

# Possibility and Necessity in Translating Dynamic Elements in the Arabic Novel “Al-Shahwan” into English

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**Abstract** --This paper aims at investigating the problem of translating dynamic elements in the Arabic novel “Al-Shahwan” into English. It proposes criteria of translation in which the concepts of possibility and necessity are employed to select the most appropriate method of translation. It is hypothesized that when there is a case of possibility, a source oriented strategy can be followed in translation and when there is a case of necessity a target oriented strategy must be used. Practically, in order to test these hypotheses, some dynamic elements in the Arabic novel “Al-Shahwan” with their English renditions have been analysed according to the proposed model. The results proved that the proposed model is applicable and the rule suggested in this paper can be followed in the selection of a translation method.

**Keywords**-- Arabic Novel, Dynamic Elements, Necessity, Possibility, Translation

## I. INTRODUCTION

The main task of the translator is to present the sense of the source language text in the target language. In order to do so, he has to adopt a certain strategy of translation that can be a source oriented or a target oriented one. All translation theorists agree that this polarity of SL and TL orientation is decisive in reaching an appropriate rendition for different kinds of texts. The decision made on these two orientations should be based on a comprehensive consideration of some variables. These variables include text type, ideology, intentionality of both of the author and the translator and the readership of the translated text.

The factors to be considered in selecting a translation strategy relate also to the selected theory of translation. This means that if a linguistic theory is adopted, the factors and variables will be linguistic ones whereas if a functional theory is adopted the analysis will be on the function of the text rather than the pure linguistic notions. In fact, even in the assessment of translation, the adopted theory governs the criteria of assessment. For example, in Skopos theory, the purpose of translation is decisive in the evaluation of the rendered text.

In this paper, the concepts of possibility and necessity will be connected with the process of selecting a translation strategy. Possibility in this paper means the possibility of

finding an equivalent in the target language that produces the same message and force of the source language text. This means that the selected target language element corresponds to the source language element in terms of the linguistic and non-linguistic properties.

## II. THE CONCEPT OF EQUIVALENCE

Translation equivalence is one of the most difficult and important concepts in translation theory, which has been tackled and investigated by many theorist. Jakobson (1959), Catford (1965), Nida and Taber (1969), Koller (1979), Newmark (1981), Baker (1992) and many other theorists have tried hard to define its nature and types. The theories of those scholars will be tackled chronologically. Some theorists adopted a linguistic point of view in defining this notion, some followed semantic and pragmatic points of view and others stand in the middle and defined translation equivalence in terms of both linguistic and pragmatic equivalences. Vinay and Darbelnet (1958) made a contrastive analysis between English and French, they compared the texts in both languages and examined the differences between the languages and identified a set of two different translation strategies (direct and oblique translations) that are in somewhat similar to literal vs. free methods; and seven procedures. Direct translation covers three strategies: Borrowing: the SL word is transferred directly into the TL. Calque, which is a kind of borrowing, where the SL expressions is literally transferred to the TL. and literal translation or word-for-word: It commonly occurs between languages of the same family and culture. On the other hand, Oblique translation covers four strategies: Transposition in which the parts of speech are changed without affecting the meaning. Modulation when the semantics and point of view of the source text is changed. A more flexible choice is finding an equivalence when the translator uses different stylistic and structural expression to convey the same meaning. Finally, adaptation when the situation in SL doesn't match with the TL, the translator alters the cultural references (Munday, 2016:93).

In his paper “On Linguistic Aspects of Translation”, Jakobson (1959) shed the light on the link between Linguistics and translation. Linguistic meaning and equivalence were his core of interest. He stated three types of translation: Intralingual translation, the process of rewording

or paraphrasing in the same language for the purpose of clarification. The second type is Interlingual translation, the traditional concept of transferring meaning as well as form from one language into another. The third type is Intersemiotic translation, the changing made on a written text through transferring it to another medium such as film or music.

