

Cultural Equivalence in the Translations of Paul Bowles The Case of: *For Bread Alone* (2006)

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Abstract:

The aim of this research is to find out the type of cultural equivalence adopted in the Moroccan novels translated by Paul Bowles. The study took the case of Mouhamed Choukri's autobiography *Al_khubz Al_hafi* (2000) and its English version *For Bread Alone*. Adopting Nida's (1964) model of biblical translation, formal and dynamic equivalence, the study attempted to investigate whether the Moroccan cultural concepts in *Al_khubz Al_hafi* were transferred formally or dynamically. A number of Arabic and Moroccan Arabic sentences and their English equivalents were selected. Then, the type of equivalence was determined and counted. The results of this research revealed that formal- form for form- equivalence was rarely used; however, dynamic -sense for sense- equivalence was significantly employed in transferring the Moroccan cultural concepts into English. Generally, the translator resorted to dynamic equivalence to add, explain, replace or omit source linguistic terms at the expense of cultural concepts; this resulted in a significant cultural loss and misrepresentation of the Moroccan culture. The study concluded that dynamic equivalence as a target culture- oriented type of translation was not effective in the translation of *Al_khubz Al_hafi* since it obscured many source cultural concepts.

Keywords: culture, dynamic equivalence, formal equivalence, translation

1. Introduction

Almost all translation theorists have defined translation as rendering the exact message from source language (L1) into an acceptable form in the second or target language (L2) (Qtd in Davoodi, 2009). Regardless of whether Paul Bowles heard the autobiography *Al_khubz Al_hafi* from Choukri or read it in Moroccan Arabic, “the main concern here is that it is a translation from one language to another and that he managed to produce a translation with a great similarity to the Arabic novel” (Bouziane, 2012, p. 14). Bowles states: “*For Bread Alone* is a manuscript, written in classical Arabic, a language I do not know. The author had to reduce it first to Moroccan Arabic for me. [...] Although exact, the translation is far from literal” (Bowles, 1973/2006, p.5).

Translation of cultural concepts has been much investigated in different language pairs recently (e.g: Ahmed-Sokarno, 2004; LIU Dayan, 2012; Shakernia, 2013; Osadnik, 2014). However, to my knowledge, this topic has not been investigated yet in Choukri’s autobiography *Al_khubz Al_hafi*. The purpose of selecting this Moroccan novel is because it is characterized by a big number of cultural expressions. It also includes a significant number of swearwords and taboos which were among the reasons that led the story to be banned in Morocco until 2000. It is surprising that Choukri’s autobiography, which has been translated into many languages, still has not been tackled yet in terms of translation of cultural equivalence.

2. Aim of the study

The aim of this study is to find out which type of cultural equivalence is used to transfer Moroccan cultural concepts from Arabic into English. More specifically, this study attempts to investigate whether the Moroccan cultural concepts in Mouhamed Choukri’s autobiography *Al_khubz Al_hafi* (2000) are transferred formally or dynamically in Paul Bowles’ *For Bread Alone* (2006). The study also attempts to find out which strategies (formal or dynamic) are more appropriate to achieve an effective cultural equivalence of the Moroccan cultural expressions into English.

4. Dynamic vs Formal Equivalence

According to Nida & Taber (1982), formal equivalence or word for word translation “focuses attention on the message itself, in both form and content” (Qtd in Leonardi, 2002). In this type of translation “one is concerned with such correspondences as poetry to poetry, sentence to sentence, and concept to concept. Viewed from this formal orientation, one is concerned that the message in the target language should match as closely as possible the different elements in the source language ” (1964, p.159).

Unlike formal correspondence, dynamic equivalence is defined as sense to sense translation through which the translator provides the meaning of the original text in such a way that the “Target language terms create the same impact on the target culture readers the same way as the original text does on the source text audience” (Leonardi, 2002). Nida (1964) stressed that “a translation of dynamic equivalence aims at completing naturalness of expression, and tries to relate the receptor to modes of behavior relevant within the context of his own culture” (p.159). Following Nida’s approach, translation of culturally specific elements entails dynamic equivalence as the main strategy adopted by the translator to transfer Moroccan cultural concepts into English.

