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KNOWLEDGE MANIPULATION THROUGH TRANSLATION BETWEEN ARABIC AND ENGLISH

Abstract: Translation involves the process of transferring texts to target audiences who possess an established system of representation (master discourse) that has its own set of norms for producing and consuming knowledge concerning the self, others, objects, and events. Influenced by its own culture, this master discourse governs matters related to identity, similarities, and differences between the source and target texts and associated cultures. While it is theoretically assumed that intercultural encounters through translation should celebrate diversity and differences, practices indicate otherwise: mon-isms have dominated over intended multi-isms. Focusing primarily on the translation of texts from Arabic into English, this article explores how the master discourse regulates translation, shaping the way knowledge is manipulated, and influencing the translation process, its product, and ultimately its reception.

Key words: knowledge manipulation, master discourse, translation, intercultural encounters, stereotypes

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INTRODUCTION

Simply put, translation does not exist. It becomes. This becoming refers to information (source texts) received by users (translators), who in turn produce other texts (target texts). In theory, both source and target texts are assumed to be similar. However, this is not always the case. Translation is a challenging medium of intercultural encounters because it relates to how humans generate meanings, including misrepresentations of others. Gee aptly argues:

> In fact, we [humans] are so good at finding meaning that we very often run off too quickly with interpretations of what other people mean that are based on our own social and cultural worlds, not theirs. Too often we are wrong in ways that are hurtful. (2004: xi)

Particularly since the 1980s, issues of culture modeling have been brought to the fore in translation studies. This shift has generated translation questions that cannot be effectively examined within the context of the conventionalised concepts of equivalence or accuracy. Instead of primarily focusing on translatability or untranslatability, translation studies has shifted its focus to the difficult issues of culture, politics, and economics (Venuti, 1998).

The examination of translation as an ideological site of power relationships, formation of identities, and images of the self and other, presupposes manipulation. In his analysis of translation practices of Western European and American cultures, Venuti (1995) labels such hegemonic considerations as *invisibility* and *foreignization.* Kuhiwczak (1990) calls it *appropriation* and Carbonell (1996) names it *subversion*. Kuhiwczak discusses the appropriated translation of central European literature into English, and Carbonell examines the ways mainstream European languages subverted Arabic texts through translation.

In general terms, manipulation means playing with the truth conditions of information for particular purposes. Citing Montgomery (1992), Sanatifar (2013: 98) refers to the example of manipulation in a 'nukespeak' example (Table 1):

Table 1

Original text	Manipulated text
Large nuclear bomb of immense destructive power	Strategic nuclear weapon
A small nuclear weapon of immense destructive power	Tactical nuclear weapon
Neutron bomb (destroys people, not property)	Enhanced radiation weapon
Killing the civilian population	Demographic targeting

The example shows how the manipulated texts alter the knowledge generated by the original texts. The purpose is to pacify receivers by camouflaging the actual/real meanings of the original texts, namely that nuclear weapons are dangerous.

In translation, manipulation occurs mostly because the translator, "striving to produce a text acceptable for the target community, has to manipulate between the various constraints under the influence of the political and literary power structures in a given society" (Kramina, 2004: 37). In this context, translation is inherently a cultural endeavor, as emphasized by Lefevere (1998). It is based on a specific culture (master discourse) that exists before the actual act of translation. Culture A perceives Culture B in specific ways, and this perception influences how Culture A translates from Culture B and vice versa. In simpler terms, translation entails the transfer of texts from one culture and its language (*culguage* A) into another (*culguage* B), where the term *culguage*, a blend of culture and language, highlights the intrinsic connection between the two.

Those who receive translations have established systems for producing and consuming both native and imported texts (knowledge). Essentially, a master discourse that defines concepts of identity and difference significantly shapes the translation process, including the product and its reception (Faiq, 2005; 2019; Said, 1995). In this case, translated texts are also received through the prism of the master discourse of the translating culture, because translation "is not an innocent, transparent activity but is highly charged with signification at every stage; it rarely, if ever, involves a relationship of equality between texts, authors or systems" (Bassnett & Trivedi, 1999: 2).

