

Research Article

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Challenges and Strategies of Translating Arabic Novels into English: Evidence from Al-Sanousi's *Fi'rān Ummī Hissa*

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Abstract: This research investigated the strategies adopted to overcome the constraints encountered in the English translation of the Arabic novel *Fi'rān Ummī Hissa* in light of Mughazy's (2016) typology of equivalence and Baker's (1992) strategies for dealing with idiomatic expressions. The data were collected and categorized thematically into four constraint types: social, political, cultural, and religious. The findings revealed that transliteration was heavily utilized in rendering cultural terms and phrases, such as names, titles, food, and clothing. Paraphrasing was the most used strategy in rendering religious terms requiring clarification, but the extensive details often disrupted the text flow and occasionally led to inaccuracies. Cultural substitution and less expressive words were used in rendering idioms and proverbs, resulting in several mistranslations. In a few cases, omission was applied to terms lacking direct equivalents, yet they were inconsistently reintroduced as transliterated terms in other occurrences. The study recommends that translators follow a consistent translation approach across similar types of cultural expressions to maintain uniformity across the translated text. Translators may use footnotes for terms that require transliteration to help readers understand the cultural context and significance. Further studies could compare similar text translations across languages to explore how cultural contexts influence translation strategies.

Keywords: literary translation, *Fi'rān Ummī Hissa*, *Mama Hissa's Mice*, equivalence, translation constraints, translation strategies

1 Introduction

Throughout history, translation has emerged as an important tool for linking diverse cultures and facilitating communication between nations. It has helped preserve and transmit knowledge, literature, and cultural traditions across generations, contributing to the richness and diversity of human civilization.

Novels, poetry, drama, and various forms of literature serve as dynamic tools for reflecting the culture of different communities, as they effectively explore complex social, political, economic, and traditional matters and challenges experienced within each community, and that is what makes literary works particularly challenging to translate. According to Newmark (1988), literary genres that often lose meaning during translation include poetry, sonorous prose, texts with rich cultural content, and dialect. Since translation aims to render an original text accessible to those unfamiliar with its language, a significant burden is put on translators' shoulders. Translators should have excellent linguistic skills and be aware of cultural elements, customs, and traditions (Braçaj, 2014).

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Among the literary works that have received great attention in Arab societies is Al-Sanousi's *Fī'rān Ummī Hissa*, as it presents a narrative with a dystopian tone, portraying the Kuwaiti nation torn in a civil sectarianism war. The novel was immediately banned after its first publication in 2015 and remained off the shelves for many years until the author won his case against the censorship. *Fī'rān Ummī Hissa* was translated into English by Sawad Hussain in 2019. Although the translator has effectively rendered the novel into English, there were some instances where inaccuracies in translation were identified. Thus, this study examines the strategies adopted to overcome the constraints encountered in translating the Arabic novel *Fī'rān Ummī Hissa* into English. It mainly answers the following questions:

- (1) What are the constraints encountered in translating *Fī'rān Ummī Hissa* novel into English?
- (2) What translation strategies did the translator adopt to overcome these constraints in the English rendition, and how effective were they?

There are many factors that make *Fī'rān Ummī Hissa* an excellent choice for translation studies. The novel addresses controversial themes as it references historical and political events, including the first Gulf War, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and the civil sectarian war between Sunni and Shiites within the Kuwaiti community. Moreover, the novel presents important elements of Kuwaiti culture and traditions, such as naming conventions, popular sayings and idioms, poems, and traditional songs. Additionally, it highlights the cultural diversity in Kuwaiti society and offers insight into the traditions of other nations.

Saud AlSanousi, the author of *Fī'rān Ummī Hissa*, is known for his creative writing style. He usually presents complex characters and deep human emotions, resulting in richly layered social and political contexts. Moreover, AlSanousi is well known for his excellent incorporation of multiple cultural elements in his novels, which adds to the complexity of the translation process.

2 Review of Literature

This section explores several important aspects of literary translation and highlights light on the challenges translators face in their attempts to find linguistic and cultural equivalence. Finally, it presents several empirical studies with related content.

2.1 Literary Translation and its Challenges in the Arabic Context

Literary translation goes beyond the referential meaning of words as it delves into the significance of words and expressions (Anani, 1997); therefore, it is seen as the most demanding type of translation (Landers, 2001). Ghazala (2013, p. 19) offers a comprehensive definition of literary translation as

a special type of translation that is concerned solely with translating literary genres and sub-genres into literary pieces of work in the TL, accounting for all features of literariness and creative style of the original, especially re-registration, semantic density, syntactic and lexical intricacies, polysemy, Displaced interaction, multi-layeredness, symbolism/hypersemanticization, aestheticism, figurativeness and, most importantly, tone: the involvement of human feelings, sentiments and emotions.

Recent developments in this field suggest a shift away from the traditional focus on linguistic text, highlighting the importance of the quality of the translation in the target language (TL) and the acceptance of the target text (TT) as a standalone product (Yousef, 2012). Therefore, translations are situated and evaluated within the intricate context of their receiving cultures. This recognition highlights that translation is not merely a simple process of converting words from one language to another but a dynamic interplay between two distinct linguistic and cultural systems (Anani, 1997). This shift has complicated the translation process, as instead of having only linguistic and stylistic constraints, translators must now deal with more challenging translation issues related to cultural and ideological values (Yousef, 2012).

Translators face many challenges when translating literary texts due to the frequent use of symbols and figurative language and sometimes the incorporation of literary and stylistic devices in these texts. In the Arabic context, literary translation goes beyond being a linguistic exercise; it involves navigating cultural nuances and societal beliefs embedded in the ST. Arabic literature is rich in historical, religious, and cultural references, making its translation particularly difficult. According to Lataiwish (1995), one of the notable characteristics of Arabic literary works, especially in fiction, is the frequent use of terms and expressions with religious meanings and connotations. This feature often has no parallel in English, resulting in the target reader's potential misperception of the original use of the term.

Proper nouns and titles are another area that translators find difficult to render in literary works due to their social implications. They are often used to identify the social origin, class, or age group of the characters. Therefore, literal equivalence is sometimes bound to constitute either an unsuccessful translation or a misrepresentation of the intentions and message of the original Arabic text (Al-Hamly & Farghal, 2015).

Moreover, Arabic literature exhibits an abundant use of phatic and honorific expressions that have social functions, making it imperative for translators to realize the true and subtle social function of an utterance before any attempt at rendering it into the TL (Lataiwish, 1995). Translating such Arabic expressions into English as closely as possible often results in an unnatural rendition that deviates from the expectations of the English reader in some contexts.

Finally, idiomatic expressions and cultural references that lack direct equivalents in the TL are also among the primary challenges faced by translators of Arabic literature (Ali & Al-Rushaidi, 2017). Idioms or cultural fixed expressions are phrases or sayings that have specific meanings within a certain language or culture, and their interpretations often carry deeper and different meanings than the literal meanings (Larson, 1984). Baker (1992, p. 69) states that idioms are “frozen patterns of language which allow little or no variation in form” and “often carry meanings which cannot be deduced from their individual components.” Therefore, the meaning of an idiom is not the sum of the meanings of its parts or its constituents, making its translation a serious challenge. Furthermore, factors such as religion, traditions, ideologies, social factors, political issues, and geographic locations within societies impact the level of complexity of rendering idiomatic expressions from one language into another (Shojaei, 2012). Translators must strike a balance between maintaining the original's aesthetic and cultural richness while ensuring comprehensibility for the target audience. This task requires employing strategies that enable translators to overcome difficulties that might be encountered in the process of translation (Al-Abbas & Al-Abbas, 2024; Dweik & Suleiman, 2013).

