

# Translatability of Arabic Cultural References to English: A Case Study of *The Queue* Novel

Abdelraouf Meqbel AH Alharahsheh

School of Languages, Literacies and Translation, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Gelugor 11800, Penang, Malaysia

Mohamed Abdou Moindjie

School of Languages, Literacies and Translation, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Gelugor 11800, Penang, Malaysia

Debbita Tan Ai Lin

School of Languages, Literacies and Translation, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Gelugor 11800, Penang, Malaysia

**Abstract**—Cultural references are phrases and words embedded within a source text that refer to entities, persons, or even ideas that are not present in the target language and culture or are significantly different in terms of sociocultural equivalents. Translating cultural references into a language where translated texts are interpreted through the prism of cultural norms presents a substantial challenge. The objective of this study is to investigate the translatability of cultural references in Arabic literary texts; it describes the presence of textual and matricial operational norms portrayed in the translator's translation procedures and shifts. The analysis focuses on one Arabic novel, Basma Abdel Aziz's *The Queue*, and follows Toury's (2012) theory on translation norms. After a comprehensive examination of "The Queue," data were methodically underscored, classified, and analysed. The findings emphasize the translator's key role in addressing cultural disparities between Arabic and English societies through selected translation methods, ensuring adherence to the target language's norms despite significant linguistic and cultural gaps. According to this study, the acceptability of the target text is enhanced not only because of cultural requirements but also because of language norms, which prevail over translation choices that can be applied by the translator.

**Index Terms**—cultural references, literary translation, translation shifts, translation norms

## I. INTRODUCTION

Significant advancements in the field of translation studies have highlighted the critical role of translators as social agents. The descriptive and target-oriented approach, proposed in the 1970s by Even Zohar, has received more attention from translation scholars than the prescriptive model of defining translation based on equivalence difficulties (Munday, 2016). To put it differently, the importance of the overall sociocultural context of the translation process has replaced the ongoing issues concerning translation methods (literal or free) with the emergence of the cultural focus (Hatim, 2014). In contrast to the traditional view of translation practitioners, who concentrate on translation applications and processes, recent attitudes concerning descriptive translation studies focus on determining translation relationships between the original text and the translated text. Holmes (1988) developed the main conceptual framework of translation studies by highlighting translation and translating. Munday (2016) states that Holmes has helped to bridge the gap between practice and theory in the translation field by introducing a systematic approach to translation studies. Holmes grouped translation research into three types: theoretical, descriptive, and applied (Toury, 2012). The current study falls into the second category of Holmes' (1988) diagram, in other words, a descriptive and target-oriented approach. It is motivated by the cultural norms and translation issues that may arise when cultural references in Arabic novels are translated into a completely different language and culture such as English.

Researchers in descriptive translation studies have a shared interest in the social role of translators and their impact on the translation process. Therefore, the aim of a translator when translating two different cultures is to appropriately handle the influence of translation norms (Alkharashi, 2016). To put it another way, translation is a norm-governed activity in which translators can be directed by the social, cultural, historical, and literary systems of the target language (TL), and the translation outcomes must conform to the demands of the receiving community. Translation, in other words, reflects facts about the target culture and target language, which can influence the translator's behaviour (Toury, 2012). Translation norms and descriptive translation studies, according to Snell-Hornby (2006), are commonly used concepts in cultural studies and literary texts. However, an understanding of the overall context of translation is required to determine what is included and excluded during the translation process. This can be revealed by identifying the tendency of the target language (TL) and the constraints toward the cultural loads of the source text (ST). Shifts in translation studies, according to Hanna (2014), necessitate revisiting theoretical and practical translation issues. Shifts, modifications, and inadequate meanings may occur in cases of context and cultural mismatches. These modifications

can occur as a result of the incompetence or reluctance of the translators to render the intended meaning of the source language as required by the target language's local cultural norms (Asghar, 2015). The objectives of this study are:

- a. To describe the translation procedures used by the translator of *The Queue* and
- b. To evaluate the impact of translation procedures as translational operational norms.

The significance of this research is supported by a review of the literature, which indicates a knowledge gap in the language and translation norms of cultural references from Arabic to English. According to the related literature review, no research has been conducted on the translation procedures of cultural references from Arabic into English as operational translation norms in *The Queue*. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to bridge some gaps in our understanding of the translatability of Arabic cultural references and translation norms. This study intends to add new insights regarding translation procedures, translation shifts, and operational translation norms for cultural references to linguists, translators, interpreters, scholars, and freelance translators.

