

Congruities and incongruities in Arabic literary translation

A contrastive linguistic analysis of “The Prophet” by Khalil Gibran

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Three Arabic translations of Khalil Gibran’s “The Prophet” are chosen among other available Arabic translations. Fifteen translated texts from the book were included for the analysis in this study. The three translations are by Basheer (1934), Abdelahad (1993), and Okasha (2008). The study investigates and analyzes different linguistic levels: discourse, stylistic, semantic, syntactic, and lexical among others as well as different choices made by the translators in rendering the same source text (ST) elements. The study found out that adopting different translation strategies by the translators led to different versions of the same ST. These strategies are based on the aesthetic ornamentation approach by As-Safi (2016). They include idiomaticity, stylistic considerations, cultural orientation, semantic/lexical accuracy, and syntactic accuracy.

Keywords: semantic congruities, idiomaticity, equivalence, ornamentation, aesthetics

1. Introduction

Even a competent translator is still expected to be creative to convey the spirit of a text aside from linguistic or structural complications. According to Newmark (1988: 94) a translator must empathize with the source text author, “the more you feel with the author, the better you are likely to translate; if you dislike a literary text, better not translate it at all.” Therefore, it seems that empathy in translation coupled with a keen interest in the text and its producer, is one of the major conditions for a high-quality translation.

The translation of literary texts reflects the individual experiences, emotions, perceptions, and thoughts of the text writer which are passed on to the target audience through the translator’s interpretation. In this connection, Shiyab and Lynch (2006: 265) accurately described the task of literary translation by saying that “translation should aim to reflect the same feelings, thoughts and style that are manifested in the original text. If the translation is done based on these criteria, then it is expected that the translated text will be moving and alive in ways very close to or the same as the original.”

The present research study singled out a widely known book, *The Prophet* by Gibran Khalil Gibran, for investigation and analysis as far as translation quality assessment is concerned. It is a contrastive text analysis between the English source text and its translation in Arabic. The contrastive nature of the study intends to detect both syntactic and semantic congruities and incongruities between the source text (ST) and the target text (TT).

The Prophet has been translated into over forty different languages including Arabic. Gibran is an American Lebanese poet, writer, and painter. He was born in 1883 and when he was 10 years old, he migrated to the USA with his family. He died in 1931 and was buried in Besharre, which is a small Christian Maronite town in North Lebanon. *The Prophet* is his most famous book, a masterpiece written in English and published in 1923. The book includes 26 essays in prose poetry or poetic prose, a kind of creative writing format that combines elements of some poetic forms such as metaphor and figures of speech but does not have all features of poetry such as metrical structure or rhyme structure. Therefore, poetic prose may blend features of prose and poetry together. Other features of poetic prose may contain hyperbole to create some poetic images. Gibran made use also of other features such as alliteration by repeating consonant sounds. He also made use of assonance by repeating vowel sounds. These essays introduce a synopsis of his experience and philosophy about love, marriage, children, eating, drinking, work, joy and sorrow, crime and punishment, laws, freedom, reason, and passion, etc. In his point of view, this book would show people the right way to God and peace exactly as the Bible does. Boushaba (1988: 62) says that Al-Mustafa (a transliterated form of the Arabic male’s proper name meaning “the one chosen by God,” one among the many names for the Prophet Mohammad) is referred to as “a prophet of love who urges people of Orphalese, to grow out of their individual and limited selves and identify themselves with greater and universal self which is love.” In fact, this city has no real existence; however, its name might be constructed on the name of the ancient city of Orpha, a source of spiritual inspiration and different religions. This means that Gibran views God as a bond of love which ties all types of people regardless of their religions.

In fact, many people and critics have considered *The Prophet* as the new Bible of the age, as it has been recited at countless weddings and funerals, as well as in books and articles, and it is undoubtedly one of the best-selling books in our modern time as it is a very widely read book, and over 100 million copies have been sold since its original publication in 1923 (Acocella 2008).

However, the Arabic renditions of this text may not have produced a translation which reflects the contents of the source text adequately (Bushrui 2000, 2013), and consequently some incongruities that affect the intended style and meaning have resulted between the source and the target texts. Congruities and incongruities in literary translation are about how translators either succeed or fail in

conveying the idiosyncratic style of literary works (such as most literary works by Gibran) to the target language. Various linguistic and stylistic features are usually considered in assessing translation quality. They include the semantic and lexical aspects of a text as well as deviation, parallelism, foregrounding or fronting, discourse structure, deixis, viewpoint, speech and thought representation, among others.

The current study derives its significance from the fact that English and Arabic are culturally and linguistically remote languages. They do not share a common cultural heritage, nor do they have exact correspondences, grammar, or rhetoric. The challenges and the problems facing translators of *The Prophet* are, therefore, abundant. This is due to the observation that the source text writer, Gibran, employed a “prose poetry” type of a literary genre, or simply a poetry written in prose rather than verse. This indeed poses tremendous difficulties even for competent translators as they will be confronted with a heavy use of figurative language. In this connection, Bushrui (2000: 55) rightly said that most of those who wrote about Gibran never read his works in English, and therefore, any translation of his books cannot be a substitute for the original ones written in English. The study, therefore, is not only concerned with the conceptual vocabulary used in the English text and its target translated text but it is also about the cultural work of translation. That is, to look more deeply at the interaction between culture ideology, and how successful different translators were able to transfer the cultural aspects of the source text into Arabic, for example, how the transfer of the culturally embedded metaphors used in the English text were translated? How the function of the images used by Gibran in English was conveyed in Arabic? Or, how culture impacts and constrains translation.

It is hoped, therefore, that this contrastive study will show whether there was a gap between what is in the source text and what is transmitted by the translators. That is, were there ideological shifts from the original book during the process of translation? It is also hoped that the present study will fill a gap in contrastive textology research which aims at identifying strategies, problems and challenges facing translators in literary translation. Such incongruities may result from assigning different interpretations of the text by different translators.

2. Review of literature

Many scholars have focused on the faithfulness of translation and how to deliver the source text (ST) to the target text (TT). Newmark (1988: 46) defines faithful translations as “attempts to reproduce the precise context meaning of the original within the constraints of the TL grammatical structures.” This definition is, in fact, in agreement with Nida’s definition of formal equivalence (1964: 159) described as “focusing attention on the message itself in both form and content. In such a translation, one is

concerned with such correspondences as poetry to poetry, sentence to sentence, and concept to concept.”