The needs for a linguistic implementation for translation led the American Bible translator Nida, in the 1960s, to find a systematic approach borrowed from Noam Chomsky's work in Universal Generative - transformational Grammar. Nida's contribution took a substantial form in his two major works: "Toward a Science of Translating" (Nida 1964) and the co-authored with Taber "The Theory and Practice of Translation" (Nida and Taber 1969: *ibid*).

Newmark (1981) tried to reduce the gap between SL and TL orientation, He replaced Nida's notions "formal and dynamic equivalences" with two other concepts of "semantic and communicative". These two new concepts differ in terms of the flexibility used by the translator. According to Newmark's ideas, Semantic translation is more flexible than formal equivalence and communicative translation is less flexible than dynamic equivalence (Munday, 2016:71).

Koller (1979), mentioned five types of Equivalence, these equivalences are ordered in a hierarchical way depending on the needs of the communicative situation. Thus, the translator should first try denotative equivalence and if it is inappropriate, he might seek for a higher-level equivalence. These types of equivalence are: "Denotative equivalence", related to the extralinguistic content of a text, (i.e., 'content invariance'); "Connotative equivalence" related to lexical choices. He called this type of equivalence as 'stylistic equivalence'; "Text-normative equivalence", related to text types, in which different texts behaving in different ways; "Pragmatic equivalence" is TL receiver oriented. It is similar to Nida's dynamic equivalence; and "Formal equivalence", which is related to form, aesthetic and stylistic features of the ST. It is same as Nida's term formal equivalence.

#### A. Possibility vs. Necessity in Translation

Translation theorists agree that when there is an equivalent lexical item in the target language for a certain source language lexical item, it must be used if it produces the same effect of the source language lexical item. This means that there is a possibility to use literal translation of a source oriented strategy in translation. Mostly, these cases do not represent a problem for the translator. However, in other cases, and due to different reasons, the translator is obliged to resort to target oriented strategy of translation.

The translator resorts to a target oriented strategy to handle certain translation problems. For example, the translator faces a problem when he comes across a source lexical item that has no equivalent lexical item in the target language. The non-existence of such an item is due to many reasons including the non-existence of the concept itself or the source lexical item is a culture specific one. Sometimes, the translator finds a lexical item in the target language that corresponds to the source language item in terms of the denotational meaning but does not in terms of connotational meaning. Such a target language lexical item cannot be

considered an equivalent one unless it has both the denotational and the connotational meaning of the source language lexical item.

The concepts of possibility and necessity can be seen at the grammatical and the semantic levels of language. In terms of the translation unit, these concepts can also be noticed at word level, sentential level and textual level.

#### 1. Possibility vs. Necessity at the Grammatical Level

Baker (1992, p. 11) says that there is no one to one correspondence between words and meaning across different languages. This means that what can be expressed in one word in a certain language may need to be expressed in more than one word in another language. Consequently, there will be a case of necessity of adopting a TL oriented strategy. Each language has its own grammatical structures and grammatical units. Such a distinction between different language represents a problem for the translator who tries his best to find the target language element that grammatically corresponds to the source language element. In this regard, At word level, Catford (1965) introduces the concept of shift as a solution for cases of necessity in terms of structure as in rendering the English sentence "The boy went to the library" which includes a subject, a verb and an adverb into Arabic "ذهب الولد الى المكتبة". The target text here starts with a verb and then a subject and a complement. This necessity of change in structure is due to the fact that Arabic sentence starts with the verb. Another case of necessity can be seen at word class. Normally, if possible, a SL noun is translated into a noun in the TL. This can be said for other classes including adjectives, verbs and adverbs. Yet, sometimes, the translator is obliged to render a noun in English into verb in Arabic or an adjective in English into a noun in English.

Necessity is also noted when the translator renders a source language item at a specific grammatical rank into a target language item at a different grammatical rank. For example, rendering the SL item "home" in the English sentence "the student went home" into "ذهب الطالب الى البيت". *الى البيت* is in the grammatical rank of phrase which is higher than the rank of word.

