



Translating Arabic Political Contratextual Expressions into

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Abstract

Contratextual texts are of a unique nature in that they tend to consist of two polemical contradictory voices: an implicit voice (hypotext) and an explicit one (hypertext). This lays on the translators the further burden of having to work out ways to preserve both voices either through developing a new mental model for the contratextuality under translation to retain an effect almost similar to that of the source text (ST), or replacing the whole contratextuality by a similar one in the target language. The study hypothesizes that the degree of translators' awareness of both voices of the ST is crucial in obtaining a sound understanding of the message, and consequently determining the elements to be sacrificed in the translation. To investigate this hypothesis, the study follows Hatim and Mason's (1990) translational model of the intertextual references. The model gives priority to keeping the intentional status (the function of the original) over the informational status (the form of the original), as well as suggesting the translation strategies that could be the most suitable for realizing each of these preferences. The study comes up with the conclusion that substitution strategy is the most suitable one for translating contratextuality in that it gives priority to keeping the intentional status (the function of the original) over the informational status (the form of the original), and consequently it allows the target text (TT) readers to live an emotional experience almost similar to that lived by the ST readers.

1. Introduction:

The statement that contratextuality never travels is frequently heard. It has many dimensions like language, culture and religion; it is sometimes based on breaking taboos. Because it uses cultural conventions, it can only be understood by those who share the same culture, background and of course language. This paper investigates what happens to



contratextuality when it crosses cultural boundaries and comes up against the problem of changing language.

In addition to translating it into the English language, an analysis is carried out by way of commentary on the translation decisions made. The analysis also includes detecting contratextuality in the original text, looking at its translation and finding out whether the same impact can be retained in translation. Analyzing those references from a translational point of view is an attempt to determine if adaptation is at all possible. Other relevant issues as far as translation problems are concerned also form a significant part of the analysis.

This paper is an attempt to shed some light on whether contratextuality can transcend language and cultural barriers, and how certain cultural issues in relation to contratextuality may be investigated in order to bring different cultures one step closer to one another. The current study hypothesizes the following:

1. Failure to retrieve the intended meaning of a given text is attributed to failure to recognize the cntratextual reference between languages and cross cultures because it is thought to be greater than within them since such recognition is culture specific therefore it requires extra-linguistic knowledge.

2. Literature Review:

Contratextuality is a form of intertextuality introduced by Martin 1986 to refer to the way in which expository texts construct oppositional relations between themselves and opposing discourses in ecological debate. In othr words, it can be interpreted as a kind of dialogism in which voices mix not simply as a pluralist expression of difference, but rather as an expression of ideological tensions highlighting negotiation of power (Lemke,1988:146).

On their part, Hatim and Mason (1990:154) state that the expository text means "the contextual focus is either on the decomposition analysis into constituent elements of given concepts or their composition (synthesis) from constituent elements." Accordingly, there are two variants of exposition: descriptive and narrative texts. The former attempts to "enrich knowledge spaces whose control centers are objects or situations", the latter aims to "arrange actions and events in a particular sequential order" (Beaugrande and Dressler, 1981:184).



As a cover term, intertextuality means that texts are comprehended and interpreted in terms of their dependence on other relevant texts. Regardless of quoting, this may or may not agree with the theme or attitude of the parent text. When it does, the textual interrelation is called intertextuality, and contratextuality when it does not (Kress, 1988:49).

Contratextuality, however, is not restricted to expository texts only, but rather, it is frequently used in argumentative texts. In this regard, contratextuality refers to references whereby addressers employ opponents' discourse or expressions for their own purposes. Thus, it is found out that contratextuality including parody and quotation is a frequently used technique in debates (WWW.CNKI.COM.CN).

3. Contratextuality VS. Satire:

As contratextuality is commonly used in debates for criticizing a given folly, it is a satirical device in Arabic political discourse. To demonstrate so, satire is viewed as a way for rebuking or criticizing any stupidity or vice in the form of scathing humor, or a critique of what text-producer sees as a religious, political, moral and/or social folly (Abdul-Raouf, 2006:256).

