

The Importance of Cultural Awareness in English – Arabic Translation

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Abstract

It is widely acknowledged that through translation, it is possible to transcend language barriers and gain a better understanding of the world by conveying ideas from one language to another. The translator, therefore, has to shoulder the burden of this responsibility. The first section looks at the inextricable link between language and culture, hence the need for translators to develop their cultural awareness. The second section deals with the process of translation, which involves cultural decoding and recoding. In this context, the two methods of translating cultural words and notions, namely *transference* and *componential analysis*, are discussed along with several levels on which the process of translation takes place, specifically, *linguistic*, *technical*, *conceptual* and *comprehension* levels. Naturally, when the translator faces unfamiliar items related to the culture of the source text, translation can become a difficult process. The third section focuses on the kinds of cultural problems related to the source text namely: *cultural untranslatability*, *highly specific cultural items*, *the problem of equivalence*, *connotations*, *collocations* and *irony*. The fourth section identifies the novice translator's challenges, in terms of his background knowledge and appropriate choice of strategy. The last section proceeds to highlight some of the levels of cultural awareness a translator needs to possess and the paper concludes with some suggestions for good translation.

Keywords: cultural awareness, collocation, connotation, irony, untranslatability