

CROSS-CULTURAL LINK IN TRANSLATION

(ENGLISH-ARABIC)

Hassan Ghazala, Ph.D

Abstract

Usually cultural terms are thought to pose the most difficult problem in translation. Although there is always a truth in that, the problem has equally been overstated by many, if not all, translators and writers about translation. This can be confirmed by exploring a strong cultural link between English and Arabic, seemingly two sharply different cultures.

This paper Lends to trace the cultural correspondence at translating from English into Arabic, or from Arabic into English, with the aim of demonstrating that there is more to the similarities than to the differences among different cultures in translation. This in turn strengthens the cultural ties among translators and, hence, among peoples belonging to a kaleidoscope of cultures, and at the some time can make the daunting task of translating culture less challenging than usually supposed -at least in some respects.

The article covers, among other things, cultural equivalence and correspondence, cultural aspects of metaphors, collocations, proverbs, calques, religious terms and technological terms, social/administrative/political terms.

Introduction

It might be redundant to redefine culture here, since it is an intuitive, well-known and widely comprehensible and acceptable term. What is rather more urgent for the purposes of this paper is to point out that the forthcoming discussion is limited to aspects of culture which can be described as rather common, general, more popular and frequent in language than others.

But prior to the discussion of cross-cultural terms in English-Arabic translation, the main line of argument in this article, we may need to draw a distinction between "cultural equivalence" and "cultural correspondence". The first means the translation of a cultural term in the SL into an another similar one in the TL, which performs the same function of that of the SL. In other words, the cultural equivalence is the translation of the function of the cultural term like, for instance, the translation of "Electricity Board" into: "Al-muassasa al-amma lil-kahrubaa"; or "majlis ash-shab" into: "Parliament/House of Commons"; or "good afternoon" into: "masaul-khayri"; or- as-salamu alaykum" into: "hello"; etc.

Cultural correspondence, on the other hand, is the absolute identification of an SL cultural term with another in the TL, both in function and description, such as translating "ministry" into:"wizara"; "prime minister" into : "raees wuzaraa or, more literally-as in Maghreb Countries, -"al wazeer al-awwal"; khawiyal-yadayn" into:"empty-handed";etc.(a plenty of examples will be discussed below.

It is possible, however, that the two translations, the equivalent and the correspondent, are available in the TL. For instance, "majlis ashshab" is sometimes translated into: « the People's Assembly" and is as perfectly and equally comprehensible as "Parliament". Likewise, if ministry" is translated into: "amana" in one or two Arab Countries, and is understandable, yet less popular than "wizara".

The concentration of this paper will be largely on the search for a possible cultural correspondence, absolute, or at least, close. And this can be explored through the following Major points.

Metaphors: absolute correspondence

A considerable part of metaphors, especially the so-called dead, cliché and stock metaphors (see Newmark, 1988: ch. 10) is cultural by origin and/or popularity of use. The following examples exhibit a perfect identification between each couple of metaphors in English and Arabic. Each example can be read both ways, and is followed by its sense, which is the same, in both languages, and at the end comes the image of the metaphor in capitals:

1. I am thirsty to see her. (ana mutaattishon liru'yatiha):
I long for her (ana mushtakon laha):
THIRSTY : MUTAATTISHON.
2. a chain of mountains. (silsilatu jibal):
CHAIN: SILSILA.
3. a series of events. (musalsalu/silsilatu ahdath):
SERIES: MUSALSALU/ SILSILATU .
4. field of knowledge. (haqlu maarifa):
FIELD: HAQLU.
5. kill the time. (yaqtulu L-waqta): waste time (yudayyi'u L-waqta) : KILL: YAQTULU
6. give me a helping hand. (mudda lee yada I-awn): help me (sa'idni) : HELPING HAND : YADU L-AWN.
7. seize the opportunity. (yantahizu I-fursata): benefit from something (yastafeedu min amren ma): SIEZE: YANTAHIZU.
8. to see no further than one's nose. (la yara abada min anfihi): narrow-minded (dayyequ I-afuqi): FURTHER THAN ONE'S NOSE: ABADA MIN ANFIHI.
9. hawks and doves. (suqoor wa hama'em): the bad and the good (al-ashrar wal-akhyar): HAWKS=SUQOOR; DOVES=HAMA'EM.
10. he is a fox. (huwa (innahu) tha'lab): cunning (maker): FOX: THA'LAB.
11. head over heels (ra'san ala aqeb): entirely (kulliyatan): HEAD: RA'S; HEELS: AQEB
12. to throw light on. (yuqee- d-daw'a ala): **focus** on (yurakkizu ala) : THROW: YULQEE; LIGHT: DAW'ON.