4. Types of Satire:

There are two types of satire.

4.1. Horatian:

Horatian satire is tolerant, funny, sophisticated witty, wise, self-effacing and aims to correct through humor. Named for the Roman satirist from the Augustan period in Rome, Horace, this playfully criticizes some social vice through gentle, mild, and light-hearted humour. It directs wit, exaggeration, and self-denouncing humour toward what it identifies as folly, rather than evil. Horatian satire's sympathetic tone is commonly used in modern society.

4.2. Juvenalian:

Juvenalian satire is angry, caustic, personal, relentless, bitter, and serious. Named after Augustan period's Roman satirist Juvenal, this type of satire is more contemptuous and abrasive than the Horatian. Juvenalian satire provokes a darker kind of laughter; addresses social evil and points



with contempt to the corruption of men and institutions through scorn, outrage, and savage ridicule. This form is often pessimistic, characterized by irony, sarcasm, moral indignation and personal invective, with less emphasis on humour (Wahba&Al-Muhandis, 1984:422-3).

5. Satirical Devices:

5.1. Irony: Literary device conveying the opposite of what is expected in which there is an incongruity or discordance between what one says or does, and what s/he means or what is generally understood. It is lighter, less harsh in wording than sarcasm, though more cutting because of its indirectness. The ability to recognize irony is one of the surest tests of intelligence and sophistication. Irony employs words of praise to imply blame and words of blame to imply praise. Irony is achieved through such devices as hyperbole and understatement (Leech, 1983:142-3 ; Versceuren, 1999:35).

5.2. Parody:

As contratextuality is an aspect of intertextual reference which, instead of evoking an image, precludes it, politicians employ such a way to achieve their goals (Hatim, 1997:240). Parody is a culture specific reference for mocking imitation, composition imitating or ridiculing another, usually serious, piece of work(Allen, 2000:132). As parody is a catastrophic based phenomenon, it enhances the feeling of skepticism, develops nonsense and evaluates political, ideological and cultural attitudes (Denith, 2000:20). An illustrative example is:

Age of burying men alive.

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Here, the text producer parodies men since the message contratextualizes with the Arabic collocation 'وئد البنات' 'burying girls alive' (a pre-Islamic practice to avoid future disgrace). Thus, s/he communicates the message that men nowadays are not manly enough, so they, rather than girls, should be buried alive (Farghal&Al-Hamly, 2005:11).

5.3. Malapropism:

A deliberate mispronunciation of a name or term in order to poke fun, maintain rhymes, etc. In other words, it is a sort of phonetic deviation



concerned with rhyme and musical effect to coin new ironical item(s). An illustrative example is:

جادلته في قُبلة فاجابني لا والمثيح وحرمة الناقوث

I asked him (the child) for a kiss, but he replied: 'No, by the Messiah and the sacredness of the church bell.'

Phonetic error here is deliberate by the poet to show that he copies the exact phonetic pattern of the child's pronunciation 'المثيح' and 'الناقوث' instead of 'المسيح' and 'الناقوس'. Such phonetic deviation employed by the poet to provide the imagery of the age of a young child speaking with a slip (Abdul-Raouf,2006:65).

6. Political Satire:

An outstanding kind of satire employed to tackle gaining entertainment from politics. It is used with subversive intent where political speech and dissent are prohibited by a regime as a method of advancing political arguments where such arguments are common (Wahba&Al-Muhandis, 1984:423). Political concepts often have been the focus of analysis since they should be totally related to the historical environment. Henceforth, translation scholars have accounted for the features of political language, and presented particular translation solutions for the socio-political causes and effects. Newmark (1991), for example, devotes an entire chapter to "the translation of political language". Thus, he characterizes political concepts as "partly culture-bound, mainly value-laden, historically conditioned" (Newmark, 1991:149). He also views that pronouns, euphemisms, metaphors, neologisms, acronyms, euphony and collocations are characteristic features of political language, and gives advice to translators on how to deal with such proplems, noting that for political texts, "the translator's neutrality is a myth" (ibid:161).

