



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Tracing Loss and Gain in Translating Ambiguity and Culture in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* from English to Arabic

Dr. Halima Hamed¹©

Associate Professor (B) of Literature, Department of English Language and Literature, Mohamed Khider University of Biskra, (ISILC Laboratory), Biskra, Algeria.



Dr. Ramdane Mehiri²

Professor of Comparative Stylistics, Department of English Language and Literature, Mohamed Khider University of Biskra, (ISILC Laboratory), Biskra, Algeria.



Dr. Mohamed Mostefa Behar³

PhD., Part Time Teacher, Department of Social Sciences, Hassiba Ben Bou Ali University of Chlef, Algeria.



(Received: 16 November 2024; Accepted: 11 February 2025; Published: 28 February 2025)

Ambiguity is a rhetorical device closely tied to the culture of the source text (ST). It plays a primordial role in the literary text as it adds profundity, suspense as well as harmony and unity. Poets employ it to communicate both language and culture; however, translating the literary text's ambiguity is not of that ease. Ambiguity creates many difficulties due to linguistic and cultural differences of the source text (ST) and target text (TT), what causes a big loss in meaning during transfer. In order to preserve both the aesthetic form and the suspense ambiguity creates, this paper follows a qualitative method and relies on Lawrence Venuti's approaches in translating literary texts. By comparing selected passages from Jabra Ibrahim Jabra (2008) with Amin Hussein Ahmed (1994) Arabic translations of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, the study explores the main strategies translators adopt to avoid loss in meaning and culture. The analysis reveals that in order to avoid loss in translation, translators have to rely on specific strategies such as: literal translation, domestication and neutralization to preserve the text's communicative purpose to the target reader, and make their translations faithful to the source text. Moreover, it demonstrates the validity of translating culturally specific terms through domestication, adaptation and neutralization. The study also offers readers two main strategies based on Venuti model: Domestication and foreignization.

Keywords: Ambiguity, Culture, Literary Translation, Loss and Gain, *Macbeth*.

¹ E-mail: h.hamed@univ-biskra.dz © (Corresponding Author)

² E-mail: ramdanemehiri@hotmail.fr

³ E-mail: mostafabhhr@gmail.com

Introduction

The language of literature is, in fact, affluent with rhetorical devices as well as cultural expressions that open the text to a multiplicity of meanings. As a rhetorical device, Ambiguity plays a primordial role in the text; it attempts on the one hand, at accumulating significance to the text by creating a sort of suspense to call the reader's attention. On the other hand, it enhances harmony and unity among the text's words and their limitless meanings. Although it is a purely linguistic phenomenon, ambiguity is heavily attached to the culture of the source text. Thus, Poets employ ambiguity in their texts to communicate both language and culture. In this regard, it becomes obvious that translation is used as a mechanism of cross-cultural or transcultural communication. Yet literary texts' translation is not of that easiness for translators; rather, it poses many problems and difficulties. One of the problems a translator might fall in is translating the text's ambiguities, because, certain literary words and expressions denote specific objects which are inherent in the source text's culture and they have no correspondent meaning in the target language's culture.

Statement of the Problem

Due to difference between language and culture of the source Text (ST) and target Text (TT), the transfer might encounter a big loss. Even though, loss is pretty acceptable in translating the content of the text, the translator should pay careful attention in preserving both the aesthetic form and the suspense ambiguity creates. In this regard, this paper will shed light on the possible strategies translators follow in translating a literary text, particularly a dramatic poetic one; in order to preserve its ambiguities and avoid a big loss in meaning.

Research Questions

The current study attempts through comparative analysis to answer the following questions:

What should translators do to avoid the big loss in meaning of the literary piece?

What are the main strategies translators should deploy to preserve both ambiguity and meaning, and the overall aesthetic form of the text?

Research Hypothesis

This study hypothesizes that translators tend to rely on adaptation and literal translation strategies to communicate meaning to the reader, but loss in meaning may take place because such strategies do not explore the true meanings that lie behind the culturally rooted terms. Translating culture and ambiguity of a literary work is in most cases a tricky matter, for this reason domestication, foreignization and neutralization as strategies are of a great importance in literary translation as they help translators to preserve the aesthetic value of the text and to keep faithfulness to the source text in order to avoid loss in meaning.

Research Methodology

Using a qualitative approach, this paper analyzes some passages extracted from Jabra Ibrahim Jabra (2008) and Amin Hussein Ahmed (1994) Arabic translations of Shakespeare's masterpiece *Macbeth* (1606). In using Lawrence Venuti model on translating literary texts, the article explores the main strategies translators should adopt in order to preserve the aesthetic form ambiguity creates in the literary text as

well as the profundity of meaning and the cultural value. Yet, before exposing the problems of translating literature, one should first set grounds of the relationship between literature and translation.