## II. RELATED LITERATURE

### A. Translation Norms

Generally speaking, norms are recognized social standards or illustrations of acceptable conduct shared by members of a particular community. Concerning the acceptability and adequacy of both the translation process and the translated material, translational norms reflect the prevailing beliefs and attitudes of a society at a given time (Toury, 2012). Translation, according to Schaffner (2010), goes beyond decoding language symbols; it is about recontextualizing the source text to fit the cultural norms of the target language. This underscores the significance of the target language's normative role and culture in the translation process. Alharahsheh et al. (2023) further elaborate that translation involves the simultaneous application of norms from both the target text and culture, as well as those of the source text. Thus, translations inherently blend elements from both poles, resulting in a synthesis that reflects the interplay between source and target cultures. Toury (2012) distinguishes between source adequacy norms and target acceptability norms as the two categories of initial norms. Furthermore, Toury distinguishes between operational and preliminary norms. Preliminary norms are associated with the prevailing translation policy in a specific community, while operational norms direct the translator's decisions regarding translation methods. Translational norms play multifaceted roles in translated literature, as elucidated by Alharahsheh et al. (2023) and Adwan and Abuorabaledwan (2019). Toury (1995) contends that translation operates within normative frameworks, where translators prioritize either fidelity to the source text (adequacy) or adaptation to the target culture or language (acceptability). Toury's approach involved analysing passages from both source and target texts to understand translators' decision-making processes and refine translation standards (Munday, 2016).

### B. Cultural References

Authors incorporate cultural references into their literary works to mirror the socio-cultural backgrounds of their respective cultures. However, translators face significant challenges in handling these expressions, as they frequently lack direct equivalents in the target culture due to their complex connections to various social and cultural contexts (Olk, 2013). This underscores the intricacies involved in translating cultural references across different languages and cultures. When translators overlook or disregard Arabic cultural references, they risk creating misunderstandings and confusion among the target readership, as highlighted by Faiq (2016). This potential for confusion arises from the distinct linguistic and cultural backgrounds of Arabic and English, with Arabic being a Semitic language and English belonging to the Indo-European family (Bawardi, 2016). Even when the plot or setting of a narrative appears unfamiliar to the author's own culture, the various elements of the text remain interconnected. As Newmark (1988) points out, translation involves conveying the intended meaning of a text into another language, which can be challenging for readers from different cultural backgrounds. To effectively translate cultural references into the target language, literary translators must possess a deep understanding of both the source and target cultures (Qutait, 2020). This understanding is crucial for employing appropriate translation techniques that accurately convey the intended meaning of the source text and resonate with the target language readers.

### C. Translation Procedures of Cultural References

Translation methods include a variety of strategies and techniques for transferring a text from the source language (SL) to the TL. According to Schaffner (2010), the translation method is decided prior to the start of the translation process, and translation norms are considered. General translation strategies have been categorized differently by various researchers. For instance, adequacy and acceptability are introduced by Toury (2012), while Venuti (2017) discusses domestication and foreignization. Similarly, Aixelà (1996) notes that translation techniques either preserve the original source language or replace it with information in the target language to make it seem natural. Several scholars have proposed various translation techniques for translation activities. Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) propose the two techniques of direct translation and oblique translation: The former is concerned with borrowing, calque, and literalism, whereas the latter addresses transposition, modulation, equivalence, and adaptation.

Moreover, Daz Cintas and Remael (2007) offered a similar category in terms of cultural reference translation strategies: transposition, lexical reproduction, compensation, loan, calque, explicitation, substitution, omission, and

addition. Pedersen (2005) offered seven extralinguistic cultural reference translation strategies: official equivalent, retention, specification, direct translation, generalization, substitution, and omission. Similar proper name strategies have been created by Leppihalme (2011), who calls them “realia”: Calque, cultural adaptation, superordinate word, explicitation, addition, and omission are examples of direct transmission. An additional taxonomy of translation strategies was offered by Ranzato (2015), which included 11 techniques: lexical recreation, compensation, removal, official translation, calque, explicitation, generalization by hypernym, concretization by hyponym, and creative addition. Most of the above-mentioned methods and procedures require the use of shifts.

#### D. Translation Shifts

Translation shifts are described by Catford (1965) as departures from formal correspondence that occur when moving from the source text to the target text. Catford divides translation shifts into two categories: level shifts and category shifts. Grammatical and lexical mismatches are examples of level shifts. When the translator attempts to provide terms for the lack of grammatical equivalents, level shifts occur. Conversely, category shifts occur when a noun’s category is substituted with an adjective. Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) introduce translation procedures as shifts; they define “transposition” as a translation strategy that entails switching out one word class for another without altering the message’s meaning (p. 36). However, Catford’s shift is more comprehensive than Vinay and Darbelnet’s idea of transposition because it applies only to one of the latter’s subsystems, class shift.

