

Objectivity in Literary Translation

Assessment:

A Model for Teacher of Translation

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Abstract

The main purpose of this paper is to investigate the possibility of securing objectivity in the assessment of literary translation, and account for the main factors that can contribute to an objective assessment. In brief, the paper is intended to suggest a model that can be useful for teacher of translation in assessing their students' translation of literary texts .The suggested model can be useful in training students of translation on how to be more objective in the process of translation. To achieve

this purpose, the paper attempts to answer two questions, viz "Is it possible to secure objectivity in the assessment of literary translation? ", and if it is possible, "How to secure it? " .

## **1. Introduction**

The world no longer seems large. In fact, it has changed into a small village due to the advances in the technology of communication and mass media. However this has led to the increasing significance of translation and the increasing number of people engaged with this art which has actually become a profitable profession. Thus, translation, and consequently translation assessment are no longer a matter of taste, like or dislike

This increasing significance of translation has added further demands on the part of translator, critic's teachers and students of translation. Of these demands objectivity seems to be significant due to the subjective element inherited in

translation. Teachers of translation, for instance, are required to train their students on how to translate and assess translation objectivity. In addition, teachers themselves are required to look for criteria that enable them to be more objective in assessing the translation of their students.

However it is significant to keep in mind that perfect objective assessment is difficult – if not possible to- achieve.

No one can claim that there is a model of translation assessment which is objective .Thus it is better to think of it as matter of degree. Trying to find an objective model is in fact an attempt to find a model with a reasonable degree of objectivity. This fact is considered in this paper which aims at finding out whether or not it is possible to achieve such a reasonable degree of objectivity of literary translation assessment.

Since it may not be practical to deal with translation of all text types, this paper is limited to literary translation which is probably more difficult

than other types for both the students and teachers who train their students on this type of translation.

Using the assessment model, the teacher assumes the role of critic; therefore, the term " critic " is used, throughout the paper, to refer to both the teacher and the critic as well.

## **2. On Defining Objectivity**

Before going into details it seems necessary to distinguish the concept of objectivity in translation assessment from the Layman's viewpoint who views objectivity only as being free of personal prejudice.

However, most of the definitions of objectivity in translation assessment indicate that objectivity implies being systematic in analyzing, describing or comparing things. Objectivity is seen in contrast to arbitrariness. Brock's (1985:231) view is a case in point .On the other hand Reiss (2000: 4) adds another dimension to objectivity, viz verification. According to Reiss, every criticism of translation

should be "defined explicitly and be verified by examples ".

Objectivity, thus, demands verification and excluding arbitrariness. However, this definition is adopted throughout this paper. The above definition necessitates certain criteria in term of which the critic (or the teacher) can verify his judgment and thus be systematic. Finding these criteria is the main concern of this paper.

### **3. Elements of Objective Assessment**

The purpose behind this section is to shed light on the main factors that can enable the teacher to make objective judgments. Below are the main elements in term of which, the teacher can formulate some criteria on which to base his judgment.

301 setting element

30101Place

This includes all the features and facts of the country and culture of the source text (ST). It is necessary to know where the actions of the (ST) take place since the place element is decisive in more than one sense. To decide appropriateness, for instance, the teacher or the critic can verify his judgment in terms of the place factor. Translating a word like "capsule" that occurs, in the context of hospital, is different from translating the same word which occurs in the context of astronomy.

Another important point related to the place element is the cultural differences between the source language (SL) and target language (TL). To be able to verify, it is necessary to the teacher or the critic to be familiar with both cultures. Translation of an Arabic sentence like "كان حاتم الطائي كثير الرماد" requires familiarity with both the English and Arabic cultures on the part of translator and consequently the critic. The translator, here, has more than one choice; he may insist on transferring the same image in English, or

he may merely translate its content. However, what is important here is the decision of the teacher or the critic. To decide the appropriate translation of this sentence, the teacher can verify his judgment in terms of some other factors, viz, function of the translation. If the translator aims at familiarizing the reader with the Arabic culture, his decision to keep the same image will be appropriate. But if he aims, only, at conveying the content, his decision to merely explain the content will be appropriate.