Viewed from this formal orientation, one is concerned that the message in the receptor language should match as closely as possible the different elements in the ST. This means that, for example, the message in the receptor’s culture is constantly compared with the source culture to determine the standards of accuracy and correctness. The above quotations by Nida and Newmark, two leading figures among translation theorists, reflect exactly what can be expected in translation on the part of highly qualified translators. However, other scholars employ different labels to define faithfulness in translation. Nord (2005: 25), for example, states that “the concept of faithfulness or ‘fidelity’ can be equated with ‘equivalence.’” As a matter of fact, the concept of “equivalence” is a controversial issue in translation studies, and it is one of the basic theoretical issues in the present study. In general, equivalence means producing the greatest possible correspondence between the source and the target texts. Steiner (1998: 460) thinks that equivalence is sought by means of substitution of “equal” verbal signs for those in the original. Baker (2005: 77) also maintains that equivalence is a central concept in translation theory. Moreover, she devoted in her well-known book, *In Other Words* (2005) six chapters to six types of equivalence, namely, equivalence at the word level, above the word level, grammatical equivalence, textual equivalence focusing on thematic and information structure, textual equivalence focusing on cohesion and finally, pragmatic equivalence dealing with coherence implicature.

3. Study objectives

To our knowledge, nothing much has been published on translation quality assessment regarding *The Prophet*. Most of the studies were comparative analyses in the field of literature or criticism. However, there is a doctoral dissertation by Boushaba (1988) analyzing some problems of literary translation about *The Prophet*. It deals with the translation of poetry from English into Arabic. Findings of this study reported that the subjectivity in the interpretation of the meaning of a source language literary text is the main obstacle in translation.

Another recent study about Gibran's *The Prophet* was a dissertation by Al-Khazraji (2014) about critical linguistic reading into the appeal of this book. Although the study did not assess translation quality, it focused mainly on analyzing the text by employing a critical discourse analysis (CDA) at a macro and micro levels in order to identify aspects of the book that contribute to its appeal. The findings of the study showed that the appeal of the universal themes and messages is attributed to Gibran’s ideology and thoughts such as hope and utopian ideals. Another important finding which is relevant to the present study is that the volume of metaphorical expressions in the entire book stands

at 83.4%. The researcher added that the aesthetic function of metaphors was to create meaning rather than to add meaning.

The objective of our study is to assess the quality of three different types of translations into Arabic of Gibran's book, *The Prophet*, written originally in English. Basheer (1934) is the first and the oldest Arabic translation at an epoch where translation tools and strategies were at their inception; it will be contrasted with two other translations by Abdelahad (1993), and Okasha (2008). More about the translators will be discussed towards the end of the article. The researchers will, therefore, explore some stylistic and semantic congruities and incongruities in translation, attempt to detect major sources of linguistic and cultural problems or difficulties encountered by the three translators, and finally, successful, and unsuccessful strategies employed by translators will be classified in terms of achievement and reduction strategies.

Fifteen texts from the book were selected for analysis in this study. Such texts encompass subtexts representing the following six major superordinate domains in the book (Al-Khazrajī 2014):

1. social activities such as work, buying and selling;
2. personal needs such as eating and drinking, and clothes;
3. family life such as marriage, children, and houses;
4. personal experiences such as love and death;
5. social institutions such as law, crime and punishment;
6. abstract concepts such as beauty and friendship.

The texts are analyzed at different linguistic levels: discourse, stylistic, syntactic, semantic and lexical among others. This analysis is meant to present a thorough comprehension of the original text in order to assess the oldest translation of the original book and to compare it with the new translations. For the sake of the analysis process, each selection is analyzed separately according to the aesthetic ornamentation approach for translating a literary work devised by As-Safi (2011, 2016). In this approach five criteria are seen to provide a comprehensive indication of literary translation strategies. They include idiomaticity, rhetorical transference, stylistic considerations, cultural orientation, and semantic accuracy. In our analysis, two types of modification are made, firstly, omitting rhetorical transference, and secondly adding lexicology by combining it to semantic accuracy in one strategy, i.e., semantic/lexical accuracy. Such modifications are relevant to our analysis as they pertain to the notions of gain and loss found in the English source text. Below is a description summarizing the strategies based on the modified ornamentation approach by As-Safi.

4. The modified ornamentation approach translation strategies

The following is a brief description of the modified approach strategies proposed by As-Safi (2016):

1. *Idiomacity*: Idiomacity is mainly indicative of idiomatic and proverbial expressions as both entail an inherently creative process of manipulation within the constructions of the TL reservoir of equivalent idiomatic expressions and proverbs. Failure to achieve this may result in literal translation.
2. *Stylistic considerations*: Style is a broad term that could stand for various concepts. However, in this study, it stands for aesthetic elements such as collocations, brevity, diction, redundancy, etc. It will also include some discussion about the structure of a paragraph or its physical appearance as well as any other important physical features, i.e., punctuation, underlining, etc.
3. *Cultural orientation*: The two notions of domestication and foreignization are important here. Domestication may contribute greatly to the naturalness and accessibility of the text. Foreignization, on the other hand, maintains the peculiar flavor of the original and contributes to the effective nature of literature.
4. *Semantic and lexical accuracy*: This strategy refers to the aesthetic framing of meaning. The choice of a proper lexical item is combined here with semantic accuracy (our addition in this approach) to account for unmotivated lexical shifts. This fourth strategy could, moreover, play a major role in shaping the figurative language, and in detecting any unmotivated semantic change.
5. *Syntactic Accuracy*: It refers mainly to syntactic distinctive features found in Gibran's *The Prophet*. An example of such features is pairing of opposites or dialectic antithesis in one synthesis as in *ascending and descending*. Other prominent syntactic features will be pointed out for comparison and contrast in translation (see also Al-Najjar 2007).

5. Data analysis

The following is a comparison and a contrast between various English texts taken from Gibran's *The Prophet* and their Arabic renditions by Basheer (1934), the oldest translation, as well as two others by Abdelahad (1993) and Okasha (2008), respectively. The three renditions will then be evaluated in terms of the five aesthetic strategies as criteria on which the analysis is based to account for congruities and incongruities in translation.

