



Translating Historical and Religious Texts from Arabic into English: Problems and Solutions

Prof. Bader Dweik*

Wafa'a Abu Helwah

Middle East University
Amman - Jordan

ABSTRACT:

This study aimed at investigating the linguistic and cultural problems that Jordanian graduate students face in rendering historical and religious texts from Arabic into English; exploring the causes of these problems and presenting solutions and recommendations to lessen these difficulties. To achieve the goals of this study, the researchers conveniently selected a sample that compromised 20 graduate students who were enrolled in the M.A. program in the Middle East University during the first semester 2012/2013. The researchers designed a translation test that consisted of six historical and religious Arabic texts which were taken from Professor Younis Amr's book "القدس، مدينة الله". They also conducted informal open-ended interviews with students and experts in the field of translation to compile more information. Results of the study revealed various linguistic and cultural problems that graduate students faced such as encountering structural, stylistic, lexical, punctuation errors and cultural terms, i.e. proper-noun equivalents. Results also indicated that these problems were caused by (1) some differences between the source and target linguistic systems; (2) lack of awareness of the importance of the context in translation; (3) students' ignorance of cultural equivalences; (4) adopting improper translation methods; and (5) misusing dictionaries and other research tools, like Google translation.

Key words: Translating, Historical, Religious, Texts, Problems, Arabic/English

* Corresponding author: drdweik@hotmail.com

المخلص:

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى تناول أهم المشكلات التي تواجه المترجم حين يقوم بترجمة النصوص التاريخية والدينية من العربية إلى الإنجليزية، وكذلك البحث في أسبابها وتقديم مقترحات لتجنبها. ولتحقيق الأهداف تم اختيار عينة تتألف من 20 طالباً مسجلين في برنامج الماجستير لعام 2012 / 2013 في جامعة الشرق الأوسط. وقام الباحثان بإعداد اختبار ترجمة مكون من ستة نصوص تاريخية ودينية مقتبسة من كتاب "القدس، مدينة الله" للمؤلف ا. د يونس عمرو، وأجرى الباحثان أيضاً مقابلات غير رسمية مع عدد من الطلاب والأساتذة المتخصصين في مجال اللغويات والترجمة بهدف الحصول على معلومات اضافية مساندة لإختبار الترجمة. وتم تحليل ترجمة ستة نصوص وكشفت النتائج عن وجود مشاكل لغوية وثقافية كثيرة تمثلت في سوء ترجمة التراكيب النحوية والأسلوبية والبلاغية والترقيم وكذلك الإخفاق في الوصول إلى المكافئ للمصطلحات الثقافية والأسماء الشخصية والمدن. وخلصت الدراسة إلى أن أسباب المشاكل اللغوية والثقافية تعود إلى (1) الفروقات بين الأنظمة اللغوية لكل من العربية والإنجليزية؛ (2) وقلة وعي الطالب بأهمية السياق؛ (3) وعدم وجود خلفية معلوماتية فيما يتعلق بترجمة الأسماء الشخصية والمدن والمصطلحات الثقافية المختلفة من العربية إلى الإنجليزية؛ (4) وكذلك عدم التمكن من استخدام أساليب الترجمة الملائمة؛ (5) وسوء استعمال القواميس وأدوات البحث الأخرى المتعلقة بالمعاني.

الكلمات الرئيسية: ترجمة، مشاكل، نصوص، تاريخي، ديني، عربي / انجليزي.

INTRODUCTION:

Translation refers to all the processes and methods used to render and/or transfer the meaning of the source language text into the target language as closely, completely and accurately as possible. However, the meaning of a text includes its subject, function or writer's intention, and tone. The text format, style and text type are also part of its meaning because writers express their ideas through format, style and text type. (Baker, 1992, P.25). In other words, the target text should have the same subject, function, tone, format, style and text type.

Religious texts are referred to as "expressive texts". They are peculiar in that in addition to their having a sacred nature, they address the minds together with the hearts of their audience. Translators rendering a historical

religious text may encounter linguistic and cultural problems which are attributed to more than one factor. Historical religious texts are categorized as classical texts which have an artistic style and usually directed to experts or educated laymen so that the translator should have a good knowledge in the topic he/she wishes to translate. Moreover, historical and religious texts are peculiar in that they have difficult and specialized lexicons which a translator may consistently make any attempt to compare and contrast different aspects of two languages to find the equivalents. Finally, religious texts include Quarnic verses, old or new testaments which need credible and reliable sources to render their contextual meaning as closely, completely and accurately as possible.