In the formulation of the verb phrase, the translator has to think about the possibility of using the same element in terms of the system of tense, voice, aspect, number and modality. For each system, there may be a case of possibility or of necessity. For example, a passive voice in English may be rendered into active one in Arabic. In the system of number, there is a necessity to render a dual in Arabic into plural in English. The same is applicable to other systems such as the definite and indefinite articles. For instance, in the translation of the English sentence "A man is a creature." into *الانسان كائن حي*, the equivalent of the English indefinite article "A" in this instance happens to be the definite article in Arabic *الانسان*, whereas the equivalent of the second indefinite article "an" in the same sentence happens to be zero *كائن حي*.

#### 2. Possibility vs. Necessity at Semantic Level

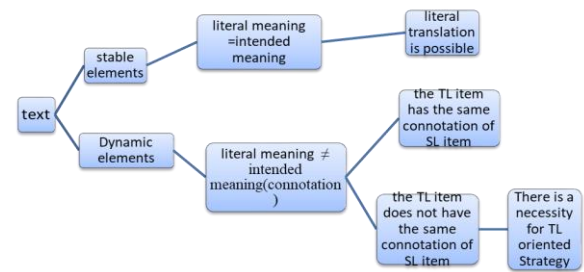
Semantic possibility of Equivalence at word level goes with the grammatical one. This means that the selected TL word should not only denote to the same referent but also have the

same loaded meaning of SL word . Semantic necessity can be noticed in the translation of certain lexical items that refer to culture specific concepts. Translation theorists agree that in such cases, the translator is obliged to use borrowing. For example , the Arabic word القبلة is rendered into “qibla” . Other cases of necessity include the ones in which the connotation of the SL item is different from the connotation of the corresponding TL lexical item. For example , The English lexical item of “owl” denotes to a class of birds with a positive connotation of expressing wisdom in that there is a proverb that says ‘He is as wise as an owl’. There is no possibility to translate such a lexical item literally into Arabic by using انه كالبومة simply because in Arabic the connotation of this word is a negative one . It is , in fact , a symbol of bad luck . This means that there will be a necessity to modify the message in order to produce the same connotation of the SL item. Intentionality of the SL writer is another factor that should be considered in the selection of a translation strategy. Sometimes, the literal meaning of the SL lexical item equals its intended one. In such cases, there is a possibility to use literal translation. Otherwise, there will be a necessity to look for another lexical item in the TL that has the same intended meaning of the SL lexical item despite the fact that this new lexical item may have a different denotation. Baker (1992:21-25) lists eleven cases in which the translator cannot find an equivalent in the target language and hence there will be a necessity to resort to a TL oriented strategy.

Grammatical rules vary across languages and this poses some problems in terms of finding a direct correspondence in the TL. When different grammatical structures in the SL and TL cause remarkable changes in the way the information or message is carried across, there will be a necessity for the translator either to add or to omit information in the TT because of the lack of particular grammatical devices in the TL itself( number, tense and aspects, voice, person and gender).

The translator has to look at the literal and intended meaning of the sentence. Sometimes , the meaning of the sentence is not the summation of the meanings of the words composing the sentence . These cases includes idioms and proverbs . The intended meaning of these proverbs and idioms could be identical in both languages , at that time there will be a possibility to use an SL oriented translation strategy. For example , the English idiom “his days are numbered” which is used to say that “someone or something will die, fail, or end soon” into Arabic ايامه معدودة is not only possible but it is also the most appropriate because it means the same in Arabic.

Other cases represent a necessity for the translator to resort to a TL oriented translation strategy.



### B. Stable and Dynamic Elements

Hatim and Mason (1997: 27-35) propose identifying ‘dynamic’ and ‘stable’ elements in a text. They link these concepts to translation strategy, adding that more ‘stable’ elements require a ‘literal approach’, while such a method is not suitable for the dynamic elements because there are many challenges (1997: 30-1). In this paper , it is proposed that there are certain cases of dynamic elements in which it is possible to adopt literal translation .In other cases , there is a necessity for using a TL oriented strategy to handle the challenges. Practically, some examples of dynamic elements selected from the Arabic novel of Al-Shahwan by ( Ibrahim Sulyman Nader,2021 ) have been chosen to be analysed with their renditions by ( Asmaa Salah Eldein ,2021).

