

## Translation Quality Assessment of a Literary Text between English and Arabic

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**Abstract:** This study investigates the translation assessment of the Arabic translation of *Eliot's Middlemarch* semantically and visually and to what extent has TT been successfully rendered the semantic and the visual scenes of the ST. This study is a qualitative comparative analysis in nature and it is based on the theoretical part of Minsky (1974); House (1981, 1998, and 2015); Munday (2016); Williams (2009); Drugan (2013); and Abdo and Abu-Faraj (2019). The studied sample (3 scripts) is chosen randomly by the researcher and two professional professors from the translation field are selected to assess the semantic and the visual images of the ST and the TT. The study concludes that TT sometimes fails to render the exact intended meaning (the semantic division) of the source text. TT also represents to some-extent successfulness in translation the selected sample. Additions or omissions may successfully used sometimes. Finally, the data analysis reveals that TT fails to some extent in visualizing the images' frames as the ST does in scripts (1 and 2); whereas, in third script, TT somehow successfully managed to transfer the visual images of the ST.

**Keywords:** literary text, translation, assessment, quality, English- Arabic

## Introduction

Translation is the replacement of source language textual material by target language equivalent textual material (Catford, 1965, p. 20). The quality of translation has been always one of the main subjects in the translation field. Scholars start searching case studies systematically (Varmazyari, 2014). The TQA (translation quality assessment) is a growing subfield of translation studies. It focuses on the relationships between the translated text (ST) and the target text (TT) (House, 1981). In fact, translation as a product has been clearly subjected to not to use generic labels as 'good' or 'bad' translation. In other words, a higher degree of objectivity has been advocated despite the fact that there is some undeniable self-sufficiency in every work of assessment and criticism. Translation scientists have attempted to improve the process of evaluating the quality of practical translation by developing models that allow repeated, gender-responsive governance. They introduce a systematic evaluation procedure (Reiss and Rhodes, 2016). Translation quality assessment is a problematic concept. The difficulties involved in the assessment are mainly based on individual and external value judgments. Meeting the requirements of scientific objectivity in translation assessment is very difficult indeed (House, 1981, p. 255). Many scholars focus on the equivalence term in order to assess the translation product. The notions of 'naturalness' and 'dynamic equivalence' are used by Nida and Taber to achieve "the closest natural equivalent to the source language" and (Nida and Taber, 2003). Contrarily, House (2015) prefers semantic and pragmatic equivalence. He argues that the ST should match the TT in function. Consequently, translators must seek to find the closest possible equivalent in the other language and there are no as identical equivalents (Drugan, 2013). Contrarily, Munday (2016) claims that there is no full equivalence between languages. Snell-

Hornby (1995), too, criticizes the equivalence notion in such a way to be sometimes as an illusion. Consequently, House (2015) affirms that the translation quality assessment requires translation theory and the different views of translation lead to different concepts of translation quality and different ways of evaluating them. House (1981) focuses the semantic and pragmatic equation, arguing that ST and TT must match each other in function. She suggests that it is possible to characterize the text function by specifying the circumstantial dimensions of ST. This means that each text must be properly identified and in a particular mode by translators. As a result, this process will lead translators to a better evaluation of the target text. She states that if ST and TT are fundamentally different from situational characteristics, they are not functionally equivalent, and translation is not of high quality. Consequently, this study investigates the translation assessment of Arabic translated literary text compared to the ST (*Eliot's Middlemarch*). It is worthy to individuals who are interested in field of translation and how to evaluate their effort of translation compare to the ST.

### *Statement of the Problem*

Translation assessment is crucial and problematic component in the translation field (House, 2015). Many Scholars believe that literary translation is considered to be the most difficult type of texts' translation. The process of conveying any material from language into another must follow the rules of translation. It is not an easy matter since a mistake in the translation of a word or an idiom will change the whole meaning of a paragraph or a page or the title of the book; therefore, the translator should be aware from committing any mistakes in his work (Newmark, 1998). Therefore, this study investigates the translation assessment of *Eliot's Middlemarch* compared to its Arabic equivalent (TT).

