

TRANSLATION SHIFTS IN THE LEXICAL REPETITION CHAINS OF TRANSLATED ARABIC LITERARY TEXTS: A CASE STUDY

By

Aida Ismail Mahmoud Nassar

**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree
of Master of Arts in Translation**

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ABSTRACT

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By

Aida Ismail Mahmoud Nassar

Petra University, 2008

Under the supervision of Professor Rasoul al-Khafaji

This research is an attempt, guided by the principles of Descriptive Translation Studies, to 'detect' and 'describe' the various types of shifts, in the area of lexical repetition, which have occurred in an English-Arabic translation. The study also tries to explain what could be behind the translators' decisions to implement the different types of the translation shifts in the translated texts. The postulation is that any translation product represents an intertext which contains some norms of the SL and culture. Furthermore, translation as a rewriting process is bound to be directed by the norms of the TL and culture.

During the process of description, taxonomy, and explanation of the different types of shifts in lexical repetition found in the study corpus, the two poles of SL 'adequacy' norms and TL

'acceptability' norms have been at the background. Various instances of shifts have been found to fall under three main categories: (a) *Shifts which avoid or minimize lexical repetition*; (b) *Shifts which announce repetition by retaining it*, though with some modifications; and (c) *Shifts which emphasize lexical repetition by expanding it*. The study has revealed that most of the shifts belong to the first category. A lengthy discussion of the possible causes which could have motivated the two translators to implement these various shifts has come to the conclusion that socio-cultural norms of the TL seem to be behind the extensive minimization/ avoidance of lexical repetition in the translation. Accepted rhetorical norms in English have been clearly demonstrated to be against maintaining a high level of lexical repetition when translating. As for the less frequent phenomenon of adding lexical repetition to translated texts, it has been found to represent a common tendency of explicitation which is exercised by translators in general to uphold cohesion in translated texts.

Signature

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Date

Table of Contents

Approval page	ii
Abstract	iii
Table of contents	v
List of figures	viii
List of tables	ix
List of abbreviations	x
Acknowledgements	xi
1. Introduction	
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Objectives of the study	2
1.3 Limitations of the study	3
1.4 Review of related literature	4
1.4.1 Translation shift	4
1.4.2 Translational norms	7
1.4.3 Translation Universals	10
1.4.3.1 Explicitation	11
2. Corpus and Methodology	
2.1 Corpus	13
2.2 Methodology	13
3. Results of Data Analysis	
3.1 Ten Sample Individual Tables	22
3.2 General Table	36
	v

4. Discussion of Results

4.1 Deletion shift	40
4.1.1 Lexical deletion	41
4.1.2 Textual deletion	43
4.2 Expansion shift	46
4.2.1 Culture words	47
4.2.2 Lexical couplets	49
4.2.3.1 Verbs	50
4.2.3.2 Nouns	51
4.2.3 The use of titles of address	52
4.2.4 The construct phrase	53
4.3 Multiple equivalent shift	58
4.4 Class shift	61
4.5 Pronominalization shift	63
4.6 Extra-repetition shift	67
4.7 Paraphrasal shift	69
4.7.1 Modulation	70
4.8 Nominalization shift	71
4.9 Contraction shift	73
4.10 Substitution shift	74
4.11 Summary of Results	76

5. Interpretation of Results

5.1 Avoidance of lexical repetition	81
5.2 Retention with alteration(s)	86
5.2.1 Pragmatic retention	87

5.2.2 Retention by the use of construct phrase	88
5.2.3 Retention by the use of lexical couplets	88
5.3 Introducing additional repetition	89
6. Conclusions and Suggestions	90
7. Bibliography	93
8. Appendix	97

List of Figures

Figure one	Rendering Lexical Repetition from English into Arabic	77
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List of Tables

1	The first twelve LRCs of the ST	14
2	Sample of an individual table	17
3	Ten sample individual tables	22
4	General Table	36
5	Lexical and textual deletion	40
6	LRC ₁₃₇	47
7	Class shift	61
8	Types/ numbers of shifts	76
9	Percentages of shifts	78
10	40 LRCs	98

List of Abbreviations

ST	Source Text
TT	Target Text
SL	Source Language
TL	Target Language
T1	Translator One: Adnan Abdullah
T2	Translator Two: Abbas Mahmoud al-Aqqad
LRC	Lexical Repetition Chain
DTS	Descriptive Translation Studies

