

Nahjul Balagha between Translation and Mediation: A Linguistic or A Cultural Encounter?

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Abstract

Nahjul Balagha is deemed a great masterpiece of Arabic. It has a unique position in Islamic heritage that makes it a source of attraction for translators. However, this book received «so little» attention in terms of translation except for some distinct attempts. The present study, therefore, is an attempt to shed some light on a significant translation of this book in a manner through which a gap in the literature will be bridged. In this context, this study intends to explore the translation of Nahjul Balagha by Reza (2003). The study will show that the cultural turn in translation studies has resulted in considerable interest in the role of the translator as a mediator as opposed to the neutral role of a mere transferor of the text from one language to another. The main question of the current study is whether the translation as mediation of this book is deemed a linguistic or a cultural encounter. A central

issue in this regard is where to draw a line between the linguistic and the cultural boundaries. This will be done by investigating the basic attitudes and perspectives of translation scholars, as well as reflecting on the different paths taken by translation to accomplish its task successfully. One of these paths is mediation. Based on the results of the analysis, the study has demonstrated that an effective rendition of Nahjul-Balagha is not only a linguistic, or a cultural, encounter, rather, both are practiced to convey a brilliantly and excellently written text by Imam Ali (A.S.).

Keywords: cultural turn, Imam Ali, mediation, Nahjul Balagha, translation studies.

نهج البلاغة بين الترجمة والتدخل: مواجهة لسانية أم ثقافية؟

كلية التربية للبنات / قسم اللغة الإنكليزية / جامعة بغداد

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الملخص

يُعدّ كتاب نهج البلاغة من روائع اللغة العربية، ويحظى بمكانة فريدة في التراث الإسلامي تجعله مصدر جذب للمترجمين. ومع ذلك، لم يلق هذا الكتاب سوى اهتمام ترجمي بسيط عدا بعض المحاولات المتميزة. وبالتالي، تأتي هذه الدراسة كإسهام معرفي لأنها تسلط الضوء على ترجمة مهمة لهذا الكتاب بطريقة يتم من خلالها سدّ ثغرة في أدبيات هذا الموضوع. سيتبين من

الدراسة أن الانعطافة الثقافية في دراسات الترجمة أدت إلى تعاظم الاهتمام بدور المترجم بوصفه وسيطاً لا محض ناقلٍ محايد للنص من لغةٍ إلى أخرى. وبهذا الصدد تتقصى هذه الدراسة ترجمة السيد علي رضا (2003) لنهج البلاغة، لتتمحور حول قضية مركزية تتساءل عن الموضع الذي يمكن فيه أن نضع حداً فاصلاً بين المواجهة اللسانية والثقافية في النص. وسيتحقق ذلك عبر تقصي أهم المواقف الأساسية ووجهات نظر التي تبناها علماء الترجمة، وتسلط الضوء على مختلف المسارات التي اتخذتها الترجمة لإنجاز مهمتها بنجاح، ولعلّ واحداً منها هو: التوسّط. وبناءً على النتائج التي تمخضت عن التحليل، أوضحت الدراسة أن الترجمة الناجحة لنهج البلاغة لا يمكن أن تكون محض مواجهة لسانية أو ثقافية مع النص، بل يتضافران سوياً لنقل نص كتبه الإمام علي (عليه السلام) ببراعة وإبداع.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الإمام علي، الانعطافة الثقافية، التوسّط، نهج البلاغة، دراسات الترجمة

1. Introduction

As a consequence of the escalating status of translators in modern translation studies, the attitude towards them has changed from that of «transferors of words and sentences between languages to mediators of culture and cross-cultural communicative functions» (Bedecker & Feinauer, 2009, p. 133). The mediator, therefore, is viewed as an active person «who serves as a link between two or more cultures and social systems» (Bochmer, 1981, p. 3). Such a shift did not affect translators only, but also the look to translation as a whole. Translation turned to be a respectable

mental activity to the extent Lotman (2000) affirms that «the elementary act of thinking is translation» (p. 143). This in turn resulted in a huge interest in the relation between translation and mediation.

Being situated at the borders of languages and cultures, translators have played a great role in enriching languages, assisting in the creation of national literatures, spreading knowledge and encouraging religious tolerance and understanding (Delisle & Woodsworth, 1995, p. xiv). This proposition can be applied to the translation of Nahjul Balagha, Peak of Eloquence, (henceforth NB). For Muslims, the Glorious Quran is a great source of guidance, besides Hadith. These two sources are considered «a unique repository of answers to all sorts of questions» (Rahman, 1982. P. 2). Another perfect source for such guidance and values would be NB, which is deemed «one of the famous and important Islamic books» (Tian & Pho, 2019, p. 881). Despite the fact that this book addresses particular people in a particular time, yet, it is considered a universal message that suits humanity as a whole especially if one realizes moral and spiritual challenges facing the world today (Stetkevych, 2019, p. 218). As a result, the translator who accomplish its translation will enjoy a mediatory position between source and target language in order to decipher the points of similarities and differences across cultures.

Based on Liddicoat and Scarino's (2013) proposition that mediation is a «meaning making activity» (p.54), this study aims to achieve three-fold goals. Firstly, it will present a theoretical framework that covers the most salient features of mediation and its significance in the cultural turn.

It then goes to identify and discuss mediation procedures followed by the translator when tackling such a vital text. Given that this book is of a religious nature, it would be interesting in the third goal to explore how it is translated and mediated, and whether it is linguistically or culturally encountered. This goal can be tackled by gauging the degree of mediation practiced by the translator.

For the purposes of this study, a qualitative methodology was employed. It analyzes linguistic and cultural aspects in the translation of NB and their original counterparts in Arabic in order to examine how the translator handled the text under focus. It will highlight the approach of the study, its data collection and translation analysis. This methodology is designed to explore the translational aspects of NB from the point of view of mediation in order to answer the main question of the current study.

As the study on NB in terms of translation and mediation is deemed rare, it can be theoretically gauged by being a contribution to fill a gap in the literature that has given less attention to «what it means for a translator to be a mediator» (Liddicoat, 2015, p. 3). This will be done by providing a practical definition of mediation in the translation of NB. Besides, this study will emphasize the significance of culture in translation theory and practice by identifying challenges that a translator may encounter when tackling such a unique text.

The theoretical framework of this study, therefore, will shed some light on the notion of mediation in translation studies and approach the relation-

ship between translation and mediation by examining these two concepts.

2. Theoretical Framework

The aim of the current section is to establish the theoretical scope of the concepts of translation and mediation in a manner that sets the view upon which the study will be built.

