Arabic Language and Emotiveness’s Translation

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Abstract—This paper addresses the translatability of Emotiveness in the Arabic language which is a very expressive language. Emotiveness might be of a particular importance for Arabic readers, because words carry a great deal of emotional content either in themselves or in the context they are imbedded in. Arabic language is well known for being eloquent, expressive, clear, rich, rational, scientific, flexible, and emotive all at once and in many ways. The paper illustrates major problems emerging while translating between Arabic and English, two distant language and two different cultures. This paper gives translators and readers an example of how to look at emotiveness in the Arabic language by studying the main sources of emotiveness. The ambition of this paper is to enrich the literature on translation with new examples of emotiveness by pointing out the expected problem areas when translating emotive expressions. Furthermore, this paper is significant since it attempts to answer the question of whether emotiveness constitutes a problem when translating from Arabic into English and whether the meaning and the musicality of poetry for example are translatable or not.

Index Terms—Arabic language, emotiveness, translation, translatability.

I. INTRODUCTION

The first part of this paper is discussing the possibility of translating between languages due to the arbitrary relation between the signifier and the signified which are the two faces of the linguistic sign.

The second part illustrates major problems emerging while translating between Arabic and English, two distant languages and two different cultures.

The third part is discussing how the difficulty of translating emotiveness from Arabic into English does not hinder the process of translating it, this section includes several examples of emotiveness resources. It also discuss the interaction between emotiveness, culture, language, meaning, and translation as well as the concept of translatability with some examples.

II. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRANSLATION AND LANGUAGE

There have been many debates about, the possibility of translation, the relationship between translation and the two concepts “langue” and “parole” and whether translation is more related to “langue” or “parole”. Language is probably the most familiar practice among members of human communities. However, when asked what language is, even the most educated person would fail to give a satisfactory definition, because language is a multi-faceted concept.

Language is a means of communication where at least two parties must be present: the producer and the receiver. Moreover, word meaning in language is controversial, language is systematic, i.e. the stringing of words together to make phrases and sentences is a rule-governed procedures, the relationship between the signifier (the acoustic image of the word) and the signified (the mental image of the object in the outside world) is arbitrary, i.e. it cannot be explained using logic, for example: كتب BOOK, or P.V.G.M, Moon, Stars.

In his works, Saussure [1] focused on what he called language, which is “a system of signs that express ideas”, and he divided it into: “langue” (linguistic competence): the abstract system of language that is internalized by a given speech community, and “parole” (speech): linguistic performance which is the individual acts of speech and the practice of language. Furthermore, we have semiology which is the science which studies the life of signs within society, langue, the stock lexical + la system de regles de parole = the actual act of speaking. Semiotics or semiology includes three branches: Semantics, studies the relation between signs and the things they refer to, Syntax studies the relation of signs to each other in the formal structure and Pragmatics, studies the relation of signs to their impacts on those who use them.

What makes translation possible is the arbitrariness relation between the signifier and the signified, the signifier could be changed (translated) for the same signified using different languages.

Translation therefore is a transfer process from a foreign language or a second language to another language, the interpreting of the meaning of a text and a subsequent production of an equivalent text, communicating the same message in another language. The text to be translated is the source text; the text to be produced is the target text. Translation takes into account constraints that include context, grammar of the two languages in question, their writing conventions, and their idioms, context includes, the author, the text, and the audience.

As we said earlier, “Parole” is the utilization de la langue par un sujet paralant” which includes a meaning intended by this “sujet”. The enunciation / the utterance is a fundamental element of the meaning, which is the core of translation (Benveniste), “enunciators” or utterances are the actual act of speaking, the linguistic performance “la parole” while “langue” is “la system de signes et de regles depose dans la memoire des locuteurs”. This gave importance to discourse which is a connected or unconnected series of utterances or a text, the interaction between two subjects (the author) and (the target audience) that takes place under specific circumstances and with a specific objective, why discourse? Because the meaning of a text which is the core of translation is the result of certain constructions which are the production of, the author intention, the text and the reader who interpret
the text according to his knowledge, opinions, values and motivations studying the meaning in the context of communication is the object of “enunciation” or what we called “la linguistique de l’enunciation”. The components of enunciation which are very important elements when we translate a text are, the deixis, the enonciateur (I, Je), l’onoctataire (Tu, You), the place and the time (here, now).