7. Translation of Contratextuality:

Translating contratextuality is stimulating challenge. It requires an accurate decoding of a contratextual reference in its original context, the transfer of that reference in a different and often disparate linguistic and cultural environment, and its reformulation in a new utterance which successfully recaptures the intention of the original contratextual reference and stimulates in the target audience an effective equivalent.

8. Translation Strategies:



8.1. Adaptation: A strategy used when the situation referred to in the SL does not exist in the TL culture, or does not have the same relevance or connotation as it does in the original. In other words, the SL quotation is replaced by an original TL quotation with a corresponding function (Vinay&Darbelnet, 1995: 31).

8.2. Literal Translation:

Literal translation is the direct transfer of a SL text into a grammatically and idiomatically appropriate text in TL which the translators' task is limited to observing the adherence to the linguistic structure of the TL. This is word-for-word translation is described as a unique solution which is reversible and complete in itself. It is most common between languages of the same family and culture like the English and French. Literal translation is the author's prescription for good translation. It can only be sacrificial because of structural and metalinguistic requirements and only after checking that the meaning is fully preserved. But literal translation will be unacceptable when it:

1. has a different meaning
2. has no meaning
3. is impossible for structural reasons
4. does not have a corresponding expression within the meta-linguistic experience of the TL
5. corresponds to something at a difficult level of language (Hatim& Munday, 2004: 149)

8.3. Explanation:

For Vinay and Darbelnet (1995:80) explanation is making explicit in the TT information what is implicit in the ST, but can be derived from the context of situation. It is the amplification from implicit to explicit status in the course of tackling *addition* which Nida (1964:272) considers the main technique of adjustment over and above subtraction and alteration.

Klaudy (2003: 82-84), however, lists four types of explicitation: obligatory explicitation (due to differences in semantic and syntactic



structures), optional explicitation (due to stylistic preferences), pragmatic explicitation (due to different cultural assumptions) and translation inherent explicitation (dictated by the nature of translation process which is interpretive in the first place).

8.4. Substitution:

According to this strategy, translators, instead of relaying the ST form and content, insert a TT of their own which is usually not part of the ST; but equivalence of intention has to be maintained (Harvey, 2001:37). Accordingly, the Arabic proverb لا يصلح العطار ما أفسده صاحب الدار Lit. *the druggist cannot fix what the house owner spoiled*) is supposed to adequately stand for the English proverb "*crooked by nature is never made straight by education*". This strategy is usually approached when parody deals with a universal theme in a culture-specific way.

Target Text Analysis:

Obviously, all the translators in question, though with various degrees, have some accessibility to the original texts these contratextual references are contratextualized with. They are aware of both the explicit (describing the tyranny and aggression) and the implicit voices (urging people to revolt against the unjust regiem) as reflected in the strategies they have adopted, viz. explanation 'O, country between the two slaughtering machines' (trans.2) for 'بلاد ما بين النهرين', substitution 'submission' and 'prostration' trans.1,2and3 for 'الانبطاح', and literal translation 'kiss the swords' 'قبل سيوف' trans.1,2and3 respectively. Such renderings reflect the translators' consideration they have payed to the form or content of the message.

Text.1

It is worth mentioning that the contratextual references under investigation are going to be traced back in trans.1 only to avoid repetition. As socio-cultural practice in the Arab world, Mesopotamia stands for an ancient region in present day Iraq, perhaps as is the case with all over the world. The intertextual reference 'النهرين' is deeply rooted in Arab culture, which is well-being in nature. However, the author, who is well-known for his successive criticism for Arab peoples and regimes, employs malapropism and argues for contratextual reference 'النهرين' instead of 'الهرين' to criticize the vice, as religious, political, moral and social folly. On the face of it, rendering 1 seems to have failed to relay the intended message of the ST. A proposed rendering supposed to perform in the TT is 'Mesopotamia bloodmania' to be easily digested by the TL audience.