### *The Purpose and Significance of the Study*

The main purpose of this study is to evaluate the translation of *Eliot's Middlemarch* novel semantically. It examines the translation assessment in Arabic language by *Hayyan* (target text) compared to the ST. It may significantly help translators to achieve a high degree of equivalence in translating a literary text from English into Arabic and how to assess this type of texts (literary) between English and Arabic with the same matching functions.

### *Research Question*

This study investigates the quality translation assessment of *Eliot's Middlemarch* and its Arabic equivalents from the semantic division.

## **Review of Literature**

The part of the study will shed the light on the novel (*Middlemarch*) as a literary work and the language characteristics used in this novel as well as the stylistic features of the author. This novel is considered to be fundamental in English literature. The novel's writer is a well-known author.

### *The Novel (ST)*

The novel took its title from a Midland town called *Middlemarch* in the center of England. It also means a land on the border. The story describes people's life at United Kingdom from 1829 to 1832. It is firstly published in 8 volumes with different subtitles from 1871 to 1872. The novel dealt with different issues as 'status of women', 'the nature of marriage', 'idealism', 'self-interest', 'religion', 'hypocrisy', 'political reform', and 'education'. Although, it is distinguished by its comic elements, it was realistic descriptions revealing different historical events. The novel comes with many characters and discusses many different habits of British people at that time (UTC, 2020). The well-known novel, the authority of the author, and the realistic characteristics of the *Middlemarch* made it study sample of this paper.

### *The Author of the ST*

George Eliot was the pen name for Mary Ann Evans. The name was mainly to escape the perception of women's writing at that time of being limited to highlight romanticism and to hide her private life from public scrutiny. She was born in England in 1819 and died in 1880. She is an English novelist, critic, poet, journalist, and translator. She was a well-known author of the Victorian era. She wrote seven novels. These novels are distinguished by realism and psychological insight about provincial England. Religion as well as Greek literature left a huge impact in her writing and life (UTC, 2020).

### *The Translator of the Target Text*

*Hayyan Juma'ah Alsa'i* is a Syrian writer, critic, and translator born in 1960. He works at Birmingham University in the United Kingdom as a professor who teaches criticism and translation. He got his bachelor degree in English literature from Damascus University. He obtained his PhD from London University. He is a blind person. Finally, He has translated many books from English into Arabic language. This novel was a project which was run by Abu-Dhabi at UAE and he was the translator and part of Kalima project there (Alyaoum, 2020).

### *Translation, Evaluation, and Assessment*

Translation is a vehicle by which a translator reproduces an original text in to a target language taking into consideration all aspects of the target language and without changing the meaning of the original text. It is a linguistic art translators use to recreate similar text to the original one (Bani Abdo and Yaseen, 2019). Every translator has a specific style that is different from one another. Translating a text requires knowledge of the author's style including the structural level of the text and every single data that might be helpful in the translation process (Bani Abdo and Abu-Hammad, 2019). Park (2009) expresses that translation needs to transfer the spirit and the taste of the original text. Translation can be defined as the result of a textual process in which text is rewritten in one language into another. As a linguistic textual process, translation is subject to a host of additional language factors and conditions and is heavily influenced. It is this interaction between 'inner' linguistic-textual and 'outer' extra-linguistic, contextual factors that makes translation such a complex phenomenon. Contextual factors make translation such a complex phenomenon (House, 2015). Adding, House (1981) expresses the 'covert' sense in producing a similar equivalence in the target language as in the source text. Bani Abdo (2017)

suggests to take the author's intention and purpose of writing into the translator's mind. Nord (2005), as well, states that translation is being faithful to the source text. Adding, House (1981) expresses the 'covert' sense in producing a similar equivalence in the target language as in the source text. Languages are different in terms of words, expressions, and style of writing that denotes things and put them in a distinct category of thought (Bani Abdo and Awwad, 2019). Writing style is used into different kinds of writings and purposes. Translation must keep the intended meaning of the original author (Bani Abdo and Abu Faraj, 2019).

