An Analytical Study of the Translatability of Culture-bound Beliefs in Taha Hussein's Autobiography "Al-Ayyam"

By:
Ghaiith Ahmad Ahmad Rabab'h

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Yarmouk University

The Examining Committee

Prof. Muhammad Raji Al-Zughoul........................................Chairman

Prof. Fawaz Abdel-Hak..............................................................Member

Dr. Muhammad Saraireh..............................................................Member

Prof. Khalil Al-Sheikh...............................................................Member
ABSTRACT

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Prepared by
Ghaith Ahmad Rabab'h

Supervisor
Prof. Muhammad Raji Zughoul

This study discusses the translatability of culture-bound beliefs, which are reflected through verbal and nonverbal behaviours, in the Arabic language with a special focus on the autobiography of Taha Hussein's "Al-ayyam." It presents various examples that reflect the distinctiveness of the Arabic beliefs that potentially pose problems for translators and are often the source of mutual misunderstanding. Furthermore, the study concerns itself with an overall assessment of the translation strategies that have been used by the translators of the autobiography to render the verbal and nonverbal behaviours associated with the religious and social beliefs into English.

Taha Hussein's autobiography "Al-ayyam" has been selected for the present study because it is loaded with culture-bound beliefs of the
Arabic and Islamic culture in general and the Egyptian culture in particular. On the other hand, each part of the three parts of the autobiography was translated into English by a different translator. This means that each one of the three translators designed some translation strategies to bridge the gap between two different cultures, and to overcome the culture-bound beliefs in the source language (Arabic). The researcher divides the study into two major sections: verbal behaviours associated with beliefs, and nonverbal behaviours associated with beliefs. Each section was subdivided into two parts: religious beliefs and social beliefs.

Finally, the study concludes that the translators of "Al-Ayyam" should have, carefully, examined the behaviour of the Arabic culture in the autobiography because these behaviours were, sometimes, not random but reflection of certain beliefs of the culture. However, they could have produced a better translation if these behaviours were correctly understood by them during the process of translation. Then the study proposes recommendations for further study.