

Research Article

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Overcoming Constraints in Literary Translation: A Case Study of Rendering Saud Al-Sanousi's *Saq Al-Bambu* into English

<https://doi.org/10.1515/culture-2022-0159>

received June 29, 2022; accepted September 5, 2022

Abstract: This article aims to investigate the constraints on the English translation of the Arabic novel *Saq Al-Bambu* (The Bamboo Stalk) and identify the translation strategies that were adopted to render the literary work in light of Baker's Taxonomy (1992). Examples were collected and classified thematically into four categories: social constraints, political constraints, religious constraints, and cultural constraints. The findings showed that the English translation used general terms to refer to specific concepts in the original novel, and some words were added for explicating purposes. Translation by omission is only used in religious and cultural constraints, which explains the gap between the source language and the target language (TL). The study recommends that translators be aware of the different constraints when rendering a literary work and resort to explanatory notes or footnotes to explain the meaning of items that do not have an equivalent in the TL.

Keywords: translation constraints, literary translation, *Saq Al-Bambu*, The Bamboo Stalk, Baker's Taxonomy

Introduction

Translation has perpetually been considered a bridge that connects languages and introduces readers to new cultures and universes. An essential part of any culture is its literature; therefore, literary translation serves as a method in which literary works from all over the world are transferred so that they can reach a wider audience (Sah and Sinha 84). However, this process is highly challenging because of the knowledge and experience the translator needs to have to deliver an accurate equivalent and deal with the interlingual and/or intercultural inequality (Kazakova 2843). Literary translation imposes many challenges, especially between two extremely different languages and cultures. A closer view of translated works of literature shows certain strategies used by translators to compensate for inevitable losses of information and enable them to overcome the obstacle of non-equivalence, in addition to keeping the Target Text (TT) as culturally friendly as possible to the Target Language (TL) readers. Baker (26) proposed some strategies to solve non-equivalence and attain functional TL equivalence in translation.

One of the literary works that gained popularity for addressing themes and questions of identity, racism, and prejudice in Kuwaiti society is *Saq Al-Bambu* by Saud Al-Sanousi, which won the International Prize for Arabic Fiction in 2013 and the Saif Ghobash Banipal Prize for Arabic-English translation in 2016. The novel was translated into English by Jonathan Wright in 2015. Since multiculturalism is often referred to in the novel, translating it into English resulted in many differences. This study attempts to highlight the

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constraints imposed on rendering the Arabic novel *Saq Al-Bambu* into English and explore the translation strategies that were adopted to overcome the obstacles. It mainly answers the following questions.

1. What are the main constraints of rendering the Arabic novel *Saq Al-Bambu* into English?
2. What translation strategies were adopted to render *Saq Al-Bambu* into English in light of Baker's Taxonomy (1992)?

An investigation of this novel's translation is of great significance because it has been a focus of passionate readers and scholarly debate since its release in 2015. For Arab audiences, the composition style of *Saq Al-Bambu* resembles a translated diary belonging to a half-Arab, half-Filipino young man. Unfortunately, that feature of the text was lost in the translation. Multiple changes were also made in the closing chapters.

Literature Review

This section provides the theoretical framework of the study. It presents a brief account of equivalence and non-equivalence in addition to reviewing previous studies on translating literary works.

Theoretical Review

Translation Equivalence

The notion of equivalence has always been central in translation studies (Baker 10). Nord (59) mentioned that the TT has to fulfill three main requirements to provide a successful equivalent to the source text (ST) and, therefore, achieve an accurate cultural adaptation. First, "an equivalent target text has to have the same function or communicative effect as the ST." Second, "an equivalent target text has to imitate or mirror the stylistic features of the ST." And finally, "an equivalent target text has to convey the same meaning or message as the ST."