A translated text does not solely, or even mostly, reveal changes in the small linguistic details. Alterations in the intended meaning of cultural allusions are examples of macrolinguistic shifts caused by translation. Rather than differences between the SL and TL systems, these developments are mostly the result of differences in the textual and conceptual norms that define the two cultures to which these languages belong (Al-Khafaji, 2006). As a result, the study of translation shifts has expanded recently to cover both linguistic and textual/cultural modifications to translated works. Translation-induced macrolinguistic alterations include changes to the intended meaning of cultural references. These types of changes are caused by variations between the SL and TL systems and more by the two cultures in terms of varied textual and discursive norms. The translated information can be explained effectively by pointing out that it is primarily present in the target language and culture (Toury, 2012). Obligatory and optional shifts are caused by discrepancies between the SL and TL linguistic systems, such as when the translator wants to use one-word class in place of another. Despite the fact that obligatory norms are regarded as a vital component of the study of norms in translation studies, optional alteration norms are significant because they accurately illustrate and reflect the conclusions that translators can reach during the translation process. Therefore, comparative translation studies can focus closely on optional alterations (Al-Khafaji, 2006).

### III. PREVIOUS STUDIES

Fouad and Sadikhan (2019) investigated how the translation of Mohammed Khodair’s short story, *The Swing*, altered over time. They aimed to determine the procedures used in translating culturally unique terms from the source text into the target language and whether these terms have changed. Translation shifts, according to Fouad and Sadikhan (2019), are the changes that occur when a text is translated into a new language due to variances between the two languages or the translator’s decisions. According to these researchers, translation shifts are an unavoidable phenomenon, especially when encountering culturally different terminology that is difficult to translate without using shifts. The adjustments presented in their article have been made to ensure that the TT is more appealing and natural to TT readers. Translation shift is an independent translation technique, and various translation approaches – including foreignization, transliteration, paraphrasing, and omission – have been employed to influence shifts and attain naturalness.

Considering the influence of translation norms in the target language and culture, Alwazna (2014) argues that employing a balance between retaining cultural distinctiveness and adapting to the target audience’s expectations is essential. This approach is particularly important when translating aspects of Arabic culture into English. He underscores the profound influence of the norms and expectations of the target language and culture on the translation process, observing the prevalent use of domestication strategies to cater to English-speaking readers’ preferences. Alwazna advocates for a balanced approach, utilizing both domestication and foreignization techniques in cultural translation to convey meaning accurately. He warns against the exclusive reliance on either method, as it could compromise the integrity of the source text or disrupt the coherence of the target culture. Additionally, Al-Adwan and Abuorabaledwan (2019) explored semantic repetition in Arabic short stories, shedding light on how translation norms influence the treatment of such literary devices, guiding translators within the boundaries of cultural and linguistic expectations.

### IV. METHODOLOGY

This research is a qualitative study. It adopts this method to describe qualitatively the way in which the translator of *The Queue* handles cultural references and to trace the regular behaviour of the translator in the decision-making process, focusing on the translation procedures used. This research is descriptive and only qualitative due to the fact that, according to Creswell (2009), qualitative research can be conducted to explore and understand the behaviour of social

groups concerning a social issue. According to Holmes (1988), descriptive research is divided into qualitative, quantitative, and mixed studies, and Creswell (2009) adds that these research designs serve as blueprints for investigations that must include critical components such as philosophical assumptions, research methodology, and specific research procedures. Mandal (2018) delineates the core disparities between qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. Qualitative studies seek to depict a situation, phenomenon, problem, or event, often utilizing nominal or ordinal variables. This method is chosen for exploring new topics, specific samples, or when existing theories do not apply. Conversely, quantitative research emphasizes quantifying variation within a subject, relying on quantitative variables and analysing magnitude. These distinctions guide researchers in selecting the suitable methodology based on research goals and the topic's characteristics.

According to Holmes (1988), translated text can be analysed based on three orientation categories: product, process, and function. This study is a product-oriented one that provides a description of translations of Arabic cultural references to English in *The Queue*. It encompasses the translatability of cultural elements from the source text to the target text of the novel. The study is done manually by using nonprobability sampling related to purposive sampling. A qualitative approach can be considered the basis for corpus analysis, especially in the description of the regular patterns in which the translation is described as a product and its influence on the receiving culture (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014). Both the source text and the target text are thoroughly examined to identify the data. Then, data related to the cultural aspects of translatability are collected and analysed manually for convenience. The data on translating cultural references, which are identified, collected, categorized, and analysed, include 227 items. Since Toury (2012) did not propose specific translation procedures or techniques in his theory of translation norms, the data are compared to identify translation shifts by analysing translation procedures.

## V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the English translation norms and translation shifts regarding Arabic cultural references in *The Queue* using Toury's (2012) translation norms theory are presented in Table 1. The results indicate that the translator of *The Queue* used a variety of translation procedures to depict the cultural material. Based on the mapping of both texts, it is discovered that operational rules for translation shifts such as modulation, explicitation, synonymy, borrowing, literal translation, deletion, addition, and adaptation procedures are used in the TT to ensure the text's acceptability in the recipient language and culture. This study indicates that *The Queue* translator uses translation shifts governed by operational norms to make *The Queue's* cultural content acceptable and understandable to the target reader. The results are thoroughly examined and discussed in the following section.

