Representing Culture in Translation: An Insider-Outsider Analysis of Arabic and English Literary Texts

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Abstract

In the contemporary era of advanced communication, the role of translators as intercultural mediators is widely acknowledged. This study delves into the evolving landscape of Arab culture, characterized by an increasing openness to embracing diverse cultural elements. Drawing on Kenneth L. Pike's Etic vs. Emic linguistic theory, which scrutinizes language and behavior from an observer's perspective, the research advocates for an insider/emic approach in translation. Contrary to relying solely on an outsider's viewpoint, this perspective emphasizes the importance of capturing the insider/emic essence to unveil the intended meaning. The study assesses specific literary translations to ascertain their success in conveying the insider/emic viewpoint to target text readers.

التمثيل الثقافي في الترجمة: تحليل منظور الداخلي والخارجي للنصوص الأدبية العربية والإنجليزية

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المستخلص

في العصر المعاصر للاتصال المتقدم، يُقر بشكل واسع بدور المترجمين كوسطاء بين الثقافات. تتناول هذه الدراسة المشهد المتطور للثقافة العربية، التي تتسم بزيادة ألانفتاح تجاه اعتناق عناصر ثقافية متنوعة. باستخدام نظرية اللغة   لكينيث إل. بايك، التي تفحص اللغة والسلوك من منظور المراقب، تؤيد البحث اللجوء إلى نهج الداخلي في الترجمة. على عكس الاعتماد الكامل على وجهة نظر الخارج، تسلط هذه النظرة الضوء على أهمية التقاط جوهر الداخلي لمعرقة المعاني المقصودة. تقيم الدراسة ترجمات أدبية محددة لضمان نجاحها في نقل وجهة نظر الداخلي إلى قراء النص المستهدف.

Introduction:-

According to "Newmark (1988: 94) as "the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression" (cited in Bednarova-Gibova, 2017) Cultural considerations play a pivotal role in the challenges of translation, representing a crucial aspect involving the disparities "between languages and cultures and the inherent connections between language and culture" (Hermans, 1998: 303). Despite all the studies and theories on translating, no one has reached the point where we can say that we have found the right or perfect way to convey the meaning intended in a foreign text. Most arguments concerning how and what should be translated according to the culture brought into this deep and never-ending debate led translation scholars to concentrate on the Outsider-insider understanding of translation. Bellow we will look at the insider—outsider approach, it is essential to delve into the historical background of the two concepts, namely, the 'etic' and 'emic.'

1-2 literature review Morris Swadesh first employed the Emic-etic in 1934 "into the social sciences" (Bussmann, 1996. 384), but they are generally believed to have originated in the field of language study with the work of American linguist Kenneth Pike (1912—2000), who published three volumes in 1967 dealing with a unifying theory of the structure of human behavior. The Structuralism and Behaviorism school of Bloomfieldin had a profound impact on Pike, as it did on many American linguists. According to Berns (2010), this school aims to elucidate language forms that are associated with social behavior. Malmkjaer, on the other hand, claims that "the tagmeme as a correlation between class and function reflects Pike's objection to the extreme distributionalism of mainstream Bloomfieldians" (1991.258), which runs counter to this. This method, which sought to build a bridge between linguistic components and the larger cultural context, was based on the work of Leonard Bloomfield and his followers and sought to comprehend language by examining its forms within the framework of social and cultural practices (Berns 523). But Malmkjaer disproves this claim by presenting tagmeme, a crucial idea in Pike's theory of language. Malmkjaer claims that Pike's use of the tagmeme shows that he disagrees with the conventional Bloomfieldian view, especially with regard to the "extreme distributionalism" held by the leading Bloomfieldian school (1991.258).

Like many linguists, Pike was interested in form vs. meaning; he wanted to create a method where outsiders to a language could learn how insiders communicate meaning in