5.1. Love

Then said Almitra, speak to us of love (Gibran 1996: 11)

A. حينئذ قالت المطرة: هات لنا خطبة في المحبة (Basheer 1934: 60)

hīnaʔiḏin qālati l-miṭratu hāti lanā xuṭbatan fi l-maḥabbati

B. No rendition of this line (Abdelahad 1993: 22)

C. وانبرت (المطرا) وقالت له: حدثنا عن الحب (Okasha 2008: 10)

wa-nbarat (il-miṭrā) wa-qālat la-hū ḥaddiṭnā ʔan il-ḥubbi

The above line is the first sentence used in the love section. Gibran used "Almitra," the name given to a woman who was a seeress, meaning in Arabic (*al-ʔarrāfa*), which might be a better translation for readers as it gives the meaning of a woman who is knowledgeable. Both translators, Basheer and Okasha kept the name "Almitra" as it is, opting for a foreignization, or an aesthetic cultural orientation strategy, while Abdelahad avoided translating the whole line. However, it will be more important to look at other words in this text. If we look at the translation of the sentence "Speak to us of love," we can notice two observations: Firstly, Okasha gave a better rendition of the word "love" as *al-ḥubb*, which is loaded with emotiveness, and "speak to us" as *ḥaddiṭnā* instead of translating them, as Basheer did by *al-maḥabba* (more general and less emotive), and *hāti la-nā xuṭba*. The context of this section of the book, to our mind, requires using the rendition of "love" given by Okasha keeping in mind that Gibran referred to "love" with the pronoun "he," as required in the source text, thus personifying it. Secondly, Okasha's rendition in Arabic of "Speak to us of love" sounds more natural. That is, it is more natural than saying *hāti la-nā xuṭbatan* because it is not a "speech." Therefore, a more appropriate lexical strategy was employed by Okasha in translating the text above.

5.2. Marriage

Give your hearts, but not into each other's keeping (Gibran 1996: 15)

A. ليعط كل منكم قلبه لرفيقه ولكن حذار ان يكون هذا العطاء لاجل الحفظ (Basheer 1934: 70)

li-juṭi kullun min-kum qalbahu li-rafiqi-hi wa-lākin ḥaḏāri ʔan jakūna haḏā l-ʔaṭāʔu li-ʔazli l-ḥifzi

B. قدموا قلوبكم هدية لمن تحبون من غير ما إستنتار. (Abdelahad 1993: 27)

qaddimū qulūba-kumu hadījatan li-man tuḥibbūna min ḡajri mā ḡistḡitārin

C. وليهب كل منكم قلبه لعشيرته لكن دون أن يستأثر به. (Okashā 2008: 15)

wa-lijahib kullun min-kumu qalba-hū li-ḡaḡiri-hi lākin dūna ḡan jastḡatira bi-hi

In this text, the major problem is in translating into Arabic the expression “each other's keeping.” It is noticed that Basheer in A. above failed to give an accurate translation as he resorted to a literal translation strategy for that expression, i.e., *li- ḡazli l-ḡifzi*. On the other hand, Abdelahad and Okasha were able to preserve the beauty of the expression by using a more accurate and an aesthetic semantic strategy by the Arabic verb *jastḡatira* and the noun *ḡistḡitārin*, meaning “possessiveness.” Comparing both renditions, one may find Okasha’s translation to be even most appealing in this text.

5.3. Children

You may house their bodies but not their souls. (Gibran 1996: 17)

A. وفي طاقتكم أن تصنعوا المساكن لأجسادهم ولكن نفوسهم لا تقطن في مساكنكم.

(Basheer 1934: 74)

wa-fi ḡaḡati-kumu ḡan tasnaḡū il-masākina li-ḡazsādi-humu wa-lakinna nufūsa-humu lā taḡtunu fi masākini-kumu

B. قد تؤون أجسادهم لا أرواحهم. (Abdelahad 1993: 29)

qad tuḡwūna ḡazsāda-humu lā ḡarwāḡa-humu

C. ولقد تؤون أجسادهم لا أرواحهم. (Okashā 2008: 16)

wa-laqad tuḡwūna ḡazsāda-humu lā ḡarwāḡa-humu

It will be noticed that the Arabic rendition of the above sentence (A) regarding the concept of children in Gibran’s *The Prophet* is quite confusing, redundant, and unnecessarily long. Even though repetition in Arabic can be normal or functional, the Arabic translation by Basheer is, unfortunately inaccurate. Moreover, Basheer resorts again to a literal translation strategy, which is not suitable here at all. On the other hand, both Abdelahad and Okasha resorted to a better style requiring brevity and vividness. Both employed also a better diction choice and an appropriate semantic strategy by using the Arabic

verb *tuʔwūna* meaning “housing their bodies” instead of *tasʿnaʔū al-masākina*, therefore translating this sentence requires a proper style and an accurate lexical choice.

5.4. Giving

1. These are the believers in life and the bounty of life, and their coffer is never empty. (Gibran 1996: 20)

A. Basheer 1934: 78) ومنهم (الناس) المؤمنون بالحياة وبسقاء الحياة، هؤلاء لا تفرغ صناديقهم وخزائنهم ممتلئة أبدا.

wa-min-humu (an-nās) il-muʔminūna bi-l-ḥajāti wa-bi-saxāʔi l-ḥajāti haʔūlāʔi lā tafrayū sʿanādīqu-humu wa-xazāʔinu-humu mumtaliʔatun ʔabadan

B. Abdelahad 1993: 32) ومنكم من يعطي كل ما يملك لايمانه العميق بالحياة وبعطاياها، فلن يفرغ وفاضه.

wa-min-kumu man juʔṭī kulla mā jamliku li-ʔimāni-hi l-ʔamīqi bi-l-ḥajāti wa-bi-ʔaṭajā-hā fa-lan jafrayū wifādʿuhu

C. Okashā 2008: 19) أولئك هم المؤمنون بالحياة وما فيها من خير، فلا تفرغ خزائنهم أبدا.

ʔūlāʔika humu il-muʔminūna bi-l-ḥajāti wa-mā fī-hā min xajrin fa-lā tafrayū xazāʔinu-humu ʔabadan

The main problem in the text above is deictic: the excerpt is an example of a reference change in the target language. The author restricts “those who have little and give it all” solely to the “believers in life...” by employing the deictic expression “these”; however, Basheer, in his rendition of the excerpt, added yet another category of people thus ignoring the anaphoric “these,” i.e., *wa-min-humu al-muʔminūna b-il-ḥajāti* “and there are some who believe in life.” By contrast, Abdelahad and Okasha provided a more accurate rendition related to the English text. Moreover, Basheer opted for redundancy in the Arabic translation when he repeated the word *al-ḥajāt* “life” twice. He also gave two renditions for the word “coffer,” *xazāʔin* and *sʿanādīq*, thus offering a superfluous information. It is noticed that Abdelahad used an elegant word instead of “coffer” when he was the only one among the three translators to render it as *wifādʿahu*, a lexical item that reflects a metaphoric beauty indeed. He manipulated the Arabic idiom *xālī ʔil-wifādʿ* “empty handed.” Finally, in the text above, employing the two proper strategies of stylistic and semantic/lexical accuracy is needed to get a good translation.