5. Procedure

The present study is based on a comparative study of Choukri's autobiography *Al_khubz Al_hafi* and its English translation *For Bread Alone* by Paul Bowles. A number of procedures were followed to investigate the type of equivalence adopted in the English autobiography. They are as follows:

First, 26 specific Arabic sentences and their corresponding English equivalents were selected. These sentences include cultural terms (e.g. *kaftan*, *zigdoun*, *taifor*), symbols and beliefs (*khmissa*), swearwords (e.g. *Allah inaalou*), dialects (e.g. Riffan dialect: *Aymanou*), religious terms (e.g. *El hamdoul illah*).

Second, the type of equivalence (formal or dynamic) from Arabic into English was determined. Formal translation is adopted when the translator maintains both the form and content of certain specific terms through transliteration or literal translation (e.g. *اخذ مني السبسي* : *He took the sebsi*). On the contrary, dynamic translation took place when the translator omits or modifies certain specific terms/concepts to make them meaningful for foreign readers (e.g. *اذالك الغزال اجي* : *Hey! Beautiful come over here*).

Third, the frequency of both formal and dynamic strategies in the English version was counted and processed on Excel and then presented in a graph.

Fourth, the appropriateness or *inappropriateness* of both dynamic and formal strategies in the selected sentences was discussed. Then, suggested translations were provided for the concepts that failed to achieve cultural equivalence in the English version.

6. Results

6.1. Type of equivalence used in the English version

Table 1. Type of equivalence used to translate cultural terms in Paul Bowles' *For Bread Alone*

Sentence number	Source Language (Arabic)	Target Language (English)	Type of Equivalence
1	خم او ماش (انظر اخاك) نتاوي تروشا (انه لا بيكي) ايشك تترود (و انت تبكي) (ص.5)	Look at your little brother, see how he is, why can't you be like him? (p.9)	Dynamic
2	المجاعة في الريف. القحط والحرب (ص. 5)	That was at the time of the great exodus from the Rif. There had been no rain and as a result there	Dynamic

		was nothing to eat. (p.9)	
3	اسكت، ستاكل قلب امك يا ابن الزنى (ص.6)	Shut up! If you are hungry, eat your mother's heart. (p.10)	Dynamic
4	في الريف رايتهم يذبحون كبشا. وضعوا طاسا تحت عنق الكبش الفائر بالدم. امتلأ الطاس واعطوه لأمي المريضة (ص.7)	In the Rif I had watched them kill the sheep. They put a bowl under its throat to catch the blood. When the bowl was full they gave it to my mother, who was sick. (p.11)	Formal
5	لماذا يموت الانسان؟ لان الله يريد ذلك- هكذا اجابتنى امي. اين يذهب من يموت؟ الى الجنة او النار و نحن؟ الى الجنة ان شاء الله. (ص.13)	Removed	None
6	تزينت و سوكت فمها وكحلت عينيها (ص.23)	I found her making up her face. (p.25)	Dynamic
7	تقولا انها تكذب (ص.23)	Pfou ! She tells lies. (p.26)	Dynamic
8	الله ينعلك (ص.20) يلعن دينهم.(ص210)	Allah inaalik! (p.23) Inaal dinhoum! (p. 193)	Formal
9	سمعت ان من يرى جنيا و يغرز سكينه في الارض يبقى الجني محبوسا في مكانه.(ص.23)	I know if you see djinn, you must pierce the earth with a steel blade where you stand. (p.39)	Dynamic
10	Eres fuerte eh! فويرتي ايريس (ص.48)	¿Eres fuerte, eh? (p.48)	Formal