2.1 From Translation to Translation Studies: A Historical Overview

To show the relevance of mediation to the discipline of translation studies (henceforth TS), this section will take its point of departure from TS to briefly recount the history of the now an important and distinct discipline.

The history of Translation Studies should therefore be seen as an essential field of study for the contemporary theorist, but should not be approached from a narrowly fixed position. (Bassnet, 1980, p. 75)

Starting with Bassnet's quote shows that TS is as an academic discipline which is concerned with the study of the theory and phenomena of translation. This fact is stressed by Munday (2012, p.13-15) who, in his important book, *Introducing Translation Studies: Theories and Applications*, highlights the way in which different parts of the world have witnessed the ongoing growth of TS as a separate discipline in its own right. Lefevere (1992, p. xi) considers such a growth as «a success story» of TS.

Though it is hard to investigate «the development of a field of thought

that spans more than two thousand years» (Tymoczko, 2007, p. 24), yet, one can say that translation did not come under the endeavours of systematic research until the second half of the 20th century (Hung, 2005, p. viii). Before that date, it was studied as part of language learning and pedagogy, comparative literature, contrastive linguistics and translation workshops (Munday, 2012, p. 27), or as a purely linguistic activity (Munday, 2001, p. 9). Such an assumption was widely held to the extent that translation is thought to be merely a «transfer of written text in one language into written text in another» (Gottlieb, 2004, p. 219). The whole situation of translation was changed by Holmes who laid an overall framework for this discipline on the basis of which different approaches to translation have been built.

Holmes represents a turning point in the history of translation studies as he outlined the «scope and structure for the new discipline» Gentzler (2001, p. 93). Through his seminal paper, *The Name and Nature of Translation Studies* (1972), presented in the Third International Congress of Applied Linguistics and was published later in 1988, the name ‘Translation Studies’ was given by Holmes to this discipline, arguing that it «would not be wise to continue referring to the discipline by its subject matter», which would mean failing to distinguish the territory from the map (Holmes 1988, p.173-174). He presents, therefore, a disciplinary map in which he differentiates distinctly between ‘pure’ and ‘applied’ TS in a way that determines the scope and structure of this discipline in general and the scholarly study of translation in particular (Holmes, 1988, p.71). He also considers TS as an empirical type of research «because it focuses on

the observable aspects of translation» (Hermans, 1999, p. 7). Empirically speaking, pure TS is subdivided into two branches; namely, Descriptive Translation Studies (henceforth DTS), with the aim of explaining the phenomena of translating and translations and Translation Theory, with the aim of determining the necessary principles required by both to explain and predict translational phenomena (Holmes, 1988, p. 172).

Accordingly, Holmes presents a thorough classification of translation theories and perspectives in his map of TS, famously known as ‘Holmes’s map’ (Toury, 2012, p.4). Figure 1 below shows Holmes’s map.

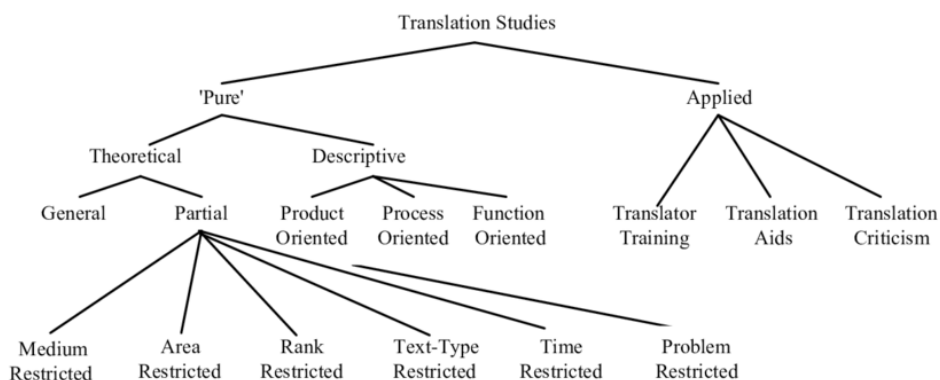


Figure 1. Holmes's Map

It is interesting to note that issues related to the translator's status and role were ignored as being of marginal interest as they are considered beyond the scope of TS. Even Holmes's map (Dam & Zethsen, 2009, p. 7).

The significance of modern TS can be measured by its role in casting some doubt on the position of the linguistically-oriented studies of translation that «unleashed the word vs. sense debate in traditional theory»

(Snell-Hornby, 1988, p. 39). With this move it has paved the way for the emergence of the cultural turn which is considered by Munday (2001, p.135-136) as a source of invaluable perspectives to translation.

2.2 The Cultural Turn

This turn is considered an «undisputed milestone in the discipline» (Gambier & Doorslaer, 2010, p. 377). The study of translation, therefore, has moved from «the formalist phase and began to consider broader issues of context, history and convention» (Bassnet and Lefevere, 1998, p. 123). Bassnett and Lefevere's efforts resulted in a collection of essays to define a major shift in translation studies during the 1990s (Khalifa, 2014, p. 9), from the text and the linguistically-oriented approaches to translator and culturally-oriented approaches (House, 2016, p. 7). This led to a radical shift in the traditional look at the translator, by which «neither the word, nor the text, but the culture became the operational 'unit' of translation» (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1998, p. 8). The core idea of this turn is that translation no longer be seen as a balanced linguistic process, but a complex process of negotiation between two or more cultures (Eco, 2003, p. 7).

Seen from this perspective, the translator is no longer deemed merely a linguistic transferor of the source text (henceforth ST). Katan (2004, p. 11) argues that translators must keep away from such a paradigm and be able «to mediate the non-converging world-views or maps of the world» in a manner that fulfills the communication between different languages

and cultures. This, in turn, has motivated translation scholars to find other approaches that cope with these changes. They, therefore, tried to find a means by which a translator can add, omit, or reshape the source text without being accused of infidelity. Some of them have found the answer in the role a translator as a mediator by arguing that «the translator is first and foremost a mediator between two parties for whom mutual communication might otherwise be problematic» (Hatim & Mason, 1990/2013, p. 223-224). It is evident that the ‘problematic’ is pertinent to the translator’s role as not merely a bilingual person but also a bicultural one who has a deep understanding of the cultural issues that may hinder communication if not removed wisely. So, the role played by translation and translators has received a new and greater importance in TS (Liddicoat, 2015, p. 354). The translator was assigned a central role to play within the process of representing cultures and disseminating different values.

