

Translating Cultural Bound Terms (Cbts) From The Zuqaq El Midaq (Midaq Alley) By Naguib Mahfouz: Challenges And Strategies

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Abstract

This study aimed at identifying the translatability of CBTs that existed in the "Zuqaq El Midaq" novel by Naguib Mahfouz and its translated English version "Midaq Alley" by Trevor Le Gassick. Moreover, the study sought at investigating the translation strategies that the translator has adopted to render the CBTs from Arabic into English. The study relied on the descriptive approach to reach the study goals. The study concluded that the most adopted translation strategies are literal translation, functional, addition, omission, transliteration, and cultural substitution. Moreover, literal translation was the most common followed by the cultural substitution strategy, while the least adopted is the translation by omission. Besides, it was noted that CBTs are very challenging for translators due to the difficulty to find the most accurate and closest cultural equivalence for the CBTs in the TT. Finally, the study revealed that literal translation and translation by omission could lead to translation loss.

Keywords: Translatability, Cultural Bound Terms (CBTs), Zuqaq El Midaq, Midaq Alley.

1.1. Introduction

The translation is generally defined as the process of rendering the message from the source language (SL) into the closest equivalence in the target language (TL) that serves the same function of the SL without losing the intended meaning set by the writer in that SL text. Nevertheless, translation is not a simple process; it exceeds searching for equivalence to the ST because in any translation process the translator shall render the culture and style of the ST and adopt the culture and style of the TT without changing the meaning. In addition, the translation shall be rendered accurately in a work in which the TT readers can understand the message easily as it is understood by the ST reader.

A good translation shall meet four criteria, namely, accuracy, consistency, acceptability, and readability. As well, translation works shall be accurate, clear, and natural (Larson, 1998, p.12). Translation accuracy means to transfer the correct message of the ST into the TT,

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while translation clarity means that the translator shall choose a clear way of communication that ordinary readers could understand. Translation naturalness means that the translator uses a natural and simple form of the TT language, in which the translation shall be effective and acceptable by the receptor language reader (Savitri, 2018). Moreover, the translation acceptability criteria mean that TT shall meet the requirement of “reading as an original” as it was written in the TT language, as well the translation shall be felt as natural for the TT reader (Shuttleworth, Cowie, 1997). Finally, readability refers to the ability of reading and understanding the written TT (Nababan, 2012).

In the same vein, Sárosi-Márdirosz (2015) confirmed that translating texts requires understanding the historical and cultural aspects of the ST. Therefore, having familiarity with SL and TL cultures, being well-educated, and having good historical background are the main requirements from the translators to reach the accurate TT. Besides, Cultural Bound Terms (CBTs) are challenging for the translators because translators shall be bilingual, bicultural, and have a good background in ST. Translators shall have the ability to render the natural TT equivalent of the ST in terms of pronunciation and morphology. Moreover, translators shall take different decisions while transferring the cultural references into the TL (Alajlan, 2016).

To this end, CBTs are challenging to be translated due to the inexistence of the equivalence in the TL. In this regard, Beekman & Callow (1975) suggested three strategies to overcome the difficulty of CBTs, namely, modifying a generic equivalence, modifying a loan equivalence, and cultural substitution. Hence, Baker (1992) suggested using paraphrasing as a translation strategy for the concepts that have no equivalence in the TL. The present study aims to present the translatability of CBTs in *Midaq Alley* by Naguib Mahfouz to find the constraints that might encounter the translator during translating CBTs and to identify the appropriate translation strategies.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Translators shall have various skills to translate the texts from one language to another, such as bilingualism and biculturalism. Cultural Bound Terms (CBT) shape a heavy burden for translators. Therefore, translators of literary texts from Arabic into English could encounter various constraints such as CBTs, lexical choice, syntax... Etc. Academic research that gathers the challenges of CBTs and the scholars' views regarding the most appropriate translation strategy could be a practical guideline for literary translators. Consequently, this Theoretical study aimed to cover the most common translation challenge in literary works, namely, CBTs and the suggested translation strategies to overcome this challenge.