2. You often say, “I would give, but only to the deserving” (Gibran 1996: 21).

A. وقد طالما سمعتك تقول متبجحا: "إنني أحب أن أعطي، ولكن المستحقين فقط." (Basheer 1934: 80)

wa-qad ṭalamā samiʿtuka taqūlu mutabazzīḥan ʔinnanī ʔuḥibbu ʔan ʔuʿṭīa wa-lākin l-mustahiqqīna faqaṭ

B. ومنكم من يقول: "إننا نعطي حصرا من فعلا يستحق." (Abdelahad 1993: 34)

wa-min-kumu man jaqūlu ʔinnanā nuʿṭī ḥasʿran man fiʿlan jastahiqqu

C. ما أكثر ما تقول: "لتصبو نفسي إلى العطاء، ولكن لا أعطي إلا من يستحق." (Okashā 2008: 20)

mā ʔakṭara mā taqūlu la-tasʿbū nafsī ʔilā l-ʔaṭāʔi wa-lakin lā ʔuʿṭī ʔillā man jastahiqqu

In text (A) above, there is an unmotivated addition at the start of the text in translating the sentence, “you often say.” Basheer rendered this initial part in Arabic by attaching the adverb *mutabazzīḥan* “arrogantly” to *taqūlu* “you say.” In fact, he seems to have added unnecessarily a negative or an aggressive tone to the TT, which is not really expressed in the ST. This added meaning is against what Gibran has emphasized throughout his book as he meant to give a message of peace by using an inspiring and a peaceful tone. Abdelahad and Okasha, on the other hand, managed to translate this part of the text more accurately and without any addition that might create a negative emotive translation which may distort the meaning of the text. This is done through employing a strategy of semantic accuracy.

5.5. Eating and drinking

And the buds of your tomorrow shall blossom in my heart (Gibran 1996: 24).

A. والبراعم التي ستخرج منها في الغد ستزهر في قلبي (Basheer 1934: 85)

wa-l-baraʿimu l-latī sataxruzu min-hā fī l-yadi satuzhiru fī qalb-ī

B. وتزهر براعمك في الغد في قلوبنا (Abdelahad 1993: 37)

wa-tuzhiru baraʿimu-ka fī l-yadi fī qulūbi-nā

C. وتزهر براعم غدك في قلبي (Okasha 2008: 23)

wa-tuzhiru baraʿimu yadi-ka fī qalb-ī

The text above is addressed to an apple after it is eaten and what can be said to it such as “Your seeds shall live in my body” and “the buds of your tomorrow...” Although this text is short, both Basheer and Abdelahad provided a type of translation that lacks the aesthetic value of the meaning. Gibran used a metaphor, “the buds of your tomorrow,” but in A and B, the translation ignored the beauty of this part when Basheer rendered it as “any tomorrow” in Arabic when he said *fi-l-yadi* rather than “your tomorrow.” The same mistranslation of this expression was also provided by Abdelahad, thus missing the beauty of the metaphor. Therefore, the major serious problem in the text above is in mistranslating an important metaphor. Okasha in (C) managed again to provide a better translation in a short way rather than providing a lengthy and literal translation as in Basher's rendition. Although Abdelahad provided a short translation, he too missed giving a suitable metaphor translation. Okasha's translation is, for that reason more accurate semantically.

5.6. Work

You have been told also that life is darkness, and in your weariness, you echo what was said by the weary (Gibran 1996: 26).

A. فرحتم في عهد مشقتكم ترددون ما قاله قبلكم جدودكم المز عجون. (Basheer 1934: 89)

faruhtumu fi ṣahdi maṣaqqati-kumu turaddidūna mā qālahu qabla-kumu zudūdu-kumu il-muzṣizūna

B. فرحتم ترددون هذا القول عبر ضناكم وما يردده الكاحون. (Abdelahad 1993: 41)

Faruhtumu turaddidūna haḏā al-qawla ṣabra dʿanā-kumu wa-mā juraddiduhu il-kadihūna

C.حتى اصبحتم ترددون من فرط الانهاك ما يقوله المنهكون. (Okashā 2008: 26)

ḥattā ʿasʿbahtumu turaddidūna min farṭi l-ʿinhāki mā jaqūluhu il-munhakūna

In rendering the text above, Basheer made some unmotivated changes that negatively affected its meaning. He added the Arabic expression *zudūdu-kumu il-muzṣizūna* “your troublesome ancestors,” which is not found in the original text. The result of this addition gives a negative impression about the ancestors, something which is not expressed. Another added expression in Arabic unneeded in English is *ṣahdi maṣaqqati-kumu*. It is, in fact, a mistranslation which does not reflect the intended

meaning. The meaning of the whole text is, therefore, distorted. Abdelahd's rendition is clearer than that of Basheer. However, Okasha managed to provide a much better translation when he accurately used *ʔal-ʔinhāk*, meaning “exhaustion,” for “weariness.” His rendition of the text, in fact, reflects the meaning clearly.

5.7. Clothes

Your clothes conceal much of your beauty, yet they hide not the unbeautiful (Gibran 1996: 35).

