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### Cultural Problems of Translating Mosuli Folk Songs into English

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<b>Keywords:</b>  <i>-folk songs</i> <i>-translation</i> <i>- mosuli</i> <i>- music</i> <i>-lyrics</i>	<b>Abstract</b>  This paper aims at examining problems and difficulties encountered by translators when attempting to translate Mosul's folk songs into English. Folk songs originate among people of a certain country or region. These songs are passed orally from one generation to the other. Such lyrics are marked by having very specific linguistic and phonological structures. The rationale behind this study is that the translation of folk songs in general and Mosul's ones in particular has not yet been given the proper attention and that there is a clear paucity in the translation literature of such field. The problem that this study will focus on, is that both novice translators and translation students alike might find it difficult to translate the cultural meaning of folk songs. The key aims of this study are to define the difficulties and problems associated with the translation of folk songs, in addition to analyzing the translation errors made by the students while conducting the translation task. The study hypothesizes that there is no one- to-one translation equivalence between the SL and TL texts. It also hypothesizes that translating folk songs requires special knowledge and expertise that only competent translators might have. Conversely, novice and incompetent translators will find it difficult to handle such task properly. The model of Wilson (2009) will be adopted for this study, since it provides an appropriate framework for the translation of folk songs from Arabic into English.  As for the procedures followed, there will be a selection of certain problematic folk songs excerpts for analysis. These excerpts will be
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<p>Available online 5/7/2020</p>	<p>translated by four 4<sup>th</sup> class translation students. Their translation versions will be analyzed to determine errors and misinterpretations.</p> <p>Since Mosul's folk songs are sung in anniversaries and social events without any collateral music or sometimes with simple musical instruments, and since translating folk songs requires relaying both the written poetic and the musical aspects of the SL lyric. Hence, the study will not include the translation of the musical aspect which will remain beyond the scope of this study.</p>
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### المشكلات الثقافية في ترجمة الأغاني الشعبية الموصلية الى اللغة الإنكليزية

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<p><b>الخلاصة:</b></p> <p>يهدف البحث الى دراسة المشاكل التي يواجهها المترجمون عند ترجمة الاغاني الشعبية الموصلية من اللغة العربية الى اللغة الانكليزية. تمثل الاغاني الشعبية نتاج الموروث الشعبي لبلد او منطقة معينة ويجري نقلها شفويا من جيل الى جيل اخر وتتميز الاغاني هذه بتراكيب صوتية و لغوية خاصة. ان الهدف من هذه الدراسة يكمن في ان ترجمة الاغاني الشعبية عموما والاغاني الموصلية خصوصا لم يحظى بالقدر الكافي من الاهتمام وان هناك قلة ملحوظة في بحوث الترجمة في هذا المجال. وبما ان الاغاني الشعبية الموصلية يتم ادائها في المناسبات الاجتماعية بدون اي موسيقى مصاحبة لها او مع وجود الات موسيقية بسيطة، وبما ان ترجمة الاغاني الشعبية تتطلب ترجمة النص الشعري والجوانب الموسيقية معا، لذا فان هذه الدراسة لتتضمن ترجمة الجوانب الموسيقية التي ستكون خارج نطاق هذه الدراسة.</p>	<p><b>الكلمات الدالة:-</b></p> <p>اغاني شعبية ترجمة موصلية موسيقى اغاني</p> <p><b>معلومات البحث</b></p> <p><b>تاريخ البحث:</b> الاستلام: ٢٠٢٠/٦/١٢ القبول: ٢٠٢٠/٦/٢٠ التوفر على النت 2020/7/5</p>
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## **2. The theoretical part:**

### **2.1. What is translation?**

Translation has been defined and viewed differently by different scholars. Some define it in terms of equivalence, while others define it in terms of transference of meaning.

For Ray (1962: 187), translation means "the transference of meaning from one language into another".

Savory (1968: 34), on the same course with Newmark (1982:7), (1992:27) conceives translation as:

"A craft attempts to replace a written message and / or statement in another language".

Farghal abd Shunnaq (1999: 2) go along with this view saying that translation is "often regarded as a project for transferring meaning from one language to another".

Catford (1965: 1), Nida and Taber (1974: 12), Mcguire (1980: 29), Aziz (1989: 258), and Aziz and Lataiwish (2000: 61); who follow the equivalence – based approach, view translation as a process of substituting a text in one language for a text in another.

