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## THE INFLUENCE OF THE TRANSLATOR'S LINGUISTIC/CULTURAL BACKGROUND ON CULTURAL EQUIVALENCE

### ABSTRACT

Cultural equivalence in translation is influenced by a variety of linguistic and cultural factors. One factor to be discussed in this paper is the translator's linguistic and cultural background and its influence on translation product.

Translation theorists have conventionally claimed that translators best translate into their language of habitual use (Baker 1992/2011). This claim has been examined. To this effect, the translation product of translators who share the same linguistic/cultural background (Arabic) is investigated and compared: once when translators translate into their language of habitual use, and once when translating outside of their language of habitual use to see if this has any effect on cultural equivalence.

In a previous publication (Al-Masri 2010), the author investigated two types of translators translating Arabic short stories into English: native speakers of Arabic and native speakers of English. The findings supported the claim above and showed that English translators (native speakers of English) translated into English more idiomatically than their Arab counterparts.

With literary translation as a focal point, this paper takes the previous research one step further and compares translators who share the same linguistic/cultural background. The comparison is hoped to give insights into the issue of cultural equivalence. Finally, we adopt Pike's (1954) emic-etic approach to cultural translation—the Insider and the Outsider.

**Keywords:** cultural equivalence, Arabic-English translation, emic-etic approach

### 1. Introduction

Cultural translation is known to be one of the most challenging aspects of translation since it involves the translation of linguistic structures as part of culture (Bassnett-McGuire 1980, Larson 1984, Farghal 1995, Baker 1996). This paper deals with the issue of cultural equivalence and investigates its relationship to the translator's linguistic/cultural background. By linguistic background, we refer specifically to the language and culture of habitual use, or mother tongue.

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Translation theory tends to point out that translation process is unidirectional and that translators best translate into their native language (Baker 1992/2011). This claim is examined to see whether or not the translator's linguistic/cultural background creates any bias towards producing translation that is more source language oriented or more target language oriented. In other words, when the language of the target text (TT) is not the translator's language of habitual use, would s/he still achieve a high level of cultural equivalence in the same way as when translating into one's own native language? To address this issue, we adopt Pike's (1954) *emic-etic* approach and expand it to cultural translation; which indeed reflects the interplay between rules of analysis (language) and actual practice (culture). Literary translation from Arabic into English and vice versa is the main source from which supporting examples are considered.

The paper is divided into the following sections: the first section is a general introduction. The second section provides a theoretical background of Pike's (1954) *emic-etic* approach and its relevance to the issue introduced here. The third section outlines methodology and data. The fourth section presents findings and discussion of translation product in relation to *emic-etic* approach. Section five is a conclusion.

## 2. Theoretical overview

### 2.1 Pike's *emic-etic* approach

The concepts of *emic* and *etic*—the insider and the outsider—are probably what Pike (1954) is best known for. The terms emerged from phonemics (language or culture-bound units of analysis) and phonetics (language-sound analysis), respectively. Pike developed this distinction—while analyzing language for Bible translation purposes—to account for both verbal and nonverbal behavior in human culture. According to Pike (1990: 28), an *emic* unit is “*a physical or mental item or system treated by insiders as relevant to their system of behavior and as the same emic unit in spite of etic variability.*” It follows that an *emic* unit: has to be discovered; it is culture specific and its description provides internal views of culture. An *emic* unit also has the feature of *appropriateness*, by which “*individual native participants of a culture either implicitly or explicitly attribute the characteristic of appropriateness for its occurrence in a particular kind of context*” (ibid: 28). Accordingly, two *emic* units are different, if they create different reactions by people acting within the system.

On the other hand, *etics*, for Pike (1990: 30) denote

...an approach by an outsider to an inside system, in which the outsider brings his own structure—his own *emics*—and partly superimposes his observations on the inside view, interpreting the inside in reference to his outside starting point.

This carries the following implications: first, while an *emic* is a system that already exists in a culture, *etic* analysis is a procedure to help us discover the *emic* structures. Second, a person who understands the *emics* of a particular foreign culture—and who gets the appropriate linguistic training—is able to carry out an *etic* analysis; hence, accounting for both verbal and non-verbal

behavior. Third, in the process of bringing two cultures closer together, the outsider researcher carries along with him an inevitable bias (imposed by her/his own emics) on the inside culture.