their culture. He also noted "the need to include nonverbal behavior in linguistic description" (as cited in Almanna, 2014:56). The aim is Phonetics is a universal approach for describing the sounds in diverse languages, while phonemics is the study of sound systems in a specific language. His reasoning was that each language has its own distinct set of phonemes that combine to form spoken terms, and that each phoneme stands in for one of these sets. A non-native speaker attempts to transliterate and associate these sounds with a set of readable characters by building a phonetic representation of these sound units. to study all languages(Malmkjaer,2002:406). Accordingly, phonetic analysis has a clear, reasonable aspect to it, and what is evident is that spoken sounds in just one language are complex, let alone many languages.   Pike contemplates that one can find the best functional way in a society and culture when identified through the 'emic' outlook, while the 'etic' perspective studies behavior outside a particular system. A good translation can result from a successful 'emic' perspective that is the result of studying behavior from inside the system. However, one must understand that the emic is not simply associated with the insider's perspective. Even if a native speaker of the language tries to study a language, there is a difference between just using a language, on the one hand and discussing as well as classifying that language on the other. Even insiders can become outsiders to a language if not looked at with a magnifying glass. The emic, or what became known as the Insider perspective in translation, is the outsider's attempt to produce as faithfully as possible the writer's descriptions or meanings of his/her text.   The translation process involves a careful consideration of the etic or outsider approach, ensuring alignment with the intended meaning and achieving agreement among the target audience, hence the importance of finding the "deep /symbolic level of the source language [...] in order to catch the cultural implications meant"(Al-Masri.2004:112) by the author of origin. One interesting example is where etic or outsider analysis is used as a way of understanding Kinship terms do not make a difference if we are translating about families from any language. The concept of family is the same all over the world, but it does make a huge difference when trying to explain specific terms used by family members. A lexical term like 'cousin' for example, is "a child of your aunt or uncle, a person who is related to you but not in a close or direct way" (Oxford, 2008:353) or "a person who is from another country but whose culture is similar to your

own" (Webster's, 2015:para.2)   Texts in English usually do not specify which uncle or aunt, so a translator into Arabic often chooses to render it into ابن العم / قريبي if he/she uses the from the etic or outsider standpoint. This word in Arabic stands for the son of an Uncle or Aunt. Both have two different meanings and are two separate words. It is the norm in English to say 'my cousin' without questioning that side of the family that cousin is. While, in Arabic, the meaning of cousin bears so many lexical items, in English, it is just one word that stands for so many meanings. It is crucial, in Arab society, to state that a cousin, your father or mother, is part of the family. Is it a male or female?   An American Anthropologist, Marvin Harris, first used the terms in his book *The Nature of Cultural Things,* stresses that any description in any society is more detailed where an etic point of view takes the position of the emic one. What is interesting is that he considers the etic term as being misunderstood by people who "emerging from oppressive colonial and neo-colonial subordination and who deemed exclusive control over the interpretation"(Harris.1999:33). In his opinion, this causes the person who is considered an outsider to fear being seen as ignorant towards the other. He does not see how an outsider's perspective on things could lead to the symbolic level of the text. He had expressed his "dismay" (Ibid:35) in the terms used as an equivalent for the emic-etic approach in meaning. He also adds that it is unclear how an outsider's understanding of things could give an emic perspective.   Looking at Harris's statement on the difficulty of an outsider producing the correct meaning, a good example of this is how Arab and Islamic societies are mainly presented. One cannot deny that some translators have successfully rendered Arabic and Islamic works, but that does not exclude many grave mistakes, deliberate or not, by many Western translators. An obvious example is how Islam is still being portrayed worldwide, even after all the numerous books written or translated. Had there been an Insider understanding of it, perhaps it would not air such harsh criticism abroad at the slightest incident. At the same time, one cannot ignore the contradiction in Lambden's article titled " Islam": "We know far more about the Bible and the Qur'an and their centuries of transmission, translation, and interpretation today than was ever possible"(Lambden 2006:135).

3. **The Aim of the resaerch:**

This research attempts to analyze the insider/outsider perspective in the translation of the cultural aspects from different chosen examples from translated texts. The writer's point of view will be discussed as well as the translator's reasons for choosing how he translates the chosen examples. The study will aim at finding out if the translator intended to adapt to the insider/emic point of view; or if the TT is a result of his misunderstanding of the ST culture.

1. Does the translation accurately represent an insider/emic viewpoint?

2. Does the translator assume the role of an insider or an outsider in relation to the text?

3.1. Methodology

In the examination of translation within this research, our initial approach involves contrasting the source text (ST) and target text (TT) using a theoretical framework that examines language and behavior from an observer's stance. The notion of the insider outsider perspective essentially encompasses the differentiation in perception and comprehension between individuals embedded in a specific cultural or linguistic milieu (insiders) and those outside it (outsiders). Within the realm of translation studies, this perspective assumes significance in comprehending the intricacies and difficulties involved in translating between distinct languages and cultures.

