

## Translation Theory: An Art or Craft?

### How Lecturers at the Preparatory Studies Center View it?

Afraa Al- Hatmi<sup>1</sup>, Abuzar Abdulaziz<sup>2</sup>,

Ahmed Qutb<sup>3</sup>, Younes Audeh<sup>4</sup>, Klubnichkina Daria Aleksandrovna<sup>5</sup> and Sultan Al  
Sawafi<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Information Resource specialist

<sup>2,3,4, 5,6</sup> University of Technology and Applied Sciences – Sultanate of Oman -Ibri

### Abstract

This paper reveals the characteristics of “Translation Theory”, whether an art or craft on one hand, and the strategies adopted by translators when get stuck upon encountering some difficult words and expressions in the texts they deal with, especially proverbs and/or well-sayings in the target language. To fathom the deep definition of translation as an art or craft, the researchers have distributed a questionnaire to a group of lecturers with a translation background at the Preparatory Studies Center - University of Technology and Applied Sciences – Sultanate of Oman -Ibri- to share some of their personal and professional experience in the field of translation. The results were astonishing, as most of them were-one day- professional translators at companies, universities, and schools. Discussion, recommendations, and explanation will be covered in detail throughout this paper.

**Key Words:** craft, culture, language, machine translation, strategies, theorists, various

### Introduction

There is no doubt that translation both, an art and/or craft is so important and essential in bridging out the gap between all parts of the globe. It is observed that the number of translators is increasing, while the studies and research are still humble. To get the possible advantage of excellent product, through better strategies, it is recommended that translators have broad horizons and good knowledge about certain idioms and cultural key clues in the target language. This way would help translators and readers get the complete message of the original writer of the text with no ambiguity or misunderstanding. This paper highlights Translation Theory as an art or craft, possible ways to get clear product, and answering any problematic issues that the audience might think of.

### Statement of the Problem

This paper highlights the strategies of translation theory both, an art or a craft, and ways translators follow when encountering difficulties, especially cultural proverbs, idioms, or well-sayings in the target language.

### Objectives of the Study

This study pursues the following:

1. Identifying the definition(s) and importance of translation theory as an art or craft.
2. Examining strategies translators should follow for overcoming the issue of cultural and unique idioms in the target language.

### Literature Review

Imagine picking up a book written in a language you don't understand. The story, characters, and emotions are locked away, inaccessible without someone to bridge the gap. This is where translators come in, playing a vital role in bringing stories from around the world to life for readers everywhere. But translation isn't just about swapping words from one language to another; it's an art that requires creativity, deep cultural understanding, and a knack for storytelling. (Kloth, 2024, Para. 1).

Translators work very hard to make things easier and more accessible for readers to understand a certain product written in another language. It is not a word for word translation, but a process that gives life for the piece of literature at hand. Translators focus on creativity and deeper cultural understanding utilizing the proper tools such as personal strategies for getting a perfect masterpiece for readers. Are translators always perfect? Do some err, or commit grave mistakes that might convey a dangerous message to the audience and the crowd of readers around the globe? Let us see.

In fact, translators are human beings and do err. It is either a slip of the pen, or the tongue while live interpretation, especially in formal conferences held by presidents, kings, or any prestigious bodies.

There are tales of myths being born, societies being forged and cities destroyed with just a slip of the pen, such as the supposed translation error that allegedly led to the US deciding to drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, or the speculation about life on Mars after the mistranslation of an Italian astronomer. (Khomami, 2023, Para. 2).

When translating a certain speech, whether live or not, the translator encounters some expressions and idioms used figuratively. This is a cutting edge in the process of translation. The translator needs to be skillful to keep the translation flow go on without problems, or vague understanding, bearing in mind that he should not include his own beliefs and attitudes into what he is translating, as it is improper to do that.

The translator, after all, brings their own experience and personality to every job they do, and often we are called upon to interpret the true meaning of our source texts. This isn't always easy and requires creativity. You sometimes have to imagine the author of the source text as a character and imbue them with personality traits that come out in their tone and style. This is in some ways fiction, of course, and introduces the risk that the translator will insert their own beliefs or attitudes into a text in place of what was actually intended. (Postan, 2020, Para. 8).

Translating texts, or formal speeches need smart translators; it is not just finding the right utterance and move forward, but paying a close attention and care to the core and essence of the text being translated. It is always said that different countries have different cultures, and that could be applied to "PUN"—a word, or words with different meanings and references. The following two sentences show the difference while using the pronoun (**They**) and verb (**Be**): (**They are**):

-**They are** flying planes.