Metaphors: close correspondence

Other metaphors have close cultural correspondences in both languages, which use the same image with a word or more added, omitted or changed, as pointed out at the end of each of the following examples:

1. to Save one's face. (yunqithu/yahfazu ma'a l-wajhi): to behave well ((yuhsinu t-tasarrufa): SAVE: YAHFA'ZU; FACE: MA'u l-wajhi: "yahfazu" (keep) instead of "save, ma'u" (water) added.
2. to slam the door on. (yoosidu l-abwaba fee wajhi): disregard completely (yatajahalu kulliyatan): "fee wajhi" added in Arabic.
3. to use every ounce of energy: (yastakhdimu kulla tharraten mina t-ta-qa to do one's best (la yaddakhiru juhda/ya' malu kulla ma fee wus'ih): "ounce" translated into "tharra" instead of "ouns".
4. hands of the clock. (aqarebu s-sa'ati): "hands" (aydee) translated into "aqareb" (scorpions).
5. foot of the page. (thaylu s-safhati): "foot" (qadam) translated "thayl" (tail).
6. a politician who made his mark. (siyasiyyon taraka basamatih): had a great impact (kana lahu ta'theeron kabir): "made" (ja'ala / sana'a) translated into "taraka" (left).
7. a drop in the ocean. (nuqtaton fee bahr): very little (qaleelon jiddan): "ocean" (muheet) equivalent to "bahr" (sea).
8. show me your back. (arinee arda aktafika): get out (insaref): "back" (zahr) equivalent to "ardu I-aktafi" (width of shoulders).
9. to take into consideration. (ya'khuthu bi'ayni l-iltibar): consider (yadrusu/yada'u fi l-husban): "ayn" (eye) added in Arabic.
10. to hold power (yamsiku bizimami s-sultati): "zimam" (rein/bridle) added in Arabic.

Loan cultural metaphors (Calques)

Some cultural metaphors are imported into Arabic from English and/or other foreign languages. These can be considered a conscious cultural link between English and Arabic, and is possibly the strongest tie between them:

These metaphors are absolutely correspondent both literally and figuratively, and are called by Newmark, 'adapted metaphors'(muqtabasa)(see also Ghazala,1992):

1. the ball is in their court. (al-kuratu fee malabihem):
2. warm reception.(istiqbalon harron).
3. warm welcome. (tarheebon harron).
4. lukewarm reception. (istiqbalon fatiron).
5. lukewarm welcome, (tarheebon fatiron).
6. to sow division. (yazra'u sh-shiqaqa).
7. massive sale. (tanzeelon dakhmon).
8. a massacre of goals. (majzaratu ahdafen).
9. no smoke without fire. (la naron min dooni dukhanen).
10. brainwashing. (ghaslu dimaghen).

Other calques

The most remarkable examples are car industry, technological and computer sciences in particular, which are a western culture borrowed into Arabic daily and unabashedly:

1. data bank (bank ma'lumat)
2. computer keyboard. (lawhatu mafatech l-kompyutar)
3. computer virus. (vayroosu l-kompyutar).
4. railway station. (mahattatu qitaraten).
5. car wash. (ghaseelu Sayyarat).
6. roundabout/ringroad.(dawwar/tareeq halaqiy).
7. car park. (mawqef sayyarat).
8. airport. (matar/meen-a' jawwiy).
9. telephone directory. (daleelu l-hatef)
10. spare parts. (qita' ghiyar).

etc.

Here there is an endless effort by Arab and Arabic translators, terminologists, scientists and specialists to find the correspondent terms in Arabic. These are sought for via Arabisation, and naturalisation in particular. Yet, transference is still dominant in this specific field of culture.