In his attempt to define translation and the role of a translator, Nida (1964) took into consideration the cultural elements by stating that “the role of a translator is to facilitate the transfer of the message, meaning, and cultural elements from one language into another and create an equivalent response to the receivers” (p.13). He also suggested that the message from the source language is embedded in a cultural context. Much of the lexis of a language has a cultural referent and is thus specific to a speech community. The meaning of culturally marked words is often difficult to grasp without some cultural knowledge and poses translation problems, particularly when the words are associated with cultural domains (Nida, 1975).

Newmark (1988) identified mistakes as referential, linguistic or mistakes of usage. Referential are about facts, the real world, propositions not words. However, linguistic mistakes show the translator’s ignorance of the foreign language: they may be grammatical, stylistic or lexical, including words, collocations or idioms. He stated that it is the style that ensures that the facts are effectively presented. Mistakes of usage are committed due firstly to an inability to write well, secondly perhaps to misuse of dictionary, thirdly to persistent seeking of one-to-one equivalents, fourthly and mainly to lack of common sense.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study intends to examine the problems that translators face when they render historical and religious texts,

investigate their causes and offer solutions in addressing these issues.

In order to achieve the above mentioned goals, the study will answer the following questions:

- 1.What are the linguistic and cultural problems that Jordanian graduate students face in rendering historical and religious texts?
- 2.What are the causes of these problems?
- 3.What solutions can be offered to ease these problems?

The research is significant because very few studies have explored the problems that translators face in translating historical and religious texts. Furthermore, this study is different with respect to the sample and the type of historical religious texts. Thus, it may benefit students of translation, translators, and teachers of translation and it will fill the gap in this area.

LIMITATIONS AND LIMITS OF THE STUDY

Results of this study may not be generalized to the whole society of translators. The results are limited to the students enrolled in the M.A. program in the Middle East University during the first semester 2012/2013 and to the instrument used in the study.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Linguistic Problems: show the translator’s ignorance of the foreign language; they may be grammatical, stylistic or lexical including words, collocations or idioms. Additionally, they include

mistakes of usage which are caused by translator's inability to write well; by misusing dictionaries; by seeking one-to-one equivalents, and mainly by lack of common sense. (Newmark, 1988).

Cultural Problems: problems that translators of Arabic-English translation face especially in translating words, phrases and expressions that are used figuratively or that may have no equivalence in the target language. Gaber (2005) discussed the following five translation techniques to avoid cultural problems; cultural equivalent, functional translation, paraphrasing, glossing and borrowing.

Equivalence: is the degree of similarity in message and effect between the source text and its translation.

Jordanian Graduate Students: are students majoring in the English language at Middle East University. These students were trained texts of cultural nature with emphasis on religious and historical expressions during the second semester 2011/2012. They also had ample training in translating culturally-bound texts.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Many theorists and linguists have elaborated on the intimate relationship between language, culture and translation i.e. Brown (1994) states that "language is a part of a culture and a culture is a part of a language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture." (p.165)

Dweik (2000) asserted that differences

between two cultures certainly cause difficulties not only in translation but also in learning foreign languages. He reported that interference problems result from either lack of knowledge of the target language or from the source language. He also discussed the role of non linguistic factors that either impede or enhance bilingualism.

Similarly, Baker (1992) mentioned that SL "source language" word may express a concept which is totally unknown in the target culture. It may be a religious belief, a social custom or even a type of food. She discussed the most common non-equivalents which a translator comes across in the process of translation. Cultural differences can cause some serious difficulties for translators that are not familiar with them. Some texts involve a considerable amount of cultural expressions and terms, such as metaphors, collocations, proverbs, religious terms and institutional terms. The role of a translator in such cases goes beyond conveying the meaning to conveying the culture.

Karimi (2000) defined the term equivalence by stating that finding equivalents in translation involves decoding the SL text and making an attempt to find an appropriate equivalent in the TL to encode whatever has been decoded in SL. Decoding the source text involves figuring out the meaning/ message/ intention of the original speaker or writer and then seeking how the same decoded meaning/ message/ intention is encoded in the target text (TT). Moreover, Karimi stated that sometimes, due to religious, cultural and literary factors, it is difficult to find a standard equiv-

alent in one language for another and he explained that in order to render a satisfactory translation the translator needs to be acquainted with phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, idiomatic, religious, and cultural systems of both SL & TL to either find standard equivalents, give an explanation, or otherwise convey the author's intended to the TL audience.

