
The Challenges of Loss or Addition in The Process of Culturally Translating Proverbs and Sayings Between Arabic and English

تحديات الحذف أو الإضافة في عملية الترجمة الثقافية للأمثال والأقوال بين العربية والإنجليزية

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Abstract:

In this article, I aspire to present a collection of findings and insights derived from a study I have conducted. The research investigates the translation of proverbs and idiomatic expressions between Arabic and English, focusing on the challenges of loss and addition in cultural translation. Proverbs and idioms carry significant cultural and poetic elements, making them difficult to translate while preserving their original meaning and impact. This study examines how cultural contexts affect translation, identifies the main challenges translators face, and explores the effects of adding or omitting elements during translation.

The research employs a qualitative approach, analyzing a representative sample of proverbs and idiomatic expressions from Arabic and English. Findings indicate that adding explanatory elements can enhance

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understanding but may alter the original intent and cultural resonance. Conversely, omitting elements to achieve brevity often leads to a loss of meaning and cultural nuances. The study highlights the importance of cultural awareness in translation and provides practical recommendations for translators to address these challenges.

This work contributes to translation studies by offering insights into the impact of cultural contexts on translation practices and suggesting strategies to better manage the translation of culturally embedded expressions.

Keywords: Language Sciences, Cultural Translation, Proverbs and Idiomatic Expressions, Cultural Translation and Translator Challenges

الملخص:

يهدف هذا المقال إلى عرض مجموعة من النتائج والاستنتاجات المستمدة من دراسة أجريتها حول ترجمة الأمثال والتعابير الاصطلاحية بين اللغتين العربية والإنجليزية، مع التركيز على تحديات الحذف والإضافة في الترجمة الثقافية. تحمل الأمثال والتعابير الاصطلاحية عناصر ثقافية وشعرية غنية، مما يجعل ترجمتها مع الحفاظ على معناها وتأثيرها الأصلي أمرًا صعبًا.

تتناول هذه الدراسة تأثير السياقات الثقافية على عملية الترجمة، وتبرز التحديات الرئيسية التي يواجهها المترجمون، كما تستكشف آثار الإضافة أو الحذف أثناء الترجمة. تعتمد الدراسة منهجًا نوعيًا من خلال تحليل عينة ممثلة من الأمثال والتعابير الاصطلاحية في اللغتين العربية والإنجليزية.

تشير النتائج إلى أن إضافة عناصر توضيحية قد تعزز الفهم، لكنها قد تغير من القصد الأصلي والرين الثقافي للنص. وعلى العكس من ذلك، فإن حذف بعض العناصر بهدف الإيجاز يؤدي غالبًا إلى فقدان المعنى والدلالات الثقافية. تسلط الدراسة الضوء على أهمية الوعي الثقافي في الترجمة، وتقدم توصيات عملية لمساعدة المترجمين

على التعامل مع هذه التحديات تسهم هذه الدراسة في حقل دراسات الترجمة من خلال تقديم رؤى حول تأثير السياق الثقافي في الممارسة الترجمة، واقتراح استراتيجيات للتعامل بشكل أفضل مع ترجمة التعبيرات المشبعة بالحمولة الثقافية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: علوم اللغة، الترجمة الثقافية، الأمثال والتعبيرات الاصطلاحية، الترجمة الثقافية وتحديات المترجم.

1. Introduction:

In our increasingly interconnected world, understanding and bridging cultural differences have become more important than ever. Cultural translation plays a crucial role in this process, going beyond mere language translation to encompass the cultural contexts and nuances that shape meaning. This practice has deep historical roots and has evolved over time to address the complexities of global communication. By exploring the history, key theories, and contemporary relevance of cultural translation, we can appreciate its significance in fostering intercultural understanding and cooperation.

The translation of proverbs and idiomatic expressions between Arabic and English presents significant challenges, primarily due to cultural differences that impact the translation process. In this article, I share the insights and findings from a study I conducted, which explores the phenomena of loss and addition in cultural translation. This study examines how these factors influence the preservation and adaptation of meaning by analyzing a representative sample of Arabic and English proverbs and idiomatic expressions.

