

## **Adaptation as a Literary Translation Technique in the English Version of Naguib Mahfouz's the Riffraff "Al Harafish"**

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### **Abstract**

The current study discusses the adaptation technique and how it is applied with its different modes to a literary text through explaining how the translator of Mahfouz's epic of "The Riff-Raff" (AL- Harafish) employs it to achieve the equivalence between different cultures. The findings show that the translator of Mahfouz's epic of "The Riff-Raff" (AL- Harafish) has succeeded in employing adaptation technique with its different modes accurately.

### **Introduction**

Since translation is a means of communication among cultures and one of the ways to reflect the environment and cultural background of different communities, it is necessary for the translator to be accurate in conveying the intended meaning of the source text to the target readers. It is known that there are different types of translation such as literary, legal, economic, religious and mass media. Each type has its own techniques and style.

Literary translation has a great effect on increasing cultural awareness among different nations. There are many genres of literary works and each genre has its own style, so the translator of literary text should be experienced and aware about the style of the genre he intends to translate to achieve an accurate equivalence and preserve the style of the original text. (Colenciuc ,2015).

Muslat (2012) thinks that the translator should know the characteristics of literary texts to be able to fulfill his task with much more accuracy. The successful translation of a literary text is achieved when the translator transforms to the target text in a way near to most of the syntactic, stylistic and aesthetic elements found in the source text. By recognizing the basic elements of the source text, the translator is able to achieve the desirable correspondence or the most acceptable equivalence. Thus, it seems that the process of translating literary texts is not just to find words and sentences in the target text that correspond to those in the source text.

To translate a literary text, the translator should know the techniques of literary translation. Adaptation, which is the subject of the current study, is one of such techniques. Although adaptation is one of translation techniques, there is a difference between these two notions. While translation stays at the level of meaning, adaptation attempts to reach the purpose of the source text. Adaptation is used when the context of the source language does not have equivalence in the culture of the target text. Thus, adaptation achieves the equivalence among different cultures. The aim of adaptation is to achieve the effect of the original work on an audience from a different cultural background. (Baker & Saldanha, 2009).

### **Theoretical framework**

Literary translation is a distinguished type of translation. It reflects the imaginative, intellectual and intuitive style of the author besides the literary features of the source text like sound effects, figures of speech and

word selection. (Hassan, 2011). One of its main features, as Dutta (2009) indicates, is that it depends on the interpretation of metaphors more than the denotative meaning. Its aim is to find expressions in another language and preserve the stylistic equivalence and cultural context at the same time. Although the translation is different from the original, it has to be acceptable and comprehensible for the target readers.

Hakemi (2013) argues that literary translation is regarded as a secondary activity and a matter of debate among translation scholars. He thinks that sometimes literary translation is considered to be inferior compared to the original because of the lack of creativity in translating literary works where the only aim is to convey the meaning. Thus, many literary translators are not able to achieve the quality of the original. It could be said that literary translators who use only their linguistic knowledge of source and target languages and fail to achieve creativity in their work cannot present to their readers a good work as the original.

Concerning the translator, since he is the main element in the translation process, he must be aware of the source language and have control over the target language characteristics to produce an accurate translation. His role is not restricted to put words from dictionary, but he must generate a new text which has the same meaning expressed in the source language. He also must understand the emotive values of words and the style of the text that indicates the “flavor and feel” of the message. He should also know how to connect between the cultural contexts of

the two languages and to have a good deal of language switching. Thus, he is considered the source of transferring the message between two cultures. (Nida, 1964).

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According to Landers (2001), sometimes adaptation is considered a kind of challenge as it requires more flexibility and creativity to produce a text suitable for the target audience. Not only does the translator deal with words, but with ideas and cultures as well, so, he/she has to be acquainted with the culture and vocabulary of the target language to produce a qualified translation.

While the translator is free to modify, add or omit certain parts of the source text to produce it in a way suitable for the target audience and their culture, he has to preserve the soul and flavor of the original text. When the reader does not understand some aspects of the text because he is not aware of some cultural features of the source text, the translator works on the reader by adding some information or interpretation keys of the obscure elements or explaining these elements by adding footnote. Although

adaptation is one of translation strategies, there are some differences between them. Adaptation involves omissions or additions and that means that the loss of information is greater in adaptation than in translation. Thus, adaptation is more flexible and creative than translation. Both translation and adaptation are considered a sort of reproduction. They also have a similar motivation which is the desire to express one's linguistic skills. Since translation and adaptation are related to each other, the concept of "tradaptation" appeared. (Saoudi, 2017).