A Brief Overview of Literary Translation

The word *translation* “derives from the Latin *translatio* (which itself comes from *trans-* and *fero*, the supine form of which is *latum*, together meaning ‘to carry across’ or ‘to bring across’)” (Kasperek 1983, 83). It is the transfer of the meaning of a source-language text through an analogous target-language text. the function of literary translation surpasses simple transfer the simple transfer function into reproducing literary features; it also aims at reconstructing both the value of the literary text as well as the aesthetic experience that the untranslatability of some literary terms could hinder it. Thus, “Literary translation serves as a network and nexus to make connections between languages and cultures by introducing the foreign to the target reader. Literary translation is often motivated and designed to serve one or more purposes” (Sun 2022, 1)

Although literary translation is a type of literary creativity in which the aesthetic work of one language, whether prose or verse, is recreated in another language, translation experts and researchers frequently define literary translation as “merely a mechanical task inferior to artistic endeavor” (Abukhudairi 2019, 1). It is considered as a secondary activity to literature due to its lack of creativity. In his article, “The possibilities and limitations of literary translation: A review of J. Payne’s and Henri Clarke’s *Translations of Ghazalyat of Hafez*”, Behnam Ganjalikhani Hakemi (2013) argues that “Literary translation is still seen as a secondary occupation, as this form of translation is thought to be (and is in many circumstances) inferior to the original. One explanation for this is the absence of imagination in many literary translations, when the process is mechanical and artificial, merely aiming at communicating the message” (p. 375). Besides, the existence of the literary translation depends in its essence on the existence of the literary text (subject of translation). This means that there is no originality and creativity in translation, because it is a mere automated way of transferring meaning from one language (STL) to another language (TTL). In due, several Literary translations fall short of the original's caliber and fame. As a result, it is classified lower than literature.

Discriminating between translation and literature has in fact no solid basis, simply because translation is neither mechanical nor a process that lacks creativity. In spite of the fact that the existence of artistic translation depends on the existence of the source text; it is a creation just like the literary work. In this regard, one assumes that the task of a translator is the same as that of a writer and in many cases harder than it. The only difference between the translator and the writer lies in: the first writes the ideas that belong to another writer, whereas the latter writes his own thoughts. This difference, however, does not make a translator’s work less than the work of the writer, because conveying others’ views is more difficult than conveying our own ideas. The writer who writes his own ideas is free to use the words that suit his ideas and he even makes his ideas feasible to his words (Enani 1992, 6).

Because literary translation is not mechanical or neutral, the translator often becomes a cross-cultural communicator, mediator, and negotiator.

Should Literature be translated or not?

In his article, Ozbek, D. Bal writes “no problem is as consubstantial to literature and its modest mystery as the one posed by translation” (2019, 6). Translation and Literature are two intersected arts, even though it is regarded in many cases as its main problem. Actually, the problems translation poses in literature are somewhat related to the ambiguous and mysterious nature of its language. This close connection between the two arts persuades us to investigate the mystery of literature and translation to answer the question: why translation resembles a problem to literature? Answering this question requires to dig within the possible strategies translators follow for translating literary texts.

A considerable number of recent researches in literary translation have focused on the translation of literature. Many scholars center their researches on issues including the nature of literary translation and the different problems encountered by translators in translating literature, whether prose or poetry, as well as its closeness or aloofness from the source text. Literary language has been considered from antiquity a sublime and distinctive from everyday language due to the special use of words which are deviated or defamiliarized from the norms. Such features or rhetorical devices give literature not only its depth in meaning, but also its aesthetic value and literariness.

Literary translation becomes much more problematic, when the literary text subject of translation is written in a poetic language rather than prose. Poetry is rich with hidden meanings and ideas that can only be noticed via a careful attentive reading. For this reason, the form of a poem is considered as essential as its content; it plays a primordial role in communicating different issues and conveying different meanings in a precise and concise manner, through the employment of rhetorical devices such as tensions, paradoxes and ambiguity. The latter turns into a distinguishing feature between poetry and everyday language. In a word, ambiguity emerges as a vitalizing rhetorical device in interpreting the language of poetry and literature as a whole; it also becomes an archetype of its objectivity. Despite the fact that ambiguity is a linguistic hallmark, it was avoided in many linguistic contexts. Nonetheless, it has been well appreciated in literature, particularly in poetry, wherein it has become its emblem. It takes the form of rhetorical devices such as metaphors, ironies, puns and wordplay, for communicating a plenty of meanings in a more precise manner. Nevertheless, it has a profound and long lasting influence.

By injecting ambiguity into their works, poets allow their readers to get the chance to utilize their imaginations, while exploring the meanings that the poem intends to convey. This method also fosters a constructive relationship between the reader and the diverse ambiguities the text exposes, stimulating by that the reader’s attention and integrating him in the poem he is reading. In so doing, poets inspire their readers to interpret their works in numerous ways. Hence, it is a device that preserves the harmony and unity between the words of the text and its meanings. In addition to the beauty and the suspense it creates in the text, ambiguity has a strong relationship with the source text’s culture. Accordingly, Susan Basnnett contends that, “just as the writer is a product of a specific moment of time and context, a translator is a product of another time and another context” (Basnnett 2007, 27).