2.2 Translation Strategies

Mughazy (2016) discussed the significance of examining the translation process across various levels, from morpheme and word level to discourse analysis. He focused on translating Arabic texts into English, emphasizing the problems and challenges faced by translators. He suggests the following five strategies:

- (1) Translation by deletion: This strategy is used when the meaning can be conveyed without the deleted word.
- (2) Translation by substitution: This strategy is used when a specific element or term in the SL is replaced with a different but contextually appropriate term in the TT. For example, translation of units of measurement.
- (3) Translation by Morphological Unpacking: This strategy is used when translating complex morphological words. For example, “احمر وجهه” is rendered as “his face became red.”
- (4) Translation by paraphrasing: This strategy is also called rewording. Translators resort to this strategy to provide additional information to help readers recognize the referent of the source words in the absence of a direct equivalent. Moreover, paraphrasing can be used in cases of ambiguity and with Arabic names that have certain connotations.
- (5) Translation by transliteration: Translators employ English letters to write Arabic text in this strategy.

Translating idiomatic and culturally fixed expressions poses a unique set of challenges for translators, who strive to preserve the intended meaning while ensuring the expression remains culturally relevant in the TL. Baker (1992) suggests four strategies to deal with the translation of idiomatic expressions:

- (1) Use an idiom with similar meaning and form: by employing this strategy, the translator strives to identify an idiom in the TL that mirrors the one in the SL, both in terms of meaning and lexical components. Achieving success with this strategy is challenging since each language has features and devices to convey specific concepts. Nevertheless, despite the inherent difficulty, it is considered the best strategy for translating idioms. Example: in Arabic, the idiom “يلعب بالنار” can be rendered into English by a similar idiom “To play with fire.”
- (2) Use an idiom with a similar meaning but differing form: in this strategy, the intended meaning of the TL idiom aligns with that of the SL but with different lexical items. Example: “كل ممنوع مرغوب” can be rendered into English by the different idiom “forbidden fruit is the sweetest.”
- (3) Translation by paraphrase: This strategy is commonly used to translate idioms that do not have equivalents in the TL.
- (4) Translation by omission: this strategy is used when the meaning in the TL can be reached without translating the ST idiom. In this case, the translator can omit the idiom from the TL.

2.3 Review of Empirical Studies

Literary translation has attracted the attention of many scholars in recent years. Marabout (2010) investigated literary Arabic texts selected from Gibran Khalil Gibran’s *Damaa wa Ibtissama*. The primary objective of the study was to determine whether the aesthetic impact of the original Arabic texts is preserved when translated into English. The texts were analyzed in terms of lexical choices, sentence structure, and the use of metaphors and similes. The results showed that the translation strategies used were literal translation, transposition, omission, addition, expansion, and the avoidance of repetition, contributing to shaping the meaning, structure, and overall effect of the TT.

Similarly, Alwafai (2015) examined two Arabic translations of Ernest Hemingway’s 1952 novella *The Old Man and the Sea* to explore the challenges and strategies involved in translating literary works into Arabic and propose guidelines for improving Arabic translation practices. The analysis was based on Baker’s theory of equivalence, focusing on two levels: word-level equivalence and collocational equivalence. The findings revealed that cultural-specific terms could be tackled in various ways, such as paraphrasing, rewording, lexicalizing new concepts, and cultural adaptation. The study recommended that translators consider both contextual and cultural factors in SL and TL and ensure naturalness and readability for the TT.

Al-Amayreh (2019) investigated two different translations of *Hamlet*, focusing on the varied strategies employed by translators in rendering the text into literary Arabic. The sample consisted of 15 translated excerpts by two skilled translators in order to compare their strategies. The findings demonstrated that the translators utilized reduction, addition, elaboration, and transposition to render the literary work in Arabic.

Zayed et al. (2021) explored the application of Newmark’s (1988) models to uncover the translation methods employed in rendering idiomatic expressions in the novel *Men in the Sun*. The researchers analyzed 41 Arabic idioms from the novel as a basis for validating their findings. The findings revealed that the translator’s most commonly employed translation strategy was paraphrasing, followed by literal translation. Translating an idiom with a TL idiom that is similar in form but different in meaning ranked third, while translating an idiom with a TL idiom that is similar in form and meaning was the least frequently used strategy for translating idioms in this novel. Paraphrasing and translating idioms with similar forms and meanings were determined to be the most suitable strategies for rendering Arabic idioms into English.

Similarly, Al-Batineh and Alsmadi (2021) examined Roger Allen’s English translation of Naguib Mahfouz’s *Khan al-Khalili*. The data consisted of different culture-specific items including Egyptian food, customs, holidays, and clothing. The analysis revealed that Allen not only reflected the source’s realistic narrative but also preserved the distinctly Egyptian cultural elements in the TT, resulting in a foreignized version of the novel that introduces readers to Arab culture.

Alhamshary (2021) analyzed culture-bound expressions in Naguib Mahfouz's *The Thief and the Dogs*. The study provided a rich comparative translation study focusing on strategies, similarities, and differences between the Arabic and English translations of both translators: Trevor Le Gassick and Mohamed Badawi. The findings revealed that seven of Baker's (1992) strategies were employed, including translation by a more general term, translation by a more neutral/less expressive term, translation through cultural substitution, translation using a loanword or loanword with an explanation, paraphrasing with a related term, paraphrasing with unrelated terms, and translation by omission.

Rababah and Al-Abbas (2022) conducted a research endeavor concentrating on the issue of cultural incongruence within the literary translation of Alsanousi's *Saq Al-Bambu*. The study examined the translation strategies employed to address these challenges, offering a wealth of illustrative examples that are classified into four main categories: social, religious, political, and cultural constraints. The findings were analyzed through the lens of Baker (1992) and presented various translation strategies, including translation by omission, the use of loanwords or the use of loanwords with explanations, as well as cultural substitutions.

By the same token, Al Saideen et al. (2022) explored the strategies adopted by two translators, Jubaili and Mola, in translating the English novel *Lolita* into Arabic. The research discussed the distinct translation strategies employed by each translator, and the results indicated that Jubaili's approach leaned towards a faithful, literal translation, preserving the original themes and character portrayal. In contrast, Mola's translation used explicit language and a more sensual tone, leading to a shift in themes and characterization, making the text more eroticized compared to the original.

Although many studies have explored the difficulties of literary translation between English and Arabic, this research is based on a novel that involves sensitive, intricate, and essential topics regarding Kuwait's history. It revolves around two main events: the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the civil war between Sunnis and Shiites. This introduces many religious, political, and war-related terms associated with both events, posing a considerable challenge for translation. Furthermore, the author deeply depicts traditional Kuwaiti cuisine, the old way of living, and the Kuwaiti street that harmoniously merges Palestinian, Syrian, Indian, Egyptian, and Iranian cultures and diverse ethnicities. Additionally, translating culturally rich material like *Fīrān Ummī Hissa* requires utilizing creative translation strategies, as it includes national songs, numerous idioms and culturally fixed expressions, poems, and different Arabic dialects within the context of the novel. While the Arab reader might find such messages relatively easy to understand, they require creative translation strategies to facilitate understanding for non-Arab readers.

3 Methodology

This section outlines the research methodology used to conduct this study. It offers a short summary of *Fīrān Ummī Hissa* novel, and the specific reasons for selecting it as the study sample. In addition, the section explores the procedures used for data collection and analysis.

3.1 Sample of the Study

Fīrān Ummī Hissa presents important elements of Kuwaiti culture and traditions, exploring naming conventions, dialects, popular proverbs and idioms, poems, and traditional songs. Additionally, it focuses on the cultural diversity in Kuwaiti society and offers insight into other nations' traditions.

3.1.1 Author

Saud Al-Sanousi is a Kuwaiti author and writer known for his literary contributions. He has gained recognition for his works, particularly his novel "The Bamboo Stalk" which won the International Prize for Arabic Fiction

in 2013. Al-Sanousi's writing often explores social and cultural themes that examine the complexities of identity, cultural diversity, and human experiences.

3.1.2 Translator

Sawad Hussain is an Arabic translator and writer, known for her sensitivity to cultural nuance and her innovative approaches to bringing Arabic literature to English-speaking audiences. She employs a variety of translation strategies to effectively convey the richness and complexity of Arabic texts, skillfully adapting idiomatic expressions, cultural nuances, and stylistic elements to retain the original tone and intent while ensuring accessibility. Her translations of important works, including *Passage to the Plaza* by Sahar Khalifeh, a cornerstone of Palestinian resistance literature; *A Bed for the King's Daughter* by Shahla Ujayli; and *Mama Hissa's Mice* by Saud Al-Sanousi, highlight her adept handling of complex narratives and cultural contexts. Her work has earned accolades from prestigious organizations, including English PEN and the Palestine Book Awards, underscoring the impact of her translation choices.