A. إن ثيابكم تحجب الكثير من جمالكم، ولكنها لا تستر غير الجميل (Basheer 1934: 104)

ʔinna ʔjāba-kumu taḥzibu l-kaṭīra min zamāli-kumu wa-lakinna-hā lā tasturu ʔajra l-zamīli

B. إن ثيابكم تخفي الكثير من جمالكم ولكنها لا تحجب القبيح فيكم (Abdelahad 1993: 53)

ʔinna ʔjāba-kumu tuxfī l-kaṭīra min zamāli-kumu wa-lakinna-hā lā taḥzibu l-qabiḥa fī-kumu

C. إن ثيابكم تحجب من جمالكم الكثير، لكنها لا تخفي ما قبح فيكم (Okashā 2008: 36)

ʔinna ʔjāba-kumu taḥzibu min zamāli-kumu l-kaṭīra lakinna-hā lā tuxfī mā qabuḥa fī-kumu

In the text above, Basheer failed in translating the last part, i.e., “they hide not the unbeautiful,” into Arabic as *lā tasturu ʔajra l-zamīli* even though Arabic is rich with various words that can fit in this context. His literal translation of this part deprived its intended beauty as well as the stylistic eloquence. On the other hand, both Abdelahad and Okasha managed to provide what is needed here. They resorted to a much better semantic accuracy strategy when they used the Arabic expression: *lā tuxfī* or *lā taḥzibu mā qabuḥa fī-kumu*. Their aesthetic translation contributed a lot in finding the proper lexical item needed, i.e., *al-qubḥ* “the ugliness” instead of *ʔajra l-zamīli* for the English “the unbeautiful.” Moreover, the Arabic exceptive particle *ʔajra* is misleading as it is polysemic, it may mean “except” inducing the opposite meaning: “It conceals only the beautiful.”

5.8. Houses

You shall not dwell in tombs made by the dead for the living (Gibran 1996: 33).

A. أجل، ولن تقطنوا في القبور التي بناها أبناء الموت لأبناء الحياة (Basheer 1934: 103)

?azal wa-lan taqtunū fi l-qubūri l-latī banāhā ?abnā?u l-mawti li-?abnā?i l-ḥajāti

B. ولن تقطنوا في قبور سيدها الاموات للأحياء (Abdelahad 1993: 51)

wa-lan taqtunū fi qubūrin fajjadahā- l-?amwatu-lil-?ahja?i

C. لا، لن تقطنوا قبورا سيدها الموتى للأحياء (Okashā 2008: 35)

lā lan taqtunū qubūran fajjadahā - l-mawtā li-l-?ahjā?i

In (A) above, Basheer provided an Arabic translation *?abnā?u-l-mawti li-?abnā?i -l-ḥajāti* for the English “the dead for the living.” It is again both a lengthy and rather an uncommon rendition in Arabic that lacks proper stylistic and aesthetic features in literary translation. To give a back translation of Basheer’s rendition, it will be like “the sons of the death for the sons of the life,” where “sons” are not mentioned in the English text. Moreover, the expression “sons of death” is not familiar in Arabic. He also added the word *?azal* “yes” at the beginning of the text, whereas Okasha added “No, you will not” to emphasize the idea. Abdelahad and Okasha gave a better rendition when both used *l-?amwatu-lil-?ahja?i* and *l-mawtā li-l-?ahjā?i*. Such renditions are more appropriate aesthetically, direct, brief and to the point in terms of form, content, and accessibility.

5.9. Buying and selling

It is in exchanging the gifts of the earth that you shall find abundance and be satisfied (Gibran 1996: 37).

A. لأنكم بغير مبادلة عطايا الارض لن تجدوا وفرا من الرزق ولن يشبع جشعكم (Basheer 1934: 106)

li-?anna-kumu bi-yajri mubādalati Ṣaṭājā al-?ard?i lan tazidū wafran mina ar-rizqi wa-lan jaṣbaṣa zaṣaṣu-kumu

B. كما أنها تبادلكم عطاياها فتغمركم وفرتها فتكتفو وتقتنوا (Abdelahad 1993: 56)

kamā ?anna-hā tubādilu-kumu Ṣaṭājā-hā fa-taymura-kumu wafratu-hā fa-taktafū wa-taṣnaṣū

C. فإن انتم تبادلتهم نعمها نلتهم الوفرة والرخاء، وطابت بذلك نفوسكم (Okashā 2008: 38)

fa-?in ?ant-umu tabādaltum niṣama-hā niltum il-wafrata wa-r-raxā?a wa-ṭābat bi-ḍālika nufūsu-kumu

In the text above, Gibran talks positively about how the earth can yield fruits, but Basheer opted in his translation to render the text in a negative way, as he gave a threatening tone to the meaning. He, therefore, misinterpreted the text, something which is not embodied in the original ST in such a way that the optimistic message of Gibran was turned into a pessimistic one, thus not giving the intended message. Moreover, Basheer made an addition not found in the text when he translated the last part by saying “you shall be satisfied” as *wa-lan jaṣbaḥa zaḡaḡu-kumu*, rather meaning “will not satisfy your greed.” The negative connotation of the word *zaḡaḡ* “greed” is in fact not motivated at all as it needlessly adds confusion to the intended meaning of the text. Abdelahad and Okasha, on the other hand, managed in their renditions to use the intended positive message of the text. They aptly conveyed the intended meaning of the original ST, indicating a strategy of semantic accuracy.

2. For the master spirit of the earth shall not sleep upon the wind till the needs of the least of you are satisfied (Gibran 1996: 38).

A. لأن الروح السيّدة في الارض لا تنام بطمأنينة وسلام حتى تشاهد بعينها أن الصغير فيكم قد نال كالكبير بينكم
كل ما هو في حاجة اليه. (Basheer 1934: 109)

li-ʔanna ar-rūḡa as-sajjidata fi l-ʔardʕi lā tanāmu bi-ṭumʔanīnatin wa-salāmin ḡattā tuḡāhida bi-ʔajni-hā ʔanna asʕ-sʕayīra fi-kumu qad nāla ka-l-kabīri bajna-kumu kulla mā huwa fi ḡāzatin ʔilaj-hi

B. فسيدة "روح الارض" لن تستكين في الريح ما لم تقض لبنات كل واحد منهم. (Abdelahad 1993: 57)

fa-sajjidatu rūḡi l-ʔardʕi lan tastakīna fi-r-rīḡi mā lam taqḡḡi li-banāti kulli waḡidin min-humu

C. فإن روح الارض المهيمنة لن تتوسد جناح الريح وادعة حتى ينال ادناكم كفايته. (Okashā 2008: 39)

fa-ʔinna rūḡa l-ʔardʕi il-muhajminata lan tatawassada zanāḡa r-rīḡi wādīṣatan ḡattā janāla ʔadnā-kumu kifājata-hu