Finding one-to-one equivalent in the TL is not easy (Newmark 16). Non-equivalence between languages at the word level occurs when the TT has no direct equivalent for a word that occurs in the ST. This may be due to different causes, which Baker categorizes into 11 types. First, an SL culture-specific concept may express an unknown concept in TL. For example, religious beliefs, social customs, or types of food such as the Arabic words غسل (ablution) and حج (pilgrimage) do this. Second, the SL may express a known but non-lexicalized concept in TL, such as the word "landslide," which is understood in many languages but not lexicalized. Third, the SL word may express a more complex meaning than it does in TL, as does the Arabic word التقوى (piousness), which needs a sentence to convey its meaning. Fourth, the TL may have more or fewer distinctions in meaning than the SL, such as the distinction in meaning between خسوف (lunar eclipse) and كسوف (solar eclipse) in Arabic. Fifth, the TL may lack a superordinate when referring to mounting a camel which has two hyponyms in Arabic that are not represented in English, namely, حردون (mounting a camel with a saddle) and شداد (mounting a camel without a saddle). Sixth, the TL may lack a specific term (hyponym), such as the verb "jump," which has many hyponyms, including "leap," "vault," "spring," "bounce," "plunge," and "plummet," which do not exist in Arabic. Seventh, a certain word can imply different physical and interpersonal perspectives, such as the English word, "uncle," which has two words that describe these relationships خال (mother's brother) and عم (father's brother) in Arabic. Eighth, there may be differences in expressive meaning that refers to the speaker's feeling, as in the word "homosexuality," which is pejorative in Arabic (Al-Abbas and Haider). Ninth, differences in form may mean that a particular form does not always convey the same meaning as it does in the Arabic words أشار (advised) and استشار (sought advice). Tenth, some languages use specific forms in frequency and purpose that tend to be different from other languages' regular usage. For example, English uses "-ing" more than any other language. Finally, the use of loan words in the ST, such as the word جهاد (holy war), which is translated into English as "jihad" and refers partially to only one type of jihad (Baker 20–25, Abdelaal 46).

In order to deal with these types of non-equivalence at the word level, Baker (1992) describes eight strategies that are used by professional translators. These include the following: (1) translation by a more general word or superordinate, as in using the English word “money” to render the Quranic word ورق (silver coin); (2) translation by a more neutral or less expressive word, such as translating the English word “standard” into Arabic as قياسي (normal); (3) translation by cultural substitution, as in translating the English item “Congress” into the Arabic item مجلس الشعب (People Assembly); (4) translation using a loanword or loanword plus explanation, as when the lexical items such as مجاهدين (Muslim fighter) and فدائيين (people who sacrifice themselves) were transferred into English without translation; (5) translation by paraphrase using a related word, as when the Arabic Islamic word يتوضأ/yatawdda'a/is rendered into “do ablution”; (6) translation by paraphrase using unrelated words, as in the Arabic word مرابط, which is not lexicalized in English and can be rendered as “guarding the borders of a Muslim state”; (7) translation by omission; and (8) translation by illustration.

Saq Al-Bambu

Saq Al-Bambu's protagonist is referred to as José Mendoza in the Philippines and Isa Al-Tarouf in Kuwait. He is stranded between two identities; he was born to a Kuwaiti father and a Filipina mother. As he moves between the two countries, he is racialized differently. Not given the recognition he wants and convinced that he will never be accepted into Kuwaiti society because of his noticeable difference, he returns to the Philippines and writes his story retrospectively.

Author

Saud Alsanousi is a Kuwaiti novelist and journalist who was born in 1981. He currently works for Qabas newspaper but has also appeared in several Kuwaiti publications, like *Al Abwab* magazines, *Al- Arabi* magazine, and *Al-Kuwait newspaper*. He has several award-winning novels, like *The Prisoner of Mirrors*, *The Bonsai and the Old Man*, and the most famous, *Saq Al-Bambu*.

Translator

Jonathan Wright is a British literary translator and journalist who spent his childhood traveling and moving around Germany, Hong Kong, Canada, and Malaysia. He translated over 20 novels from Arabic into English. He also won the 2013 and 2016 Banipal Prize for Arabic Literary Translation for translating *Azazeel* and *Saq Al-Bambu*, respectively.

Empirical Studies

Studies on literary translation have attracted the attention of researchers over the years. Petrulione (43) investigated the translation of two of Joanne Harris's novels into Lithuanian using Davis's classification of translation strategies. The practical part of the analysis included seven strategies: preservation, addition, omission, globalization, localization, transformations, and creation. The results demonstrated that the strategy of globalization, in which culture-specific references are replaced with ones that are more neutral or general to make them accessible to audiences from a wider range of cultural backgrounds, was adopted more frequently in the translation of the chosen novels. The majority of proper names were translated while paying full attention to the phonemic aspect and grammar rules of the Lithuanian language.