Collocations: absolute correspondence

The major part of the cultural link between English and Arabic is the identification of many of their collocations with one another. By collocation I mean the two or more words which keep permanent-or usually permanent- company, including idioms, fixed and special expressions of all types, and proverbs (though proverbs are

assigned a separate paragraph later in this paper for their special cultural significance) (see Carter, 1987:ch.3; Ghazala (in Arabic),1993 for further details about collocations).

The following examples illustrate an absolute identification among cultural collocations in both languages, lexically as well as semantically:

1. at a stone's throw. (ala marma hajar):near (qareeb):STONE : HAJAR; THROW; : MARMA.
2. blind confidence.(thiqa amya): absolute trust(thiqa mutlaqa): BLIND:AMYA'
3. to toss down the bitterness of defeat. (yatajarra'u mararata l-hazeema): to accept it unwillingly (yaqbaluha ala madad): TOSS DOWN: YATAJARRA'U; BITTEKNESS : MARARATA.
4. honourable defeat. (hazeema musharrifa): marginal defeat (hazeeme bifariqen da'eelen jiddan): HONOURABLE:MUSHARRIFA.
5. to save one's skin. (yanjoo bijildihi): to **escape** death (yanjoo mina l-mawt): SKIN:JILD.
6. bed-ridden. (tareehu l-firashi): seriously ill (shadeedu l-marad) : BED: FIRASH: RIDDEN :TAREEH.
7. association of ideas. (tada'ee l-afkar):ASSOCIATION:TADA'EE.
8. the throes of death. (sak(a) ratu l-mawt): THROES:SAK(A)RATU.
9. wonderments and bewilderments. (aja'eb aghara'eb): WONDERMENTS : AJA'EB BEWILDERMENTS : GHARA'EB.
10. sweet-tongued. (hulwu/tariyyu l-lisani):good talker(mutahaddithon maher): SWEET: HULWU/TARIYYU; TONGUE : LISAN.
11. bare-footed. (hafiya l-qadamayni): BARE:HAFIYA; FOOT:QADAM.
12. bare-headed. (hasira r-ra'si) : BARE : HASIRA; HEAD:RAAS.
13. straying sheep. (ghanamon qasiya):lost sheep(ghanamon ta'iha :STRAYINC: QASIYA.
14. winking and blinking (al-ghamzu wal-lamzu): backbiting (al- gheebatu wan-nameema): WINKING:GHAMZ: BLINKING : LAMZ.

15. hurly-burly/hodgepodge/higgledy piggledy. (al-harju wal-marju): a great deal of noise(jalaba/sakhab):
16. filthy richness. (ghina fahesh):unnatural richness (ghina ghayru tabee'iy): FILTHY:FAHESH.
17. humpty dumpty. (qaseeru l-qamati): short and fat(qaseeron wabadeen).
18. to teach someone a lesson. (yulaqqinuhu darsan): rebuke (yuqarri'u /yuwabbikh): TEACH:YULAQQINU; LESSON:DARSAN.
19. by sheer co-incidence. (bimahdi sudfa): SHEER:MAHD.
20. food and drink. (at-ta'amu wash-sharabu): FOOD : TA'AM, DRINK 'SHARAB.
21. to grind one's teeth. (yasukku asnanahu): express anger(yu'abbiru 'an gadabihi): GRIND:YASUKKU.
22. to exert an effort. (yabthulu juhdan): EXERT:YABTHULU; EFFORT:JUHD.
23. to wash one's hands(yaghsilu yadayhi min):give up hope(yafqidu l-amal): WASH:YAGHSILU; HANDS:YADAN.
24. raging storm. (asifaton hawj-a'u): strong wind (reehon qav,,iyyaton):RAGING: HAWJA'U; STORM:'ASIFA.
25. in at one ear and out at the other.(yadkhulu min othon wayakhruju mins L-ukhra): understand nothing(la yafqah shay'an): IN/OUT: YADKHULU/ YAKHRUJU; EAR:OTHON; THE OTHER:AL-UKHRA.