1.3. Purpose & Significance of the study

Researching a specific field could offer guidelines for professionals who work in this field. Therefore, the present study aims to investigate the meaning, structure, and types of CBTs. In addition, it seeks to translate some literary Arabic expressions into English that have not been translated before and attempts to render the same meaning and impact of the SL to the audience, faithfully with the source text. It also highlights the lexical and cultural difficulties and issues that face the translator when translating an Arabic text into English.

This study is important because it deals with the translatability and challenges of CBTs and discusses the appropriate translation strategies to overcome the challenges. It helps those who want to study intercultural communication and literary translators by presenting specific strategies that enable them to translate CBTs and expressions into English. It will also represent an attempt to apply the sociolinguistic approach to translation, as it will investigate the use of language in its social settings.

1.4. Research Questions

- ❖ What is the meaning of CBTs, and what are the cultural references they represent?
- ❖ How difficult is translating Arabic CBTs into English?
- ❖ What are the strategies that the translator has adopted in dealing with CBTs that existed in *Zuqaq El Midaq*?

1.5. The limitations of the study

- ❖ This study is limited to identifying the meaning and cultural references of CBTs.
- ❖ This study is limited to identifying the translatability of CBTs that existed in the "*Zuqaq El Midaq*" novel by Naguib Mahfouz and its translated English version "*Midaq Alley*" by Trevor Le Gassick.
- ❖ This study is limited to investigating the translation strategies that the translator adopted to cope with these terms.

2. Theoretical Background

According to Komissarov (1991), people who share a similar linguistic community would share the same culture. Therefore, these people share many habits, traditions, and manners of doing actions and speaking. Besides, the term "culture" refers to "a complex set of beliefs, attitudes, values, and rules which a group of people shares" (Larson, 1984, p.431).

In this regard, translation scholars have paid a major focus on the issue of cultural differences and cultural knowledge. Observing the definition of the term "Translation" provided by translation scholars,

it is noticeable that translation for a long time has been only associated with the language. Catford (1965) argued that translation refers to the process of replacing a text material in a specific language with an equivalent text material of the TL. Moreover, equivalence was the central problem for translation scholars. Nida and Taber (1982) defined translation as the process of reproducing a natural and the closest equivalent in the TL for the message of the SL, and this equivalent shall be the closest in terms of style and meaning of the SL message.

In the same vein, some translation scholars considered the language as a part of the culture (Veermer, 2000, p.22; Nord, 2007, p.23). Newmark (1988) argued that cultural equivalent refers to the process of replacing the SL cultural word with an accurate and normal cultural word in the TL. Besides, the term "Cultural Bound Terms (CBTs)" refers to the terms that have no equivalence in the TT or they have different references in the cultural system of the target reader (Moradi & Sadeghi, 2014). Baker (1992) categorized the CBTs as SL concept which is not lexicalized in TL, SL word which is semantically complex, the source and target languages make a different distinction in meaning, TL lacks a specific term (hyponym), differences in physical or interpersonal perspective, and differences in expressive meaning.

To this end, there are translation strategies that are necessary for the translators to help him/ her translate easily, but it depends on the source text (ST). When it comes to the requirements of literary translation, it requires a great deal of knowledge of both languages taking into consideration, cultural terms, idioms, proverbs, and structure to convey the message. We used methods like transposition, modulation, transliteration, and omission to make my translation perfectly understandable in the target language (TL). Graedler (2000) suggested some strategies to translate CBTs, such as generating new words or explaining the meaning of the SL expressions.

Similarly, Harvey (2000) argued that CBTs requires some techniques that indicate utilizing an equivalence in the TT culture and hold the same function of the SL cultural reference. Besides, using the linguistic or formal equivalence, and borrowing. Finally, there is a descriptive or self-explanatory translation, according to which the translator uses generic terms to convey the meaning". In addition, using the naturalization technique to translate CBTs includes adapting words from the SL to normal pronunciation and morphology of the TL (Newmark, 1988).

