YARMOUK UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Translating Death Announcements in
Saudi, American and British Newspapers

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June 2007
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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, YARMOUK UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

This study focuses on the translation of Arabic and English obituaries. The way people in different societies such as Saudi, American and British ones, announce the death of a person follows certain traditions depending on cultural backgrounds. In this paper, the researcher investigates how translators dealt with such cultural-related texts. These randomly selected student translators were from Yarmouk University, Jordan, and Imam Muhammad Bin Saud Islamic University, Saudi Arabia. They translated 14 American and British death notices and five Saudi death announcements. After examining their renditions, the researcher found some linguistic errors. He categorized the errors into two main categories: lexical and syntactic. The lexical errors resulted from omission, wrong choice of words, un-translating and addition. The syntactic errors included errors in concord, word order, prepositions and missing components. After identifying and categorizing these errors, the researcher accounted for them in terms of some possible causes like carelessness, lack of understanding obit components, and lack of a good command of Arabic and/or English linguistic systems. Moreover, the researcher examined the equivalence type for which the subjects opted when
it comes to handling the cultural aspects of obits. All the errors and changes were computed and presented in number and percentage.

This paper has come up with results that may assist translators and researchers interested in translating cultural-bound texts such as obits, and that highlight types of errors that translators may commit and which ought to be overcome in rendering such texts.

**Key Words:** Obituaries, Death Announcements, Translation, Saudi Arabia, American and British English.