TABLE 1  
TRANSLATION PROCEDURES IN *THE QUEUE* NOVEL

Translation procedure	Frequency	Percentage
Deletion	11	4.8%
Addition	20	8.8%
Synonymy	21	9%
Modulation	67	29.5%
Explicitation	34	14.9%
Literal translation	40	17.6%
Borrowing	29	12.7%
Adaptation	5	2.2%
Total	227	100%

### A. Operational Norms in Translating ACRs in *The Queue*

To determine the prevalent matricial operational norms affecting the translation of *The Queue*, the researcher used Toury's methodology of text-pair analysis, in which a description is given to the replaced and replacing texts. Arabic cultural references in *The Queue* were examined, and each was investigated in a different part that provided contextual information for the SL and TT. Toury (2012, p. 83) outlines two sections within operational norms: matricial norms and textual linguistic norms. Matricial norms involve structuring the entire target text, allowing translators to adjust text elements through actions such as omission, addition, rearrangement, or relocation. These translation operations, or shifts, as described by Toury (2012), provide insights into translators' consistent behaviours, thereby revealing the overarching translation norms guiding the translation process.

### B. Translation Procedures in *The Queue*

The translation shift is common throughout *The Queue*, in which the translator employs translation procedures, modified lexical fragments, word order, and cultural features to ensure their acceptability for the intended reader. Toury focuses on segmentation modification via the matricial operational norms process, in which the translator alters the divisions of the TT, relocates some portions, and deletes and occasionally inserts detailed information. The English edition of *The Queue* comprises 226 pages. Matricial norms, as mentioned above, are concerned with the operations that a translator uses to regulate the process of translation through segment manipulations such as omission, addition, or repositioning of sentence or paragraph parts in the TT. After conducting a comparison between the source text (ST) and

the target text (TT) of *The Queue* novel, it is found that the translator of the novel used various types of translation procedures represented by addition, deletion, modulation, literal translation, adaptation, and borrowing.

### C. Segment Manipulation by Addition

This section focuses on the additive segments as a translation procedure in which the translator of *The Queue* adds to the text for coherence and clarity. The translator contributed this new information to the TT to get closer to the intended reader. The example below illustrates the process of adding information.

اختفى الحاكم القديم من المشهد، وراحت البوابة تنظم الكثير من الامور، وتضع القيود والضوابط اللازمة لتسيير المصالح والاشغال (ص.41).

As the ruler faded from the public eye, it was the Gate that increasingly began to regulate procedures, imposing rules and regulations necessary to set various affairs in motion. (Abdel Aziz, 2016, p. 31)

The Arabic sentence above includes the (S+V) *rahat albawabata*, which was introduced to the intended reader as an empathic device in which it states that the Gate itself becomes the accountable body for everything linked to citizens' affairs, including food and health. The pronoun is missing in the ST, but it is implicitly understood in Arabic, therefore, the translator added the pronoun to make it acceptable and natural to the readership. Due to linguistic differences between Arabic and English, the translator found himself obliged to add new segments to the TT for clarity and cohesion reasons.

مر على حجرات الكشف المجاورة له، فوجد عددا من الأطباء الجدد يتناولون اكراب الشاي والقهوة على صوت الراديو، توقف لدقائق مستمعا، كانت مذبة محطة الشباب تحاور ضيفتها تليفونيا على الهواء (ص.13).

On his way back to his office, he walked past the empty examination rooms and saw several new doctors drinking tea and coffee by the radio. He paused a minute to listen: it was the Youth Station presenter speaking on the air with a call-in guest. (Abdel Aziz, 2016, p. 6)

When TT and ST are compared, it is discovered that the translator frequently makes matricial operational alterations for acceptability reasons, such as adding lexical segments for clarity and consistency. In the TT sentence above, a phrase, *on his way back to his office*, is added at the beginning of this sentence for clarity purposes, because the readership shares the same cultural background with the translator, which enhances acceptability norms. Tarek, one of the main characters in *The Queue*, was required to inspect the examination rooms as part of his medical duties. To make the text clearer, the translator included the prepositional phrase at the beginning. The example below also illustrates another occurrence of an addition prepositional phrase at the beginning of the sentence.

### D. Lexical Deletion Procedure

After mapping the ST and TT of *The Queue*, various deletion occurrences have been explored in which the translator deletes complete segments of the original text due to reasons such as not understanding the meaning of the CRs or to avoid repetition. The sentence below illustrates the occurrence of deletion.