Newmark (1988) argued that using the culture-neutral word means to adopt the functional equivalent.

1. Descriptive equivalent required explaining the meaning of the CBT in several words;
2. Using the componential analysis for CBT translation;

3. Using synonymy because provides the nearest and closest equivalent TL;
4. Through-translation, implying literal translation of common collocations;
5. Translators can also use Modulation, Compensation, and Paraphrase

In this regard, Moradi & Sadeghi (2014) investigated the most adopted translation strategies for rendering CBTs from Arabic into English. The researchers selected Islamic terms from the Holy Quran related to Islamic law, and they observe their equivalences as rendered by Quran translators, namely Pikhtal (1996), Yusuf Ali (1996), and Shakir (1985). The descriptive approach was used, and the data was collected from chapter 30 of the Holy Quran. First, the researchers collected CBTs and identified their equivalences as rendered by the three mentioned translators to identify the adopted procedure and translation strategy. Data analysis showed that the mentioned translators adopted four translation strategies, namely, addition, borrowing, definition, and literal translation. Moreover, the study found that literal translation is the most appropriate and frequent procedure for translating CBTs that existed in the Holy Quran into English.

In line with that, Alajlan (2016) investigated the adopted translation strategies while translating cultural issues that existed in Arabic texts into English. The main focus was on the strategies that lead to meaning loss of cultural aspects, and to highlight the translator's essential role in dealing with these constraints. The study data was extracted from an Arabic book named "lātaḥzan written by A'id al-Qarni" and the translated version "Don't be sad by Faisal Shafeeq". The study revealed that cultural differences between SL and TL are the most difficult challenge that translators might encounter while translating CBTs could cause a meaning loss in the TL equivalence. Besides, transliteration, literal translation, translation by addition, cultural transplantation, definition translation, and translation by omission are the most common strategies that translators adopt for translating cultural terms and expressions from Arabic into English.

Study Framework

Mailhac (1996) identified the most appropriate translation strategy in dealing with CBTs as the following:

1. **Cultural substitution:** by selecting an equivalent from the target language's culture.
2. **Literal translation:** by providing word-for-word equivalence.
3. **Addition:** by defining CBTs by providing additional information about the meaning in SL.

4. **Omission:** by omitting the term to avoid the problem and leaving the CBTs without translation.
5. **The functional translation approach** was defined by Nord (2007, p 1) as “focusing on the function or functions of texts and translations.” This definition implies that in the translation process the priority is to consider the function of the target language text.
6. **The proper nouns transliteration** indicates cultural borrowing and implies decoding the foreign words in the TL (Dickins et al, 2002).

Data of the Study

Table (1.1) Study Data (Collected from Midaq Alley Novel)

Term	Translation	Translation Strategy
زاد من سمرتها عمقا انه منحصر بين جدران ثلاثة كالمصيدة... P.5	The darkness was all the greater because it was enclosed like a trap between three walls.”	Literal
“أذنت الشمس بالمغيب، والتف زقاق المدق في غلالة سمراء من شفق الغروب "P.5	“The sun began to set and Midaq Alley was veiled in the brown hues of the glow.”	Literal
كان وجهه الأبيض الوردي يفيض بشرا ونورا، تحيط به لحيته الصهباء احاطة الهالة بالقمر. p.57	His pinkish-red face glowed with benevolence and light, his reddish beard framing it like a halo around the moon.	Literal
يا خبر اسود!	"What a shock!"	Functional
فضحك عم كامل حتى صار وجهه كالطماطم في ابانها، ... p.113	Uncle Kamil laughed so heartily that his face went red as a ripe tomato.	Functional Cultural Substitution
كيف لا وطريقها المبلط بصفائح الحجارة ينحدر مباشرة إلى الصنادقية	"How could it be otherwise with its stone-paved surface leading directly to the historic Sanadiqiya Street".	Addition
ومع ذلك كانت الحياة سعيدة، وقد بدت اثارها الطيبة في جسمه البدين المتين، ووجهه المورد،	“In spite of this, Salim Alwan’s life was a happy one, as was shown by his plump body, chubby	Addition Cultural Substitution