11	الرجل لا ينبغي له ان يغسل الثياب الداخلية لرجل مثله. (ص 210) نعم. عيب ان يغسل الرجل ثياب رجل مثله عندنا في المغرب. (ص. 58-59)	A man doesn't wash another man's underwear. Yes, that's our custom in Morocco. (p.58)	Dynamic
12	فتيات قبيلة بني عروس مشهورات بجمالهن..... لابسين القفطان و الزكدون و الحزام الجبلي الشبية بعجلة سيارة. (ص. 72)	Removed	None
13	بسم الله الرحمان الرحيم. اعود بالله من اولاد هذا الزمان. (ص. 74)	<i>Bismillah rahman er rahim!</i> Preserve me from the young ones of today! (p.71)	Formal
14	ابي. انه كلب (ص. 76).	my father...he is a pig. (p.72)	Dynamic
15	اعطاها سلسلة ذهبية يتدلى منها صليب. فحصت الصليب و قالت هذا ساخلعه لارميه او ادويه عند الصائغ لاجعل منه خميسة (ص. 77)	Removed	None
16	رايت هناك كشكا لبيع البصارة. بسيطة واحدة واشرب فنجان ببصرة (ص. 102)	Nearby was a stand that sold bean soup. Only one peseta and I could have a bowl. (p.92)	Dynamic
17	احيانا تسمع تجشئات الذين انتهوا من الاكل تعقبها (الحمد الله). (ص. 110)	From time to time one of those who has finished eating emits a loud belch, followed by a drawn- out exclamation: <i>El hamdoul illah!</i> (p.100)	Formal
18	فتلت ثلاث وقيدات و ادنيتها من الشاهدة الرخامية. استطعت ان افهم من الارقام ان الميت (لم اعرف ارجل ام امرأة) لقد	..took three wax matches and twisted them together to make a torch. Then I held them up to	

	عاش 51 عاما. هناك ايضا نجمة سداسية. نجمة يهودية على قبر مسلم. يا للغرابة ! (ص. 111)	inspect the writing on the marble plaque. I saw from the numbers there that the person had lived for fifty one years. The numbers were all I could read. (p.101)	Dynamic
19	كتضرب ياك العايل كتتفر (.ص.113) خلي عليك العايل . من بعد من بعد. اتقول عمرك ما شفت العاويل (ص. 114.)	What are you so nervous about? Afraid of me? Leave him alone! Not now! Later, later! (p.103)	Dynamic
20	اجي اذاك الغزال (ص. 115)	Hey! Beautiful come over here...	Dynamic
21	انت هل احمق. ليس حسننا غسل الثياب في الليل. انه قال سيء. (ص. 117)	Are you crazy, washing your clothes at night? (p.105)	Dynamic
22	جسرت الفلوس الاخير في لعبة العيطة. (ص. 119)	I had just lost my last centime playing <i>aaita</i>	Formal
23	اخذ مني السبسي الذي عمرته له. (ص. 121) على الطيفور زجاجة نبيذ وسبسي وعلبة كيف (ص. 163)	He took the <i>sebsi</i> I had filled for him. (p.111) A half bottle of wine sate on the <i>taifor</i> , and beside it the <i>sebsi</i> and the box of <i>kif</i> . (p.149)	Formal

24	صعدت امرأة جبليية فوق صندوق خشبي و اخذت تزغرد. (ص. 123)	A Djibliya woman in straw hat climbed up onto a wooden crate and began to scream: <i>Youyouyouyouyouyouyouyou.</i> (p.112)	Dynamic
25	ساعدني جندي فرنسي على انزال القفة و قال. هيا ارنا ما عندك. (ص. 206)	Allez ! <i>laisse voir ce que tu as la dedans.</i> (p.190)	Dynamic
26	وجدنا هناك بعض حفظة القران يقراون سورا على بعض القبور. (ص. 232)	We found few <i>tolba</i> chanting. (p.212)	Dynamic