Gaber (2005) defined Translation equivalence as the degree of similarity in message and effect between the source text and its translation. He also discussed five translation techniques: The first one uses "cultural equivalent" words or phrases such as translating "it rains cats and dogs" by its Arabic equivalent "إنها تمطر كأفواه القرب". The second technique is the "functional translation" where the translator uses words/phrases that have the same function in the source language i.e. translating "hello" as "السلام عليكم". The third technique is "paraphrasing" in which the translator explains in the target language the meaning of the word/phrase in the source language such as translating the word "صلاة العصر" by "Late afternoon prayer". The fourth technique is "glossing" where the translator gives additional information in a footnote or within the text to explain the cultural word or expression such as explaining the Arabic word "AL-Zakat" by saying "it is one of the "Five Pillars of Islam," and is an important religious obligation for Muslims. It requires the giving of an individual's wealth. Historically, it was levied in Islamic countries as a tax upon adult Muslims". The fifth technique is "borrowing" where the transla-

tor borrows from the source language the word or phrase and Arabize it such as translating "شهر رمضان" by "The month of Ramadan".

Bakir and Lazim (2005) investigated stylistic errors made by Arab students at the university level in translating a text from Arabic into English. Thirty advanced-level students of the Department of English Language & Translation, Faculty of Foreign Languages & Translation, Ajman University of Science & Technology were tested. The tested were allowed to consult dictionaries. The researchers' choice was primarily based on the fact that students at this level have a fairly good command of English after 2-4 years of intensive study. Their concern would, however, be focused on expressive connected writing, i.e. students' versions should reflect the context (including particularly its literary flavour), and not merely on isolated items or structures.

The passage chosen for the test describes Basrah, Iraq. The economic and cultural aspects of the city are especially pinpointed. They concluded that in Arabic-into-English translation, the students encounter thorny problems in rendering style. Students' errors in translating style stems largely from the fact that they focus on words as isolated items whereas their main task ought to be directed to "perform a given function in the best possible way. The errors diagnosed in the students' versions fairly indicate that the task of the translator is rather multiple, for he should be aware of the linguistic, cultural, as well as idiosyncratic features of the language involved in the translation process.

Dweik and Abu-shaqra (2010) investigated the problems that translators face when rendering cultural collocations in three religious texts, namely, the Holy Quran, the Hadith and the Bible. To achieve the goal of the study, the researchers selected a purposive sample that comprised 35 students enrolled in M.A. translation programs at the Universities of Petra, Yarmouk and Jordan. The researchers also constructed a translation test that consisted of 45 contextual short sentences randomly selected from the above three religious texts and assigned 15 sentences for each religious text. The researchers concluded that (i) translators encountered difficulties in lexical and semantic collocations, (ii) translators of religious texts should be deeply aware of the nature of lexical and metaphoric collocations, should realize the disparities between Arabic concepts and beliefs and Western ones, and should always avoid literal translation by taking the context into consideration.

Reviewing the above mentioned em-

pirical studies helped the researchers to determine the methodology of the current study.

METHODOLOGY

Population and Sample of the Study

The population of this study consisted of M.A. students who were enrolled in the English language M.A. program during the first semester 2012/2013 at the Middle East University. A sample of 20 students was conveniently selected from the MEU. The demographic background of the sample included data related to their gender, age, education, occupation, languages, translation experience and the number of years spent in an English speaking country. Table (1) below describes the characteristics of the sample. The Ministry of Higher Education in Jordan requires that all graduate students, to be admitted in any master program, have passed the TOEFL test with a minimum score of 550 or passed the Jordanian National Exam for Graduate Students.

TABLE (1): DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

1	Age	No. of Students
	18-24	1
	25-29	9
	30-34	7
	35 and above	3
2	Gender	
	Male	10
	Female	10

3	Level of education	
	BA	0
	MA	20
4	First language	
	Arabic	18
	English	2
5	Translation experience	
	Yes	9
	No	11
6	No. of years spent in an English country	
	None	16
	Five years	0
	More than five years	4
7	Occupation	
	Teacher	11
	Translator	0
	Administrative assistant	2
	Others	7

INSTRUMENTS OF THE STUDY

The researchers used two instruments:
1) a translation test 2) open-ended interviews.

1. Translation Test

The test was designed to investigate the following:

1. The linguistic and cultural problems that M.A. students face in rendering historical and religious texts from Arabic into English.
2. The causes of the linguistic and cultural problems.