In the same token, Dabbaghian and Sanaz (280) applied Baker's taxonomy on the rendering of Persian cultural terms and conducted a Translation Quality Assessment (TQA) on the Persian translation of George Orwell's *Animal Farm* by Ali Akbar Akhondi. The results indicated that most mistranslations occurred at the word level.

Similarly, Alwafai (320) investigated two Arabic translations of Ernest Hemingway's novella *The Old Man and the Sea* to find the problems and strategies of literary translation into Arabic. Their data were analyzed based on Baker's theory of equivalence. Two levels of equivalence were taken into consideration: equivalence at the word level and equivalence at the collocation level. The findings showed that untranslatable, culture-specific items could be rendered in various ways, such as paraphrasing, rewording, lexicalizing new concepts, and adapting them culturally.

In the same vein, Farghal and Bazzi (114) explored the translation strategies adopted when rendering English fiction titles into Arabic. One hundred English fiction titles were collected and compared with their Arabic counterparts. The study found that literal translation works very well when the title is lexically and culturally transparent. However, when the title includes culture-bound references or allusions, adaptation seemed to be the most used strategy. In some cases, related words and explication were employed to render the title more attractive. Paraphrasing produced flat and unnatural titles, while transliteration works well with proper nouns but has to be supplemented by other procedures in some cases.

Rahmani (16) also investigated the translation process of the Moroccan cultural terminologies mentioned in Leila Abouzeid's novella, *Ām al-fil*. Arabic culture-specific items related to the Moroccan culture and their English translations were identified and classified into various cultural categories according to Newmark's approach (1988), Baker's approach (2011), and Ghazala's approach (2008). The results showed that the culture-specific items were often rendered using loan words accompanied by an explanation. When the words were not lexicalized in the TL, the translator used more neutral/less expressive words by close alternatives or paraphrases even if they did not deliver the same meaning from SL into TL. Although the studies mentioned above discuss literary translation from many perspectives, this study is different in that it investigates a novel, *Saq Al-Bambu*, that received little attention in the literature. *Saq Al-Bambu* discusses multiple topics that could create a dilemma in translation, such as identity, racism, and multiculturalism, which add to the translation process's difficulty and complexity.

Methodology

This study follows a descriptive qualitative research method appropriate for analyzing the data from the source language (Arabic) text and the data in the TL (English) text. The source of data was the Arabic novel *Saq Al-Bambu* (Saud Alsanousi, 2013) and the English translation entitled *The Bamboo Stalk* (translated by Jonathan Wright, 2015). Examples were collected from the translated novel, classified thematically, and analyzed based on Baker's taxonomy (1992). The thematic classification generated four categories: social constraints, political constraints, religious constraints, and cultural constraints. Social constraints refer to how relations and names of people and things are represented. Political constraints involve the descriptions that are given to political events and figures. Religious constraints refer to the way religious groups and beliefs are manifested in the text. In contrast, cultural constraints have to do with the traditions and customs of people and what is culturally acceptable and what is not. It must be noted that the strategies used to overcome these constraints may overlap as the same strategy can be used to address translation problems under different categories.

Findings and Discussion

Translation is a process foiled by many constraints at different levels for various reasons, including the translators' lack of experience and awareness of the target culture and their integrity and faithfulness towards their translation. These constraints may negatively affect the translation process, the translator's reputation, and the translation product as a whole.

Social Constraints

Social constraints include social relations and actions that may represent how people and groups are named in a particular culture.

- *Nomenclature*

Nomenclature refers to naming things which is a part of human communication. These names may differ from one culture to another, and hence, pose challenges for translators.