فسحب نفسا عميقا احس بصداه في جانبه العليل، وتوجه إليها. - مساء الخير. - مساء النور. أفندم؟ - اسمي يحيى جاد الرب، كنت نزيل في المستشفى اللي حضرتك بنشغلي فيها(ص.144).

he drew a deep breath, let it echo in his injured side, and headed toward her. "Good afternoon." "Hello . . . can I help you?" "My name is Yehya Gad el-Rab Saeed. I was a patient at the hospital you worked at". (Abdel Aziz, 2016, p. 124)

Due to the absence of these two cultural references in the target culture (TC), the translator left two occurrences of titles or addressee terms untranslated in the TT. The translator is compelled to remove these CRs from the preceding phrase because they are not present in the TL. As a result, the translator made a change in accordance with what Toury refers to as operational matricial norms, which include manipulating lexical segments. The word *افندم* is adopted from the Turkish language and refers to the polite response to a call or when someone requires assistance. As a result, when someone says *afndem*, the suggested meaning is the English phrase "yeah, sir". Due to cultural differences, this word was removed from the preceding phrase. The second instance is the word *حضرتك*, which the translator eliminated on the grounds that it was sufficient to merely use the pronoun *you*, which might reflect a part of the meaning intended by the author of *The Queue*. The elimination of CRs from the ST reveals how *The Queue's* translator handled the cultural constraints of the ST.

### E. Synonymy Procedure

The resemblance of meaning between two identical or semi-identical words is referred to as synonymy. Various synonym translation procedures were explored in *The Queue*, in which the translator made adjustments related to synonymous words to be closer to the understanding of the target reader and the coherent narration of the story. The following example illustrates:

ملاً رأسها بكلام كثير وفتح أبوابا لم تكن تلتفت إليها في سابق حياتها. عزمتم بعد الزيارة التي سألت فيها دموعا ندما وخشوعا، على إداء الفروض والنوافل والالتزام بالمواعيت، وابتاعت طرحه بيضاء احتفظت بها لدى السيدة الكبيرة ام امانى، حتى لا تقوتها الصلاة وهي هناك (ص.29).

Her head filled with so many words, and a way out of this suffering seemed to open up before her. Tears of humble remorse flowed down her cheeks, and she swore she would uphold her religious duties and never miss a prayer. She even bought a white scarf to keep at Amani's mother's house so she would be sure to have one for praying there. (Abdel Aziz, 2016, p. 20)

The sentence above includes two occurrences of synonym procedures in which the translator replaces the first two different words *الفروض والنوافل* *alfurwwD wannawafil* with only *religious duties*. This replacement may apply to the first word *الفروض* and obliterate the word *النوافل*, which has another different meaning. This combination of two religious Islamic words refers to obligatory and non-obligatory activities and worship. *Nawafil* is different from *alfurūdh*, in which the latter is a requirement for every Muslim, whereas *Nawafil* is performed as an additional activity to please Allah the Almighty. The translator rendered both words as religious duties, thinking that both of them are synonyms for one word. Obligatory duties include praying five times per day, fasting during the Holy Month, pilgrimage, and Zakat, while no obligatory duties include donating money to the poor and offering additional prayers such as the *Duhaa* prayer. Therefore, there is an obvious difference between the two words. In such cases of synonyms, translators need to consult the whole context to render the exact meaning. *الفروض والنوافل* pose an obstacle to the translator, since such concepts are missing in the target language and culture due to ideological and religious differences. The second occurrence of synonym shift is obvious in the word *طرحة بيضاء*, which is rendered by the translator of *The Queue* into *a white scarf*. It seems that the translator does not adhere to a specific type of equivalent through the selection of one type of synonymous word; she sometimes translates the head cover *طرحة* as a veil and other times as a scarf. The translator made adjustments to the synonymous words to be closer to the target reader, in which easy-to-understand replacements function as evidence of the impact of the operational matricial norms suggested by Toury, in which the translator makes modifications to the ST to match the needed norms of the TL.

#### F. Explication Procedure

In *The Queue* novel, the translator utilizes explication, especially within cultural and theological contexts, to offer additional information to the target reader when needed. An exemplar of this practice, illustrating explication as an operational metrical norm, is found in the following sentence.

وقد قام على الفور بالتخلص من الحلوى، وإحراق غلافها مستغفرا ومتعوذاً وسط صيحات التكبير، والتنهائي، التي تلقاها لتحقيقه اول انتصار على صاحب المصنع (ص.143).

Pleading for God's forgiveness and protection, he immediately destroyed the candy and burned the wrapper, as people around him cried out in praise of God's greatness and commended his victory over the factory owner. (Abdel Aziz, 2016, p. 123)

The aforementioned extracts, which are taken from *The Queue*, refer to the elderly man in Gallabiyah, who stands in for the religious character in the story and appears to be submissive to both the ruler of the nation and the entire political system, both of which are criticized by the populace as being unfair and corrupting the entire nation. The two words *مستغفراً ومتعوذاً* refer to two religious phrases that most Muslims mention as daily routines, in which the former stands for *أعوذ بالله من الشيطان الرجيم* whereas the latter stands for *أستغفر الله*. Such religious cultural references constitute a problem for the translator, who is from a different English language and culture. Due to religious differences, the receiving language lacks this cultural reference, and the translator should decide whether to adapt the original phrases to make them more acceptable to the target audience. The literal translation of *أستغفر الله* is *I ask forgiveness of Allah*, and the phrase *أعوذ بالله من الشيطان الرجيم* can be literally translated as *I ask Allah to protect me from the accursed Satan*. The translator rendered the two expressions in one sentence as *pleading for God's forgiveness and protection*. However, this rendition may provide the receiving audience with a less religious connotation than the original text. These matricial operations offer a tangible example of the translation shifts that a translator may employ to adhere to the norms of English language.