وحيويته الشابة المتوثبة، p.69...	pinkish face, and youthful vitality. “	
فرفع بصره الذابل عن الريابة فرأى المعلم كرشة، بجسمه الطويل النحيل، ووجهه الضارب للسواد، وعينيه المظلمتين النائميتين، فنظر اليه واجما، ... p. 9	The old man lifted his failing eyes from his instrument and saw the sleepy, gloomy eyes of Kirsha , the tall, thin, dark-faced I owner, looking down at him.	Addition Cultural Transliteration Substitution
فلا تكاد ترى في صفحته سمات او خطوط، ولا انف له ولا عينان، وقمة ذلك كله راس أصلع صغير لا يمتاز عن لون بشرته البيضاء المحمرة. p. 6	“Consequently, scarcely a single line can be seen on the surface , and he seems to have neither nose nor eyes. His head topping all this is small, bald, and no different in color from his pale yet florid skin. ”	Cultural substitution -
ابيضت عيناها من المقت والغضب؛ وتساءلت يا ترى هل ذهبت نصيحة رضوان هباء؟ p.105	“Her eyes would turn white in loathing and rage and she asked herself whether Radwan Hussainy’s advice had gone unheeded.”	Literal Transliteration
اتجهل حقا ام تظنه يريد الزواج منها حبا في سواد عينيه؟ واغتاضت المرأة قليلا، ... p.130	“Did she really not know? Did she think he wanted to marry her for her youth and beauty? Umm Hamida was a little angry at the thought. ”	Paraphrasing Cultural
وانصتت الى المرأة بانتباه عميق وهي تروي قصتها. وخفق قلبها خفقانا متواصلا، وتورد وجهها، وتألقت عيناها بشرا وسرورا.	“She listened attentively as Umm Hamida told her what had happened. Her heart throbbed and her face flushed, her eyes glistening proudly.”	Addition Cultural
وتورد وجهها حتى احست بحرارة دمها تلفح جبينها. ونفضت الى المرأة تعان صورتها، p.131	“She flushed at the thought. She moved to the mirror.”	Omission

... فعاودته أفكاره السوداء، وتصوراته المريضة، واخيلة الاحتضار والموت والقبر التي انهكت اعصابه. P.312	"Dark thoughts and sick fantasies of the throes of death itself and of the grave all came back to him."	Literal
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3. Data Analysis

3.1. Introduction

This section presents the collected data from the "Zuqaq El Midaq" novel by Naguib Mahfouz and its translated English version "Midaq Alley" by Trevor Le Gassick. Besides, this section explains the study methodology and the translation strategies that the translator adopted to deal with CBTs from Arabic into English.

3.2. Research Methodology

This study relied mainly on the descriptive approach. It aimed to investigate the challenges of translating CBTs from Arabic into English and to identify the translation strategies used in translating Zuqaq El Midaq (Midaq Alley) by Naguib Mahfouz. The present study compared the CBTs in the Arabic version of the novel with its English version to identify the translatability of these terms in detail and to investigate the translation strategies that the translator adopted in dealing with such terms. The study data was collected from analyzing the CBTs of "Zuqaq El Midaq" novel by Naguib Mahfouz and its translated English version "Midaq Alley" by Trevor Le Gassick.

The theoretical background section will discuss in detail the scholars' arguments regarding the translatability of CBTs and their suggestions regarding the most appropriate translation strategy to cope with such terms. The study will compare the CBTs in the Arabic version with their equivalences in the translated version to identify the translatability of these terms and the strategies that the translator adopted to cope with them. Finally, the results will be compared with the theoretical works to draw a conclusion and answer the study questions.

