponding reality in the TT; this new reality would be more usual to the audience of the TT. It means a shift in cultural environment and it amounts to cultural approximation whereby a different situation is utilised to express the message. A culture-bound expression is translated into a cultural substitute in the TL. The TL form becomes different from that of the SL. In other words, the image used in both languages in question is different so that the translation can be readable as far as the TL receivers are concerned.

According to Nida (1964, pp. 166-170) there are three areas of adaptation involved in the process of translation: (1) grammar and lexicon which requires the attention to be paid by the translator so that the lexical items and grammatical structures selected do not alienate the TL reader from his or her language; (2) adaptation of the message within the context which requires the translator to place the new TT within a context approximate to the context of the SLT; and (3) audience of the receptor language which requires the attention to be paid to the TL readership.

Therefore, this strategy is carried out as an effective way to deal with culture-bound expressions, metaphors and images in which translators' works on changing the content and the form of the ST, with the intention that it complies with the rules of the language and culture in the TL community. Adaptation is based on a few procedures: cultural substitution and omission. The former refers to translators who use equivalent words in the TL that serve the same goal as those of the SL and substituting the SL cultural expressions by TL cultural expressions.

#### **EXAMPLE (3.4)**

يقول المثل: "هذا الشبل من ذاك الأسد."

#### **TRANSLATION OF EXAMPLE (3.4)**

The proverb says: "A chip off the old block."

It is obvious from the translation of the above proverb هذا الشبل من ذاك الأسد – *hatha el-shebel men thak el-asad* that the translator used adaptation as a strategy to translate the source item in question, in attempting to make textual materials that are specific to a given language culturally appropriate to another language, in other words, it is a shift in the cultural environment.

In short, translators omit words, phrases or sentence that do not have equivalents in the TT, or that may raise the hostility of the receptor. In short, adaptation strategy enhances the readability of the TT in a way that helps reader to comprehend the ST ideas, images, metaphors and culture.

#### **3.3.2.4 LEXICAL CREATION**

Lexical creation is a translation strategy that involves the coining of a new lexical item in the TL to stand for SL culture-specific elements. When it happens that the signified is the product of the minds of the SL culture, the translator has to create a signified that labels the SL's.

### EXAMPLE (3.5)

وقالت لجبريل الفص:

ليكن معلوماً أني لا ارضى بـضرة. (نحيب محفوظ، ١٩٧٧، ص. ٣٧١)

### TRANSLATION OF EXAMPLE (3.5)

“Remember, I won’t be a **co-wife**,” she repeated to Gibril al-Fas.  
(Cobham, 1992, p. 264)

The Arabic item *ضرة* – *ḍurrah* (wife other than the first) is nothing short of culture-specific. Translating the highlighted item into ‘co-wife’ solves part of the SL function of the word problem and requires the SLT reader to study the socio-cultural context so that the lexical item makes sense. The cultural word does not exist in the mind of native speakers of the TL culture. In Islam, an individual whose wife is barren and suffering from chronic illness is permitted to marry up to four wives.

### 3.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

There is no doubt from the examination of the role and place of culture in the translation phenomenon that culture is fundamental and central to translation. It is also evident from the foregoing that there are many strategies at the disposal of translators to transfer culture-specific realities from one language, or culture to another.

In general, those translators who choose various strategies in rendering allusions seem to play a vital role in observing and acknowledging the connotations carried out by them. For instance, if beginner translators render literary texts without paying an adequate attention to the allusions, the connotations are possibly not to be transferred due to the translators’ failure to acknowledge them. Consequently, the translation will be ineffective.

Culture-specific realities, cultural transfer and idiomaticity in translation may be regarded as contradictory and this contradiction makes translation be strewn with recurrent cross-culture transfer problems and difficulties. One way for translators to solve this contradiction is to seek the optimal balance point between them, i.e., to carefully weigh and take into account all the determining considerations and factors.

Considering the relevance of particular culture-specific items to their immediate context, translators also need to see them within a wider perspective where individual cases are evaluated in terms of their contribution to the global effect on the whole text. Consequently, before deciding how to deal with cultural allusions it is necessary for translators to assess the significance of such references at the macro-level of the work as a whole.