Both definitions suggest the interplay between emic and etic knowledge: understanding the emics of a language represents an insider's view; analyzing and describing these emics reflects an outsider's view. In this regard, Pike asserts the *subconscious* interplay of the two concepts:

A person knows how to act without necessarily knowing how to analyze his actions. When I act, I act as an insider, but to know, in detail how I act, I must secure help from an outside disciplinary system. To use the emics of nonverbal (or verbal) behavior I must act like an insider; to analyze my own acts, I must look at (or listen to) material as an outsider (Pike 1990: 33-34).

Lett (1990) emphasizes the epistemological nature of the two concepts. If one accepts that emics are generally accounts that are regarded as meaningful and appropriate *by the native members (insiders) of a culture whose beliefs and behaviors are being studied* and that etics are regarded as meaningful and appropriate by the *community of scientific observers*, the validation of etic knowledge, then, is a matter of logical and empirical analysis. In Lett's (ibid: 131) words, "*all etic constructs must be precise, accurate, logical, comprehensive, replicable, falsifiable and observer-independent.*"

Berry(1990) adopted Pike's emic-etic approach and applied it to cross-cultural psychology. Following an epistemological approach to studying culture, Berry proposed a three-step cycle of "*etic-emic-etic,*" or "*imposed etics, emics, derived etics.*"

In Berry's approach (1990: 87-88), one begins with intercultural study in her/his own culture and ends in a comparison between two cultures. As a start, a researcher begins her/his analysis by identifying cultural behavior (verbal or non-verbal) in one's own culture; s/he, then, transposes this emic understanding to another culture as an etic approach, i.e. these emics become *imposed etics (etic presuppositions)*. At this point, the researcher, setting aside her/his *own cultural baggage*, gradually attempts to understand a culturally specific concept or phenomenon in the same way as employed by locals of that culture (emics of the other culture). After that, and using a comparative method, the researcher compares her/his original emic understanding (own culture) and her/his new emic understanding (from the second culture); if there are common aspects, then these aspects (*imposed etics*) become '*derived etics*' or possible cross-cultural etics that provide basis for comparing behavior in the two cultures.

To summarize, there is indeed a systematic approach to studying culture or cultural concepts, and there is indeed interplay between etic and emic knowledge whereby one understands, assesses, compares and reaches common grounds to facilitate and enhance understanding among cultures. Accordingly, this interplay is relevant to the translator's role as an insider and outsider of two cultures, as will be discussed below.

## 2.2 Translator: an insider/outsider approach

According to Pike, *insiders* are understood as local persons or native speakers of a language who understand the situated beliefs, cultural norms and social customs of their culture (*mental items*). They are also familiar with their fellows' actions, their feelings, their perception and their intentions (*as relevant to their system of behavior*) since thinking, imagining and speaking are all kinds of emic behavior (Pike 1990: 34). From an anthropological translational stand, an outsider

needs to ‘get along’ with cultural insiders in order to act effectively and appropriately (Feleppa1990: 116).

In order to achieve translation that takes into account cultural aspects, and following the emic-etic (insider/outsider) framework, it is initially assumed that a translator who translates *into* her/his own language of habitual use (in this case Arab translator translating into Arabic) starts off the translation process as an outsider of the source text (ST) and culture (and naturally an insider to the TT)—in which s/he is a local participant). The goal would be to acquire an insider’s view, an emic account of the ST before reaching to the end product. To achieve this end the translator begins the process by exploring and attempting to understand the world of the ST: its values, its idiosyncrasies, its features and its culture (i.e. its emics). While doing so s/he works out ways and tools to become an insider to the ST and culture and gain emic knowledge. As understood in Pike’s terms (1990: 77), the outsider translator should have the ability to talk, think and act like an insider (as judged by insiders). The translator then uses the emic knowledge of her/his own culture to handle and analyze the cultural aspects of a different culture (i.e. ST). During this process, the translator is still using her/his cultural background and presuppositions (*imposed etics*); as such, analyzes the source culture from an outsider’s perspective. As s/he becomes thoroughly familiar with a particular cultural phenomenon or concept (guided by its context of situation and background information), the translator gradually sets aside her/his own cultural impositions, and moves to a deeper emic understanding of the ST and culture. At this point, the translator acquires, at least theoretically, a native-like understanding of the ST, and so becomes an insider to the world of the source culture. Only then, actual translation process starts. Having had that native-like emic understanding of the ST (which is now *derived etics*), the translator commences with a comparison process.