#### G. Literal Translation Procedure

Literal translation is one of the translation shifts used frequently in *The Queue* to depict non-equivalent concepts in the realms of organization and religious statements. The example below elucidates the matricial operational translation norms governing the process of translating ACRs in *The Queue*. The translator implemented translation shifts to align with the readership's requirements.

ألقى عليها السلام كاملاً بصوته الرفيع. ثم عاد إلى مكانه بعد أن ألقى نظرة عابرة على يديها الاتنتين، وقد سعد بامتلائهما البيض، وبخلو أصابعها من أي مصاغ (ص.62).

He bade her the full, formal religious greeting with a reedy voice that was so incongruous with his sullen visage. He went back to his place in the queue but not before casting a fleeting glance at her hands; he was pleased with her tender skin and the absence of a ring. (Abdel Aziz, 2016, p. 50)

The preceding example, in which the Arabic Islamic formal manner of greeting others is completely rendered in the TT, is used as an example of applying a literal translation shift to translate ACRs. To maintain the cultural distinctiveness of the ST cultural reference, the translator used literal translation to convey the sociocultural meaning of *السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته* *assalamu alaikum warahmatu Allah wa barakatuh*, which derives from Islamic teachings and is the proper way to greet someone in Arabic-speaking communities. This way of greeting is so formal that some translators have used the word "hello" as a formal equivalent in the English language. Due to lexical and cultural differences between Arabic and English, such a type of Islamic greeting is missing in the target language. The alternative translation of the previous example is "hello", since that is the formal way of greeting others in English. However, the translator decided to use a literal translation because he attempted to preserve the originality of the Arabic expressions.

### H. Borrowing Procedure

The translator used borrowing as a translation procedure to handle cultural references that are missing in the TL, using it for the available equivalent in every language, which is the doorman. This is also because of cultural differences in which not all families have a doorman.

كان الرجل ذو الجلباب هو اول من احتقى بفتوى الشيخ الاعلى، احضر مكبرا للصوت، وخرج ليوقف بمحاذاة الطابور وبدا في قراءة البيان المطبوع الذي حمله في يده، واغلق تليفونه المحمول ووضع في جيب الصديرية الداخلي (ص.152).

The man in the galabeya was the first to embrace the High Sheikh's fatwa: he took a microphone, stood alongside the queue, and read the statement aloud from a copy in his hand. He'd turned off his phone and placed it in his inner breast pocket so it wouldn't attract attention. (Abdel Aziz, 2016, p. 132)

The *Queue's* translator followed matricial operational translation norms to make it easy and natural for the target readers to understand the intended meaning of the ST. Two CRs were borrowed in the TT to appear as the *galabeya and High Sheikh's fatwa*. The word *galabeya* refers to one type of dressing for men in Arabic countries in general and in Egypt in particular. In other Arabic countries, it is called a *thoub*. The translator kept this type of clothing untranslated but transcribed and borrowed it into English without any additional details that define what a *galabeya* is; this is left to the intuition and understanding of the reader. The second borrowed CR is the *High Sheikh's fatwa*, which includes two religious expressions. The first is *sheikh*, which in this context refers to a religious figure. The word "sheikh" has multiple meanings in Arabic, which causes confusion for translators. The term can refer to a tribal head, a religious figure, a renowned individual, or even a layperson in comedic settings. Another religiously borrowed word is *fatwa*, which is a decree or religious law and regulation issued by a group of highly religious individuals. Some sections of the sentence were translated literally for the intended reader, such as the phrase **his inner breast pocket**, which may appear peculiar to the readership since the word *Sayydaryah* ("bra" in English) is used only for women. This type of dress refers to a kind of clothing used by old men worn under *galabyeya*, or *thoub*, which has an inner pocket to hold money and personal documents.

### I. Modulation Procedure

The Queue translator employs modulation, seen throughout the target text (TT). This technique is apt when idiomatic or colloquial terms in the original lose their intended meaning despite a grammatically accurate translation. Modulation takes two forms: mandatory modulation preserves the ST's original meaning, while free modulation uses TL expressions for stylistic or cultural reasons.

لم تصدق امني ما ذكرته ووصفتها بانها حرياء، بينما اصّر ناجي على اتهام طارق بالكذب. (ص.148).