This means that the language of the text is inseparable of its culture, what renders their translations problematic due to the lack of equivalence, especially when STL and TTL are both linguistically and culturally distant. Both the cultural dimensions and the unique flavor created by the rhetorical devices such as ambiguity, puns and wordplay elevate literary works to the uppermost forms of rendition, as their translation is viewed as more than a simple form of text's translation. Yet, the cultural difference between two languages will render the transfer difficult and sometimes impossible.

The mere shift in meaning from the source text to the target text is frequently seen as subversive act counter to the culture it represents. In this context, the translator should be cautious enough when translating words, that have a typical fabric, such as puns and wordplay, or associated with a specific culture. This implies that translators who rely only on their linguistic understanding of the text will inevitably fail to inject the needed suspense, creativity, as well as multitude of meanings in their translations as that encountered while reading the confusing words of the original text. Hence, they are unable to afford their readers a work as compelling as the original one. Even though flawless translation of two culturally different texts is farfetched, the translation that is centered up on conveying the meaning and the message of the SL text is, however, always possible, chiefly, when a translator borrows or coins words from the SLT or familiarizes it to suit the TT culture.

Loss and Gain in Translating Literature

Literary translation is always regarded as a debatable issue among translation scholars. Some theorists regard that the only way to read literary works should be in the source language in which it has been written. Translation scholars, however, advocate that this very specific kind of translation could be achieved – even though a sort of loss of the original meaning that the author intended to convey may occur, as well as of the beauty and the suspense of the original text (Hakemi 2013, 377). This means that the translator must be skilled to translate the delicate elements in the literary work. In spite of the fact that there is loss in translating the meaning of the literary text, there is also another aspect of gain that should be taken into consideration. To translate the original text into more than one language means to allow the text to cross boundaries to penetrate other cultures. In this sense, translation and literary translation in particular participates in creating what is called world literature, a literature that surpasses the notion of nationalistic chauvinism of literature.

With translation, a literary work travels the world penetrating different cultures, hence, this will automatically give an after- life to the original text. If this means a thing, it means that translation is the afterlife of the original work and its continuity throughout time. Moreover, literary translation is a creation, because once we compare the translated text with the original work, it appears as a new work that is distinguished with its own characteristics, spirit and style. In fact, the lack of equivalence between text SL and TL in finding the accurate meaning as in the original text drive translators to adopt different strategies and procedures to translate the difficult words and expressions.

Strategies of Literary translation

In considering translation as a challenging task that requires from the translator to render the untranslatability of numerous linguistic and culturally rooted terms possible, scholars have come up with a range of strategies that will help the translator to overcome such problems and finding balance between ST and TT both in form and structure. According to Lawrence Venuti in his book *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*, "Every translation is influenced by cultural values and norms present in the target language, including both dominant and marginalized perspectives. While translators may submit to existing ideologies, they can also resist them, aiming for a more culturally diverse representation through their work" (Venuti 1995, 33). In this regard, every translator should view the translation process through the lens of culture, which refracts the cultural norms of the source language. It is the translator's responsibility to transfer these cultural norms to the target-language text while maintaining their meaning and their foreignness" This means that translating the various cultural values from STL to TTL is compulsory in every phase in the process of translation. In his 1998 book *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference*, Venuti states that "Domestication and foreignization deal with 'the question of how much a translation assimilates a foreign text to the translating language and culture, and how much it rather signals the differences of that text'" (Benkrima & Lilia 2023, 37).

Domestication alters the source text (ST) in order to conform to the linguistic and cultural norms of the target Text (TT). In contrast, foreignization preserves at preserving the elements of the text, when it maintains the linguistic and cultural variations that the target reader might not be familiar with. Yet selecting one of the strategies over the other affects the cultural and ideological values of the translated text. Furthermore, the term adaptation according to Hutcheon and O'Flynn (2006), refers to the entity resulted out of implementing a particular source; it is also regarded as the process through which the entity is produced or created, including reinterpretation and recreation of the source. This process of adaptation is a palimpsest through the memory of other works and resonating through repetition and change (2006, 179). In the traditional Arabic milieu of translation, these strategies were not explicitly used. In order to allow the Arab reader to live similar experiences as that lived by the English reader, Arab translators used to modify the translated text on both linguistic and cultural levels to keep authentic to the source text. Such modification is somewhat closer to domestication strategy and tend to conform with the Arabic language and culture.

With the advancement of translation in the Arab world in postmodern time as well as the advancement in comparative studies and translation field, domestication, foreignization and adaptation strategies come forth. Arab translators began to center attention in their research studies on such concepts, using the different tactics in translation to convert text from one culture to another. The issue related to how the procedures of translation take part in altering the linguistic and cultural turns out debatable in the current time, especially when a number of translators from the Arab world employ a strategy that is somewhat similar to domestication, what help them in adapting translated texts to the Arabic language, culture, and ideas becomes

obvious. Yet, concepts as domestication and foreignization were not explicitly discussed by Arab translators to avoid loss in meaning and maintain the cultural value of the target text. The advocates of domestication claim that employing this strategy would preserve the original text's norms and protect them from any foreign addition or alteration, because "domesticating translation is easier for the readers to understand and accept." (Yang 2010, 79). Yet this strategy deals with simple and well known texts and would not help translator who struggle to translate foreign texts. Unlike foreignization that deals with diverse cultural components, this strategy contradicts Venuti's perspective, because domestication may lead to the loss of cultural subtleties and unique elements of the source text, what renders the translated text inauthentic. It becomes obvious that the two strategies share the ultimate goal of the translator. Besides, the two strategies are the only global strategies which are oriented for translating the whole source text instead of sentences; they encourage readers of the target language to get interested in other cultures.