Manipulation of knowledge in the cultural encounters between the West and the Arab World is not a new phenomenon, but it has become rather poignant and nasty. Today, the reporting by 24/7 news channels of the recent flood (tsunami for some) of refugees from Syria, Iraq, or North Africa, reflects the headaches the Arabs cause the West. However, the image of this headache-causing group emanates from an established system of representation (images), transmission (discursive strategies), and transculturation (circulation and consumption of images); in other words, a master discourse. Drawing mostly on translational practices of textual imports from Arabic into English, this article explores how a master discourse (a normative system of representation) has conditioned the transfer of knowledge from Arabic and ultimately manipulated translation as process, product, and reception.

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Translation is a complex process that inherently involves culture and language. It binds the two into an intricate and multifaceted cultural act. In this context, culture is perceived in two distinct forms: macro and micro. Macro culture (which can also be referred

to as mental culture) encompasses the essential knowledge that individuals require to navigate their social environment individually and as groups. Macro culture includes the key elements of history, religion, values, social structures, and language.

Religion, history, values, and social organization are interrelated and mutually influence each other, and are all mediated through language. Through its language and other forms of communication, culture represents shared and learned behaviors passed down through generations, serving the purposes of group preservation, growth, and the distinction of the group from others. Macro culture is the prime motivator for representations and misrepresentations, including stereotypes, through translation.

Although language is considered a part of culture, it is just one facet of a larger whole. It and culture represent the complete entity. They are so intertwined that it is impossible to separate one from the other, as emphasized by Bassnett (1998). In its most basic form, language is the combination of grammar rules and a monolingual dictionary. However, the true significance of language lies in how members of its culture use it to reflect reality, identity, self, and other.

The second type of culture, micro-culture (often referred to as material culture), pertains to material aspects like food, clothing, customs, marriage and divorce rituals, prayers, modes of transportation, housing, flora, fauna, and more. These elements typically pose fewer challenges in translation since, for instance, fish remains fish, with differences lying in how it is defined and prepared as food. Aspects of micro-culture can often be explained in footnotes. Unfortunately, when celebrating cultural diversity, media outlets and governmental and non-governmental entities often concentrate on micro-cultural aspects like dance traditions, cuisines, and clothing, while neglecting the central role of macro culture in intercultural interactions. Nevertheless, elements of micro-culture can serve as symbols reflecting macro cultures, evoking underlying perceptions derived from the master discourse, such as the symbolism of the turban, beard, veil, and camel as images standing for Arabs.

The Arabs as well as Islam are represented in ways that transcend simple narratives of different locations, cultures, and societies. More significantly, these ways are mostly images projected by Western cultures and stem from some old and new fears and desires. These images are often camouflaged knowledge that claims to be objective. The Western World has used mostly monolingual lenses to represent the Arab world and Islam. In this context, Dallal rightly comments:

> One of the ironies about multiculturalism is how parochial it is. Despite ever-increasing globalism, multiculturalism remains largely monolingual and limited to American culture: consider the absence of interest in Arabic literature and culture in

Western Europe and the United States, despite the enormous and persistent attention paid to the Arab world and to Islam. (1998: 8)

Given the fundamental premise that translation deals with the dynamics of knowledge production within one culture and the subsequent interpretation and relocation of this knowledge within another culture, it becomes evident that the perception of the Arab and Islamic worlds has historically been shaped by *topos* (singular: *topoi*). These *topos* represent primary stereotypes that serve as reservoirs of ideas and core images, firmly embedded in the collective memory of the translating culture. These *topos* form the source from which many representations and translations derive their distinctive discursive features (see Fairclough, 1995; Karim, 1997; Lefevere, 1990; Said, 1997).

Here translation becomes "a significant site for raising questions of representation, power, and historicity. The context is one of the contested stories attempting to account for, to recount, the asymmetry and inequality of relations between peoples, races, languages" (Niranjana, 1992:1). As such, translation underscores the profound influence of its master discourse in shaping and perpetuating narratives, stereotypes, and power dynamics in intercultural exchanges, particularly in the portrayal of the Arab and Islamic worlds in English.