Isa spent his entire childhood roaming around the streets and towns of the Philippines; therefore, he provided a thorough explanation of these cities and the tribes he had contact with during his childhood. The names of the tribes were rendered in different ways, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Rendering nomenclature into English

No.	ST	English translation	Literal translation
1	يمكنني أن أضمنكم عند البومباي، فهم يتقون بي، ولي سنوات طويلة في التعامل معهم.	"I can vouch for you with the Indians . They trust me. I've been dealing with them for years."	"I can guarantee you at the Bombay , they trust me, and I have been dealing with them for many years."
2	يلبس ثوباً أبيض فضفاصاً، وعلى رأسه. "طافية بيضاء كنتك التي يعتمرها المسلمون في كويابو والحي الصيني."	"[...] Wearing a loose white thobe and a white cap on his head like the ones the Muslims wear in old Manila ."	"... he wears a loose white dress, and on his head is a white cap, like the ones that Muslims wear in Quiapo and Chinatown."
3	لينضم فيما بعد للعمل مع أبي فارس. "الذي كان يكتب اوبريتا وطنياً."	"[...] And started working with Abu Faris , who was writing a patriotic operetta[...]"	"[...] to join later to work with Abu Faris , who was writing a patriotic operetta."

The first example includes the tribe/nickname of particular groups of people with a detailed explanation of their history. A first example is Isa's explanation of the story of his mother's financial struggle before she went to Kuwait, when a neighbor of theirs told them that he knew people who could lend Josephine some money to help her pay for her plane ticket: the "Indians." According to Baker's taxonomy, the strategy that the translator adopted here is translation using a general word; the footnote mentioned that the group's name, "Bombai," is the old name for the Indian capital Mumbai. But in the Philippines, this name is given to a group of Indians who finance the poor with small sums of money for interest and visit houses to offer electronic devices for several installments.

The second example is the translation of the word "كويابو" (Quiapo in English). Quiapo is a district of Manila, the capital of the Philippines, and is often referred to as the "Downtown." The translator rendered the word كويابو as "old Manila," adopting the same strategy of using a more general word.

The addition of footnotes in the ST provided a full explanation of the history of the "Bombai" and "Quiapo," which was not mentioned in the TL at all. Not only did the translator waste an opportunity to draw readers into the events of the fiction and create a brand-new alternative dimension to help them grasp the novel as the author intended, but he also chose not to translate the groups' names, instead substituting them with more general words like "the Indians" and "old Manila" and severely under-translating the text in the process.

In example (3), Isa mentions the names of Ghassan's friends in the army's music choir, most of whom were arrested, their bodies later found and received by their families after being recovered in mass graves in Iraq. The translator rendered the word "أبو فارس" to "Abu Fares" instead of using the literal translation of the word: "Fares's father." He used a loan word, which is a strategy that is often associated with culture-specific items like giving nicknames to parents as the father of "Abu" (first male child's name) and mother of "Um" (first male child's name).

It is worth mentioning that the footnote in the TL provided background information on the lives of the musicians mentioned above (Abu Fares's friends). According to the footnote, Abu Faris was a Kuwaiti poet called Fayegeq Abd Aljaleel, who was born in 1948 and captured in 1991. His remains were found in a mass

grave in Karbala'a – Iraq in 2006. His family received his remains and buried him in Kuwait in June 2006. "The man who wrote the music for the operetta" is Abdullah Al Rashid, Abu Fares's best friend, who was captured during the occupation. His remains were identified on 25 July 2007.

The names provided in the novel are names of real musicians that were killed defending their homeland. Translating their names would not have added any additional information to the text. Still, it would definitely add a whole new human perspective to the novel among readers of the TL, especially after learning that the fiction they are reading is interwoven with reality. Reading names and occupations of people who died defending their country would undoubtedly provide a human depth to the fiction. The footnotes did not only mention the martyrs' identity but also their occupations, the instruments they played, achievements they accomplished during their service, the circumstances that led to their death, and, finally, the year and place in which they passed.

No one could argue that reading this footnote was very touching and heartbreaking. Alsanousi also did thorough research on their accomplishments to honor their memory. Obviously, this footnote was very personal to the author since he added so much background information about their lives.

Political Constraints

Translators face problems when rendering a political text, including clashing ideologies, neologisms, adopting the wrong approach, translational inaccuracy, and political metaphor.

- War-Related Terms

In August 1990, former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein ordered his army to invade Kuwait in a 2-day military operation that ended with his forces seizing all Kuwaiti territory on August 4. One of Saddam's first ferrets was the formation of a sham government in Kuwait, headed by Colonel Alaa Hussein, which lasted only 5 days. On 9 August 1990, Saddam announced the "annexation" of Kuwait to Iraq as "governorate number 19" and submitted new names for the Kuwaiti streets, institutions, and even the capital.