The contratextual reference 'الاجتياح' 'invasion' has been skipped by the translator whereby he opts for passivization once he is aware of the explicit voice, describing the tyranny and injustice. In this vein Larson (1984:20) points out "the passive sentences are used primarily when the subject is portrayed as suffering."

Tracing back the contratextual reference 'الاجتياح' 'invasion', it is found that the poetic line is contratextualized with the Glorious aya "ألم يأتيكم نذير" "Has no Warner come up to you?" (Ghali,2005:562). This aya has been initiated by a rhetorical question realized by 'ألم' 'has no' to signify reproaching the unbelievers (Al-Razi,2004:56). However, the translator succeeded in using a linguistic maneuver, passivization, to convey the intended message as much forcible as possible.

Concerning 'أولي الأنبطاح' 'those of prostration', the poet falls back on the following Glorious aya: "لقد كان في قصصهم عبرة لأولي الألباب"



"Indeed in their narratives is already a lesson to (the ones) endowed with intellects" (Ghali,2005:248).

Exploiting this aya, however, 'أولي الأنبطاح' contratextualizes with it by communicating the message that the addressees in the poetic line, unlike the aya, are expected to revolt not to lay down once the poet parodies the addressees in question. On his part, the translator opts for substitution 'submission', which is not appropriate once the lexical item 'الأنبطاح' is a polysemous word denoting either 'laying down' or 'prostration'. The latter, however, is a religious characteristic feature of Muslims; it can be a proposed rendering here.

In terms of the contratextual expression 'ترك المباح' 'giving up the unforbidden', it is contratextualized with the religious collocation 'ترك المحذور' 'giving up the forbidden'. The poet here argues for the view that bloodshedding in Iraq is unforbidden, thus he parodies the addressees to quit this forbidden deed. Thus, he communicates the message in the form of scathing humor once this deed is illegitimate. The translator, however, seems to have misunderstood the message properly perhaps because he is not acquainted with religious genre, thus he converted it into 'leave the rights, you do not', which is non-sensical for the TT audience. A proposed rendering can be realized as 'will you give up the unforbidden' to facilitate comprehension on the part of the TL audience.

Trans.2

As is the case with trans.1, the translator here is well aware of the explicit voice calling for revolting against the tyrants therefore he opts for such translation strategies as substitution 'slaughtering machines' for 'النحرين' and passivization 'engulfed' for 'يأتكم الأجتياح'. Notably, he



successfully managed to convert the contratextual expression 'أولي' via substitution into 'men of prostration' because this item is a characteristic feature of Muslims when they perform their prayers. Literal translation is well manifested in rendering the Arabic genitive case 'سلاح السلاح' into 'weapons of weapons'. This rendering is inappropriate for it has no meaning. A proposed rendering can be 'arms of weapons' because it stands for a corresponding expression within the meta-linguistic experience of the TL audience.

Trans.3

Apparently, the translator here opts for literal translation 'بين النحرين' 'between slaughterings' to keep the form rather than the content. Literal translation is non-sensical for the TL audience in this context therefore it is useless. According to the mode adopted in this study, intentionality is given priority over than the form. Henceforth, the researchers propose the following translation: Mesopotamia bloodmania' to be easily digested by the TL audience. Building on the fact that the translator is well aware of the explicit voice calling for revolting against the tyrants he opts for passivization 'overpowered' for 'يأتكم الأجتياح' as a sort of hedging.

Obviously, like trans.2, he successfully managed to convert the contratextual expression 'أولي الأنبطاح' via substitution into 'men of prostration' because this item is a characteristic feature of Muslims when they perform their prayers. Substitution has been successfully employed in rendering the Arabic genitive case 'سلاح السلاح' into 'arms of weapons' because it stands for a corresponding expression within the meta-linguistic experience of the TL audience.



