

# Equivalence Problems in Translation

Nansy Ahmad Daoud Mosleh Alfaori

Translation Department, Yarmouk University, Irbid, Jordan

Equivalence is an important notion in translation theory. Therefore, theorists in the field of translation studies are interested in studying and examining this notion in order to discover its effect on the way a translator deals with a text. The aim of this study is to explore the different definitions of translation as a process and as a product. The study focuses on specific definitions that have been introduced by Arab scholars in the field of translation, for example, Al-zarqani (1998) who argued that translation is an act of transferring a text with all its meanings and objectives from one language to another. This idea of transferring the different meanings and objectives of a given text imposes an important question that the researcher tries to answer in this paper. Is translation a process of substituting a text in one language for a text in another? After reviewing the related literature and by analyzing different translated passages from Arabic and English, it shows that translation is not a mere substitution of texts among languages. The translator must be aware of the objectives and meanings conveyed in the source text in order to produce an accurate translation.

*Keywords:* translation, equivalence, translation objectives, substitution

## Introduction

Despite the existence of the highly sophisticated modern means of international communication that have reduced the distances between individuals and communities and despite the wide use of the English language for communication among the nations of the globe, translation is still an indispensable means, not only of communication among nations, but also for facilitating access to science and knowledge worldwide. Translation has been practiced throughout the ages by many civilizations and nations: For Arabs, it has been known throughout their history. The term used for this process is the Arabic term “tra-jamah” (translation) or “nagl” (transfer of speech) or “taḥweel” (meaning transformation) (Aziz, 1990, p. 154). According to the *Oxford Companion to the English Language* by Tom and Feri Mc Arthur, the term comes from Latin: “What is carried across, from **trans** across, **ferre/latum** to carry. A doublet of transfer; The restatement of the forms of one language in another: the chief means of exchanging information between different language communities” (1992, pp. 1052-1053).

Perhaps it would be useful to consider the meanings of translation from an Arabic source. Abulaḏeem al-Zarqani, in his book *Menahil El-Irfan fi Ulūm Al-Quran* (1995) (the fountains of knowledge of the Quran) cites the following definitions of translation in Arabic. The term “traj-jamah” is used in Arabic to denote one of four meanings, the first of which is communicating an utterance to those who had not received or heard it, as illustrated in the following verse of poetry: “The age of eighty which I have reached has made my hearing in need of a translator” (Al-Zarqani, 1995, p. 334). Here, the translator would interpret what the persona cannot

---

Nansy Ahmad Daoud Mosleh Alfaori, lecturer, M.A., Translation Department, Yarmouk University, Jordan.

hear with his diminished sense of hearing. Consequently, in this context, translation means interpretation. Ibn Abbas is nicknamed “Turjuman al-Quran” meaning the translator of the Quran or the interpreter of the Quran, because translating something is interpreting it, according to Zamakashri in his lexicon “Assas el Balagha” or “The essentials of Rhetoric”.

One of the definitions of translation that Zarqani highlights in his book is the traditional definition of translation. He says “Tradition, here, is the universal sense of traditional communication rather than the definition of a specific sector or nation. Rather, it is the traditional definition that has been adopted by all people throughout the world, i.e. a universal definition” (1992, p. 72). This definition is language based. Translation is therefore transferring discourse with all its meanings and objectives from one language into another. Transferring speech is to express its meaning by using another form of speech in another language maintaining all its meanings and intentions and you have only adequately transferred the speech from one language into another if all the meanings and intentions are transferred. This is the secret in the phrase “transfer of speech” as speech itself can by no means be transferred from the source language to the second language. Therefore, we can roughly define translation, based on this general tradition, that translation is expressing the meaning of a text in one language into another text in another language while maintaining all its meanings and intended meanings which are transferred with it.

The word “ta’abeer” (expression) is a generic noun but the modifiers following it are disjunctions. “The meaning of speech” in this context means expressing the meaning existing by itself when it is expressed in the form of an utterance for the first time, and “with another speech” is to retain the meaning of the original regardless of the number of times the meaning is expressed. This is a reliable translation, because if you retranslate the text in different forms in different languages, the meaning and the objectives remain the same: they do not change.

### **Literature Review**

Thus, we see that translation is an operation or process, but at the same time, it is a product: It is an abstract concept consisting of the process and the product (Bell, 1991, p. 13). This means that translation is a process of transference operating among languages, that is, it is an interpretation of the verbal symbols in one language via the symbols of other languages. It is also an intra-language process: the translator often resorts to interpreting the source text by using the tools of the source language itself (vocabulary items and structure) when facing some difficulty in absorbing the message. He or she may look for the synonyms of a vocabulary item, paraphrase a text, or simplify it in order to grasp the meaning and then render it in a proper form in the target language.