-**They are** flying planes.

"**They Are**" might refer to people: what are those people doing? *They are* flying planes. On the other hand, it could mean certain objects in the sky: What are those flying objects? *They are* flying planes. So, before rushing into translation, care must be taken.

At first glance, translation might seem like a straightforward process: find the right words in the new language and move on. But it's much more complex than that. Translators are tasked with capturing the essence of a story, including its tone, style, and cultural nuances, and making it resonate with readers who might have a completely different cultural background. (Kloth, 2024, Para. 2).

To be an excellent translator, it is a must to master the two languages at hand; first language and the target one, otherwise things will get worse. Having an excellent knowledge about the target language in depth means that the translator should be aware of standard usage of that language, slang idioms, proverbs, well-sayings, cultural background, etc.

To become a translator of literary texts, you must, of course, master both the original and the target languages almost perfectly. If you couldn't at least be a mid-level novelist or poet yourself, this task will be too challenging for you. (Guogienè, (n.d), Para. 4)

Translators need to possess certain strategies to use and follow as a life saver while encountering certain problematic issues that exist beyond the text—between the line.

Nowadays, in a world characterized by global communication, translation plays a key role in exchanging information between languages. To move along the natural and

professional continuum of conveying the meaning from one particular language into another, a translator needs to learn some skills, which are referred to as translation strategies. (Owji, (n.d.), Para. 1)

Translation is a dual creative process done by two people—the writer of the original text, and the translator. In this regard, it means “creation” of a new product that is understood by both readers of the two languages. “...the translational process is a creative process and, consequently, translation is also creation, for it entails the interaction of two creative elements - the author of the original and its translator”. (Bezerra, 2012, Para. 1).

As previously mentioned, translators must be familiar with certain usages and idioms they face in the target language. Here he/she has to search for a possible equivalent for that idiom, or just keep it as is and the audience should guess the meaning of it.

Take idioms, for example. An idiom that makes perfect sense in one language might be completely baffling in another. A translator has to decide whether to find a similar phrase in the target language, explain the meaning in context, or keep the original expression and let the readers figure it out. Each choice impacts how the story feels to the reader and how closely it stays true to the original. (Kloth,2024, Para.3).

## **Methodology**

This study employs a quantitative research design using a questionnaire to gather data on Translation Theory as an art or craft. The participants are teachers of English with a good background at translation. The use of questionnaire is appropriate for collecting standardized, comparable data across a sample of participants, allowing for statistical analysis of their responses.

## **Participants**

The participants -20 male and female lecturers - teach at the Preparatory Studies Center - University of Technology and Applied Sciences-Ibri in the Sultanate of Oman. They come from different countries.

## **Sampling Strategy**

Due to logistical constraints and summer vacation, the sample size was limited to (20) participants. A convenience sampling method was employed, as the lecturers were readily available to the researchers at the time of the study.

## **Research Instrument**

Data was collected using a questionnaire created by the researchers that had (15) questions. The survey asks (Yes/No), (Agree/Disagree), and (Multiple Choice) questions to get respondents'

opinions on the subject of “Translation Theory”, an art or craft, which included empathy, fairness, and communication skills. A pilot study with five lecturers was used to validate the device in order to ensure clarity and reliability, and any necessary changes to the wording were made in response to their input.

### Data Collection Procedure

Questionnaires were distributed to participants during their free time at the Preparatory Studies Center. Before participating, they were given a detailed explanation about the purpose of the study, informed of their right to apologize anytime, and assured of their anonymity. Participants provided written consent, and questionnaires were completed within (10) minutes during a scheduled session.

### Ethical Considerations

This study followed ethical research guidelines. All subjects gave their informed consent, and they were promised that their answers would be kept private.

### Data Analysis and Discussion

Table1

3. Do you feel confident in “who” you are, but are willing to improve yourself?	Yes	No
	20	0
	100%	0%

?Do you feel confident in “who” you are, but are willing to improve yourself .3

20 ر

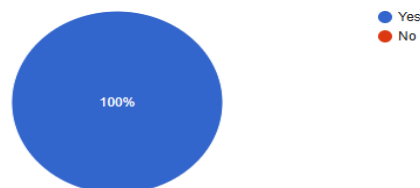


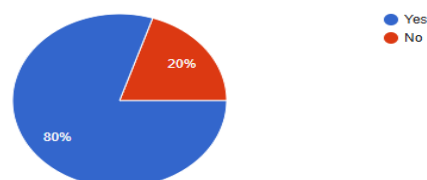
Table 1 shows that all participants (100%) agree that they are confident in “who” they are, but are willing to improve themselves.