Footnote: Hussain holds an MA in Modern Arabic Literature from SOAS and has contributed to prominent publications such as ArabLit. She also co-edited the Arabic-English section of the Oxford Arabic Dictionary (2014), demonstrating her commitment to advancing Arabic-English literary exchange.

3.1.3 Plot

Fīrān Ummī Hissa is a fictional novel that navigates between the past and present, narrating a story covering decades through the lens of the protagonist, Katkout, who reminisces about his childhood in the 1980s Kuwait with friends Fahd and Sadiq. Their close-knit neighborhood is disrupted by the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, leading to sectarian tensions and conflicts. Despite efforts to promote unity through their group "Fuada's Kids," sectarian violence escalates, culminating in a civil war. The novel begins with Katkout being injured in the present, reflecting on the tragic events that led to his current situation.

3.2 Data Size and Analysis Approach

This research utilizes a qualitative approach to investigate and analyze the translation challenges encountered in rendering the Arabic novel *Fīrān Ummī Hissa* into English.

The researchers closely read the Arabic novel and its translated version, carrying out a thorough comparison. Forty-five examples were manually collected and thematically classified into four categories: religious, social, political, and cultural constraints. The data were analyzed using Mughazy's (2016) typology and Baker's (1992) translation strategies for dealing with idiomatic and culturally fixed expressions.

A comprehensive assessment of the translational choices and strategies was employed, facilitating a thorough exploration of the cultural, linguistic, and contextual difficulties faced during translation.

4 Findings and Discussion

Throughout the translation process, translators frequently encounter many challenges that can significantly affect the accuracy of their work. These challenges are often referred to as "constraints." Translation constraints include any elements that limit the translation process and impede the achievement of an accurate translation. Usually, these constraints are associated with several factors but are mostly found in complex cultural texts that rely heavily on culturally specific terms and expressions that may not have direct

equivalents in the TL (Yousef, 2012). Upon thorough examination of the Arabic novel *Fīrān Ummī Hissa* and its translated version, *Mama Hissa's Mice*, the challenges encountered in the translation process are identified and classified into four main categories: social, cultural, political, and religious constraints.

4.1 Social Constraints

Al-Sanousi presented deep social messages in *Fīrān Ummī Hissa*, which revolve around the past and present of Katkout, the protagonist, describing his childhood and adulthood in Kuwait. Such messages are delivered through many social events, interactions, and relationships that Katkout has with neighbors and relatives. Besides, Al-Sanousi incorporates the names of places and landmarks that form the foundational backdrop of his narration and reflect a significant social dimension. Table 1 presents examples of how the proper nouns, kinship terms, and places were rendered into English.

Example (1) presents the translation of the protagonist's name, “كنكوت” which literally means “a chick.” The term “كنكوت” is also used in Arabic to describe small things or to call young children affectionately. The protagonist is called “Katkout” by his friend's sister and appears to hold affection for her despite her being a few years older than him. The name seems to make Katkout angry, so he replies with “أنا مو أصغر عيالك” as an attempt to alert her to the minor age difference between them. In this example, the translator employed a transliteration strategy to render the proper name “كنكوت” as “Katkout.” Initially, the translator did not explain the meaning of the word “Katkout” but instead relied on the explanation that came later in Katkout's response, “I'm not some little girl, you know,” which can explain that she referred to him using a term implying that he is younger than her. Although the translation of “أنا مو أصغر عيالك” into “I'm not some little girl, you know” manages to convey the age difference, it fails to reflect the accurate meaning of “Katkout.”

Table 1: Rendering names and kinship terms into English

No.	Source text	Literal translation	Target text
1	“كنكوت” “أنا مو أصغر عيالك”	“Chick!” “I am not your youngest child!”	“Katkout” “I'm not some little girl, you know”
2	“صادق ليس بصادق”	“Sadiq is not honest”	“Sadiq, like all his kind, isn't as truthful as his name suggests”
3	صالح الله يصلحه ، ابني وليس ابني	Saleh, may God fix him, is my son, and is not my son	Saleh, God help him, is my son and isn't my son
4	خالتي أم فهد؟ هذا أنا	My aunt Um Fahd? This is me	Khala? It's me
5	عمي صالح	My uncle Saleh	Uncle Saleh
6	عمي عباس وعمي صالح	My uncle Abbas and my uncle Saleh	Am Abbas and Am Saleh
7	فوق نهر البين كما يسمي الأهالي امتداد الطريق أسفل الجسر، بين المنطقتين بعدما طفق الشارع بمياه المجاري منذ سنوات	Above the Bayn River, as the people call the stretch of road under the bridge between the two regions, after the street overflowed with sewage years ago	The Bayn river, which is actually a road that run under the bridge and was so named after it started overflowing with a deluge of sewage a few years ago. Bayn-between two places
8	العميرة أم؟ “العميرة؟”	“Omariyya or Omairiyah?”	“Omariya or Umairiya?”
9	تمنيت لو أنني أبقيت على قطيعتي مع السرة، خرجا بلى عودة، كمن إنقطع به حبل السرة	I wished I had maintained my severance with the Surra, leaving and never returning, like someone whose umbilical cord was cut off	I wish that I'd stayed away from Surra, leaving never to return, like one cut off from his umbilical cord

Example (2) represents a case of homonyms where the first mention of the word “صادق” was employed as a proper name, while the second is used as an adjective that means “honest.” The translator effectively conveyed the meaning of both the proper name and the adjective by using a transliteration strategy to render the proper name “صادق” into English and paraphrasing to explain the meaning of the adjective “ليس بصادق” which was rendered as “isn’t as truthful as his name suggests.” Although the meaning was accurately conveyed in English, the translation failed to maintain the homonymous effect of the Arabic sentence. In Example (3), the ST contains the proper name “صالح” which literally means “righteous” and was transliterated into “Saleh.” This was followed by an expression containing the word “يصلحه” which is derived from the same root as the name “صالح,” namely, “صلح.” This expression is usually said as a wish for someone to come to their senses after a period of irrationality. Using derivations of the same root in this context may highlight the contrast between what the proper name and the following expression suggest. The translator paraphrased the expression as “God help him,” which does not seem to hold the same contrast indicated rhetorically in the Arabic expression.

Examples (4), (5), and (6) represent cases of rendering kinship terms into English. In Arab culture, titles are widely used as a mark of respect for elders or to denote specific relationships with family members. Consequently, titles are employed to denote relationships on the father’s and mother’s sides, and some are even used to address elderly neighbors or friends. For example, in the Arabic language, children use the word “خالة” to address their mother’s sister, and they may use the same title to address a stranger, an old lady, or an old neighbor. In the English language and culture, titles are used less frequently, typically reserved for close relatives like uncles and aunts, as it is common to use the nickname directly when dealing with friends or neighbors regardless of age.

In Example (4), the protagonist knocked on the door of their neighbor and addressed his female neighbor as “خالة أم فهد” out of respect, as she is the mother of his friend. The translator utilized the transliteration strategy, rendering the word into “Khala.” Although there is a direct equivalent to this term in English, which is “aunt,” it is not used as an addressing form. While “Miss” or “Mrs” could be used to show respect to elderly neighbors, titles are typically not used in such contexts in English culture. The translator also utilized a deletion strategy for the word “أم فهد” which followed the word “Khala,” since this naming system is not used in English. However, this can potentially lead to a misunderstanding of the meaning of the word “Khala” for the target audience, as they may perceive it as a new name rather than a title.

