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English-Arabic Translation of Humour: Challenges and Strategies

Rasha Khan(1)

Ghaleb Rabab'ah(2)

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Abstract:

This research aims to investigate the challenges that native Arabic-speaking EFL learners face in rendering the equivalent meaning of humorous excerpts selected from Plum Pie (1966), a collection of short stories by English humourist P.G. Wodehouse (1881-1975). The researchers examined the translation strategies used by a sample of 16 senior Arabic-speaking BA and MA students specialising in English and translation at the University of Sharjah, to solve the problems that they encountered in the translation process. The findings indicated that the participants encountered lexical, semantic, grammatical and syntactic problems in the process of translation. The findings showed that the participants used 10 main strategies to translate the excerpts, with literal translation being the most frequently employed. The findings also revealed several mistranslations or errors, which have been classified as lexical errors, grammatical errors, mistranslations of cultural references or items, and inappropriate use of certain translation strategies. These results led us to conclude that some translation strategies (e.g. the use of literal translation instead of idiomatic, and vice versa) were unsuitable and reflected a need for improvement of linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the target language, which is essential for enabling Arab EFL learners to translate humorous literary texts. The research provided some implications and recommendations for native Arabic-speaking translation students and novice translators.

Keywords: translation, literary texts, humorous texts, EFL learners.

(1) College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences - University of Sharjah (Sharjah – U.A.E.)
U17200721@sharjah.ac.ae

(2) College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences - University of Sharjah (Sharjah – U.A.E.)

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1. Introduction

Though dictionaries may be useful in giving some idea of what humour is, there continue to be disagreements among the scholars regarding the definition, indeed the definability, of humour (Attardo, 1994; Ermida, 2008; Raskin, 1985). This issue arises due to the multifaceted nature of humour, there being physiological, cognitive, psychological, emotional, linguistic and cultural sides to humour. The multifarious aspects of humour led to its being the subject of various disciplines, both in the sciences and humanities. Theories about the nature of humour date back to antiquity, and have been summarised into "disparagement (or superiority) theory" (i.e. humour being equated to scorn or derision of others), "release (or relief) theory" (i.e. humour as a form of escape from societal restraints), and "incongruity theory" (i.e. humour resulting from incongruity, leading to a "surprise effect" which causes mirth) (Ermida, 2008). Each of these theories have their own critics.

If defining humour is such a problematic issue, how can one reliably identify humour in a text? Attardo (1994) holds that since producing and engaging with humour is a social experience, it is cultural norms or "shared intuition" that are the best indicators for the presence of humour. This implies that humour boils down to the speaker and listener (or author and reader) implicitly agreeing on a common understanding of humour, based on the time and culture they live in – and sometimes, beyond that time and culture.

Literary texts and humour, as a discourse, can both be challenging for translators due to the often ambiguous and culture-specific nature of both (Newmark, 1988; Martinez Sierra and Zabalbeascoa Terran, 2017). Aside from the cultural difficulties they can pose, literary texts are also problematic due to their emphasis on form as well as content (Newmark, 1988). Since literary texts are usually open to interpretation, the translator's reading of the source text is the one most likely to be imposed upon TL readers (Hatim and Mason, 1990). Similarly, when it comes to humour, the translator has linguistic problems with connotation and denotation, as well as cultural issues, to deal with (Vandaele, 2010).

The present study looks into the difficulties faced by native Arabic-speaking EFL learners in translating a humorous text from a culture and literary tradition markedly different from their own, maybe because the translation texts were taken from P.G. Wodehouse's collection of short stories, entitled Plum Pie (1966). The study examines the strategies used by the subjects to translate 21 humorous excerpts selected from P.G. Wodehouse's collection of short stories, entitled Plum

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Pie (1966). Finally, the study assesses the effectiveness of these strategies in humour maintainence or humour loss.

The literature review shows a lack of studies pertaining to the translation of humorous literary discourse from English into Arabic and a need for a quality assessment of translators' translation experience from English into Arabic. Therefore, it is hoped that the findings of the present research will contribute to the existing translation studies on the translation of culture-specific humorous literary texts from English into Arabic, by: (a) revealing the problematic nature of translating such texts and (b) providing useful insights for translation students and translators on the challenges they might encounter while translating such texts.

More specifically, the study aims to answer two research questions: 1) What were the difficulties that Native-Arabic speaking BA and MA students encountered when translating culture-specific humorous literary texts into Arabic?, and 2) What strategies did they use to overcome the difficulties they encountered when translating culture-specific humorous literary texts?

2. Literature review

2.1 Overview

The literature review looks at some of the previous studies conducted on the translation of humorous literary fictional texts. Section 2.2 pertains to studies on the translation of literary texts, while Section 2.3 pertains to studies on the translation of humorous texts.

2.2 Studies on the translation of literature

Recent studies on the translation of English literary works, with a special focus on the translation of culture-specific terms, include case studies of the translation strategies followed in Arabic translations of certain English novels and short stories. For example, Tanjour (2011), in her study of the translation of DH Lawrence's The Virgin and the Gypsy into Arabic, found that various sociocultural, economic, political and ideological factors influence translation in the Syrian market, and that these factors seem to affect the translation process as well as target readers' reception of the translated texts.

Likewise, Khrais (2016) examined an Arabic translation of Jhumpa Lahiri's The Namesake, looking in particular at the difficulties of dealing with "untranslatable" and highly culture-specific terms, including abbreviations, phonetically significant words, specialised vocabulary and idioms, and colours. The researcher showed

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that there appeared to be a conflicted relationship between the Arabic translator and the source text, in terms of faithfulness to the text. Khrais (ibid.) suggested expanding the parameters of translation studies, especially those dealing with literary prose as there is more emphasis on poetry at present.

Similarly, Giaber (2015) investigated the lexical choices made in an Arabic translation of Hemingway's A Farewell to Arms, and found that the translator used unfamiliar classical Arabic words as well as items with Islamic connotations, which changed the level of discourse in the novel from informal to formal and added an Islamic flavour to the whole.