Clark, for example, discusses an instance of approaching a British publisher proposing to translate contemporary Arabic literature into English:

I wanted [...] to translate a volume of contemporary Syrian literature. I [...] thought the work of 'Abd al-Salam al-'Ujaili was very good and well worth putting into English. 'Ujaili is a doctor in his seventies who has written poetry, criticism, novels, and short stories. In particular, his short stories are outstanding. Many are located in the Euphrates Valley and depict the tensions of individuals coping with politicisation and the omnipotent state. I proposed to my British publisher a volume of 'Ujaili's short stories. The editor said, "There are three things wrong with the idea. He's male. He's old and he writes short stories. Can you find a young female novelist?" Well, I looked into women's literature and did translate a novel by a woman writer even though she was and is in her eighties. (1997: 109)

This account demonstrates that translating from Arabic into English is often perceived as an intriguing journey that heavily relies on adapting the source culture, making it a distinct product shaped by a particular master discourse of translation. For instance, *The Arabian Nights*, a title favored for its exotic connotations over the original *alf Layla wa Layla* (*A Thousand and One Nights*), is better known in Western culture than in the Arab world (cf. Said, 1993).

The master discourse of translation also regulates the quantity of texts translated from a particular culture. In the case of translation from Arabic, statistics listed in Venuti (1995: 14) show global translations for the years 1982, 1983, and 1984, respectively. For translations from Arabic, the statistics were 298, 322, and 536 for the three respective years. These numbers look insignificant when considered against those of translations from Spanish (715, 847, and 839) Hungarian (703, 665, and 679), or even classical Greek and Latin (839, 1116, and 1035) for the three years discussed by Venuti (1995). The differences between the numbers for Arabic and the other languages are self-explanatory.

Similarly, Trentacosti & Nicholls (2017: 7) provide interesting statistics on literary translation from Arabic for the period 2000 to 2015 (16 years) in the United Kingdom (UK) and Ireland (this extensive survey was carried out by Literature Across Frontiers (LAF); see Table 2).

Table 2

2000	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	Total
12	4	5	6	7	10	5	9	16	31	10	11	13	7	6	10	158

Computing these numbers, the average comes to around 9.8 literary translations per annum in both the UK and Ireland. It is worth pointing out here that translations from Latin, for example, for the same period also totalled 158; the same number of translations from Arabic – a contemporary and living language and culture.

The minuscule volume of translation from Arabic aside, the almost exclusive focus on authors like Mahfouz and Saadawi points to the influence of a master discourse on translation from Arabic (Büchler & Guthrie, 2011). Overall, Arabic literary works are typically selected for translation not primarily for their innovative or socio-political perspectives, but because they align with the master discourse of depicting and portraying Arab culture in English. When a writer like Abdelrahman Munif[1], whose writings critique the socio-political realities of the Arab world, is translated into English, the reception is noticeably distinct but somewhat anticipated. In the case of Munif's outstanding novel *mudun almilH* rendered into English as *Cities of Salt*, John Updike (1988: 117) observes, "despite his higher studies in Europe, [Munif] seems to be insufficiently Westernized to produce a narrative that feels much like what we can call a novel."

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[1] He completed his doctoral studies in oil economics at the University of Belgrade (1958-1961).

Although Arabic literature was chosen for the Nobel Prize in literature (awarded to Naguib Mahfouz in 1988) and although the Arab world is accorded plenty of attention, at times almost hysterical, literary translation from Arabic is still controlled by a familiar discourse whereby,

> […] stereotyping, strategies of signification and power: the network in which a culture is fashioned does appear as a texture of signs linked by endless connotations and denotations, a meaning system of inextricable complexity that is reflected, developed and recorded in the multifarious act of writing. (Carbonell 1996: 81)

Examining the discursive choices adopted by the Arab writer, Hanan al-Shaykh, in her novel *misku alghazaal* (lit. scent of a gazelle) translated into English as *Women of Sand and Myrrh*, Dallal aptly comments:

> That *Women of Sand and Myrrh* was written specifically for English-speaking audiences is clear in the opening chapter. References specific to Western culture which would be unfamiliar to Arabs go unexplained, whereas references to customs or practices specific to Arab contexts are consistently accompanied by explanations. Suha explains why "the [imported] soft toys and dolls had all been destroyed" by the authorities: "everyone that was meant to be a human being or animal or bird [was confiscated] since it was not permissible to produce distortions of God's creatures". This explanation of a particular interpretation of Islam (or outright fabrication, as most Arab Muslims would believe) used by the Gulf regimes would need no explanation for Arab audiences. However, the narrators' references to "Barbie dolls and Snoopies and Woodstocks" would not be recognized by most in the Arab world, and yet are left without explanation. (1998: 8)