Translation must be reliable and valid: The meaning should not be changed regardless of the number of times it has been translated and should be valid as long as the translator translates what he is supposed to translate. In other words, he should not add or delete anything of the message in target language.

Thus translation consists of several diverse dimensions: It can refer to the process, the product, or the abstract concept of translation. The process focuses on what a translator does in turning the source text (ST) into a target text (TT) in another language. The sense of product centers on the outcome of the process. The sense of abstract concept of the general phenomenon compromises the subject field. In fact, translation is a process and a product: In the process, the translator renders the message in the target language. The outcome message should be complete, clear, and accurate fulfilling the objective of the source text. The translator should

be concerned about the effect of the outcome translation on the receiver of the translation. So translation can be a process of transferring the message of the source text into a target text. The outcome should be an acceptable translation as long as it carries with it all the meanings and objectives of the source text.

We have seen that the definition of translation, according to Zarqani, is the transfer of speech with all its meanings and objectives into the speech of the second language. Having seen the definitions of translation above, we will now proceed to a review of the opinions of some notable scholars in the field. In *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*, Catford maintains that translation is concerned with a specific type of inter-language relationship and therefore it is a branch of comparative linguistics. In other words, Catford sees translation as an operation performed on language: a process of substituting a text in one language for a text in another (1965, p. 27). Therefore, the concern of this study is to answer the following question: Is translation really a process of substituting a text in one language for a text in another? The answer to this question will take into account two things: The first is a review of related literature and the second will be the provision of real examples that prove or disapprove the idea of text substitution.

There is no adequate research about the topic of equivalence texts in translation. Nonetheless there are some theoretical (not based on practical experience) articles and studies that highlight certain problems in translation. For example, Eissa Al Khotaba and Khaled Al Tarawneh (2015) prepare a M.A. thesis under the title "Lexical Discourse Analysis in Translation". This qualitative study involves 15 texts translated by M.A. students in the Department of English Language and Literature at Mu'tah University in Jordan. The texts are random samples. The researcher uses two research instruments which are lexical and textual analyses and semi-structured interview. The findings of this research indicate that lexical knowledge and meaning insufficiency have a significant effect on translating texts from the source language (Arabic) to the target language (English) or vice versa in the field of Applied Linguistics. They recommend that further research be conducted to investigate the effect of the translator's lexical knowledge on translating texts from SL to TL.

They maintain that at the beginning of teaching and learning translation, few translators assume that translation is a process of doing things with words not in context. Translation is therefore a human activity that involves transferring not only the meaning of words but also the style, emotions, impression, and the effect of the writer in the source language into the target language. That is, a translator should be imaginative enough to convert the different techniques that are created by the SL writer into that of the TL audience. There have been many studies carried out to examine the difficulties and the factors influencing the translation process in its various facets sometimes as a contribution to the enforcing of a translation theory and a language teaching methodology as well as to identify the factors influencing the process of converting meaning from one language into another within a certain historical and cultural context. However, there has been limited research that seeks to probe the effect of lexical knowledge on translation and how this factor affects or hinders the translation process. Nonetheless, Anari and Ghffarof (2013, pp. 76-84) conducted a study to investigate the effect of the productive and receptive knowledge of lexical and grammatical collocations on the accuracy of the translation done by Iranian EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners taking a translation course at university. The study concluded that there is a significant relationship between the productive knowledge of lexical collocations and grammatical colligations and the accuracy of the translation.

Al-Saeed (1989) conducted a study on old Arabic vocabulary equivalents for certain English words (p. 206). The study was conducted in 2010 on a sample of English female students who were taking a course in translation from English into Arabic. He distributed a test of Arabic sentences containing old Arabic words used

by Saeed Al Karemi in his bi-lingual dictionary, *al Mughni al akbar*. Examples of those words are: “raqūn” for “mascara”, “huthee/hūḏi” for “chauffeur”, and “wathar” for “mini skirt”. The test consists of 50 old words that can be considered obsolete, but Al Karmi uses them in his dictionary as equivalents for the English words. The students are only able to select 845 out of 2,500 (33.72%) of the correct answers. The study concludes that those obsolete Arabic words may remain as they are until they are revived in the language and to be reused in everyday communication. Consequently, old or obsolete words may hinder the assimilation of the message of the translation or blur it at least.