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1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Repetition is common in human languages, but certain languages and cultures seem to tolerate it more than others. Arabic is often referred to as a language that makes much more use of repetition, including lexical, than many other languages, including English. Repeating the same lexical item many times has often been signaled out by text-linguists as being a typical characteristic of text in Arabic (al-Khafaji 2005). Repetition can have didactic, playful, emotional, artistic, ritualistic, textual and rhetorical functions, among others (Johnstone 1994: 6). In regard to its textual function, repetition is “a central process through which language is created in discourse”; there are even some texts that are “completely organized around patterns of repetition” (Johnstone 1991: 11, 32). The prime function of repetition in language is the informational value of providing a framework for interpreting what is changed or ‘new’, by repeating what has already been said in a process which Winter calls ‘repetition and replacement’ (Hoey 1991: 20). Hoey also maintains that the real significance of the different strategies of repetition in language “lies in their availability as means of connecting sentences, both close to and far off” (2001: 41). The cohesive function of repetition in discourse has been extensively studied in English by Halliday and Hasan (1976: 13).

The most direct form of repetition in language is repeating a word that has already been used, either exactly in the same form or with some changes. But repetition in text can also be realized in other ways as by repeating a structure while filling it with new elements. This is called ‘parallelism’. Moreover, content can be repeated as in ‘paraphrase’. There also exist other means in language for repeating content or the structure, or both, like ‘pro-forms’ or ‘ellipsis’ (Beaugrande and Dressler 1986:49).

Because of the high importance of repetition in texts, this study is conducted to tackle this phenomenon. It studies how LRCs (Lexical Repetition Chains) are handled when translating from English into Arabic. Studying the different types of shifts resulting from the process of translation, and the norms which might be behind implementing them, would help to arrive at some preliminary generalizations concerning the norms that govern the type and direction of those translation shifts detected in that area. Consequently, this would reveal some features of translational language that might validate or refute or modify the already existing hypotheses about translation 'universals'. Since contrastive English-Arabic research within the framework of DTS (Descriptive Translation Studies) is still scarce, studies like this can be of special significance for Translation Studies in general. This is because Arabic and English belong to two typologically distant languages. Most of the studies conducted in the field until now compare translations from English with those of other Indo-European languages, like French, German, Spanish, Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish (al-Khafaji 2007).

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The current study aims to investigate the phenomenon of **shifts in translation in LRCs**. When a **translation** is compared with its original, the analyst would end up with a long list of differences between the pair of texts. This is natural as every text is so rich in syntactic and semantic features, and the transfer into another language adds such a large number of phenomena to the list. For the achievement of depth in the analysis, the focus of the present study is limited to the investigation of **shifts** in the area of lexical repetition. The study will try to arrive at some preliminary generalizations concerning the

norms that govern the type and direction of the translation shifts detected in this area. The above objectives are to be illustrated by analyzing and discussing two Arabic translations of an English literary text. The main point to be addressed is the issue of how **LRCs** in English texts are rendered in Arabic since every translated text is bound to result in shifts both in the type and size of lexical repetition.

It is said that Arabic tolerates the use of lexical repetition more than English. Moreover, lexical repetition seems to be always functional in the Arabic polysystem. Unlike Arabic, English rhetoric tolerates lexical repetition when motivated and used as a figure of speech (Johnstone 1991: 4). Due to this discrepancy between English and Arabic, it would be both interesting and illuminating to study what happens to lexical repetition in English-Arabic translation.

Various studies have tentatively revealed that **avoiding lexical repetition** is a common translational norm in translated texts notwithstanding the two languages involved in the process of translation (Ben-Ari 1998: 2). Therefore, it would be illuminating to find out whether this postulation applies to English-Arabic translations and, if so, how it is realised by different translation shifts. At the end, the study will attempt to arrive at explanations of the norms which caused these shifts.

1.3 Limitations of the study

Lexical repetition is a cohesive device found in most text types. Yet, the present study proposes to investigate lexical repetition in one text type only; namely, literary text.

Further studies are needed to explore this phenomenon in other literary and non-literary texts.

1.4 Review of related literature

1.4.1 Translation shift

The investigation of shifts has a long-standing tradition in translation studies. Vinay and Darbelnet (1958), working in the field of comparative stylistics, developed a system of translation procedures. Some of them are more or less direct or literal, but some of them are **oblique** and result in various differences between the source and the TT (target text). These procedures are: **transposition** (change in word class), **modulation** (change in semantics), **equivalence** (completely different translation, e.g. proverbs), and **adaptation** (change of situation due to cultural differences).