Similarly, Examples (5) and (6) present rendering male neighbors’ titles into English. In Example (5), the translator rendered the word “عم,” which is used in this context to show respect to elders, as “uncle,” although it typically refers to the brother of one’s father or mother in English or the husband of one’s aunt, which are both related to familial relations and are never used to address a neighbor. On the other hand, the translator used transliteration to render the same word as “am” in Example (6), which may lead the target readers to interpret it as part of the name since no explanation was provided indicating that it may be used as a title for calling male elders. Although this strategy may help preserve the cultural content of the text, using different strategies may demonstrate inconsistency in the approach used in the translation.

In Example (7), the translator also employed transliteration to render the word “Bayn” into English. After completing the sentence, the translator provided a definition of the word “Bayn” in a separate sentence: “Bayn-between two places.” However, inserting the definition as an explanatory note negatively affects the aesthetics of the literary text. Furthermore, the English translation fails to convey the nuanced meaning of the Arabic word “البين” which implies misfortune, since this river originated after the civil war between the Sunnis and the Shiites began, symbolizing division and tragedy.

Example (8) addresses the different pronunciations of the name of a place between the Sunni and Shiite sects. The actual name of the area is “Omariya,” in reference to Omar bin Khattab, the second Caliph after the Prophet, which indicates a Sunni symbol. Shiites, however, reject the second caliph and refer to him as Umair instead of Omar, which is used in Arabic to diminish the value of the name and, thus, call the area “Umairiya.” The translator rendered both words “Omariya” and “Umairiya” into English, successfully reflecting the difference in the pronunciation of each. However, the translation fails to convey the significance of each word and its meaning for each sect.

In Example (9), the author talks about where he spent his childhood, known as “Surra.” In Arabic, “Surra” refers to a bodily organ to which the fetus’s umbilical cord is attached, namely, the belly button. The author utilizes the word “السرة” as a homonym to provide a symbolic image, suggesting that his connection to his hometown is similar to the connection of a fetus to its mother’s womb through the umbilical cord. The translator transliterated the place name “السرة” into English and then explained the link in meaning to preserve the symbolic image.

4.2 Political Constraints

Fi'rān Ummī Hissa novel stands on many political events that could pose political constraints on translators, as it presents events related to the First Gulf War and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, which are familiar to the Arab audience but require explanation to the target readers. It also examines the present narrative of the civil war that occurred in Kuwait between the Sunnis and the Shiite sects. Table 2 presents examples of how political events and war-related terms were rendered into English.

In Example (10), Katkout remembered the first time he heard about the Iranian revolution “الثورة الإيرانية,” and how he initially did not understand what the word “ثورة” meant in Arabic, so he associated it with the word “ثورة” that refers to a female bull. This confusion highlights an important aspect of Arabic, where the word “ثورة” is homonymous and has multiple meanings depending on context. On the one hand, it refers to a “revolution” which in this context relates to the Iranian revolution that had significant political and social consequences. On the other hand, “ثورة” also refers to a female bull, a term used in Arabic agricultural or pastoral contexts. Given this dual meaning, the translator faced a difficult decision in conveying the full spectrum of the word’s meaning in the target language. To preserve the complexity of the term, the translator chose transliteration, rendering “ثورة” as “Thawra” even though it has a direct equivalent in English “revolution.” This decision may have been motivated by the desire to maintain the homonymic nature of the original word and to subtly underscore the ambiguity Katkout felt upon first encountering the term. Transliteration allowed the translator to capture the word’s phonetic form while simultaneously preserving its potential for multiple interpretations.

However, while the choice of “Thawra” may have successfully communicated the homonymic aspect of the Arabic word, it fell short in conveying the deeper cultural and historical significance of the term “Iranian

Table 2: Rendering political events and war-related terms into English

No.	Source text	Literal translation	Target text
10	منذ الثورة الإيرانية يمكن زوجة الثور؟ لا أفهم ماذا تعني ثورة. خمنت	Since the Iranian revolution I don't understand what revolution means. I guessed: “Can Taurus wife?”	Since the Iranian thawra What was thawra ? I knew thawra was a bull, and adding an [a] usually make things female, so I guessed it must be a female bull
11	دخل الكويت! أهى أقصى كلمة تصف الحدث يومكم ذاك	He entered Kuwait! Entry! is the best word to describe the event that day	Has entered Kuwait! Dukhool..entry – it was the only word you could come up with that day
12	دول كثيرة ... كثيرة، ليس من بينها دول ... الضد! دول الضد، العراق ومن كان في صفه من دول عربية	Many countries... many, not including the countries... the opposing! The opposing countries , Iraq and those who were on its side from the Arab countries	Many, many nations..but not one of the countries that has opposed your liberation “ Opposing countries ” Iraq and those other Arab countries in the same boat
13	أبو، الرئيس العراقي، بطل القادسية عدي، أو الرئيس كما يحلو للعم صالح	The Iraqi president, the hero of Al-Qadisiyah , Abu Uday, or the president as Uncle Saleh likes	Iraqi president, the hero of AlQadisiya , Abu Uday, or the “Big Man” as Am Saleh likes to call him

Thawra” to the target audience. The term “Thawra” in the context of the Iranian Revolution evokes specific historical events and political associations that may not be easily understood by a non-Arabic-speaking audience. Moreover, the translation failed to address the correct meaning of the Arabic word “ثورة.” The word “ثورة” in Arabic includes the feminine suffix “ة” but this form does not correspond to the English term “female bull,” as the English equivalent is “cow.” While “female bull” could be an attempt to reflect the gendered nature of the Arabic word, it does not accurately convey the English equivalent of “ثورة,” which would have been more culturally appropriate if rendered as “cow.”

In Example (11), the translator transliterated the word “دخول,” followed by its English equivalent “entry” to clarify the meaning. The word “دخول” has a significant meaning to Kuwaitis, particularly during the early days of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, as this word evokes memories of the complicated and fraught political situation at the time, with many Kuwaitis unsure about the intentions of the Iraqi leadership. At that time, Kuwaitis placed trust in the Iraqi president, doubting that his entry would end up in the invasion of Kuwait. Also, the word “دخول” is used by many Arabs when recounting the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Thus, transliterating this word is considered effective, especially when accompanied by its English translation, as it helps preserve the original meaning while making it accessible to the target audience. The inclusion of the English translation provides readers with a clear understanding of the term’s significance in the context of the invasion. However, the choice of transliteration emphasizes the cultural and historical weight of the term, allowing the translator to preserve the nuance that would otherwise be lost in a direct translation. Again, an inconsistency in the translation approaches is evident. In Example (10), the translator employed a transliteration strategy without offering an explanation, whereas in Example (11), the translation was provided.

Example (12) illustrates a translation of a war-related term. During the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, some countries allied with Iraq in its invasion of Kuwait, and these countries are referred to in Arabic as “دول الضد.” In this example, the translator paraphrased this expression to emphasize the negative side of the invasion. Thus, the term “دول الضد” was translated as “countries that opposed your liberation.” This choice reflects an attempt to capture the hostility associated with those countries from the Kuwaiti perspective by explicitly linking them to the obstruction of Kuwait’s freedom. It is worth mentioning that in the subsequent lines, the author re-mentioned “دول الضد,” and the translator rendered the expression differently as “opposing countries.”

In Example (13), the translator’s choice to transliterate “القادسية” as “AlQadisiya” without further explanation introduces a gap in conveying the term’s layered historical, political, and cultural connotations to the target audience. The term “Al Qadisiya” is not only a reference to the First Gulf War but is deeply embedded in the collective historical memory of Muslims, especially Arabs. The Battle of Al Qadisiya, which occurred in 636 CE, was a critical battle between the Muslim forces and the Sassanian Persian Empire, marking the end of Persian dominance in the region and the spread of Islam into Persia. This historical event holds significant symbolic weight as a powerful Muslim victory, often evoked in Arabic culture to signify triumph against overwhelming odds.