After analyzing the features of a particular term or concept in the ST, the translator is ready to look for matching features from within her/his own language of habitual use. If s/he were able to find words that have common features in both languages, then translation product would be culturally and linguistically equivalent to that of the ST. In conclusion, when a translator translates *into* his/her language of habitual use, s/he would be completing Berry’s cycle of “*etic-emic-etic*” or “*imposed etics, emics, derived etics.*”

Looking at the other side of the coin, i.e. when the translator translates *outside* of her/his language of habitual use (in this case, Arab translators translating into English), the translator is expected to follow the same mental process of thinking, as those translating into their native language; only this time with a different sequence. The translator starts as an insider to the ST and culture (innately, an outsider to the TT). S/he already starts with emic knowledge of the ST and its cultural values. The remaining task is to maintain this familiarity and to render it successfully into the TT. In other words, the task of the translator here is finding appropriate etic tools (translation strategies) that bring her/him closer to the TT and its culture. Accordingly, translation process progresses with a reversed sequence; namely “*emic-etic-emic.*” The first emic being the translator’s own language (native language), while the second represents the emics of the TT.

In conclusion, we believe that the emic-etic (insider/outsider) framework gives valuable insights into the process of translation in the following ways: first, an emic-etic analysis provides a holistic view of culture from two points of view: that of an insider who internalizes and uses cultural concepts, and that of an outsider who describes and analyzes these concepts in a scientific manner, as such would also contribute to our understanding of sociocultural phenomena. Second, this approach permits an understanding of how language mirrors culture and how culture, in turn, reflects individuals’ daily lives, attitudes and interests. This would provide the translator with a privileged insider’s view of the ST. Third, the two concepts reflect human creativity and the range

of human possibility provided by a detailed knowledge of the emics of a particular culture as well as the etic knowledge of various cultures (Lett 1990: 133). Last but not least, emic-etic is an approach that follows an epistemological view in analyzing cultures. According to this view: “*there really is a behavior rooted in a cultural system, that there really is a concept used locally to identify it, and that there really can be a way of assessing it*” (Berry 1990: 91).

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Data**

The corpus of this paper is based on data taken from Earnest Hemingway's novel *The Sun also Rises*; translated into Arabic by Badi Haqqi. In order to see the other side of the coin, and to better assess the influence of the translator's background on translation product, the findings here will be compared to the findings of a previous study (Al-Masri 2010) that analyzed the translations of Yusuf Idris's short stories into English by the following translators: Saad El-Gabalawy, Wadida Wassef, Mona Mikhail and Nawal Nagib—all native speakers of Arabic and known for their accuracy and naturalness. Idris's stories used in the previous study above were: *Three Egyptian Short Stories* (including *Farahat's Republic*, *The Wallet* and *Abu Sayyid*), *A House of Flesh* (including *Bayt min Lahm*, *Did You Have to Turn the Light On*, *Lili?*), *City Dregs*; *The Siren* (including *The Concave Mattress*), *Five Innovative Egyptian Short Stories* (*The Pigs*, *The Torpedo*, *Nobody Complained*, *The Reader and the Glass of Milk* and *Men*), and *Kill Her*.

We wish to point out that although the comparison includes two different literary genres (short story and novel), its purpose is not to conduct a literary analysis of the genre's stylistic features, length, setting, content or era. Instead, the genres are used to extract illustrative examples to investigate the main issue of this paper; i.e. the influence of the translator's linguistic and cultural background on cultural equivalence. Furthermore, this paper does not address the question of genre difficulty (i.e. which one is more challenging to translate), although the brevity, accuracy and preciseness that characterize the art of short stories would put limitations on the translator's flexibility in expressing the intended meaning.

Since the focal point of this paper is to investigate the role of the translator's linguistic/cultural background and its influence on cultural equivalence, translators are classified into two types: those translating Arabic literature into English, and those translating English literature into Arabic. Table (1) is an illustration:

The table below indicates that the translators investigated here are all Arabs. Those translating into English are considered ‘outsiders’ of the TT (English), and at the same time ‘insiders’ to the ST and culture (Arabic). As for the translators who translated into Arabic (their language of habitual use), they are viewed as insiders to the TT but outsiders of the ST. These two groups will be juxtaposed and compared to reflect on the main issue addressed here, i.e. the influence of the translator's linguistic/cultural background on cultural equivalence.