Birjandi (1999) conducted a study to examine the effect of foreign language learners’ lexical knowledge on their translation ability. This study was conducted at the Islamic Azad University. This study showed that there is a significant relationship between lexical knowledge and translation ability. The study also showed that lexical knowledge may contribute to the development of translation skills and conceptual comprehension of the text by the translator so that he or she may give a good rendering. Al-Sohbani and Muthanna’s (2011) study probed the current major challenges of Arabic-English translation and vice versa for English Department students at the Faculty of Arts in Ibb University in Yemen. They concluded those difficulties that insufficient lexical resource, inadequate knowledge and practice of grammar, inadequate cultural background, and an unsuitable teaching atmosphere and methodology are the main challenges to the students there.

Dweik and Abu Shakra M. M. (2009) studied the problems of students and the strategies used by students to overcome them in translating a set of lexical and semantic collocations from three religious references: the *Holy Quran*, the *Hadith*, and the *Bible*. The sample consisted of 35 M.A. students majoring in translation in three different public and private Jordanian universities. The researcher designed a translation test containing 45 short sentences of contextual collocations chosen from the three above mentioned religious sources. The participants in the survey were asked to translate the collocations from English into Arabic. The study showed that students used various strategies to overcome the problems in translating certain phrases. The study disclosed that literal translation is a prevailing strategy applied in translating these semantic collocations in the *Holy Quran* and the *Bible*.

Accordingly, one might conclude that most of studies have dealt with the problems that M.A. and B.A. undergraduates or translators in general might face when translating texts. However, not much work has been done to explore the challenges encountered by beginner translators in translating postgraduate abstracts in the Applied Linguistics domain. Most of the studies are concerned with the theory of translation which is of a marginal importance in practical or real world translation. Therefore, this study will focus on real examples derived from real world translation. The examples given will challenge the theory of Catford in which he claims that translation is a process of substituting the source text with a target in the target language.

Al-Saeed (1989) says that choosing the right word in translating a text is one of the most difficult tasks the translator encounters during the translation process. It is so difficult that the translator has to resort to the dictionary to find the right word to get the meaning across to the reader but most often the dictionary may not help. The translator may find himself forced to use some archaic words adopted by some translators and authors of lexicons (examples will be provided later in this study). Duff (1984, pp. 14-17) cites several illustrative examples from real translations discussed under the title “Appropriacy: the Choice of Words”. According to him, “appropriacy” means the right word in the right place. One of the examples he gives is: “Cobalt blue waters, white sand beaches and unique cultural backgrounds make the Okinawa islands ideal year-round resort” (JNTO, Southern Japan). To show the inappropriateness of certain words he says:

We all know what blue waters and white beaches look like. And we are used to meeting these words in a specific context, that of publicity material. Cultural backgrounds belongs to another context, that of international conference reports. Here, it is in-appropriate. (Duff, 1984, p. 14)

He also says that if a word is inappropriate, it is usually because it has been forced out of its “customary context. The problem for the translator is that he is dealing with two context, that of the source language and that of the target language. What is appropriate in the one is not necessarily appropriate in the other (1984, p. 14). However, Duff himself points out in a footnote: “I discovered only after writing this book that the word ‘appropriacy’ does not, in fact, exist. It is therefore an instinctive coinage, but the one which I nevertheless prefer to ‘appropriateness’” (1984, p. 14).

The second problem he refers to involves not only the subject matter but also the register. He gives an example of the Yorkshire Post:

*Advertisements will only be accepted on the understanding that descriptions relating to goods are accurate and in no way contravene the provisions of the Trade Description Act.*

As below it is an advertisement by the advertising Standards Authority:

*LEGAL, DECENT, HONEST, TRUTHFUL*

*And if you see a poster*

*That isn't-tell us.*

In his comment on this quotation, he says: “The content is similar, but the wording is very different. Try reading the first passage and substituting the words ‘DECENT’, ‘TRUTHFUL’, OR ‘HONEST’ for ‘ACCURATE’: They are too powerful and too emotive, because the register is wrong” (Duff, 1984, p. 14). In sociolinguistics and stylistics, register is a variety of language defined according to the social use as scientific, formal, religious, and journalistic (Mc Arthur, 1992, p. 859). Duff cites some examples of translation on the appropriateness of the words in translation: “The architects and engineers had quite a lot of trouble with these columns before the desired optical effect was achieved. His thing was that, in spite of the raised pattern, the concrete rods could be seen through the glass” (1984, pp. 15-16). In his comment on this translation, he wonders what the register of the passage is. The first section of this passage the pattern of the register was formal and technical, which is a description of an aspect of an architect. Then the register changed in an informal language in the form of a chatty language “quite a lot” and “his thing was that”.

