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CURRENT TRENDS IN THE TRANSLATION OF
ARABIC DRAMA INTO ENGLISH:
A LINGUISTIC STUDY

An MA Thesis Submitted to the Department of English

BY

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Contents

Abbreviations

A	Answer
Ev	Evaluation
FA	The form-biased approach
FuA	The function-biased approach
FFA	The integrated form-function approach
IU	Initiating utterance
Pro	Proposal
$\overline{\text{Pro}}$	Counter-proposal
Q	Question
$\overline{\text{Q}}$	Counter-question
Rem	Remark
$\overline{\text{Rem}}$	Counter-remark
Res	Response
RU	Resolving utterance
S	[This symbol is used with examples from the source language]
SL	Source language
SLT	Source language text
ST	Source text
T	[This symbol is used with examples from the target language]
TL	Target language
TLT	Target language text
TT	Target text

List of Phonetic Symbols

(I) Consonants

/t/	voiceless dental plosive.
/d/	voiced dental plosive.
/T/	voiceless emphatic dental plosive.
/D/	voiced emphatic dental plosive.
/s/	voiceless alveolar fricative.
/z/	voiced alveolar fricative.
/θ/	voiceless interdental fricative. [only in Standard Arabic]
/ð/	voiced dental fricative. [only in Standard Arabic]
/S/	voiceless emphatic alveolar fricative.
/Z/	voiced emphatic alveolar fricative.
/ð̣/	voiced emphatic dental fricative. [only in Standard Arabic]
/k/	voiceless velar plosive.
/g/	voiced velar plosive.
/j/	voiced palatal affricate.
/š/	voiceless palato-alveolar fricative.
/q/	voiceless uvular plosive.
/x/	voiceless uvular fricative.
/ġ/	voiced uvular fricative.
/b/	voiced bilabial plosive.
/f/	voiceless labio-dental fricative.
/m/	voiced bilabial nasal.
/n/	voiced dental nasal.
/ʔ/	glottal stop.

/r/	voiced alveolar.
/h/	voiceless glottal fricative.
/ħ/	voiceless pharyngeal fricative.
/C/	voiced pharangeal fricative.
/y/	voiced palatal semi-vowel.
/w/	voiced bilabial semi-vowel.

(II) Vowels

/a/	front open. [When italicized, this symbol takes the form "*a*".]
/e/	front, mid to half-close spread.
/i/	front, half close spread.
/o/	back mid to half-close rounded.
/u/	back half-close rounded.

* Long vowels are indicated by doubled symbols.

- This symbol marks elision at word-junction.

Introduction

The last two decades have witnessed an evident interest in translating Arabic literary works into foreign languages. Before that (from the reign of Mohamed Ali in the 19th century up to the 1970s), Egyptian translators had been concerned with translating from foreign (i.e. European) languages into Arabic. However, the twentieth century has witnessed the establishment of some organizations and departments which have largely contributed to the translation movement in Egypt. Among these organizations are the General Cultural Administration, the Egyptian House for Writing and Translating, and the General Egyptian Book Organisation.

The General Egyptian Book Organization has been pioneering the translation of Arabic literature into foreign languages, e.g. English: many Arabic literary works have been translated and published within a series entitled "Contemporary Arabic Literature". However, the main concern of this study is to investigate the English translations of some Arabic plays published by the General Egyptian Book Organization, and to find out the trends and procedures adopted in these translations.

It is a contrastive study, adopting an eclectic approach so as to accomplish descriptive adequacy. This eclectic approach is based on principles and theories taken from:

(1) A large body of literature on translation theory and practice.
(2) Discourse analysis.
(3) Pragmatics.

(4) Semantics

(5) Halliday's systemic grammar.

(6) The Functional Sentence Perspective (FSP) as it is handled by the Prague School of Linguistics.

Although this study adopts a descriptive approach, it does not reject prescriptivism – Chapter 1, for instance, attempts to suggest or prescribe a translation method for dramatic texts.

The source texts this study is to investigate are written in *Egyptian Colloquial Arabic**. Yet, Standard Arabic is not totally discarded, references are made to it so as to show the differences between the two levels and to what extent these differences can affect translation. The texts on Standard Arabic are selected from three one-act-plays by Naguib Mahfouz, and translated by Nehad Selaiha.

The translations under study are carried out by three groups of translators:

(1) Translators whose mother tongue is Arabic, i.e. Egyptian translators.

(2) Translators whose mother tongue is English.

(3) A group including two translators working in collaboration: one whose mother tongue is Arabic and another whose mother tongue is English. The study will investigate whether such a division could affect their translation: trends and procedures. The Arab translators are expected to be more concerned with the source language text (SLT), while the English translators are expected to be more concerned with the target language text (TLT). But, the third group is expected to

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* The term Colloquial Arabic will be used throughout this study to refer to Egyptian Colloquial Arabic

strike a balance between the SLT and the TLT.