The actual term **shift** was introduced by Catford (1965), who distinguishes between **formal correspondence**, which exists between source and target categories that occupy approximately the same place in their respective systems, and **textual equivalence**, which holds between two portions of texts that are actually translations of each other. He defines **translation shifts** as "departures from formal correspondence in the process of going from SL (Source Language) to TL (Target Language)" (1965: 73). Catford identifies two kinds of major shifts:

1. **Level shift** – which occurs when an SL item has a TL translation equivalent at a different linguistic level from its own (grammatical, lexical, etc.).

2. **Category shifts** – which are subdivided into four kinds:

- ☒ Structural shifts- involving shift in grammatical structure;
- ☒ Class shifts- comprising shifts from one part of speech to another;
- ☒ Unit shifts or Rank shifts- where the translation equivalent in TL is at a different hierarchical linguistic unit of sentence (e. g. translating a phrase by a clause);
- ☒ Intra-system shifts- which take place when the SL and TL possess approximately corresponding systems but where 'the translation involves a selection of a non-corresponding term in the TL system' (e.g. a change in number even though the languages have the same number system).

Catford was very much criticized for his linguistic theory of translation. One of the most scathing criticisms came from Snell-Hornby (1988), who argued that Catford's definition of textual equivalence is 'circular', his theory's reliance on bilingual informants 'hopelessly inadequate', and his example sentences 'isolated and even absurdly simplistic' (ibid.: 19-20). She considers the concept of equivalence in translation as being an illusion, and asserts that the translation process cannot simply be reduced to a linguistic exercise, as claimed by Catford for instance, since there are also other factors, such as textual, cultural and situational aspects, which should be taken into consideration when translating. In other words, she does not believe that linguistics is the only discipline which enables people to carry out a translation, since translating involves different cultures and different situations at the same time and they do not always match from one language to another.

The most detailed model of shift analysis was developed by van Leuven-Zwart, published originally as a doctoral thesis in Dutch and then, in abbreviated form, in two articles in *Target* (van Leuven-Zwart 1989, 1990). Her model is "intended for the description of integral translations of fictional texts" (1989: 154) and comprises two complementary models: (1) **a comparative model** which involves a detailed manual classification of micro-structural shifts (semantic, stylistic and pragmatic, modulation, modification and mutation) between the ST and the TT, and (2) **a descriptive model** which attempts to calculate the effects of the micro-structural shifts on the macro-structural level using the three functions of language from systemic linguistics (interpersonal, ideational and textual functions) and discourse concepts taken from Leech and Short (1981). In van Leuven-Zwart's analysis (1990: 178), segmentation (i.e. word order change) and cohesion are highlighted as two areas where the effects of micro-structural shifts are visible on the textual and interpersonal functions of language and the discourse level. Van Leuven-Zwart's method was applied by around seventy of her postgraduate students on Dutch translations of mainly Spanish language literary texts (1990: 86). The results revealed that "around 70% of the translations [...] show a percentage of shifts of approximately 100%" (1990: 88), with preponderance of semantic shifts and with specification and explanation seen frequently. Her own conclusions (1990: 92-93) were that the translation strategy of the works she analyzed was TT-oriented, towards what Toury (1995) calls the **norm of acceptability**.

The problem with this model is that the comparative model is "very complex and difficult" (Gentzler 1993: 137), which van Leuven-Zwart herself partly recognizes (1989:

153-154). It is extremely difficult to keep track of all the different kinds of shift as there are 8 different categories and 37 subcategories, not all clearly differentiated.

One important point to be mentioned here is that in translation we have two types of shifts:

1. **Obligatory shifts:** those which occur due to differences between language systems.
2. **Optional shifts:** they refer to non-obligatory changes that are due to the translator's own style and preferences. Vinay and Darbelnet stress that it is optional, the realm of stylistics, that should be the translator's main concern. The role of the translator is "to choose from among the available options to express the nuances of the message" (Munday 2001: 59)

Finally, shift analysis can be seen as a way of influencing the system of **norms** which govern the translation process.