### **Methodology**

Adaptation as a literary translation technique has different modes as, Baker and Saldanha (2009) indicate, such as transcription of the original, omission, expansion, exoticism, updating, situational or cultural adequacy and creation. The translator of Naguib Mahfouz's the epic of "The Riff-Raff" employs three modes of adaptation in her translation which are creation, situational or cultural adequacy and expansion. She employs each mode as it is required according to the source text and the meaning she wants to convey to the target readers. The following are some examples of adaptation technique which the translator applied to the source text and their English equivalents with an explanation.

**Creation mode of adaptation:** in this mode the translator resorts to change the source text and replaces it with another to help the target readers get the intended meaning of the source text according to their culture, at the same time it has the main message and idea of the original one.

## I hope nothing's wrong

### كفى الله الشر

In Egyptian culture the expression "كفى الله الشر" is used to express a hope that nothing bad or wrong would happen. To convey that meaning to the target readers the translator employs creation mode of adaptation to help them understand the expression.

## With a shout to the donkey

### حا

In Egyptian culture these Arabic letters "حا" is used specifically with donkeys to make them move and sometimes the rider of the donkey shouts to it. The translator employs creation mode of adaptation to convey that meaning to the target readers.

## Congratulations

### ألف نهار أبيض

In Egyptian culture there are many expressions used for congratulation and the expression "ألف نهار أبيض" is one of them. Since there is no equivalence for that Arabic expression in English language, the translator employs creation mode of adaptation to convey the intended meaning in the source text, which is expressing congratulations, to the target readers.

## I really treated you badly

### ظلمتك ظلم الحسن والحسين

Al- Hassan and Al- Hussein are grandsons of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and their story is a tragedy as they suffered oppression from enemies. Al-Hassan abandoned caliphate to Mou'awya to prevent bloodshed of Muslims and he was accused of weakness. He intended the good for Muslims, but his enemies attacked

him and his wife betrayed him as she conspired with his enemies (especially Mou'awya) and poisoned him. Concerning Al- Hussein, he told al-Kufa people that any unjust ruler breaking Allah's covenant and contradicting Prophet Muhammad's Sunna and his teaching Allah shall punish him. Al-Kufa people betrayed Al- Hussein and cheated him as they pretended that there were with him, but they supported Yazid, the son of Mou'away. They killed him in a horrific and distressing scene, and it is one of the most awful and brutal crimes in the history. (Redha, 1999).

As Al- Hassan and Al- Hussein were treated badly and unjustly, they are made an example of anyone suffers from prejudice and bad treatment. If the translator had mentioned Al- Hassan and Al- Hussein in the target text, the target readers would not have understood the intended meaning. Thus, she employed creation mode of adaptation to convey the intended meaning to the target readers by mentioning the significance of Al- Hassan and Al- Hussein's story.

### **Mr. Beard**

#### **يا سني**

In Arabic society it is a Sunnah for a man to grow his beard in imitation of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and he is called "Sunni". Although the Arabic word "سني" has an equivalent in English language which is "Sunni", the translator does not mention it in the target text. It is known that "Sunni" in English means someone who follows the teachings of Prophet Muhammad, but it is not the intended meaning in the source text. The word "سني" in the source text refers to a person grows his beard, so the translator employs creation mode of adaptation and translates it as

“Mr. Beard” to convey the accurate meaning to the target readers.

**Situational or cultural adequacy mode of adaptation:** in this mode the translator makes slight changes to the source text to be more suitable to the target readers.

### يا أهل الله Hello! Is anybody there?

In Arabic language and culture the expression “يا أهل الله” is considered a type of greeting and a question about if anybody is in the place or not. The translator conveys that meaning to the target readers and indicates to them the significance of greeting which the expression has through employing situational or cultural adequacy mode of adaptation.

### An old man’s voice apparently encouraging an animal توكلي على الله

In Egyptian culture the expression "توكلي على الله" is used when someone rides an animal to encourage it to move. That Arabic sentence is mentioned in the source text and it is said by an old man riding an animal trying to help it to move. The translator conveys that intended meaning to the target readers by employing situational or cultural adequacy mode of adaptation.

### Chorused their agreement

#### قالوا آمين

The word "آمين" in Arabic language has two meanings; the first is used at the end of prayer and the second gives the meaning of agreement or acceptance. The word has equivalence in English language as it is also used at the end of prayer or religious statement. In the source text the word



is said by a group of people to show their agreement on something, so the translator employs situational or cultural adequacy mode of adaptation to convey the meaning of agreement to the target readers.