4. Examples and analysis of insider-outsider in translation: Below are examples where the emic/etic(insider-outsider)approach in translation is used to avoid the difficulties that TT readers might face in trying to understand the original text's meaning. - The following sentence from Graham Green's (1969:13) *Travels with my Aunt* الخالة اوغستا, which was translated by Sameer Ali (1990:13):*"I knew too much. About both of them. I remember you were far too quiet. You didn't **yell the devil out**"* "لاني أعرف الكثير. إنك لا تستدعي الشيطان"

The failure of the translator to grasp the meaning behind the phrase "You didn't yell the devil out," a metaphor from Christianity that refers to Jesus expelling a demon from a man, is evident. This metaphor is drawn from a biblical passage (Luke 4:35, 62:1901a, 2008b) where Jesus commands a demon to leave a man, resulting in the demon leaving without harm. The concept suggests that during a baby's christening, if the baby cries as if possessed by the devil, it is because the devil is being expelled.In this case, the translator overlooked the need to delve

into the cultural nuances that hold significance for members of a specific society, as highlighted by Almanna and Farghal (2014:3). One of the most challenging tasks is how translators render culture-bound elements in translating a foreign language. The following example is from بصرياثا

و **الشناشيل** و عباءات الامهات و أخمرة الجدات و ثياب **العشيقات** و افرشة العائلة المشتركة:(1993:26)

And in Basrayatha (2007:5):*Our mothers' **kerchiefs** and cloaks and our grandmothers' veils, the clothes of our sweethearts, and the shared family beddings.*In this instance, the translator misconstrues the specific cultural connotation of the term "شناشيل" and instead chooses to translate it as "Kerchiefs" (حجاب المرأة/وشاح نسوي). If the translator had comprehended the significance of "الشناشيل" from an insider's perspective, they might have opted to provide a more precise explanation or even transliterated it as 'Shanasheel.' An additional illustration can be found in Rjaa Alsanea's (2005) book titled بنات الرياض 'Girls of Riyadh,' which has been rendered into English by the author herself along with Marilyn Booth (2007:151). أحسن واحدة

تعرفيها جاية من أمريكا فيوزاتها ضاربة!

*The best friend you had is an American **rebel that doesn't worry about what people think*** (p147)As outlined by Almanna & Farghal (2014.5), translators are advised to "convey the symbolic essence in their translated works," a principle evident in the aforementioned case. By adopting an insider's viewpoint, the translator successfully communicated the intended significance. Within a conservative Arab society, young women who exhibit rebellion are often perceived as deviating from the norm.In another instance drawn from the identical novel, the author addressed the readers of the source text (ST) from an insider's stance. In response, the translator chose to elucidate to English-speaking readers that Al-sane was referring to women in Saudi Arabia.(ص ٢٦٤)"يا الله,لقد حرمنا أشياء كثيرة,فلا تحرمنا نعمة الحب!"

"O God, we—the Girls of Riyadh—have been forbidden many things. Do not take the blessing of love away from us, too!"(p.231)

Understanding the prohibition of love for women might pose a challenge within an English-speaking context. Both the translator and the author recognized that incorporating an explanation within the sentence would provide an insider's insight.

Certain idiomatic expressions from Arab culture, when translated literally, necessitate additional explanation to convey their precise connotations. In Al Tayyeb al Salih's work "The Wedding of

Zein and Other Stories," Denys Johnson-Davies, adopting an insider's viewpoint, found it necessary to augment the text with more words to clarify the intended meaning behind the character Mahjoob's words:"و تشهد محجوب و استغفر" عرس الزين (١٩٦٨:ص١٢)

In The Wedding of Zein(2010:p 37) the rendering of تشهد was

*"Mahjoub was so shocked that he muttered 'there is no god but God and Mohammed is His prophet.'"*The usage of the word 'testify' in an Arab/Muslim cultural context, when uttered by a startled man, may be perplexing to an English reader due to its literal interpretation of تشهد. Despite comprehending the implied significance of the phrase, the translator was compelled to clarify its literal sense.Likewise, in another instance extracted from the identical book, the translation falls short of effectively conveying the precise intention of the original author.

"عليٍ بالطلاق يا آزول الريحة سكرتني"(ص١١)

"May I divorce if the very smell didn't intoxicate me."(p.36)

We grasp the cultural implications embedded within the expression. However, the translation falters in capturing the underlying insider significance. An English reader may struggle to comprehend why a man requires permission to divorce his wife over a mere scent failing to intoxicate him. Approaching this from an external standpoint, particularly in cultures where divorce isn't contingent on a single utterance by a man, the concept might appear perplexing.