3.3. Adopted Translation Strategies

This part presents the translation strategies that the translator utilized in translating this novel.

3.3.1. Names Transliteration

Trevor Le Gassick has utilized transliteration to render the proper names that existed in Midaq Alley. Reviewing and comparing the ST

with the TT, the researcher found various examples for employing this strategy for proper names, such as the translation of كامل that has been rendered to “Kamil”, the proper name الصنادقيه that has been rendered to “Sanadiqiya”, the name رضوان الحسيني that has been rendered to “Radwan Hussainy”, and ام حميدة that has been rendered to “Umm Hamida”.

3.2.2. Translation by Addition & Omission strategies

One of the most common translation strategies that existed in Midaq Alley is “translation by addition”. The translator has utilized this strategy to render various verbs and names by adding more information and words that do not exist in the ST. It is worth mentioning that Dickins et al (2002) suggested utilizing this strategy as it is very effective while rendering CBTs. For instance, the translator has rendered the segment “ كيف لا وطريقها المبلط بصفائح الحجارة ينحدر ” as “How could it be otherwise with its stone-paved surface leading directly to the historic Sanadiqiya Street”. He added some words that are not existed in the ST to attract the readers, to make the TT more idiomatic, and to explain the name for the target reader. Another example is illustrated in “ ومع ذلك كانت الحياة سعيدة، وقد ” as “In spite of this, Salim Alwan’s life was a happy one, as was shown by his plump body, chubby pinkish face, and youthful vitality”. The translator added some words “added the name” to connect the information and keep the reader on track.

Besides, in many examples, the translator has adopted a “translation by omission strategy”. For example “ وتورد وجهها حتى احست بحرارة دمها ” as “She flushed at the thought. She moved to the mirror.” The translator adopted this strategy because he could not find the accurate metaphorical equivalence for the ST. However, the TT did not convey the accurate meaning of the ST, and this example involves translation loss of meaning.

3.2.3. Literal Translation

The literal translation was highly utilized in “Midaq Alley”. For instance “P.5 آذنت الشمس بالمغيب، والتف زقاق المدق في غلالة سمراء من شفق الغروب” as “The sun began to set, and Midaq Alley was veiled in the brown hues of the glow.” The translator has rendered this example literally and involved a translation loss. The expression “شفق الغروب” was rendered to “glow” which means an “a steady radiance of light or heat.” However, the Arabic term means “Sunset Twilight”. The translation did not convey the metaphorical meaning of “غلالة سمراء” as it was rendered to brown hues, while the term “غلالة” in the Arabic dictionaries refers

to see-through clothes. In this example, the writer wanted to exemplify the twilight as a blanket of light that covered the place.

3.2.4. Functional Translation

In some cases, the translator has adopted the functional translation, while the function of the TT was centralized. For instance, "زاد من سمرتها" "P.5 عمقا انه منحصر بين جدران ثلاثة كالمصيدة..." was rendered to "The darkness was all the greater because it was enclosed like a trap between three walls." In this case, the translator utilized the functional translation strategy to render this example by rendering the term "عمقا" to greater and the term "سمرتها" to "darkness". In this case, the translator focused on rendering the TT that has effective meaning and impact on the TT readers. Therefore, the translator has adopted the equivalence that conveys the SL message instead of adopting literal translation. Another example is "يا خير اسود!" as it was rendered to "What a shock!". This expression is related to the Arabic- Egyptian culture, and the translator was successful in rendering it to what a shock instead of translating it literally to what black news.