Saud Alsanousi would have known the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait as a well-known war with consequences that spread to affect the entire Arab region. Therefore, it is highly likely he wrote his novel confident that his target audience would surely understand who the subject of specific actions was. But since most of Jonathan Wright's target audience is likely far less acquainted with the Gulf war, he needed to use translation by illustration or cultural substitution to give more context and provide a better understanding of the course of the war (Table 2).

Table 2: Rendering war-related terms

No.	ST	English translation	Literal translation
4	كان من أحد الكتاب القلائل المعارضين لسياسة بلاده في دعم أحد الطرفين المتنازعين في حرب الخليج الأولى.	"He was one of the writers who opposed the Kuwaiti government's decision to take sides in the Iran-Iraq war."	"He was one of the few writers who opposed his country's policy of supporting one of the conflicting parties in the first Gulf War."
5	لم يقتلوه. نحن من فعل. نحن.	"They didn't kill him. It was us who did it. It was us who did it. We shouldn't have supported Iraq."	"They didn't kill him. we did. we did."
6	انشغل الناس في الكويت، انذاك، بأمر اختطاف طائرته المتجهة إلى تايلاند. غسان ووليد كانا من ضمن ركاب هذه الرحلة.	"Ghassan and Walid were passengers aboard the Kuwaiti plane that was hijacked by a pro-Iranian extremist group on its way to Thailand."	"People in Kuwait were busy at the time about the hijacking of their plane to Thailand. Ghasan and Walid were among the passengers on this flight."
7	كنت أحسبكم تقاومون الجيش المحتل بالسلاح!	"I thought you resisted the Iraqi army with weapons!"	"I thought you were resisting the occupying army with weapons!"

The political situation in the Arab world is usually very sensitive and complicated, and it becomes even more complicated when its discourse and language are translated. Translators should be aware of the choice of words and their implications since political and ideological discourses are extremely sensitive and may offend either party of the translation, the ST readers or the TT readers.

In example (4), Wright had to substitute “حرب الخليج الأولى”, which is literally translated to “The First Gulf War,” with the parties of the war, which are Iran and Iraq. According to Baker’s taxonomy, cultural substitution aims to create the same effect between readers of the SL and the TL. The First Gulf War is a well-known term among the Arab audience, but may be less commonly used among the English readers and therefore, identifying the conflicting parties in the name given in the translation was more conventional.

In example (5), when Rashid sees the dead body of his best friend on the television, he breaks down into tears. In order to guarantee that the TT readers are as engaged as the ST readers, Wright added contextual information by saying that supporting Iraq against Iran caused the hijacking of the plane that led to the death of Walid Rashid’s best friend. The translator uses translation by addition as an attempt to overcome the ambiguity of the pronouns that are used in the ST. He then needed to elaborate on the characters’ words to deliver meaning more accurately.

In example (6), the translator elaborated on the plane hijacking incident by adding the nationality of the kidnappers, indicating that this incident is directly associated with the consequences of the First Gulf War.

In example (7), the translator substituted the lexical item “الجيش المحتل” which is literally translated to “occupying army,” with the phrase “Iraqi army” to clarify that the Second Gulf War had begun. This time, the war was between Kuwait and Iraq.

Cultural Constraints

Saud Alsanousi often uses footnotes to explain Filipino and Arabian cultural thoughts and backgrounds. The rich, interesting cultural content of these footnotes helped expand the limits of the narrative outline, presenting new heuristic models for further understanding and offering new, different story threads for the TL reader to become familiar with. In addition, this cultural content can be a playful, fun way of providing an alternative experience that enables and provides the reader with a whole new perspective of dealing with the text.

- *Habits, Traditions, and Beliefs*

Cultural adaptation and bending the text to fit the target audience’s ideologies, religion, culture, and tradition are sometimes necessary. Still, the translator should be aware and capable of assessing that any adaptation that has to be done should not ruin the general theme of the literary work (Table 3).