Definition of Cultural Translation

Cultural translation refers to the process of translating texts in a way that considers the cultural nuances and context of the source and target languages. It involves not just linguistic translation but also adapting the cultural elements to ensure the translated text resonates with the target audience (Bassnett, 2013 ,p137).

Cultural translation is a process that goes beyond merely converting words from one language to another. It involves interpreting and adapting the cultural context, idioms, and cultural references of the source language so that the target audience can understand and appreciate the message as intended. This process requires a deep understanding of both cultures involved the one from which the text originates and the one into which it is being translated (Bassnett, 2013, p14).

In cultural translation, the goal is to maintain the original text's meaning, tone, and impact, considering the cultural nuances and differences. This can include adjusting expressions, metaphors, and even entire concepts that may not have direct equivalents in the target language (Nida, 1964, p164). For example, consider the Arabic proverb, "في التأني السلامة وفي العجلة الندامة" ("In patience, safety; in haste, regret"). The translator must find an English equivalent that conveys the same cultural and contextual significance, such as "Haste makes waste." So it is not just about changing words from one language to another. It involves adapting texts or practices to fit the cultural context of the target audience. This means considering cultural differences, idioms, and social factors to make sure the meaning is clear and appropriate in the new culture.

1.2Importance of Cultural Translation:

Cultural translation is important for effective communication between different cultures. It involves more than just converting words from one language to another; it includes conveying the meaning, context, and cultural nuances of the original text to ensure it connects with the target audience. Here are some reasons why cultural translation matters, with simplified examples.

Cultural translation helps preserve the identity and values of a culture. When literature, films, or other media are translated, cultural details must be kept to ensure the original work's essence and context, are not lost. For example, translating Arabic poetry into English requires keeping the poetic style, imagery, and cultural references to preserve the poem's emotional and cultural impact (Bhabha, 1994, p. 38).

Cultural translation bridges the gap between different cultures, enabling better understanding and communication. It allows people from different cultural backgrounds to access and appreciate each other's ideas, traditions, and knowledge. For instance, translating an English business manual into Arabic, while including local business practices and terminology, helps Arab professionals understand and use the material effectively (Katan, 2004, p. 112).

In a globalized world, businesses, governments, and organizations interact across cultural boundaries. Cultural translation ensures that communication is effective and culturally appropriate, which is essential for successful international relations and business operations. For example, a global company's marketing campaign translated into Arabic must consider local cultural values and preferences to connect with Arab consumers (Venuti, 1995, p. 68).

By making cultural products accessible to a wider audience, cultural translation promotes inclusivity and diversity. It ensures that people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds can engage with and appreciate diverse cultural expressions. For instance, translating an English children's book into Arabic, with illustrations and references adapted to Arab culture, helps Arab children connect with the story and its characters (Cronin, 2003, p. 145).

Cultural translation is essential in postcolonial contexts, where it can help correct historical imbalances by accurately representing marginalized cultures and voices. It allows for a more fair exchange of cultural and intellectual contributions. For example, translating postcolonial Arabic literature into English while preserving the original cultural and historical context challenges colonial narratives and highlights the richness of Arab culture (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1989, p. 25).

Definition of Loss and Addition in Cultural Translation:

Cultural translation involves not just converting words from one language to another, but also adapting cultural contexts. During this process, translators often face the challenges of loss and addition, which affect how the original meaning is conveyed.

Cultural translation is more than the mere conversion of text from one language to another; it involves an intricate process of adapting the cultural context and nuances embedded within the source text. One of the key challenges faced by translators is managing the concepts of loss and addition. These terms refer to the inevitable changes that occur when translating cultural elements that may not have direct equivalents in the target language. Understanding and balancing loss and addition are

crucial for producing translations that are both faithful to the original and meaningful to the target audience. This overview will explore the definitions of loss and addition in cultural translation, illustrating their significance with examples from English and Arabic translations.

1.3 Loss in Cultural Translation:

Loss in cultural translation occurs when certain cultural nuances, meanings, or elements present in the source text cannot be fully conveyed in the target text. This can happen due to differences in cultural contexts, languages, or the lack of equivalent terms and concepts.