Another example of the religion register cited by Al-Saeed (1989, p. 16) is the Arabic phrase “صبغة الله - sibghat-Allah”. “Sibghat” means a dye. However, according to Al-Saeed, the phrase is difficult to translate because of its connotation which has been overlooked by some translators; he says: “صبغة الله is a phrase that might be difficult to translate into English” (p. 16). Consider how Arberry (1955) translates “sibghah” in 2: 138. (our) religion The baptism of God and who can baptize better than God? N. J. Dawood (1956) renders it as follows: We take on Allah’s own dye. And who has a better dye than Allah’s (cf. Arberry: the baptism of God and who is there that baptizes fairer than God)?

Al-Saeed remarks that these translations are not only inaccurate, but also misleading. Arberry does not indicate that baptism stands for religion. Dawood’s translation indicates that Allah has color. It does not convey that صبغة is meant to be the religion that Allah asks people to adopt. The word “baptism” may confuse the reader and lead him or she to think that there is a Christian practice in Islam. To Al-Saeed, the translators have committed themselves to literal translations so the meaning is often lost. In a study under the title of “The Paradox of Translating the Untranslatable: Equivalence VS. Non-Equivalence in Translating From Arabic Into

English”, Amira Kashgary (2011, p. 23) argues that if equivalence is the essence of translation, non-equivalence constitutes an equally legitimate concept in the translation process. In such cases, she argues that equivalence or translating using equivalence is not necessarily the best strategy, i.e., it does not produce a meaningful rendering of the source term [ST] into the target term [TT]. Rather, purposefully using non-equivalence results in a “better” translation. She believes that non-equivalence becomes more relevant than equivalence. In other words, “non-equivalence” becomes more equivalent than “equivalence”. It is a better strategy in these cases. (2011, pp. 47-57). Hence, it is quite legitimate to discuss non-equivalence and its applicability in translating culture-specific terms and concepts including idioms, metaphors, and proverbs. An interjection is called for by this, as the word “equivalent” is not gradable. A thing is either equivalent or not. To say more, equivalent is an incorrect phrase. The non-equivalent usage in translation is improper, for example if we translate “his name is mud” to “his name is stone”. “Stone” is not equivalent to “mud” considering the connotations of the both mud and stone.

Baker (1992, pp. 11-12) adopts grammatical equivalence when referring to the diversity of grammatical categories across languages. She notes that grammatical rules may vary across languages and this may pose some problems in terms of finding a direct correspondence in the TL. In fact, she claims that different grammatical structures in the SL and TL may cause remarkable changes in the way the information or message is carried across. These changes may induce the translator either to add or to omit information in the TT because of the lack of particular grammatical devices in the TL itself. Amongst these grammatical devices which might cause problems in translation, Baker focuses on number, tense and aspect, voice, person and gender. Word-for-word translation is not necessary as long as we are concerned with the meaning because languages have different methods of expression. As Paret (1983) says “The language of the Quran is often terse, sometimes even abrupt, and the line of thought is not always a straight one” (p. 204). This shows that adopting the style of the Quran in translation is fraught with problems. The language of the Quran seems terse because of multiplicity of meanings and abrupt because of deletion; and the line of thought is not always considered straight because of the complexity of expression and overt concord inconsistency of expression in the surface structure. However, *aliltifat* is one of the rhetorical devices of the expressive powers of the Quranic language. In Arabic, it is usual for the speaker or writer to begin a discourse with a certain pronoun and suddenly use another pronoun that does not go with the first one or the antecedent. This style is peculiar to Arabic and it is named by Lasheen and Ibn Al Atheer (1983, p. 262) as “the boldness of Arabic”. An example of *iltifat* is the following: (verse 22 of 36)

ومالي لا اعبد الذي فطرني واليه ترجعون

This verse is literally translated “Why should I not worship him who created me and to him you shall go back”. There is a shift or discord between the first pronoun and the second pronoun.

According to Lasheen (1983, p. 261), the context entails that the second pronoun should be in the first person “to him I shall go back”. There is a disagreement between the pronoun in the second sentence and the one in the first. This is done for a certain purpose. Al-Zamakhshary (1998) says that the speaker here marked his discourse as if he were advising himself in order to show politeness and tact and he indicated that he only wanted for them what he wanted for himself. Therefore, he said: “Why should I not worship him?” Instead of “Why should not you worship the one who created you and unto him you return” (vol. 3, p. 319). If he intended to communicate a meaning other than this meaning, he would have said “Who created me and unto him I return”. We notice here that the discord between the pronouns is meaningful; it is for rhetorical effect that

cannot be reflected in the literal substitution of the source text in the English one. This style may sound strange in English, though it is one of most expressive devices in Arabic.