### C. The Novel

The novel "Al-Shahwan"\* by the novelist Ibrahim Suleiman Nader narrates the occupation of the city of Mosul by the barbarians of the era, ISIS, laden with the mentality of apostasy, immersed in the darkness of the Middle Ages and deviating from the tolerant teachings of Islam. This narrative genre is distinguished by the fact that it is based on the centrality of the narrator’s ego in the text, which relies on “the autobiography, which is considered the most prominent and most reliable form of ego writing related to the art of narration”.

Ibrahim Suleiman Nader has divided the novel into six windows, (a window to the language of the sun, a window to the whispering of the banks, a window to the space of light, a window to the grunting of spinning, a window to the sweetness of the day, a window to the departure of the shadow), with an opening or introduction to the first and the second launched. They have “but windows.” The first is a quotation of Jalal al-Din al-Rumi, and the second is about the locality of Shahwan.

The reality that the city of Mosul went through is considered a surreal paradox, and we are at the beginning of the twenty-first century AD, in terms of what ISIS wanted, to return to the first century AH, deriving the ideas and visions of the Kharijites that depend on a one-sided perspective, and extremist jurisprudence in exaggeration, and working to cancel the other. The difference is in the subtraction. In front of this challenge, the Mosul person has become doing whatever is necessary to protect himself from these terrible things.

This is how the novelist wanted to show the situation he went through, and the city went through, no matter how strong

and wide the vision was, the words stopped and could not express what was going on, but rather became silent from the horror of what happened. The scene is out of the ordinary, shrouded in ugliness that devours every innocence in the world. Rather, it becomes an unprecedented crime in the history of humanity. However, the novel "Al-Shahwan" was inspired by its title from one of the neighborhoods of the old city located on the right bank of the Tigris River, meaning that the title was taken from the semantics of the name of a place and because Mosul is the only city out of all the cities of Iraq that was destroyed and enslaved by an international conspiracy led by Obama, and those who went to great lengths to slaughter it They are brainwashed by the people of the city and its surroundings, and yet the hero remains to the last, believing that "the miracle is constantly found beside despair"

As for "Windows... But", it is an introduction to the novel, about the neighborhood called Al-Shahwan, located on the right bank of the Tigris River in the city, and it is one of the ancient neighborhoods of Mosul, which the novelist makes as the focal point and starting point, through which we look forward over the rest of the city. In the chapter "A Window to the Language of the Sun," which is the first chapter, we see the devastation and what happened to the Shahwan neighborhood: "The image of (Shahwan) was completely erased, and the devastation and destruction came to an end... I went searching for the rubble of our old house, of which only one window remained overlooking the river.

In order to add a second voice, which works to give freedom in expanding the ranges of narration, presenting the points of view of others, and balancing the voices, Ibrahim Suleiman Nader created the second voice in the form of a seagull, dialogues with the main character.

The place in the novel is considered an important element in the narrative and one of the mechanisms of its functioning, and because the place in the novel "Al-Shahwan": Ain Kabrit Spring - Bash Tabia Ottoman Castle - Sheikh Al-Shatt Mosque - Saint Joseph Church - the ancient bridge - Al-Khatuniyyah - the body, etc. There is a structural and existential interaction in the fictional text, as the place acquires great importance not because it is an element of its artistic elements or because it is the place where events take place and characters move only, but because it turns in some distinguished texts into a fictional space loaded with all the fictional elements, and this is done through language and its transformations in Novelist fiction.

### III. DATA ANALYSIS

The practical part includes analyzing some dynamic elements taken from the novel of "Al-Shahwan". These dynamic elements cover proverbs, idioms, figures of speech such as metonymy, metaphors and personifications.

#### A. Text (1) Proverb

##### Context of the text

This text is part of a conversation between the main character (the author) and the seagull. The author is talking about the intentional destruction

of the city of Mosul by the gangs of Daish. The seagull used an Arabic proverb to ask the author to stop talking because the gangs would kill him if someone heard him saying that.

