Translatability of Arabic Phonological Repetition into English: A Case Study of Edwar Al-Kharrat

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Supervisory Committee

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Prof. Mohammed Farghal..................Member
Dr. Fadia Suyoufe..................Member
Dr. Mohammad Saraireh..................Member

January 2001
Dedication

TO MY FATHER AND MOTHER,

TO MY WIFE MANAL,

AND TO MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS.
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I wish to thank my supervisor, Dr. Abdulla Shunnaq, for his guidance and suggestions. His invaluable remarks on this thesis impelled me and constituted a great addition to its value, let alone his cooperation and tolerance. I am particularly indebted to the supervisory committee: Prof. Mohammed Farghal, Dr. Fadia Suyoufie and Dr. Mohammad Saraireh for dedicating their time and effort for discussing this thesis. Their remarks will certainly be taken with great care.

Many thanks go to my father and mother, to my wife (who is also an MA student and working on her thesis nowadays) and to my brothers and sisters for their patience, help and continuous support during the time of preparing this thesis and without whose help this thesis was almost impossible. Special thanks are due to Dr. Ahmad Khrais, who proposed the topic of this thesis, for his help, beneficial discussions and helping remarks all the way through. I cannot forget to thank my colleagues both at work and at Yarmouk University for their help and cooperation. I want to second my special thanks to my wife, Manal, for her help in keeping me awake over the nights, and for her revising as well as typing this thesis. And finally my deepest gratitude is due to every one who participated in bringing this work to light.
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Abstract in Arabic
ABSTRACT

This study is set to discuss the phenomenon of phonological repetition as a problem of translation from Arabic into English from a semantic and pragmatic perspective. It derives its evidence from two Arabic novels (written by Edwar Al-Kharrat) which are *Turābuḥa Za'farān* and *Yā Banāt Iskandariyyah*, both translated into English by Frances Liardet. The translation of phonological repetition constitutes an obstacle for translators. This linguistic phenomenon is handled against three scales: the best type of equivalence to adopt, i.e., to choose among formal, functional, or ideational equivalence; the most suitable translation strategy to employ; and the functions achieved by the use of this type of repetition.

A number of extracts taken from the two above-mentioned novels are studied and compared them with Liardet’s translations. The extracts are analyzed semantically, pragmatically, and then the translation problems that occur in the TL texts are accordingly discussed. This type of repetition takes several forms. For the purposes of this study, it is divided into five categories, namely alliterative segments, onomatopoeic patterns, phonological word-strings, cognate accusatives, and finally
rhyming patterns and parallel structures. The semantic and pragmatic functions achieved through the use of such repetition are shown and analyzed. Functionally, such repetition could be cohesive, emphatic, emotive, aesthetic, etc. Translation problems caused by the presence of such elements are also discussed and analyzed, and finally some solutions for the ensuing problems and beneficial recommendations are furnished.
Transliteration Table

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Long Vowels: ā ū ī
Chapter One

1. Introduction

A good definition of translation was given by Karla Déjean:

Translation means comprehending the author’s meaning and restating that meaning in the target language as the author most probably would have expressed it, had s/he been a native speaker of the target language.

(1988: 239)

The ultimate goal of translation theory is to use the most effective techniques and the soundest strategies to achieve what is called ‘equivalence’. However, it is unanimously acknowledged that translations never reach this goal. This, in fact, is due to many factors including cultural differences between the Source Language (SL) and the Target Language (TL), and differences in lexicon, phonetic systems, syntactic features and structures, word order, style, etc. between any two languages. Failure to take these differences into account might cause the translator to come up with an ‘unfaithful’ rendition of the text s/he is dealing with.

The present study addresses one of the problematic issues facing the translator: repetition of sounds or what will be called in this study ‘phonological repetition’ presented by the use of some segmental devices
and some other patterns. Phonological repetition involves the repetition of sounds in pronunciation or letters in writing. This repetition, if intentionally incorporated within the text, is by all means meaningful and functional. That is why such meaning should appear in the TL text and the translator, therefore, should deal with this phenomenon carefully.

The study draws on evidence from two Arabic novels written by Edwar Al-Kharrat: *Turābuha Za'farān* and *Yā Banāt Iskandariyyah*, both translated into English by Frances Liardet. In these novels phonological repetition abounds. This study will shed light on the functions of such repetition semantically and pragmatically and then will attempt to arrive at a kind of decision-making regarding what translation strategies better serve to translate such repetition.

2. Rationale of the Study

Phonological repetition is a phenomenon that has not yet received its due interest and attention in translational studies. This judgment could be justified by stating the fact that there is a shortage of references and literature dealing with this particular phenomenon. Shunnaq (1992: 5) states that “very few studies have in fact touched on this topic in Arabic [and] any attempt to investigate repetition in Arabic and its relevancy to translation [...] is therefore justified and motivated because of its usefulness to linguists, teachers, students, translators, and laymen alike.”
Phonological repetition, as a term, is rather uncommon in the studies done in the fields of linguistics and literature. This study aims at examining this term, highlighting and featuring it as a functional linguistic phenomenon and analyzing its forms, functions and translatability. The study will try to find answers to some of the problems that might face the translator when dealing with such devices. The study will also open a door for further research and more studies and analysis to be done and conducted in the future.

3. Purpose of the Study

This study is meant to show the role of phonological repetition and the devices manipulating it in extending meaning and adding overtones to the overall meaning of the text(s) in which they occur. As it is shown in the analysis (Chapter Three), such devices are not easy to render in translation while maintaining the same meanings and effects of the original. That could be due to many factors, one, and probably the most important, of which is the remoteness between the linguistic and phonological systems of the SL and TL. The translator should find a way out to convey such meanings that could be as important as the denotative meaning of the lexical items themselves. Form and meaning should be equally dealt with; but to prioritize, ‘meaning’ should outweigh ‘form’
and if form carries any meanings, such meanings should be rendered or shown in the TL text.

This study is based on two Arabic novels written by Edwar Al-Kharrat (an Egyptian novelist). Phonological repetition is one of the main stylistic devices on which the said novels depend to relay meaning. The study shows the different semantic and pragmatic functions and the difficulties of translating the phonological devices of this type of repetition. The study also attempts to show the adequacy and the inadequacy of Liardet’s translation of phonological repetition in the said novels. It then investigates the different strategies that might be adopted by translators dealing with similar tasks. It is hoped that the findings of the present thesis help translators overcome the obstacles that hinder the production of approximate equivalence.

4. Statement of the Problem

Repetition, regardless of its type or form, if used intentionally, is functional and acquires further and additional meanings. The translator should pay great attention to this phenomenon, and such additional meanings should be shown in the TL text. The translator should think out the best strategy to be used in order to convey the meanings, whether implicit or explicit, which are encapsulated in this type of repetition.