The test comprised six historical and religious texts to be translated from Arabic into English. These texts were carefully chosen from Younis Amr's

book "القدس: مدينة الله". The test was hand delivered by the researchers to the aforementioned university students during the first semester of the academic year 2012/2013. Students were urged to take the contextual meaning into account and were allowed to use whatever books or dictionaries they needed to help them in their translations. The researchers corrected the test by focusing on the problems that students encountered whether linguistic or cultural problems. Twenty five copies of the test were distributed, but only 20 responses were received back.

The scoring system was as follows:

- 1- A linguistically and culturally correct translation was given two marks.

2- An acceptable translation was assigned one mark. The answer was considered acceptable if the translation was culturally or linguistically correct. The translation may have some slight linguistic errors that did not change the meaning but culturally correct or the translation may be rendered correctly in terms of language but inexact in terms of culture. In other words, students may give non-equivalent cultural expressions or one which needs further explanation.

3- A wrong translation was given zero mark if the answer failed to render the cultural term and/or committed some fatal linguistic errors that changed the meaning of statements.

2. Open-ended Interviews

The second instrument was informal open-ended interviews; three experts at MEU (See Appendix 2) and five M.A. students were interviewed. Each interview consisted of the following three questions which were related to the problems the students usually encounter, the causes and solutions that could be presented to ease the problems. This technique helped the researchers to gather more information that could not be compiled from the test (See Appendix 1(A) and (B)).

DATA ANALYSIS

The collected data were analyzed by referring to the criteria suggested by Newmark (1988) and Gaber (2005) and by consulting a number of bilingual dictionaries such as (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1995) and Al-Mawrid, Arabic English, 1974).

With regard to the semantic translation of the Biblical and Quranic verses, the researchers referred to the websites <http://www.htmlbible.com> and <http://www.biblegateway.com> to examine the professional translators who translated the Bible and the Holy Quran.

RESULTS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Results of the test were presented first in simple tables by using percentages and frequencies followed by a description of the content of the tables. Then, results of interviews with the translation experts and M.A. English language and literature students were also discussed. The results were discussed and explained in light of the previous theoretical and empirical literature and with reference to the limitations of the study. The study answered the following questions:

- 1.What are the linguistic and cultural problems that Jordanian graduate students face in rendering historical and religious texts?
- 2.What are the causes of these problems?
- 3.What solutions can be offered to ease these problems?

RESULTS RELATED TO THE FIRST QUESTION:**TABLE (1) STUDENTS' TRANSLATION PERFORMANCE IN THE ARABIC ENGLISH TEST**

Texts	Accurate Answer 2 Points		Acceptable answer 1 Point		Wrong answer	
	Frequen- cy	Percent- age	Frequen- cy	Percent- age	Frequen- cy	Percent- age
Text No. 1	2	10%	9	45%	9	45%
Text No. 2	2	10%	0	0%	18	90%
Text No. 3	2	10%	1	5%	17	85%
Text No. 4	2	10%	7	35%	11	55%
Text No. 5	2	10%	7	35%	11	55%
Text No. 6	0	0%	9	45%	11	55%
Total of responses for 20 students	Accurate Answer		Acceptable answer		Wrong answer	
	Percentage		Percentage		Percentage	
Total	8%		29.2%		62.5%	

The outcome of the six texts is presented first in Table (1) above. Each item is discussed separately to show the kind of problems that students faced and the kind of the reasons that stand behind the poor translation performance of the students. Then, responses of the interviewed professors and students are stated and presented. Table (1) shows that only 10% of the students have correct translations for all the texts. While the lowest percentage of wrong answers is in text number 1 (45%), the highest percentages of wrong answers are for

texts number 2 (90%) and number 3 (85%). On the other hand, the highest percentages of acceptable translation are for texts number 1 and number 6 (45% for each) and the lowest are for texts number 2 and number 3 (0% and 5% respectively).

Text No. 1

إن مدينة القدس مدينة للقداسة والإيمان منذ نشأتها، تعلقت بها قلوب الناس جميعاً من المتدينين بالإديان كافة، ولا يجوز لأحد من الخلق الإدعاء بملكيتها أو نسبتها لشخصية دينية أو تاريخية مهما بلغت مكانتها.

Table (1) showed that (10%) of the stu-

dents provided a correct translation as in:

Jerusalem is a city of holiness and faith since its emergence. The hearts of all religious people are attached to it/ Jerusalem captivated the hearts of the people. It is, thus, not permissible for anyone to claim its ownership or attribute it to a religious or historical figure, regardless of his/her importance.