Collocations:one-part correspondence

Many other collocations in the two languages are semi-correspondent in that one part of the collocation is perfectly identical with its peer in the other language:

1. Bread and butter, (al-khubzu wal-milhu):basics of life(asasiyyatu l-hayati):BREAD=KHUBZ; BUTTER(ZUBDA)=MILH.
2. presence of mind. (hudooru l-badeehati):wittiness(sur'atu l-badeehati): PRESENCE=HUDOOR; MIND(THIHN/AQL)= BADEEHA.
3. prime of life. (rabee'u L-umuri): youth(ash-shabab):PRIMF-(MATLA'/SADR)= RABEE(SPRING); LIFE=UMUR.
4. live and learn. ('eesh wshoof/'ishna wshufna):an expression of surprise (ta'beeron

ani L-istigrabi) : LIVE = EESH/'ISHNA; LEARN(TA'ALLAM-/ALLAMNA)= SHUFNA(SEE).

5. to go to earth. (tabla'uhu L-ard): disappear/ no trace of him (yakhtafee / la athara lahu): GO (YATHHAB) =TABLA'UHU); EARTH=ARD.
6. to sign on the dotted line. (yuwaqqi'u ala bayad):absolute confidence (thiqa mutlaqa): SIGN=YUWAQQI'U; ON THE DOTTED LINE(ALA S-SATRI L-MUNAQQAT) =BAYAD.
7. to take the lead. (ya'khuthu zimama l-mubadara):to be in the front(yakunu fi l-muqaddima): TAKE =YA'KHUTHU; THE LEAD(AL-QIYADA) = ZIMAMU I MUBADARA.
8. brain drain (hijratu I-admigha):immigration of the intelligentsia (hij ratu n-nukhba): BRAIN=DIMAGH; DRAIN(ISTINZAF/RASHU)= HIJRA.
9. poet laureate. (ameeru sh-shu'ara'i): POET=SHA'ER; LAUREATE(MUKALLALON BIL-GHARI) = AMEEF (PRINCE).
10. fast/sound sleep. (subaton ameeq):heavy sleep (nawmon thaqeel) : FAST (SAREE'ON) /SOUND (MATEEN).= AMEEQ; SLEEP = SUBAT.

Collocations: Similes:absolute correspondence

As...as-similes are classified here as collocations of a special kind, as they are fixed expressions. These are also cultural and some of them are identical in both languages:

1. as strong as a horse/a lion.(aqwa mina L-hisan/l-asad).
2. as patient as a donkey. (asbaru mina l-himar).
3. as obstinate as a mule. (a 'nadu mina l-baghl)
4. as cunning as a fox.(amkaru mina th-tha'lab).
5. as slow as a tortoise. (abta'u mina s-sulehfat).
6. as innocent as a child. (baree'on bara'eta l-atfal).
7. as fast as an arrow. (asra'u mina s-sahm).
8. as sweet as sugar/honey. (ahla- mina s-sukkar/L-asal).

9. as pretty as a picture. (ahla- mina s-sura).
 10. as blind as a bat. (a'ma mina(ka)l-khuffash).

Collocations: Proverbs: absolute correspondence

Being fixed expressions, proverbs can be labelled under collocations as well. They are heavily imbued with culture. The two widely different cultures, English and Arabic, do have some absolutely correspondent proverbs:

1. like father like son. (man shabaha abahu ma zalam/al-waladu sirru abeehi /al-waladu nuskhaton min abeehi).
2. do not put off your duty till tomorrow. (la tu'ajjel amala l-yawmi ila l-ghad).
3. all that glitters isn't gold. (ma kullu ma yalma'u thahaban).
4. need is the mother of invention. (al-hajatu ummu l-ikhtira'i).
5. money is the root of all evils. (al-malu masdaru/aslu sh-shuroori kulliha).
6. love is blind. (al-hubbu a'ma).
7. as you sow so will you reap. (kama tazra'u tahsudu).
8. man is known by the company he keeps. (yu'rafu L-mar'u bisuhbatihi/ qol lee man tu'ashiru aqoolu laka man ant).
9. laugh and the world laughs with you, weep and you weep alone. (idhak yadhak laka L-alam, ibki tabki liwahdika).
10. (I hear wheeling without milling.(asma'u ja'ja'atan wala(ara)taheenan).
11. too many cooks spoil the broth. (kathratu t-tabbakheena tufsidu (tahruqu t-tabkhati/t-tahyi).
12. every why has wherefore. (likulli su'alen jawab(uhu)).