Jan (2018) investigated the challenges of cross-cultural translation by comparing translations of the nineteenth-century English classics Jane Eyre and Frankenstein into Arabic. The researcher noted the parallels between the religious values and social conservatism of their time and those of contemporary Arab societies, but concluded that challenges arise in the translation of these works due to quintessential differences between British and Arab culture.

Amayreh (2019) compared two Arabic translations of Shakespeare's Hamlet by highlighting the strategies used by the translators to render the source text effectively into literary translations. The researcher found that omission and addition were prominent features of the translators' rendition of the original, with a focus on maintaining equivalence, reproducing or creating aesthetic effects to complement those in the original, and maintaining the stylistic and functional features of both languages; all of which led to highly effective translations.

Other researchers studied particular aspects involved in the translation of literary texts, such as linguistic or stylistic elements. For example, Bounaama (2019) studied the translation of irony in literary texts from English into Arabic, with Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness as a case study. More specifically, the researcher examined the problems that arose in the translation of stylistic literary devices and cultural items, and evaluated the translator's success in conveying irony to the TL reader. Bounaama concluded that the Arabic translator succeeded in reproducing the ironic impact of the ST; however, the translator was compelled to resort to omissions due to the untranslatability of certain religious or cultural items as well as additions, to reinforce the ironic impact of the ST on the TL reader.

Similarly, Abdo (2020) examined the translation of another figure of speech, i.e., metaphor. The study looked at ways to preserve literary style when translating metaphors from English into Arabic, with Animal Farm as a case study. The

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researcher examined whether metaphors are retained in the target text in the same style as the original. The study indicated that literal translation and omission were frequently used as strategies in dealing with metaphors (how effective they are, is also discussed) and compared the effectiveness and competence of two Arabic translations in conveying the style of the original. The study also showed the extent to which each translation emphasised either the source text culture, or the target text culture.

The studies reviewed in this section discuss various strategies used in the translation of literary texts, whether generally or with regard to a certain aspect of these texts (e.g. foreignization, as in Giaber's (2015) study; culture-specific terms, as in Khrais's (2016) study; addition and omission, as in Amayreh's (2019) study; irony, as in Bounaama's (2019) study; and metaphor, as in Abdo's (2020) study). These studies are relevant to the present study as it also examines strategies used in the translation of a literary humorous text. Though there is a common aim of comparing the ST and TT, the methodology of these studies is different to that of the present study. One significant difference is that the present study examines the translation of students, whereas the previous studies looked at translations produced by professional or commercial translators, or by the researchers themselves. The findings of the present study are discussed in greater detail in Section 4.

2.2 Studies on the translation of humour

Though the translation of humour has not been specifically dealt with in earlier, seminal works on translation, including those of Nida (1964), Catford (1965), Newmark (1988), and Baker (1992), among others, these works do contain chapters on register, untranslatability, non-equivalence, idioms, puns and culture-specific words and concepts, all of which have a bearing on the topic of this paper.

Among the recent studies on the translation of humorous texts are Antonopoulou (2004), Fusari and Montagni (2009), Ageli (2014), Hosseini et al. (2017), Saleh (2018), Mohammed (2019), and Miller (2019).

Some of these researchers conducted case studies of certain humorous works (whether written or audio-visual), looking at the transfer of humour from one language to another. For example, Antonopoulou (2004) examined transferring the humorous effect of proper nouns [PNs] in the translation of Raymond Chandler's novels from English into Greek. The researcher checked traditional translation strategies used to render proper nouns against readers' reactions to them, in order to gauge the transference of the humorous effect of proper nouns

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from the source to the target texts. Based on her findings, the researcher argues, "replacing socioculturally-bound PNs in translating jab lines may jeopardize their humorous effect."

Likewise, Fusari and Montagni (2009) studied the translation of English humour and national stereotypes into Italian, with Stephen Clarke's novel Merde Happens as a case study. The researchers showed difficulties they encountered in their translation of culture-specific words and references in a humorous text. They tried to solve these difficulties by attempting a balance between the translation approaches of foreignization and domestication. Thus, they demonstrated that "the product of this translation can be entertaining to the Italian public even if the novel contains no reference to the Italian language and culture."

Similarly, Hosseini et al. (2017) studied the effect of lexical differences between languages from different families on the translation process. The researchers examined the transference of humour in two Persian translations of the American satirical novel The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, and found that the unequal structures of the SL and TL caused difficulties for the translators. Both translations showed different results due to the translators' disparate choices in the process of translation, with varying degrees of success in each case.

Other researchers have looked at the translation of humorous phrases and expressions, as in Ageli's (2014) study. The researcher demonstrated specific strategies and methods to be used when encountering difficulties in the translation of humour. The researcher holds that linguistic humour, i.e., humour that is dependent upon certain norms of the source language, is practically untranslatable if it infringes on the norms of the SL, and that cultural humour can be transferable only if the culture of the SL has diffused and "gained currency globally." Furthermore, the researcher found that in some cases of humorous expressions, it would be more effective to replace the whole utterance with TL humour instead.

Other researchers investigated the translation competence of native Arabic-speaking students studying English at the undergraduate and graduate levels. For example, Saleh (2018) looked at the problems faced by MA students in translating English jokes into Arabic, and the translation strategies employed by them. The researcher reported issues in the use of inappropriate translation techniques on the part of the students, which were attributed to linguistic and cultural factors. The study recommended greater exposure to the SL culture and media and more frequent communication with native speakers. For translators, it recommended focusing on the gist of the joke during its translation and taking the background of the TL audience into consideration. The study called for improvement in translator

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training so as to enable practitioners to perform better in this aspect.

Likewise, Mohammed (2019) investigated loss, gain and compensation in the process of translating humorous English expressions into Arabic. The researcher demonstrated the inevitability of loss in the expressions selected for translation in his study, concluding that equivalence may frequently be unattainable in the translation of humorous expressions, and that compensation is often needed in this particular area of translation.