This shows that some Arab authors write for translation. They mold their Arabic texts and tailor their language to fit the requirements of the master discourse of English, in this case. Discussing the case of Arab authors who write in Arabic with an eye on their texts rendered into French, Jacquemond (2004) argues that such writings are taken by French critics as evidence that the orientalist stereotypes and clichés used to represent/translate Arabs and Islam were and still are true and that such texts by Arab authors

> […] are all the better received since they confirm at the same time the otherness of the other culture (backward, authoritarian …), and the representation French culture bestows on itself (modern, democratic ...) – confirmation all the more gratifying since it stems from the other. (Jacquemond, 2004: 123)

Another case in point is Nawal al-Saadawi, the most widely translated Arab writer after Naguib Mahfouz. Her renown in the West is not primarily a result of her role as an

author who has critiqued social norms, particularly those concerning women's issues in the Arab world. Her fame largely springs from her narratives about female circumcision (clitoridectomy), a topic in high demand in Western discourse about the Arab world. Consequently, Saadawi has found herself often adapting her writing to accommodate the influences and demands of the Western literary market (Dallal, 1998).

Amireh (1996) indicates that Nawal Saadawi is "acclaimed not so much because she champions women's rights but because she tells the Western readers what they want to hear. In this view, the West welcomes her feminist critique of Arab culture because it confirms the existing stereotypes of Arabs and Muslims as backward, misogynist, and violently oppressive" (para. 6). But even this favourite Arab author of the West has not escaped the manipulatory tactics of the master discourse of translation. Discussing the translation of Saadawi's *al-wajh al-aari lil-mar'a al-arabiyya* into English as *The Hidden Face of Eve*, Amireh points out numerous deletions and additions (instances of manipulation and subversion):

> Entire chapters in the Arabic edition disappear from the English translation. Two chapters in particular, 'Women's Work at Home' and 'Arab Women and Socialism', in which El Saadawi critiques capitalism's exploitation of women and argues for a socialist economic and political system, are not in *The Hidden Face of Eve* […]. Also absent are passages that assert Arab women to be ahead of American and European women in demanding equality for their sexes, that celebrate the progress Arab women have made, and that exhort them to see wars of liberation as empowering to them. (2000: 224)

Furthermore, the English text includes an added new chapter on female circumcision (Amireh, 2000), an expected requirement of the master discourse. All these strategies deployed through translation (i.e. instances of manipulation) fit the requirements of a master discourse that regulates translation from Arabic.

Language choices are not the real problem. The problem lies in the existence of a master discourse that dictates the choices. The Arabic novel *Banaatu r-Riyaaḍ* (Sanea, 2005) transferred into English as *Girls of Riyadh* by Marilyn Booth (Sanea, 2007), provides good cases in point. Booth claims to have originally produced a foreignizing target text, but the actual published English translation is characterised by "the prevailing practices of marketing, reading and evaluating translations" (Emmerich, 2013: 200). If Booth's original translation was altered, then it would appear that any alterations were likely prompted by the master discourse and that such alterations were most probably made in the English text by all agents involved in the translation project (editors, reviewers, and the like), and perhaps with little to no knowledge of Arabic.

In the Arabic text, '20/2/2004' (Sanea, 2005: 22) is rendered as 'February 20, 2004' in the English text (Sanea, 2007: 14). Why such a rendering? It would not be difficult for readers, in the United States or elsewhere, to understand what each number in the Arabic date stands for. Similarly, in the Arabic text (Sanea, 2005: 23), there is an excerpt that can be literally transferred into English as: 'Lamees sat in the passenger seat, while the rest of the girls, five in total, sat in the back seats. They all sang along with the loud music from the CD player and moved as if they were dancing.' However, the excerpt appears in the published English text as: 'Lamees took her place next to Michelle while Sadeem and Gamrah climbed into the backseats. The CD player was on full blast. The girls sang along and swayed their abaya-clad shoulders as if they were dancing on the seats' (Sanea, 2007: 16). Here, facts are altered (the number five is deleted), and the phrase 'their abaya-clad' is added. It is not difficult to deduce that a logical explanation for all these alterations is to reinforce the image of how these "little Arab girls dress" as required by the master discourse.