In the context of the First Gulf War, Saddam Hussein invoked “Al Qadisiya” as a parallel to his own military campaigns, positioning himself as “بطل القادسية” or “the hero of Al Qadisiya.” This association framed the Iraq–Iran war as a modern continuation of ancient Islamic conquests, portraying Saddam as a defender of Arab and Muslim pride against a Persian adversary. Thus, when the translator simply rendered “بطل القادسية” as “the hero of AlQadisiya” English-speaking readers were not provided with this rich historical and ideological backdrop, which would have helped them understand Saddam Hussein’s self-styled image and the cultural resonance of the term among Arabs. Without this additional context, the English translation lacks the full historical and symbolic weight that the original Arabic phrase conveys, potentially leading to misunderstandings or a lack of engagement with the text’s cultural significance.

4.3 Cultural Constraints

Saud AlSanousi in the *Fi'rān Ummī Hissa* novel excels in capturing the cultural dimension of Kuwaiti society by portraying characters from different generations, highlighting Mama Hissa’s character as a grandmotherly

figure, presenting old Kuwaiti customs and traditions through her words and actions. Additionally, the author brilliantly presents the Kuwaiti community and its diversity across two periods, separated by 20 years. Thus, the richness and depth of the novel's cultural dimension pose a challenge for the translator in accurately rendering the cultural terms and reflecting customs and traditions.

4.3.1 Food and Clothing

Food and clothing are essential aspects of defining every culture, as each is distinguished by its distinctive national dishes and traditional clothing. Therefore, rendering terms related to food and clothing poses a significant challenge and usually requires examining and utilizing professional strategies to convey them effectively. Table 3 presents examples of how food and clothing terms were rendered into English.

Examples (14), (15), and (16) illustrate examples of how the translator rendered traditional clothes into English. The translator employed a transliteration strategy to render each of “غتره”, “دشداشة”, and “ملفح” into English, in an attempt to culturally present these terms to the target audience. The word “dishdasha” has gained recognition and become familiar to other nations in addition to the word “thobe,” thus the translator successfully rendered “دشداشة” as “dishdasha.” Similarly, the translator successfully rendered the word “ghutra,” despite its lesser familiarity compared to “dishdasha” due to the variations in naming among different Arab nations such as “kufiyyah,” “ghutrah,” “hatta,” and “shemagh,” with “kufiyyah” being the most common. However, “ghutra” is still defined in dictionaries and widely recognized on platforms like Wikipedia as “a type of men headcloth.” Regarding “milfah,” various interpretations are possible as it carries different meanings in Arabic, so it would have been more comprehensible to the target audience if it had been rendered as “milfah” associated with its direct equivalent “Hijab or veil.”

Examples (17), (18), and (19) demonstrate different approaches in rendering food terms into English, highlighting a potential inconsistency in translation. In Example (17), the term “مطبق سمك” was rendered as “muttabbaq samak.” Here, the translator opted for a transliteration strategy to culturally introduce the term to the target audience as a well-known Kuwaiti national dish. Similarly, in Example (18), the translator used a transliteration strategy to render both words “الدولمة” and “الدملوج,” which are known Iraqi national dishes. Employing terms like “muttabbaq samak,” “dolma,” and “damlooj” is considered effective as these terms become familiar, appearing on search engines with accompanying images that help the target users understand them.

In Example (19), the translator inconsistently opted for a paraphrasing approach instead of transliteration for the word “مسخن” despite the fact that “مسخن” could be treated similarly to “muttabbaq samak” “dolma” and “damlooj” all of which are well-known national dishes. It is important to note that even paraphrasing “مسخن” as “sumac chicken” does not accurately convey the meaning of the dish, as “مسخن” is characterized by its caramelized onions atop layers of flatbread, rather than solely by sumac and chicken. Consequently, using

Table 3: Rendering cloth and food terms into English

No.	Source text	Literal translation	Target text
14	أمد كفي اتحسس جيب دشداشتي الأيمن	I reach out my hand and feel the right pocket of my dishdasha	I stretched my arm to grope for the right pocket of my dishdasha
15	وغتره يلفها بإهمال على رأسه	He wears a ghutra carelessly wrapped around his head	With a carelessly wrapped ghutra around his head
16	أحكمت أمي لف الملفح حول رأسها	My mother tied the scarf tightly around her head	Mama Hissa wrapped her milfah around her head.
17	“يمه..مشتهي مطبق سمك”	“Mom... I’m craving layered fish ”	“Mom, I am craving muttabbaq samak! ”
18	الدولمة الدسمة والدملوج	Fatty stuffed vine leaves and damlooj	Fatty dolma and damlooj
19	وقف سامر وحازم يحملان طبق مسخن وطبق عوامه	Samer and Hazem stood carrying a plate of musakhan and a plate of awama	Stood Samir and Hazim carrying a dish of roasted sumac chicken and awwameh for dessert

“sumac chicken” fails to capture the true essence of the national dish “مسخن.” In the same example, the translator effectively rendered the word “عوامة” as “Awwameh” by employing transliteration followed by the addition of a classifier “dessert,” aiding the target audience in understanding that “Awwameh” is a type of dessert.

4.3.2 TV Series, National Songs and Poems

The novel draws inspiration from many national songs and patriotic poems that emerged during the period of the novel's events. Moreover, the author refers to an old famous TV series in Kuwait called “على الدنيا السلام” using insights from it, like the name of the group “Fuada’s Kids.” Incorporating songs, and poems poses several challenges and doubles the translators’ workload. For example, translating poetry requires maintaining both the meaning and rhyme scheme. Table 4 includes some examples related to the rendition of TV series, poems, and songs.

Example (20) presents one of the poems that “Fuada’s Kids” used to broadcast on their own radio channel, conveying profound messages against sectarian conflicts between Sunnis and Shiites, where the term “darkness” symbolizes sectarian discord. The translation fails to reflect the beauty of the rhymes, as seen in the original Arabic text. Moreover, certain terms like “لغة الكلام” which means “speech lisp,” and which is associated with difficulties in articulating sounds, especially among children, were incorrectly rendered as “power to speak.”

Example (21) provides a translation of a song by the famous Kuwaiti singer “Abd AlKareem Abd AlKader.” His songs are mentioned several times throughout the novel, as Fahad, Katkout’s friend, is a big fan of his songs. While examining the translation of these songs, it was found that they were effectively rendered. In this example, the translator employed a cultural substitution strategy to render the word “غربة” as “a whole world,” which successfully conveys the meaning.

In Example (22), the translator opted for a literal translation of the traditional song “عبي لي الجرة” rendering it as “fill the jug for me.” Recognizing the song’s cultural significance, especially as it is frequently recited by Abu Sameh, a Palestinian neighbor, the translator added a brief explanation: “written after 1967 for the displaced Palestinians who’d traversed across Jordan to Iraq to settle in Kuwait.” This concise addition helps convey the song’s cultural value to English-speaking readers. In Example (23), a famous series named “على الدنيا السلام” was referred to. It is an idiomatic expression used by Arabic speakers, meaning “life has nothing worth!” This reflects a sense of skepticism regarding the value of life itself. The translator used “rest in

Table 4: Rendering TV series, poems, and songs into English

No.	Source text	Literal translation	Target text
20	المجد للظلام للصوص السارقين من فم الرضيع لغة الكلام الغاصبين من جفون أمه شهية المنام	Glory to darkness For thieves who steal from a baby’s mouth Speech lisp The usurpers of its mother’s eyelids Dream appetite	Glory to darkness To thieves stealing from the mouths of babes Stealing their power to speak Stealing away from their mother’s eyelids The appetite to dream
21	يبنى وبينك غربة كنها الليل أغنية لعبد الكريم عبد القادر	A song by Abdel Karim Abdel Qader: “Between you and me there is a strangeness like the night...”	Abdulkareem Abdulqader song: “between you and me a whole world , long and dark as night
22	يردد ما يشبه أغنية شعبية محرفة حفظناها من أبي سامح: عبي لي الجرة	He repeats what sounds like a distorted popular song that we memorized from Abu Sameh: Fill me the jar	He parroted a garbled version of one of Abu Sameh favorites, written after 1967 for the displaced Palestinians who’d traversed across Jordan to Iraq to settle in Kuwait “fill the jug for me”
23	على الدنيا السلام “مسلسل”	“ Peace be upon the world ” series	TV series “ Rest in Peace ”

peace” to render this expression, which, while it can carry a sarcastic undertone in certain contexts, is mainly known in English as a wish or prayer for peace in the afterlife for someone who has died. While both expressions may carry a sarcastic tone, the Arabic reflects a critique of life being meaningless, which is not present in the English equivalent and might seem unrelated to the original emotion expressed.