These theorists have used various approaches to study equivalence in the translation process and have provided fruitful ideas for further study on this topic as a subject of linguistics. These theorists can be classified into three major categories: (1) the protagonists of a linguistic approach to translation, who focus on translation as a mere matter of theoretical linguistics; (2) the second category of theorists has a pragmatic/semantic or functionally oriented approach to translation, and they regard translation equivalence as being basically a transfer of the message from the source text to the target text; and (3) finally, other translation scholars who see theory and practice as complement. This last group includes Baker, who maintains that equivalence is used “for the sake of convenience—because of habit rather than because it has any theoretical status” (qtd. in Kenny, 1998, p. 77).

### **Analysis of Different Examples From Arabic and English Texts**

Equivalence is undoubtedly one of the most challenging and contentious areas in the field of translation theory. The term has been triggering heated debates within the field of translation studies but these debates are totally overlooked in practice. Translators rarely resort to such theoretical work when they translate. Perhaps this claim needs verification. Discussions of the concept of equivalence in translation have triggered further studies and explanations of the term by contemporary theorists but despite this elaboration, it has been difficult to define equivalence. As a result, it has not been feasible to agree on a universal approach to the concept due to a great gap between theory and practice in translation.

From the preceding review, we may conclude that studies in translation are based on a theory of linguistics. Some prominent theorists, including Catford, believe that translation is a substitution of texts to and from languages. Catford sees translation as an operation performed on languages: a process of substituting a text in one language for a text in another (1965, p. 27). This study, therefore, seeks to answer the following question: Is translation really a process of substituting a text in one language for a text in another? To answer this question, let us consider three difficulties in translation: translation of vocabulary in a cultural context, translation of the bun, faulty translation of vocabulary and difficulties in the translation of some grammatical structures such as *iltifat* (equivalence).

In regard to the cultural context, let us consider this excerpt from Gibbon’s book (1997): *The History of the Decline and the Fall of the Roman Empire*. Gibbon says, “If a Bedouin discovers from afar a solitary traveler, he rides furiously against him, crying, with a loud voice: undress thyself, thy aunt is without a garment” (pp. 599-600). Here the reader might ask if the word “aunt” refers to the solitary traveler’s mother’s sister or his father’s sister. Why should the Bedouin ask the solitary traveler to undress? Gibbon’s sentence is not taken from a translated text, but in this sentence he translates some words in the context of robbing in the desert. The Bedouin words are substituted for English words which Gibbon thinks are good equivalents in English. To make the meaning clear for the reader, he put “my wife” in juxtaposition to “thy aunt”. The word “aunt” cannot be understood even by the native speakers of both Arabic and English. The word “aunt” is used in the cultural social context of the Bedouin life in the desert. When he meets the solitary traveler, the Bedouin knight wants to deprive him of his possessions. So he uses words that intimidate the traveler. The phrase “thy aunt without a garment” reveals to the traveler the following: The attacker is a chieftain of a tribe (sheikh); the members of the tribe, especially the young ones, use the word “uncle” when addressing the sheikh and refer to his wife as aunt.

Traditionally, the sheikh's wife is the aunt of all the men who are subject to the authority of the chieftain of the tribe. In this context, as cited by Gibbon, she is naked and she is in need of a garment to cover her, because it is shameful for the sheikh to allow his wife to be seen by others in this situation. Therefore, giving in promptly will entitle the stranger to mercy while resistance will provoke the aggressor and his own blood must expiate the blood which he presumes will be shed in legitimate defense (Gibbon, 1996, p. 600).

This example may show that there may be equivalent words in the source and the target languages, but the meaning might be difficult to grasp by the receptor of the translation due to the different cultural context. In the above example, although the word aunt's referent is the same in Arabic and English: the mother's or father's sister. In this case, the substitution is linguistically equivalent to that of the first language, but the connotation is different. It cannot be understood without an explanation of the cultural background of the original.

The following example shows that the translator may absorb the culture, but he may not transfer the meaning adequately in his native language. T. E. Lawrence, known as *Lawrence of Arabia*, who lived long with Arabs and knew the culture in depth and provided some of his translations from Arabic in his book *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1935, p. 151). Notice how he used the word "agent" in:

We watched Feisal. He got up from his rug, on which he had been saying a last word to Abdel Kerim, caught the saddle pommels in his hands, put his knee on the side and said aloud "Make God your agent...". (Lawrence, 1935, p. 151)

The key word that concerns us here is "agent". What is the meaning of agent in this context? According to Webster's dictionary, "agent" has the following meanings: "a person who does business for another person; a person who acts on behalf of another; a person who tries to get secret information about another country, government, etc.; a person or thing that causes something to happen".