Based on this literature review, we observe that, though the translation of literary and humorous texts has indeed been the subject of several studies, there appears to be a distinct lack of studies pertaining especially to the translation of humorous literary texts, specifically 20th century short stories, and more specifically from English into Arabic. Thus, this study aims to contribute to the existing literature by identifying the problems encountered, and strategies used, in the translation of humorous literary texts from English into Arabic, particularly with regard to translation students who are Native-Arabic speakers studying translation at the BA and MA levels in an Arabic speaking country.

3. Method

3.1 Overview

This section pertains to the methodology of the present study in relation to the following points: (a) the subjects of this study, (b) the source text/data, (c) how the validity/reliability of the research instruments was determined, and (d) the data collection process and analysis procedures. It also discusses the limitations of the study.

3.2 Subjects of the Study

The subjects of the study consisted of a sample of 9 senior BA students and 7 MA translation students, who just joined the MA Translation program, from the University of Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates. The BA in English language and literature program is offered by the Department of Foreign Languages; it includes compulsory and elective courses including courses on Arabic language, Arabic literature, and general translation, as well as a graduation project, totaling 123 credits. The MA in translation program includes compulsory courses, elective courses (including a course on literary translation) and a thesis, totaling 34 credits. The subjects' age ranged from 21 to 28 years old. The subjects studied English as a foreign language for about 16 to 20 years, and were all EFL learners from Arab

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cultural backgrounds, namely Gulf nationals from the UAE and Saudi Arabia, Jordanians, Palestinians, Syrians, Iraqis, etc.

3.2 Source Text

Twenty one scripts (word count: 702) containing humour were selected from six short stories out of a collection entitled Plum Pie, by the English humourist PG Wodehouse. These 21 humorous scripts made the translation task (See Sec. 3.3). The stories were Jeeves and the Greasy Bird, Sleepy Time, Stylish Stouts, Bingo Bans the Bomb, George and Alfred, and A Good Cigar is a Smoke. Plum Pie was first published in the U.S by Simon and Schuster in 1966. It is a work of fiction belonging to the comedy genre, and it was chosen for this study because of its humorous content, particularly culture-specific terms and phrases used for humorous effect.

3.3 Translation Task as a Data Collection Instrument

A translation task was prepared as a data collection tool, which consisted of two sections. Section 1 asked for information about the subjects (See Appendix A). Section 2 contained 21 excerpts comprising the humorous texts, totalling 702 words (See Appendix A). To maximize the validity of our instrument, the preliminary translation task, which consisted of 50 humorous scripts, was given to a jury of three native speakers of English. They agreed unanimously that 21 were only humorous. Therefore, these 21 scripts were chosen to make up the translation task. The translation task was sent by email to the subjects of the study through faculty members at the Department of Foreign Languages at the University of Sharjah, UAE. The subjects were asked to complete the translation task and submit it within three days. The subjects were asked to attempt the translation of all excerpts.

3.4 Data Analysis: Theoretical Framework and Procedures

After collecting the students' responses, the researchers read and identified the subjects' translation strategies as per Newmark's (1988) model of translation strategies. Newmark (1988) differentiates between methods and strategies in that methods relate to the text as a whole, while procedures are used for sentences and smaller units of language. For this study, we considered the terms "strategies" and "procedures" to be interchangeable; where Newmark used "procedure", we used "strategy."

According to Newmark, translation methods may be classified either as

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placing emphasis on the source text language, or on the target text language. Translation methods with SL emphasis include word-for-word translation, literal translation, faithful translation and semantic translation. Translation methods with TL emphasis include adaptation, free translation, idiomatic translation and communicative translation. Newmark regards semantic and communicative translation as the only two methods which fulfil the two main aims of translation: accuracy and economy (p. 41).

As for translation strategies, Newmark identifies transference (transliteration); naturalisation; cultural, functional and descriptive equivalents; synonymy; through-translation (borrowing); grammatical shifts or transposition; modulation; recognised translation; translation labels; compensation; componential analysis; reduction and expansion; paraphrase; equivalence; adaptation; couplets; and notes, additions and glosses.

Based on this theoretical framework, we provided an operational definition for each strategy identified in the subjects' work, to show the exact criteria which the researchers used to classify those strategies. These operational definitions are as follows:

1. Transliteration is defined by Newmark as "transference", i.e. the process of transferring an SL word to a TL text as a translation procedure, or converting the alphabets of different languages into English (Newmark, 1988, p. 81).
2. Literal translation is defined as a method of translation whereby SL grammatical constructions are converted to their nearest TL equivalents but the lexical words are translated singly, out of context (Newmark, 1988, p. 46).
3. Cultural equivalents are defined as TL cultural words used to translate SL cultural words (Newmark, 1988, pp. 82, 83).
4. Functional equivalents are "culture-free" words used to translate cultural words, sometimes with a new specific term, thus "neutralizing" or "generalizing" the terms used in the source language (Newmark 1988: 83).
5. Descriptive equivalents are words used to translate culture-specific terms, which denotes the description or function of a cultural item or concept, e.g. the description of "samurai" as "the Japanese aristocracy from the eleventh to the nineteenth century, with its function being "to provide

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officers and administrators" (Newmark, 1988, pp. 83, 84).

6. Newmark (1988) defines paraphrase as "an amplification or explanation of the meaning of a segment of the text." According to Newmark, paraphrase contains important implications and omissions where the TT is concerned. In this study, I have regarded every lexical rewording of ST phrases as a paraphrase. (This is different from shifts, which refer to the modification of ST grammar and syntax so that both are in accordance with the TL grammatical and syntactic norms. See section 4.3.10).

7. Borrowing (also known as calques, loan translation, and through-translation) is defined as the literal translation of common collocations, names of organization, and the components of compound words (Newmark, 1988, p. 84).

