

## Foreword

### Translators, *Achtung!*

As Lawrence Venuti says, a translator remains invisible until he makes a mistake—or, I would add, until he does something conspicuously ‘quirky.’ Indeed, the blunders and quirks of translators are too numerous to be overlooked. Thanks also to the notorious Italian expression, *traduttore, traditore*, the ‘translator’ has somehow become a ‘traitor’ in the eyes of the public and learned circles. As such, perhaps it is the malpractice of translators that usually tends to generate endless responses, denunciations, rebuttals, refutations, corrections, or sometimes just a disgusted shrug of resignation. However, whatever acts of ‘treason’ a translator commits, they should not always be ascribed to purely subjective reasons. Lacunas are an inevitable, albeit unfortunate, feature of all intercultural exchange.

The majority of papers in this volume testify as much. In them one hears echoes of frustration or disenchantment as well as a sincere effort to improve translational praxis. Our impressive roster of contributors boasts researchers from Spain and Morocco to Indonesia and Malaysia; our topics are correspondingly as varied as can be imagined.

Aware of the dearth of research on English-Arabic subtitling, three of our contributors offer insights to redress this lacuna. That they do so at this critical juncture is a welcome sign of a growing interest among Arab researchers in this increasingly important field. Amer Al-Adwan examines the use of various euphemisation strategies in subtitling the tenth season of *Friends*, a popular American sitcom, into Arabic. He explains how/why the subtitler had to avoid translating semantically transparent terms in order to avoid offending the target Arab viewers. Adel Alharthi argues that while the Arab subtitler of *Seinfeld*, another American sitcom, managed to transfer language-based satire, using some interventional techniques, culture-based satire was a problematic issue, forcing the subtitler to retain all cultural references in the target text without any modifications, thus resulting in humorless subtitles. In order to identify the different types of pragmatic and semantic errors that occur in the course of the subtitling process, Fatma Ben Slaima undertakes a pragma-linguistic analysis of how the illocutionary speech acts in the American film *Kingdom of Heaven* were subtitled in Arabic.

Given their notorious polysemy, puns are the perennial nuisance that faces translators. But Yousef Bader tackles the issue head on by offering a linguistic and cultural analysis of some 17

examples of homographic, homonymic, and onomastic wordplay in recent journalistic discourse in Jordan. How accurately a translator can render the meaning of metaphors in the source language and what strategies s/he uses is an issue raised by Mohammad Alshehab who compares the translation of metaphors in two English versions of the Holy Quran. In a case study about translating conceptual metaphors in economics texts in which cultural aspects of the SL (English) come into contact with the TL (Indonesian) and culture, Karnedi concludes that the translators preferred to render the SL metaphors as metaphors into TL with a similar source domain or image, as opposed to the second procedure in which the source domain or image in the SL was replaced with a standard source domain or image in TL.

In a joint paper, Pamela Faber and Nassima Kerras study common Arabic environmental terms that are originally translations from French or English. Because there are different regional varieties of Arabic, and because Arab countries are characterized by diglossia, these two conditions can create numerous challenges for the translator, thus resulting in changes in the meaning of texts and terms. In order to avoid cross-cultural communication breakdown (or, socio-pragmatic failure), Abdali al-Saidi and Sabriah Rashid demonstrate why translators should strive to understand the speaker's intention, the effect a speaker's utterance has on the hearer, the socio-cultural signs the speaker implies in using language in a certain way and the nature of the speaker-hearer relationship. By examining Paul Bowls' translation of Mouhamed Choukri's autobiography *For Bread Alone*, Karima Bouziane argues that the dynamic equivalence approach Bowls followed resulted in a significant cultural loss and misrepresentation of Moroccan culture.

By its own nature, literary discourse is idiosyncratic and complex. Thus, simple translation may not do justice to the texts translated. This entails, according to Elmouloudi Aziz, that other translation strategies be employed (explication, commentary, annotation) and that the literary translator's task must of necessity be interdisciplinary, as his/her insights, grafted on the body of the original text, are derived from various fields. Despite the abundance of Arabic translations of Victorian and classic crime novels, crime fiction failed to engage Arab writers and readers, according to Tahani Alghureiby. The reasons are cultural, political, social, educational, and philosophical. She argues that the flourishing translation of crime fiction from the 1890s through the 1960s in Egypt parallels the construction of the Egyptian nation. This clearly demonstrates how the prevailing political atmosphere sometimes dictates what is and what is not to be translated.

It is all too natural, though—no translation is ideology-free, especially when the translated text holds an extremely sensitive locus in the Arab-West nexus. In a paper on ideology and Quranic translations into English, Abdunasir Sideeg demonstrates that cultural and linguistic backgrounds, Sufi doctrines, and feminist agenda combine to produce an extremely radical reading of the Holy Quran in English with regard to 'gender-neutral' issues. Rachid Agliz, too,

examines the difficulties and challenges that Arab translators face when they deal with religious texts.

No wonder, then, that the greatest epidemic that continues to plague translation is the translator him/herself. This undeniable fact is reason enough to incite jealous translation theorists and practitioners to come to the aid of the lost, desperate, and needy. Asim Ismail Ilyas offers a critical study of three English-Arabic internet glossaries and provides an alternative rendering of those mistranslated items. With a view to helping frustrated learners and translation trainees, Mohamed-Habib Kahlaoui provides a useful road map regarding the modal resources in Standard Arabic and how they function in discourse, while Jamal Mohamed, who examines three modern Arabic dictionaries, details the productivity of the Arabic derivational suffix *-iyya* and its implications for translating foreign words (especially new concepts) and modernizing vocabulary in modern Standard Arabic.

Finally, by analyzing academic regulations, newspaper advertisements, and official circulars in both Arabic and English in Palestinian institutions Omar Najjar and Samah Shahin show that while cultural differences in Arabic and English adversely affect how gender issues are addressed, Palestinian translators tend to resist the gender sensitivity that restricts their translation. Sabah Salman Sabbah investigates the negative effects of Arabic language interference on learning English, effects that cause Arab learners of English to make mistakes in producing the target language. Mustafa Ahmed observes that two current educational terms in English have been inaccurately translated into Arabic. As a corrective measure, he proposes the topic-and-comment pattern in English to translate these terms.

It is hoped that this special issue on translation by AWEJ will make a valuable contribution to the field of translation studies. Finally, I would like to extend my warmest thanks to Dr. Khairi Al-Zubaidi, editor of AWEJ, who gave me the honor to be guest editor of this volume. My gratitude also goes to our contributors and reviewers who have made this issue possible.

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