Meanwhile, (45%) provided acceptable translations as they had simple grammatical errors which may have resulted from a lack of proof-reading. For example some students wrote "the hearts of all religious people is attached to it". Such a grammatical error could easily be corrected if the students revised their renditions. Other students tended to paraphrase the metaphoric expression "وتعلقت بها قلوب الناس جميعاً من المتدينين كافة" by providing a corresponding expression that gives an equivalent effect such as: "it has a great place in the hearts of all religious people."

However, (45%) of the students provided wrong translations that included linguistic and stylistic errors which may be attributed to the fact that this text has a formal style and language which made students misunderstand the original source text. To illustrate this claim further, consider the following examples:

Jerusalem is a city for Holiness and faith since its inception, it was in the hearts of all people of different religions, and notably man has the right to claim it as his or her property or attributed it to historical or religious celebrity.

Such translation showed that some students have improper usage of punctua-

tion and grammar as using "for Holiness" instead of "of Holiness". They also misunderstood the referential meaning of the text which reversed the meaning. Other students failed to render the equivalent effect of the metaphoric expression "وتعلقت بها قلوب" because they translated it by deleting many words which weakened the meaning, as in: "all people loved it". Still others used literal translation and committed lexical, grammatical and semantic errors such as translating "منذ نشأتها" as "since it is finding". The literal translation caused punctuation problems where students used commas like the Arabic text. These translations indicate the inability of some students in understanding the meaning in context. This result supports Bakir and Lazim (2005) who concluded that students' errors in translation stem largely from the fact that they focus on words as isolated items whereas their main task ought to be directed to perform a given function in the best possible way.

Text No. 2

وإن كان اليهود قد استغلوا وجود داود فيها وقتاً يسيراً من الزمن أسوأ استغلال، بل تحدوا مشاعر الناس في ادعاء نسبته اليه، ذلك النبي الملك الذي ذكرها كغيره من الأنبياء جميعاً، وإن اختلف ذكره لها عن هؤلاء الأنبياء بمعان من الحسرة والأسى، صارخاً معاهداً أنه لن ينساها، فقد كان ذلك في وقت محنة قبل وبعد ثورة ابنه إشالوم عليه، حين اضطر إلى مغادرة المدينة هارباً من وجه ذلك الولد العاق.

This text comprises one long sentence which makes it difficult for students to present the facts in an acceptable style

and causes lack of coherence. Only (10%) of the students translated it by giving an equivalent meaning as in:

Not only had the Jews badly taken advantage of David's short stay in Jerusalem, but they also defied people's feelings by claiming that they inherited this city from David, the prophet and the king who mentioned it as other prophets did but his recall was different as he experienced deep sorrow and grief, pledging to keep its memory forever. The recall conveyed his ordeal before and after his son Absalom* revolted against him, forcing him to leave the city and to run away from that disobedient boy.

*According to the Bible, Absalom or Avshalom was the third son of David, who eventually rebelled against his father and was killed during the Battle of Ephraim Wood.

Ninety percent of the students have wrong translations because they chose word-for-word and literal translation of the source text. As a result, some renditions were actually both ungrammatical and meaningless. To illustrate this claim further, consider the following translation:

Though the Jews had taken advantage of the presence of David, and challenged the people's feelings in the attributing this city to him, that the Prophet the King, who mentioned it like all other prophets, even though, his way of mentioning it was different from other prophets. He pledged that it will not be forgotten, this was at a time when the plight of before and after the revolution of his son Absalom, when he was forced to leave the city at large for

not seeing that disobedient son.

Mistranslations were sometimes due to misunderstanding the text. For example some students translated "وقتاً يسيراً من الزمن" as "a long period of time" while others preferred to delete it. In both cases, the meaning is distorted. However, some students understood the meanings involved in the text but they found difficulties in presenting the facts in an acceptable style. This can be explained that Arabic tends to connect sentences more frequently than English. Some students used the comma to connect sentences which produced run-on sentences as in:

....., that the Prophet the King who mentioned it like all other prophets, but his way of mentioning it was different as it expressed sorrow and grief, shouting and pledging that he will not forget it, this was his ordeal before and after his son Absalom revolted against, when he was forced to leave the city for not seeing that disobedient son.

Additionally, the usage of the emphatic article "إن" in Arabic which indicates the emphasis is translated literally and thus it failed to produce the same impact of the source language. Moreover, some translations transliterated the proper nouns "داود" as "Dawood" and "أبشالوم" as Abshaloom" and others provided insufficient and sometimes wrong renditions by paraphrasing "صارخاً معاهداً"، "محنة"، "الولد العاق" as "cried and promised", "bad times", "doesn't follow the steps of his father" respectively. This result confirms the findings of Newmark (1988).