Table 3: Rendering of cultural beliefs

No.	ST	English Translation	Literal Translation
8	أصبح أبي يتحاشى النظر إلى أيدا منذ استخالت ديكًا، يشيح بنظره إلى أي اتجاه بعيدًا عنها ما إن تظهر أمامه، وكأنها رمداء.	“He’d been avoiding looking at Aida since the incident with the cocks. As soon as she came into sight, he looked aside as if he thought she had some eye disease, and he was frightened of catching it. ”	“My father has been avoiding looking at Ida since she became a rooster, looking away from her in any direction as soon as she appears in front of him, as if she suffers from Ophthalmia.”
9	أتمنى أن لا يُفقد في الحرب. يقول. مخاطبًا لا أحد. في حين تنقر والدتي خشب الأريكة حيث تجلس، بمفاصل أصابعها.	“I hope he doesn’t go missing in the war,” he said, addressing no one in particular, while my mother rapped her knuckles on the wooden part of the sofa for good luck. ”	“I hope he won’t be lost in the war. he says to no one. while my mother pecks the wood of the sofa where she’s sitting, with her knuckles.”

In example (8), Isa narrates the events of a fight that happened between his aunt Aida and her father. The footnote in the ST provided an additional explanation by mentioning that people in the Philippines believe that Ophthalmia (which was referred to in the translation as “eye disease”) could be contagious in case of direct eye contact between a healthy person and in infected one. This is another example of a cultural piece of information that readers of the TT could not become familiar with, because the translator did not translate the footnote which would have clarified the meaning. Regardless, Wright used a general word to render the quotation listed above, which led to a weaker rendering of the Filipino cultural belief and, therefore, a translation outcome that is less expressive and engaging than the sentence in the ST.

In example (9), Isa narrates his family’s terrible financial situation after his father stopped sending money to the Philippines. The novel’s footnotes provided a further explanation that knocking on wood is a popular habit in both the Philippines and the Arab world in situations when someone says anything that is considered to be a bad omen, as Filipinos believe that it will permit turning what just had been said (bad luck) into reality while Arabs believe knocking on wood will kick out evil spirits and envious eyes. Therefore, the translator paraphrased using related words and clarified the meaning of knocking on wood as a cultural habit that is thought to bring good luck.

- *Arabic Taboos and Curse Words*

In the Arab world, socially structured cultural norms and beliefs demonstrate that sex should never be discussed in front of anyone. Many cultures do not allow open conversations or depictions of such events since it is a profoundly intimate act. Therefore, anything containing the concepts of sex or sexual experiences is considered taboo and should be rephrased and referred to in more culturally acceptable terms (see Debbas and Haider; Haider and Hussein) (Table 4).

Table 4: Rendering Arabic taboos and curse words

No.	ST	English translation	Literal translation
10	كنت قد بلغت الرابعة عشر للتو حين زارتنى فى حلمي لأول مرة.	“I had just turned fourteen when I first dreamt about her. In my wet dream she was adventurous.”	“I had just turned fourteen when she first visited me in my dream.”
11	قالت والخجل يصعب وجهها بالأحمر، حمارة. كررت الكلمة كما قالتها بالعربية: حمارة؟	“Still blushing, she said: it’s himara. It means donkey. I repeated the word as she said it in Arabic: himara. ”	She said with shame dyeing her face red, a donkey. She repeated the word as she said it in Arabic: a donkey?

In example (10), the protagonist talks about his first “sexual” experience that enabled him to enter manhood and leave his childhood behind. Arab readers understand that what Isa had experienced is a “wet dream” without actually reading words that refer to that. As an Arab, Alsanousi also understands that explaining what a wet dream is will probably cause slight backlash from his target audience because it is culturally inappropriate. On the other hand, the translator used a more general word strategy because he understands that his target audience mostly doesn’t mind sexual terminologies. He added the term to deliver the idea better.

The novel has many Arabic and Filipino terms, influenced by Isa’s life in Kuwait and in the Philippines. This quotation is derived from a dialogue between Isa and his half-sister Khawla when he asked her what his grandmother was saying when she was talking about the Filipina maid in Al Tarouf’s household. In the second example, the translator, in his rendering of this sentence, adopted the strategy Baker suggested: the translation of a loan word. He had to explain what the word “**himara**” meant to readers of the TL, a terminology that is already present in the dictionaries of the readers of the SL. But by this addition, Wright delivered a less than accurate rendering of the sentence. The Arabic quotation did not mention that Khawla clarified what the word **himara** means, indicating that Isa is still ignorant that his grandmother often insults the Filipino maid by calling her a donkey. But the English rendering indicated that Isa is now aware that his grandmother often insults the maid, which could, in the TL reader’s mind, provide an

additional reason for the mutual hatred between Isa and his grandmother at the beginning of their relationship – which may not be accurate.

