The art of translating theatrical texts between arabic and the west language: selected examples

L'art de traduire des textes théâtraux entre l'arabe et la langue occidentale: exemples choisis

Slimani Hafida[1]

[1]Laboratory ofArabizationof Terms in Human andSocialSciences, Facultyof Letters andLanguages, Tlemcen University, Algeria, hafida.slimani@univ-tlemcen.dz

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Abstract:

This study examines theatrical translation, balancing fidelity and adaptation while conveying cultural, social, and historical nuances. Through theories like translation pragmatics and case studies of "Hamlet" and Arab plays, it highlights linguistic and political challenges. It emphasizes translation's role in intercultural dialogue and diversity. The study advocates for translators' awareness of cultural specificities.

Keywords: Theater text; Translation; Western literature; Arab culture; Novel.

Résumé:

Cette étude analyse la traduction théâtrale, conciliant fidélité et adaptation tout en restituant les nuances culturelles, sociales et historiques. À travers des théories comme la pragmatique de la traduction et des études de cas ("Hamlet", théâtre arabe), elle met en lumière les défis linguistiques et politiques. Elle souligne le rôle de la traduction dans le dialogue interculturel et la diversité théâtrale. L'étude plaide pour une meilleure prise en compte des spécificités culturelles par les traducteurs.

Mots-clés:Texte théâtral ; Traduction ; Littérature occidentale ; Culture arabe ; Roman.

***Correspondingauthor**: SlimaniHafida, slimanihafidatlm@gmail.com*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Theatrical translation between Arab and Western cultures is a captivating field that presents both challenges and opportunities. This process goes beyond mere linguistic translation, involving the conveyance of cultural, social, and historical subtleties unique to each context. Adaptations often must reconcile varying temporal, geographical, and sociocultural frameworks, which requires a deep understanding of both cultures involve (Ourahmane, 2022, p. 48).

Literary translation must balance fidelity to the original text, cultural adaptation, humor and idiom transposition, all while preserving central characters and themes. Audience reception is also a crucial factor in the success of these adaptations between two distinct cultural realms.

This type of translation is essential for fostering cultural exchange and mutual understanding. It exposes audiences to diverse worldviews and experiences, beyond linguistic and cultural barriers. By bringing diversity to the theatrical stage, these adaptations contribute to the enrichment of global dramatic art, integrating varied stories and artistic sensibilities. They also play a vital role in strengthening intercultural dialogue, promoting more empathetic communication between people.

However, numerous challenges accompany this endeavor. It requires not only mastering linguistic subtleties but also understanding specific idiomatic expressions and cultural references. Adapting cultural concepts while making them accessible to a new audience is a delicate exercise. Furthermore, political, social, and moral differences between cultures may necessitate careful navigation to avoid misunderstandings. Despite these obstacles, successful theatrical translation between Arab and Western cultures can enhance artistic exchanges and offer audiences valuable experiences.

The adaptation of plays by WajdiMouawad (Côté Jean-François, 2015, p 10), a Lebanese-Canadian playwright, exemplifies this process. His works, rooted in Arab themes, have found notable success on Western stages, especially in France and Canada. Similarly, Western adaptations of classic Arab works, such as those by Tawfiq al-Hakim (Al-Hakim, 1989, p. 78) and SaadallahWannous (Wannous, 2014, p. 130), highlight the challenges of

intercultural translation, balancing fidelity to the original with accessibility for non-Arabic-speaking audiences. These projects underscore the importance of intercultural dialogue and the global appreciation for contemporary Arab theater.

Adapting Arab texts for foreign audience entails overcoming significant cultural and linguistic gaps, yet when successful, these translations reveal the richness and diversity of Arab literature. Contemporary playwrights like LinaKhoury and Ahmed Ghazali embody this dynamic. They tackle universal themes while remaining grounded in their culture, captivating audiences and challenging Western expectations, (Aouadj&Mabrak, 2020, p.116.). These examples demonstrate that theatrical translation transcends linguistic and cultural boundaries, reinforcing intercultural dialogue and providing access to a diversity of narratives and perspectives.

2. Theoretical framework

The topic includes an introduction that deals with the points that are presented within it according to the division into requirement.

2.1 Key approaches to theatrical translation

Enter Theories of theatrical translation encompass various frameworks and approaches that guide the transformation of dramatic texts from one language and culture to another. Below are some key theories in this fiel, (Aaltonen, 2000, p.78).