The theoretical part of the translation's field is concerned with the relationship between languages. Therefore, it is not logical to study translation without the linguistic part. The linguistic field is the guiding light for translation. "Translation is an operation performed on languages: a process of substituting a text in one language for a text in another. Clearly, then, any theory of translation must draw upon a theory of language a general linguistic theory. Catford studied translation through applied linguistic approach. He pays attention to the semantic equivalence (Catford, 1965, p.1). This is the main focus of this paper. Newmark (1998, p.5) focuses on the content and how to convey it in the target text. The translation of any material must follow a few rules as that translator should be highly qualified in both languages and any mistake might lead to a loss of meaning.

#### *Evaluation and Assessment*

Evaluation is intended to determine quality, value or importance (House, 2015). In other words, the evaluator must specify and present the value and importance of a given work in contrast to the shortcoming or weakness of that work itself. This might need a special interpretive skill and all kinds of works are subjected to evaluation (Munday, 2012, p. 424). Munday (2012, p. 155) explains that the evaluation process must includes continuous verification of TL equivalents that can support the lexical elements of SL. Williams (2009, p. 3) expresses the needs to find the acceptance of translation and states that it is a controversial issue in the translation field. He states that there is a lack in the accepted standards to assess a translated text. Adding, every single word is an evaluative approach. It is meaningful and valuable.

Translation and assessments can also be considered a complex process of interaction. Translators and evaluators can be viewed as a result of the complex interaction between translators and evaluators based on their interpretation of the original text (House, 2015). As a result, this study takes into account to discuss words and phrases along with full sentences. In addition, Abdo and Abu-Faraj (2019) believe that readers may interpret the text and play a major role in understanding any text. In addition, the different cultural backgrounds may affect the translation product and may not look similar to the source text.

#### *Problems of Translation Assessment*

Williams (2009, pp. 5-6) states that there are a number of problems that might face the process of evaluating translation. Lack of knowledge of the subject matter by the evaluator is considered the main problem. Evaluators' differences of accepted translation may vary depending on the treatment of punctuation errors, misspellings and typos. While some evaluators ignore this type of error in their assessment, other evaluators see them as crucial errors. The evaluators' level accuracy is also important for the evaluation process between the ST and TT. Most of translation

teachers' works involve partial text analysis or samples, as it is a useful translation assessment technique. It saves time and also enables evaluators to calculate and use errors in translation assessment. This technique may face critical issues where each text may contain many errors more than it is allowed by the network developed by the evaluator to be a good translation. Although some evaluators classify errors into different categories of seriousness, such as this approach is crucial in the absence of a mutual agreement or consensus among the evaluators on what constitutes a major error, as opposed to what represents a minor one (Williams, 2009, p. 6). Even though, the fact that scientists such as Nord (2005) and House (2015) suggest some parameters based on a comprehensive assessment of the quality of the target text that can be used to evaluate translation, such as target language quality, accuracy, recording, appearance of target text.

Each text contains an argument. The writer believes that he has an intention to provide some information in his text, which is primarily in an attempt to convince the reader to accept this information and act accordingly. Each source text contains a specific argument macro structure, and the translator must keep this structure intact in the target text. Any function related to the ST is also important in the assessment process such as structure must be kept in TT to achieve high-quality translation (Drugan, 2013). Examining a particular text according to macro or micro functions, the translation can be classified as "good", "appropriate", "good" and "relevance", "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory" regardless of the type of text or knowledge area to which the text relates. Discovery of a particular argument is the fundamental point common to all elements of the argument in the assessment process to represent the ground of argument in the evaluation (Williams, 2009, pp. 12-13). Minsky (1974, p.1-2) classifies structures into frames. Experiences and situations are regarded as data frames that represent a typical situation. Each frame has several types of information. In translation, this frame can be useful for translating descriptions things, people, and scenes. These frames are visually based in our minds and our expectations. These Experiences and situations are relatively different between evaluators which might seem to be problematic for assessors.