Text No. 3

ولد المسيح عليه السلام في أواخر حكم هيرودس الكبير الذي استطاع أن يوجد شيئاً من الإستقرار في فلسطين إبان حكمه، ذلك الإستقرار الذي انتهى بموته، مما حدا بالرومان إلى التحول بحكم فلسطين بما فيها القدس من الحكم الإقطاعي المحلي اللامركزي إلى الحكم المركزي التابع لسوريا وعاصمة الروم فيها أنطاكية، فعين الرومان حكاماً رومانيين بدلاً من الحكام المحليين، وكان ذلك بعد فشل ابن هيرودس في القيام بمهام الحكم خلال سنين حكمه بعد موت أبيه.

Only (10%) of the renditions are culturally equivalent and linguistically correct as in:

Jesus, Christ, peace be upon him, was born during the reign of Herod, the Great, who created some stability in Palestine. This stability ended with Herod's death. This event led the Romans to turn away from the local decentralized feudalism in Palestine including Jerusalem and followed the centralized rule of the Romans whose capital city was Antioch(*). Because Herod's son failed to carry out his duties during his reign after his father's death, the Romans appointed Roman rulers instead of local ones.

*Antioch: is an ancient city located on the eastern side of the Orontes River (a river of Lebanon, Syria and Turkey). It is near the modern city of Antakya, Turkey. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antioch>

While only (5%) of the students provided acceptable translations without adding explanatory notes inside the main body of the target text to make it more natural and comprehensible to target readers, (85%) of them provided wrong translations. They were wrong lexically

and syntactically because the students failed to produce natural translations. Additionally, some students adopted literal translation which weakened their style and didn't help them in communicating the meaning accurately and economically. Also it is clear that some students did not analyze the text before starting their translation in order to achieve a better understanding. For example, one student rendered "ذلك الإسقرار" as "الذي انتهى بموته" as "This peace caused his death." Other students failed to give correct translations for names of places and persons such as: "هيرودس، أنطاكية، الرومان" which were translated as "Herodius, Antakia, Al-Massieh, and Ruman". Some students used words out of context as in "حدا" which was rendered as "restrict" and "الحكم" as "judgment". Other translations did not furnish the cultural equivalents for the technical terms "الحكم الإقطاعي المحلي" "اللامركزي، الحكم المركزي" which were sometimes rendered as "central ruling, local and non-central ruling". This result supports the findings of Nida (1975), Baker (1992), Dweik (2000), Karimi (2000) and Gaber (2005).

Text No. 4

The following text is quoted from the Old Testament:

إن نسيبتك يا أورشليم نسيبتك يميني. لياتصق ((لسانني بحنكي إن لم أذكرك إن لم أفضل أورشليم (على أعظم فرحي)). (من المزمور 137: 5,6).

Only (10%) of the students provided translations by referring to the available online resources such as:

<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%20>

137&version=NIV

5 If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cleverness.

6 If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy. (Psalm 137: 5,6)."

However, 35% of the students rendered acceptable translations because they didn't mention the source of their translations. For credible reasons, translators should cite the source of Quranic and Biblical translations. On the other hand, (55%) of the students rendered wrong translations because they used Google translation as in:

If I forget thee, Jerusalem thee, my right hand. To stick my tongue Bhandi if I remind you, if not the best Jerusalem greatest joy.

Other translations were wrong because students incorrectly rendered "المزمور" as "Orshalem and Al-mazmour" and sometimes didn't translate "المزمور". Moreover, their renditions were highly informal and inexpressive, as in:

I forget you Orshaleem, my hand also forgets you. Let's my mouth shut up if I don't remember you and don't prefer Orshalem to my greatest joy.

Google translation not only affects the form of the text but also it changes its meaning. The words are translated out of context and formal expressive vocabularies are rendered colloquially. Google translation does not adhere to standard rules of grammar, punctuation and style. Moreover, Google translation does not pay attention to cultural terms and expressions. Google translation produces distortion and loss of cultural and linguistic meanings. It is highly

advisable that students refer to the available translations and choose the most credible sources based on critical analysis of the translation. This translation supports the results of Dweik and Abu Shaqra (2010) who concluded that translators should pay attention to the disparities between Arabic names and the Western ones.

Text No. 5

كان داود ابن ثلاثين سنة حين ملك وملك أربعين ((سنة. في حبرون ملك على يهوذا سبع سنين وستة أشهر...)). (صموئيل الثاني 5: 4,5)

Only (10%) of the students provided correct translation by referring to the following website:

<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Samuel+5&version=KJ21>

David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. 5 In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months,...). (Samuel II 5:4,5).