In this text, the first problem is in translating into English the meaning of the expression, “the master spirit of the earth.” Basheer rendered it in Arabic as *ar-rūḡa as-sajjidata fi l-ʔardʕi*, which is a confusing literal translation that may not really be accessible to many Arab readers. Abdelahad too, provided almost the same rendition in Arabic with a minor word order change, i.e., *sajjidatu rūḡi l-ʔardʕi*. Okasha tried to provide a clearer expression by adding a relevant adjective in the expression, i.e., *rūḡa l-ardʕi il-muhajminata*. Therefore, adding *il-muhajminata* “domination” to the expression instead of *sajjida*

“lady” may be a better choice for clarification. In fact, this expression “the master spirit” is difficult to translate, one may think of a kind of female or maternal divinity. The second problem is in translating the last part of the English text “till the needs of the least of you are satisfied.” In Basheer’s rendition, we observe an unmotivated addition when he referred to the word “least” in Arabic as *as^s-s^aʿayir wa-al-kabir* “the child/young and the elderly,” which is not found in the text. Abdelahad’s rendition was quite general as he included “everyone” when he rendered it as *kull-i waḥid-in min-hum* whereas the intended meaning was confined only to “the least.” However, Okasha may have given a more suitable and accurate rendition, *ʔadnā-kumu*, which is a good equivalent term. Therefore, both literal translation and explication were not the proper strategies to employ in translating the text. A brief and an accurate semantic strategy followed by Okasha seems to be the most suitable one.

5.10. Crime and punishment

You are the way and the wayfarers (Gibran 1996: 40).

A. أنتم الطريق وأنتم المطرقون (Basheer 1934: 112)

ʔantum ʔṭ-ṭarīqu wa-ʔantum il-muṭriqūna

B. فأنتم الطريق، وأنتم السائرون عليها (Abdelahad 1993: 60)

fa-ʔantum ʔṭ-ṭarīqu wa-ʔantum is-sāʔirūna ʕalaj-hā

C. ذلك أنكم السبيل، وأنتم أيضا سالكوه (Okashā 2008: 42)

ḏalika ʔanna-kumu ʔs-sabīlu wa-ʔantum ʔayḏan sālikū-hu

The text above clearly shows how a translator can either succeed or fail depending on the proper choice in using proper idiomatic expressions. The text is short, but in (A) rendition, an improper translation is clearly obvious to any native speaker of Arabic. An uncommon lexical item was chosen by Basheer, i.e., *al-muṭriqūn* for English “wayfarers.” This word seems to be quite obsolete not to mention the fact that it is also quite formal stylistically. Abdelahad used instead the Arabic word *as-sāʔirūn*, which is a suitable choice. However, Okasha employed the word *as-sālikūn*, a choice which contributes much to the aesthetic effect of the original as it offers a better vivid lexical item than a formal and literal

translation; i.e., *al-muṭriqūn*. Therefore, both Abdelahad and Okasha employed a better collocation, or a strategy of idiomaticity than Basheer.

5.11. Law

What of the cripple who hates dancers? (Gibran 1996: 44).

A. وماذا أقول في المقعدين الذين يكرهون الراقصين؟ (Basheer 1934: 119)

wa-māḍā ʔaqūlu fī-l-muqʕadīna l-laḍīna jakrahūna r-rāqisīna?

B. وماذا عن الكسيح الذي يحقد على الراقصين؟ (Abdelhad 1993: 65)

wa-māḍā ʔan il-kasīḥi l-laḍī jaḥqidu ʔalā r-rāqisīna?

C. وما يكون شأن المقعد وهو على الراقصين حاقداً؟ (Okashā 2008: 47)

wa-mā jakūnu ʔaʔnu l-muqʕadi wa-huwa ʔalā r-rāqisīna ḥāqidan?

Stylistically, Basheer’s choice of words in the excerpt above may not be appropriate for two reasons. Firstly, he made a deictic change when he changed the third person singular into a plural one for no good reason. Secondly, his literal translation of the text resulted in a less dynamic rendition when he used the verb *jakrahu* for “hate” in English. Abdelahad and Okasha used the verb *jaḥqidu* “grudge” instead, a better and more appropriate choice. However, Okasha made a better translation of the whole text than the other two translators by employing a strategy of a rhetorical force. In this way, the aesthetic features of the text are heightened through the utilization of a beautiful syntactic order.

5.12. Freedom

Verily all things move within your being in constant half embrace, the desired and the dreaded, the repugnant and the cherished, the pursued and that which you would escape (Gibran 1996: 49).

A. الحق أقول لكم، إن جميع الأشياء تتحرك في كيانكم متعانقة على الدوام عناقا نصفيا. كل ما تشتهون وما تخافون وما تعشقون وما.

al-ḥaqqā aqūlu la-kumu ʔinna zamīʔa l-ʔaʔjāʔi tataḥarraku fī kijāni-kumu mutaʔāniqatan ʔalā d-dawāmi ʔināqan nisʔijjan kulla mā taʔtahūna wa-mā taxāfūna wa-mā taʔʔaqūna wa-mā tastakrihūna mā taʔʔauna warāʔa-hu wa-mā tahrubūna min-hu

B. إن الأشياء تتحرك حقا داخل انفسكم، وهي دوما في نصف عناق معكم : ما ترغبون فيه وما ترغبون عنه، ماهو متناغم ومنسجم معها ،
وما هو متنافر معها. (Abdelahad 1993: 71)

ʔinna l-ʔaǧǧāʔa tataḥarraku ḥaqqan dāxila ʔanfusi-kumu wa-hija dawman fi nisʔfi ʔināqin maʔa-kumu mā taryabūna fī-hi wa-mā taryabūna ʔan-hu mā huwa mutanāyimun wa-munsazimun maʔa-hā wa-mā huwa mutanāfirun maʔa-hā

C. ولعمري إن الامور جميعا، مرغوبة او مرهوبة، ممقوتة او محبوبة، منشودة او ممجوجة-تتحرك كلها في أعماق وجودك، تكاد تتعانق
أبدا (Okashā 2008: 51)

*wa-la-ʔamr-ī ʔinna l-ʔumūra zamiʔan maryūbatan ʔaw marhūbatan mamqūtatan ʔaw maḥbūbatan manʔudatan
ʔaw mamzūzatan tataḥarraku kullu-hā fi ʔaʔmāqi wūzūdika takādu tataʔānaqu ʔabadan*

The text above is an excellent example of Gibran’s use of dialectics through the “pairing of opposites,” in which opposites are formed in a balanced way, using a series of antonyms. It can be noticed that Okasha, in (C) above, attempted to preserve the aesthetic frame of meaning by employing rhyming antonyms. He did that by fronting the series of opposites to highlight them at the start of the text, and then placing the verb *ʔānaqa* “embrace” at the end. In this way, the beauty of the translation appears more clearly than it is the case in the rendition provided by both Basheer and Abdelahad. Furthermore, Abdelahad used long phrases to render the opposites while Okasha employed brief single adjectives. Basheer, on the other hand, tried to resort to rhymes in rendering the meaning of the opposites but his choices were not successful. That is, it is difficult to see adequate antonymous relations, for example, between *xāfa* “be afraid” and *kariha* “hate.” Therefore, Okasha alone was able to preserve the brevity of the original antonyms.