Table2

4. Do you have a clear sense of your goals, but are willing to	Yes	No
	16	4

Do you have a clear sense of your goals, but are willing to consider .4  
?alternatives

20 ر



consider alternatives?		
	80%	20%

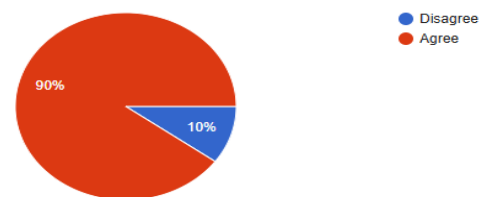
Table 2 shows that the largest group of participants (80%) agree that they have a sense of their goals but are willing to consider alternatives.

Table3

6. I am very much affected and influenced professionally by my experiences in translation.	Agree	Disagree
	18	2
	90%	10%

I am very much affected and influenced professionally by my experiences in .6 translation

20 ر



The findings indicate that the participants (90%) believe that they are very much affected and influenced professionally by their experiences in translation. This indicates a strong link between personal experiences and professional development in the field of translation. Such insights could help shape training programs and support systems aimed at improving translators' skills and adaptability.

Table4

10. Translators should take courses and workshops on translation.	Agree	Disagree
	18	2
	90%	10%

.Translators should take courses and workshops on translation.10

20 ر

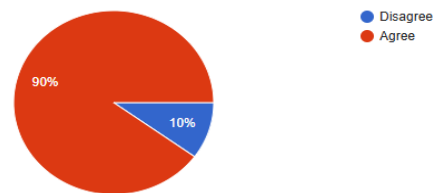


Table 4 shows that all participants (90%) agree that Translators should take courses and workshops on translation. These educational opportunities can help them improve their skills and gain valuable insights into other languages and cultures. Furthermore, networking with other professionals in the field can lead to collaborations and future career advancements.

14. Do you sometimes consult with experienced translators for more knowledge and advice about translation?	Always	Yes	No
	1	18	1
	5%	90%	5%

Table5

Do you sometimes consult with experienced translators for more knowledge .14  
?and advice about translation

20 ر

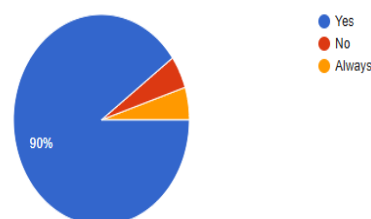


Table 5 shows that of the participants (90%) agree that they sometimes consult with experienced translators for more knowledge and advice about translation. This collaboration can significantly improve their understanding of language differences and cultural contexts. Sharing best practices allows them to not only improve their skills but also expand their professional network.

## Conclusion

This article highlighted an important topic—Translation Theory as an art or craft, and the strategies followed by translators when getting stuck, or encountering some cultural words and idioms in the target language that are difficult to deal with.

On the other hand, translators do their best to bridge out the gap between different cultures and languages to explore how rich and diverse the global literature is. Moreover, skillful and professional translators do more than converting words from one language to another, they make readers feel the emotions of the original text, whether a short story, poem, play, or whatsoever.

In fact, translators do have a great job in bringing to life good literature. They should be thanked and appreciated for their hard work. They are the heroes of innovation who represent the bridge of knowledge that connects the whole world and makes it as small as a small town.

## Recommendations

- Be sure that an idiom that makes perfect sense in one language might be completely baffling in another.

-Translators should be qualified in both languages—First and Target.

-Translators should read between the lines, as there are some words and expressions have different meanings—surface and deep.

-Translators should not include their beliefs and ideas arbitrarily in the text being translated, especially while interpreting formal speeches.

- Translators should understand that Translation is not a word for word, but a process that gives life for the piece of literature at hand.

### Acknowledgement

The researchers would like to express their utmost gratitude to all participants whose involvement was essential for the accomplishment of this study.

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### About the authors

**Afraa Hamed AL Hatmi** is an Information Resource specialist in the LRC (Learning Resource Center) at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences/ Ibri - the Sultanate of Oman. She holds a Ph.D. in Libraries and Information Science from the International Islamic University Malaysia. She is interested in educational and academic research.