The fruits of the cultural turn, therefore, can be seen in the «wealth of new approaches and concepts, some of which reflect new translation phenomena, whereas others mirror new scholarly foci» (Dam et al., 2019, p. 1). One of these fruits is the fact that the translator is no longer «a soundbox or mouth-piece animator that the translator’s subject position becomes discernible in translation» (Hermans, as cited in Kadiu, 2019, p. 60), but a bi-cultural who is «translating cultures, not languages» (Ivir as cited in Manfredi, 2008, p. 34). In other words, the cultural turn has spotted, among other things, «how a text is selected for translation, for exam-

ple, what role the translator plays in that selection» (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1998, p. 123). In brief, this turn is laden with novel perspectives to the extent that «the house of translation now had many mansions» (Bassnett & Lefevere, as cited in Kuhiwczak & Littau, 2007, p. 19). It is possible to say that mediation is one of these mansions in which translation is no longer considered as merely a transfer from one language to another, but much more complex task (Portelli, 2018, p. 357).

2.3 Broadening Boundaries in Translation Studies

The next section is going to shed some light on the developments witnessed by TS, and how they have contributed to broadening the boundaries of this discipline.

2.3.1 Linguistic or Cultural Approaches to Translation?

Throughout the centuries, translation has shown that it efficiently works on cultural and linguistic levels. A relevant question, therefore, seems urgent now: can translation be studied from a linguistic perspective or from a cultural one, or are they so interrelated in a way that the one of them suggests the other? The answer is given by House (2009) who thinks that

Translation is not only a linguistic act; it is also a cultural one, an act of communication across cultures. Translation always involves both language and culture simply because the two cannot really be separated. Language is culturally embedded: it both expresses and shapes cultural reality, and the meanings of linguistic items, be they words or larger segments

of text, can only be understood when considered together with the cultural context in which these linguistic items are used. (p. 11)

This statement takes its point of departure from Toury (1978/2004, p. 200) who deems translation an activity which involves «at least, two languages and two cultures.» This means that there is an inseparable relationship between language and culture, and any attempt to separate language from culture is something similar to «the old debate about which came first – the chicken or the egg. Language is embedded in culture [...] for the two are inseparable» (Bassnett, 2007, p. 23).

Accordingly, in modern TS, there is a general recognition of the complexity of translation; there is no such a categorization of translation as being purely linguistically-oriented or culturally-oriented, but as a combination of the two. This combination is well emphasized by El-Dali (2011) who does not regard culturally-oriented and linguistically-oriented approaches to translation as contradictory, rather, there is an «inextricable link between language and culture [which] can even be highlighted by a linguistic model that views language as a social phenomenon, indisputably embedded in culture» (p. 37).

A point worth noting is that this wealth of different perspectives and paradigms has the ability to lay the foundation on which mediation will be built.

2. 4 Translation and Mediation

The basic two notions of the current study; namely, translation and

mediation, will be thoroughly discussed in the next section by examining their different aspects.

2. 4. 1 Translation: Definition

The interest in translation, according to Baker (1998, p. 277), is as old as human civilization as it «builds bridges of understanding and appreciation among different societies. Even the most skeptical of critics cannot but admit that, if it were not for translators and interpreters, we would be living in a far less friendly and less interesting environment» (Baker, 1992, p. 8-9). For centuries, translation scholars have been asking: what is translation? Hence, the researcher found it important to present this section in the literature review in order to spotlight the concept of translation first, and to prevent the confusion of terms later.

The need for a universal definition of translation is, therefore, felt by translation scholars (Cf. Nida, 1964; Hermans, 1999; Chesterman & Arrojo, 2000; Bassenet, 2002; Tymoczko, 2007). Opinions about translation were so diverse to the extent that there is «overabundance of terminology» (Munday, 2001, p. 46). Accordingly, any attempt to define the concept of translation within translation studies «becomes immediately much more difficult than it first appeared» (Tymoczko, 2007, p. 57).

Jakobson was the first linguist to present a typology of three types of translation in his seminal essay, *On Linguistic Aspects of Translation*. The importance of his classification lies in the fact that it was presented at

a time when TS were not a fully recognized as a distinct discipline. By arguing that there are «three ways of interpreting a verbal sign: it may be translated into other signs of the same language, into another language, or into another nonverbal system of symbols» (Jakobson, 1959/2000, p. 261), he gives a more comprehensive view about translation by viewing translation within three types; namely, intralingual translation, interlingual translation and intersemiotic translation. The interlingual one closely parallels with what is already understood by the concept of ‘translation’ (Shuttleworth, 1997, p. 82).

As the present study is concerned with translation of a written, not oral, text, it is possible to cite Colina’s (2015) basic definition of translation as being «the process of, or the product resulting from, transferring or mediating written text(s) of different lengths (ranging from words and sentences to entire books) from one human language to another» (p. 3). In this definition, one can notice three basic translation elements that most translation scholars and practitioners have referred to; namely, (1) written texts; (2) mediation; (3) from one natural language to another. Yet, these three elements for Tymoczko (2007) turns translation into

[A]way through which cultures define itself, to come to know itself, to come to terms with its own hybridity, and to construct a national identity. Translators are frequently the agents who set the terms of these discourses. Thus, translators have a potentially activist role in all these areas,

an empowered role that has both ethical and ideological parameters. (p. 197-198)

It is clear now that the task of defining translation is a difficult one, taking into consideration Bassnett's (1998) view that the term 'translation' itself is «vague and unhelpful» (p. 38). This difficulty is assigned to the fact that translation «is a concept which in its very 'complex' nature crosses borders. It is used by people in general, by practitioners and by scholars alike» (Dam et al., 2019, p. 231). Besides, defining the concept of translation in order to be used confidently is not an easy task because the English word for 'translation' may refer «simultaneously to the concept, the activity of translating, and the products of translation» (Tymoczko, 2007, p. 59).

2. 4. 2 What is Mediation?

This section takes as its point of departure from the proposition that translation is often seen as a communicative act where mediation forms «an indispensable element of the communicative act» (Núñez, 2012, p. 21). It may seem logical, then, to ask, what is mediation?

Mediation, for Wang (2019, p. 67), is «a new phenomenon in the field of translation.» The etymology of the term 'mediation' is investigated by Stathopoulou (2015, p. 15) as being derived «either from the Latin word *medius* (middle) or from the Latin root *mediare* - to halve, to be in the middle, to intercede, to act as intermediary.» It is widely used in legal

contexts to refer to the act through which problems, disagreements and conflicts can be peacefully resolved between parties with different effects (Leng & Regan, 2003, p. 435). For Roberts (as cited in Katan, 2013, p.76), the legal meaning of mediator is ‘arbitrator’ or ‘adjudicator’. As a result, some cultures have considered the mediator «as a wise man, a sacred figure, deserving a special respect and admiration» (Râbacov, 2013, p. 66). This term is also used in different disciplines (e.g. in education, philosophy, psychology, theology, and civil and international law) to convey the impression that the ideas and deeds of people are expressed through a dialectic between the different elements of an interaction to solve a problem (Catarci, 2016, p. 129). In foreign language education, for instance, it is used as an activity for solving problems of «communication breakdown caused by cultural differences» (Liddicoat, 2015, p. 356).