Example: In Arabic, the word "صباح الخير" (sabah al-khayr) means "good morning" and carries a cultural warmth and formality. When translated to English as "good morning," some of the cultural nuances and the warmth of the greeting might be lost (Bassnett, S. 2014, p22).

2.3 Balancing Loss and Addition:

Translators often need to balance loss and addition to create a translation that is both accurate and culturally appropriate. This involves making informed decisions about what to include, omit, or explain to ensure that the translated text resonates with the target audience while remaining faithful to the original (Lefevere, A.1992, p39).

Example: When translating a historical English novel into Arabic, a translator might add footnotes or explanations for cultural references and historical events unfamiliar to Arab readers, while acknowledging that some stylistic or idiomatic expressions may not fully translate.

3.3 Importance of Understanding Loss and Addition:

Understanding loss and addition is crucial for translators to make strategic choices that enhance the quality and cultural relevance of their translations. It helps them navigate the complexities of cultural differences and produce translations that are meaningful and accessible to the target audience (Spivak, G. C.1993).

Example: A translator working on a cross-cultural research paper between English and Arabic needs to be aware of cultural sensitivities and may add clarifications or adjust terminologies to ensure that the research is accurately understood and respected in both languages.

Previous Research on Cultural Translation, Loss, and Addition:

Understanding how language and culture interact in translation has been the focus of many studies. Here's a simple look at what researchers have found:

1.4 Loss and Addition in Translation:

When translating, some things from the original text might not fully carry over to the new language. This is called "loss." Sometimes, extra information needs to be added to make the translation clear in the new language. This is called "addition."

Example: When translating English sayings into Arabic, like "raining cats and dogs," it might become "تطر قططا وكلابا" to fit the new language.

2.4 Cultural Turn in Translation Studies:

Some researchers shifted focus from just the words to the cultural context of translation. They found that understanding the culture is really important in making good translations.

Example: Translating novels from Arabic to English might need explanations for English readers about the culture in the story.

3.4 Postcolonial Perspectives on Translation:

Others looked at how translation relates to colonial history. They found that translation can either support or challenge old power structures.

Example: Translating books like "Things Fall Apart" into Arabic means thinking about how to represent African culture respectfully.

4.4 Case Studies in Cultural Translation:

Looking closely at specific translations helps us understand the challenges translators face and how they deal with them.

Example: Translating religious texts requires balancing the original meaning with making it understandable to different cultures.

Cultural translation is like a puzzle, piecing together ideas from one language to another. But sometimes, pieces go missing, or new ones are needed to complete the picture. This framework helps us make sense of this process.

In the world of translation, there are big ideas we need to understand. First, cultural translation is about more than just words, it's about sharing the heart and soul of a culture. But when we translate, we often lose some of that heart and soul. This is what we call "loss." To make up for what's lost, translators might add new things to the translation. We call this

"addition." Think of it like cooking. If a recipe from one country uses ingredients you can't find in another, you might need to add something else to make it work. But even with the best ingredients, you still need a recipe to follow. That's where theories come in. These are like cooking guides, helping translators make decisions about what to add and what to leave out.

One important theory is the Skopos Theory. It's like a compass, guiding translators to focus on the purpose of the translation. Another theory, called Polysystem Theory, helps us understand how translations fit into the bigger picture of literature. And then there's Postcolonial Translation Theory, which reminds us to think about power and history when we translate.

But theories are just the beginning. In the world of translation, there are lots of moving parts, or "variables." These could be things like the culture of the original text, the strategy the translator uses, or how the audience reacts to the translation. By looking at these variables, we can make guesses, or "hypotheses," about how translation works. For example, we might guess that translations done with a clear purpose in mind will be more successful. Or we might think that translations that add new ideas to the original will be more interesting to readers. These are just guesses, but they help us understand how translation works in the real world.

In conclusion, understanding cultural translation, loss, and addition is like solving a puzzle, with the right tools like theories, variables, and hypotheses. We can start to piece together how translation works and why it matters. And by studying this framework, we can learn to appreciate the beauty of language and culture in a whole new way.