Theatrical translation presents specific challenges that various approaches help to address, enriching intercultural dialogue. Among these, the theory of loyalty and freedom examines the balance between fidelity to the original text and the necessary freedom to adapt it for relevance in a new cultural context. Translators must preserve the author's intent while ensuring accessibility for the target audience. Speech-act theory, meanwhile, highlights the importance of adapting dialogues and performances to maintain their effectiveness within the target linguistic and cultural framework. Additionally, cultural adaptation addresses the cultural differences that must be navigated to retain the work's authenticity while making it comprehensible to an audience with a distinct cultural

background. Finally, the methodology of selection emphasizes the importance of choosing plays to translate by considering their linguistic diversity, textual complexity, and potential critical reception. Together, these approaches enable translators to navigate the complexities of theatrical translation and foster rich interactions between cultures.

2.2. Specificities of Arab-western theatrical translation

Preface Arab-Western theatrical translation presents specific challenges that require advanced expertise to bridge linguistic, cultural, and stylistic differences. Arabic, with its unique phonological and syntactic features, often demands adaptations to preserve the fluidity and intent of the work in a Western language. The rich cultural context of Arabic, filled with historical, religious, and social references, requires a nuanced approach to make these comprehensible to a foreign audience. Moreover, differing value systems necessitate subtle adjustments in themes and characters to maintain the work's essence. Sensitive topics, such as political and religious issues, call for cautious translation to avoid misunderstandings. Finally, varying theatrical traditions may require stylistic adaptations to meet Western audience expectations.

2.3. Key concepts in theatrical translation, especially between Arabic and western languages

Key concepts in theatrical transcription, particularly between Arabic and Western languages, involve a complex set of linguistic and cultural considerations. Careful adaptation of references and idiomatic expressions is essential for ensuring cultural equivalence while preserving the emotional impact of the text. Additionally, the socio-historical context must be factored in to ensure accurate transposition. Orality and performativity play a crucial role in this translation, necessitating special attention to dialogue rhythm and implicit gestures. Language registers, ranging from Classical Arabic to dialects, also require thoughtful adaptation, and challenges of intertextuality and cultural allusions call for careful management between adaptation and fidelity to the source text. The poetic dimension, significant in Arabic tradition, requires heightened sensitivity to capture the linguistic beauty of the texts. Finally, elements peripheral to the main text, such as stage directions, along with timing and theatrical pacing, are essential for successful translation. Together, these concepts form a framework that

guides translators in conveying not only the words but also the cultural and dramatic essence of theatrical works.

3. Methodology

The in a study on dramatic transcription between Arabic and European literatures, selecting examples carefully is essential to ensure a comprehensive and representative analysis of the challenges and practices in translation. Considering linguistic and cultural diversity is crucial, including various language pairings such as Arabic-French, Arabic-English, and Arabic-German, to explore the specific nuances of each language combination, (Amine, 2018, p 25) and (Cachia, 1982, p.11). Cultural complexity in texts, often rich with references and allusions specific to the source culture, must also be taken into account, as it highlights translators' creative strategies in addressing intercultural challenges, (Venuti, 2017, p.78.). Furthermore, examining a variety of theatrical genres, from classical tragedy to experimental theater, enables an analysis of how each genre's unique characteristics influence the translation process, (Bassnett, 2014, p.72).

Finally, the cultural significance and critical reception of the selected works are fundamental aspects, as choosing pieces with substantial impact and diverse reactions allows exploration of the issues of intercultural reception and the influence of translation on how a work is perceived within a different cultural context, (Amine, 2018, p.37).

4. Analysis of selected examples

The analysis of theatrical translations between the West and the Arab world reveals how literary works cross cultural and linguistic boundaries. Each translation poses unique challenges, balancing fidelity to the original work with adaptation to the sensibilities of contemporary Arab audiences. This section focuses on landmark works such as "Hamlet" by William Shakespeare, "Les Fourberies de Scapin" by Molière, "Waiting for Godot" by Samuel Beckett, "A Streetcar Named Desire" by Tennessee Williams, and "Death of a Salesman" by Arthur Miller. Each example illustrates the translators' strategies and choices to retain the essence of the plays while making them accessible and relevant within a modern Arab cultural context

5. Translating a western play into Arabic

5.1 Firstly: "Hamlet" by William Shakespeare

The Arabic translation of «Hamlet» seeks to adapt the Elizabethan poetic style while preserving universal themes such as betrayal and fate. Translators like Jabra Ibrahim Jabra and Khalil Mutran strive to make Shakespeare's linguistic complexity accessible to Arabic-speaking readers. These well-received translations have enriched the Arab perspective on European classic, (Jabra, 2005, p.80) and (Mutran, 2010, p.79).

5.2 Secondly: "Les Fourberies de Scapin" by Molière

Molière's comedy has been translated into modern Arabic to capture the humor and social satire of 17th-century France. Translators like SaadallahWannous have adapted cultural references while preserving the comic essence, making the play relevant to contemporary audiences. The translation has been well received, facilitating the introduction of European comedic classics into the Arab world, (Amine, 2018, p.28).