Another argument which support the claim that translation is about “parole” is the fact that Jacobson affirms that translation is not about isolated words but “entire messages”. He also recommended the use of two instruments to help the translators in their translation which are the bilingual dictionaries and the grammar of the languages concerned.

Furthermore, this discussion of “parole” is leading to “languge” and “l’emploi de la langue” language use which is the “mise de fonctionnement de la langue par un acte individual de l’ enunciation” which is “parole” one aspect of “enunciation” utterance is “les actes de langage, speech Acts” which are part of the pragmatics; the interaction between speaker and hearer, the context of utterance (physical, social and linguistic) and the potential meaning of an utterance. The utterance /enunciation has three different acts, act of selecting words and combining them according to grammatical structure, Locutionary Act, the intention of the enonciateur, Illocutionary Act, and the effect of the enonciation sur l’enonciataire, Perlocutionary Act. Taking into consideration that one Locutionary Act might have different illocutionary values depending on the context of its utterance, for instance

Utterance 1→Close the door, if not your paper will fly

Valeurilloctoire = avertissement, warning

Utterance 1→Close the door, I ask you to close the door

Valeurilloctoire = order

Consequently, from this example we can see the importance of pragmatics for translation; it changes our understanding of a text, since a text is not a stable form in which the meaning is interpreted according to the situation of utterances, i.e. as interaction between the producer of the text and the reader of the text. In order to understand an utterance we not only have to assign reference i.e. to determine in context who or what is being referred to. John Austin was convinced that we don’t just use language to say things (statements) but to do things (perform actions).This supports the fact that translation is about “parole” not about “languge” because language is only an instrument to say things and to do things by performing actions (Austin [2]).

Furthermore, the speech act theory of Austin brings the theory and practice of translation together and according to this theory, the meaning of an utterance is a composite thing comprising both its sense and force. Both parts of the meaning should therefore be taken into consideration in translation. But the ways in which speech acts are realized differ between languages. For example a request in English normally takes the form of a question “can I have some sugar?” while in Arabic it is formulated in a direct way “سکراًأريد”(I want some sugar), or “سکراًأعطني ”(give me some sugar).

The conception of meaning in translation which is related to the actual use of “languge” which is “parole” has expanded to include sense, reference, denotation and connotation, which are all related to the text. Translation is about texts which are stretches of language and this is functional, i.e. doing some job in some contexts as opposed to isolated words or sentences.

To conclude and after this brief illustration of some language components, definitions and uses, we can say that what makes translation possible is the arbitrariness relation between the signifier and the signified, the signifier could be translated for the same signified using different languages. Moreover, we can say that language is not only a set of words and a set of grammatical rules, language is a use, a practical use which depend on the speaker, the context in which he speaks or write, the audience or the receptor of his discourse and their backgrounds, cultural and social and sometimes age or gender, all these elements together form the practical use or the actual use of language, which was assigned as "parole" according to Saussure. Consequently, while translating we don't translate word by word, we translate a whole utterance, an entire messages (parole) in using the language as a tool or instrument of communication, but as Jacobson put it when we communicate we exchange ideas, information, etc., where we have at least two persons, the speaker or the writer and the hearer or the reader, exchanging a message in a context using a code, a language to convey certain information or ideas.

When language is used a speaker has some message in his mind, he chooses words with suitable meanings and put them together in appropriate grammatical constructions. This use or this actual use of a language is what translation is all about, translating the message from one language to another.

### III. WHY ARABIC/ENGLISH TRANSLATION MIGHT BE PROBLEMATIC

Arabic belongs to the Semitic group of languages, whereas English is a West Germanic language. Arabic culture and English or Western cultures are also different in many ways. Linguistic differences might raise different types of problems when translating from Arabic into English or vice versa, especially in translating; connectivity, punctuation, paragraph organization, argumentation, number and gender, relative nouns/ pronouns/clauses, as well as in cases of monitoring and managing, lexical non-equivalence, cultural-bound expressions, emotiveness, repetition, redundancy, euphemism, untranslatability, and synonymy [3]. Due to time constraints only emotiveness will be illustrated below.