4.3.3 Arabic Taboos and Curse Words

In every society, some words are used to convey anger, often containing impolite and disrespectful terms and expressions. Furthermore, each culture has a specific style of employing these words. For example, in Arabic culture, insults often involve references to a person’s parent or lineage, and sometimes are associated with animal behavior or name. Additionally, in Arab and Islamic societies, the use of sexual terms is considered taboo and goes against societal norms, whereas in other Western societies, such terms are considered normal and used frequently. Table 5 illustrates some taboos and curse words found in the novel, along with their English translations.

Example (24) illustrates an insult that associates damn to one of the parents, where the word “أبو” is associated with “يلعن” to damn a person. As mentioned earlier, insults referencing one parent are common in Arabic societies, but in the TL, the curse is typically directed at an individual rather than their parents. Rendering the insult as “Damn you fathers” might seem odd to the target readers. Therefore, its use in this context, where Fahid’s father insults Katkout, whose own father plays no role in the novel, may surprise the readers.

In the same example, further insults were directed to Katkout when Fahid’s father called him and his group, Fuada’s kids, by “عيال الكلب,” a phrase that is commonly used in Arabic swear words. The translator applied translation by substitution to render “عيال الكلب” as “son of bitches.” The term “bitches” can be understood in two ways: either as referring to female dogs or as a derogatory term for women. Both interpretations redirect the insult from being towards males in the Arabic context to showing bias against females in the TL. Moreover, if interpreted as referring to a lewd woman, the translation may appear more aggressive.

In Example (25), Fahid’s father referred to one of the neighbors as “القواد,” which is highly derogatory in Arabic, indicating someone involved in indecent acts or who manages and leads a group of women engaged in prostitution. The translator employed a translation strategy using the less expressive words to render the term “bastard.” While “bastard” typically describes someone of illegitimate birth or can be used as an insult to convey contempt or disapproval, its meaning is generally less offensive than the Arabic curse word “القواد.”

Example (26) illustrates an insult that links shame to one of the parents, as in Example (24). However, it refers to another commonly known insult in Arab culture, “أولاد الحرام,” which indicates individuals who are born outside the framework of lawful marriage. This term is also employed to describe people with bad morals. The translator opted for a translation strategy using a less expressive word to render the term “bastard.” In Western culture, “bastard” is a milder term since illegitimate relationships are perceived normally, whereas Arab societies reject them.

Table 5: Rendering Arabic taboos and curse words into English

No.	Source text	Literal translation	Target text
24	يلعن أبوكم لأبو فؤاده لأبو !من أسسكم يا عيال الكلب	Damn your fathers and Fuada’s father, and the father of the one who founded you, you sons of dogs!	Damn your fathers and your stupid Fuada’s kids’ group, you son of bitches!
25	القواد! والله جرىء	The pimp! He is brave!	That bastard! How dare he!
26	أبوكم.. أبو منظمة التحرير يا أولاد الحرام	Damn your father... and the father of the Liberation Organization, you illegitimate children	Damn you and your liberation movement, you bastard
27	تخلخل عظامك	May your bones become brittle	May your bones become brittle

In Example (27), the translator adopted a literal translation to render “تخلخل عظامك” as “May your bones become brittle.” Although the phrase retained its meaning, this literal translation may seem odd and unusual to the target readers since such phrases are not commonly used in English culture. The idiomatic flair is lost in the translation, resulting in an expression that feels foreign or forced in an English context.

4.3.4 Idioms and Proverbs

Idioms and proverbs are considered one of the most important characteristics associated with every culture, where they originate through centuries of shared experiences. Each culture typically has its unique set of idioms and proverbs derived from historical events, traditions, and social interactions. Consequently, translating idioms and proverbs poses a significant challenge, as finding precise equivalents in other languages is not easily achieved. Table 6 demonstrates the translation of some idioms and proverbs used in the novel.

In Example (28), the translator literally rendered the Arabic proverb “كل بلد بعين أهله مصر” as “Everyone thinks his own country is an Egypt!” Over the years, the inhabitants of desert regions and Gulf countries have regarded Egypt as a symbol of beauty, particularly due to the presence of the Nile River, as well as its rich cultural and historical heritage. Therefore, Egypt is used as a reference for something well-recognized and superior. The proverb carries a profound meaning, suggesting that people find what they possess the best. However, a literal translation of the proverb leads to misunderstanding as the target audience may not capture the significance of using Egypt in this context. Translating such a proverb requires finding a cultural substitute to convey the intended meaning to the target readers.

In Example (29), the translator rendered “لسان يلو ط الاذان” as “big mouths” utilizing an idiom with a similar meaning but a different context. The Arabic idiom depicts talkative people, who are verbose and loud, as their tongues reach their ears due to the intensity of their shouting and verbosity. The English idiom used to describe people who talk too much or boast excessively. Although the Arabic idiom conveys a sharper meaning, rendering it as “big mouths” effectively reflects the meaning to the target audience.

Example (30) is mentioned by Mama Zinab, Sadiq’s (Katkoot’s friend) grandmother, who was Iraqi but married and lived in Kuwait. She used “اه من بطني..واه من ظهري” to indicate that both the Kuwaiti and Iraqi people are important to her, symbolizing them as integral parts of her body: the back and belly. Later, Katkout

Table 6: Rendering idioms and proverbs into English

No.	Source text	Literal translation	Target text
28	!كل بلد بعين أهله مصر	Every country through the eyes of its people, is Egypt!	Everyone thinks his own country is an Egypt!
29	عيال اليوم ... لسان يلو ط الاذان	Today's children... a tongue that touches the ears	Kids today, such big mouths
30	اه من بطني ..واه من ظهري	Ouch, my stomach...ouch, my back	In my back and in my stomach, I feel pain. Both hurt the same
31	شلوح ملوح، إلى يدل بيته يروح	Shalouh Mallouh, whoever shows his house will go	“Shalluh Mallouh, illi dil baiteh yaruh.” He who knows the way home, off he goes
32	من ترك داره ، قل مقدار	Whoever leaves his home, his value will be reduced	Strangers are not respected in a strange land
33	من خاف سلم	Whoever is afraid will be safe	The cowards stay safe
34	ألتفت حولي. الناس كجياذ العربات كأبقار السواقي. شيء يحجب رؤيتهم عما حولهم	I looked around. People are like carriage horses and irrigation cows . Something obscures their view of what's around them	I look around. People here are like horses with blinders on, pulling carriages. Or cow being driven through irrigation Dyches , their peripheral vision blocked
35	الحافظ الله	Allah is the protector	“Alhafiz Allah” God is a mighty protector
36	يا صبر أيوب	Oh, the patience of Job!	“O God, give our Ayub here patience like the prophet he’s named after”
37	يفوتك من الكذاب صدق كثير	You miss out on a lot of honesty from a liar	Don’t look for truth on the lips of liars!

employed the same idiom to emphasize the importance of both his Shiite and Sunni friends. The translator chose to interpret the Arabic idiom as “In my back and in my stomach, I feel pain. Both hurt the same” by employing paraphrasing. The English translation suggests that the speaker is experiencing both emotional and physical pain, with both sources of pain being equally significant and impactful. However, the translation fails to convey the metaphorical depth of the Arabic idiom. Instead, it depicts it as emotional and physical pain, failing to accurately convey the intended meaning.

Example (31) features the Kuwaiti idiom “شلوح ملوح، إلى يدل بيته بروح” which is commonly used by children after finishing playtime and heading back home, and by adults to politely encourage someone to leave a gathering or event. The translator utilized translation by transliteration to render the idiom as “Shalluh Mallouh, illi dil baiteh yaruh,” along with paraphrasing to explain the meaning to the target readers as “He who knows the way home, off he goes.” The translator attempted to reflect part of the culture’s essence through transliteration and effectively conveyed the meaning through the provided explanation.