5.3Thirdly: "Waiting for Godot" by Samuel Beckett

This existential work has been translated into Arabic with the intention of preserving the essence of the absurd and the human condition. Translators such as Khaled Al-Breidi have adapted the dialogues while retaining the play's philosophical depth. Its reception in the Arab world reflects an interest in themes of existence and despair, fostering relevant discussions, (Mehrez, 1992, p.125).

5.4Fourthly: "A Streetcar Named Desire" by Tennessee Williams

The translation of this tragedy aims to reflect social tensions within the Arab world. Hanaa El-Sheikh has adapted American idiomatic expressions to ensure cultural relevance. This version was well received, allowing for the exploration of universal human dilemmas within a specific cultural context, (Marat, 2021, p.75).

5.5 Fifthly: "Death of a Salesman" by Arthur Miller

The translation of this play examines individual aspirations and family struggles in a modern Arab context. Mohamed Enani has skillfully adapted cultural references while retaining the emotional impact of the original, (Enani, 2005, p.35). The play has been well received in the Arab world,

facilitating the exploration of universal themes like the American Dream, (Hafez, 2008, p.55).

6. Translating an Arab play into western languages

Theatrical translation between Western and Arab cultures presents cultural, literary, and social challenges. This section examines several significant examples of this adaptation, illustrating translators' decisions in addressing cultural difficulties.

6.1 Firstly:"Ritual for a Metamorphosis" by SaadallahWannous

Published in 1971, this play addresses tensions between authoritarian regimes and individual aspirations. The English translation aims to preserve the work's poetic richness while adapting it to Western audience expectations. Translators have employed various techniques to contextualize Syrian cultural references while maintaining the emotional impact of the dialogue. This translation has been well received for its ability to address universal themes of freedom and political resistance, though challenges remain in translating cultural nuance, (Wannous, 1995, p.32).

6.2 Secondly: "Les Justes" by Albert Camus (adapted as «La Juste»)

Though Camus was not Arab, his work has been translated and adapted into Arabic and other languages. Written in 1949, the play deals with justice and ethical dilemmas. English translations seek to preserve the historical context while making philosophical concepts accessible. Translators must balance fidelity to the original with adaptation for Western audiences, with critics acknowledging the depth of themes explored, (Camus, 1949, p.58).

6.3Thirdly: "One Thousand and One Night"

These folk tales have been translated into multiple Western languages since the 18th century, influencing literature and theater. Translations face challenges in linguistic and cultural fidelity, requiring adaptations to make the stories accessible. «One Thousand and One Nights» has evolved in Western perception from exotic curiosity to critical examination of universal themes, (Mahdi, 1995, p.09).

6.4Fourthly: "Antigone" by Sophocles (Arab adaptation)

Arab playwrights have adapted this tragedy, exploring classical themes from a contemporary perspective. Challenges include adapting

Greek moral concepts to modern Arab values, often through explanatory dialogue. Western reception of these adaptations varies, highlighting the impact of tragedy on different cultures, (Carlson, 2006, p.400).

6.5 Fifthly: "I Am Yusuf and This Is My Brother" by Jawad Al Assadi

This play addresses themes of family and resilience in modern Iraq. Its translation into Western languages has facilitated international recognition, despite cultural challenges. Translators have often employed contextualization strategies to enhance Western audience engagement. The play has been well received for its nuanced portrayal of the human condition in Iraq, sparking significant intercultural dialogue, (Al-Assadi, 2009, p.99).

7. Adaptations across cultures

Adapting a theatrical play across cultures involves reinterpreting an original work to make it accessible to a new audience, adjusting dialogue, narrative structure, and themes while preserving artistic integrity. This process enriches global theater by fostering cultural exchange.

7.1 Firstly: Chinese Adaptation of "The Good Woman of Setzuan"

Yu Shui has transformed Brecht's work to reflect contemporary Chinese culture, including adjustments to character names, cultural references, and social dynamics. The adaptation emphasizes traditional Chinese values and addresses contemporary themes such as corruption and social inequality, making the play more relevant for Chinese audiences while retaining universal themes, (Li & Wang, 2019, p.89).

7.2 Secondly: American Adaptation (Tony Kushner)

Tony Kushner reinterpreted «The Good Person of Szechwan» within a contemporary American context, incorporating American cultural and social references. His adaptation explores themes such as individualism and social justice, contextualizing moral dilemmas within modern political issues. This makes the play more engaging for American audiences while retaining the moral themes of the original, (Kushner, 1994, p.12).