Table 1. Classification of translators according to their linguistic background

Translator's Background	ST	TT	Outsider/ Insider to ST	Outsider / Insider to TT
Arab <sup>2</sup>	Arabic	English	Insider	Outsider
Arab	English	Arabic	Outsider	Insider

The parameter used to identify the translators above as 'insiders' is based on their biographic information (all are native speakers of Arabic who live(d) in the Arab world, and so understand its situated beliefs, cultural values, appropriateness and ways of thinking). In addition, they are identified according to the following operational definition of insider/outsider adopted in this paper: an insider is a translator who has the innate linguistic and cultural knowledge of his native community and his emic viewpoint results from studying behavior as from inside the system. An outsider, on the other hand, is a translator who has an etic viewpoint that focuses on cultural items as from outside of a particular system<sup>3</sup>.

Sometimes, however, drawing clear-cut boundaries between the two definitions is not always possible. For instance, while all native speakers of Arabic are insiders to the Arabic language, only some will be considered insiders to a particular culture. For instance, an insider to the Levant culture could be an outsider to the Moroccan one.

### 3.2 Issues addressed

The paper discusses two issues: the main issue is to examine the conventionally held claim that translators best translate into their language of habitual use for the obvious reason of idiomaticity. We intend to bring this claim under focus through the following questions: how would translation product differ if a translator were translating outside of her/his language of habitual use? Put differently, would this affect the naturalness and flow of the translation product? Finally, would the translator's linguistic/cultural background create any bias towards the final product by making it more source language oriented, or more target language oriented?

The second issue focuses on the role of the translator in the translation process. If we accept the claim that the translator is a mediator between two cultures, then we argue that s/he is expected to assume the role of a cultural insider to both ST and TT. If this is true, the translator is assumed to produce a TT that appeals to target readers; that has the insider local view; and that maintains the foreign flavor of the world in the ST. The question that poses itself, here, is whether a translator could actually be both an insider and outsider of two texts and two cultures. If so, how would s/he combine that role of being an insider who knows the emics of her/his culture and at the same time analyzes, as an outsider, these deep structures (emics) and describes them in terms of *etics*? Philosophically speaking, is it possible for an observer from inside to see the whole? Or, is it the case that one can see the whole inside (but not the whole outside)? Finally, while assuming the dual

<sup>2</sup>This group of Arab translators was investigated in Al-Masri (2010). They were compared to English translators who also translated Arabic literature into English. The findings will be revisited for comparison in section 4.2 of this paper.

<sup>3</sup>Pike's definition of insiders in section 2.2 also applies to the translators mentioned here.

role, would the translator observe Berry's (1990) proposed sequence of "*etic-emic-etic*," or "*imposed etics, emics, derived etics*?"

### 3.3 Procedure

This paper employs the analytical/comparative method. We analyze illustrative examples from literature to examine the influence of the translator's linguistic/cultural background (if any) and to investigate how s/he works out cultural references in the ST to produce accessible, enjoyable and familiar TT. We then compare translators who share the same linguistic/cultural background (Arabic) when translating into and outside of their language of habitual use. This juxtaposition is hoped, accordingly, to give insights onto two levels of cultural associations: translators who could only assume one role as *either* insiders or outsiders of the TT and culture, and translators who manage to assume *both* roles as insiders and outsiders of the TT and culture. Pike (1990: 34) indicates the possibility of this dual function, "*just as the outsider can learn to act like an insider, so the insider can learn to analyze like an outsider.*"

The examples used in the body of analysis are presented in three lines: the first line represents each example in its source language. The second line represents it in the TT, as reproduced by the translator. The last line represents back translation, provided by the author of this paper, to show points of shifting in the TT. Following Newmark (1991: 7), back translation serves as a tool to show precisely such instances of mistranslation, literal translation, functional translation and so on. Each line ends with a parenthesis that makes reference to the author and the page number from which the example is taken.

## 4. Findings and discussion

### 4.1 Findings

The analysis of translation product shows that the insider translator (translating into Arabic) was successful in assuming three roles: first, as a linguistic mediator between two ST and TT; second, as a cultural mediator to target readers; and third as a cultural insider to both ST and TT. It is worth pointing out, though, that the boundaries between these roles are not clear-cut because the translator could assume two or even three roles simultaneously. Accordingly, the examples presented below are not restricted to one role but are representatives of the most obvious role within a particular context.