### **30102 Time**

This is also another determinant element which the teacher (or critic) can base his judgment on. The element is specifically important in dealing with a text belonging to previous period .To determine the correct indication of a certain metaphor, expression, image; it is necessary to consider the period to which the ST belongs. In Dr. Faustus, for instance, Marlowe makes his hero, Faustus; grow a pair of horns on a knight's head as a matter of contempt .So in translating this

metaphor or image, it is necessary to consider its indication according to that period in case its modern indication is different.

### **30103 Author**

The teacher (or the critic) should also consider the personality of the author, his style, his attitude towards the subject or the individual he is talking about. Some authors, such as Bernard Shaw, are known to be ironic, while others, like Dickens, are known to be satirical. An author may be enthusiastic or scornful or what is being talked about.

Thus the teacher (or the critic) can verify part of his judgment of the target text (TT) on the basis of his knowledge of the author's attitude or personality. In other words he can make his judgment based on the fact whether the TT has captured the main viewpoint or the attitude of the author or not.

### **30104 Translator**

Knowing the translator's attitude towards the subject of the text is another criterion on which the teacher can base his judgment. In many cases, fidelity to the SD is influenced by the attitude of the translator .A translator of any essay , for instance, who supports the Irish may translate a sentence such as " The Irish aggression against the British Army "said by the British minister, for instance, into, " المقاومة الايرلندية للجيش الانكليزي "

". Thus the teacher (or critic) can demonstrate his judgment simply by reference to the attitude of the translator. A translator, on the other hand, may be aggressive towards certain author and this will certainly influence his fidelity to the ST.

### **30105 Audience**

This element provides the teacher (or the critic) with another criterion for assessment. It is necessary to know the audience the translator has in mind, simply because translating, a story, for example ,intended to be read by children should not be evaluated in terms of the same criteria as those

used in evaluating the translation of a story intended to be read by scholars. Translating a story such as Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, for example, doesn't require simplification or adaptation. Such a translation should be assessed in terms of the normal criteria of assessing literary translation .Such as fidelity to form, style, and content of the ST. On the other hand, translating this story for children and young readers necessitates some simplification and adaptation of the ST. The result of this type of translation, however, may not be translation in its restricting sense. An objective assessment of this type of translation should not determine the fidelity of the TT to the ST in terms of form or style. Instead, it should determine whether or not the TT achieved its aim- simplifying the ST to young readers.

## 302 Textual Elements

### 30201 Text Type

Just to decide that a certain text is literary doesn't mean that this typology is final. A narrative

text, for example, may only aim at narrating a story, or it may have an implied function behind narration. It may for example, aim at invoking a certain reaction on the part of reader. Another narrative text may be satirical. To know the text type in this way is of vital significance for the critic. Based on this knowledge, the critic can verify his agreement or disagreement with the particular methods chosen by the translator for specific purposes (Brock, 1985:60).

However, Reiss's (2000: 26) classification of text seems useful to be adopted here. She divides text into four types:

### **3.2.1.1 Formed – Focused texts**

In translating this type of texts, fidelity is to the form of the ST. The critic should determine whether the St corresponds with the TT in terms of form, style, and literary devices.

### **3020102 Content – Focused Texts**

Here the critic should determine whether the translator shows close attention to the accuracy of content or not.

### **3020103 Appeal – Focused Texts**

Here the critic is to decide the TT convey the same appeal or evokes the result in the ST.

### **3020104 Audio media Texts**

What is to be evaluate here is the extent to which the TT matches the ST in integrating the contribution of non – linguistic media and other components in literary form.