Al-Saeed (2011) comments on Lawrence's usage of this word by saying:

"Feisal uttered this sentence after he mounted his camel. It was an indication for the Army to move ahead: That is let's go, depending on Allah" (Al-Saeed, 2011, p. 150). This sentence is common in Arab culture; it is a catch phrase and said when one embarks on doing something or when one shows one's approval of their doing it, just as when you say to someone who is about to travel to a certain place: "Good luck! Put your trust in God" or "God be with you". It may be also said to someone who is about to do something to men "Go ahead" or "Start". This sentence may be easily understood by Muslims and Arabs, but it may be difficult for a foreigner to understand.

The word "agent" cannot be used with "God" because God is exalted above the use of such a word and cannot be the agent of a human. It is the common normal use in the social context. The English words are not in consonance with the original Arabic words.

Another example from Lawrence's work is his translation of a common Arabic phrase is: *Please God good?* For *kheir inshallah?* (p. 542). These words were said by the heads of tribes when they were summoned one by one to Feisal's tent. When a sheikh arrived he would ask "Kheir inshallah". This phrase can be used as a question meaning: What is the news? We hope that it is good, God willing.

Thus, we see that the translator may think that he has chosen the right word but in fact it is inappropriate. Thus we see that the choice of the right word for its equivalence in the source language is not an easy task since even if the translators resorts to a bi-lingual dictionary he may choose the word that he believes to be proper for the context. His choice of the words reflects his understanding of the original text and how far he understands the cultural context. As we have seen, in these examples, Lawrence uses non-equivalents for Arabic catch



phrases. Here, Lawrence creates the third phrase that is not found in English or in Arabic. To solve the problems resulting from the cultural differences, Duff (1984, p. 11) suggests various ways in which the translator can help his reader understand the source language terms for which no satisfactory equivalent exists in the target language. One is by embedding an explanation of the source language expression. In fact, the example quoted above from Lawrence, "Please God good" can be explained in parentheses (What is the news? We hope it is good).

Another example from English into Arabic is: "He is the black sheep of the family". If this sentence is translated literally to Arabic, the meaning will not be understood. The reader may wonder about the meaning of black sheep. Many sheep breeders have black sheep and they may get higher prices for them. We should understand that this sentence contains an idiom or metaphor. The use of black sheep is an English idiomatic usage, but the literal translation to Arabic does not give the English meaning. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English*, it is:

The black sheep of the family that member (of a family or other group) who is thought to be a disgrace to other members of it (because he is a criminal or because he does not measure up to their imposed standards). (1975, p. 102)

The source of the problem here is the word "black" because colors have different connotations in different languages.

The colors in Arabic have connotations different from those in English.

Take for example, the verse (vol. 3, p. 106): (يوم تبيض وجو وتسود وجوه), (تبيض) is translated by Khateeb (1984) as "whiten" while he uses "blacken" for تسود. Meanwhile, Ali (1934) uses "will be lit up with white" for تبيض and "will be in the gloom of black" for تسود. Al-Saeed (1989) sees that such usage of "whiten" and "blacken" does not render the intended meaning of the Arabic words in the source text. Considering the meanings of "whiten" in the *Webster's Dictionary*, I agree with Al-Saeed because according to Al-Saeed, "whiten" can be used instead of "pale" as in:

Light colored or lacking in color: a pale complexion; his pale face; a pale child. Lacking the usual intensity of color due to fear; illness, stress: She looked pale and unwell when we visited her in the nursing home. Not bright or brilliant; dim: The pale moon. Faint or feeble; lacking vigor: a pale protest. (Al-Saeed, 1989, p. 11)

These examples indicate that the translator may think that the words he has chosen to translate certain text are good equivalents though, in fact, they are not, because literal translation is often misleading especially when the cultural use of the words is overlooked by the translator.

In fact, the translator may speak a foreign language fluently, but he does not grasp the cultural connotations, as we have seen from Lawrence's examples. Consider some of the faulty translation taken from [ForeignSignsFaultyTranslations-AnEnglish-Zone.ComFunLanguagePage.English-zone.com/language/translate.html](http://ForeignSignsFaultyTranslations-AnEnglish-Zone.ComFunLanguagePage.English-zone.com/language/translate.html).

- (1) In a Paris hotel elevator: Please leave your values at the front desk.
- (2) In a Yugoslavian hotel: The flattening of underwear with pleasure is the job of the chambermaid.
- (3) On the menu of a Swiss restaurant: Our wines leave you nothing to hope for.
- (4) In the office of a Roman doctor: Specialist in women and other diseases.
- (5) From the Soviet Weekly: There will be a Moscow Exhibition of the Arts by 15,000 Soviet Republic Painters and sculptors. These were executed over the past two years.
- (6) Traffic sign in Jordan: Speed control.