8. Newmark (1988, p. 91) states that there is certain cultural, technical or linguistic information that a translator may have to add to the translation, for the benefit of the TT readership. As per this description, additions may be defined as words or phrases added to the target text to enhance the translation or make it more comprehensible and readable. Newmark (1988, p. 92) includes in-text notes, end-notes and glosses under such "additions".

9. As Newmark (1988) has not defined omission, this study has included the deletion of certain lexical and grammatical items, which constituted keywords and phrases in the source texts, without any reference being made to the deleted items through paraphrasing, shifts, or other translation strategies.

10. A shift is defined as a translation procedure involving a change in the grammar from SL to TL (Newmark, 1988, p. 85).

The communication problems encountered by the students and the translation strategies used by them were discussed qualitatively. After that, frequencies and percentages of strategies were found and tabulated. Finally, the translation strategies were discussed and illustrated with examples taken from the participants' translations.

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4. Findings

4.1 Overview

This section pertains to the findings of the present study. Section 4.2 comprises a discussion of certain translation problems that the subjects were observed to have encountered in translating the ST. Section 4.3 contains a discussion of the strategies used by the subjects in translating the ST, with examples from the subjects' work. Section 4.4 examines mistranslations that occurred in the subjects' work. The effect of the translation strategies and mistranslations on humour loss is another aspect that is examined in this section.

4.2 Translation Problems

As observed in their translations of the given task (discussed in the sections below), the subjects faced both linguistic and cultural challenges when translating the source text. The linguistic problems encountered by the subjects are divided into lexical, semantic, grammatical and syntactic.

4.2.1 Lexical problems:

Lexical issues arose due to a lack in the participants' comprehension skills and linguistic competence when it came to the ST's vocabulary.

Example:

ST: …looking like something stuffed by a taxidermist… (Excerpt 9)

TT: ...ويبدو وكأنه شيء محشو من قبل رجل الضرائب...

The subject translated the word "taxidermist" in excerpt 9 as "رجل الضرائب" (rajul aḍ-ḍarā'ib), meaning "tax man"). In this example, the participant mistranslated the word due to (presumably) not understanding it. The participant may have mistaken the presence of "tax" in this compound noun as meaning "a charge usually of money imposed by authority on persons or property for public purposes."(1) This mistranslation might also be attributed to the fact that in some English words, "–ist" is used as a noun suffix, to refer to the "person who" or the "man who," as in pharmacist, artist, etc. The subject may have overgeneralized the rule due to lack of familiarity with the meaning and usage of the lexical item "taxidermist." The correct Arabic equivalent would have been «محنِّط» (muḥanniṭ), meaning "taxidermist" or «محنِّط حيوانات» (muḥanniṭ ḥaywānāt), meaning "animal taxidermist."

(1) https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tax

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4.2.2 Semantic problems:

Semantic problems arose in the translation of figurative language and cultural references, when the participant used inappropriate strategies or mistranslated language that could not (or should not) be translated literally, for instance, due to idiomaticity.

Example:

ST: 'Where are you, cocky? At the Zoo?'

'I don't follow you, Jas Waterbury.' (Excerpt 20)

TT: «أنا لا أتبعك يا جاس ووتربري».

The subject translated "I don't follow you," which is an idiomatic phrase denoting lack of understanding or comprehension, as «أنا لا أتبعك» (ana lā atba'uk), instead of «أنا لا أفهمك» (ana lā afhamuk), meaning "I don't understand you." This was presumably due to the subject's lack of familiarity with idiomatic usages in the SL; therefore, they used literal translation as a strategy to solve this communication problem.

4.2.3 Grammatical problems:

Grammatical problems, such as the mistranslation of singular and plural or masculine and feminine occurred frequently in the translation of grammatical structures and complex sentences in the source text.

Example:

ST: The newcomer's only response was… (Excerpt 5)

TT: كان رد القادمون الجدد الوحيد هو...

The subject translated "newcomer" as «القادمون الجدد» (al qādimūn al judud), which is a plural version of the ST word. Thus, the TT is inconsistent with the ST in terms of singularity and plurality. Instead of rendering the noun in singular, the subjects used the plural form in the TL text.

4.2.4 Syntactic problems:

Syntactic issues occurred as a result of adopting the structure of the SL in their translations, instead of rearranging grammatical structures to read more naturally in the TL, bearing the TL syntax in mind.

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Example:

ST: "A lion just roared at me." (Excerpt 20)

TT: «أسد زأر علي للتو.»

The subject translated the sentence as «أسد زأر علي للتو» (asadun za'ara 'alayya lit taww) instead of «زأر أسد عليَّ للتو» (za'ara asadun 'alayya lit taww), i.e. by placing the subject before the verb instead of the other way around to conform to the Arabic grammar. In English syntax, the sentence is arranged as subject + verb + object; however, in Arabic syntax, the order should be verb + subject + object. It could be argued that sentences in Arabic can be either nominal (i.e. with nouns preceding verbs) or verbal (i.e. with verbs preceding nouns), and that the subject's translation may be considered acceptable. However, it is also a rule of Arabic composition that the noun only precedes the verb if there is a stylistic reason for it. Since there is no such reason in this example, the subject's translation reads less naturally in Arabic.

4.3 Translation Strategies Used by the Subjects

The subjects used 10 main strategies to translate the source text: transliteration; literal translation; cultural equivalents, functional and descriptive equivalents; borrowing and naturalization, paraphrasing; shifts; addition; and omission. The findings showed that the translation strategies that leaned towards faithfulness to the source text language (source language emphasis), which included transliteration, literal translation, use of lexical equivalents, and borrowing, were used more frequently than strategies that leaned towards the target text language (target language emphasis), such as the use of functional or cultural equivalents, paraphrasing, shifts, additions and omissions. The frequencies and percentages of translation strategies used in the translation of humorous scripts are presented in Table 4.1 below.

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Table 4.1 Frequencies and percentages of the translation strategies used by the subjects.