### **30202 Tenor(s) of the Text**

Here, the critic should decide whether the ST matches the TT in representing the level of formality among the in – text and / or out – text participants (Sa' Adeddin, 2000: 78).

### **30203 Mode (s) of the Text**

The critic should also determine whether the TT reflects the speak ability or readability of the ST in terms of lexical, phonological or junctive constituents (Ibid: 79).

### **30204 Field (s) of the Text**

The critic should determine whether the TT corresponds with the TT in terms of lexical selection (Ibid).

### **30205 Figures of speech\_**

No doubt, these devices are significant in literary text. The critic, therefore should determine whether the translator managed to transfer these figures to the TT, and, if not, why?

### **30206 Text Coherence**

The critic should determine whether each idea in the text leads smoothly to the text or not. He should also decide whether there is any shift in coherence or not. And, if there is any, the critic

should determine whether these shifts are due to translation, or they are originally found in the ST.

### **30207 Text Cohesion**

Again the critic is to decided whether there is any shift in cohesion or not, and if there is any, he should determine whether these shifts are found only in the TT or in the St as well.

### **30208 Source Text Function (s)**

Here the TT should be evaluated in terms of its matching the ST's purpose. If the ST is written for didactic purposes, for instance, the TT should achieve the same aim. The critic should assess the TT by determining whether it can be useful for didactic purpose or not.

### **303 Function (s) of Translation**

The translation's purpose may be different from that of the **ST**. A story, for example, which is originally written to be read only, may be translated to another language to be performed on stage.

Here, the critic should assess this TT not in terms of

its matching the ST purpose, but according to its achieving the aim of translation.

### **304 Linguistic Elements**

Here, As- Safi (1996: 5) lists some elements such as punctuation, spelling, grammatically and acceptability. However, some other elements can be added such as semantic and lexical elements. The TT is examined in terms of semantic equivalence, grammatical correctness, and its stylistic correspondence with the ST.

Any judgment of the TT in terms of these linguistic elements should be verified by examples if the critic for instance makes a negative judgment about the TT, he should suggest better alternative.