6.2. The frequency of formal and dynamic equivalence

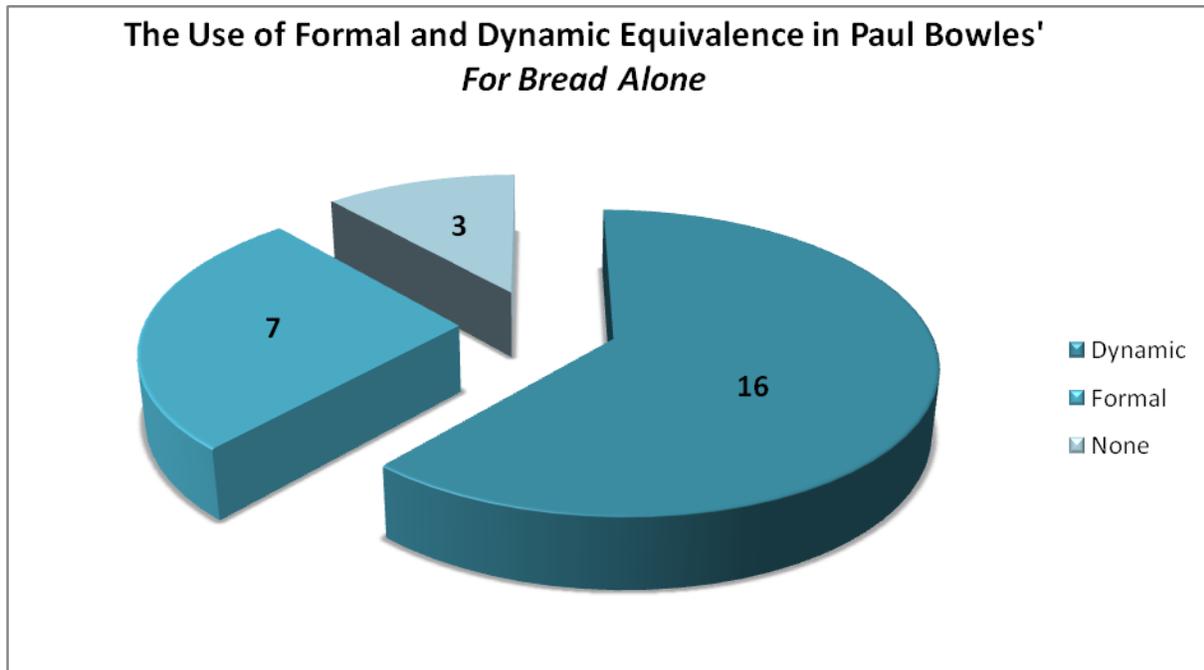


Figure 1. The frequency of formal and dynamic equivalence in Paul Bowles' *For Bread Alone*

16 Moroccan cultural concepts were dynamically transferred in Paul Bowles' translation *For Bread Alone*. 7 cultural expressions were formally translated into English. Only 3 cultural expressions were not treated dynamically or formally because they were removed.

7. Discussion

7.1. Dynamic equivalence and cultural loss

7.1.1. Omission

Although dynamic strategy was highly used in Paul Bowles' novel *For Bread Alone*, it failed to achieve cultural equivalence because the translator adopted excessive inappropriate omissions: For example, in sentence 1 in the table above, there is a translation within the Arabic text from Riffian (or Tarifit, a dialect spoken in some Northern regions of Morocco) to Arabic: "خم او ماش (انظر اخاك)". The translator adopted a dynamic translation through omitting the Moroccan Riffian dialect; he simply translated the Arabic expressions into English "Look at your little brother, see how he is, why can't you be like him?". The existence of Riffian in the source novel is significant since it shows the linguistic and cultural diversity that exists in Morocco. The English readers should know about the existence of Riffian (dialect and culture) in the north of Morocco through the use of transliteration (transcription) such as in the following suggestion: "khem oumash: Look at your brother".

Another instance of omission exists in sentence 2 "المجاعة في الريف . القحط والحرب" where the translation obscured an important element in the Moroccan history, which is the Riff war as well as the Spanish French war and their effects. Instead, the translator preferred to focus on the factors that contributed to the exodus such as draught and famine: "That was at the time of the great exodus from the Rif. There had been no rain and as a result there was nothing to eat". The word "war" should be preserved in the English translation as follows: "There was famine in the Rif: Drought and war".

A further example of omission is in sentence 6: "و سوكت فمها وكحلت عينيها تزينت", "I found her making up her face". The translator omitted the names of two main natural beauty products that Moroccan women used to use to beautify their teeth (*siwak*) and their eyes (*kuhl*); they used to use these products especially after coming from the public steam bath (*hammam*). The suggested translation is: "She beautified herself: She purified her mouth with siwak and used kuhl in her eyes".

Sentence 21 also indicates another cultural loss in the English version:

"هل انت احمق؟ ليس حسنا غسل الثياب في الليل. انه قال سيء."

"Are you crazy, washing your clothes at night?"

The Arabic version explains that washing clothes at night is not good since it is a bad omen. The translator did not depict this superstitious concept; instead he provided an ordinary question that is free from any "superstitious beliefs". The English readers should know about these differences of beliefs in the rendered version. The suggested translation is: "Are you crazy? Washing clothes at night is not good, it is a bad omen".