## Methodology

### *Background of the Study*

Translating the semantic and the visual divisions of Eliot's works in different language (Arabic) is not an easy job, as this process may lead to misunderstanding or loss of meaning. Capturing all visual scenes is really problematic for translators and may not be successfully fully captured in the TT. The study investigates the translation assessment of the Arabic version of *Eliot's Middlemarch* semantically and visually. Consequently, this study is a qualitative comparative analysis investigating the Arabic translation of *Eliot's Middlemarch* in terms of translation assessment based on the theoretical part of Minsky (1974); House (1981, 1998, and 2015); Munday (2016); Williams (2009); Drugan (2013); and Abdo and Abu-Faraj (2019). The paper evaluates the semantic part of the novel compared to its equivalents in TT.

### *Procedures*

As mentioned earlier that the novel consists of eight volumes with different titles and themes. The study has selected three volumes of the ST. The researcher went through these volumes thoroughly in both versions (ST and TT). Then, three scripts are assigned as a sample of the study based on Minsky's visual frames. The frames are categorized based on experiences and expectations to compare between the source text and the target text to see if the visual frames are conveyed ideally. Then, the visual frames of the ST are categorized by two professors whom selected by the researcher based on their knowledge of translation.

### *Evaluators for Visual Scenes*

The study selected two professors in order to examine the visual scenes of the ST. The chosen respondents work at the University of Jordan. They are lecturing in the English and translation departments. They are known for their achievements in the translation field. Both have PhDs majoring in the translation field from respected universities at the United Kingdom. They have many publications in the field of the translation. They are asked to find out the visual images of the selected data. Therefore, part of the following analysis is based on their views of the ST and how images are captured.

### *The study Sample*

The following scripts in table (1) are the selected data based on Minsky (1974) along with their translations in the target text (Arabic) and the transliterations. The Researcher uses DIN 31635' compartment.

Table 1

ST data, TT, and Transliteration

ST - Volume (4)/ Chapter (34) Script (1)	TT	Transliteration
Three Love Problems 1st Gent. Such men as this are feathers, chips, and straws. Carry no weight, no force . 2d Gent. But levity is causal too, and makes the sum of weight. For power finds its place in lack of power; Advance is cession, and the driven ship May run aground because the helmsman's thought Lacked force to balance opposites'.	الرجل الاول: مثل هؤلاء الرجال كالريش، او كقطع الخشب، او كالقصب لا وزن لهم ولا قوه. الرجل الثاني: و لكن خفة الوزن هي العلة ايضاً، و لها ثقل ايضاً اذ تجد القوة مكانها حيث لا يكون هناك قوة و عندما يتخلى عن التقدم، ويمكن للسفينة ان تغرق.... اذا ما فقد من يدير دفتها قوة التركيز الذهني كي يحافظ على توازنه.	<i>arrajul alāwl: maṭlu haw' lā' arrijāul karrayši, aw ka qīṭa' alkašab, aw kal qlqašb lā wazna lahum wa lā qawah.</i> <i>arrajul attānī: wa lakin kafat alwazn haya al' lata aydan, wa lahā tuqlun aydan, id tajid alqawata makānuhā haytu lā yakūn hunāk qawatan.</i> <i>wa 'endmā yataklā 'an attaqadum, wa yumkin lilsfīnata an tağraq .... idā mā faqda man yudīr dafatahā qawata attarkīz addīhnī kay yuhāfiq 'alā tawāznuhu.</i>