Generally speaking, Cohen-Emerique (cited in Catarci, 2016, p. 129) lists three general functions of mediation:

- It plays an ‘intermediary’ role in contexts in which there are certain problems of communication. Facilitating communication and understanding between different cultures is the main function of this type of mediation.
- It acts as a ‘conflict resolution’ of different cultural values.
- It makes full use of the shared knowledge among different cultures to create new values.

Based on Munday's (2001, p.135-136) view that the cultural turn is a source of appreciated paradigms to translation, intervention on the part of translator has received, therefore, much attention within TS. TS, therefore, turned into a «house of many rooms» (Neubert & Shreve as cited in Hatim, 2001, p. 8). This metaphor of «many rooms» is explained by translation scholars as «interdisciplinary».

A point to note, however, is that although the cultural turn has seen many references to translation as mediation between cultures (Katan, 2004, p. 66), and to the translator as a person «moving back and forth between two languages with a view to bridging potential linguistic and cultural gaps» (Stathopoulou, 2015, p. 25), the term 'mediation' did not gain momentum in TS only recently (Liddicoat and Scarino, 2013, p. 234). Accordingly, Wang (2019) considers mediation a new phenomenon within the academic study of translation as mediation as it «was often briefly touched on in connection with other topics, such as power, ideology, or manipulation» (p. 68).

Mediation, then, occurs when the translator intervenes the text in order to interpret «what is hidden, lost or distorted due to culture» (Katan, 2013, p. 84). Accordingly, Hatim & Mason (1997) define mediation as «the extent to which translators intervene in the transfer process, feeding their own knowledge and beliefs into their processing of a text» (p. 122). The main goal of intervention, therefore, is the «broadening and expanding»

of the potentials of translation itself (Bachmann-Medick, 2010, p. 186).

In line with the above definitions, one can infer that mediation is not a loose activity; rather, it is simply a practice that situates the translator in a position compelling him/her to continually take different responsible decisions. Hatim & Mason (1990, p.128), therefore, view mediation as a fruitful tool to examine the translator's decision.

2.5 Levels of Mediation

Jakobson (1960, p.353), presents his linguistic model of communication, in Figure 2, as including the message, its sender and receiver:

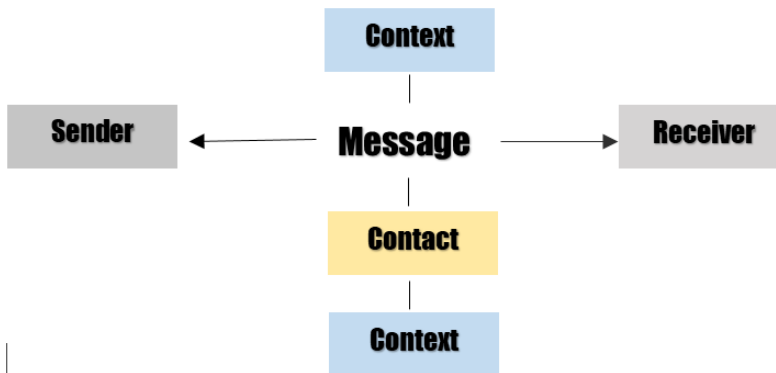


Figure 2. Jakobson's (1960) model of Communication

By taking this model as a basis for their updated model, Hatim & Mason (1990) consider translation as «a communicative process which takes place within a social context» (p. 3). They suggested a different model from Jakobson's in that the translator is not only a sender of the message, but also a receiver who negotiate, with his/her potential readers, to interpret meaning.

They believe that translation is done as an act of intervention:

If we accept that meaning is something that is negotiated between producers and receivers of texts, it follows that the translator, as a special kind of text user, intervenes in this process of negotiation to relay it across linguistic and cultural boundaries. (Hatim & Mason 1990/2013, p. 33)

Mediation, then, is achieved through two types (Hatim & Mason, 1990/2013, p. 223-224). The first type concerns mediators' role as critical readers who are «visible agents in creating understanding between people» (Katan, 2004, 2-3). The second type calls mediators «not to translate texts but to translate cultures and help strangers give new texts welcome» (Katan, 2004, p. 241) by acting as bicultural agents having a good command of bicultural knowledge.

Furthermore, Hatim & Mason (1997) affirm that mediation can be gauged according to «the extent to which translators intervene in transfer process, feeding their own knowledge and beliefs into processing the text» (p. 147). Within this model, translators as mediators intervene in texts in order to interpret them. This process of intervention by mediators is divided into three levels of mediation.

2. 5. 1 Maximal mediation

In this level, the translator intervenes in the ST's in a manner that results in huge shifts. The TT, consequently, shows radical changes from the ST, such as deletions, substitutions or additions.

2. 5. 2 Minimal mediation

In this level of mediation, the translator intervenes in the ST to a lesser extent that the ST basic posture is not totally altered. The SL basic features, therefore, are discerned by the target reader as the translator makes few shifts (Hatim & Mason, 1997, p.148). To put it differently, the general theme of the ST is kept except for few additions or deletions.

2. 5. 3 Partial mediation

Within this level of mediation, the translator keeps the ST intact and shift nothing but the style of writing. Slight changes from the ST are found. This means that it occurs when the lexical intervention by the translator is the least. In other words, the translator intervenes much less than the other two levels.

By taking these levels into consideration, it is revealed that mediation is pertinent to the degree by which a translator intervenes in the TT. Intervention, from Bassnet and Lefevere's (1990, p. 97) perspective, is relevant to the cultural distance between the ST and the manner through which it is received in the target language and culture.

3. Methodology

In this section, an attempt is made to highlight the study approach, data collection, model of analysis and data analysis in terms of translation and mediation. To achieve this aim, some sermons, letters and aphorisms from NB had been selected and analyzed. A qualitative descriptive method was

used to analyze the translation of these texts without assessing the quality of translation.

3.1 Data collection

The data of this study are taken from Nahjul Balagha, which contains 241 sermons, 79 letters and 480 aphorisms by Imam Ali (A.S.) (henceforth Imam) and compiled by ar-Radhi (d. 406/1016). This book is regarded as «an encyclopedia of Islamic culture» (Keizoghani and Moulavinafchi, 2016, p. 5). It proves Imam's unparalleled eloquence as the true way to salvation (Stetkevych, 2019, p. 220). Gibbon (as cited in Reza, 2005, p.20) asserts that Imam's wisdom «still breaths in a collection of moral and religious saying; and every antagonist in the combats of tongue or of sword was subdued by his eloquence and valour.»