Example (32) presents the popular Arabic proverb “من ترك داره، قل مقدار” which implies that a person cannot find comfort except at home and often encounter humiliation and loss of dignity when leaving it. The translator employed paraphrasing to render the Arabic proverb as “Strangers are not respected in a strange land.” While using a closer phrase such as “Leaving one’s home diminishes one’s worth” could have been used, the chosen translation effectively conveyed the meaning to the target audience, as both phrases deliver the concept that departing from one’s home can lead to a loss of value or respect.

In Example (33), the translator utilized paraphrasing to render the Arabic proverb “من خاف سلم” as “the cowards stay safe.” This translation effectively conveys the meaning since a coward refers to someone who lacks courage in facing danger or difficulty, aligning with the Arabic proverb that those who fear remain safe.

Example (34) presents a significant example of an Arabic idiom that is hard to interpret. When Katkout mentioned “الناس كجيات العربات كأبقار السواقى” he meant that people were simply going about their business without doing anything new that catches his attention, much like the carriage houses and draught oxen. The translator employed paraphrasing to render the Arabic idiom “كجيات العربات كأبقار السواقى” as “horses with blinders on, pulling carriages. Or cow being driven through irrigation Dyches.” This translation captures the literal meaning of the idiom but fails to convey its connotation or significance. Moreover, the definition was lengthy and distracted the readers’ attention from the core idea.

In Example (35), the translator rendered “الحافظ الله” as “Alhafiz Allah” by employing translation by transliteration along with paraphrasing to explain the meaning to the target readers as “God is a mighty protector.” Transliteration in this example effectively captures the pronunciation of a significant religious invocation while incorporating its translation aids in explaining the meaning to the intended reader.

Example (36) is similar to the previous one as it reflects a religious aspect of an idiom. Muslims invoke the name of the prophet Ayub to emphasize patience. In many situations that require patience, they say “يا صبر أيوب.” The translator employed paraphrasing to render this idiom as “O God, give our Ayub here patience like the prophet he’s named after” to explain that Ayub is the name of a prophet whose story serves as a powerful example of patience.

In Example (37), the translator rendered the Arabic proverb “يفوتك من الكذاب صدق كثير” by using a proverb with a similar meaning. However, the chosen English proverb “Don’t look for truth on the lips of liars!” actually conveys the opposite meaning and thus fails to accurately convey the intended message. The Arabic proverb suggests that liars may tell some truth, which people might miss due to their tendency to lie, whereas the English proverb implies that liars never speak the truth, and thus highlights the impossibility of a liar being truthful.

4.4 Religious Constraints

The divine religions and the various religious sects that follow them encompass many unique terms and expressions specific to their respective beliefs, setting them apart from others. These religious terms and expressions may lack direct equivalents in other languages, posing challenges for translators in accurately

conveying their meanings and connotations into the TL. Table 7 addresses several religious terms and expressions collected from the novel and presents how the translator rendered them.

Example (38) discusses the name “عبد النبي” which is commonly used by the Shiite sect. In Arabic, the word “عبد” is typically associated with names related only to God in Sunni beliefs, while in Shiite, it can be used before the name of the prophet and some of his family members. Therefore, within the Arabic language and among Muslims, it is evident that a person with the name “عبد النبي” is likely a Shiite believer. The translator employed translation by transliteration to render the name “عبد النبي” into “Abdul Nabi,” along with paraphrasing to explain the meaning of the name to the target readers by “Slave to the prophet.” The translation effectively conveyed the meaning of “Slave to the prophet” since, in Islam, it refers to someone who devoutly adheres to the teachings and guidance of Prophet Muhammad. However, the additional explanation provided by the translator states, “They don’t worship God; ‘they’ worship the Prophet and his family.” is incorrect. This implies that the translator may not be familiar with the beliefs of other sects. It is important to know that Muslims, regardless of their sects, worship Allah alone, and in Shiite beliefs, the word “Abdul” is used to denote obeying and respecting the prophet and his family, not worship.

Example (39) presents several terms related to Sunni and Shiite sects. It describes Katkout’s journey through the Kuwait streets during the civil war between Sunni and Shiite believers. Along the way, he encountered many phrases written on walls, expressing support or opposition to various sects. The translator

Table 7: Rendering religious terms into English

No.	Source text	Literal translation	Target text
38	“عبدالنبي!” هز رأسه “مؤكد! فهمت؟”	"Abdel Naby!" He nodded his head, saying, "Understood?"	“Abdul Nabi...Slave to the prophet.” He nodded his head in confirmation.” “Get it now? They don’t worship God; ‘they’ worship the Prophet and his family”
39	أمير من بينها حربا كلماتية:	I distinguish among them a war of words:	Word of words etched into the building facade in turns by Sunni and Shia extremists:
	أم المؤمنين رغم أنوف الحاقدين	Mother of the believers, despite the noses of the haters	AISHA, MOTHER OF THE BELIEVERS, DESPITE WHAT THE HATERS SAY
	اللعه على النواصب	Damn the opponents of the prophet’s household	DAWN THOSE WHO GO AGAINES THE PROPHET’S HOUSEHOLD
	الموت للروافض	Death to the opponents of the prophet’s companions	DEATH TO THOSE WHO REFUSE TO ACCEPT THE PROPHET COMPANIONS
40	رافضة، أولئك الذين يرفضون الترضي على صحب النبي وزوجته عائشة	An opponent of the prophet’s companions , those who refuse to accept the companions of the Prophet and his wife Aisha	Rafida, the refuseniks, those who refuse to invoke God’s blessing on the prophet companions – Abu Baker, Omar, and Uthman – and his wife Aisha
41	"عمر ... عمر لم أكن في تلك السن أدرك أن المعنى هو ثاني خلفاء النبي	“Omar...Omar. At that age, I did not realize that the meaning was the second successor to the Prophet	“Omar...Omar.” Back then I didn’t know that Hercules’s utterance was referring to the second Caliph after the prophet, a Sunni symbol, and that Umair was short for Mus’ab Bin Umair, a Shia symbol
42	في حين تذهب إلى الحمام تتوضأ قبل النوم. تستغرب وضوؤها في غير وقت الصلاة	When she goes to the bathroom, she performs ablution before sleeping. It is strange that she performs ablution outside the time of prayer	Do her ablutions before going to bed. You were surprised that she did wudu’ even though she was just going to bed and not praying
43	تتمتع العجوز: ألا يا من أعاد يونس من بطن الحوت.. أعده سالما	The old woman mumbles: Oh, you who brought Yunus back from the belly of the whale , bring him back safely	The old lady mumbles, “Yunus who returned from the whale’s stomach ..
44	أقامت لها أمك زينب مجلس عزاء في أربعينيتها	Your mother, Zainab, held a funeral after 40 days of her death	Mama Zaynab had organized a Shiite mourning ceremony for Mama Hissa’s Arba’eeniya
45	أرفعت الأقلام وجفت الصحف	Pens are lifted and papers are dried!	Pens down, ink dried. Too little too late

used paraphrasing to clarify that these phrases were written: “in turns by Sunni and Shia extremists.” Here, the translator effectively uses the word “Extremist” to preface subsequent phrases that include curse words and expressions of hatred typically associated with extremists. The first phrase is about “Aisha,” who is commonly known as “Mother of the believers.” Although the Arabic phrase did not include the word “عائشة,” the translator successfully introduces the concept to the target readers by adding “AISHA.” In the second and third phrases “اللجنة على النواصب” and “الموت للروافض” the translator omitted the words “النواصب” and “الروافض,” and employed paraphrasing strategy to explain the meaning of each word. Consequently “النواصب” was rendered as “THOSE WHO GO AGAINST THE PROPHET’S HOUSEHOLD” and “الروافض” as “THOSE WHO REFUSE TO ACCEPT THE PROPHET COMPANIONS.” While providing definitions was necessary to inform the readers about these groups, deleting the group names may not have been a successful approach as both words were frequently used later in the novel. The translator opted for transliteration in later occurrences to render them (as in Example (40)), indicating inconsistency in the translation approach.