Strategy	Frequency	Percentage (rounded off)
Transliteration	201	18%
Literal Translation	263	24%
Cultural Equivalents	57	5%
Functional Equivalents	27	2%
Descriptive Equivalents	5	0.4%
Paraphrasing	103	9%
Borrowing	115	10%
Shifts	235	21%
Addition	42	4%
Omission	68	6%
Totals	1116	99%

Table 4.1 shows that literal translation and shifts were the most frequently used strategies, with 263 and 235 instances, respectively. The frequent use of literal translation, compared to other strategies, implies that the subjects tended to emphasise the source language, as per Newmark's classification of translation methods (1988). The use of lexical equivalence and shifts indicates the subjects' mindfulness of lexical and grammatical structures in the target language. Paraphrasing was comparatively less frequently used in 103 instances, and addition and omission, which can be considered "invasive" translation strategies (as they add to, or deduct from, the source text), were also relatively less frequently used, with 42 and 68 instances respectively. Again, this implies that most of the subjects preferred faithfulness to the source text over taking liberties with it in

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the target text. As far as culture-specific terms were concerned, the subjects used transliteration, lexical equivalence, functional equivalence, cultural equivalence and borrowing. The table shows that transliteration (201 instances) and borrowing (115 instances) were more frequently used to translate culture-specific items than cultural equivalence (57 instances), functional equivalence (27 instances) and descriptive equivalence (5 instances), which again implies that most of the subjects preferred a ST-oriented approach.

4.3.1 Transliteration

Transliteration was used by the subjects for rendering proper nouns in all the responses, albeit with different spellings in Arabic (e.g. "Quorn and Pytchley" as "الكورن وبيتشلي" or "كورون وبيتشلي" or "كوورن وبيتشلي"). The humorous import of some unusual-sounding names (used by the author for humorous purposes) was lost in the target texts. There were also instances of transliteration being used for common nouns. For example, in excerpt 4, the capitalised culture-specific noun "Kennel" in "Kennel Show" was transliterated as "عرض كنل". In excerpt 14, the culture-specific nouns "gremlin" and "boogie" were also transliterated as "جرملين" or "غرملن" and "بوجي" or "بوغي". In excerpt 20, the culture-specific noun (not adjective) "cocky" was also transliterated as "كوكي".

These findings indicate that subjects resorted to transliteration when faced by unfamiliar culture-specific terms, references or usages. This strategy resulted in translations that would be obscure to the reader of Arabic, and thus led to humour loss.

4.3.2 Literal Translation

Literal or word-for-word translation was by far the most frequently used strategy in the subjects' translations, with 263 instances in all, which made up 24% of all translation strategies. As a translation strategy, literal translation had the dual effect of retaining the structure and tone of the source text, and resulting in obscurity or mistranslation when used to translate ambiguous, connotative, metaphorical or idiomatic language. On the other hand, the literal translation of certain dialogues and narration also led to effective translation. In this case, literal translation can be said to have enabled the participant to retain the imagery of the original, thus preventing humour loss.

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Consider the following example (bold in English and Arabic):

SL Text	TL Text
The old relative laughed one of those booming laughs of hers which… probably lifted many a sportsman from the saddle. (Excerpt 1)	ضحكت القريبة المسنة إحدى ضحكاتها المزعجة التي كانت... من المحتمل رفعت العديد من الرياضيين من السرج.

In this example, the ST phrase "lifted from the saddle" denotes being startled or alarmed. Thus, it may have been more appropriate to translate this as, for example, «أفزعت كثيرًا من الصيادين»(afza'at kathīran min as ṣayyādīn), meaning "startled/alarmed many hunters." This may have better helped in retaining the humour of the original.

4.3.3 Cultural Equivalents

Cultural equivalents are cultural words in the target language used to translate cultural words in the source language (Newmark, 1988, pp. 82, 83). The data show that Islamic terms and Arabic culture-specific terms were used by the subjects in translating culture-specific items, certain common nouns and idioms. In all, there were 57 instances of the use of cultural equivalents, accounting for 5%.

The following excerpt was translated using a cultural equivalent (bold in English and Arabic):

SL Text	**TL Text**
'**Bless my soul**, I haven't felt so relieved since the afternoon in West Africa …' (Excerpt 18)	«**يا إلهي**، لم أشعر بهذه الدرجة من الراحة منذ غرب أفريقيا ..."

In this example, the ST phrase "bless my soul" is an idiomatic phrase denoting surprise, as per the dictionary. As seen in the TT, "Bless my soul" was translated as "يا إلهي" (yā ilāhi), meaning "O my God." Since the ST phrase originates from a religious expression, it is fitting that the subject used a religious invocation to translate it.

The findings show that the effectiveness of cultural equivalents depended on the subjects' choice of appropriate cultural equivalents, because the use of appropriate cultural equivalents led to greater comprehensibility of the source texts on the part of the reader, as in the example mentioned.

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4.3.4 Functional Equivalents

Functional equivalents are "culture-free" words used to translate cultural words, sometimes with a new specific term, thus "neutralising" or "generalising" the terms used in the source language (Newmark, 1988, 83). In all, there were 27 instances of the use of functional equivalents.

Consider the following example (bold in English and Arabic):

SL Text	TL Text
...there are six varieties of hangover – … and the Gremlin **Boogie**... (Excerpt 14)	...هناك ستة أنواع من آثار السكر... **ورقصة** الجرملن...

In this example, "boogie" was translated as «رقصة», meaning "dance". As observed in the given examples, functional equivalents were explanatory, but still vague as translation choices. They did not specify or denote the exact meaning of the words in the source text; thus, there was potential for humour loss. However, they fulfilled their purpose in bringing the meaning as close as possible to the target reader in relatively neutral (i.e., non-cultural) TL terms.