Text 2

Here, 'قبل سيوف الغاصبين' 'kiss the swords of coercers' is an echo of one line in 'Muallaqat Antara' whereby Antara wishes to kiss the arrows since they resemble (his sweetheart) Abba's teeth. The simile is alluded to embody the theme of love and bravery. As for ' ' اخفض جناح ' ' lower the wing' is part of the Quranic aya "واخفض لهما جناح الذل من الرحمة" (verse:23, Al-Isra'a, the Glorious Quran) (see: Alwi, 2010:17).

A cursory look at trans.1, one can see that literal translation is the predominant feature, therefore it is inappropriate to be accessible by a different culture audience. In terms of culture specific terms, translation theorists unanimously view that "the difficulty in decoding cultural signs can be more problematic for the translator than semantic or syntactic difficulties" (Gonzalez,2004:123). Notably, the difficulty goes from bad to worse when it comes to languages of little affinity as is the case with Arabic and English. Thus, the translator in question, if he is acquainted with the TL culture, he would have opted for substituting the lexical item 'swords' by 'rods' because the TL audience recognize that 'kiss the rods' refers to someone who accepts punishment submissively.

Trans.2

Likewise, the translator here adopted literal translation to achieve his goal but he failed since 'kissing the swords' is non-sensical for the TL audience. Thus, a better translation is 'kiss the rods' because the latter stands for a corresponding expression within the meta-linguistic experience of the TL audience.

Trans. 3



Similarly, literal translation is an outstanding strategy employed by the translator to fulfil his task but it is fruitless since 'kissing the swords' is non-sensical for the TL audience. Thus, a better translation is 'kiss the rods' because the latter stands for a corresponding expression within the meta-linguistic experience of the TL audience.

Text 3

The poetic line in question is contratextualized with a poetic line by Al-Shabi (1994:25)

إذا الشعب يوماً أراد الحياة فلا بد أن يستجيب القدر

If people want life one's day,

The monarchies must obey.

Al-Shabi argues for the view that when people revolt they destroy everything. Thus, he praises them as he regards them the arms of weapons that their weapons must be met even by the monarchies. Ironically speaking, the poet, via parody, contratextualizes Al-Shabi's line because he views that Arabs are not manly enough to resist the invaders therefore they have to be inflicted with the invaders. Notably, he opted for the loan word 'مارينز' 'marines: troops trained to serve on sea or land' for sound effect. On his part, the translator seems to have misunderstood the whole story therefore he mistranslates it well. His failure is attributed to literal translation for 'marines', which may not necessarily mean so. Furthermore, he opted for translating 'يبتلى بالمرينز' into 'with marines they have to be allied' where the item 'allied' refers to 'mutual benefit' whereas it is not the case here. The connotative meaning of 'يبتلى' here is associated with such connotatives as 'overwhelmed', 'predominated', 'controlled', etc. Thus, a better translation is realized by substitution as in 'yoke of



imperialism', which refers to something regarded as oppressive or burdensome in the TL culture.

Trans. 2

The translator in question resorted to such translation strategies as explanation 'حياة' for 'respectful life' and literal translation 'مارينز' 'marines' to overcome the translation problem. However, he failed to convey the message appropriately. What is more, he did not account for rhythmical aspects. Thus, substitution is the best strategy to be used for it gives priority to the intentional over the informational content as Hatim and Mason (1990:131) propose for translating intertextuality.

Trans. 3

Here, the translator opted for literal translation as a translation strategy to overcome the barriers he underwent as is the case with 'أراد الحياة' 'wanted to live' and the contratextual reference 'المارينز' 'marines'. He, however, failed to convey the message well because literal translation, though keeps the form, is no longer sufficient since it does not stand for a corresponding expression within the meta-linguistic experience of the TL audience. Moreover, the rhythmical aspects have been neglected. Hence, substitution is the best strategy to be used for it gives priority to the intentional over the informational content as Hatim and Mason (1990:131) propose for translating intertextuality.