However, literary translation is a highly complicated task as it is not solely concerned with transferring words from one language to another one; rather, it encompasses the transmission of cultural values while maintaining meaning. In doing so translators have to determine the most suitable strategy to keep faithfulness and fidelity to the source text. In order to discover which strategies better help Arab translators in avoiding loss in meaning and being faithful to ST, while struggling to preserve the cultural value, the analysis and discussion section compares some extracted passages from Jabra Ibrahim Jabra translation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* with Amin Hussein Ahmed translation.

Jabra and Amin's Procedures of Translating Shakespeare's *Macbeth*

The uniqueness of the literary text makes literary translation is particularly significant as it is dealing with a unique sort of text. The translator of literary text is not concerned to translate the language of the text only, but its culture also. The main objective of translation theories is providing translators with the soundest strategies that will enable them to find the equivalence between the ST and TT languages, otherwise the loss will take place, what renders their translation unfaithful to the source. A simple example that makes us believe that translation is a creation and not a mere mechanical task is the fact that when we compare the original masterpiece *Macbeth* of the world poet and playwright William Shakespeare with its Arabic translations of Jabra Ibrahim Jabra and Amin Hussein Ahmed.

Macbeth (1606) is one of Shakespeare's best-known and most potent tragedies during his lifetime and of the most potent and significant tragedies in all of English literature. The play's popularity as well as the big number of translations it has received are the true reasons behind its selection. Actually, *Macbeth* grabbed the world wide attention of translators, whom translated into more than 80 languages. Arab translators such as Mohamed Enani, Amin Ramzi, and Salah Niazi have also interested in translating the play into Arabic. Each one of them used different strategies in his translation.

This study examines passages of the play that are extracted from the ST Shakespeare's *Macbeth* written in English to be compared with its two different

translations of the same Target Language Arabic. The first being Jabra Ibrahim Jabra Arabic book *El- Maassi El Koubra* “المأسي الكبرى” (2000), that includes all the translated versions of shakespeare’s big tragedies, whereas, the second is taken from “مسرحية مكبث”, translation of Amin Hussein Ahmed (1994). It should be stated that the two translations were not arbitrarily chosen, rather, the two translations belong to two famous translators and publishing houses. Unlike other translators such as Mutran Khalil, who based his translation on reading of the French version of the play instead of the source text, the two translators relied on the original text written in 1606 and translated it differently to Arabic.

Both Jabra and Amin employ different strategies to create a beautiful translation close in its structure as much as possible to the source text. Linguistically speaking, both of them adhere to sentence structure of the target text and depend, in their strategies, on culture –specific item. Concerning their strategies, both of them adopt common strategies such as functional equivalence, literal translation, and domestication, or neutralization. Rather than retaining the cultural uniqueness/identity of the original text, these strategies aim to attain to linguistic/formal equivalence, while retaining the source text’s communicative function.

After closely reading the play in English as well as its two translated versions in Arabic, the researchers perceive how the play’s translation could be altered depending on how the two translators comprehend the original text’s words. That’s why, many of the figurative expressions of a dialectic nature are translated into non-figurative language, deploying literal translation, domestication and neutralization as main strategies. Therefore, many of the culturally relevant elements of the source text turn out emptied of their aesthetic appealing and cultural significance. The opening scene from Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* appears the following:

First Witch: When shall we three meet again?

In thunder, lightning, or in rain?

Second Witch: When the **hurly-burly**’s done,
When the battle’s **lost**, and **won**

Third Witch: There to meet with Macbeth.

First Witch: I come, **Graymalkin**. (Shakespeare 1999, 102)

In his book *The Big Tragedies* (2008), Jabra Ibrahim Jabra translated the first scene of Macbeth as follows:

ساحرة ١: متى نلتقي نحن الثلاث
في رعود هطول أمطار كاللهاث
ساحرة ٢: حين يكف الهرج و المرج رعبا و يصبح القتال خسرانا وكسبا
ساحرة ٣: ذلك عند مغيب الشمس حاصل
ساحرة ٣: حيث نلتقي بمكبث
ساحرة ١: قطتي الشهباء، لبيك؟
ساحرة ٢: علجومتي تنادي
ساحرة ٣: لبيك، لبيك
الثلاث معا: الجميل هو الدميم و الدميم هو الجميل على الدوام

هيا حموا في حلقة من ضباب و قتام
يخرجن (جبرا إبراهيم ٢٠٠٨، ٦٦٦)