### **God bless Ghassan**

اسم الله عليه

In Egyptian culture the expression "اسم الله عليه" is used to express admiration with someone or encouraging him to do something or win a competition. In the source text the characters of the epic encourage someone called "Ghassan" to win a competition against another one saying "God bless him" as they ask God to help and protect him. Thus, the translator employs situational or cultural adequacy mode of adaptation to convey that meaning to the target readers.

### **To use the law to make her go back طلبها لبيت الطاعة**

The expression of "بيت الطاعة" is known in Arabic culture as a legal procedure for a husband to make his wife go back to their marital house. This expression does not have an equivalent in English language so, the translator mentions what it refers to in the target text and employs situational or cultural adequacy mode of adaptation to convey the intended meaning to the target readers.

**Expansion mode of adaptation:** in this mode the translator adds some details to the source text to explain to the target readers more information about the source text to help them get its idea.

### **Garlic, coriander, and cooking butter**

تقليبة

In Egyptian culture some types of food are made of mixtures of ingredients that gives it a delicious flavor. The

word "تقليية" is one of these mixtures that is added to certain types of food and it is made from garlic, coriander, butter and salt. Since there is no an English equivalent for the word "تقليية", the translator employs expansion mode of adaptation and explains the meaning of the word to the target readers by mentioning the ingredients of "تقليية" to make it easy for them to understand it. She also reflects to them an aspect of Egyptian culture and traditions about food.

### **Dusty winds of early spring**

#### **رياح الخماسين**

Every year at the beginning of spring dusty winds blow up in Egypt and last for about 50 days so it is called "Khamsin winds". In English society some people may not know about these winds, so the translator employs expansion mode of adaptation to explain to the target readers what Khamsin winds are.

### **Beans with onions and tomatoes**

#### **فول بالخلطة**

In Egyptian culture beans are usually eaten by adding a mixture of some ingredients such as onions and tomatoes and are known as "خلطة". The translator conveys that meaning to the target readers by employing expansion mode of adaptation as she mentions onions and tomatoes in the target text to explain to the target readers how beans is eaten in Egypt.

### **That's how people are. They won't change**

#### **هكذا الناس دائما وأبدا**

The translator employs expansion mode of adaptation by adding "they will not change" to the target text to explain

to the target readers the intended meaning of the source text that people won't change at all.

### **Restoring the Nagi's golden age**      أحلام البطولة والعهد

The translator here employs expansion mode of adaptation by mentioning "the Nagi's golden age" in the target text although it is not mentioned in the source text as the target reader could understand the intended meaning of the source text that the dreams of heroism are related to Nagi's golden age.

It is clear that the translator employs adaptation technique accurately through using three modes of adaptation (creation, situational or cultural adequacy and expansion) as it is required according to the context when some expressions or words in the source text do not have equivalent in the target language and the target readers could not understand it, so she tries to convey the meaning to them according to their culture and environment. She also uses adaptation technique to help the target readers understand the source text in a flexible and productive way to the extent that the target text appears as if it is original one.

### **Conclusion:**

The current research deals with adaptation as a literary translation technique in the English version of Naguib Mahfouz's epic of "The Riffraff". The goal of the study is achieved through finding some examples of adaption technique which the translator has applied to some parts in the target text. Some words and expressions in the source text do not have equivalents in the target language due to

cultural differences, but she has succeeded in conveying their intended meanings to the target readers according to their culture. She goes beyond the meaning of the source text and translates the idea and significance of the context more than words themselves to give the target readers the closest meaning to it. She succeeds in achieving the balance between employing adaptation technique and preserving the soul of the source text. Although she makes some changes to some parts to the source text to be suitable for the target readers, the whole original text is not affected.

It is also noticed that the translator takes into account the cultural differences between the original and target texts and makes her best to help the target readers understand the intended meaning of the source text and its significance and get its idea. Moreover, she reflects the culture and traditions of the source text community to the target readers and makes them feel the soul of the source text. Since the success of the translator depends on his/her accuracy in choosing the precise equivalents, the translator of Mahfouz's epic of "The Riffraff", achieves that goal through giving the right equivalents of words and expressions in the source text. Employing adaptation technique requires efficiency and accuracy and the translator has been both efficient and accurate to some extent. She employs adaption with flexibility and creativity making the target text appear as if it were original.

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