### IV. EMOTIVENESS

In this paper we are highly and mainly concerned about how the difficulty of translating emotiveness - which might be - an Arabic-bound phenomenon - does not hinder the possibility of translation between Arabic and English. Therefore, different categories of emotiveness, the relationship between language, culture, and translation, connotative meanings, and their translation, as well as the concept of translatability will be discussed in the following pages.
V. LANGUAGE AND MEANING

Language includes six major branches: syntax, phonology, prosody, morphology, pragmatics, and semantics. The branches which are related to this paper are semantics and pragmatic. Pragmatic is a subfield of linguistics which studies the ways in which context contributes to meaning while semantics is the science that studies the relationship between the signs and the objects to which they refer, as well as the study of the meaning of words and sentences in human language. Each sign in the language has two faces like a sheet of paper, the signified on one side and the signifier on the other side. We believe that translation is possible because of the arbitrariness relation between the signifier and the signified and the fact that the signifier can be translated in different languages. Catford defines meaning as “the total network of relations entered into by any linguistic form-text, item-in-text, structure, element of structure, class term in system, or whatever it may be” [4]. In his book Translation and Translating, R.T. Bell distinguishes between denotative and connotative meanings; the first refers to referential and associative meanings, which are related to the concept of emotive meaning.

Emotive meaning or emotive meaning are part of the connotative meaning of a concept or a word, and the meaning therefore differs from person to person and from one language to another, and consequently from culture to culture. Emotive expressions might in some cases depend on the context, text type, and the intention of the speaker. They might also be used to emotionally impact the addressee or to reveal the speaker’s reaction or feelings towards the subject matter. The expressions of emotiveness can also be positive or negative.

Different scholars who have studied emotive expressions have divided them differently. Volek has divided emotive expressions into the following categories: phonetic/phonological, morphological, lexical units, syntactical, intonational, and the use of direct address [7]. Shamma as cited in Shunnaq has also followed Volek’s division [3]. While Shunnaq divides emotive expression into two types: negative and positive, and traces the main sources of emotive expressions to figures of speech and cultural expressions [3], [10] and [11]. Figures of speech include metaphor, euphemism, and dysphemism, and personification among others, which in addition to their denotative meanings carry emotive overtones.

VII. EMOTIVENESS AND TRANSLATION

There are many ways to define and describe emotiveness using the dichotomy mentioned above, the denotative and connotative meanings. Denotative meaning is the conceptual or dictionary meaning, while connotative meaning includes the emotional associations which are suggested by lexical items, and is equivalent to emotive or expressive meaning. In this regard Bronislava Volek states that “Emotive expressions have no meaning formed by the qualities of the object referred to, but it is sort of an intended meaning formed by the associative features of the object expressed” [7].

Emotive expressions stir up strong feelings such as: love, hate, joy, pleasure, fear, and grief. Furthermore, the attitudes connotative meaning reveal about an object or an event may be favorable or unfavorable, and they can be used to express emotions (expressive function), to affect the addressee (appellative function), or to establish some contact with the addressee (phatic function) (Volek). Shunnaq argues that “an emotive meaning is a function of responses, i.e. certain words tend to produce emotive responses showing that there is emotive meaning.” [3].

Nida defines connotative meaning as “the aspects of author and the emotional response of a receptor, it can be bad or good, strong or weak” [8]. For Nida emotiveness is the result of the interaction of the triangle of author, text, and audience. Geoffrey Leech has also discussed emotive meaning. He divides meaning into seven types in his book Semantics [9]. Among these seven types, he includes: connotative, affective, and associative meanings, which might be considered the major categories of emotiveness.

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and their translatability, we should take into consideration that emotions are variable and cannot be measured, or determined in advance, and that they differ from person to person according to the cultural context and the specific situation or event that triggers them. “How do we know which words are the words for emotions? Only from the role they play in the local culture, picking out displays that seem to express judgments of one's own and other people's behavior along dimensions familiar to all of us, having to do with loss, possession, and enjoyment and so on” [12].