On the back cover of the English text, there are some excerpts, apparently extracted from reviews. These excerpts read 'most repressive society,' 'a rare glimpse,' and 'secretive/closed society,' which all generate images that are influenced by a master discourse that precedes and influences literary Arabic translation into English.

CONCLUSION

Translation has historically facilitated intercultural exchanges that have shaped cultural shifts from one civilization to another. Translation deals with what Bhabha (1994) calls the 'au-delà' or the 'beyond' of one's immediate known world, transcending the self. Despite the complexities of intercultural encounters, translation ethics, in principle, posits that it should bridge the gap between the 'au-delà' (in this case, Arab culture) and the Western world, with the translator serving as the intermediary. Given that 'inter' is at the core of the intercultural, translation could potentially make such encounters less painful, less conflict-ridden, less adversarial, and less violent. This goal is urgent. It could be attained through a cross-cultural examination of the master discourse of translation to gain an understanding of identity issues (self and other), the translation enterprise (patronage, agencies, translators), and norms of representation (master discourse itself). However, in the case of Arabic translation, this objective often seems unattainable, as Jraissati (2011) points out: "Compared to other regions in the West, the Arab world is known through past colonial ties, intense media coverage and immigrated populations – or by *One Thousand and One Arabian Nights*."

The representative translational samples discussed in this article show how the process, product and reception of translation are bound up with a particular master discourse. This discourse makes translators "oblivious of the Eurocentric pretheoretical assumptions

built into the discipline of Translation Studies, they not only play out hegemonic roles in their works, they willingly limit their own agency as translators" (Tymoczko, 2007: 8), and where translation becomes an instrument of knowledge manipulation.

Literary translation, in particular, from Arabic into English has perpetuated stable stereotypes that sustain conflict and the perception of the Arab culture as the other, par excellence. This aligns with the norms of a master discourse that favors one-sided ethics in intercultural exchanges, ultimately leading to fixed patterns of information production and consumption that manipulate knowledge. In essence, the master discourse (or the culture) of translation shapes and governs the translation of culture (knowledge).

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S A I D   M .   F A I Q

MANIPULACIJA ZNANJEM KROZ PREVOĐENJE IZMEĐU ARAPSKOG I ENGLESKOG

Rezime: Prevodioci se često susreću sa ideološkim izazovima i predrasudama u vezi sa moći, identitetom i drugim aspektima prevođenja. Zbog ovih kompleksnih izazova, često se nalaze u situaciji u kojoj moraju manipulisati tekstom kako bi ga približili ciljnoj grupi, što može dovesti do takozvanog „otuđivanja" ili „nevidljivosti prevoda", odnosno manipulacije znanjem. Ovo je izazov koji prevodioci moraju prevazići, kako bi stvorili prevod koji je bliži originalu i koji ne izostavlja važne aspekte kulture i identiteta. Ovde je vrlo važna međukulturna procena diskursa, da bi se bolje razumela pitanja identiteta, kako sopstvenog, tako i onog drugog. U prevodilačkom procesu vrlo je važno i razmatranje političkih struktura moći, koje igraju važnu ulogu u uspešnom prevođenju.

Ovaj rad istražuje proces manipulacije znanjem kroz prevode sa arapskog na engleski. Autor istražuje kako takozvani „master diskurs", koji je oblikovan kulturom i vrednostima, utiče na proces prevođenja i način na koji se manipuliše znanjem. Autor pokazuje kako prevodi sa arapskog jezika odražavaju ustaljene stereotipe i predrasude o arapskoj kulturi, što se uklapa u norme „master diskursa" koji favorizuje jednostrane principe u međukulturnim razmenama, dovodeći do fiksnih obrazaca produkcije i konzumacije informacija.

Ključne reči: manipulacija znanjem, master diskurs, prevođenje, interkulturalni susreti, stereotipi