ST - Volume (7)/ Chapter (63) Script (2)	TT	Transliteration
Two Temptations  These little things are great to little man. —GOLDSMITH .  'Have you seen much of your scientific phoenix, Lydgate, lately?' said Mr. Toller at one of his Christmas dinner-parties, speaking to Mr. Farebrother on his right hand.	تبدو هذه الاشياء الصغيرة عظيمة لدى الرجل البسيط ..... (غول سميث).  هل شاهدت مؤخراً الكثير من النتائج العلمي لطائر العنقاء، ليدجت؟ هذا ما قاله السيد تولى في اثناء احدي حفلات عيد الميلاد التي كان يقيمها، مخاطباً السيد فيربرذر الذي كان يجلس الى يمينه	<i>tabdū haḥhi alāšyā' aṣṣaiḡirata</i> <i>'aḡīmatan ladā arrajul albasīṭ</i> <i>..... (ḡawl samīṭ).</i>  <i>hal šāhadta mu'aḡran alkaṭīr</i> <i>min annatāj al'elmī leṭā'ir</i> <i>al'anqā', laydjt? haḡdā mā</i> <i>qālahu assayd tawler fī atnā'</i> <i>eḡdā ḡaflāti 'eydi almeylād</i> <i>allatī kān yuḡīmuḡhā, maḡāṭeban</i> <i>assayd fayrbrḡder allatī kān</i> <i>yaḡlesu alā yamīnehi</i>
ST - Volume (1)/ (P.7) Script (3)	TT	Transliteration
Miss Brooke  Miss Brooke had that kind of beauty which seems to be thrown into relief by poor dress. Her hand and wrist were so finely formed that she could wear sleeves not less bare of style than those in which the Blessed Virgin appeared to Italian painters; and her profile as well as her stature and bearing seemed to gain the more dignity from her plain garments, which by the side of provincial fashion gave her the impressiveness of a fine quotation from the Bible,—or from one of our elder poets,—in a paragraph of today's newspaper.	كان للانسنة بروك جمالاً يتجلى حتى في ثوبها البسيط، كما كان ليديها ومعصمها جمالاً أُخَذَ، يمكنها من ارتداء أكام لا يقل بهاؤها عن تلك الصورة التي بدت فيها البتول العذراء المباركة للرسامين الايطاليين.....  وكان مظهرها الجانبي، وقوامها، كما هي تصرفاتها، تكسيها وقاراً اكثر مما تكسيها اثوابها المزركشة، التي منحنتها بالاضافة الى الزي الريفي، تُأثير مقطع من الكتاب المقدس، أو تأثير مقطع شعري من صحيفة يومية.	<i>kān lil'ānisati brūk jamālan</i> <i>yatajalā ḡatā fī ṭawbehā albasīṭ,</i> <i>kamā kān liyadyihā wa</i> <i>mi'ṣamihā jamālun 'aḡāḡd,</i> <i>yumakinuhā min irtidā' 'akmām</i> <i>lā yaḡīlu bahā' huḡha 'an tilka</i> <i>aṣṣawrati allatī badat fayḡhā</i> <i>albatūl al'aḡrā' almubāarakati</i> <i>lilrasāmīn aliyṭālyīn .....</i>  <i>wa kāna maḡḡharuhā aljānībī,</i> <i>wa qawāmahā, kamā ḡaya</i> <i>taṣarufāthā, tuxibuhā waqāran</i> <i>akaṭra mimā tuxibuhā aṭwābahā</i> <i>almuzarkša, allatī manaḡathā</i> <i>biliāḡāfati ilā azzayi arriyḡfī,</i> <i>ta'īru maḡṭa' min alkitābi</i> <i>almuḡads, 'aw ta'īri maḡṭa'</i> <i>ši'rī min ṣaḡḡḡfatin yawmīhah.</i>

## Data Analysis

This section will analyse and discuss the data of the selected scripts (ST compared to TT). The discussion will focus on the semantics division as well as the visual frames between the ST and TT. The analysis will be as the followings:

### ST - Volume (4)/ Chapter (34) - Paragraph (1)

- In the first paragraph, the translator choices of some words are unsuccessful. That 'such men as this are feathers, chips, and straws'. TT conveyed the resembling between 'the weight of men' and 'chips' as 'كقطع الخشب' which relatively might be visualized as 'heavy' for Arabic audience; whereas, the ST indicates the 'light weight' rather 'heavy

weight'. Translator may add the word 'water' with 'chips'. This may indicate a visual picture of the readers to 'light weight'.