Other significant omissions were made by the translator (in sentences 5, 12, 15, 18), but they were not replaced by any other type of equivalence in the English version. In sentences 5: the narrator was asking his mom about death and where people go after death. The translator probably avoided such religiously complicated topic by opting for removing this part though it is translatable as follows:

"لماذا يموت الانسان؟ - لان الله يريد ذلك. هكذا اجابتنى امي."

“Why do people die? – because Allah wants that. This is how my mom answered me. ”

Where do dead people go? – to heaven or hell?

اين يذهب من يموت؟ – الى الجنة او النار؟

“And what about us? to heaven inshaallah”

و نحن؟ -- الى الجنة ان شاء الله

Another instance in sentence 12 “لابسين القفطان و الزكدون و الحزام الجبلي الشبيه بعجلة سيارة .” includes important cultural terms that were removed by the translator. The sentence describes the traditional garments of Djibbli women (from Riff). These elements should be preserved in the English version as follows: “They are wearing kaftan, zigdown and the Djibbli belt”. The translator should also add a footnote for more explanation or definition of the transliterated terms.

Sentence 15 is a significant example of another type of omission; the Arabic sentence includes important cultural symbols indicated in the Arabic sentence:

“ هذا ساخلعه لارميه او ادوبه عند الصانغ لاجعل منه خميسة فحصت الصليب و قالت ”...

The sentence is, yet, removed from the English version probably because the Christian readers might not appreciate the fact that the cross, as a sacred symbol of Christianity, was implicitly devalued by a Muslim woman in the story when she said she would throw the cross away or take it to the jeweler to make of it a *khmissa* (the hand), a superstitious symbol of protection from the evil eye. The above Arabic sentence stresses large cultural and religious differences between the Moroccan and the English people; these differences should be preserved in the English version.

7. 1.2. Alteration

Another reason why dynamic translation failed to achieve a faithful cultural equivalence in the English version is that the translator tended to use alterations. He modified the specific cultural concepts and figurative terms which led to cultural loss and misrepresentation of the Moroccan culture. This can be noticed in sentences 3, 7, 9, 14, 20 in the table above. In sentence 3 for instance, the translator failed to translate the meaning of the figurative expression ستاكل قلب امك ، which means: “you will cause deep sorrow to your mom”. He probably did not understand it in Arabic; he thus, opted for changing the sentence into a conditional where he maintained a literal translation of the Arabic idiomatic expression: “Shut up, If you are hungry, eat your mother’s heart”. This changed the meaning of the Arabic text in which the father ordered his son to stop crying so as not to increase his mom’s sorrow: “اسكت، ستاكل قلب امك يا ابن الزنى ”; this resulted in an awkward translation. Besides, the translator omitted the swear word that the father used in the original text *ابن الزنى bastard!*. The Arabic text depicts clearly the rude treatment of the father towards his son; a great deal of suffering of the narrator comes from the mistreatment of his father towards him and his mother; this rude treatment is absent in the English version; the translator avoided such expression probably to avoid shocking the target readers. Still, this contradicts other scenes in which he maintained shocking rudeness and sexual abusiveness. In short, to achieve a meaningful translation, the above sentence should be translated as follows: “Shut up! You will increase your mom’s sorrow, bastard!”

Another significant example of alteration is depicted in sentence 7: “تفو! ” انها تكذب: 7, the translator modified the interjection “تفو!” into “Pfou!” probably because he is not familiar with its Arabic meaning; the expression refers to “spitting on someone or something”. Sometimes people use the expression “تفو!” just to show that they are angry with someone or something. To preserve this expression, it should be transliterated: “Tfou!” then explained in a glossary.

A further instance of alteration is indicated in sentence 9: من يرى جنبا و يغرز سكيننا في الارض يبقى الجني ”. It was translated as: “if you see djinn, you must pierce the earth with a steel blade

where you stand". The expression " يبقى الجني محبوسا في مكانه ", which means imprisoning or tying the *djinn*, is obscured in the English version. The English readers might not understand the concept behind piercing the knife on earth. The concept must be maintained as follows: "if you see *djinn*, you must pierce the earth with a knife; this will tie them and prevent them from harming you".