Collocations:Proverbs:close correspondence

Other proverbs in the two languages have some elements in common, which are illustrated in the following examples:

1. out of sight out of mind. (ba'eedon ani I-ayni ba'eedon ani L-kalb): SIGHT = AYN; MIND(AQL)=KALB.
2. carrying coal to Newcastle. (kahamili t-tamri ila l-basra): CARRYING" YAHMILU ; COAL (FAHM) -=TAMR; NEWCASTLE=A -BASRA(CITY).

3. forbidden fruit is sweet. (kullu mamnoo'en marghoob):FORBIDDEN = MAMNOO'; FRUIT (DROPPED); SWEET (HULWON) = MARGHOOB (DESIRED)
4. blood is thicker than water. (ad-damu la yaseeru ma'an):BLOOD=DAMON, THICKER THAN(ASLMAKU MIN)=LA YASSERU(DOES NOT BECOME); WATER=MA'ON
5. to hit three birds with one stone. (yadribu'usfoorayni bihajar): HIT = YADRIBU; THREE BIRDS (3.) = 'USFODRAYN(2)- WITH ONE STONE = BIHAJAR.
6. a bird in hand is worth two in the bush. ('usfooron fi L-yadi khayron min asharaten ala sh-shajara):BIRD= 'USFOOR; HAND=YAD; TWO(2)= ASHARA (10),BUSH=SHAJARA.
7. two minds are better than one. (ra'yani khayron min ra'yen wahed): MIND(AQL)=RA'YON.
8. to make a dome out of a molehill. (ya'malu mina l-habbati qubba): DOME=QUBBA; MOLEHILL(TALLATU L KHILD)= HABBA(ONE GRAIN).
9. a friend in need is a friend indeed.(as-sadeequ waqta d-deeqi): A FRIEND INDEED=AS-SADEEQ; IN NEED = WAQTA D – DEEQ (INDEED is dropped).
10. better to be safe than sorry. (as-salamatu wala n-nadama):BETTER (MINA L-AFDALI) SAFE= SALEM; SORRY = NADEM.

Note

Absolute and close correspondence of cultural terms in English and Arabic can in fact be sought for in other cultural aspects: institutional, social, religious, political, geographical and international. Yet, and for the purposes of this paper Whose concentration has been on metaphors and collocations in specific, suffice it to say that these aspects of culture are mostly calques imported into Arabic(especially political, institutional, international and some social terms), or cultural-specific equivalents (including geographical and religious terms). Many examples are come across almost daily by

people, especially through the mass media, either read, heard, or watched.

On the other hand, it is unfair to turn a blind eye to the fact that there are other aspects and examples of culture which are still strange, or rather, estranged to and by translators and readerships. As the case may be, I would argue that, due to international communications-and I single out television, satellite television in particular, which has reached almost everywhere in the globe- cultural barriers have in the most been eliminated, broken down, tamed in some way or another, or at least dismantled of utter strangeness.

Cricket, baseball, or rugby, for instance, are no longer unfamiliar to Arab people. The same is true for clothes, foods, social habits and gestures, pop. music, social and national occasions, music, political jargon, jokes, etc.

Needless to say, however, that English/western cultural barriers are overcome much quicker than Arabic-cultural barriers, because of the superiority and invasion of western

civilization and culture of the rest of the world, whether we like it or not.

Conclusion

In the translation of culture - and this paper is not about the translation of culture - there can be cross - cultural links even between two- widely different cultures such as English and Arabic. Not only-equivalence or close correspondence is available and possible between English and Arabic cultural terms, but also absolute correspondence is recurrent.

Although the translation of culture is still a problem for the translator, strong ties among global cultures, no matter how different they may be, are no longer a fiction, but a fact, as this paper has hopefully demonstrated in connection to some cultural aspects of Arabic and English. And further research in this direction can perhaps decipher more depths of international cross-cultural links in translation.

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