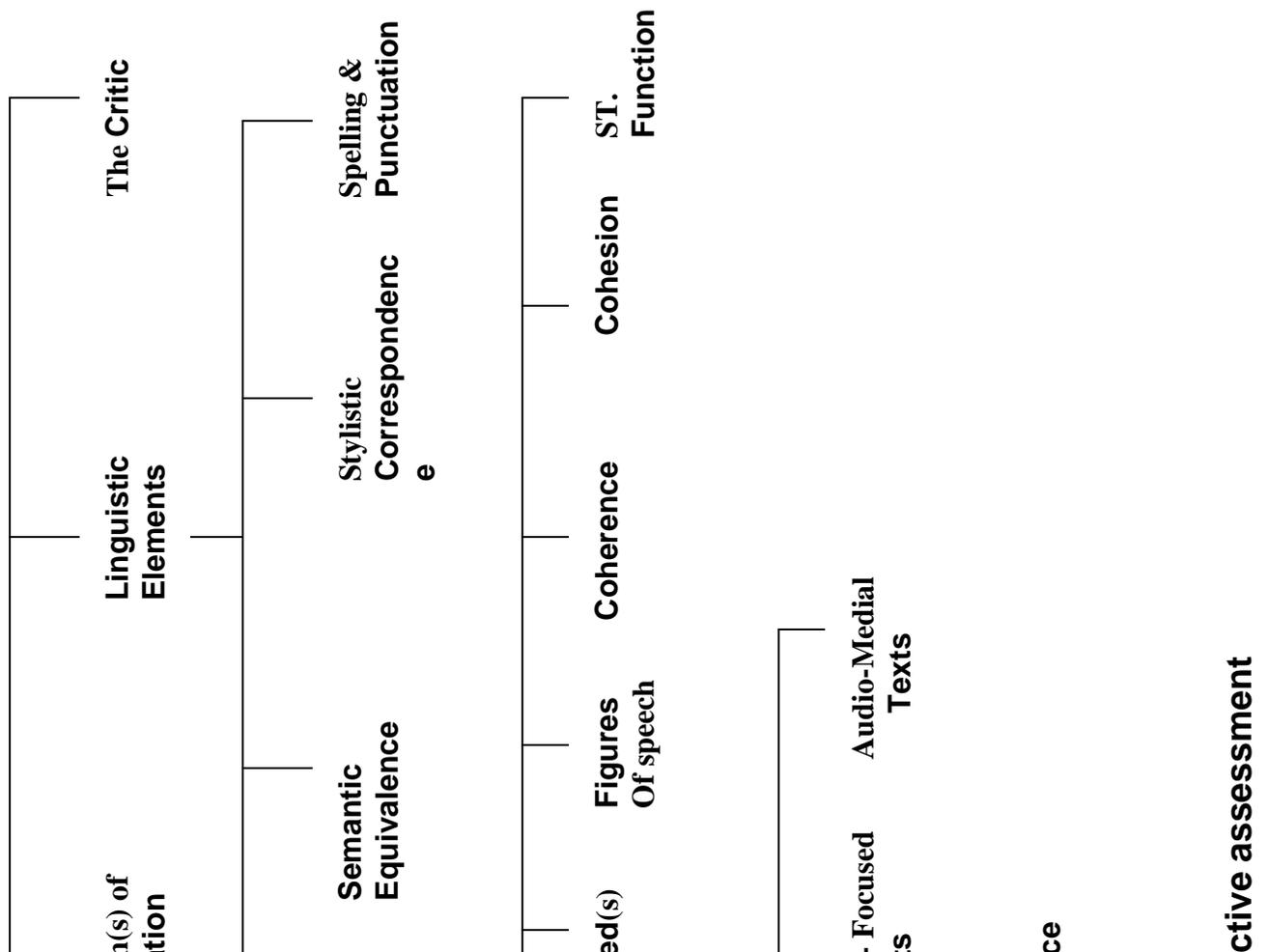
### **305 The Critic Factor**

The final factor to be discussed is the factor of the critic himself, on whom the whole process of assessment mainly depend. In spite of all the criteria being talked about, the critic's judgments may be influenced, to a certain extent, by his prejudice.

To control over this variable, it seems useful to ask more than one critic to evaluate the same text through the same model. The final judgment will then be averaged.

This averaged judgment will be the final assessment of translation.

However, it may be useful to summarize the elements of objectivity discussed so far in a diagram. See figure (1)



## 4-Assessment of Translation: A sample

It seems useful to show, by example, how the criteria discussed throughout this paper can be applied in assessing the following translation of a passage quoted from Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*:

The ST

I was superstitious about dreams then, and am still, and Catherine had an unusual gloom in her, that made me dread something from I might shape a prophecy, and foresee a fearful catastrophe.

She was vexed, but she did not proceed. Apparently taking up another subject, she recommenced in a short time.

"If I were in heaven, Nelly, I should be extremely miserable."

"Because you are not fit to go there, "I answered." All sinners would be miserable in heaven. "

"But it is not for that. I dreamt, once, that I was there. "

"I tell I won't harken to your dreams, Miss Catherine! I'll go to bed. "I interrupted again. She laughed, and held me down, for I made a motion to leave my chair.

" This is nothing , cried she , " I was only going to say that heaven didn't seem to be my home ; and I broke my heart with weeping to come back to earth; and the angels were so angry that they flung me out

, into the middle of the heath on the top of Wuthering Heights, where I woke sobbing for joy. That will do to explain my secret, as well as the other. I have no more business to marry Edgar Linton than I have to be in heaven, and if the wicked man not brought, Heath cliff so low I shouldn't have thought of it. It would degrade me to marry Heath cliff, now; so he shall never know I love him; and that, not because he's handsome, Nelly, but because he's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same, and Linton's is as different as a moonbeam from lightning or frost from fire.