3.2.5. Cultural Substitution

Finally, the translator was keen to consider the TL culture by making an approximation and substitution to reach the cultural equivalence that suits the target reader's culture. For example, "أتجهل حقا ام تظنه" "p.130 يريد الزواج منها حبا في سواد عينيها؟ واغتازت المرأة قليلا، ... as the translator rendered it to "Did she really not know? Did she think he wanted to marry her for her youth and beauty? Umm Hamida was a little angry at the thought.". The expression "حبا في سواد عينيها" is very common in the Arabic language. The translator utilized cultural substitution instead of literal translation to reach the most appropriate equivalence that suits the TT readers. Another example is "وانصبت الى المرأة بانتباه عميق وهي تروي قصتها. وخفق قلبها خفقانا متواصلا، وتورد وجهها، وتألقت" "عيناها بشرا وسرورا." As "She listened attentively as Umm Hamida told her what had happened. Her heart throbbed and her face flushed, her eyes glistening proudly." In this example, the translator utilized omission, addition, and cultural substitution strategies. The speaker's name was added, and it does not exist in the SL. The expression "خفقانا متواصلا" was rendered to flushed, and it involved translation loss because it indicates being very attracted and in the love of what is heard. Finally, The translator replaced the Arabic cultural expression "تروي قصتها" to the closest English one as "what has happened".

4. Findings Discussion

Study Question: What is the meaning of CBTs, and what are the cultural references they represent? & How difficult is translating Arabic CBTs into English?

According to the results discussed in the table (1.1), the CBTs are terms that belong to a specific culture, and these terms could have full meaning inside the society in which they were uttered. Therefore, these terms are attached to a specific tradition, customs, and culture. These terms have no TL equivalence, or they might have different references in the cultural system of the target reader (Moradi & Sadeghi, 2014).

On the question “What are the strategies that the translator has adopted in dealing with CBTs that existed in Zuqaq El Midaq?” The study found the following results:

It was found that the most common translation strategies that the translator has adopted are literal translation, functional, addition, omission, transliteration, and cultural substitution. The researcher frequently utilized the literal translation strategy for rendering some CBTs if using this strategy would not affect the meaning. However, some examples, as mentioned in the results, a literal translation could involve translation loss of meaning because the translator did not convey the metaphorical meaning that exists in the SL.

Utilizing translation by addition and translation by omission were less frequent, but they still existed in various examples. Investigating the examples in which the translator has adopted the “Translation by addition”, it is notable that the translator was adding some information that does not exist in the ST, such as names and some verbs. Besides, the translator has adopted a translation by omission strategy for the CBTs that have no equivalence in the TT, and to avoid the redundancy that the Arabic language compromises.

To this end, the translator utilized transliteration strategies to render the proper nouns and names of places. Moreover, the functional translation was common as it is effective in rendering the CBTs to the most accurate and closest equivalence in the TT. As well, using functional translation is appropriate to avoid the translation loss that literal translation could compromise in dealing with CBTs.

Finally, it is notable that “Cultural Substitution Strategy” is common also in the translated work “Midaq Alley” as it is vital for rendering the cultural equivalence that suits the TT reader’s culture. Since the CBTs involve culturally specified references, utilizing this strategy would be the cure for the complexity that CBTs could impose on the translators’ shoulders.

These results are inconsistent with Moradi & Sadeghi (2014) who argued that CBTs requires utilizing specific translation strategies, such as addition, borrowing, definition, and literal translation. Moreover, Alajlan (2016) indicated that there are common strategies in dealing with CBTs and they are transliteration, literal translation, translation

by addition, cultural transplantation, definition translation, and translation by omission.

Conclusion

The CBTs are culturally specified terms and they are understandable in the same society. However, these terms have no TL equivalence, or they might have different references in the cultural system of the target reader. This study sought to identify the meaning of CBTs and the translation strategies that the translator of Midaq Alley novel has adopted to convey the CBTs into English. Through comparing the ST with the TT, it is noticeable that the translator has adopted the literal translation, functional, addition, omission, transliteration, and cultural substitution. Moreover, literal translation was the most common followed by the cultural substitution strategy, while the least adopted is the translation by omission.

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