**Daria Klubnichkina**: Coauthor & proofreader, an English lecturer at the Preparatory Studies Centre at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Ibri – the Sultanate of Oman. She holds a master's degree in Linguistics as well as TEFL and CELTA certifications. She worked as a Russian and English as foreign language educator in technical universities across Russia with students from more than 25 countries. Her main academic focus includes foreign language acquisition theories, educational psychology and language assessment.

**Ahmed Qutb** is a senior lecturer at the Preparatory Studies Center -PSC-, University of Technology and Applied Sciences-Ibri- The Sultanate of Oman. He holds a PhD in English Linguistics from the University of Port Said in Egypt. He has an MA in Applied Linguistics and



Translation from the University of Mansoura. In addition, he holds a CELTA certificate from Cambridge. He has been teaching English for more than 15 years. His main areas of interest are educational assessment, teaching applied linguistics, composition and rhetoric, and translation.

**Abuzar Abdualaziz Ali** is an English lecturer currently serving as a part-time faculty member in the Preparatory Studies Centre at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, Ibri, Sultanate of Oman. He holds a Ph.D. in Translation from Sudan University of Science and Technology, as well as a CELTA certification from Cambridge. With over 11 years of experience in the fields of translation and teaching English as a second language across Sudan and Oman, Abuzar specializes in English language instruction and translation studies. His academic interests center on foreign language acquisition, educational methodologies, and translation practices.

**Sultan Al Sawafi** is an English Lecturer at the Preparatory Studies Centre, University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS), Ibri, Oman. He is currently serving as the Head of the English Language Curriculum and Assessment Unit. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Education majoring in English Language from Sultan Qaboos University and a Master's degree in Education in TESOL from the University of Southern Queensland, Australia. With over nine years of teaching experience in Omani schools and more than eleven years at the university level, he has developed extensive expertise in English language teaching, curriculum design, and assessment. His academic and professional interests include foreign language acquisition, teaching methodologies and approaches, and the integration of AI in education.

**Younes Audeh** is a part-time lecturer at the Preparatory Studies Center at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences – Ibri– the Sultanate of Oman. He is an M.A. holder in Applied Linguistics from Indiana University of Pennsylvania -USA. He has been teaching English as an ESL/EFL for a long time. He has taught at a number of colleges and universities in different countries: Jordan, the Kingdom of Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, and the Sultanate of Oman. His research interest is “academic writing”.

## Questionnaire

This questionnaire consists of three parts: **(Yes/ No)**, **(Agree/ Disagree)**, and **(Multiple-Choice)** questions, and is mainly geared to teachers with a translation background. The questionnaire is about Translation Theory: an Art or Craft.

### Part One Yes / No Questions.

I. Do you agree that translators should include their personal opinions and beliefs in the text being translated?

(Yes)

(No)

2. Do you welcome criticism and, maybe disappointment, when you fail in getting an excellent translation?

(Yes)

(No)

3. Do you feel confident in “who” you are, but are willing to improve yourself?

(Yes)

(No)

4. Do you have a clear sense of your goals, but are willing to consider alternatives?

(Yes)

(No)

5. Are you always looking for ways to improve your translation methods?

(Yes)

(No)

### Part Two: Agree/ Disagree Questions.

6. I am very much affected and influenced professionally by my experiences in translation.

(Agree)

(Disagree)

7. Normally, I rely on others because I lack confidence in my judgment regarding my translation.

(Agree)

(Disagree)

8. I spend a little time wondering “Why” I translate in certain ways—sometimes I commit grave mistakes.

(Agree)

(Disagree)

9. I always try to avoid change in my professional life, or how I see myself translate texts.

(Agree)

(Disagree)

10. Translators should take courses and workshops on translation.

(Agree)

(Disagree)

### Part Three: Multiple –Choice Questions

11. Do you -sometimes- feel stuck and cannot continue translating a certain text?

A. No

B. Yes

C. Never

12. What kind of difficulties and (problems) do you normally face while translating?

A. Lack of information about cultural aspects in the target language

B. Difficulty in knowing the exact meaning of some idioms and proverbs in the target language.

13. How do you consider translation?

A. An art

B. A craft

C. A, B

14. Do you sometimes consult with experienced translators for more knowledge and advice about translation?

A. Yes

B. No

C. Always

15. Do you sometimes utilize modern technology in translating texts such as Google Translate, AI, etc.?

A. Yes

B. No

C. Always