De Beaugrande (1978: 13) believes that translation should not be studied as a comparison and contrast of two texts, but as a process of interaction between author, translator, and reader of the translation.

According to Schaffner (2000), translation requires "as awareness of and conscious reflection on all the relevant factors for the production of a target text that appropriately fulfills its specified function for its target addressees" (Schaffner, 2000: 146).

### **2.2. Definition of folk songs**

Folk songs refer to all sorts of lyrics and songs which represent the musical and oral traditions and heritage of specific regions or societies around the world.

The word (Folk) originally refers to the German word (volks) which designates the meaning of (people). Folk songs is viewed mostly as the songs that belong to the inhabitants of a certain area or region (Davidson: 2013).

The folk songs reflect the nature of people's life. Its main focus is on their way of life, the values and norms they believe and cherish, the main events that they have went through or have encountered, all these are engaged and employed to form their own indigenous folk songs (ibid).

Such folk songs will revive and bring to live all the memories that could be relived and evoked in such songs and lyrics when performed by future generations. Folk songs demonstrate the people's emotions and the way they would describe and characterize themselves (Geertz: 2003)

Folk songs are eye witnesses of the past. Past events such as, natural incidents, wars, anniversaries, feast seasons, rites and rituals, belief system, moral norms, relationship of the community, occupational behavior, leisure time, or to put it in a more comprehensive framework, folk songs represent the whole social and cultural environments that are kept alive and preserved in this genre which represents a unique form of oral tradition (ibid).

Thus, Folk songs had thrived and flourished in rural areas since it represents the product of communities that are less prestigious or we can say that folk songs were preserved by the simple people living in rural areas because it was their own product which they know better than anyone else.

### **2.3. Importance of folksongs**

One of the most important functions that folksongs can do is unifying groups of people through their common interest in such songs.

Folksongs can also stimulate them to common actions and allow them to express their feelings and emotions. Certain folksongs have become so popular and this popularity have turned them into anthems like songs that are widely sung in social and cultural events . These anthems express common values, historical events, virtues, emotions and experiences that might contribute to shaping the groups common identity (Dundes:1965).

Folksongs represent a rich source of joy and entertainment. Folk songs can be a rich source of information about the society's history and past events that younger generations might have a clearer image about their history and culture. In folksongs, people might abide by important values and beliefs peculiar to their culture. They can also set examples and prototypes of behavior and attitude. This can be done through the message that folksongs might convey (ibid).

Folksongs can be differently interpreted by different social groups and hence they might serve as forums for peoples' debate on different issues such as, morals, manners, values and other social concerns (ibid).

### **2.4. Translation of folk songs**

According to Low (2005), a translator commissioned to translating folk songs might have to think about one of the following choices and to decide using one of them to render the assigned folk songs:

1. Leaving the song untranslated
2. Translating the lyrics but not taking the music into account(words)
3. Writing new lyrics to the original music with no overt relation to the original lyrics

4. Translating the lyrics and adapting the music accordingly – sometimes to the extent that a brand new composition is deemed necessary

5. Adapting the translation to the original music.

Based on the fact that a song has three components (lyric, music, performance). The translation of folk songs throughout this research will only tackle one component (lyric) or the linguistic elements of the songs. This means that the second choice will be selected, in other words (a semantically close prose renderings) will be the focus of the translated lyrics.

Translators engaged in translating folk songs and lyrics should pay proper attention to cultural codes, norms and customs and try to interpret them in the recipient culture in a way that would preserve the original imprint and flavor of the original. (Low:2005).

Eco (2001) in the same line of thinking, agrees with (Low:2005) and emphasizes that When translating folk songs, all the traditional, cultural codes and customs had to be taken into consideration. “A translator must take into account rules that are not strictly linguistic but, broadly speaking cultural.” (Eco 2001:17).

In this framework, it's obvious that translating folk songs poses certain challenges and demands on the translator. Such as, maintaining the cultural print of the original text which means preserving the original meaning or otherwise give a literal translation (ibid).

### **2.5. Difficulties of translating folk songs**

There are multiple difficulties and challenges associated with the translation of folk songs. Most of these hindrances stem from the cultural nature and social legacy which are transferred from one generation to another.