Where as Amin translates the same scene as follows:

الساحرة الأولى : متى نلتقي نحن الثلاثة مرة أخرى ؟ عند قصف الرعد، أو وميض البرق أو هطول الأمطار؟
الساحرة الثانية : حين تنتهي المعركة و تسفر المعركة عن هزيمة و انتصار
الساحرة الثالثة: سيكون ذلك قبل غروب الشمس و انقضاء النهار
الساحرة الأولى : و أين المكان؟
الساحرة الثانية: في المرج يكون اللقاء
الساحرة الثالثة: حيث نقابل مكبث
الساحرة الأولى : إني قادمة يا قطني جريمالكين
الجميع: الضفدع بادوك ينادينا. فلنبادر بالإياب ...
قد غدا الجميل قبيحا و القبيح جميلا... فلنظر عبر الهواء الملوث و الضباب.
يخرجن (أمين حسين ١٩٩٤، ٢٥)

Discussion and Analysis

The opening scene in the two translations shows that both Jabra and Amin's TT language retains the poetic and the aesthetic qualities of the ST. This means that both of the translators have relied on literal translation as a strategy. The language of the TT comes in standard Arabic and in a very expressive and instructive form with intention of being read by target readers. The translation of Jabra deliberately reveals his experience as a poet, since he was very interested in producing the same poetic impression on the Arabic reader as it has been done by the original text. For this reason, his translation follows short rhymed lines as much as possible to stick to Shakespeare's poetic lines. He also used the simile "كاللهاث" and the adjective "رعبا" to keep, on the one hand the lines rhymed. On the other hand, it seems that these two words are ambiguous, what adds profundity to the meaning of the text and persuades the reader to carry on reading to learn what next scenes hold in their folds.

In the ST, Shakespeare employed three natural phenomena "thunder, lightning, or rain" to intensify the opening scene's dramatic effect. Although these three words denote three natural phenomena, they connote danger and catastrophe in English culture. Shakespeare employed them in the opening scene to entice the reader's mind to anticipate into King Duncan's calamitous crime that takes place in scene Five. In spite of the fact that the three expressions have common denotation in ST and TT cultures, their connotations are quite different. In English culture of ST, they resemble danger and catastrophe, however, in the Arabic culture of the TT, the three are merely natural phenomena. For this reason, Jabra smartly adds the simile "كاللهاث" to create the same depth, effect and ambiguity in his text.

Similarly, The pun "hurly-burly" and the oxymoron "lost and won" in the third line hold more than one meaning. In the surface level, they refer to the battlefield, yet the underlying meanings refer to the awful crime of the king as well as the change in Macbeth's near future life. Accordingly, Jabra adds an extra word "رعبا", but he relied on literal translation of the oxymoron and put it in a rhymed form "خسرانا وكسبنا" to more or less create the same effect. Although Jabra modified the original text by adding extra words to bestow more depth to the dramatic effect of

the first scene, such expressions did not destroy the meaning of the text, rather, they preserve both its meaning and its aesthetic value, as well as the unity between the first scene and the next coming scene of the crime. Hence, this modification reveals Jabra's true identity as a poet as well as his mastery of the process of translation as an artistic creation.

Jabra's talent as a translator appears clearly when he translated the ambiguous expression **"Graymalkin"** the name of one of the witches' cat. Exclusively, in English culture, this cat's name is heavily attached to witchcraft and demonology. Cats, rats, and toads are animals that represent disguised demon creatures and witches. Obviously, this name refers to the elder sister of the weird sisters or their master.

Contrasting to the English culture of the ST, such cultural feature has no sense in the Arabic culture of the TT, since it does not exist in Arabic culture as a whole. For this reason, Jabra reinforced the noun **"Graymalkin"** with the adjectival phrase **"قطتي الشهباء"** to give her a deceptive nature between a cat and a frog / a toad. In fact the color gray is not heavily attached to incarnation as the black color; but, when he added the adjective **"الشهباء"**, he deceived the reader's mind. In spite of this extra modification in the source text, Jabra translation did not destroy the text since there is no loss in the meaning. Instead, there is gain, because the words Jabra added contributed additional dramatic effect as well as lyrical flavor to the scene, while preserving both of the aesthetic value and the semantic implication of the original text.

Unlike Jabra, Amin's translation seems too conservative to the ST. Although he tried to follow rhymed lines to preserve the same dramatic and poetic effect as much as possible, as in the original text, he did not make any modification in the text. The word **"المعمعة"** is the best translation to shakespeare's ambiguous expression **"hurly-burly"** as it gives the same effect, and the same meaning. Unlike Jabra's expression **"الهرج و المهرج"** that did not add strong effect until the adjective **"زعبا"** was added, the word **"المعمعة"** per se holds multiple meanings. In the surface level, it denotes the battlefield with two armies in clash, but in its underlying meaning, it connotes both Macbeth's self that swings between honesty and dishonesty, a loyal general in king Duncan's army who swiftly turns into a butcher or a criminal; a soldier who fought for the name of his king who turns into a traitor who kills his king to steal the throne, as it also refers to the night of the awful crime. In short, Amin was successful in his choice, because the word **"المعمعة"** is such an ambiguous word with multiple strong meanings: it refers to dirty, dark deeds, and unstable things. Hence, it adds more to the effect of the scene, and teases the readers mind.