1.4.2 Translational norms

Norms in general are defined as the rules of behavior that are part of the ideology of the group. Norms tend to reflect the values of the group and specify those actions that are proper and those that are inappropriate. In regard to translation, Gideon Toury explains norms as "the general values or ideas shared by a certain community as to what is right and wrong, adequate and inadequate into specific performance instructions appropriate for and applicable to specific situations providing they are not (yet) formulated as laws"

(Toury 1995: 51). Norms constitute a continuum between two extremes, with formulated rules on the one hand and instances of idiosyncratic behavior on the other. They also make up a graded system, in which certain norms are ascribed greater importance than others. Moreover, the concept has a dynamic aspect. On the one hand, near-rules may fade while individual deviations acquire the status of norm; on the other, variations are likely to be found within as well as between cultures. Translation norms are regarded as independent of systemic differences between SL and TL, and are not determined by the ST (Source Text). The notion thus relates to the target orientedness of the polysystem theory in that it represents the possibilities and constraints provided by the target community. Toury speaks of three types of norms:

- ▣ **Initial norm**, which refers to the general choice, made by the translator, whether the translator subjects himself to the norms in the ST or to those of target culture. Whereas "adherence to source text norms determines a translation's adequacy compared with the source text, subscription to norms originating in the target culture determines its acceptability" (Toury 1995: 57). Initial norms need not be verbalized or even conscious; on the other hand, they may contradict with explicit intentions. Moreover, a given translation need not be consistent in its adequacy or acceptability: these are theoretical poles between which actual translations are likely to hover.
- ▣ **Preliminary norm** refers to extra-textual issues, such as the position of translation within the polysystem of a target culture, and the choice of languages and texts to be translated.

- **Operational norms** have to do with the presentation and linguistic matter of the TT. These are sub-categorized into matrical norms and textual-linguistic norms. Matrical norms relate to textual segmentation, addition of passages and footnotes, deletion or relocation of passages. Textual-linguistic norms control the selection of TT linguistic material such as words and phrases.

Andrew Chesterman proposed his own set of norms, which covered the areas of Toury's initial and operational norms. Chesterman's norms are:

1. **Product or expectancy norms.** These are established by the expectations of readers of a translation concerning what a translation (of this type) should be like. These norms are governed by the predominant translation tradition in the target culture, discourse conventions of the same TL genre and economic and ideological considerations.
2. **Professional norms.** These regulate the translation process. They are subordinate to and are determined by expectancy norms.

Chesterman proposes three kinds of professional norms:

1. The **accountability norm** which is an ethical norm. It deals with professional standards of integrity and thoroughness.
2. The **communication norm**: this is a social norm, which specifies the translator's role as a communication expert, both as a mediator of the intentions of others and as a communicator in his/her own right. Therefore, a translator should act in such

a way as to optimize communication, as required by the situation, between all the parties involved.

3. The **relation norm** is a linguistic norm which deals with the relation between the ST and the TT.

These norms are socio-cultural constraints, which are society-, culture-, and time-specific. One could reconstruct the norms that are operative in a particular translation, make statements about the decision-making processes that the translator has gone through and formulate **hypotheses** that can be tested by future studies.

Toury's idea of norms in descriptive studies will enable, he thought, a formulation of probabilistic laws of translation which may be used to aid future translators and researchers. The laws he proposes are:

1. The law of growing standardization, which states that textual relations of the original are ignored in favor of the options offered by the TL.
2. The law of interference. Interference here refers to the ST linguistic features being copied in the TT. This happens understandably when the translation is from a prestigious language or culture and the TL or culture is minor.

I.4.3 Translation Universals

The investigations of norms, and the empirical data yielded, have cast new light on the existence of translation universals. Translations have certain universal features that separate them from original texts, and these features are caused by the process of translation. Mona Baker has given this issue a lot of attention. She states that "the nature

and pressures of the translation process must leave traces in the language that translators produce” (Baker 1996: 177). Laviosa (2002: 43) defines translation universals as “linguistic features which typically occur in translated texts and are thought to be the almost inevitable by-products of the process of mediation between two languages rather than being the result of the interference of one language with another”. This notion of universals is related to Frawley's (1984) “**third code**”, the unique language at the meeting point of the source and TTs, languages and cultures. It is by all means a descriptive toolset which has been identified by observation and comparison of source and TTs on the one hand and comparison of original and translated materials on the other hand. Among the proposed translation universals are:

- (a) Simplification
- (b) Normalization
- (c) Explication

One of these universals, viz. explication, is discussed below since it has a relation with this work:

1.4.3.1 Explication

Explication was described by Vinay and Darbelnet in 1958 as “the process of introducing information into the TL which is present only implicitly in the SL, but which can be derived from the context or situation” (1995: 8). What later became known as the “explication hypothesis” was formulated by Blum-Kulka in 1986. In its historical development, the hypothesis broadly states that a translation will be more explicit than a

corresponding non-translation, which may be either the ST or a comparable text in the TL.