#### Text Analysis

SL(1)	الجدران لها اذان	Method of Translation	Possibility	App.
TL (1)	Walls have ears	Literal	*	+

#### Discussion

The translator in this example has rendered the Arabic proverb الجدران لها اذان into the English equivalent proverb "Walls have ears". The use of literal rendition is not only possible but it is also the most appropriate because the same proverb is used in English to mean "used to say that other people could be listening to what someone is saying Lower your voice and be careful what you say". "Walls have ears." (Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/walls%20have%20ears>. Accessed 25 Dec. 2022. \_ There is no need for explicating the intended meaning because it would harm the force and aesthetic value of the text.

#### B. Text(2) Idiom

##### Context of the text

This text is part of a narration by the author who is talking about an old man passing by him and suddenly, mysteriously and completely disappear. The author uses an Arabic idiom فص ملح وذاب to refer to the disappearance of that old man.

#### Text Analysis

SL (1)	كأنه فص ملح وذاب	Method of Translation	Necessity	App.
TL (1)	Like vanish into thin air (72)	Cultural Equivalence	*	+

Discussion: The translator in this example has rendered the Arabic idiom فص ملح وذاب into the English equivalent idiom "vanish into thin air". In this case, there is a necessity to avoid using literal rendition because such a rendition would produce a completely different meaning in the English language. The translator solved this problem by finding an equivalent idiom in English "vanish into thin air" which gives the same meaning of the Arabic idiom. (Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriamwebster.com/dictionary/walls%20have%20ears>. Accessed 25 Dec. 2022. \_ The translator has been successful in giving the intended meaning without harming the aesthetic value of the text.

### C. Text (3) Metonymy

#### Context of the text

The author speaks about his city and says that whenever he comes near the Tigris River , he remembers the windows that give a nice look over the river . There are many windows and each gives a special view . The metonymic use of this lexical item is intentional to indicate the denotation and the connotation of this word.

#### Text Analysis

SL (1)	كلما دنوت من دجلة البني الراكض فيك كل حين...نوافذ..	Method of Translation	Possibility	App.
TL (1)	Whenever I approach the brown Tigris River ,which runs with you every time. <b>Nawafeth</b>	Transliteration	*	-

Discussion :This metonymy نوافذ has been translated by the use of transliteration into “Nawafeth” . This lexical item has been used for its denotational and connotational meaning .First to denote to the physical windows of the place and also to refer to the concept of opening memories . Such a denotation and connotation can be found in both languages by the same lexical item .Therefore, it is possible to use a literal translation .This means that the lexical item “windows” is the most appropriate equivalent and there is no need for transliteration .

### D. Personification

#### Context of the text

The author uses personification to show that the situation in the city is not natural at the rule of Daish who destroyed the city and employed very harsh regulations on the citizens of the city .

#### Text Analysis

SL (1)	كان الرصيف لا يكلم المشاة ,	Method of Translation	possibility	App.
TL (1)	The sidewalk did not speak to pedestrians	Literal	*	+

#### DISCUSSION

This personification الرصيف لا يكلم is a dynamic element because it violates the semantic truth by giving a property of human being (talking) to an inanimate element (sidewalk) . It has been translated by the use of literal translation into “sidewalk did not speak” . There is a possibility to use literal

translation because in both languages the intended force can be achieved by the same lexical items. Therefore, it is deemed as an appropriate rendition.

#### CONCLUSION

Generally, the translator ought to produce a translation that is as literal as possible to the ST, however, sometimes and due to certain reasons, free translation becomes necessary especially in literary genre. In this case literal translation might affect the aesthetic values, and/or distort the meaning of the original text or even for the absence of the contextual equivalent and the divergency in meanings between the two languages. For these reasons and others, the translator would adopt free translation and deviate from the norms toward choosing the contextual expression that convey the closest meaning of the SL.

The paper concludes that the proposed criteria for the selection of SL and TL oriented translation strategies can be adopted . Cases of possibility include the ones in which the literal meaning of the text equals the intended one. This means that the message equals the force ;therefore, a SL translation strategy is the most appropriate . In other cases , the literal meaning does not equal the intended one or the message is different from the force ,in such cases , there will be a need for TL oriented translation strategy .

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