In this regard, Amin's translation demonstrates devotion and authenticity to the source at aesthetic, structural, and cultural dimensions. As it was earlier mentioned in this paper, some linguistic expression that are heavily connected to source text's culture are hard to translate, because when dealing with two different cultures such as English and Arabic cultures, the cultural loss is inevitably will take place. Therefore, the best strategies the translator should follow to avoid loss in meaning and preserve the cultural effect are literal and domestication strategies.

As it is previously stated, the tactics used in the two translations are communicative in function, and aim at upholding meaning to target language's reader instead of preserving the cultural identity of the source text. Thus, the Arab reader when reads the two target texts will not feel foreignized, rather, he will go on smoothly his reading. In spite of the fact that the two translators have adopted the communicative function to preserve the meaning of the original text, numerous expressions differed between the two translations. This deliberately appears in the following example extracted from Scene three of Act One:

First Witch: A sailor's wife had chestnuts in her lap
And munched, and munched, and munched. 'Give me', quoth I.

[...]

I'll do, I'll do, and I'll do.

[...]

ALL: The weird sisters, hand in hand,
 Posters of the sea and land,
 Thus do go, about, about,

[...]

Peace, the **charm**'s wound up. (Shakespeare 1999, 108 -112)

Jabra translates the same scene as follows:

ساحرة ١: لقيت زوجة بحارة الكستناء في حجرها

و هي تمضغ و تمضغ و تمضغ

أعطيني قلت لها

[...]

سأفعل و أفعل و أفعل

[...]

كلهن معا : أخوات القدر المسرعات،

عبر الأراضي و البحار، يجرن مدا في حلقات يدا بيد

[...]

كفى فالرقية استوت . (جبرا ابراهيم ٢٠٠٠، ٦٦٩-٦٧٠)

Where as, Amin translates it as follows :

الساحرة ١ : قابلت زوجة بحار في حجر ثوبها كستناء، و تقضم و تقضم و تقضم... قلت لها " أعطني " فصرخت

المرأة السممية، أغربي عن وجهي أيتها الساحرة. و قد أبهر زوجها على ظهر سفينة النمر قاصدا حلب، غير اني

سأبعه مبحرة في منخل ، وفي صورة فأر لا ذيل له ، فأقضم خشب سفينته و أقضم و أقضم.

[...]

الجميع: نحن أخوات القدر يدا بيد

[...]

هكذا إكتملت التعويذة. ... (أمين ١٩٩٤، ٣٠)

In their translation of the repeated line "**And munched, and munched, and munched**", Jabra translated this verb with the verb "تمضغ" to refer to the sailor's wife, pointing out to human nature in eating nuts, whereas, Amin used the verb "تقضم" to indicate rats way of grinding things. He connotes by that the nature of the witch that intends to disguise in a rat without tail to sail with the sailor to Aleppo.

Although it is obvious that no loss in the meaning has taken place in the two translations of the line, but the loss had impact on the cultural component of the source text owing to the cultural difference between ST and TT. In this regard, it seems that the communicative function of the translation has neutralized the target text to suit the overall taste of the reader.

Accordingly, "the ultimate aim of communicative translation lies in producing an effect as close as feasible on the reader as that acquired by source text's readers" (Newmark, 1988, 39). To make it clear, the translator should give much attention to the target audience as well as the target culture. He should respect the reader's taste, put what should be accepted in the target text and reject what should be denied or prohibited by the reader and the target culture. Even though this alteration made the text acceptable and the meaning transparent to the target reader, the loss affects the culture of the ST, especially when the change touches the words that are deeply attached to the culture of the source text.

The translation of Shakespeare's ambiguous expression "Weird Sisters" into "أخوات القدر" clearly demonstrates this cultural loss. Firstly, Shakespeare has employed this ambiguous expression to denote the strange or supernatural nature of the three sisters and their unfamiliar deceptive appearance, in which they have beards like men but faces of women. Yet it connotes the mysterious case of Macbeth and his lady. Both Jabra and Amin translated this expression as "أخوات القدر", but this expression did not give its intended effect as in the source text.

In spite of the fact that both of them interested in designating the three witches, for preserving only the allegorical and the mythological aspect of the source text, their deployed term "القدر" does neither connote the strange nature of weird sisters, by considering them imperfect speakers of prophecies, nor the deceptive nature of Macbeth. Moreover, the difference in meaning between the word "Weird" and "القدر" is very obvious. The former word means strange and when translated into Arabic it gives another sense "غریبات", whereas the latter refers in English to "fate or destiny". It seems that the word "غریبات" suits much more the appearance of the witches than "القدر".