Blum-Kulka's explicitation hypothesis has generally been confirmed by studies on translation between different language pairs. Some of these studies are cited below:

- Vilma Pápai analyses in her paper a combination of parallel and comparable corpora of Hungarian and English literary and non-literary texts. First, the analysis of translators' shifts in the parallel corpus reveals a series of frequent explicitation strategies on different linguistic levels. At the second stage, these strategies are taken up for closer analysis in a comparable corpus of Hungarian. The results provide evidence in support of the above hypotheses on explicitation as a characteristic feature of the translation process and on the explicitness of translated texts as compared to non-translated ones (Pápai 2004).
- Tiina Puurtinen concentrates on explicitation as "a potentially distinctive quality of translations in comparison with non-translated TL texts of the same type". Potential manifestations of this quality are the explicit signals of clausal relations, which offer themselves for use in translated texts as alternatives to rather implicit and complex realization such as non-finite constructions (Puurtinen 2004).

2. Corpus and Methodology

2.1 Corpus

The research corpus consists of an original English narrative text and its two translations into Arabic. The English text is a short story by William Faulkner, *A Rose for Emily* (1930), translated first by Abbas Mahmoud al-Aqqad in 1983, and then by Adnan Abdullah in 1986. The two translations are fairly close in terms of time. The entire corpus comprises approximately fifty pages, including the translations. A literary text has been chosen for analysis since lexical repetition in such texts is usually highly motivated and has more functional value than in other text-types (Lotfipour 1997: 190).

2.2 Methodology

The analysis process starts with thoroughly examining the ST for all **chains of lexical repetition**. An LRC consists of two occurrences of the same word, or more, repeated in a given text either intra- or inter-sententially (al-Khafaji 2005). The term '**chain**' was first introduced by Halliday and Hasan to denote a relation where an element refers to an earlier element that is itself cohesive with a still earlier element, and so forth (Hoey 1991: 14). To give an example of an LRC, the following text segment is provided:

Alive, **Miss Emily** had been a tradition, a duty, and a care; a sort of hereditary obligation upon the **town**... Colonel Sartoris invented an involved tale to the effect that **Miss Emily**'s father had loaned money to the **town**, which the **town**, as a matter of business, preferred this way of repaying.

There are two LRCs simultaneously running above:

(1) Miss Emily... Miss Emily

(2) town... town... town

It is worth mentioning that only 'content', and not 'function', words can make up such chains. The content words are nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs, while the function ones are prepositions, pronouns, determiners, conjunctions, particles, and auxiliary verbs. Yet, because pronominals of co-reference can stand for original lexical items, they are considered here as a type of 'implicit' lexical repetition. Therefore, such pronominals of co-reference that are found intertwined with the lexical items of a given chain are also recorded¹. Accordingly, every single lexical word in the SL text has to be manually checked against all other words in the text in order to locate all the instances of lexical chains. Once all LRCs are detected and recorded, a comprehensive table is formed. This comprehensive table includes all the constituents of each LRC beginning with the initial item, proceeding in the same order these LRCs occur in the SL text. The full version of the table in the present study includes 240 LRCs found in the analyzed English text. Table one is a sample of the comprehensive table:

The first twelve LRCs of the ST

Table one

Serial No.	Initial Item	Example of other constituents in the lexical chain	No. of constituent words in the LRC
1.	Miss Emily	Miss Emily, she, her, I, you, me, hers, herself	184
2.	Grierson	Grierson, Griersons	6
3.	died	death, dead, die	13
4.	town	town	12

¹ Only 3rd person pronouns have cohesive function and therefore considered part of the lexical repetition. As for 1st and 2nd person pronouns, they can only considered cohesive when occurring within direct speech or quotation.

5.	went	went, gone	5
6.	funeral	funeral	3
7.	men	man, men	23
8.	fallen	fall, fallen, fell	5
9.	women	woman, women	9
10.	curiosity	curiosity, curious	2
11.	see	see, saw, seen	17
12.	house	house	9

The longest LRC in the data was found to consist of 184 lexical words while the number of lexical constituents in the other LRCs of the text ranges between 2 to 25 words. **LRC₁₄₃**, as reported below for example, consists of four lexical repetition items only. The following text portion is provided to show the textual environment in which these lexical items appear in the ST:

- So the next night, after midnight, four men crossed Miss Emily's **lawn** and slunk about the house like burglars, sniffing along the base of the brickwork and at the cellar openings while one of them performed a regular sowing motion with his hand out of sack slung from his shoulder.
- ...
- As they recrossed the **lawn**, a window that had been dark was lighted...
- They crept quietly across the **lawn** and into the shadow of the locusts that lined the street.
- ...
- ... and the very old men- some in their brushed Confederate uniforms- on the porch and the **lawn**...