Another alteration instance can be noticed in sentence 14: " ابي... انه كلب " which was translated into: "My father... is a pig". The word " كلب " (dog) is altered into "pig" probably because the latter is more insulting and degrading in the English culture than the word "dog". Similarly, the example in sentence 20: " احي اذاك الغزال " was modified into "Hey! Beautiful come over here". The word " الغزال " (gazelle) was translated into "Beautiful". Though the word "Beautiful" is more significant in the English version, the concept of beauty in the Arabic culture must be preserved through the transliteration: "Al-gazal".

7.2. Formal equivalence and faithfulness

Formal equivalence was less frequent than dynamic equivalence in Paul Bowles' novel *For Bread Alone*. It was used through two types of sub-techniques: literal translation which is a word-for-word translation and transliteration which is a transcription of the cultural terms in Latin letters. Formal translation has some limitations such as "serious implications in the TT since the translation will not be easily understood by the target audience (Qtd in Leonardi, 2000). Also, "formal correspondence distorts the grammatical and stylistic patterns of the receptor language, and hence distorts the message" (Qtd in Leonardi, 2000).

7.2.1 Literal translation

Only one successful case of literal translation can be noticed in sentence 4:

"في الريف رايتهم يذبحون كبشا. وضعوا طاسا تحت عنق الكباش الفائر بالدم. امتلأ الطاس واعطوه لأمي المريضة"

Literal translation managed to preserve the Moroccan custom which is offering blood to a newly delivered mother or to people who are said to be haunted by *djinn*: "In the Rif I had watched them kill the sheep. They put a bowl under its throat to catch the blood. When the bowl was full they gave it to my mother, who was sick". Though literal translation was useful in this example, it is not efficient in translating idiomatic expressions or figurative speech such as pun, metonymy and metaphor. Thus, this strategy is not advisable in the translation of cultural specific terms.

7.2.2 Transliteration

Transliteration as a sub-strategy of formal equivalence has also its shortcomings; it does not respect any particular system; its purpose is to offer a rough guide to pronunciation of the Arabic cultural terms. This is useful for the English readers, but it only offers a partial solution, as it does not maintain the implied meanings of the Moroccan cultural concepts. This is clearly depicted in sentence 8: " يلعن دينهم " which was transliterated into: "Inaal dinhoum!". The swearword in the English version is meaningless since it does not have the same impact as in the Moroccan version. A similar example can be seen in sentence 13:

"بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم. اعود بلله من اولاد هذا الزمان"

"Bismillah rahman er rahim! Preserve me from the young ones of today!"

The transcription "Bismillah rahman er rahim!" provided only a phonetic pronunciation of the Arabic expression but not its cultural and religious meaning. The expression is normally used in different contexts including this context when a person gets abruptly frightened by something or

someone such as the case of this example. In short, transliteration would be more effective in transferring cultural concepts if the meaning of the transliterated terms was provided in a footnote or a glossary.

8. Conclusion

Dynamic equivalence was highly used to transfer Moroccan cultural concepts/terms into English in Paul Bowles' *For Bread Alone*. This target text oriented strategy was effective in Nida's biblical translation; however, it proved to be inappropriate in literary translation, especially in cultural transfer. Dynamic equivalence took place when the translator omitted or altered elements in the English version. These omissions and alterations frequently affected the original message of the Moroccan cultural expressions. Formal equivalence was also less effective in transferring Moroccan cultural concepts into English because it was mainly based on literal translation and on transliteration. The latter provided a formal faithfulness in terms of phonetic pronunciation of Moroccan cultural expressions but not in terms of meaning. In order to achieve an adequate cultural equivalence, transliteration should be accompanied by a footnote or a glossary that provides an explanation or definition of the cultural terms transliterated.

Another strategy should be considered in the translation of cultural concepts is: foreignization introduced by Venuti (1995). It refers to maintaining the foreign cultural elements in the target version; that is to say, in this case, preserving the Moroccan cultural terms in the English version. The purpose here is to make the cultural items more "visible" so as to "resist" and change the norms imposed by the Anglo-American cultures. This contradicts Nida's dynamic strategy in which the translator has to rewrite, alter or adjust any foreign elements to fit the cultural norms of the (Anglo-American) readers. Dynamic strategy is not an innocent translation; it leads to "dominance" of the target cultures and "marginality" of source cultures. Dynamic strategy reduces the cultural differences in translation to become "imprinted by the target-language culture, assimilated to its positions of intelligibility, its canons and taboos, its codes and ideologies" (Venuti, 1995, p. 31).

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