The Translatability of the Egyptian Colloquial Dialogue into English:

A Case Study of Latifa Al-Zayyat's Novel the Open Door

By

Mahdi Ahmad Al-Sulaiman
B.A. in English language and literature
Al-Ba’th University, Homs, Syria, 2000.

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Yarmouk University, Irbid, Jordan.

The Examining Committee

Prof. Muhammad Raji Zughoul ——— Chairman
Prof. Hussein Abdel-Fattah ———— Member
Dr. Muhammad Saraireh ———— Member
Prof. Sameer Estaitiyah ——— Member

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ABSTRACT


The present study aimed at examining some problems resulting from translating an Egyptian Arabic (EA) literary text into Formal English (FE) by a native speaker of English. Latifa Al-Zayyat’s novel Al-Bab Al-Maftuh (The Open Door) has been selected for this study because it is highly loaded with EA passages of dialogue. On the other hand, the formal English translation by Marilyn Booth shows a great difference from the source text. The difference lies mainly in the fact that the original Arabic novel was written in two registers, i.e. Standard Arabic (SA) and EA while the translation was rendered in only one register; that is FE.

Following Ferguson’s notion of Arabic diglossia (1959) and his division of Arabic into high and low registers, the study attempted to differentiate between the attitudinal situations in which these two registers are used. Thus, the study addressed itself to the major problems and pitfalls that a literary translator may face when translating a text from a low register into a high register.

The study focused on translating certain EA categories into English. These categories contain forms of address, religious expressions and certain culture-oriented expressions. They are studied in the light of the theory of linguistic variation. The study suggested the translation of
these EA expressions into a selected English dialect: the dialect of Yorkshire.

The study concluded that the formality of the translated dialogue in Booth’s translation puts two speakers on a high social level that may contradict with their original social levels in the original novel. The study argued that such translation might distort the message of the original text because it may establish a different character with a different social background. The study gave some of the relevant recommendations.

**Keywords: Diglossia, Register, Egyptian Arabic, English Linguistic Variation, and Literary Translation.**