Yet, both Jabra and Amin preferred to adapt the word "القدر" to domesticate and neutralize the text to the target reader and preserves the aesthetic form of the text. In this case the two translators employed adaptation and neutralization as strategies for adapting to source text's original context.

Although the reader of the target text will find no problem to access to the meaning of text and could even imagine the strange nature of the sisters, the loss in the cultural dimension is visible, when the ambiguous word "Weird" of the source text is substituted with the word "القدر" that connotes something else in Arabic or TT culture. Similarly, the cultural loss and contradiction in meaning has taken place in Jabra translation of the last word in the ending line "the charm". Jabra used the expression "الرقية" as a synonym the word "charm", however, his translation made a big loss both in meaning and culture, because the term "الرقية" in target text's culture

does not have similar meaning in the source text's culture, instead, the two terms have contradicted meanings.

In Arabic culture (TTC), "الرقية" refers to the religious way of treating/healing a charmed person, whereas the word "charm" in English culture (STC) refers to the supernatural curse that may affect someone. Hence, Jabra was not successful in translating the last line, because he tried to adapt an idiomatic expression to the cultural context of TT, yet, this adaptation has created contradiction in the meaning of the TTL. This slight modification caused a big loss on the target text's cultural dimension. Due to the big difference between the two cultures, the loss affected the overall meaning of the line, the cultural aspect of the target text, and has also affected the entire aesthetic form, because the last word is not persuasive enough to tease the reader's mind.

Unlike Jabra, Amin was very successful, when he kept loyal to the original text, as he learns that translating a difficult idiomatic expression that has a strong effect on both the meaning and the aesthetic value of the text is in fact a risky road. Instead, Amin has relied on the literal translation of the line. In this regard, he used the word "التعويدة" the very direct equivalent term to the word "charm". As a result, Amin's authenticity and loyalty to the original text boosted him up both to create a beautiful equivalent ending line "the charm's wound up" "صه هكذا إكتملت التعويد", and to achieve success in avoiding loss both in meaning and the cultural aspect of the target Text.

Conclusion

After having Compared Jabra Ibrahim Jabra and Amin Hussein Ahmed's Arabic translations of Shakespeare's masterpiece *Macbeth*, the discussion and the analysis section has demonstrated that:

literary translation is not a mere *mechanical task* as it is affirmed above in one of its definitions. Rather, it is a literary creation, a true artistic work similar to that of a writer or a poet.

Translating literary texts is a truly challenging and rigorous task, wherein the translator's duty is to transmit an entire civilization, encompassing cultural, religious, and social norms.

The choice between the concepts of domestication and foreignization is dependent on the translator's intention.

Domestication and foreignization run in parallel and complement each other.

translating a literary text such as *Macbeth* is not an easy task for a translator to do; it poses different problems and difficulties. Ambiguity and culture are among these difficulties, in which some words and idiomatic expressions, resembled in metaphors, wordplay, paradoxes, are deeply rooted in the culture of the ST.

Translating culture and ambiguity of a literary work is in most cases a tricky matter. The difference between STC and TTC, as in the case of English and Arabic, generates loss whether in meaning or the cultural aspect of the text, and, therefore, affects the process of translation.

In order to avoid loss in translation, the two translators have followed specific strategies as: literal translation, domestication, neutralization to preserve the text's

communicative purpose to the target reader, and make their translations faithful to the source text. However, loss has affected Jabra's translation, when the latter employed adaptation strategy to render specific cultural terms in a creative way.

Unlike Jabra, Amin's faithfulness to the source text helped him to take both the target reader taste and the target text culture into consideration, what created such a beautiful transfer, preserving the ST meaning, unity, culture and the source text's aesthetic form in general. In doing so; Housseyn attained an ultimate success in translating Shakespeare's tragic masterpiece *Macbeth*.

In spite of the fact that there is loss in translating the literary text, there is also another aspect of gain that should be considered since translation will allow readers of different cultures to read and interpret literature, what gives an afterlife to the original text.

References

- Arif, Abukhudairi (2019). 'Translation of literature or literature in Arabic'. *International Journal of Language and Literature*, 7(1), 1-35. https://www.academia.edu/20028271/Translation_of_Literature_or_Literature_of_Translation
- Hakemi, B. G. (2013). The possibilities and limitations of literary translation: A review of J. Paynes and Henri Clarkes Translations of Ghazalyat of Hafez. *International Journal of English and Literature*, 4(8), 375-387.
- Basnnett, S. (2007). *Translation studies (3rd ed.)*. Edited by Piotr Kuhiwczak and Karin Littau. *A companion to translation studies*. Multilingual Matters.
- Benkrima, Touka, & Lilia, M. (2023). *Investigating Domestication and Foreignization in Literary Translation from Arabic to English*. Department of English Language. Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla.
- Jabra Ibrahim Jabra (2008). *Great Tragedies: Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth*. Arab Association for Studies and Publications. Beirut. Lebanon.
- Enani, M. (1992). *Art of Translation*. Cairo: Library of Lebanon.