The sample of the current study consisted of the ST and an English translation by Reza (2003), as Peak of Eloquence. From among different translations of NB, the researcher selected this particular one because it is commonly cited as the most authentic English translation. Besides, it will be adopted for the analysis as it is deemed by Shah-Kazemi (2006, p. 8) «the best available complete translation of the text in English.»

For collecting data, the researcher carefully read the ST in order to detect the texts applicable to the aim of the current study. Then, the TT was extracted from the English translation. Finally, these versions were matched carefully to know how they were translated and mediated, first,

and to see whether the encounter was linguistic or cultural to be classified later according to that encounter.

As the limitation of the current study does not allow for a thorough discussion of NB, the focus, therefore, will be on a randomly selected data of four sermons, two letters and two aphorisms to be examined as the source text of this study alongside their English translation by Reza (2005)

3. 2 Model of Analysis

A model in Bell's (as cited in Hassan, 2011) words is «an attempt at a description rather than an explanation» (p. 6). To analyze the texts in question and, then, to scrutinize the choices made by the translator to render them into English, an analytical model is suggested in this section. This model complies with the aims of the present study. It is presented in Figure 3, as designed by the researcher.

As far as the theorization of the study is concerned, one can see in this model that the framework for identifying mediation in the translation of NB is based on key theoretical considerations. The first layer of this model takes its point of departure from Hatim & Mason's (1990/2013) insights that in mediation the translator plays two roles. The first one is related to that of a critical reader with the aim of arriving at a full understanding of the ST. The second type asks translators not to tackle the texts as such, but to translate cultures.

According to this model, the TT will be analyzed as translation units

to be matched with their ST counterpart. A translation unit, according to Shuttleworth and Cowie (as cited in Thunes, 2017), is defined as a term which is used «to refer to the linguistic level at which ST is recodified in TL» (p. 241). This will make it easier to detect any intervention in the TT that may result in a change in meaning, such addition, omission or compensation. This, in return, takes the model to second layer through which the level of mediation will be gauged and then categorized into three degrees; namely, maximal, minimal and partial. The aim is not to assess the quality of their renditions, but to illuminate the translator’s choice(s) on the linguistic or cultural trajectory. The model of analysis can be sketched in the following figure:

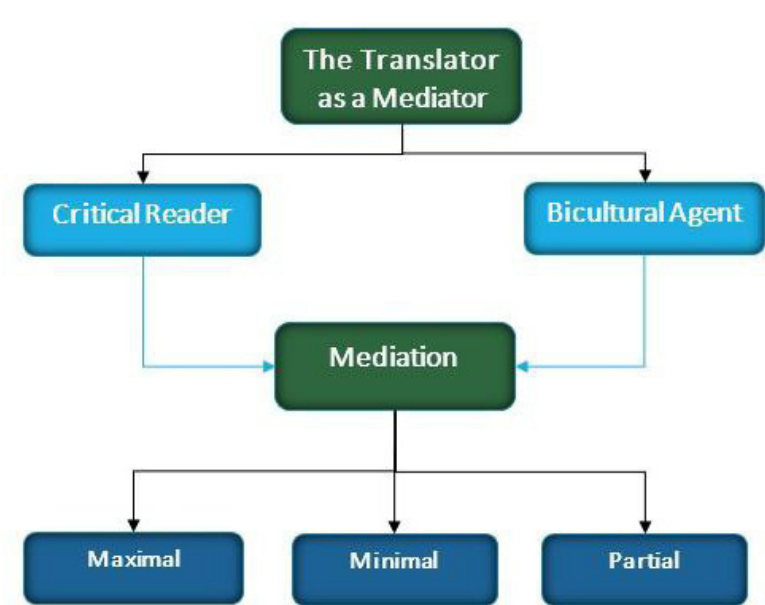


Figure 3. The Analytical Framework of the Study

3.3 Data Analysis

The present section pays attention to the analysis of the English translation of NB. Based on Bassnett's (2005) proposition that it is «quite foolish to argue that the task of the translator is to translate but not to interpret, as if the two were separate exercises» (, p. 86), mediation will be considered as an interpretive act. Interpretation can be defined as an attempt to find the writer's intended meaning. This explanation goes hand in hand with the main theme of translation as being mainly concerned with meaning. To interpret the ST, then, the translator acts as a critical reader. The critical reader for Wallace (2003, p. 43) is the one who is critically involved in a mental process to detect the word-form and find connections between the context and meaning. Besides, reading is done by «relating the content of reading material to personal standards, values, attitudes or beliefs, going beyond what is said in the text» (Richards & Schmidt, 2002, p. 134).

In order to thoroughly analyze the linguistic or cultural aspects encountered while translating NB from Arabic into English, the analytical model is adopted to check the position of the translator as a mediator between the ST and TT.

4. Results and Discussion

Based on Hatim & Mason's (1997, p. 147) view that mediation is «the extent to which translators intervene in the transfer process, feeding their own knowledge and beliefs into their processing of a text,» the goal in this section is to analyze the data by making full use of the theoretical

considerations and analytical tools presented previously. Consequently, the focus in this section will be on the ST extracts with their English translation by Reza (2003). Each extract will be analyzed as a translation unit representing a whole text of a translation problem that requires a decision from the translator to mediate at a certain degree.

Sermon 11

ST	TT
تَزُولُ الْجِبَالُ وَلَا تَزُلْ! عَضَّ عَلَى نَاجِدِكَ، أَعِيرَ اللَّهَ جُمُوعَتَكَ، تَدِّ فِي الْأَرْضِ قَدَمَكَ، ازِم بِبَصْرِكَ أَقْصَى الْقَوْمِ، وَغُضِّ بَصْرَكَ، وَاعْلَمْ أَنَّ النَّصْرَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ سُبْحَانَهُ.	Mountains may move from their position but you should not move from yours. Grit your teeth. Lend to Allah your head (in fighting for Allah, give yourself to Allah). Plant your feet firmly on the ground. Have your eye on the remotest foe and close your eyes (to their numerical majority). And keep sure that succour is but from Allah, the Glorified.