## The TT

كنت خرافية بشأن الأحلام عندئذ ومازلت، كان كدر غيري اعتيادي في جانب كثرين وهذا ما جعلني افزع من شيء مما قد أشكل منه نبؤه و أتوقع كرثة مرعبة. كانت مغتظة ولكنها لم تتصرف . ظاهريا بدأت ثانية تأخذ موضوعاً أخرفي وقت قصير . لو كنت في السماء نيللي كان ينبغي أن أكون تعيسة تماماً . أحببتها لأنك غير ملائمة أن تكوني هناك كل الخاطئون مدعون أن يكونوا تعساء في السماء .

لكن ليس لذلك . قلت مرة بأني كنت هناك .  
أخبرك بأني سوف لن أنصت إلى أحلامك، أنسة كأثرين!.  
سأذهب إلى الفراش، قاطعياً مجدداً.  
ضحكت وأجلستني من جديد لأنني تحركت لأغادر الكرسي.  
هذا لاشيء صرخت : كنت قط أريد أن أقول بان السماء لم تبدو بيت لي  
واني كسرت قلبي بالبكاء لكي أعود ثانية إلى الأرض و الملائكة كانوا  
غاضبين عندما القوا بي إلى داخل وسط المرج على قمت مرتفعات وذرنج  
حيث استقضت من الفرح . هذا سيفسر سري بالإضافة إلى الآخر . ليس  
عمل لانزوج من لنتون من أن أكون في السماء ولو لم يكن الرجل الشرير  
ليجلب هيثكف أدنى من هذا بكثير ما كان يجب علي أن أفكر في ذلك .  
سوف تحط من شأني أن أتزوج هيثكف الآن ، لهذا سوف لن يعرف كيف  
أحبه وهذا ليس لأنه وسيم ولكن ، نللي ، لأنه نفسي أكثر مما أكون أنا .  
مهما تكن أرواحنا مصنوعة من ، فروحي وروحة مماثلتان أما روح لنتون  
فهي مختلفة كاختلاف ضوء القمر من البرق أو الصقيع عن الحريق .

401 Comparison of the Arabic

Translation with the English Text for

Assessment

40101 Author

The author's romance and poetic imagination is clear in the TT. The translation managed to preserve

almost the same images of dreams, heaven, moon, etc. in the TT.

### 40102 Text Type

The text is from – focused. It is a narration . This necessitates the following criteria to be used in assessment.

### 40103 Tenor

The tenor in the ST is represented by the declarative sentence said by Catherine. These sentences are connected by some conjunctions such as "and" "but ", as well as some participles and that clause.

The translator made some errors concerning some conjunctions. In the sentence:

كنت خرافية بشأن الأحلام وما زلت ، كان كدر غير اعتيادي

The translation elided the conjunction "and" in:

"And Catherine had an unusual ...." The translator could have said:

كنت خرافية بشأن الأحلام وما زلت كذلك وكانت كأثرين كدرة ....

Another error is in translating the ing- participle in:

"Apparently taking up another subject" which was translated into?

ظاهرياً بدأت ثانية تأخذ موضوعاً آخر.

The translator could have said:

متظاهرة بالتحدث عن موضوع آخر...

## 40104 Mode

As for the ST , Catherine keeps on repeating the words " dreams " , " dreamt", in addition to using some cohesive conjunctions such as " so " , " or " , " and that " , as in " so he shall never know how I loved him , and that, not because he is handsome . In the TT the translator made use of the same means used in the ST to achieve the readability of the TT.

## 40105 Field

It seems that the ST didn't make the translator face a serious difficulty concerning lexical selection.

Thus it can be said that the lexical items in the TT correspond with that of the ST.