In Example (40), the translator utilized transliteration to render “رافضة” as “Rafida.” Besides, she effectively introduced the target readers to the Prophet’s companions by adding “Abu Baker, Omar, and Uthman.” This addition was beneficial considering that Caliph Omar’s name was referenced frequently throughout the novel.

In Example (41), the translator utilized paraphrasing to introduce the readers to the significance of the name Omar, indicating that it is “a symbol for the Sunni sect and that Umair was short for Mus’ab Bin Umair, a Shia symbol.” However, this addition resulted in incorrect information, as Mus’ab Bin Umair was martyred in the Battle of Uhud, which occurred before the emergence of sects in Islam. As previously mentioned, “Umair” is actually a diminutive form of the name “Omar” used with the intention of disrespecting the name. This highlights another example of the translator’s unfamiliarity with Muslim sects’ beliefs.

Example (42) illustrates a case where the same religious term has been rendered in two different ways. Initially, the word “توضأ” has been rendered as “Do ablutions” by employing paraphrasing using a related word while in the next occurrence, it was transliterated as “Wudu.” The translator’s intention of providing both an equivalent term and the transliterated version may have been to familiarize the target readers with this religious terminology. However, this may cause confusion for the target readers, as they may not immediately recognize that “wudu” and “do ablutions” convey the same meaning. Additionally, the translator employed paraphrasing to render the phrase “في غير وقت الصلاة” as “even though she was just going to bed and not praying.” The translation is considered inaccurate as “في غير أوقات الصلاة” includes times other than bedtime. Therefore, a more precise rendering would be “out of praying time.”

In Example (43), Mama Hissa prayed to God, asking for the safe return of her son from prison in Iraq, referring to the story of Prophet Yunus, who returned safely from the whale stomach as mentioned in the Quran. The translator applied the omission strategy, deleting “ألا من” from “ألا يا من أعاد يونس من بطن الحوت” as “Yunus who returned from the whale’s stomach.” However, this altered the tone of the phrase, as the Arabic phrase is a supplication begins with “يا من” which means “O God,” whereas the English translation appears as a statement about someone called “Yunus.” Besides, the translator did not provide an explanation to clarify who “Yunus” is, which may leave the target readers confused and unable to understand the intended meaning.

Example (44) discusses a religious occasion specifically associated with the Shiite sect and with some Sunnis as well, known as “الأربعينية.” This event occurs on the fortieth day after someone’s death, when the family members and mourners gather, just like on the day of the deceased’s death. The translator opted for transliteration to render the Arabic word “الأربعينية” as “Arba’eeniya.” Additionally, the translator added the word “Shitte” to ensure that the readers understand that “Arba’eeniya” is a Shiite mourning ceremony. This addition effectively conveys the specific religious context, even though the “Arba’eeniya” gathering is known among some Sunnis as well. In the context of the novel, it was portrayed as an event specifically associated with the Shiite sect, and therefore, adding the term “Shiite” accurately conveys the intended meaning.

Example (45) includes the Arabic idiom “رفعت الأقلام وجفت الصحف,” which is derived from a prophetic hadeeth. This idiom indicates the completion of a work, an event’s conclusion, or the termination of responsibility. In the novel context, Katkout employed this idiom upon hearing people associating his group (the Fuada kids’ group) with atheists as an acknowledgment of surrender and acceptance of the inability to fix or change people’s beliefs. The translator rendered this idiom by using two different expressions: “Pens down

and ink dried” and “Too little too late.” “Pens down” aligns as an idiom with a similar meaning and form, conveying the idea of completing a written work or a task. “Too little too late” aligns as an idiom with a similar meaning but a different form, implying that whatever was done is not enough to make a difference because it occurred too late. Both idioms can convey the intended meaning but with less expressive meaning compared to the original Arabic idiom. Translating the idiom by “ink dried” lacks familiarity among the target audience and cannot be considered as an accurate translation.

5 Conclusion

This research explored the challenges encountered by the translator of *Fi'rān Ummī Hissa* novel when rendering social, political, cultural, and religious expressions into English. The primary aim was to identify the key constraints faced in the translation of this novel and to analyze the specific strategies employed to address these constraints. The research questions focused on the constraints faced by the translator and the strategies adopted to overcome them, with an evaluation of their effectiveness in conveying the novel's meaning and cultural significance to an English-speaking audience.

The novel's translation faced several constraints: social, political, cultural, and religious. Social constraints involved the nuanced rendering of names, titles, and place names. Politically, the novel's focus on events like the Gulf War and internal sectarian conflicts presented challenges in conveying accurate political and war-related terminology. Cultural constraints included the translation of national attire, food, and the frequent use of songs, idioms, and proverbs, which were complicated by the novel's pessimistic tone and use of curses. Religious constraints, particularly around Sunni and Shiite beliefs, required the translator to add explanations for clarity, demanding a deep familiarity with these religious practices and beliefs.

To overcome these constraints, the translator employed multiple strategies, with transliteration being the most frequently used, alongside paraphrasing and additions to clarify terms or phrases. Transliteration was heavily used in rendering terms and phrases, yet inconsistencies in the translation approach emerged. In certain cases, transliteration was provided without explanations, such as in the translation of names, titles, food, and clothes, as well as war-related terms and some dialectal constraints. This is consistent with the previous findings of Al-Batineh and Alsmadi (2021) and Al Saideen et al. (2022), who found that literary translators opted for foreignization when translating such expressions. However, for religious constraints, transliteration was often accompanied by explanatory additions, which aimed to clarify meanings for the target readers. Although these additions are crucial, some were found to be excessively lengthy, while others contained inaccuracies regarding religious details, highlighting the translator's unfamiliarity with concepts related to sects' beliefs and practices (Alwafai 2015). However, these findings point to the need for a systematic strategy in applying explanatory additions, one that categorizes additions based on relevance to the text and cultural nuances to prevent overwhelming readers.

The translator also opted for a cultural substitution strategy in rendering song lyrics and some curse words, which validates the results of Alhamshary (2021) and Rababah and Al-Abbas (2022). Additionally, translation using less expressive words was used to render taboos, curse words, and some idioms to mitigate cultural impact. For idioms and proverbs, various strategies were utilized, including the use of idioms with similar meaning and form, paraphrasing, transliteration with additions, and, in some cases, literal translation. This is partially consistent with Zayed et al. (2021), who confirmed that paraphrasing and translating idioms with similar forms and meanings were determined as the most suitable strategies for rendering Arabic idioms into English. Cases of inaccurate or incorrect translation are evident in the translation of idioms and proverbs, either due to the use of literal translation, resulting in a strange and unfamiliar text to the target readers, underscoring the need for stronger familiarity with Kuwaiti culture and dialect on the part of the translator.

The omission strategy was applied in a few cases to remove cultural and religious terms lacking an equivalent in the TL, which lends support to the previous findings of Al-Amayreh (2019) and Marabout (2010). However, some omitted terms were reintroduced later in transliterated form, highlighting further inconsistency in the translation approach. This incompatibility in the translation approach provides further

evidence of inconsistency in the translator's approach to translation. This inconsistency suggests a need for a more systematic method to ensure omitted terms are effectively managed and reintegrated where essential.

This study underscores several implications for translators. Consistency is vital when translating similar types of cultural terms and expressions to maintain uniformity across the translated text. The use of footnotes for terms requiring transliteration can aid readers in understanding cultural contexts without interrupting the text flow. Furthermore, this study of a culturally and linguistically rich Arabic text highlights specific challenges in translating homonyms, which often hold symbolic or aesthetic significance. Distinguishing between homonyms with similar forms but different meanings is a formidable challenge yet offers translators an opportunity for deeper engagement with the text, potentially expanding their translation skills.

Future translation studies are recommended to explore other literary works to gain deeper insight into the way Arabic literature is rendered. Additionally, comparative studies can be conducted to compare translations of similar texts across multiple languages to provide insights into how different cultural contexts influence translation strategies.

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