This sermon is delivered in the Battle of Jamal when Imam gave the standard to his son Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyyah. As Buckwalter and Parkinson (2011, p. 1) assert, «Arabic is reputed to have a remarkably rich vocabulary [...] and that the overall vocabulary of the language is relatively large,» one can notice that this text shows a brilliant mixture of rhetorical, figurative and lexical relations between words. Metonymy is also found in the ST which is defined as «a trope that takes its expression from near and close things [...] by which we can comprehend a word that is not denominated by its proper word» (Panther and Thornburg, 2007, p. 237). This trope is deemed one of the most

significant figures of speech as it serves a communicative function (Newmark, 1988, p. 84). So, «تَزُولُ وَلَا تَزُلُ», «تَذْقَمُكَ», «أَعْرِ جُمُجْمَتَكَ» and «أَزِم بِبَصَرِكَ» are presented as different instances of metonymy, meaning forbearance, steadfastness and obedience, respectively.

In terms of translation, metonymy poses certain challenges to translators when rendered from Arabic into English because of their linguistic and cultural differences in the two languages (Al-Rawi, 1994, p. 186). It can be translated by taking different aspects into consideration, such as the relation between its parts, its function, and the type of text in which it is used (Littlemore, 2015, p.187). Consequently, the translator is in a situation described by Newmark (1988, p.213) as the one in which translation represents a recurrent struggle to find the appropriate trope in the TL. As a result, the translator behaves as a mediator when rendering «أَعْرِ اللَّهَ جُمُجْمَتَكَ» and «غُضَّ بَصَرَكَ» by adding some explanation for the TL reader. The degree of mediation can be considered minimal as the translator added some explanation to clarify the text and make it more comprehensible.

Sermon 16

ST	TT
أَلَا وَإِنَّ الْخَطَايَا خَيْلٌ شُمُسٌ حُمِلَ عَلَيْهَا أَهْلُهَا، وُخِلِعَتْ لُجْمُهَا، فَتَقَحَّمَتْ بِهِمْ فِي النَّارِ. أَلَا وَإِنَّ التَّقْوَى مَطَايَا ذُلٌّ، حُمِلَ عَلَيْهَا أَهْلُهَا، وَأُعْطُوا أَرْمَتَهَا، فَأَوْرَدَتْهُمْ الْجَنَّةَ.	Beware that sins are like unruly horses on whom their riders have been placed and their reins have been let loose so that they would jump with them in Hell. Beware that piety is like trained horses on whom the riders have been placed with the reins in their hands, so that they would take the riders to Heaven. (Reza, 2003, p.160)

This sermon is delivered when allegiance was sworn to Imam at Medina. In this sermon, Imam focuses on ‘taqwa’ as being a spiritual ability by which the soul refuses to comply with ones lust and desires. In Arabic, when a horse is described as being «شُمُس» it mean that it is out-of-control and prevents anyone from riding its back. Imam compares sins to an uncontrollable horse who hurt its rider. Taqwa, from Imam’s perspective, is a spiritual condition through a human obstinates from committing sins and fears Allah. So, Imam express a universal message to humanity by the excellent choice of lexical and semantic aspects in the ST. The text is loaded with metaphorical images that demands great effort by the translator to communicate the message in a manner consistent with rhetorical brilliance of the ST.

As metonymy is widely employed in Arabic culture (Abdul-Raof, 2006, p. 233), Imam uses metonymic constructions, such as «خُلِعَتْ لُجْمُهَا» and «أُعْطُوا أَرْمَتَهَا» to show that sins are uncontrollable in the former and

controlled in the latter.

In this extract, it is clear that mediation is done by the translator resulted in a certain degree of intelligibility in the TT. From Hatim & Mason's (1997, p.150) perspective, the degree of mediation in this text is minimal as it did not cause any change a radical change in meaning.

Sermon 27

ST	TT
أَمَّا بَعْدُ، فَإِنَّ الْجِهَادَ بَابٌ مِنْ أَبْوَابِ الْجَنَّةِ، فَتَحَهُ اللَّهُ لِخَاصَّةِ أَوْلِيَائِهِ، وَهُوَ لِبَاسُ التَّقْوَى، وَدِرْعُ اللَّهِ الْحَصِينَةُ.	Now then, surely Jihaad is one of the doors of Paradise, which Allah has opened for His chief friends. It is the dress of piety and the protective armour of Allah and His trustworthy shield. (Reza, 2003, p. 177)

This text is loaded with metaphors which are of a cultural nature. Dickins, Hervey & Higgins (2002, p. 29) assert that cultural, rather than linguistic, differences constitute a major obstacle in the way of translation. In this sermon, the obstacle in the way of translation is both cultural and linguistic. It is represented by a very sensitive word; namely, Jihad. Muslims who adopt a fundamentalist stance define jihad as the obligation to wage a holy war against disbelievers, whereas the more moderate advocate a flexible meaning of it as an act that aims to effect positive change in the world (Esposito, 2002, p. 65). But this word has lately gained negative connotations of radicalism, intolerance, excessive violence, etc. in the non-Muslim world despite the fact that its intended meaning «is packed with

positive connotations» (Shunnaq, 1993, p. 47). In his book, *Jihad Beyond Islam*, Marranci (2006, p. 29), affirms that this is an overloaded word with negative connotations mistranslated as 'holy war' which has become synonymous with terrorist act, such as the incident of 9/11 incident. As a result, the original meaning of the word, Jihad, as the «holy war» is, according to Hatim (2001, p. 33 - 34), no longer used because it has changed now to be nothing but «defunct in current political discourse.»

The choice of this word by the translator is, therefore, unsuitable as it creates the impression of a hateful culture.

Being of no attempt of mediation, the ST seem unfamiliar to the target reader both linguistically and culturally especially if one takes the negative connotations of the word Jihad into consideration. Furthermore,

Because of one to one correspondence translation method of «خَاصَّةً» , and the odd translation of the metaphor «(لباسُ التَّقْوَى)» , as «His chief friends» and «the dress of piety» successively, the rendition seems strange in the TT and resulted in a certain degree of unintelligibility in the TT.

Sermon 90

ST	TT
فَلَمَّا أَلْقَتِ السَّحَابُ بَرَكَ بِوَائِيهَا وَبَعَاغَ مَا اسْتَقَلَّتْ بِهِ مِنَ الْعِبَاءِ الْمُحْمُولِ عَلَيْهَا أَخْرَجَ بِهِ مِنْ هَوَامِدِ الْأَرْضِ النَّبَاتَ وَمِنْ زُعْرِ الْجِبَالِ الْأَعْشَابَ فِيهِ تَبَهَّجُ بَرِيَّةٍ رِيَاضِهَا وَتَزْدَهِي بِمَا أُلْبِسَتْهُ مِنْ رِبِطِ أَزَاهِيرِهَا وَحُلِيِّهَا مَا سَمِطَتْ بِهِ مِنْ نَاصِرِ أَنْوَارِهَا	When the cloud prostrated itself on the ground and delivered all the water it carried on itself Allah grew vegetation on the plain earth and herbage on dry mountains. As a result, the earth felt pleased at being decorated with its gardens and wondered at her dress of soft vegetation and the ornaments of its blossoms.