Ammani didn't believe the head nurse, and called her a snake, while Nagy accused Tarek of lying. (Abdel Aziz, 2016, p. 127)

In this example, the translator of *The Queue* novel employs modulation to adapt the Arabic cultural reference "حرياء" (*hirbbaa*) to the target language and culture. The original term implies cunningness and deceitfulness, akin to a chameleon blending into its surroundings to deceive prey. However, the translator renders it as "snake" (أفعى) in the target text, aligning with the English phrase "a snake in the grass" commonly used to describe deceitful individuals. This modulation prioritizes the acceptability and effectiveness of the translation for the target audience, preserving the original meaning and aligning with Toury's concept of adequacy and acceptability.

### J. Adaptation Procedure

In *The Queue's* source and target texts, the translator used cultural substitutions or domesticated expressions for Arabic cultural references (ACRs). According to Munday (2016, p. 92), this reflects cases where ACRs lack direct TL equivalents. Translators thus adapt by integrating domesticated terms, enhancing the translated text's resonance and accessibility. Translators in these situations are expected to give the cultural differences top importance to avoid being accused of prejudice towards the cultural norms of the receiving language. However, some expressions are not available or have no equivalents in the TL, in which domestication or adaptation is acceptable as long as the original meaning is explained in the footnotes. A translated text that uses adaptation as a translation approach, according to Baker (1998, p. 7), cannot be regarded as a translation result and cannot accurately represent the originality of the ST. In this situation, adaptation is noted as a matter of revising the original content. As a result, the differences between translation and adaptation are clear. The following example illustrates the occurrence of an adaptation shift.

فتش في جيبه عن شريط المسكن الذي يحمله دائما فعثر عليه خاويا. تطوع الشاب الوسيم الذي كان يسرق السمع من خلف كتف ناجي بقرصين من دواء ذائع الانتشار (ص.22).

He searched in his pocket for a strip of the painkillers he always carried with him but found just an empty packet. A handsome young man in front of them had been eavesdropping over Nagy's shoulder, and he offered a couple of pills of an over-the-counter medicine, the kind for headaches. (Abdel Aziz, 2016, p. 15)

The ST of the cultural reference stated in the previous example contains a phrase that represents a medication that people in the ST use. It alludes to one of the most popular headache medications. *The Queue's* translator provides an expression in the TT in which the target reader easily understands the cultural connotations of the cultural references. The Arabic expression **ذائع الانتشار** is replaced by the TL expression "pills of an over-the-counter medicine", which is conveyed to the intended reader as if it were spoken in English rather than Arabic. For the TL reader's ease of comprehension, the translator offers modified or localized CRs in English. The phrase "over the counter" refers to the

idea of obtaining a medication quickly and at a low cost. According to Newmark (1988), adaptation is a translation approach that is referred to as “naturalization”. The translator adopted this translation shift by adjusting the expression to appear natural to the target readers by respecting the acceptability norms of the translated CRs.