The above translations show how the translators fail to choose the right words for the right meanings. The translations reveal that they do not reflect the intended meaning. It seems that the producers of these examples are confused. For example, in sentence (1), the word “values” is a substitute for valuables. It may be a kind of malapropism (Bolinger & Sears, 1981, pp. 244-247). Another example of erroneous translation due to malapropism should be recalled here. At the outset of *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, Lawrence (1998) writes the following sentence:

“Some of the evil of my tale may have been inherent in our circumstance” (p. 27).

Najjar (1998, p. 170) renders the meaning of “inherit” instead of “inherent”. This kind of translation is an example of non-equivalence and refutes the proposal that non-equivalents should be used in translation because there is a shift of meaning. The translator should be careful when translating malapropisms, which are, according to Bolinger and Sears, kinds of uneducated blend (1981, p. 243). Malapropism is named after a character in an eighteenth-century play, *Mrs. Malaprop*. The character was afflicted with chronic word trouble (her language was malapropos) instead of two (or more) expressions, either of which would be appropriate under the circumstances and both of which appear physically in the result (this the ordinary blend), there is a confusion between the two and the inappropriate is spoken. The result is not a new word but a shift meaning. Malapropism can be seen when

A political writer says: “a man aggregates to himself theright”, intending arrogates... It is seen also when a weather man predicts: “five below zero, nominally a safe temperature for driving, intending normally”. A gross example of malapropism is the following from the mail on line. (qtd. in Bolinger and Sears, 1981, p. 243)

The translator should be a careful reader. He/She should be aware of the spelling and the pronunciation of the malapropism so that he/she will not be confused. He should render the intended meaning. Finally, the pun may be a proof that translation is not a mere substitution of texts between two languages. The following discussion is based on the definition and an example taken from the *Oxford Companion to the English Language* by Tom and Feri Mac Arthur, “Pun is: (1) conflating of homonyms and near-homonyms to produce a humorous effect; (2) a comparable play on words and phrases with similar sounds, sometimes requiring the (often forced) adaptation of one word or phrase to fit the other” (1992, p. 822). Lewis Carol uses it widely and whimsically in his Alice books. Thus, if we translate the pun from English into Arabic, the difficulty will be finding the dynamic equivalents because translation is not only substituting a text for text; rather the effect of the source text (the humor) should be conveyed in the target language. This transfer is impossible with puns. Consider a sentence like: “Ask for me to morrow and you shall find me a grave man”. The pun word is “grave”, which has more than one meaning that can be deduced from the context. *The Longman Dictionary of American English* defines it as, “(1) the place where a dead body is buried and (2) grave (adjective) means very serious and worried”. The two meanings can be deduced from the above example. The problem here lies in the lack of an Arabic equivalent word that can have the two meanings conveyed in source word. Another example is “Thousands of nuts can hold a car together but one nut can scatter it all over the road”. “Nut” has several meanings, but there are two possible meanings of nut conveyed in this sentence. First, it is possible that the nuts used to join the parts of the car can hold together, but if one nut is broken or lost this may cause an accident to the car and then it is broken into thousands of pieces. Second, it might mean that the car is held together by thousands of nuts but a reckless crazy driver may break into thousands of pieces in an accident.

A final example quoted from Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* in the *Oxford Companion* (1992, p. 823) is:

Here the red queen began again,

"Can you answer useful questions?" She said, "How is bread made?"

"I know that!" Alice cried eagerly, "You take some flour."

"Where do you pick the flower?" The white queen asked "In the garden or in the hedges?"

"Well, it is not picked at all", Alice explained "It is ground."

"How many acres of ground?" said the white queen "You must not leave out so many things."

Consider the words "flower" and "ground". The first is a homophone of "flour" while the second is a homophone of the past participle of "grind". If a translator wants to translate this excerpt into Arabic, he will certainly encounter the problem of finding Arabic equivalents that fulfill the meaning as homophones. The humor will be lost in translation, it should be noticed here that the problem of translation is caused by a word or phrase of similar or identical pronunciation, so that while the written form is clear and can be easily translated, the pronunciation creates confusion to humorous effect in the spoken form and defies easy translation.