Although emotions are controversial and cannot be controlled nor predicted in advance, they are very important in our lives. Emotions constitute a part of our daily life and our reactions and attitudes towards our own experiences and what is happening to other people around us, or anywhere else in the world.

Emotions play an important role in culture: in our particular context, they are expressed in words, later to influence “reality”... emotive meaning in the lexical sense consists in the hierarchical list of emotions that are aroused in the native user of the language upon using the word in question, augmented by the peripheral sense, i.e., connotations, associations, metaphors, idioms, and non-verbal communication [13].

Moreover, “the connection between emotions, religion, and society is also emphasized by Islamic educational literature... Not only does it provide duties that address emotions ... religious means are offered in the psychological emotional treatment of individuals” [13]. It goes without saying that Islam has influenced all aspects of the life of Arab-Muslims, but the Arabic culture is also influenced by Christianity and Judaism, as we will see Darwish’s poetry is full of allusions to the three religions dominant in the Arabic world, Islam, Christianity, and Judaism.

Studying the translatability of emotiveness in is a thorny task which requires an in-depth reading of the Arabic texts as well as their translation. To define whether a lexical item is emotive or not is a tricky task which needs the real experiment of what types of emotions and feelings these items evoke when one reads them. The reader response to these emotive items might depend on the age, background, and the encyclopedic knowledge of the reader as well as the context. The context of the expression is required to decide whether these expressions are emotive or not, but sometimes “the emotive component of an expression seems to reside, at least in part, in the words themselves rather than exclusively in the peripheral and the contextual” [13].

One can say that any language is a tool to facilitate the communication between the members of the same society as well as between the members of different societies. While denotative meanings might not create problems among the members of a speech community because these meanings are mutually shared, connotative meanings might constitute a problem in communication because each word has a different set of connotations and reactions that vary from one person to another and according to context, which might constitute a difficulty while translating. Since connotations might vary from person to person in the same speech community, then consequently it will also vary from culture to culture and from language to language. For example: in the West, a dog is considered a domestic pet, treated and taken care of as a member of the family, while in the Arab culture, the situation is different. Usually, dogs are not to be found at homes and are not treated as members of the family. Even though the term “dog” in both Western and Arab culture is denotatively identical, it has a negative connotation in the Arab culture, mostly for religious reasons: for example, if a Muslim touches a dog he has to make his ablutions before prayer. An owl is another example. It has the same denotative meaning in all cultures, but connotes pessimism, loss of hope, and bad omen in the Arab culture, while it symbolizes wisdom and beauty in Western cultures.

VIII. TRANSLATION, CULTURE, AND THE CONNOTATIVE MEANING

Bell considers the translation of connotative meaning as somehow problematic, and defines translation as “The transformation of a text originality in one language into an equivalent text in a different language, retaining as far as it is possible, the content of the message, the formal features, and the functional roles of the original text” [5].

He affirms that finding the right equivalent for the connotative meaning is not an easy task, because the crucial element which one has to take into consideration when one translates is that one is trying to write an “equivalent” text. This “equivalent text” could be possible, or might be difficult in some cases, depending on the nature of the language and the culture from which we are translating. Taking into consideration that translation is possible because of the arbitrary relation between the signifier and the signified, and the fact that the signifier could be changed (or translated) while the signified might remain the same. Accordingly, translation is possible, but the way in which each language expresses and describes things is different. Therefore, the translator faces some difficulties in translating the connotative meanings which differ from language to language and from culture to culture.

Language and culture can be seen as inseparable; there is no culture without language representing it and there is no language without culture as part of it. We might say that language cannot be understood perfectly without its culture, as Nida states: “Translating can never be discussed apart from the cultures of respective languages, since languages themselves are a crucial part of culture” [8]. Translation cannot be perceived as transferring meaning from one language to another, but it could be perceived as transferring cultural elements from a source culture to a target culture.