## VI. CONCLUSION

According to the data provided, the translator of *The Queue* encountered a number of difficulties when conveying Arabic cultural references in English, some of which required indirect translation. The textual and cultural norms of the target language and culture appear to have a considerable influence on all sorts of translation procedures explored in this study. In fact, the norms of acceptability played a significant role in determining TT equivalents relating to ST cultural references. Based on the findings of this study, it is evident that both *The Queue* and its English translation contain cultural references, and the translation seems to align with the cultural expectations of the target audience. The presence of cultural differences requires the translator to employ various translation strategies to meet the readers' expectations. This investigation highlights the influence of norms throughout the translation process, particularly focusing on translation shifts. The study emphasizes the diverse roles of cultural references in *The Queue*, serving as significant elements that reflect specific Egyptian political, social, and cultural contexts. The translator utilizes a range of techniques, such as modulation, synonymy, literal translation, borrowing, adaptation, and deletion shifts, to convey these cultural references into English. Notably, modulation emerges as the primary strategy employed to translate Arabic cultural elements into English, indicating the translator's thoughtful consideration of the target language and audience. The translator's choice to omit certain Arabic cultural references aids in aligning the source material with the norms of the target language, thereby enhancing acceptability. This analysis underscores the intentional reduction of cultural references in the English translation to meet acceptability criteria, thus facilitating the creation of a target text that respects both cultural and linguistic norms. Such an approach has the potential to improve the quality of literary translation, whether conducted by humans or machines, from Arabic into English. Given the nature of this study as a case study, it is recommended that further research be conducted on other novels to gain a broader understanding of the translatability of cultural elements.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Abdel Aziz, B. (2016). *The Queue* (E. Jaquette, Trans.). London: Melville.
- [2] Al-Adwan, A., & Abuorabaledwan, M. (2019). Handling Semantic Repetition when Translating Arabic Short Stories: The Case of Excerpt from the Book of the Dead. *3L, Language, Linguistics, Literature*, 25(2), 49 – 60.
- [3] Aixelá J. F. (1996). Culture-specific items in translation. *Translation, power, subversion*, 8, 52-78.
- [4] Alharahsheh, A. M. A., Moindjie, M. A., & Lin, D. T. A. (2023). Cultural References Translation Norms in *The Queue* from Arabic to English. *e-BANGLI*, 20(3), 151-165.
- [5] Al-Khafaji, R. (2006). In search of translational norms: The case of shifts in lexical repetition in Arabic? English translations. *Babel*, 52(1), 39-65.
- [6] Alkharashi, N. (2016). Modern Arabic Fiction in English: The Yacoubian Building; a Case in Point. *Arabic Literature in Translation: Politics and Poetics*, ed. by Tarek Shamma. *Salamanca: CLINA*, 43-59.
- [7] Alwazna, R. Y. (2014). The cultural aspect of translation: The workability of cultural translation strategies in translating culture-specific texts. *Life Science Journal*, 11(11), 182-188.
- [8] Asghar, J. (2015). The Power Politics of Translation: A Study of Translation-Ideology Nexus. *NUML Journal of Critical Inquiry*, 13(2), 32-49.
- [9] Bawardi, B. (2016). *The Lebanese-Phoenician nationalist movement: literature, language and identity*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- [10] Catford, J.C. (1965). *A linguistic theory of translation: An essay in Applied Linguistics*. London, England: Oxford University Press.
- [11] Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. (3rd Ed.). Sage.
- [12] D'áz-Cintas, J., Orero, P., & Remael, A. (Eds.). (2007). *Media for all: subtitling for the deaf, audio description, and sign language* (Vol. 30). Rodopi.
- [13] Faiq, S. (2016). 1. Through the Master Discourse of Translation. In *New Insights into Arabic Translation and Interpreting* (pp. 7-21). Multilingual Matters.
- [14] Fouad, A., & Sadkhan, R. (2019). *Translation lexical shifts in the swing with reference to culture-specific items*. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/335665784> Translation Lexical Shifts in The Swing with Reference to Culture-Specific Items.
- [15] Hanna, S. F. (2014). Remapping habitus: norms, habitus and the theorization of agency in translation practice and translation scholarship. In *Remapping habitus in translation studies* (pp. 57-71). Brill Rodopi.
- [16] Hatim, B. A. (2014). *Teaching and researching translation*. Routledge.
- [17] Holmes, J. S. (1988). The name and nature of translation studies. Translated. *Papers on literary translation and translation studies*, 2, 67-80.
- [18] Leppihalme, R. (2011). Realia. In *Handbook of translation studies* (Vol. 2, pp. 126–130). John Benjamins.
- [19] Mandal, P. C. (2018). Translation in qualitative studies: Evaluation criteria and equivalence. *The Qualitative Report*, 23(10), 2529-2537.
- [20] Munday, J. (2016). *Introducing translation studies: Theories and applications* Routledge.
- [21] Newmark, P. (1988). *A textbook of translation* (Vol. 66). Prentice Hall.



- [22] Olk, H. M. (2013). Cultural references in translation: a framework for quantitative translation analysis. *Perspectives*, 21(3), 344-357.
- [23] Pedersen, J. (2007). Cultural interchangeability: The effects of substituting cultural references in subtitling. *Perspectives*, 15(1), 30–48. <https://doi.org/10.2167/pst003.0>
- [24] Qutait, T. (2020). The imaginary futures of Arabic: Egyptian dystopias in translation. *Textual Practice*, 34(5), 743-759.
- [25] Ranzato, I. (2015). *Translating culture specific references on television: The case of dubbing*. Routledge.
- [26] Sch äffner, C. (2010). Norms of translation. *Handbook of translation studies*, 1, 235-244.
- [27] Snell-Hornby, M. (2007). Theatre and opera translation. In *A Companion to Translation Studies* (pp. 106-119). Multilingual Matters.
- [28] Toury, G. (2012). *Descriptive translation studies-and beyond*. Revised version. *Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company*.
- [29] Venuti, L. (2017). *The translator's invisibility: A history of translation*. Routledge.
- [30] Vinay, J.P., & Darbelnet, J. (1995). *Comparative stylistics of French and English*. A methodology for translation (J. C. Sager & M. J. Hamel, Trans.). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

**Abdelraouf Meqbel Alharahsheh** specializes in English language and translation. He works as a lecturer in Sattam university in KSA. He is keen on Arabic –English translation research, literary translation, translation norms, and discourse analysis.

**Mohamed Abdou Moindjie** is a polyglot. He is currently a Senior Lecturer in Translation Studies and English Language at the School of Languages, Literacies and Translation, University of Science, Malaysia (USM). He was Senior Lecturer (*Maître de Conférences*) at the Department of Foreign Languages, *Université des Comores*; he was also Chairperson of the Department of Foreign Languages, *Université des Comores* from 2016 to 2018.

**Debita Tan Ai Lin** serves as Senior Lecturer at the School of Languages, Literacies and Translation, Universiti Sains Malaysia. She is keen on interdisciplinary research and her current areas of interest include language and media/political studies, translation difficulties, and the relationship between psychology and linguistic nuances. For more information, <https://ppblt.usm.my/index.php/lecturer-profile/163-debita-tan-dr>