According to Bell (1991:32) translation is "the transformation of a text originally in one language into an equivalent text in a different language retaining, as far as possible, the content of the message and the formal features and functional roles of the original text"

Translators working on folk songs rendering are constantly facing the challenge of striking a balance between preserving source language cultural imprint and abiding by the cultural norms of the target language.

Maintaining this balance is obviously challenging, particularly when the translation process centers around folk songs and lyrics that are deeply instilled in the culture and norms of a certain speech community (ibid).

To make it more evident, translators working on different texts and topics might have the ability to manipulate the translated version either by adding, deleting or even paraphrasing, but when it comes to folk songs translation, the situation will be entirely different in the sense that the translator must abide by the original text as far as he/she

could. This commitment will result in a target text that fully complies with the source language text (ibid).

## **2.6. Difficulties of translating Mosul's folk songs**

One of the most prominent obstacles associated with the rendering of Mosul's folk songs is represented by the fact that these lyrics are sung in the Mosul's dialect.

This dialect represents a unique form of Iraqi Arabic dialect. It has certain phonological and linguistic features some of them are taken from Turkish, Persian and Kurdish languages.

This means that the translator should be fully aware of the linguistic and phonological structures of this dialect in order to perform the translation task appropriately.

The translation task will be implemented on two stages, the first one will be dedicated to rendering the folk songs from Mosul's dialect into standard Arabic language, while the second stage will focus on rendering the folk songs from standard Arabic language into English.

## **2.7. Culture and folk songs**

According to Wikipedia, "Culture is defined as the social behavior and norms found in human societies including beliefs, arts, knowledge, customs, and habits of the individuals in these societies.

It is important to understand that the meaning of folk songs emanates from the norms and values of the original culture in which such folk songs were originated (ibid).

Folk songs convey universal messages. They are the product of a designated culture. Thus, folk songs rendering could be challenging for translators due to cultural differences and inconsistencies since translators are required to maintain the meaning and the message of the original culture within a new cultural environment. in cultures.(Low:2005)

This fact is even applicable even to songs or lyrics that discuss a universal message, such as love or freedom, where it would be difficult for translators to free themselves from cultural constraints and barriers that need to be adapted to suit the new recipients' culture and norms. (ibid)

Hence, we need to have a clearer image of the cultural structure and fabrics of the community in which the folk songs have originated and also of the recipient community and culture (ibid).

Conversely, the cultural aspects must be taken into account before trying to comprehend the meaning of the song in order to specify the intended meaning of the related song through aesthetic or cultural interpretations (Eco:2001).

So, upon giving the culture the proper attention, the cultural interpretation of the related folk songs would become much easier. This might contribute to a better aesthetic interpretation which would yield a clearer image and a better understanding of the related songs (ibid).

### 3. The analytical part:

#### 3.1. Data analysis

A number of excerpts from various Mosul's folk songs were given to a number of translators(4) to verify the difficulties and hindrances they have encountered throughout the translation process.

#### ١ - شيلي الزلف ليفوق عيني يا بنية

SL text	شيلي الزلف ليفوق عيني يا بنية
Sense of the SL text	Raise your falling hair

TL text	Sense of the TL text	Compatibility of sense
1- Dear girl, get rid of the hair	Getting rid of the girl's hair	-
2- oh girl, bring up the cowlick onto your eyes	Raising the girls hair	+
3- girl, would you put the strand back above your eyes.	Sweeping back the girl's hair	+
4- hey lovely girl, get that hair out of your face.	Do not let your hair covers your face	+

#### Discussion;

The meaning of this song excerpt concentrates on the fact that the bride's hair is so long and that the singer is advising her to lift it off her face. In the Mosuli culture , a lengthy and thick hair is a symbol of the beauty of a girl that makes her special and distinctive among other girls in her community.

This meaning was conveyed through the renderings of translators 2, 3 and 4 therefore, regarded appropriate translation of the SL text. on the other hand, translator's 1 rendering contradicts the intended meaning and thus considered inappropriate rendering of the SL text.