Considering rhetoric, from Kennedy's (as cited in Abdulmajeed, 2017, p.21) view, as «the energy inherent in emotion and thought, transmitted through a system of signs, including language, to others to influence their decisions or actions,» it is possible to say that this highly rhetorical text with brilliant lexical choice, the translator mediated minimally by conveying the original image of the ST in order to communicate the message comprehensibly to the target reader. Imam likens the clouds to «بَرَكَ بِوَائِيهَا», which means a she-camel when it prostrated that its neck and ribs hit the ground. For Al-Rawi (1994, p. 3) translation challenges occur as a result of the cultural differences discrepancies between Arabic and English. To avoid such challenges, the translator adopts Newmark's (as cited in Hassan, 2011) insight that «unusual metaphors and comparisons should be reduced to their sense if the text has a mainly informative function» (p. 19). So, by using minimal mediation of omitting a cultural metaphor in

the ST, the TT preserved a certain degree of intelligibility. Besides, the classical word, 'بَعَا', is brilliantly conveyed as meaning «all the water.» Through mediation, the English translation has mirrored the splendor of the ST image and do justice to its richness of images and at the same time succeed in conveying the intended meaning.

Sermon 120

ST	TT
أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَدَاوِيَ بِكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ دَائِي كَنَاقِشِ الشَّوْكَةَ بِالشَّوْكَةِ وَهُوَ يَعْلَمُ أَنَّ صَلَعَهَا مَعَهَا.	I wanted my treatment from you, but you proved to be my disease, like one who extracts a thorn with another thorn knowing that the thorn bends towards itself. (Reza, 2003, p. 291)

This sermon is bitterly delivered by Imam as complain After the Kharijites, who after pledging allegiance to him, objected to his acceptance of arbitration. By using a well-known Arabic proverb, Imam addresses his followers that their characters are similar, just like a thorn which tends to be similar to another thorn. Based on Schaffner (2004, p. 1257-1258) who argues that figurative language is not used for decorative purposes, but as «basic resources for thought processes in human society», the cultural context of the proverb necessitates that the translator abandon literal translation and adopt mediation. When analysed, the ST is charged with a distinctly negative connotations that implies blame and complain delivered with a rhetorically brilliant language. Being translated literally

resulted in a certain degree of unintelligibility in the TT due to the cultural gap between the ST and TT. It is worthy of note that as the target readers does not share the same cultural background with the ST, the translator should have intervened the text with some degree of mediation. The degree of mediation in this text is minimal.

Sermon 127

ST	TT
وَالرُّمُومَ السَّوَادَ الْأَعْظَمَ فَإِنَّ يَدَ اللَّهِ مَعَ الْجَمَاعَةِ، وَيَاكُمْ وَالْفُرْقَةَ! فَإِنَّ الشَّاذَّ مِنَ النَّاسِ لِلشَّيْطَانِ، كَمَا أَنَّ الشَّاذَّ مِنَ الْغَنَمِ لِلذِّئْبِ.	Be with the great majority (of Muslims) because Allah's hand (of protection) is on keeping unity. You should beware of division because the one isolated from the group is (a prey) to Satan just as the one isolated from the flock of sheep is (a prey) to the wolf. (Reza, 2003, p. 302)

In this sermon, Imam warns against the Kharijites' decision to revolt and chaos. So, he asks his followers to return once again to the opinion of the majority to avoid the consequences of chaos in breaking the consensus.

In his famous article, Translation as Decision Process, published in 1967, Levý sees translation as a decision process that depends on choices (p. 1171). So, it can be said that the translator's decision to mediate in the text resulted in a natural rendition of the ST. «السَّوَادَ الْأَعْظَمَ» is rendered by adding the explanation of 'of Muslims' between two brackets to clarify meaning. It is possible to argue that minimal mediation has led to the

preservation of meaning.

Sermon 222

ST	TT
وَاللَّهِ لَأَنْ أَبَيْتَ عَلَى حَسَكِ السَّعْدَانِ مُسَهِّدًا أَوْ أُجْرَفِي فِي الْأَغْلَالِ مُصَفَّدًا أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِنْ أَنْ أَلْقَى اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ظَالِمًا لِبَعْضِ الْعِبَادِ وَغَاصِبًا لِشَيْءٍ مِنَ الْخَطَامِ.	By Allāh, I would rather remain all night long awake on as-sa`dan thorns (a plant having sharp prickles), or be driven in chains as a prisoner, than meet Allāh and His Messenger on the Day of Judgment having oppressed anyone or usurped anything of the world's wealth. (Reza, 2003, p. 470)

In this sermon Imam asks his followers to keep aloof from oppression and misappropriation. Based on Lotman's proposition that «no language can exist unless it is steeped in the context of culture; and no culture can exist which does not have at its centre, the structure of natural language» (Lotman, 1978, p.211-32), the language of this text is culturally constructed. It talks about «حَسَكِ السَّعْدَانِ» which is first transliterated by the translator as «as-sa`dan» and then mediated into «a plant having sharp prickles» to clarify the text. As is clear, Reza (2003) does follow Dickins et al. (2002, p. 32) advice that when translators are faced with cultural challenges, they must use transliteration. Besides, Reza (2003) mediates the text minimally by adding an explanation to make it read more natural.

Letter 12

ST	TT
إِتَّقِ اللَّهَ الَّذِي لَا بُدَّ لَكَ مِنْ لِقَائِهِ وَلَا مُنْتَهَى لَكَ دُونَهُ وَلَا تُقَاتِلَنَّ إِلَّا مَنْ قَاتَلَكَ وَ سِرِّ الْبَرْدَيْنِ وَ غَوِّزِ النَّاسِ وَرَفُّهُ فِي السَّيْرِ.	Fear Allāh before Whom attendance is inevitable, and with other than Whom there is no meeting. Do not fight except with those who fight you. Travel in the two cool periods (i.e., morning and evening). Let the men have a midday sleep. (Reza, 2003, 501)

Imam's letters to his governors and employees reflects his wise policy in governance and managing the affairs of people. This letter is sent by Imam to his faithful governor to Maqal bin Qais when the latter was sent to Syria with an army of 3000 soldiers. This letter attests Imam's insightful orders to his generals during war times.

As the main goal of translation is to convey meaning from one language into another on the condition that the translator has the ability to decipher the connotations in a text before attempting to tackle it, in the text Reza (2003) mediated successfully in explaining a language of cultural connotations. The word «الْبَرْدَيْنِ» has a reference to the soldiers who march long distances to reach their destination. So, «the two cool periods» reflects a cultural practice by the Arab army whose hot weather has only particular times in the morning and evening as cool periods. Furthermore, the «رَفُّهُ» has another connotative meaning pertinent to the Arab culture meaning midday nap.