Translating religious concepts and terminology ranks among the most intricate and delicate challenges faced by a translator. To effectively navigate this task, the translator must possess an insider's understanding of both cultures, enabling them to grasp the genuine essence of the term within its original context. Moreover, the translator must consider how the receiving culture will receive the utilization of that particular term. The final example in this chapter is extracted from David Lodge's novel "Changing Places" (1975) and its rendition by Kahlil Ibraheim Hammash (1992).

"Keep God out of America" (p.49)(ص ٧٧)**"ابعدوا الدين عن اميركا"** The translator effectively captured Lodge's intended meaning without employing the term "God." Being intimately familiar with the intricacies of the Arab world, the translator is acutely aware of the potential sensitivity associated with using the word, particularly if rendered as الله. In the current era of globalization and enhanced communication, Arab societies regard the term "God" or الله as

denoting a supreme creator. Anyone well-versed in Arab culture would understand that omitting God from its proper context is seen as a departure from religious principles.

The following example is also from Basryrtha: "الأخضر ثانية: فيضانات, **أهوار**"(ص٣٢)

*"Green again: Floods and **Lakes**" (p13)* 'Lakes' to a person in an English-speaking culture would mean a group of lakes. In the southern part of Iraq, the Marshes of Iraq hold deep symbolic meaning. They are a massive part of the history of the literature of Iraq. The Iraqi Marshlands holds an old and unique position in the Iraqi epic, narrative literature, and poetic and mythological. Any translation should not ignore or misplace the marshes or Marshlands of Iraq. Talking about them is essential, which portrays the characteristics of the environment and traditions of the inhabitants of the marshes with the rituals and beliefs. A legendary climate and assets of the exotic and mysterious secrets characterize them. It holds a dominant power of the spirit of the place.   The translation was not successful in explaining that أهوار is in southern Iraq, which consists of vast water bodies with small floating islands and golden reeds. Its inhabitants have inherited the Sumerian civilization and the houses and retained the features of their faces and ways of life. The cities of water that formed the existence of that nature represented a world magician is not available in this capacity anywhere in the world.   The nature of the marshes represents the advantages of artistic visions represented in the Iraqi intellectual memory since the first bonds Sumerian. They are part of the Iraqi folklore and the modern Iraqi narrative, and many are embodied in short stories and novels.

5. Conclusion

Due to anticipated cultural differences, complete cultural equivalence is still impossible to achieve. As a result, it becomes more difficult to achieve an appropriate cultural translation into a second language/culture without an insider/outsider perspective, and the results are generally weak and confusing. Mastery of both the source text (ST) and the target language (TL) is of the utmost importance. Even among Arab countries, there are substantial cultural differences; hence, it is particularly difficult for a translator to fully immerse themselves in either culture when translating literature from Arabic to English.

It is not enough for a translator to only understand the text. It is essential to research the author's cultural background and influences thoroughly before translating the source text (ST). For the target text (TT), it is critical to use equivalent expressions with care to avoid problems. Because many translators fail to account for cultural characteristics, straightforward translations of culturally bound literature often cause confusion.

A comprehensive and accurate knowledge involves significant investigation by persons familiar and unfamiliar with cultures. In this article, we will examine translation processes and show how choices undermine the original culture by ignoring symbolic or literary aspects.

A third-party translator's function is obvious. There are still nuanced distinctions between "our culture" and "their culture," which casts doubt on the representation and prestige of those on the outside. It is important from an intellectual, practical, and moral standpoint to resolve this difference. Accurate reading and perception of texts is impossible without distinct local viewpoints. Therefore, the end product is really affected by the translation method that was taken.

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المصادر العربية :

الطيب الصالح.(١٩٩٧).عرس الزين.دار الجيل

غراهام غرين(١٩٦٩) الخالة اوغستا.ترجمة سمير علي(١٩٩٠)الشمس للنشر و الاعلان.بغدا-العراق.ص.ب.- ٢٠٤٥٩

ديفيد لودج(١٩٧٥) تبادل الأمكنة .ترجمة خليل ابراهيم حماش (١٩٩٢) دار المأمون للترجمة و النشر.بغداد ص.ب-٨٠١٨ تلكس ٢١٢٩٨٤

(online article) أهوار العراق- مدن الماء العائم-دلال جويد ٢٠٠٩/١١/٥

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