- In the first sentence the author mentions 'the non-important people' who have no power as a 'visual picture' but TT didn't use the suitable word to describe those men who can't do anything.
- TT added the word 'كالفصب' (cane); it may indicate lightness in weight, but this word 'cane' is not found in the ST.
- In the third sentence, the author wrote about 'the movement of the ship'. TT, on the other hand, uses the word 'تقدم' rather than the word 'الابحار' (sailing) that may represent the full image about the ship's movement.
- In the second sentence, the original author uses the word 'levity' to describe what men do without thinking but TT uses the words 'خفة الوزن' to translate it. TT visualizes 'the physical appearance'; whereas, the ST means 'the behavior of those men'. Therefore, TT fails somehow to transfer the vision of the ST. 'Power' is also indicated in the ST and how it appears from nowhere, but TT describes the power as it search for a place.
- TT fails to some-extent to convey punctuation marks.
- 'The helmsman's thought lacked force to balance opposites', in this phrase TT is not successfully transferred the visual picture of Arabic readers' mind. This phrase means the 'antithesis' in all aspects not only 'balance' as the translator affirms in 'كي يحافظ على توازنه'.
- TT uses the literally translation to some-extent. It doesn't convey the visual scene in a perfect way as the author of the ST did.
- In the last sentence, TT would sound better if he uses the word 'الريان' rather having an implicit meaning of 'من يدير دفتها' (who steer the ship). Addition strategy in translation may sound better to achieve the same ST image.
- To some-extent, the translator (TT) is successfully transferred the content but rather to fully transfer the images of the visual pictures of these scenes.

*ST - Volume (7)/ Chapter (63) - Script (2)*

- TT uses literal translation or word-by-word strategy. This may cause the non-equivalents visual scene.
- In the first sentence, the original author indicates 'simple things' and how 'humble and simple people sees these things'. 'Man' in the ST represent 'plurality'; whereas, TT represent 'man' as 'singular or an individual'. The visual scene of the whole wisdom, 'these little things are great to little man', is not successfully transferred for Arabic readers as it is for ST ones. TT may use a cultural equivalent that represents the same identical semantic division and the visual scene as 'وتعظم في عين الصغير الصغائر'.

- ‘Have you seen much of your scientific phoenix, Lydgate, lately?’; This question was not successfully conveyed. The visual and the semantic divisions are not fully conveyed as TT uses word-by-word translation. TT fails to transfer the visual scene in that question.
- In this script, TT fails to transfer the visual or the semantic divisions of the ST.

#### *ST - Volume (1)/ (P.7) - Script (3)*

- TT fails to some-extent to convey punctuation marks.
- To some-extent, the translator (TT) is successfully transferred the content but rather to fully transfer the images of the visual pictures of these scenes.
- TT conveys the meaning content and the semantic divisions of the ST.
- ‘The beauty of the lady’ and resembling of the visual picture in TT was successfully transferred to some-extent. Addition may sound a bit more appropriately if TT uses some Arabic words as ‘فائق’ and ‘بهی’ to represent the beauty of Miss Brooke and would capture the visual image for the Arabic readers.
- In the last sentence, the ST author presents the image of ‘beauty effects’ as a ‘paragraph of today’s newspaper’. The visual scene, here, is omitted by TT.

## Conclusion

This study investigates the translation assessment of the Arabic translation of *Eliot’s Middlemarch* semantically and visually and to what extent has TT been successfully rendered the semantic and the visual scenes of the ST. Consequently, this study is a qualitative comparative analysis investigating the Arabic translation of *Eliot’s Middlemarch* in terms of translation assessment based on the theoretical part of Minsky (1974); House (1981, 1998, and 2015); Munday (2016); Williams (2009); Drugan (2013); and Abdo and Abu-Faraj (2019). The paper evaluates the semantic part of the novel compared to its equivalents in TT. The paper evaluates the semantic part of the novel compared to its equivalents in TT. The translation assessments were based on the theoretical part of Minsky (1974); House (1981, 1998, and 2015); Munday (2016); Williams (2009); Drugan (2013); and Abdo and Abu-Faraj (2019). This study addresses the assessment of visual frames in target text with cooperation of two professors of translation. The semantic division along with the translation quality assessment was based on House model in order to evaluate the TT compared to the ST. Although, the study shows that translator fails sometimes to give the exact intended meaning (the semantic division) of the source text (English), he also represents to some-extent successfulness in translation the selected sample. Additions or omissions strategies are also noticed in the data analysis. Some of these strategies are successfully used and others are preferred to be used. Finally, the data analysis reveals that TT fails to some extent in visualizing the images’ frames as the ST does in scripts (1 and 2). In script (3), TT somehow successfully managed to transfer the visual images of the ST.

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