While (35%) of the students rendered it acceptably without mentioning their source of translations, translations of (55%) were wrong as their renditions were not equivalent to the source text grammatically, lexically, stylistically and culturally, as in:

Dawood was 30 years old when he became a king and he ruled 40 year. In Hibron he ruled 7 years and 6 months. Moreover, some students couldn't provide the exact meaning for "ملك" which is mentioned twice in the text. They translated it as "king". Some students didn't give the equivalent English names of "يهوذا، حبرون، داود، صموئيل". These cultural terms were translated

as “Yahutha, Hibron, Dawood and Samoeel”. Such translations may happen due to students’ lack of knowledge, or students’ inability to use resources properly or borrowing these words from Arabic.

Text No. 6

The following text is quoted from the Holy Quran:

سبحان الذي أسرى بعبده ليلاً من المسجد الحرام إلى المسجد الأقصى الذي باركنا حوله لنرى من آياتنا انه هو السميع البصير

Results showed that while (55%) of the students furnished wrong translation, (45%) rendered acceptable ones. The wrong translations suffered from lexical, cultural and stylistic problems. Consider the following translations:

Glory to Allah who carried his servant at night in a journey from the forbidden mosque to the farthest one which we bless to show him from our verses, he is the hearer and seeier

Glorified be He who took his slave for a journey by a night from Al-Masjid Al-haram (at Mekkah) to Al-Aqsa Mosque (in Jerusalem), the neighborhood whereof we have blessed.

Exalted is He who took His servant by night from Al-Masjid Al-Haram to Al-Masjid Al-aqsa whose surroundings we have blessed, to show him of our signs. Indeed, he is the hearing, the seeing.

An example of lexical errors is the word “عبده”. Here, it does not mean “slave” or “servant”; rather, it has many meanings such as “worshipper”, or “messenger”.

Students also failed to render the exact equivalent cultural expressions for the expressions “المسجد الحرام” which was

translated as “the forbidden mosque” and “المسجد الأقصى” as “the farthest one” or “Al-Aqsa Mosque”. They should have added footnotes in the main body of the target texts, explaining the cultural intended meaning. Other students did not render the whole verse. Instead, they produced incomplete and inaccurate contextual meaning. It is important that translators refer to available interpretation (tafsir) sources for the meanings of the holy Quran verses.

Moreover, other students used informal style and simple everyday language to render such an expressive, sacred and highly formal text as in:

“Glory is to Allah who sent his messenger to heaven at night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque which we bless to show him our signs. he is the hearing, the seeing.”

Furthermore, they have committed wrong punctuation such as “heaven”, “we”, “our” and “he” which should be “Heaven” “We”, “Our” and “He”.

RESULTS OF THE INTERVIEWS

Five students were interviewed after answering the test. They were asked three questions. The first one dealt with the problems that they encountered while translating historical and religious texts. Their answers are summarized as follows:

1 – Inability to comprehend the meaning of the original text because of its formal style, vocabulary and structure.

2 - Inability to find the equivalence in ordinary dictionaries and the need for more specialized dictionaries and re-

sources.

3 - Uncertainty about which translation technique can be more appropriate to render the meaning accurately.

4 - Unfamiliarity with some cultural equivalents for religious, historical and geographical terms and lexicons.

The experts in the field of language studies have answered this question based on their experience. The first professor said that students face serious problems when they come to quotations from the Bible and the Quran which should be translated according to accredited texts in English. The second professor mentioned that translators of historical and religious texts lack the specific knowledge and don't give special attention to cultural issues. Additionally, translators lack the adequate knowledge in the linguistic systems of the language, such as semantics, syntax and stylistics. The third professor made it clear that translators of historical and religious texts are not familiar with the specialized dictionaries from which they choose the exact meanings without distorting the translation. Additionally, students are unfamiliar with translation techniques and methods which significantly help them in having correct renditions.

RESULTS RELATED TO THE SECOND QUESTION

The second question dealt with the reasons that make students encounter such problems while translating historical and religious texts. The students gave the following reasons:

1- Lack of courses that deal with differ-

ent types of translation such as historical, religious, medical, scientific, business, legal and media to name few.

2 – Lack of knowledge in Arabic historical and religious texts.

3 - Unfamiliarity with Biblical and Quranic quotations.

4 - Lack of general knowledge especially in terms of geographical terms and proper nouns.

5 - Lack of reading historical and religious texts in English.

6- Lack of knowledge in how to overcome the issues of style and formality in both languages.