- Amin Hussein Ahmed (1994). *William Shakespeare: Macbeth*. Classics Library. Echourrouk House of Edition. Cairo. Egypt.
- Hutcheon, L., & O'Flynn, S. (2006). 'A Survey on Domestication and Foreignization'. *Theories in Translation*, Vol. 3, No. 1.
- Kasperek, C. (1983). The Translator's Endless Toil, *The Polish Review*, 28(2), 83–87. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25777966>
- Newmark, P. (1988). *A textbook of translation* (Vol. 66, pp. 1-312). New York: Prentice hall.
- Ozbek, D. Bal (2019). 'On Jorge Luis Borges' "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote" & "Some Versions of Homer". *Journal of Translation Studies*, 4(2), 112-125.
- Shakespeare, W. (1999). *Macbeth*. (A. R. Braunmuller, Ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Sun, Y. (2022). 'Literary translation and communication', *Frontiers in Communication*, 7, 1073773. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2022.1073773>
- Venuti, L. (1995). *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*. Book Key, p.33.
- Yang, W. (2010). Brief study on domestication and foreignization in translation. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 1(1), 77-80.

HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE

Hamed, H., Mehiri, R., & Behar, M. M. (2025). Tracing Loss and Gain in Translating Ambiguity and Culture in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* from English to Arabic. *LANGUAGE ART* 10(1), 49–64. Shiraz, Iran.

DOI: 10.22046/LA.2025.04

URL: <https://www.languageart.ir/index.php/LA/article/view/442>





ردیابی باخت و افزایش در ترجمه ابهام و فرهنگ در نمایشنامه «مکبث» شکسپیر از انگلیسی به عربی

دکتر حلیمه حامد^۱

دانشیار متخصص ادبیات، گروه زبان انگلیسی و ادبیات، دانشگاه محمد خیضر،
آزمایشگاه تخصصی چندرشته‌ای در زبان و فرهنگ، بسکرة، الجزائر.

دکتر رمضان مهیری^۲

پروفسور سبک‌شناسی تطبیقی، گروه زبان انگلیسی و ادبیات، دانشگاه محمد خیضر،
آزمایشگاه تخصصی چندرشته‌ای در زبان و فرهنگ، بسکرة، الجزائر.

دکتر محمد مصطفی بحر^۳

استاد مدعو، گروه علوم اجتماعی، دانشگاه حسییه بن یوعلی، الشلف، الجزائر.

(تاریخ دریافت: ۲۶ آبان ۱۴۰۳؛ تاریخ پذیرش: ۲۳ بهمن ۱۴۰۳؛ تاریخ انتشار: ۱۰ اسفند ۱۴۰۳)

ابهام از جمله صنایع ادبی است که پیوندی ناگسستنی با فرهنگ متن مبدأ دارد و نقشی اساسی در متون ادبی ایفا می‌کند، چرا که بر ژرفا، تعلیق و همچنین هماهنگی و وحدت اثر می‌افزاید. شاعران از آن برای انتقال همزمان زبان و فرهنگ بهره می‌برند، با این حال، ترجمه ابهام موجود در متن ادبی کاری به این سادگی نیست. ابهام به دلیل اختلافات زبانی و فرهنگی بین متن مبدأ و متن مقصد، مشکلات متعددی ایجاد می‌کند که این خود به باخت معنایی قابل توجهی در فرآیند انتقال منجر می‌شود. به منظور حفظ هم شکل زیباشناختی و هم تعلیق ناشی از ابهام، این مقاله از روشی کیفی پیروی کرده و بر رویکردهای لارنس ونوتی در ترجمه متون ادبی تکیه می‌زند. این پژوهش با مقایسه نمونه‌هایی از ترجمه‌های عربی مکبث شکسپیر توسط جبرا ابراهیم جبرا (۲۰۰۸) و امین حسین احمد (۱۹۹۴)، راهبردهای اصلی مترجمان برای اجتناب از باخت معنایی و فرهنگی را بررسی می‌کند. تحلیل داده‌ها نشان می‌دهد که مترجمان برای پرهیز از باخت در ترجمه، ناگزیر به بکارگیری راهبردهای خاصی از قبیل ترجمه تحت‌اللفظی، همگون‌سازی و خنثی‌سازی هستند تا هم هدف ارتباطی متن را برای خواننده مقصد حفظ کنند و هم ترجمه‌هایی وفادار به متن مبدأ ارائه دهند. افزون بر این، پژوهش، کارآمدی ترجمه واژگان دارای بار فرهنگی خاص را از طریق راهبردهای همگون‌سازی، اقتباس و خنثی‌سازی به اثبات می‌رساند. این مطالعه همچنین دو راهبرد اصلی مبتنی بر مدل ونوتی، یعنی همگون‌سازی و بیگانه‌سازی را به خوانندگان معرفی می‌نماید.

واژه‌های کلیدی: ابهام، فرهنگ، ترجمه ادبی، باخت و افزایش، مکبث.

¹ E-mail: h.hamed@univ-biskra.dz

© (نویسنده مسؤول)

² E-mail: ramdanemehiri@hotmail.fr

³ E-mail: mostafabhhr@gmail.com