9. Conclusion

As contratextual references are culture specific, translators should be acquainted with textual patterns in both the ST and TT.



The authors in question have carefully designed their works on intertextual references as much as possible. To avoid communication failure, text receivers must call up knowledge structures.

In terms of the translation strategies, the contratextual references have been rendered into English via adaptation, substitution, passivization, explanation and literal translation. Notably, translators are well aware of translating political contratextual references. This is why they totally resorted to passive voice as a hedging translation strategy 'يأتكم' 'overwhelmed', 'engulfed' and 'overpowered' respectively. As for adaptation, it is well manifested in 'بلاد ما بين النهرين' 'Mesomassacres' and 'slaughtering machines' trans.1&2 respectively. Concerning literal translation, it is employed by trans.2 'بلاد ما بين النهرين' 'country between slaughterings' ; 'قبل سيوف' 'kiss swords' and 'مريّنز' 'marines' by the whole test subject translators. Obviously, substitution is apparent in all of the renderings differently as shown in 'الانبطاح' 'submission' trans.1 and 'prostration' trans.2&3. Explanation, however, is less frequently used as it is realized in rendering 'الحياة' 'respectful life' trans.2.

It is worth mentioning that substitution, though overburdens translators because it requires extra-linguistic sagacity, is the best strategy for translating contratextuality because it conforms to the model adopted in that it gives priority to the content rather than the form.

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Appendix

ST (1)

Trans. 1

Mesomassacres

Have not you been overwhelmed ? It is surely a lesson to you those of submission. Weapons are sold to kill nations, and bought by their fortunes. Don't you know that weapons are themselves nations ? So, leave the rights!

Trans. 2

O Country Between the Two Slaughtering Machines !

Haven't you been engulfed ? It was indeed a lesson to you, men of prostration. Weapons are sold for killing people, so are they bought by peoples fortune. You have already known that peoples are the weapons of weapons. So, will you then let go what is allowed ?

Trans. 3

O Country Between the Two Slaughterings !

Haven't you been overpowered ? Indeed it was a lesson to you, men of prostration. Weapons are sold to kill nations, and bought by their fortunes.



Don't you know that weapons are the arms of weapons ?
So, will you leave what is unforbidden ?

ST (2)

Trans. 1

The swords of invaders you kiss and full yield you show to
be forgiven.

Trans. 2

Kiss the invaders' swords so they may forgive you,
And lower to them the wing of disgrace, and apologize.

Trans. 3

Kiss the swords of invaders in order to be forgiven,
Put down the side of disgrace, and seek forgiveness.

ST (3)

Trans. 1

If nations want to be survived,
With marines they have to be allied.

Trans. 2

If, one day, people want respectful life, they must be
inflicted with marines.

Trans. 3

If the people wanted to live, they must be befallen by
marines.



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المستخلص

إن نصوص تناص التضاد ذات طبيعة خاصة كونها تتألف من صوتين جدليين متناقضين: صوت جلي وصوت خفي. وهذا يضع عبئاً كبيراً على المترجمين من خلال إيجاد سبل أخرى للمحافظة على كلا الصوتين أما من خلال تطوير انموذج ذهني جديد لتناص التضاد قيد الترجمة لتحقيق تأثير مماثل لما في النص الاصلي أو من خلال استبدال النص بأسره بنص مماثل لما في لغة الهدف. تفترض الدراسة بأن درجة حذر المترجمين من كلا الصوتين شرط أساسي للحصول على الفهم الصحيح للمعلومة , وبالتالي تحديد العناصر التي يضحى بها المترجم. وللتحقق من هذه الفرضية, تتبنى هذه الدراسة انموذج حاتم وميسن (1990) . وهذا الانموذج يرجح القصدية على الشكل, وبالتالي يسمح لقراء لغة الهدف أن يعيشوا أجواء مماثلة لقراء لغة الهدف.