The particulars of the study:

In this article, I share the insights and findings from a study I conducted, which explores the phenomena of loss and addition in cultural translation. This study examines how these factors influence the preservation and adaptation of meaning by analyzing a representative sample of Arabic and English proverbs and idiomatic expressions.

Cultural translation involves more than the mere conversion of words from one language to another. It requires a deep understanding of the cultural contexts and nuances that give meaning to the original text. This process often involves interpreting and adapting idiomatic expressions, poetic elements, and cultural references so that the target audience can fully appreciate the intended message. The primary challenge in translating proverbs and sayings, lies in retaining these cultural nuances without losing the original intent or altering the cultural resonance.

For instance, consider the Arabic proverb "في التأني السلامة وفي العجلة الندامة," which translates to "In haste, there is regret; in patience, safety." This proverb reflects a cultural value placed on patience and caution. However, the direct translation may not fully capture the depth of this value for English speakers, who might not have a comparable cultural reference. This discrepancy illustrates the potential for cultural loss during translation.

The history of cultural translation demonstrates its pivotal role in the exchange of ideas and literature across different cultures. From ancient civilizations to modern times, translators have grappled with the challenge of preserving cultural meanings while making texts accessible to new audiences. Early translators, such as Greek and Roman scholars, laid the groundwork for modern practices, often translating works of philosophy and science. During the golden age of Arabs and Muslims, translation flourished as scholars translated scientific, medical, and

philosophical texts from Greek, Persian, and Indian languages into Arabic. This period, known as the Islamic Golden Age (8th to 14th century), saw remarkable advancements in various fields, including mathematics, astronomy, medicine, and philosophy. Prominent figures such as Al-Kindi, Al-Farabi, Avicenna (Ibn Sina), and Averroes (Ibn Rushd) played crucial roles in preserving and expanding upon the knowledge of earlier civilizations.

This era also saw the establishment of the House of Wisdom (Bayt al-Hikma) in Baghdad, which became a renowned center for translation and scholarly activity. Scholars at the House of Wisdom translated a vast array of texts, making significant contributions to the preservation and dissemination of knowledge. This period underscored the importance of cultural translation in fostering intellectual exchange and advancing scientific and philosophical thought.

This study employs a qualitative approach, utilizing textual analysis to explore cultural translation in detail. Textual analysis allows for an in-depth examination of how proverbs and sayings are translated, identifying patterns and common challenges. The data collection involved selecting a representative sample of proverbs and idiomatic expressions from Arabic and English literature. These texts were analyzed to identify instances of loss and addition during translation.

One example of addition in translation is the Arabic proverb "عصفور في اليد خير من عشرة على الشجرة," which translates to "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush" in English. This translation retains the meaning but changes the number of birds, illustrating how numerical elements can be adapted. This addition helps the proverb make sense in the target language but slightly alters its original form.

Another example of addition is the Arabic saying "إبنك على ما تربيته وزوجك على ما تعوديه", which translates to "Your child is what you teach him, and your husband is what you accustom him to." Here, the addition of "teach" and "accustom" provides clarity for English speakers but may introduce nuances not present in the original Arabic text.

Conversely, the Arabic saying "الوقت كالسيف إن لم تقطعه قطعك" translates to "Time is like a sword; if you don't cut it, it will cut you." The English translation preserves the metaphor but may lose some of the cultural resonance associated with the Arabic language's poetic nature. This example highlights how loss can occur when cultural and poetic elements are not fully conveyed in the target language.

Another illustrative example is the Arabic proverb "يد واحدة لا تصفق", meaning "One hand does not clap." This phrase translates directly into English but may require additional context to convey the same cultural significance. The loss of cultural context can diminish the proverb's impact, as the cultural connotations may not be as readily understood by the target audience.

Throughout the study, I observed that while adding explanatory elements can enhance understanding, it can also alter the original intent and cultural resonance. For example, adding a phrase like "meaning that cooperation is essential" to the translation of "One hand does not clap" can help English speakers understand the proverb's intent but shifts the focus from its original, concise expression.