The translation professors have their own points of view regarding the reasons that might stand behind the poor translations of some historical and religious texts. For instance, the first professor mentioned that students are generally weak in both English and Arabic. Their knowledge and culture are also poor. They, therefore, have to practice English structures and to be exposed heavily to varieties of texts. The second professor agrees with the first in that students who were not exposed to such texts during their undergraduate education may prevent them from furnishing proper renditions. The third expert argued that the problems in this area stemmed from being technically unaware of the standard equivalent translations of these texts and also most students do not proof-read their translations for the purpose of improving their English style of writing which, according to Newmark (1988), ensures that facts are effectively presented.

RESULTS RELATED TO THE THIRD QUESTION

The third question dealt with solutions to these problems. The students gave the following responses:

- 1 - Introducing some courses that concentrate on the second language culture and others that deal with translation studies to get them familiar with its techniques and practice translation before they enter the real market.
- 2 - Instructing teachers to give more attention to the linguistic, syntactic and stylistic issues.
- 3 - Arranging activities that focus on interaction with native language speakers.
- 4 - Providing the students with lists of specialized dictionaries and useful resources for quotations taken from the Bible and Quran.
- 5- Encouraging students to improve their readings of historical and religious texts.

The three professors suggested that, first of all, more courses that deal with translation studies in general and historical and religious texts in particular should be introduced. They stressed that students should be fully aware of the proper translation methods and highlighted the issue of literal translation and mentioned that translators cannot render such texts into another language literally. Moreover, they should encourage students to do some research on this topic and be exposed to such texts and conduct direct contacts with native speakers of English. Finally, one professor recommended that students should learn more than one foreign lan-

guage as this may help them very much in understanding the different cultures and reducing language interference.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper investigated the linguistic and cultural problems that graduate M.A. students confronted when translating historical and religious texts. Some students furnished good translations because they were aware, to some extent, of the differences between the source and the target languages and cultures. Other students faced many problems and committed plenty of linguistic and cultural errors. These problems are: misusing English dictionaries; using informal style including informal words; improper use of connectors and punctuations; improper use of translation methods, providing non-equivalent lexical, grammatical and cultural terms such as names of places, cities and personal names. For example, some students translated "هيرودس الكبير" in text No. 3 as "the big Herodus" and others deleted the expression "عليه السلام" in the same sentence. Some students didn't give the equivalent English names of "يهوذا، حبرون، داود، صموئيل" which were translated as "Yahutha, Hibrion, Dawood and Samoeel". Additionally, students didn't give footnotes for the cultural terms "المسجد الحرام، المسجد الأقصى" in the main body of the target language. Geographical terms are also important cultural items in this respect. For instance, lack of knowledge in this point led some students to borrow "أنطاكية" in text No. 3 and translated it as "Antakia" and "أورشليم" in text no. 4

as "Orshalem". Additionally, some students didn't preserve the formal style of religious texts and used informal words to render the contextual meaning of the verse. For example, some students translated "إن نسينك أورشليم" as "I forget you Orshaleem" instead of "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem".

However, students faced such problems because, firstly, they are unfamiliar with some cultural equivalents for religious, historical and geographical terms and lexicons. Secondly, they are unable to find the equivalence in ordinary dictionaries and they need more specialized dictionaries and resources. Thirdly, they are uncertain about which translation technique which can be more appropriate to render the meaning accurately. Some students used Google translation which produced weak target texts. Fourthly, students lack the knowledge in overcoming the issue of style and formality in both languages. Fifthly, they lack courses that deal with different types of translation such as historical, religious, medical, scientific, business, legal and media to name few. Finally, due to the differences between the English and Arabic linguistic systems students encountered some difficulties especially in translating long and complex Arabic structures. Arabic tends to connect sentences more frequently than English by using commas. This difference forced students to translate literally, producing ungrammatical translations.

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<http://www.biblegateway.com> (Translation of Old Testament)

Appendix 1(A)

Open-Ended Interview Questions- For Experts

Informal interviews

Open-ended questions:

1-Based on your experience, what problems do students face when rendering historical and religious texts?

2- In your opinion, what are the factors that make students encounter such problems?

3-What solutions do you think can improve the students' translation when they translate historical and religious texts?

Appendix 1 (B)

Open-Ended Interview Questions- For Students

Informal interviews

Open-ended questions:

1-As an M.A. student, what problems do students face when rendering historical and religious texts?

2-In your opinion, what are the factors that make students encounter such problems?

3-What solutions do you think can facilitate the student's translation of historical and religious texts?