4.3.5 Descriptive Equivalents

A descriptive equivalent is a word used to translate culture-specific terms, which denotes the description or function of a cultural item or concept, e.g. the description of "samurai" as "the Japanese aristocracy from the eleventh to the nineteenth century, with its function being "to provide officers and administrators" (Newmark, 1988, pp. 83-84). There were five instances of descriptive equivalence in all, and they all occurred in the translation of excerpt 21.

Consider the following example (bold in English and Arabic):

SL Text	TL Text
…to make sure that she was not committing **bigamy**.	...للتأكد من ألا ترتكب جريمة **الجمع بين زوجين في آنٍ واحد.**

In this translation, the subject described bigamy as "being in a relationship with two husbands at one time." This is appropriate as it explains the concept of bigamy, especially for the TL audience, who would be aware of the Islamic ruling of polygamy as regards men and women. Thus, the subject used description, which is also classified as a strategy of paraphrase.

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4.3.6. Paraphrasing

There were 103 instances of paraphrasing in all. Thus, this strategy was relatively less frequently used. Though it resulted in some powerful imagery, there were cases where paraphrasing led to changing the meaning of whole sentences, thus diverting the reader from the author's original intent.

See the example below (bold in English, and Arabic):

TL Text	SL Text
'**Three heads are better than two**,' I argued. (Excerpt 3)	أجبته **ما خاب من استشار**.

In this example, the subject paraphrased the English idiom "three heads are better than two" using an Arabic idiom "ما خاب من استشار" (mā khāba man istashār), meaning "he who consults others does not lose (or fail)." This can be said to be an effective choice as it increases idiomaticity in the TT.

4.3.7. Borrowing

Borrowing (also known as calques, loan translation, and through-translation) is defined as the literal translation of common collocations, names of organisation, and the components of compound words (Newmark, 1988, 84). Borrowing occurred in 115 instances.

Consider the following example (bold in English and Arabic):

SL text	TL text
He was looking, spellbound, at the photograph of a man so vast, so like a captive **balloon**… (Excerpt 21)	كان ينظر ، مندهشًا ، إلى صورة رجل ضخم جدًا ، مثل **بالون** أسير...

The choice to use borrowed words, which originated from English and French as per the dictionary, helped retain humour as these words have entered common parlance in Arabic; hence, they would not be obscure or incomprehensible to the Arabic reader, which in turn would prevent humour loss.

4.3.8. Shifts

A shift is defined as is a translation procedure involving a change in the grammar from SL to TL (Newmark, 1988, 85). Shifts were observed to have the

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effect of making sentences read more naturally as per Arabic grammar. In certain translations, shifts were coupled with idiomatic language, which led to higher readability in Arabic. There were 235 instances of shifts.

Consider the following example (bold in English and Arabic):

ST	TT
There were dark circles **under his eyes**… (Excerpt 11)	**وكانت تحيط بعينيه** حلقات داكنة…

In this example, the subject changed the order of the adverb, preposition, pronoun and noun in the TT, and changed the verb "there were" to "تحيط" (tuḥīṭ) meaning "surrounded." This choice was more natural than the literal translation "كانت هناك هالات سوداء تحت عينيه" (kānat hunāka hālātun sawdā taḥta 'aynayh) or the even more literal "كانت هناك دوائر مظلمة تحت عينيه» (kānat hunāka dawā'iru muẓlimah taḥta 'aynayh).

Shifts were observed to have been used by the subjects to increase the naturalness and readability of the subjects' translations, thus helping to retain the humorous import of the source text's lexical structures.

4.3.9 Additions

Addition includes in-bracket explanatory notes or glosses as well as words or phrases added to the target texts to enhance their translation or make it more comprehensible and readable. There were 42 cases of addition in all.

See an example of addition below (bold in English and Arabic):

SL Text	TL Text
He looked at me incredulously, his jaw beginning to droop like a badly set **souffle**. (Excerpt 15)	ونظر إلي بارتياب، فتتدلى فكه و انهدل **كطبق** سوفليه معد بشكل سيّئ.

In this example, the subject added the word طبق (ṭabaq) meaning "dish" before soufflé. This increased comprehensibility in the TT, as "soufflé" is an item of foreign cuisine, which may not be known to some Arabic readers. Making this addition also causes the TT to read more smoothly. The combined effect would be to retain the ST's humour.

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4.3.10 Omission

Omission includes the deletion of certain lexical and grammatical items, which constituted keywords and phrases in the source texts, without any reference being made to the deleted items through paraphrasing, shifts, or any other translation strategies. There were 68 cases of omission in all, meaning that, as a strategy, it was less frequently employed by the subjects.

As seen in the example below, the bolded English phrase was deleted by the subjects.

SL Text	TL Text
He shrank from exposing himself to their bleak contemptuous stares. His emotions when he did would, he knew, be similar in almost every respect to those of **a mongrel which has been rash enough to wander into some fashionable Kennel Show.** (Excerpt 4)	تقلص نفسه من نظراتهم الكئيبة. كان يعلم أنه سينظر إليهم بنفس هذه النظرات المحتقرة.

In this example, the subject paraphrased the ST and omitted the simile of the mongrel (in bold) entirely. This led to the loss of humour due to the loss of the imagery of the mongrel (a type of dog), which the author of the ST used for humorous purposes.

The findings show that omission can result in phrases which appear stilted or unnatural. Omission also results in partially conveying, or completely changing, the meaning of the sentences in which the omitted items had occurred, leading to loss of meaning, and thus, humour loss.

4.4 Mistranslations in the Subjects' Responses

Mistranslations, or translation errors, included both slight and significant inconsistencies between the source and target texts, which led to an unintentional change in the denotations and connotations of excerpts, resulting in humour loss. In total, there were 253 mistranslations or errors. The types of mistranslations found in the subjects' responses are discussed in the sections below.

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4.4.1 Lexical Mistranslations

Lexical mistranslations were lexical inconsistencies between the source text and the target text, i.e., translation of a word by other than its lexical meaning.