٢- يا ماشطة مشطها و بسطوح العالي قعيها

SL text	يا ماشطة مشطها و بسطوح العالي قعيها
Sense of the SL text	Oh hair dresser comb her hair and let her sit upstairs

TL text	Sense of the TL text	Compatibility of sense
1- she is so precious and outstanding.	She is a special person	-
2- oh, hair dresser, do up her hair and sit her down on the roof top.	Style up her hair and sit her on the roof top of the house.	+
3- oh hairdresser, comb her hair and take her to the high roof.	Comb her hair and sit her on the roof top of the house.	+
4- Oh dear, comb the sweetheart's hair and let her go upstairs.	Comb her hair and sit her on the roof top of the house.	+

Discussion

The meaning of this song excerpt focuses on the meaning that the bride's hair is so beautiful that the hair stylist should arrange her hair at the rooftop of her house as an indication that the bride is pampered and cuddled by her family.

Translator 1 rendering is not in line with the SL meaning, since it contradicts the original meaning of the SL text. hence, regarded inappropriate rendering of the SL text. Renderings of translators 2, 3 and 4 are compatible with the SL intended meaning and thus, deemed appropriate translation of the SL text.

٣- لو تغشعوا الشعغ العليها مشط الذهب لايق عليها

SL text	مشط الذهب لايق عليها لو تغشعوا الشعغ العليها
Sense of the SL text	The girl's hair is so nice that a golden comb would be required for styling

TL text	Sense of the TL text	Compatibility of sense
1-her hair is remarkable	The girl's hair is important.	-
2-look at her hair, for which a golden comb is suitable.	The girl's hair is so beautiful that it would require a golden comb for styling	+



3-Ok, if you see her hair, a gold comb fits it.	The girl's hair is so beautiful that it would require a golden comb for styling.	+
4-if you see her hair how beautiful it is, so it deserves a golden comb.	The girl's hair is so beautiful that it would require a golden comb for styling.	+

## Discussion

The meaning of this excerpt centers around a description of the bride's hair which is so beautiful and charming that it requires a golden comb for styling and combing.

This meaning was successfully conveyed through the renderings of translators 2, 3 and 4. Their translation versions are in concert with the intended meaning of the SL text. Consequently, regarded appropriate rendering of the original text.

On the other hand, translator 1 rendering stands against the intended SL meaning and hence, deemed inappropriate translation of the original intended meaning.

٤ - بالله افغشولوا بصدغ الايوانة مات العدو واصفغت الوانه

SL text	بالله افغشولوا بصدغ الايوانة مات العدو واصفغت الوانه
Sense of the SL text	Sit the groom in the hall so the envious will suffer

TL text	Sense of the TL text	Compatibility of sense
1-sit him at the front of the hall and the enemy died from jealousy	allow the groom to sit in the hall so the envious will feel bitter	+
2- sit him in the favorite part of the hall. We hope our enemy is dead.	Sit the groom in the hall so our enemies might suffer	+
3- furnish his place in the hall. The foe is outraged even his face color has changed.	Prepare a place for the groom in the hall so our foe will feel envy and will become pale	+
4-please, let him have the main sitting position and let the enemy gets mad.	Allow the groom to sit in the best location of the hall so our enemy will be mad.	+

### Discussion

The meaning of this excerpt focuses on the meaning of taking a very good care of the groom through allowing him to sit down in the best place of the house front hall so his rivals and opponents will feel bitter and turn blue in envy and jealousy. This meaning was realized through the renderings of the four translators. Their translation versions are compatible with the SL intended meaning. Hence, regarded appropriate translations of the original SL text.

#### ٥- والتشلحو مالا والتلبسو مالا وابوها تاجر حلب جياب الحمالة

SL text	والتشلحو مالا والتلبسو مالا وابوها تاجر حلب جياب الحمالة
Sense of the SL text	The girl belongs to a rich family

TL text	Sense of the TL text	Compatibility of sense
1- What she wears and takes off is her and her father is a trader	The girl comes from a rich family since her father is a merchant of Aleppo	+
2- All what she puts on or puts off is her, her father is the merchant of Aleppo.	The girl comes from a rich family since her father is a merchant of Aleppo	+
3- She owns what she wears and what she takes off as her father is the merchant of Aleppo.	The girl has a lot of personal belongings and comes from a rich family	+
4- Everything is under your service since your father is a rich merchant.	The girl is free to act in any way she favors	-

### Discussion

This folksong excerpt designates the meaning of the status of the girl's family, being rich and their daughter in possession of a lot personal belongings mostly delivered by her father who works as a trader bringing goods and merchandise from the city of Aleppo.