- *Clothing, Songs, and Musical Instruments*

The names of clothing items and musical instruments vary from one culture to another because each culture has its own distinguished, traditional way of getting dressed and expressing itself through songs and music. Translators have to be well acquainted with both the ST and TT's cultures in order to provide an accurate rendering of the “material culture” (Table 5).

Table 5: Rendering clothing items and musical instruments

No.	ST	English translation	
12	كان يكتب اوبريتا وطنياً أثناء الاحتلال. “ اشتهر بإسم الصمود لم يعد (غسان) يملك أي رغبة للعزف على آلة العود، خصوصاً بعد وقوع أبي فارس وملحن الأوبريت في أسر قوات الاحتلال.”	“[...] Who was writing a patriotic operetta that became known as al-Sumoud (Steadfastness) ... He no longer had any desire to play the oud , especially after Abu Faris and the man who wrote the music for the operetta were captured by the Iraqis.”	“[...] he was writing a patriotic operetta during the occupation and was known as al-Samoud (Ghassan) no longer had any desire to play the lute, especially after Abu Faris and the orbit composer were captured by the occupation forces.”
13	الأولاد بالثياب التقليدية البيضاء، مع جاكيت بلا أكمام، تعلق رؤوس البعض طاقيات والبعض الآخر يرتدي غطاء الرأس الأبيض مثل الرجال	“The boys were wearing traditional white thobes with sleeveless jackets; some had skullcaps on while others wore the same white headdress as the men.”	“The boys are in traditional white clothes , with a sleeveless jacket, some with hoods on their heads, others with a white headscarf like men.”

The translation strategy used to render example (12) was translation using a loan word, which could be easily observed in the rendering of the word “oud,” an oriental music instrument that looks like a guitar. In the rendering of the title of the patriotic operetta, “al-sumoud,” there was an explanation of what it meant to make the readers of the TL more aware of the content of the music they were making during the Iraqi occupation.

Example (13) provided the translation of traditional Kuwaiti clothing items. The translator adopted Baker's strategy of translation using a loan word accompanied by an explanation to render the clothing items “الثياب التقليدية البيضاء” and “غطاء الرأس الأبيض”. He took the items' names and translated them literally, word-for-word to English, because these items do not exist in the English culture. Therefore, there is no direct way to render these words. In the rendering of the word “طاقيات”, the translator used the cultural substitution strategy suggested by Baker because the word “طاقيات” means “caps” in the English language, a word that is not fit in this context. Therefore, the translator used the word “skullcaps” (a clothing item that is often worn to support and prevent the white headdress that men of the Gulf wear from sliding), which is a more accurate rendering of the word “طاقيات” in this context.

Religious Constraints

Translating religious-related texts could be difficult for the translator to overcome. This difficulty easily happens in religious texts because of some culture-specific terms that do not have a direct equivalent – not to mention the high level of accuracy required to render this type of text. Cultural and religious sensitivity varies from one culture to another; therefore, becoming familiar with the TT culture is the best way to enable a translator to produce a culturally appropriate work. Sometimes, what is culturally and religiously allowed in one culture is considered a taboo and a highly sensitive topic in the other. For example, consanguine marriage is a common practice in the Arab region but is considered a great sin in

Christianity and is extremely rejected as a form of incest in western cultures. As a result, translators have to use several translation strategies to overcome these barriers.

The Bamboo Stalk is a novel diverse with religious content, derived from full verses and practices of religions like Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, and some South-East Asian religions (Table 6).

Table 6: Rendering of religious texts

No.	ST	English translation	Literal translation
14	اهتم الجميع في الفلبين بمتابعة خبر اختطاف الرهائن الذين كان من بينهم ثلاثة مبشرين أمريكيين، رجلان، أحدهما مع زوجته.	“Everyone in the Philippines followed the news of the hostages, among them three Americans , two men and the wife of one of them.”	“Everyone in the Philippines was interested in following the news of the kidnapping of the hostages, among whom were three American missionaries , two men, one with his wife.”
15	“ابن الرب. لست أدري كيف أصلي لك.”	“ Buddha ... I don’t know how to pray to you”	“ Son of God ... I don’t know how to pray for you.”