5.13. Self-knowledge

Say not, “I have found the truth,” but rather, “I have found a truth” (Gibran 1996: 55).

A. اجل ولا تقل في ذاتك : "قد وجدت الحق" بل قل بالاحرى : "قد وجدت حقا". (Basheer 1934: 137)

ʔazal wa-lā taqul fī ḏātika qad waʔaddu l-ḥaqqā bal qul bi-l-ʔaḥrā qad waʔaddu ḥaqqan

B. لا تقولوا : "إننا وجدنا الحق"، بل قولوا : "إننا وجدنا حقا". (Abdelahad 1993: 80)

lā taqūlū ʔinnā waʔadnā l-ḥaqqā bal qūlū ʔinnā waʔadnā ḥaqqan

C. "وجدت الحقيقة، بل قل: "وجدت بعض الحقيقة" (Okasha 2008: 59)

wa-lā taqul waẓaddtu l-ḥaqīqata bal qul waẓaddtu baḥdʿa l-ḥaqīqati

Translating this text, in fact, needs a skillful rendition particularly when dealing with the definite and indefinite articles in both languages. The indefinite article in English is easier to be expressed than in Arabic, which has no specific word. It is observed that both Basheer and Abdelahad provided the same translation for the English “I have found a truth,” which is challenging to many Arab translators. Both rendered that expression in Arabic as *qad wajaddtu ḥaqqa* and *?innā wajadnā ḥaqqa*. Any Arab reader will find ambiguity in this translation as *ḥaqqa* is uncountable. Okasha rendered it as *wajaddtu baḥdʿa al-ḥaqīqati* “I found some truth” which is expressed more clearly even though Arabic may not accept this rendition from an essentialist point of view. This view considers truth to be indivisible, and that is why it might not be accepted even though it is clear. If we are to provide a rendition, we may agree with the rendition given by Okasha but with a minor change by saying: *?iktāfaftu ḥaqīqatan mā* “I discovered a truth.” It is, therefore, more accessible to an Arab reader to understand Okasha's rendition or ours from a syntactic point of view in showing the difference between the definite and the indefinite articles between the two languages. Finally, this text, as we have already noticed, is ambiguous and it seems that the three translators tried to clarify the ambiguity to make renditions easier to comprehend. However, it may not be the responsibility of the translators to interpret what is not clearly expressed in the source text.

6. Translation quality assessment

When we look at Basheer’s translation, we notice that there are some problems that include unmotivated changes such as adding unnecessary words and expressions. He may have wanted to make his renditions clearer, but the result was unfortunately complicated. He also provided unnecessary lengthy explications and nonfunctional lexical repetitions.

Stylistically, it was noticed that Basheer’s translation suffered from a deictic problem. He used personal pronouns different from those used in the source texts and this may have caused some confusion. Cases of this, for example, are frequently found between the first singular and plural pronouns. Another stylistic problem is his tendency to use a more formal diction than that found in the source text. It seems that this was done intentionally because he always provided an explanation

through footnotes. We do believe that Gibran did not make use of a formal language; on the contrary, his style was simple and easy to comprehend because his concepts were addressed to ordinary people listening to his wisdom, not in a written style.

As for the second translator, Abdelahad, we notice that his translation is different because he resorts to an avoidance strategy. That is, he avoided to translate some parts of the book such as the first concept, "the coming of the ship" and the last concept, "The Farewell." He also avoided translating all the short dialogs between Al-Mustafa and the individuals who usually ask him a regular question at the beginning of each concept. Abdelahad did not explain why he avoided translating such important texts from the book.

It is clearly noticed that Abdelahad was careful not to resort to literal translation. He mentioned this point in his Arabic introduction explaining that he benefited from the previous translations of *The Prophet* and that he avoided most of the pitfalls of his predecessors. However, based on our observation of his renditions, we can say that Abdelahad sometimes resorted to elaboration and explication, especially in texts having philosophical concepts. He also attempted to clarify what was ambiguous, admitting in his introduction that he deliberately resorted to this strategy of disambiguation for what seemed to him to be vague texts. In fact, ambiguity in translation may be a controversial issue among translation theorists. Ghazala (1995: 17-18) rightly says that

it is not the responsibility of the translator to interpret and reveal what the source texts hide or say indirectly. The readers are the only ones who decide these unseen meanings in English as well as in Arabic.

To give an example, let us look at the following from the "love" concept:

"When you love, you should not say, "God is in my heart," but rather, "I am in the heart of God" (Gibran 1996: 13)

إن أحببتم لا تقولوا : إن الله [جل جلاله] في قلوبنا بل قولوا إنا في قلب الله

?in ?ahbābtum lā taqūlū ?inna ?allaha zalla zalālu-hu fi qulūbi-nā bal qūlū ?inna fi qalbi ?illah

In this illustration, we notice that Abdelahad added more clarification to God when he said "God, The Glorious." The other clarification is deictic: he changed the first-person singular to the plural one possibly for readers to have a better understanding of this text.

One more observation about Abdelahad is that he did not preserve the syntactic pairings of the parallel structures, which are abundant in the text. This can be clearly noticed in our analysis of the “freedom concept” in text 21. In this text, Abdelahad (as well as Basheer) failed to provide the proper collocations requiring merely double adjective or antonyms used in the source text. He instead used longer unparallel and long phrases.