Example:

ST	TT
In rather an **awed** voice he asked: (Excerpt 20)	في صوت **مذهل** سأل:

The subject translated "awed" as «مذهل» (muth-hil), meaning "amazing." It should be translated as «مذهول» (math-hūl), meaning "amazed" or "stunned" would have been closer to the meaning.A morphological difference between «مذهل» and «مذهول» leads to the two similar-sounding words having completely different meanings.

4.4.2 Grammatical Mistranslations

Grammatical mistranslations occurred wherever there were grammatical inconsistencies between the source text and the target text.

Example:

ST	TT
…he resembled in every respect the gorilla to which **Cyril had mentally compared him.** (Excerpt 7)	كان مماثلاً للغوريلا في جميع النواحي التي **قارنته بها سيريل في ذهنها...**

Instead of rendering the ST sentence as «قارنه بها سيريل» (in the masculine), the subject rendered it as «قارنته بها سيريل» (in the feminine). Thus, "Cyril's" gender is inconsistent between the source and target text. This would lead to the loss of humour, as the source text meant to juxtapose a physically weak man with a physically strong one for humorous purposes.

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4.4.3 Mistranslation of culture-specific items

The mistranslation of culture-specific items occurred due to the lack of cultural information on the part of the participant.

Example:

ST	TT
…rash enough to wander **into some fashionable Kennel show**.	…كان متسرعًا بما يكفي للتجول في **عرض بيت الكلب المألوف.**

Here, "fashionable kennel show" is translated as «عرض بيت الكلب المألوف» ('arḍ bayt al-kalb al-ma'lūf), meaning "pet dog kennel show" This translation would be obscure in the TT, leading to humour loss due to lack of comprehensibility.

4.4.4 Inappropriate use of translation strategies

Some cases may be considered as an inappropriate use of translation strategies. For example, if literal translation were used instead of paraphrasing or idiomatic translation or if synonymy were used instead of lexical equivalence, or if paraphrasing were used instead of literal translation, this would have been be considered an inappropriate use of translation strategies.

Example:

ST	TT
The old relative **laughed one of those booming** laughs of hers… (Excerpt 1)	ضحكت قريبتها العجوز إحدى **ضحكاتها المزدهرة...**

The word "booming" means "loud" or "flourishing", depending on the context. Here, the subject used idiomatic translation to convey the second (idiomatic) meaning instead of the first (literal) meaning, leading to obscurity and hence loss of humour.

5. Conclusion

The aims of this study are: (a) to identify the problems or challenges that Arabic-speaking EFL students face in translating humorous literary texts at the graduate and undergraduate levels; (b) to identify the strategies used by Arabic-speaking EFL students to translate humorous literary texts; and (c) to assess the effectiveness of these strategies in retaining the humour of the source text.

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The study reveals that the problems students faced were equally linguistic and cultural, particularly with regard to the chosen source text. The students used 10 main strategies to translate the source texts (as per Newmark's model), with literal translation being the most commonly used. In general, students tended to favour strategies with an emphasis on the source text language rather than the target text language; hence, they mostly preferred literal translation, shifts, transliteration and borrowing over paraphrasing or adaptation, omission, and the use of cultural equivalents.

Unlike Amayreh's (2019) and Bounaama's (2019) studies, the findings of this study show that the subjects did not resort to omission and addition frequently; rather, they tended to be faithful to the source text. Moreover, unlike in Giaber's (2015) study, the subjects tended to use an approach oriented around the source text and source language, rather than the target text and target language. In terms of the effect that their strategies had on the target text's retention of humour, the subjects' translation mostly retained the humour of the source text, reflecting the findings of Fusari and Montagni's (2009) study of humour translation from English into Italian. As per Hosseini et. al.'s (2017) study, the unequal linguistic structures between the source language and the target language did pose a problem for the subjects in this study. Finally, in congruence with the findings of Saleh's study (2018), the findings of this study indicate that there is a need to enhance EFL university students' linguistic and cultural competence, so they can produce adequate translations of humorous literary texts.

Based on the findings of the present research, we give the following recommendations for translation students, instructors and syllabus designers.

Firstly, some academic and extracurricular initiatives should be launched for translation students in the translation programmes offered at Arab universities. This could take the form of adding more courses on the translation of literary texts to BA and MA English, Arabic and translation programmes at UAE universities. Courses on Arabic language and literature could also be included, especially in translation programmes, to make translation students more proficient and qualified to translate texts from English into Arabic.

Secondly, translation instructors should use assigned texts to further enrich translation students' knowledge of culture-specific items and concepts. There should be special focus on the cultural aspects of such texts, and how to make appropriate decisions when translating them for an Arabic-speaking target audience.

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Thirdly, instructors should use translation practice exercises, which involve more advanced linguistic structures (whether in terms of grammar or vocabulary) and ambiguous or connotative language.

Finally, syllabus designers should include more humorous literary texts in the learning materials being used in translation classes.

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Appendix: Translation Task

GRADUATE RESEARCH

University of Sharjah

Translation Task

This translation task constitutes research for an MA thesis on the translation of humorous texts. The task contains 21 excerpts from a collection of humorous short stories entitled Plum Pie (1966), by English author P. G. Wodehouse. These texts are to be translated into Arabic. You may use any tools at your disposal; however, your work must be your own. You are requested to submit your translation of these excerpts within three days of receiving this task.

Thank you for your participation.

Please note that your responses will be only used for research purposes.

Section 1. About the participant

Name: ……..… Student ID: …..……

Nationality*:…… Native Language*: ……...……

Second Language*: ……

Have you visited an English-speaking country (i.e. the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, or others)?*

o Yes

o No

Have you lived for an extended period in an English-speaking country (i.e. the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, or others)?*

o Yes

o No

University*: ……..... College/Faculty*: ……..……

Major*: .....…… Level*: ……

*Required fields.

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Section 2. Translate the following excerpts into Arabic. Make sure that you attempt all.

1. The old relative laughed one of those booming laughs of hers which in the days when she hunted with the Quorn and Pytchley probably lifted many a sportsman from the saddle.

