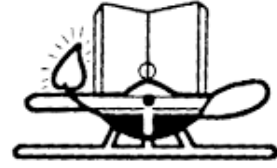Ain Shams University

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Evidence-Based Techniques for Translating Repetition in Arabic Discourse into English

A Ph.D. Dissertation in Linguistics and Translation

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2016

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Acknowledgments

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisors Professor Mustafa Riad Mahmoud and Professor Ahmed Gamal Eldin for the boundless support, enlightening feedback and insightful guidance they have kindly provided for me. I am really thankful for their valuable comments, which have enriched my study. Needless to say, their editorial advice was essential to the completion of this dissertation.

I am also indebted to Dr Adil Inani, my MA supervisor, for initially guiding me to the rich and challenging field of translation studies and for providing me with many of the necessary reading materials. I am extremely grateful for his continuous encouragement and sound advice during the writing of this dissertation.

Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to my parents' love, understanding, encouragement and constant support.

Abbreviations

ATS	Applied Translation Studies
DTS	Descriptive Translation Studies
KK	*Khan al-Khalili*
KWIC	Key Word In Context
MA	*Midaq Alley*
NP	Noun Phrase
OTSE	*On The State of Egypt*
PreP	Prepositional Phrase
R/R	Reduplication/Repetition
SL	Source Language
ST	Source Text
TD	*The Days*
TL	Target Language
TS	Translation Studies
TT	Target Text
VP	Verb Phrase
أي	الأيام
خخ	خان الخليلي
زم	زقاق المدق

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Evidence-Based Techniques for Translating Repetition in Arabic Discourse into English

Abstract

This study attempts to discover how lexical, semantic, morpho-syntactic and mixed repetition in Arabic fiction and non-fiction has been dealt with in translations by native speakers of English, as evidenced by the TTs selected for this purpose. The investigation involves scanning the descriptive translation studies literature to identify techniques for translating repetition that scholars have either proposed or drawn from actual translations by others. The techniques inferred from the translations scrutinized and the ones collected from the TS literature are compared in the course of the study. The corpus used for the purpose of this evidence-based study consists of selected Arabic literary and non-literary texts and their published translations including Naguib Mahfouz's خان الخليلي translated as *Khan al-Khalili* by R. Allen and زقاق المدق, translated as *Midaq Alley* by T. Le Gassick; Taha Hussein's الأيام, translated as *The Days* by E. H. Paxton, H. Wayment, and K. Cragg; and a collection of non-literary articles by Alaa Al Aswany, published in the Egyptian Al-Shorouk and Al-Dustur newspapers and translated under the title *On the State of Egypt: The issues that caused the revolution* by J. Wright. The analysis shows that 1) many techniques are actually employed, foremost among which are: merging, grammatical transposition, semantic distancing, maintenance, omission, gisting, pronominalization, and paraphrase; 2) the choice of a certain technique is determined by the type of repetition in question; and 3) certain techniques are used to enact a

domesticating strategy aimed at avoiding many cases of STs repetition that are deeply and closely peculiar to Arabic language and culture. Conversely, it is also revealed that the translators of the selected STs tend to preserve types of repetition that are not unfamiliar in English in the TTs. This may account for the rather heavy use of the technique of maintenance, which would produce English TTs with a higher frequency of repetition. This violation of an essential norm of English could be considered a kind of foreignization.

Keywords: Repetition, descriptive translation studies, the evidence-based approach, parallel corpus, parallel concordances, translation techniques, translation strategies

Chapter 1

Introduction: Types of repetition in discourse, a literature review

1.0 Introduction

The topic under investigation in this thesis can be formulated as the overarching question: What techniques have actually been used for translating into English the various types of repetition that occur in written Arabic texts? Such techniques are drawn from published English translations of Arabic fiction and nonfiction by means of ST-TT description and comparison. The types of repetition involved are lexical, semantic, morpho-syntactic, and phonological. There is also mixed repetition. What the study does not intend to do is recommend certain translation techniques related to the phenomenon of repetition. In other words, the work presented here is descriptive rather than prescriptive.

As such, the current study could be said to be worthwhile because it attempts to fill an easily identifiable gap in product-oriented translation studies as well as in

applied and perhaps theoretical translation studies concerning repetition in Arabic discourse and the translation of it into English.

Repetition in discourse, which has various realizations, seems to be more or less a universal phenomenon which has been explained in various ways. It has, according to Johnstone (1991, pp. 29-30, 73), been said to be a feature of (unplanned) spoken discourse (i.e. orality) rather than written discourse (i.e. literacy) (Ochs, 1979; Tannen, 1982, 1984). Tannen also states that all conversations include repetition as an essential linguistic "meaning-making strategy, a limitless resource for individual creativity and interpersonal involvement" (Tannen, 1989, p. 97, cited in Wang, 2005, p.509). Repetition, realized as a kind of similarity, seems to emanate from speakers' tendency to use the same linguistic form to convey consecutive portions of their content in order to make the meaning clearer (Ochs 1979, cited in Johnstone, 1991, p.29). Tannen (1989) also states that "just as the speaker benefits from some relatively dead space while thinking of the next thing to say, the hearer benefits from the same dead space and from the redundancy while absorbing what is said"(p.58).

In other words, "dead space", or the repeated item, allows the speaker to produce efficient and fluent speech while planning what to say next. This kind of utterance repetition enables a listener to get the message at the same rate the speaker is producing it (Tannen, 1989). Furthermore, the major principles of legal writing, as proposed by Garner (2002), include different types of repetition to avoid ambiguity (pp. 168-176).

To sum up, repetition occurs in various forms and for various purposes in particular types of discourse. The subsequent sections therefore deal, amongst other issues, with orality/literacy as a determinant of type and frequency of repetition, functions of repetition, and types of repetition in Arabic discourse.

1.1 Orality/literacy as a determinant of repetition as a culture-specific phenomenon

The phenomenon of repetition has been examined extensively in the context of literary and cultural studies with the ultimate goal of understanding its underlying structures and recurrent patterns by analyzing different kinds of discourse. A number of scholars have argued that

language is a mirror of the cultural communication style. As a result, both spoken and written discourse can each reflect both oral and literate features that are culture-bound. In this respect, Tannen (1983) investigated two general hypotheses that had been adopted in previous studies of discourse, especially those focusing on the distinction between spoken and written discourse, and orality versus literacy. The first "one is that written language is decontextualized while spoken language is highly context-bound; the other, that spoken discourse establishes cohesion through paralinguistic cues while written discourse relies more on lexicalization." (p.80). Tannen's investigation ended with the assertion that "oral strategies may underlie successful discourse production and comprehension in the written as well as the oral mode." (Tannen, 1983, p.92).

In addition to the varying use of repetition within the same language, written texts produced in various languages have, according to the contrastive rhetoric hypothesis, a "culture-specific organizational patterns" (Mohamed and Omer, 2000, p.45). Purves (1988) also argues that in the linguistic approach "written texts are compared with reference to the observable discourse-sensitive linguistic

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