With relation to the renderings, it's obvious that translators 1, 2, and 3 have been able to convey the intended meaning properly. Their translation versions comply with the SL original meaning. Therefore, considered appropriate renderings of the SL text.

On the other hand, translator 4 rendering falls short of complying with the intended meaning and hence, deemed inappropriate translation of the SL text.

٦- دنزلي واتدحججي من سطوحك العالية

SL text	دنزلي واتدحججي من سطوحك العالية
Sense of the SL text	Get down from your living place at the roof top of your house

TL text	sense of the TL text	Compatibility of sense
1-get down fast from your high house surface.	get down fast from your place at the house rooftop	+
2-oh girl, climb down quickly from the upstairs.	Get down quickly from the house rooftop	+
3-come downstairs and roll from your high roof.	Get down from your place at the rooftop	+
4-please, bride step down and move forward	Get down and move a head	-

### Discussion

The meaning of this folksong excerpt indicates the concept of asking the bride to get down from her living place at the rooftop of her house in a clear indication of the higher living standard of that girl's family.

Translators 1, 2 and 3 renderings are consistent with the original intended meaning in the sense that they convey the intended meaning properly, hence, are compatible with the intended meaning of the SL text. on the other hand, translators 4 rendering contradicts the original intended meaning. Thus, regarded inappropriate rendering of the SL text

٧- تحبون الله ولا تقولون دخيل الله لا تقولون

SL text	تحبون الله ولا تقولون دخيل الله لا تقولون
Sense of the SL text	Do not convey any bad news about my sweetheart

TL text	Sense of the SL text	Compatibility of sense
1-for god's sake do not tell anyone.	Refrain from telling anyone.	-
2-for god's sake do not tell anyone.	Refrain from telling anyone.	-
3-for the sake of god don't tell anybody.	Refrain from telling anybody.	-
4-if you love god don't say that.	Don't deliver any bad news.	+

## Discussion

This idea of this song excerpt centers around the situation of the lover being very worried and concerned about his sweetheart condition, so he would say "for god's sake do not deliver any news about my sweetheart condition because I can't stand listening to any bad news about her".

Translators' 1, 2, and 3 renderings conveyed a different meaning from that intended by the ST in the sense that the original meaning centers around the notion of refraining from delivering any bad news, while the translation versions convey a different meaning focusing on that of maintaining confidentiality and secrecy. This meaning stands against the targeted meaning and hence deemed inappropriate rendering of the source text.

Conversely, translator 4 rendering corresponds to the original meaning. His rendering corresponds to the intended meaning, and thus represents an appropriate translation of the SL text.

### ٨- فغشتولو لذنون و هلهتولو بخشيش من عند امه كن جانا

SL text	فغشتولو لذنون و هلهتولو بخشيش من عند امه كن جانا
Sense of the SL text	The child (Thanoon) was pampered by his parents as he was the only son in the family.

TL text	Sense of the SL text	Compatibility of sense
1-I set for Thanoon his bed and put the money on it.	Arranging the bed and putting money on it	-
2- I arranged the bed for Thanoon and gave him money.	Arranging the bed for Thanoon and giving him money	-
3- I arranged the bed for Thanoon and took tip from his mother.		+
4- I provided Thanoon with everything and his mother gave us some money.		+

## Discussion

This song excerpt focuses on the circumcision party that was held for the child (Thanoon) who was the only child in the family and hence was pampered and

cuddled by his parents who gave tips for those who have arranged the place for the child in that party.

With relation to translators renderings, translators 1 and 2 were not able to convey the intended meaning properly. Their translation versions contradict the original meaning and hence regarded inappropriate rendering of the SL text.

On the other hand, translators 3 and 4 renderings conform to the source text meaning. Therefore, considered appropriate translations of the SL text.

### **3.2. Findings and conclusions**

- 1- Translating Mosuli folksongs into English is an intricate and complicated task due to the cultural and traditional implications peculiar to the Mosuli dialect
- 2- Translators handling the task of rendering Mosuli folk songs into English should be linguistically and culturally proficient with relation to the relevant languages.
- 3- Novice or incompetent translators such as, the translation department students who were involved in translating the analytical section of this research will find it difficult to handle such translation task properly.

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