“Culture” is a widely used concept in translation theories, and there are various definitions for it. Generally speaking, Newmark defines culture as the way of life and its manifestations in a given society. In the same line, Faidq Said refers to culture as: “Beliefs and value systems tacitly assumed to be collectively shared by particular social groups and to the positions taken by producers and receivers of texts, including translations, during the mediation process” [14]. Culture then is a cumulative experience which includes knowledge, beliefs, morals, art, traditions, and any habits acquired by a group of people in a society (Bahameed [15]). Culture also includes the system of habits and behavior of
which language is an essential part. “Language is the most clearly recognizable part of culture and the part that has lent itself most readily to systematic study and theory building” (Hofstede [16]). The vocabulary constitutes the most important cultural aspect of a group of people in a particular setting whether religious, social, or environmental. Connotative meanings of lexical items of different cultures might vary; therefore translation becomes a crucial tool through which people can access other cultures.

Furthermore, culture is a very complex and controversial issue because all human groups have their own specific culture which differs from other groups’ cultures in different manners (Bahameed). One can say that what is considered culturally acceptable to one group might not be acceptable for another group for cultural reasons.

Faiq Said also highlights the strong relationship between culture and language and considers them to be the two basic components of translation. He states that:

The two fundamental components of translation are culture and language, culture refers to beliefs and value systems tacitly assumed to be collectively shared by particular social groups as well as to the positions taken by producers and receivers of texts, including translations during the mediation process facilitated by language. Language is the system that provides its users with the tools to realize their culture [17].

To sum up, we might say that each linguistic group has its own culture which is represented through language. Cultural differences or cultural components could constitute some difficulties in terms of translation especially if we are dealing with distant languages like Arabic and English.

An important concept can be introduced here to explain this difficulty; it is the concept of untranslatability which represents the area in which intercultural equivalence does not exist. Intercultural non-equivalence, which can cause untranslatability, arises when a situational feature is functionally relevant to the source language text, but fully absent from the target language text, in which the target language culture is rooted (Bahameed). It is true that in some cases, the translator may find some lexical items in Arabic which have no equivalent in English because the concepts which they refer to do not exist in English-speaking culture as stated by Baker “The source–language word may express a concept which is totally unknown in the target culture. The concept in question may be abstract or concrete, it may relate to a religious belief, a social custom, or even a type of food, such concepts referred to as culture-specific” [18].

However, Jacobson believes that cognitive experience is conveyable in any language “All cognitive experience and its classification are conveyable in any existing language. Where there is deficiency, terminology may be qualified and amplified by loanwords or loan translation, neologisms, or semantic shifts, and finally by circumlocution” [19].

However, the cultural gap among cultures can still be bridged and this is precisely the role of the translator. In this regards, Majed Al-Najjar states “The receptor–culture reader may share with the source culture reader knowledge about the life patterns of the source culture. He may have been informed previously about the source culture. He may have read an anthropological study of the other culture, or may have lived for a certain time with the society of the source culture” [20].

In our opinion we believe that, the issue of translatability is a translator-dependent task. Whenever the translator faces a difficulty of not finding an equivalent of a concept or an item of the source language in the target language, he might resort to a closer equivalent, which may have the same function in the target language culture. When it comes to fixed cultural expressions which are unique in the source language, such as proverbs or idioms, the translator should make a strong effort to provide an accurate equivalent in the target language.

There are various strategies to which he can resort such as: compensation, transliteration plus definition, loanwords, and neologism among others. First and foremost, the translator should have a good background in both cultures so that he can compensate for what is missing in an effective way. The role of the translator is crucial in rendering the message and meaning from one language to another. His or her linguistic knowledge of both the source language and the target language, his or her knowledge of cultures, his or her experience, and his or her proficiency in translation play a major role in choosing the right equivalents for the most complicated cultural items and make them understandable to the target language reader. The translator is among other things, a reader. Moreover, it goes without saying that two readers of the same text may presumably interpret the same text in two different ways. Since the translator is a reader, two translators might interpret the same source text in two different ways. Furthermore, two translators may reproduce in the same target language the meaning of a source language text in two similar but not necessarily identical ways. The important point here is that the translator is the one who determines the meaning of the text in the source language, and it is also the translator who determines how to encode this meaning to the target language and culture. In other words, the translator is the mediator between the source language text and the target language text. Any problematic areas that emerge while translating must be solved by the translator, thus the whole process of translation depends on the translator’s skills and ability to render the source language text in a clear and readable way to the target language readers.