## **40106 Figures of Speech**

The main figures of speech in the ST are : simile as in " as different as moonbeam from lightning , or frost from fire " hyperbole as in Catherine's description of her love of Heathclif, illustration as in the use of some images such as " heaven " , " angels" .

No one of these figures seems to be lost in the TT. This may be due to the availability of these images in the target language. So it was not difficult for the translator to keep these figures.

## **40107 Text Coherence**

There is no recognized shift in coherence in both the ST and TT. All the details seem to be centered around two concepts: Catherine's dream and her love to Heathclif.

## 40108 Text Cohesion

The TT seems to match the ST in terms of lexical organization. The translator used certain words throughout the TT such as

"الأحلام"، "أحلامك"، "تعساء"، "تعيسة"، "مغتظة"، "كدر"

As for conjunctions, the translator made an error in that he omitted the conjunction "and" in "and Catherine had an unusual gloom in her aspect", which was translated into

كان كدر غير اعتيادي.

As mentioned earlier the translator could have said

وكانت كأثرين كدرة على نحو غير اعتيادي

As for performs and their there references, there is a sort of ambiguity about the reference of the pronoun "other" in "to explain my secret, as well as the other". The same ambiguity is found in the TT:

هذا ما سيفسر سري بالإضافة إلى الأخر.

Generally, it can be said there is no significant shift in cohesion in the TT.

## 40109 Text Function

The ST is an excerpt from a novel which is intended to be read by literary readers for purposes of literary appreciation.

The TT seems to match this purpose, since it seems also to be intended to be read for literary purpose, simply because it doesn't contain the adaptation of the author's style.

## 401010 Linguistic Elements

### 40101001 Grammaticality and Acceptability

The translator made a number of grammatical errors. The first is in translating "heaven did not seem to be my house "into  
The translator could have said:

السماء لم تبدو بيتاً لي Or السماء لم تبدو بيته

Another error, which may not seem very serious, is not to use the proform *كذلك* in كنت خرافية although the ST doesn't contain the pronoun, it seems more appropriate to use it in Arabic. The translator could have said

كنت خرافية بشأن الأحلام عندئذ وما زلت كذلك

## 40101002 Semantic Equivalence

An obvious error made by the translator in translating "All sinners would be miserable in heaven" into: كل الخاطئون مدعون أن يكونوا تعساء في السماء. The word 'مدعون', which has no equivalent in the ST, was added by the translator. Its use affects meaning. The translator could have said:

كل الخاطئون سيكونون تعساء في السماء

## 40101003 Stylistic Correspondence

The translator made some stylistic errors which affects the acceptability of the TT. A good example is translating "Catherine had an unusual gloom in her aspect" into

The translator could have said: وكانت كأثرين كدرة على نحو غير عادي في جانب كأثرين.

## 40101004 Spelling and Punctuation

There are no obvious errors in this concern.

## 401011 Statement of Quality

In spite of the errors which have been discussed, it could be said that the translator managed – to considerable extent – to realize the author's focus. It could be also said that the TT is equivalent to the ST.

## 5. Conclusions

Based on the finding of this paper, it can be concluded that perfect objectivity is difficult to secure. However, this doesn't mean that the result is complete lack of objectivity. Instead, teacher of translation should be aware that objectivity had better through of as a matter degree. Following systematic procedures, using suitable criteria, and verifying judgment can secure a reasonable degree of objectivity.

Another important condition for objectivity is the necessity of building translation assessment models on the basis of text typology. Every type of texts has its particular characteristics and requirements, therefore particular model should be built to meet the specific requirements of each type of texts. Consequently teachers of translation had better choose the models that are appropriate for the characteristics and requirements of the texts they are dealing with.

The critic himself represents an additional variable that needs to be controlled. In this concern, It is suggested that the same translation can be

assessed by more than one critic using the same model, and their final judgments can be averaged. Teachers are required to train their students on this type of assessment as an attempt to secure more objectivity.

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