Conversely, omitting elements to achieve brevity often leads to a loss of meaning and cultural nuances. For instance, translating the Arabic proverb "الجنة تحت أقدام الأمهات" as "Heaven lies at the feet of mothers" may

require additional explanation for English speakers to fully grasp the cultural significance of the phrase in Arabic. Without this additional context, the translation loses some of its cultural and emotional weight.

The study finds that cultural loss and addition significantly impact the translation of proverbs and sayings. Cultural loss occurs when essential elements of the original text's meaning are omitted or altered, while addition can sometimes introduce elements that were not present in the original, potentially changing its intended impact. For instance, the Arabic saying "الجار قبل الدار" translates to "The neighbor before the house," emphasizing the importance of good relationships with neighbors before choosing a home. This concept might be unfamiliar to some English speakers, leading to potential cultural loss if not explained properly.

In my research, I also explored the strategies translators use to manage the loss and addition of cultural meanings. Translators often face the dilemma of choosing between fidelity to the source text and accessibility for the target audience. One effective strategy is the use of footnotes or explanatory text to provide additional context for culturally specific references. For example, adding a footnote to explain the cultural significance of "Heaven lies at the feet of mothers" can help English readers understand the depth of this expression in Arabic culture.

Collaboration with cultural experts is another valuable strategy. By consulting individuals with deep knowledge of the source and target cultures, translators can ensure that their translations accurately reflect the intended meanings and cultural nuances. This approach helps mitigate the risks of cultural loss and addition, resulting in more effective and faithful translations.

To further illustrate these points, consider the following case studies from the research:

The Arabic proverb "الوقاية خير من العلاج" translates to "Prevention is better than cure." In English, this proverb is easily understood because it has a direct equivalent. However, in some contexts, translators might add explanatory elements to clarify the proverb's application, such as in health contexts. For example, "Taking precautions to avoid illness is better than seeking treatment after getting sick." This addition makes the proverb's relevance more explicit but slightly shifts its focus.

The Arabic saying "الحاجة أم الاختراع," which translates to "Necessity is the mother of invention," carries a universal concept but can lose cultural resonance in translation. In Arabic, the phrase might evoke specific cultural contexts where innovation is driven by necessity in daily life. The English translation, while accurate, might not evoke the same cultural imagery without additional context.

The impact of loss and addition on cultural translation is profound, affecting both the preservation of cultural meaning and the effectiveness of the translation. Translators must navigate the delicate balance between staying true to the original text and making it accessible and meaningful to the target audience. Cultural translation requires more than linguistic expertise; it demands cultural sensitivity and awareness.

This research contributes to translation studies by offering insights into the impact of cultural contexts on translation practices and suggesting strategies to better manage the translation of culturally embedded expressions. The findings emphasize the critical role of cultural awareness in effective translation and the need for ongoing exploration of this complex field. Further research could explore the impact of

cultural translation on different genres of literature and other languages, providing a broader understanding of the challenges and strategies involved.

Based on the study's findings, several practical recommendations for translators include the use of explanatory notes, incorporating footnotes or explanatory text for culturally specific references to enhance understanding without altering the original meaning significantly. Collaboration with cultural experts is another valuable strategy. By consulting individuals with deep knowledge of the source and target cultures, translators can ensure that their translations accurately reflect the intended meanings and cultural nuances. This approach helps mitigate the risks of cultural loss and addition, resulting in more effective and faithful translations. Contextual adaptation is crucial. Adapting translations to the cultural context of the target audience while preserving the core message of the original text can bridge cultural gaps effectively. Additionally, developing educational tools and resources for translators to improve their cultural awareness and sensitivity can enhance their ability to manage loss and addition effectively. Continuous research is encouraged to identify new challenges and develop innovative strategies for managing them.