Although the plays written in Colloquial Arabic sometimes borrow the *classical* script, the transcription provided presupposes that the performance is in Colloquial Arabic. Hence, for example, the "ق" /q/ in the classical script is transcribed as a glottal stop /ʔ/.

This study is divided into three chapters. Chapter 1, "Translation in the Theatre", discusses, among other things, the concept of equivalence and other concepts in translation theory. It also tackles some of the stylistic and linguistic features which distinguish dramatic discourse from other types of discourse. It then distiguishes between dramatic speech and ordinary speech. Finally, this chapter concludes with a model for the translation of dramatic texts.

Chapter 2, "Some Linguistic Procedures" deals with some of the most prominent linguistic procedures utilized in the Arabic-English translations in hand. These are of three types: syntactic, lexical, and semantic. Also, an attempt is made so as to relate them to a general approach to translation, e.g. semantic or communicative. It is noteworthy to mention that this chapter is highly descriptive.

Chapter 3, "Pragmatic Issues: the Form-Biased versus the Function-Biased Approach", classifies the approaches adopted in the translations in hand, and then discusses two important pragmatic issues: *implicature* and *information structure*. In other words, it will be shown how conventional implicature (i.e. metaphors) and conversational implicature, and information structure (i.e. unmarked and marked) are rendered in the translations under study.

Chapter 1
Translation In The Theatre

1. 0   Introduction

This chapter begins with a discussion of some of the concepts relevant to translation theory, which finally lead to the conclusion that *translation is a thorny issue*. This section also discusses two main points: (i) is translation an art or a science?, (ii) equivalence in translation. Moreover, this section presents a survey of the methods of translation.

Also, the present chapter tackles some of the stylistic and linguistic features which distinguish a dramatic text (or discourse) from other types of discourse. Furthermore, it differentiates between dramatic speech and ordinary speech. However, the discussion conducted in Chapter1 paves the way for a proposed translation method for dramatic texts at the end of the chapter.

1. 1. 0 Concepts and Trends

1. 1. 1 A Thorny Subject

Many translation theorists, in trying to define "translation", have almost agreed that it is a process in which the translator transfers a source language text (SLT) into a target language equivalent. On the other hand, many issues have been a matter of conflict among them with the result that, as Savory says, " there

are no universally accepted principles of translation" (1969, 49). He attempts to list several points of controversy :

> 1- A translation must give the words of the original.
> 2- A translation must give the ideas of the original.
> 3- A translation should read like an original work.
> 4- A translation should read like a translation.
> 5- A translation should reflect the style of the original.
> 6- A translation should possess the style of the translator.
> 7- A translation should read as a contemporary of the original.
> 8- A translation should read as a contemporary of the translator.
> 9- A translation may add to or omit from the original.
> 10- A translation may never add to or omit from the original.
> 11- A translation of verse should be in prose.
> 12- A translation of verse should be in verse.
>
> (Savory 1969, 50)

These divergent pairs reflect the nature of the perplexity which translation theorists have encountered from the time of Cicero up to the present. They reflect the spirit of discord between the literal and the free.

A further aspect of the conflict arises from the question: is translation an art or a science? Among those who advocate its "scientificness" comes Catford (1974, 1) who claims that.

> Translation is an operation performed on language: a
> process of substituting a text in one language for a text in
> another. Clearly, then, any theory of translation must draw
> upon a theory of language – a general linguistic theory.

In other words, the relationship between translation and linguistics crystallizes on knowing that translation often, via applying a contrastive approach to the source language text (SLT) and the target language text (TLT), relies on syntax, lexis, semantics, sociolinguistics, semiotics, and pragmatics. It is the nature of this relation which has made some translation theorists believe that translation is a science. Summarizing this view, Nida (1964, 3) says: "As linguistics may be classified as a descriptive.science, so the transference of a message from one language to another is likewise a valid subject for <u>scientific description</u>".

On the other hand, if we approach translation as an art, it lacks in Standard criteria: translation becomes a matter of relativity. Octavio Paz (1971), for instance, presents a pertinent view:

> Every text is unique and, at the same time, it is the translation of another text. No text is entirely original because language itself, in its essence, is already a translation: firstly, of the non-verbal world and secondly, since every sign and every phrase is the translation of another sign and another phrase. However, this argument can be turned around without losing any of its validity: all texts are original because every translation is distinctive.
> (qtd. in S. McGuire 1980, 38)

What Paz says confines the serious attempts at establishing a translation theory to doom. That is, while serious attempts have been made to establish various frameworks for a translation theory, Paz goes to extremes when he claims that a translation must have essential features which distinguish it from the original text, and, so, the translator may be said to create another original text.