For example (14), Isa explains the news of the kidnapping and execution of three American missionaries in the Philippines and how this incident caused the spread of islamophobia in the Philippines. But the fact that the executed Americans were Christian missionaries was hidden from readers of the TT.

Wright omitted the occupation of the Americans that were in the Philippines in his translation. Based on the resulting translation, TL readers could build a narrative that an Islamic group is randomly killing western foreigners living in the Philippines and that the three Americans were there by chance, were perhaps even Christian tourists, and the Islamic “terrorist” group decided to kill them for being Christian. This reading results from hiding the original cause of their visit to the Philippines – spreading Christianity in Muslim territories – that eventually causes their death.

Islamophobia has been a hot topic of discussion in western outlets since the beginning of the twenty-first century. The incorrect Islam-related translations in different kinds of transcultural communication caused and deepened the misunderstanding against Islam and Muslims in general. Translators, unfortunately, play a very distinct, negative role in increasing that gap and pushing people further from knowing the truth.

In a different scenario, example (15) narrates Isa’s visit to the Buddhist temple and when he begins to pray. He began his prayers by saying: “ابن الرب. لست أدري كيف أصلي لك” which is literally translated to: “son of god... I don’t know how to pray to you” but was translated by Wright to: “Buddha. I don’t know how to pray to you.” The translator did not refer to Buddha as the “son of god” as Isa did; instead, he used the cultural substitution strategy that Baker suggested. The translator’s judgment in these sensitive cases is what makes the TT culturally and religiously palatable since “the son of god,” according to Wright’s target audience, is Jesus Christ. Nonetheless, sometimes it becomes extremely difficult for scholars to decide whether to attribute the ideological differences spotted between the ST and the TT to the translator as a consequence of his/her subliminal ideological belief system or of their consideration to their target audience’s deliberate ideological and religious views.

Conclusion

Translating *Saq Al-Bambu* into English was foiled by four main constraints: cultural, social, political, and religious. The cultural constraint included issues in rendering different cultural beliefs that are present in the Filipino and Arabian cultures, and in negligently translating footnotes in the ST without taking into consideration the rich cultural background they contain which helps to draw readers into the cultural soul of the novel. The social constraints include issues of rendering proper names of martyrs, towns, tribes, and nicknames. The political constraints include the translator’s responsibility to shed light on the First and Second Gulf wars and engage the TL’s readers with its reasons, parties, and general information that could

be beneficial in providing context to readers. And finally, the religious constraints involve the rendering of religious specific terms, like the term “son of God.”

In terms of the strategies used, the results showed that the translator used the strategies of omission, cultural substitution, and translation using a loan word or a loan word accompanied by an explanation more frequently to deal with culture-specific items in the novel, which confirms previous findings by Rahmani (75) and Al-Khalafat and Haider.

The translation by omission strategy was only used in cases of religious and cultural constraints, which explains the vast distance between the ST and the TT; that is, the ST was culturally closer to readers since it paid attention to the different cultural aspects in Arabic and the Philippines. This contrasts with Alwafai (230), who found that paraphrasing, rewording, lexicalizing new concepts, and adaptation are mostly used to render culture-specific items. On the other hand, the translator used the strategies of cultural substitution, illustration, and translation using a loan word or a loan word accompanied by an explanation to handle and render the different political and social constraints because the social and political constraints demand a further explanation, especially when it comes explaining the Gulf Wars and its consequences.

Among the examples that were provided by the researchers, the strategies of translation by omission, translation using a loan word or a loan word accompanied by an explanation, and cultural substitution were adopted equally, but each strategy in a different constraint.

Translators are recommended to try to be as consistent with the ST as possible while making a completely remarkable piece that inspires similar reactions from the target readers. They can resort to explanatory notes or footnotes to explain the meaning of culture-specific items. Future studies may investigate the translations of *Saq Al-Bambu* into other languages to find the obstacles that the translators faced during the translation process.

Acknowledgment: The authors are grateful to the Middle East University, Amman, Jordan for the financial support granted to this research.

Conflict of interest: Authors state no conflict of interest.

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