Conclusion:

The translation of proverbs and idiomatic expressions between Arabic and English is a complex and nuanced process that extends beyond linguistic conversion to encompass cultural adaptation. This study has demonstrated that the challenges of loss and addition in cultural translation significantly impact the preservation and transmission of meaning. Loss occurs when cultural nuances, connotations, or stylistic elements fail to transfer into the target language, potentially diminishing

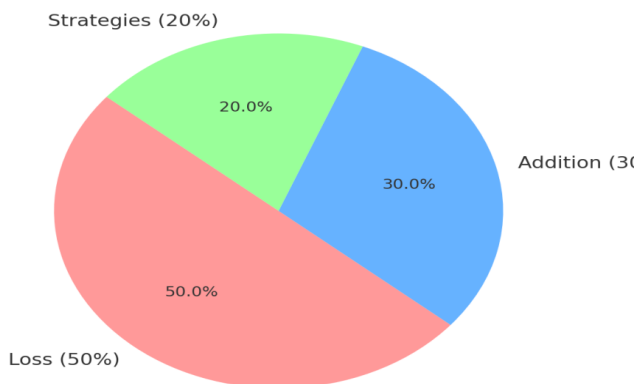
the richness of the original expression. Conversely, addition, whether through explanatory elements or modifications, may enhance comprehension but risks altering the intended cultural resonance.

By analyzing a representative sample of proverbs and idiomatic expressions, this research has highlighted the intricate decisions translators must make to balance fidelity and intelligibility. The findings indicate that successful cultural translation requires more than linguistic proficiency; it necessitates a deep understanding of both source and target cultures. Translators must navigate the complexities of cultural equivalence by employing strategies such as contextual adaptation, explanatory notes, and collaboration with cultural experts.

Moreover, this study underscores the crucial role of cultural awareness in ensuring accurate and meaningful translations. As globalization fosters increased intercultural exchange, the ability to convey culturally embedded expressions effectively becomes ever more vital. The insights presented here contribute to the broader field of translation studies by offering practical recommendations for managing cultural loss and addition.

Future research may expand on these findings by exploring cultural translation across additional language pairs and literary genres. Investigating the reception of translated proverbs in different cultural contexts could further enrich our understanding of how cultural nuances are preserved, transformed, or lost in translation. Ultimately, fostering a more nuanced and contextually aware approach to translation will enhance cross-cultural communication and preserve the integrity of linguistic and cultural heritage.

Outcomes of Cultural Translation of Proverbs



Glossary of Terms

TERM	DEFINITION
Addition	The process of including extra information in the target language to ensure clarity and context that might not be present in the original text.
Contextualization	Providing background or additional information to make the text understandable in a different cultural or linguistic context.
Cross-Cultural Research	Studies that compare cultural contexts to understand differences and similarities in behaviors, traditions, and practices.
Cultural Nuances	Subtle differences in meaning, expressions, or customs that are specific to a particular culture.

Cultural Translation	The adaptation of a text from one language to another, ensuring that cultural contexts, meanings, and nuances are preserved.
Source Text	The original text that is being translated.
Target Language	The language into which a text is being translated.
Translation	The process of converting text or speech from one language to another while attempting to retain its original meaning and context.
Translation Strategies	Techniques used by translators to address challenges in conveying meaning, including the balance of loss and addition, cultural adaptation, and maintaining equivalence.
Translator	A person who converts written or spoken text from one language to another.
Equivalence	The degree to which a translation accurately conveys the meaning of the original text, maintaining its sense and purpose in the target language.
Footnotes	Notes at the bottom of a page providing additional information or explanations related to the main text.
Historical Context	The moods, attitudes, and conditions that existed in a certain time which are reflected in the cultural elements of the text.
Idiomatic Expressions	Phrases or expressions that have a figurative meaning different from their literal meaning and are unique to a particular language or culture.
Literal Translation	A word-for-word translation that may not convey the intended meaning or cultural nuances.

Loss	The omission or inability to convey certain cultural elements or meanings from the source text in the target language.
Poetic Style	A way of writing that emphasizes form, meter, and expressive language, often used in poetry.
Proverbs	Short, commonly known sayings that express a truth or piece of advice, often specific to a culture.
Rhyme	The repetition of similar sounding words, often at the end of lines in poems or songs.

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