### Conclusion

The question raised in the study can be revisited here. Is translation really a process of substituting a text in one language for a text in another? The review of related literature and the examples provided in the study and other studies show that translation is not a mere substitution of texts among languages. The translator must be aware of the objectives and the all the meanings conveyed in the source text. If one shade of meaning is lost in translation, then the text rendered in the target language is a failure. Producing non-equivalents in translation is inappropriate and distorts or blurs the meaning. Translation is the most difficult task to do for translation should not be a poor substitute for the original. Duff says "Translation does have a bad reputation with general public". Torture and translation are, in fact, amongst the few fates that can be worse than death. Strictly speaking, translation is a subtle form of torture.

### References

- Al-Saeed, M. S. (1989). Major problem in translating Quranic meanings into English (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation, Yarmouk University).
- Al-Saeed, M. S. (2011). *Moqadimafi al-tarjamah al-tahririyah: Al-lughah al-Injliziyyah ila Al-Arabiyyah* (Introduction to written translation from English into Arabic). Irbid: Alam al-Kutub al-Hadith.
- Anari, S., & Gaffarof, S. (2013). The effect of collocational competence on translation. *European-Science Journal*, 1(3), 76-84. Retrieved from file:///C:/Users/Hp/Downloads/277-843-1-PB%20(2).pdf
- Arberry, A. J. (1955). *The Koran interpreted*. London: Allen & Unwin.
- Aziz, U., & Yusuf, A. (1990). *The language of translation*. Beirut: Al Fiker Al-Arabi, Arab Development Institute.
- Baker, M. (1992). *In other words: A course book on translation*. London: Routledge.
- Bell, R. T., & Candlin, C. (1991). *Translation and translating: Theory and practice*. London: Longman.
- Birjandi, P. (1999). Lexical knowledge and translation ability. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 2, 1-8.
- Bolinger, D., & Sears, D. A. (1981). *Aspects of language*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Catford, J. C. (1965). *A linguistic theory of translation; an essay in applied linguistics*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Cowie, A. P., Mackin, R., & McCaig, I. R. (1975). *Oxford dictionary of current idiomatic English*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Dawood, N. J. (1956). *The Koran*. Hammondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books.
- Duff, A. (1984). *The third language*. Tarrytown: Pergamon Press.
- Dweik, B. S., & Abu Shakra, M. M. (2011). Problems in translating collocations in religious texts from Arabic into English. *The Linguistics Journal*, 5(1), 5-14. Retrieved from

- w.linguistics-journal.com/2011/02/07/problems-in-translating-collocations-in-religious-texts-from-arabic-into-english/Faulty Translations Retrieved from an English-Zone.Com Fun Language PageEnglish-zone.com/language/translate.htm
- Gibbon, E. (1996). *The history of the decline and fall of the Roman empire*. USA: Modern Library.
- Kashgary, A. D. (2011). The paradox of translating the untranslatable: Equivalence vs. non-equivalence in translating from Arabic into English. *Journal of King Saud University—Languages and Translation*, 23(1), 47-57.
- Kenny, D. (2009). Equivalence. In M. Baker and G. Saldanha (Eds.), *The Routledge encyclopedia of translation studies* (2nd ed., pp. 96-100). London: Routledge.
- Khatib, M. M. (1986). *The bounteous Koran*. London: Macmillan Press.
- Khotaba, E., & Al-Tarawneh, K. (2015). Lexical discourse analysis in translation. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6(3), 106-112.
- Lasheen, A. (1983). *Meaning in the light of the Quranic stylistic*. Beirut: The Umayyad Library.
- Lawrence, T. E. (1935). *The seven pillars of wisdom*. UK: Oxford, Penguin Modern Classics.
- Lawrence, T. E. (1998). *The seven pillars of wisdom* (Najjar, Trans.). Amman: National Press for Publications and Distribution.
- Longman dictionary of American English: Your complete guide to American English*. (1997). White Plains, NY: Longman.
- Mc Arthur, T. (1992). *The Oxford companion to the English language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Paret, R. (1983). The Quran. In T. M. Johnston, R. B. Serjeand, A. F. L. Beeston and G. R. Smith (Eds.), *Arabic literature to the end of the Umayyad period* (The Cambridge history of Arabic literature). UK: Cambridge University Press.
- The Quranic Arabic corpus—word-by-word grammar, syntax and morphology of the Holy Quran* (n.d.). Retrieved March 4, 2016 from <http://corpus.quran.com/>
- Zamkhsari, O. J. (1998). *Assas el balagha* (Essentials of rhetoric). Cairo: Dar Al-Kutub El-illmiyah (House of Science Books).
- Zarqani, A. (1995). *Menahil el-irfan fi ulum al Quran* (The spring sources of sciences of the Quran). Beirut: Dar Al-Kitab Al-Arabi (Arab House Books).