2. A head popped out. I've seen heads that were more of a feast for the eye. It was what I would describe as a greasy head. Its summit was moist with hair oil and the face, too, suggested that its proprietor after the morning shave had thought fit to rub his cheeks with butter.

3. 'Three heads are better than two,' I argued.

'Not if one of them is solid ivory from the neck up,' said the aged relative.

4. He shrank from exposing himself to their bleak contemptuous stares. His emotions when he did would, he knew, be similar in almost every respect to those of a mongrel which has been rash enough to wander into some fashionable Kennel Show.

5. The newcomer's only response was a bronchial sound such as might have been produced by an elephant taking its foot out of a swamp in a teak forest.

6. The discovery that, in addition to possessing the physique of a gorilla he had also that animal's easily aroused temper was not one calculated to induce a restful state of mind.

7. Except that he was not beating his chest with both fists, he resembled in every respect the gorilla to which Cyril had mentally compared him.

8. …so he had gone to Mr Purkiss and asked for a raise, and Mr Purkiss had stared at him incredulously.

'A what?' he cried, wincing as if some unfriendly tooth had bitten him in the fleshy part of the leg.

9. and he sat staring at it with his eyes protruding in the manner popularized by snails, looking like something stuffed by a taxidermist who had learned his job from a correspondence course and had only got as far as Lesson Three.

10. Even at this distance he could hear him gnashing his teeth. Unless it was an electric drill working in the street.

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11. There were dark circles under his eyes, and those eyes could have stepped straight on to any breakfast plate and passed without comment as poached eggs.

12. 'There is a letter from Wilfred Waterson (aged seven) about his parrot Percy which would serve him as a passport into any but the most choosy lunatic asylum.'

13. He seemed to be blushing, though it was hard to say for certain, his face from the start having been tomatoesque.

14. I am told by those who know that there are six varieties of hangover – the Broken Compass, the Sewing Machine, the Comet, the Atomic, the Cement Mixer and the Gremlin Boogie, and his aspect suggested that he had got them all.

15. He looked at me incredulously, his jaw beginning to droop like a badly set souffle.

16. There was an ominous calm in the motion picture magnate's manner such as one finds in volcanoes just before they erupt and make householders in the neighbourhood wish they had settled elsewhere.

17. 'We want to conduct this operation with a minimum of sound effects. Your impulse, I know, will be to trip over your feet and fall downstairs with a noise like the delivery of a ton of coal, but resist it.'

18. 'Bless my soul, I haven't felt so relieved since the afternoon in West Africa when a rhinoceros, charging on me with flashing eyes, suddenly sprained an ankle and had to call the whole thing off…."

19. Her vocal delivery when amused always resembles one of those explosions in London street you read about in the papers.

20. In rather an awed voice he asked:

'Where are you, cocky? At the Zoo?'

'I don't follow you, Jas Waterbury.'

'A lion just roared at me.'

'Oh, that was my aunt.'

'Sooner yours than mine. I thought the top of my head had come off.'

21. He was looking, spellbound, at the photograph of a man so vast, so like a

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captive balloon, that Kirk Rockaway seemed merely pleasantly plump in comparison. A woman, he felt, even one as globular as his Aunt Myrtle, would have been well advised before linking her lot with his to consult her legal adviser to make sure that she was not committing bigamy.

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ترجمة الفكاهة من اللغة الإنجليزية إلى اللغة العربية: التحديات والاستراتيجيات

رشا خان[1]

غالب ربابعة[2]

ملخص البحث:

تبحث هذه الدراسة في التحديات التي يواجهها الطلبة العرب من متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، في ترجمة المعنى المتقارب لمجموعة من النصوص المقتبسة من كتاب «بلوم باي» (فطيرة برقوق)، المنشور عام 1966م، وهو مجموعة قصص قصيرة للمؤلف الإنجليزي الفكاهي بي. جي. وودهاوس (1975-1881). وقد نظر الباحثان في الاستراتيجيات التي استخدمتها عيّنة تتكون من 16 طالبًا من جنسيات عربية مختلفة، متخصصين في اللغة الإنجليزية باعتبارها لغة أجنبية بالإضافة إلى الترجمة، ويدرسون في مرحلتَي البكالوريوس والماجستير بجامعة الشارقة، لحل مشكلات الترجمة. وأظهرت النتائج أن الطلبة واجهوا مشكلات تتعلق بالمعنى والمبنى بالإضافة إلى مشكلات تتعلق بالنحو والصرف. وقد استخدم الطلبة 10 استراتيجيات أساسية في ترجمة النصوص المقتبسة، كانت الترجمة الحرفية هي الأكثر استخدامًا من بينها. وكشفت الدراسة عن وجود عدد من الأخطاء في الترجمة، تم تصنيفها بأنها أخطاء لغوية ونحوية وأخطاء في ترجمة المصطلحات الثقافية وأخطاء في استخدام الاستراتيجيات غير المناسبة في الترجمة (مثل استخدام الترجمة الحرفية بدلًا عن الترجمة الاصطلاحية، وكذلك العكس) وتشير هذه النتائج إلى الحاجة لتحسين مستوى الكفاءة اللغوية واللغوية-الاجتماعية في اللغة المترجَم إليها، وهو أمر ضروري لتمكين متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية من ترجمة النصوص الأدبية الفكاهية. وقدمت الدراسة بعض الاقتراحات لطلبة الترجمة المتحدثين باللغة العربية، بالإضافة إلى المترجمين المبتدئين.

الكلمات الدالة: ترجمة، نصوص أدبية، نصوص فكاهية، متعلمو اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.

(1) كلية الآداب والعلوم الإنسانية والإجتماعية - جامعة الشارقة (الشارقة - الإمارات العربية المتحدة)
U17200721@sharjah.ac.ae

(2) كلية الآداب والعلوم الإنسانية والإجتماعية - جامعة الشارقة (الشارقة - الإمارات العربية المتحدة)

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