7.3 Thirdly: Indian Adaptation (RustomBharucha)

RustomBharucha merged «The Good Person of Szechwan» with Indian theatrical traditions, integrating local narrative and stage styles while respecting Brecht's moral dilemmas. His adaptation addresses concepts of

karma and social responsibility, exploring tensions between altruism and survival in modern Indian society. This enriches the play by rooting it in contemporary Indian culture, facilitating a deeper emotional resonance, (Bharucha, 2005, p.44).

8. DISCUSSION

8.1 Firstly: Observed Trends in Arab-Western Theatrical Translation

Theatrical translation between Arab and Western literatures reveals several trends. It requires a deep cultural adaptation to make works relevant in different contexts, often involving adjustments to historical, religious, and social references, (Amine, 2018, p.29). This practice examines cultural identities and intercultural tensions, highlighting convergences and divergences between Arab-Muslim and Western civilizations, (Vinuesa Muñoz, 2017, p.200). Finally, it stimulates artistic innovation by encouraging creative adaptations that merge narrative and aesthetic styles, creating hybrid works, (Hanna, 2016, p.183).

8.2 Secondly: Effective Strategies for Overcoming Cultural and Linguistic Barriers

Addressing theatrical translation challenges requires collaboration between translators, playwrights, and artists, enabling navigation of cultural nuances, (Bassnett, 2002, p.58). Extensive research into historical and social contexts is also essential to ensure faithful translations, (Baker, 2011, p.86). Creative adaptation, which finds cultural equivalences while preserving the integrity of original works, plays a crucial role. These methods not only enrich the translation process but also foster mutual understanding between cultures, as noted by Venuti, (Venuti, 2017, p.32).

8.3 Thirdly: Implications for Intercultural Understanding Through Theater

Theatrical translation is a significant vector for intercultural understanding. It fosters critical dialogue among people, exposes audiences to diverse experiences, and broadens their worldviews. By raising awareness of cultural diversity, theater promotes mutual respect and encourages reflection on shared universal values, thereby strengthening intercultural bonds, (Amine, 2018, p.32).

9. Challenges and solutions in theatrical translation

Theatrical translation is a complex process requiring fidelity to the original work while conveying cultural nuances and tone in the target language. Translators face several challenges, including:

9.1 Firstly: Wordplay

Preserving humor and double meanings is crucial. For example, in The Bald Soprano by Eugène Ionesco, the line "On ne fait pas brillerses lunettes avec du cirage noir" was adapted into English while maintaining its absurdity, (Delabastita, 1996, p.99). The solution lies in prioritizing the comic effect over literal translation.

9.2 Secondly: Culture-specific references

Adapting cultural references to make them understandable while retaining authenticity is essential. In Cyrano de Bergerac by Edmond Rostand, references to French cuisine were subtly adjusted. This might involve using cultural equivalents or explaining certain references, (Katan, 1999, p.21).

9.3 Thirdly: Regional dialects

Translating the sociolinguistic nuances of a dialect poses a unique challenge. For instance, the Cockney dialect in Pygmalion by George Bernard Shaw was represented using Parisian slang, (Shaw, 1912, p.33). Finding a sociolinguistic equivalent in the target language is key.

9.4 Fourthly: Rhythm and musicality

Maintaining the rhythm and musicality of the original text is vital for performance. In Romeo and Juliet by Shakespeare, adjustments were made to retain the musical dimension of the text, (Smith, 1999, p.201).

9.5 Fifthly: Idiomatic expressions

Translating idiomatic expressions while preserving their meaning and nature is often necessary. For example, the French saying "Tantva la cruche à l'eauqu'à la fin elle se casse" was adapted into English, preserving its meaning and proverbial nature. Translators may seek equivalents or create new phrases to capture the original spirit, (Baker, 1992, p.36).

Collaboration between translators, directors, and actors is essential to ensure that the translation respects the original work's intent while

remaining accessible to the target audience.

10. CONCLUSION

The study of theatrical translation between Arab and Western cultures reveals that this practice goes beyond mere linguistic transfer, requiring both cultural and contextual adaptation. These adaptations navigate a balance between fidelity to the original work and modifications to meet audience expectations, highlighting cultural identities in both conflict and convergence.

Theatrical translation plays a key role in intercultural dialogue, enriching our understanding of the world and facilitating access to diverse narratives. It also contributes to the preservation of dramatic works and stimulates artistic innovation through stylistic experimentation.

Looking ahead, it is crucial to explore the ethical and political implications of translation within a diverse context, focusing on stereotypical representations and biases. The impact of technology and digital platforms on the dissemination of translations is another important consideration. Finally, comparative studies of specific adaptations could reveal effective and ethical practices, underscoring the intellectual and cultural potential of theatrical translation in fostering global diversity appreciation.

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