As mentioned earlier, translation is concerned with giving an equivalent in another language for a particular word, phrase or text. One of the problems which might emerge is the difficulty of translating emotive expressions to affect the audience emotionally, in order to gain their support or influence them. In the case of English translation of Arabic poetry, what is important for the translator is that he or she must be aware that what may be considered a highly emotive text in Arabic will not necessarily be highly emotive in English and vice versa. The emotive meaning of a lexical item refers to the emotional response which the lexical item is supposed to evoke in the text’s receiver. This response is relative because it depends on three agents, the author who is the text producer and who invokes emotive pictures; the translator as a mediator who gives his own reading of the original text; and the reader who also has his own reading and his own response to the translation according to his age, experience, knowledge and general background about the subject. The response of the reader as well as the response of the translator could be neutral, positive or negative: “we not
only understand the reference of words, we also react to them emotionally, sometimes strongly, sometimes weakly sometimes affirmatively, sometimes negatively” (Nida [8]).

In addition to being a language of science, technology, and philosophy, Arabic is considered to be a highly emotive language, particularly, the Arabic poetry which conveys different types of feelings and emotions which are intended to influence the reader in a certain context, time, and place. In this regard, IiAlAlon has invited scholars to study the emotivity of the Arabic lexicon. He has conducted a study about emotive lexicon in Palestinian Arabic language where he states that:

Arabic is at least in part, an emotional institution. This characteristic can be evidenced by the very important role that poetry, perhaps the strongest emotional literary genre, plays in the culture. Arabic is considered to be a language that can easily transmit affect because of, powerful group experience, aesthetic character, and oral nature that seek to engage the listener’s response. Added to these are its social, religious, and national roles. Grammar and syntax of the words and of the emotions too are important in conveying the emotionality of the language [13].

Finally, we believe that translation is possible because of the arbitrariness relation between the signifier and the signified and the fact that the signifier can be translated in different languages as we have seen earlier. Moreover, the possibility of translating emotiveness - although it is a thorny task, between Arabic and English- the two different languages stylistically and linguistically- proves that translation is possible and necessary especially between Arabic and English.

We can conclude also that the Arabic language is a very expressive one. Therefore, emotiveness might be of a particular importance for Arabic readers, because words carry a great deal of emotional content either in themselves or in the context they are imbedded in. “The emotive component of an expression seems to reside, at least in part, in the words themselves rather than exclusively in the peripheral and the contextual” [13]. Finally Arabic language is a very distinguished language as stated by Chejne: “Praise to God who made the Arabic language the most palatable of all languages to utter the most accurate in its formation, the clearest in the meaning of expression, and the richest in the various branches of knowledge” [22]. This belief is still plausible today, especially in poetry, the oldest and the most genuine genre in Arabic literature.

IX. CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to illustrate that translation activity is a possible task despite the stylistic, linguistic and cultural differences between languages. This paper also focused on the translatability of Emotiveness from Arabic into English, by illustrating the definition, main types and resources of emotiveness, and showed that despite the difficulty of translating emotiveness between Arabic and English, translation is still possible, valid and even necessary.

We said earlier that emotive expressions are part of the connotative meaning of a concept or a word, therefore there might be a universal agreement on the general connotations of some emotive expressions, as Pell writes: “human expressive behaviors which communicate joy, disgust, sadness, and fear are thought to possess certain invariant properties which allow them to be recognized independent of culture and learning” [14]. We also believe that there are particular connotations specific to certain languages and cultures.

Accordingly, one can say that the translation of connotative meaning might somehow be problematic especially between distant languages like English and Arabic. Different types of problems might emerge when translating from Arabic into English and vice versa. Moreover, the possibility of translating emotiveness - although it is a thorny task, between Arabic and English- the two different languages stylistically and linguistically- proves that translation is possible and necessary especially between Arabic and English:

Since the beginning of the 21st century there has been a great need for translating in the Arab world, it is more or less a self-evident need, due to the rapid scientific advances and technologies and the urgent need to translate them into Arabic, the importance of translating the true values of the Arabic and Islamic cultures to the West especially after 9/11 and the War against Terrorism, the international trade movements and globalization, the emerging of international organizations, and the need for exchanging information between countries because of the development of diplomatic and cultural relations among them. Mahasneh [21].

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