Letter 52

ST	TT
أَمَّا بَعْدُ فَصَلُّوا بِالنَّاسِ الظُّهْرَ حَتَّى تَفِيءَ الشَّمْسُ مِثْلَ مَنْ مَرِيضِ الْعَنْزِ وَ صَلُّوا بِهِمُ الْعَصْرَ وَ الشَّمْسُ بَيضاءَ حَيَّةً فِي عُضْوٍ مِنَ النَّهَارِ حِينَ يُسَارُ فِيهَا فَرَسَخَانِ.	Now, say the zuhr (noon) prayers with the people when the shade of the wall of the goats' pen is equal to the wall. Say the 'aṣr (afternoon) prayers with them when the sun is still shining in a portion of the day enough for covering the distance of two farsakhs (about six miles).

Recognizing the significance of worship, more specifically the five prayers by Muslims, as the pillar of worship to Allah, the Creator, in this letter sent by Imam to his governors in various places, Imam urges them as regards the importance of prayers. When taking a close look at the TT one can find that despite the translator's attempts to linguistically, rather than culturally, mediate the ST by adding some explanation, the TT resulted as unnatural. In Hassan's (2011) view, «if there is mismatch between the source language and the target language, a figure of speech should be explicated» (p. 19). Consequently, being laden with cultural figures of speech, the ST should have been mediated culturally in order to avoid incomprehensibility by explaining certain cultural expressions, such as «عُضْوٍ مِنَ النَّهَارِ» and «بَيضاءَ حَيَّةً», «مَرِيضِ الْعَنْزِ». Besides, minimal mediation shows some shifts from the ST, such as the omission of «الشَّمْسُ» in the TT by rendering the text as «the shade of the wall» has made it read odd. This type of linguistic mediation distorted the intended meaning of the text be-

cause the translator preserved the same metaphor of the ST in the TT in a manner that emptied the metaphorical charge of the original.

Aphorism 1

ST	TT
كُنْ فِي الْفِتْنَةِ كَابْنِ اللَّبُونِ، لَا ظَهْرَ فَيْرَكَبَ، وَلَا صَرْعَ فَيَحْلَبَ.	During a civil disturbance, be like an adolescent camel that has neither a back strong enough to riding nor udders to milk. (Reza, 2005, p. 604)

This is one of the wise aphorisms by Imam which entails a universal message to humanity. He calls people to refrain from being involved in any form of perturbation. From a rhetorical viewpoint, Imam uses a purely cultural image to describe the scene. With reference to Lefevere (1992) who attests the interrelationship between language and culture by arguing that «since language is the expression of culture, many of the words in a language are inextricably bound up with that culture and therefore very hard to transfer in their totality to another language» (p.17), the adoption of literal method of translation of «كَابْنِ اللَّبُونِ» as «adolescent camel» without any attempt of mediation has preserved the same image of the ST in the TT in a manner that resulted in a peculiar text to the target reader and led to the distortion of the effect of the original as the phenomenon is not existent in the target culture. This result complies with Rojo's (as cited in Tisgam, 2014, p. 29) proposition that translators «usually dream of achieving an ideal replica of the source text, but in practice they often

have to accept that not everything can be translated exactly into different language.»

Aphorism 8

ST	TT
اعْجَبُوا هَذَا الْإِنْسَانَ يَنْظُرُ بِشَحْمٍ وَيَتَكَلَّمُ بِلَحْمٍ وَيَسْمَعُ بِعَظْمٍ، وَيَتَنَفَّسُ مِنْ حَرَمٍ.	How wonderful is man that sees with fat, talks with a piece of flesh, hears with a bone and breathes through a hole. (Reza, 2003, 605)

Religious texts are laden with spiritual values, translators, therefore, must be very careful when translating them. In this aphorism, Imam wonders the miraculous creation of man by Allah.

In terms of translation, Baker (1992, p. 250) stresses that «anything that is likely to violate the target reader’s expectations must be carefully examined.» As the translator adopts the literal method of translation, the target reader will not understand what it means to say that «man that sees with fat». This literal rendition resulted in a text that «strike[s] the reader as unnatural» (Hatim & Mason, 1990, p.204). A point worth noting is that the translator’s decision not to mediate the text through adding some explanations to clarify the meaning of this eloquent text resulted in a translation that mislead the reader as it lacks familiarity in the TT.

Conclusion

The aim of the current study is to examine the translation and media-

tion of some selected data from Nahjul Balagha to figure out what direction do they take: a linguistic or cultural. To reach this end, four sermons, two letters and two aphorisms were selected for analysis. Reza's (2003) translation was chosen for its authenticity. The data analysis has revealed that despite the challenging nature of Imam's text, the translator's efforts to tackle the ST are invisible. Although the data presented here is far from comprehensive, the results confirm that Nahjul Balagha has been rendered both linguistically and culturally. To put it differently, effective translation and mediation of Nahjul-Balagha is not only a linguistic, or cultural, encounter, rather, both are practiced to render a brilliantly and excellently written text by Imam Ali (A.S.).

Furthermore, a point worth noting that mediation is proved to be a prerequisite for the translation of such a great book as Nahjul Balagha. When acting as a mediator, the translator is supposed to acquire good intercultural knowledge of this book from the linguistic and cultural perspectives. Consequently, Reza (2003) intervened by adding, deleting, explicating, etc. without being accused of unfaithfulness. On the other hand, when he did not act as a mediator, meaning was literally rendered or distorted. The translator as a mediator's intervention has been gauged by the degree of textual shifts. It is found out that the most frequently method of translation used by Reza (2003) has been 'minimal mediation', with some instances of partial mediation. No signs of maximal mediation are found in the data. The reason behind that is the

nature of the religious text itself that demands the utmost precision and accuracy. But Reza's translation problems occur when he just transfers the text as it is; i.e., in a one-to-one correspondence, without intervening in mediation which consequently yield an unnatural and sometimes alien translation. Such interventions comply with Faiq's (2008) proposition that they have played effective role in the «formation and/or deformation of cultural realities» (p.29).

Despite the deficiencies of Reza's translation, it is possible to echo the optimistic view of Bassnett (1997) that even when translators are faced with some cultural problem in the ST that may not produce a natural text, the act of translation turns to be an act of optimism:

If nothing is translatable, then each time any of us translates, we are affirming our abilities to cross cultural boundaries. Hence my belief that to believe in the impossibility of translation and still to go on doing it, is a statement of optimism (Bassnett, 1997, p. 38).

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