Finally, it seems that Abdelahad, as well as the other two translators dealt with emotiveness in the same way. The following example as well as other examples in our analysis shows that he increases the level of emotiveness quite differently from the source text. This can be clearly noticed in the beauty concept:

The tired and the weary say, Beauty is of soft whisperings (Gibran 1996: 74).

أما المنهكون فيقولون عنه " الجمال همسات ناعمة تتاجي أرواحنا"

ʔa mma l-munhakūna fa-jaqūlūna ʔan-hu al-zamalu hamasātun nāʔimatun tunāzī ʔarwāḥanā

Abdelahad in this illustration, among other examples, seems to raise the level of emotiveness by adding another emotional sense not found in the source text, i.e., *tunāzī ʔarwāḥanā* تتاجي أرواحنا meaning in English “communicating with our souls.” In fact, it is beyond the scope of the present study to elaborate more on this matter though it is important to analyze at length in future research to find out if emotiveness may distort translation or not.

Regarding the third translator, Okasha, we can in this section evaluate his translation along with the other two translators according to the ornamentation approach since it appears that his renditions apply mostly to this approach. To begin with, it is observed that Okasha made serious attempts to play the role of an author to recreate the source text by approximating his renditions as much as possible. He seems to have achieved this by employing some aesthetic strategies of the ornamentation approach. By looking at the data analysis, we notice that firstly, he managed to comply with the idiomaticity strategy. In this respect, and comparing him with the two other translators, i.e., Basheer and Abdelahad, we can say that he succeeded in preserving idiomatic and proverbial expressions equivalent to those found in the source text. Thus, he achieved to a great extent, and more than the two other translators to maintain the aesthetic elements as much as possible. This can be explicitly noticed in text analysis of examples such as 2,3,8,11,12 among others.

Secondly, successfully employing the aesthetic strategy and respecting stylistic considerations, Okasha has managed more accurately than the two other translators to render collocations, idioms as well as the choice of diction and the brevity of phrases and sentences. Unlike Basheer, he did not

provide footnotes to explain certain concepts. Moreover, Both Okasha and Abdelahad avoided redundancy and repetition in their renditions throughout the translated book. Okasha's style, therefore, was quite flexible but not at the expense of his loyalty to the source text. By flexibility, we mean that he resorted to a managing strategy without seriously affecting the intended meaning. Almost all examples in the data analysis are evident to this observation.

Thirdly, regarding the cultural orientation strategy, which has to do with the two notions of domestication and foreignization, one can notice that Basheer tended to employ foreignization. That is, Basheer appears to be more concerned with maintaining the peculiar flavor of English, the result was a literal translation which did not contribute much to naturalness. This strategy meant that he attempted to preserve the linguistic conventions of the source text possibly to be faithful to the original work but at the expense of accessibility and acceptability. On the other hand, Okasha resorted to a domestication strategy in which the main criterion for a good rendition is fluency, naturalness, and intelligibility. This was achieved by rewriting the source text according to the target language and culture's values (Venuti 1995). It must be stressed here that this domestication did not seriously affect renditions made by Okasha. As for Abdelahad, he too employed domestication strategies and avoided foreignization. However, he opted for lengthy sentences, whereas all Okasha's domesticated sentences were brief and to the point. Therefore, brevity in Okasha's renditions led to a more elevated style and contributed to preserving the aesthetic features of the source text. Okasha exerted a creative effort to manipulate the target language.

Regarding the fifth strategy of lexical/semantic accuracy, which has to do with the aesthetic framing of meaning in shaping figurative language, we observe again that Okasha managed to implement this strategy more adequately than the other translators. His creative skill in maintaining the aesthetic ornamentation of the source text was manifested when translating the metaphorical language used abundantly in the book. This may be attributed to his literary talent which enabled him to render the figurative language despite all the constraints imposed by the original work. Moreover, it is noticed that he achieved to translate metaphors by attempting to be as much as possible faithful to the source text. It must be pointed out also that Abdelhad made use of this strategy but comparing him to Okasha, we observe that there is a big difference in translation quality between the two translators. This difference might be attributed to the fact that Okasha, in addition to being a well-known literary figure in the Arab world, must have benefited from the other previous translators' flaws of *The Prophet*.

6. Conclusion

In this final part of the present research, two translation notions are worth mentioning. Firstly, the notions of gain and loss. We have already noticed that the three translators in the study either added some texts or avoided to translate others. It was clear to observe how, for example, Okasha actively sought to achieve an aesthetic flavor in his translation by resorting to the strategy of gain to enhance the aesthetic force of rendition without changing the meaning of the source text; he managed to preserve the content of the message in a pleasing way. The notion of loss was manifested in Abdelahad's translation when he followed an avoidance strategy. He omitted some parts of the book as we have pointed out earlier. Therefore, comparing both translators, i.e., Okasha and Abdelahad, one can observe that Okasha did intend to achieve an approximation of the original text to the Arab readers. That is, his approach was recipient-oriented, which explains why he opted for domestication.

The second notion is about bridging the gap between artistic creation and constraints dictated by the source and target texts. This problem must be addressed in the light of the fact that translators need to be as faithful and as creative as possible to the original text. Based on our data analysis, it was obvious that Basheer could not overcome the constraints imposed by the source text on his translation. His priority was given to the preservation of the linguistic conventions to be faithful to the source text. He seems to have sacrificed the creative aspect of literary translation and the result was a distortion of renditions as well as inaccessibility, which constitutes the major flaw in literary translation. As we have mentioned, Okasha managed to mediate both the cultural and the linguistic constraints to render an Arabic text which conveyed as much as possible the source text in a creative way. His creativity made his translation both acceptable and accessible. This was only possible because of his ability to follow a successful domestication strategy. In fact, any reader can notice how the aesthetic effect of the source text was better conveyed by Okasha's manipulation of the source text, which resulted in a more intelligible, natural, and acceptable translation. Consequently, an aesthetic balance between the two texts was achieved.

Finally, regarding the notion or the strategy of explication, which is an elaboration for the sake of achieving clarity, we notice that Basheer comes first in his translation to use such a strategy. He did this to provide explanatory information for what is perceived to be a difficult readability problem. In fact, Basheer made use of explication in two cases. First within the body of the translated text when he used lengthy phrases or sentences. Second in providing more explanation than the other two translators throughout his translation of the book, Abdelahad, on the other hand, decided to avoid any footnotes. Even though footnotes are useful, we may agree with the view that they negatively affect the flow of reading as they may distract the eye from the reading material.

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