First, let us consider how the translator's linguistic/cultural background enabled him to assume the role of a linguistic mediator. In example (1), the translator took the responsibility to disambiguate the abbreviated word *V.A.D.* which may not otherwise be clear to target readers as referring to a voluntary aid detachment. Consider example(1) below:

- (1) "Yes", I said. "She was a **V.A.D.** in a hospital I was in during the war." (Hemingway: 46)  
"أجل، كانت ممرضة متطوعة في مستشفى، حيث كنت أعالج أثناء الحرب" (حقي: 52)

(Yes, she was a **volunteering nurse** in a hospital, where I was treated during the war)

In example (2), the translator decided to keep the word of the ST within the body of the TT; leaving it to target readers either to figure out its meaning from the situational context or to read his explanatory footnote; a strategy highly commended to maintain the flavor of the ST, see example (2):

- (2) We wished him “**Mucha Suerte**”, shook hands, and went out (Hemingway: 167)  
 (1) وتمنينا له Mucha Serte، وصافحناه وخرجنا (حقي: 211)  
 (1) الحظ السعيد، في الإسبانية  
 [We wished him **Mucha Suerte**, we shook his hand and we went out.  
 (1) **Good luck, in Spanish**]

In example (3) below, the translator not only translated the source word into its equivalent in the TT but also used a footnote to ensure the exact transfer of meaning without disturbing the flow of the TT. The footnote itself is a strategy of borrowing, whereby the translator kept the foreign word within the TT due to its familiarity (through its pronunciation or its transliteration) to target readers. Here, we agree with the translator’s strategy, and we share the views of Al-Qinai (1999) and Farghal (1995) that in the translation of literary texts, cultural information should be highlighted and/or supported by explanatory phrases or notes that explain the customs, beliefs and attitudes that are unfamiliar to target readers, consider the example below:

- (3) And her hair was brushed back **like a boy’s** (Hemingway: 30)  
 (1) وكان شعرها، مرتداً الى الخلف، في تسريحة غلامية (حقي: 30)  
 (1) الا غارسون  
 [And her hair, brushed to the back, in a **boyish style** (1)  
 (1) **à la Gárçon**]

The second role of the translator, as an insider, is that of a cultural mediator. Similar to other examples, the translator in example (4) used borrowing by transliterating the word in order to keep the foreign flavor of the ST. He decided to keep the word *punch* in its original pronunciation to introduce target readers to a drink popular to people in another culture. In addition, the translator supplemented this cultural item with an explanation in the form of a footnote, as follows:

- (4) We drank the hot **punch** and listened to the wind (Hemingway: 116)  
 (1) وشربنا (البونش) الحار فيما كنا نصغي الى زفيف الريح (حقي: 144)  
 (1) البونش: مزيج من خمر الروم وعصير الفواكه  
 [And we drank the hot (**punch**) while we were listening to the sound of the wind  
 (1) **Punch**: a mixture of Rum wine and fruit juice]

Example (5) shows the use of three strategies, all in the same example: translating the word *matadors* into its equivalent in the TT, using the source word in its English form within the TT to keep its local flavor and finally providing the definition of the word in a footnote. This footnote is significant in that it shows how the translator is aware of his role as a mediator and identifies himself as one, consider:

- (5) The other two **matadors**, one was very fair and the other was passable (Hemingway: 168)  
 (1) وأما المصارعان الآخران Matadors (1)، فقد كان احدهما حسناً جداً وكان الآخر مقبولاً (حقي: 212)

(1) المبتادور: المصارع الذي يلاعب الثور ثم يقتله في النهاية (المعرب)

[As for the other **two fighters (Matadors)**, one of them was very fair and the other was acceptable

(1)Metador: the fighter that plays with the bull then kills him at the end (the translator)]

The third role the translator assumed was that of a cultural insider. The translator was able to assume this skillful role after successfully completing his role as a cultural mediator. In other words, since translation is a process, the translators gradually moved to a higher level of interpretation of the different emics of ST and TT, thus a better understanding of their common features to finally rendering these emics efficiently in the TT. By doing so, the translator tried to give target readers the joy and appreciation of becoming insiders to the text. Examples (6-11) illustrate this role. In example (6), the translator gave us an insider's view by successfully bringing together words of religious background commonly shared by two distinct cultures. Consider:

(6) Brett smiled at him. "I've promised to dance this with **Jacob**," she laughed. "You've hell of a **biblical name**, Jake." (Hemingway: 30)

وابتسمت "بريت": "لقد وعدت "يعقوب" بها (وضحكت) ان لك اسماً مقدساً صرفاً من التوراة يا "جاك" (حقّي: 31)

[Brett smiled: - I promised **Yakoub** it (and she laughed) indeed you have a pure sacred name from **Al-Torah** Jake]

Example (7) reflects the addition metaphor as a literary device that did not exist in the ST. This way, the translator used the appropriate image, as an insider, to render the same meaning and the same effect that the word has in the ST, consider:

(7) "Pernod is greenish imitation absinthe... it tastes like licorice and it has a **good uplift**" (Hemingway: 23)

"(البرنود) شراب ضارب للخضرة مقلد للأيسنت... إن له طعم عرق السوس، وإنه ليهب لك ما تهب لذعة السوط" (حقّي: 21)

[(Pernod) is a greenish drink that imitates the absinthe... it has a taste of a licorice, and it gives you what a **ping of the whip gives you**]

In example (8), the translator acted as an insider through the correct choice of social deixis, i.e. terms of respect. The phrase *old gentleman* is used here as an honorific term of respect of the person selling the tickets. The word *Sheikh* is used in the same way in some parts of the Arab world. The translator, hence, has combined the two words, *the Sheik man*, to refer to an old man and to exclude the two other meanings associated with the word *Sheikh*, namely clergy man or a tribe head. Horton (1999) proposes that social deixis is crucial to the process of characterization in drama. The translator managed to dramatize the narrative in Arabic by finding a cultural equivalent in the TT that portrayed the same layers of meaning inherent in the ST phrase; thus fulfilling his role as a cultural insider.

(8) I went to the Ayuntamiento and found **the old gentleman** who subscribes for the bull-fight tickets forme every year (Hemingway: 102)

ومضيت الى (الأيونتامتنيو) باحثاً عن الرجل الشيخ الذي يُعنى، في كل سنة، بأن يحجز لي محلات لحضور حفلات مصارعة الثيران (حقّي: 126)

[And went to (the Ayuntamiento) looking for **the Sheikh man** who takes care of, every year, reserving places for me to attend the parties of bull-fighting.]

In example (9), the author of the ST described the good family decent of the character by making explicit reference to both parents. In the TT, however, when mentioning one's family

descent it is implicitly understood to refer to the male parent. The translator; accordingly, modified the ST to avoid the redundancy implied in the target word *belong*, consider:

- (9) Robert Cohn was a member, through **his father**, of one of the richest Jewish families in New York, and through **his mother** of one of the oldest (Hemingway: 12)  
 وكان "روبرت كون" ينتسب الى أسرة من أغنى الأسر اليهودية في (نيويورك) ويُنجى عن طريق أمه الى أسرة من أقدم هذه الأسر (حقّي: 12)  
 [And "Robert Con" belonged to a **family** of the richest Jewish families in (New York) and through **his mother** belongs to one of these oldest families.]

Being a successful cultural insider also involves observing the features of appropriateness inherent in the target culture. Example (10) reflects the use of euphemistic strategy to produce an appropriate translation of cursing, or what Levinson (1983: 42) calls 'imprecatives' (for more on the concept of appropriateness in English Arabic translation, see Azeriah 2002). As a cultural insider, the translator replaced the second person pronoun (used to describe a person as being an idiot—a personalized imprecative) by the more general word "nonsense" in the TT in order to adhere to the norms that target readers would conventionally follow in these cultural situations. Consider:

- (10) Don't talk like a **fool** (Hemingway: 30)  
 لا تفه بهذا الهراء (حقّي: 32)  
 (Do not say this **nonsense**.)

Finally, example (11) below also shows the translator as a competent cultural insider. He beautifully replaced the idiomatic phrase *got a class all over you* by an exact equivalent in the TT. In this regard, El-Shiyab (1999: 208) supports this insider's view and suggests, "*the translator should be close to the mentality and thinking as well as the experience of the source author.*"

- (11) "No", said the count, "You don't need a title. You **got class all over you**" (Hemingway: 64)  
 وقال الكونت: "لا، لست بحاجة الى لقب فانك كريمة النسب، من رأسك الى أخمص قدميك" (حقّي: 78)  
 (No, you do not need a title for you are of an **honorable decent, from your head to the toe of your feet**)

In conclusion, the analysis of examples has verified the translational assumption mentioned earlier in the introduction of this paper. The Arab translator produced linguistically accurate and culturally appropriate translation when translating into his language of habitual use. His linguistic/cultural background enabled him to successfully assume the roles of linguistic and cultural mediator. Finally, after the translator successfully embraced the emics of both ST and TT, he moved up to the level of a cultural insider.

The analysis, nevertheless, showed two instances of inaccurate translations where the translator was not able to maintain the dual role of an insider/outsider translator (examples 12 and 13 below). To start with, example (12) shows how the translator was not fully accurate in presenting the insider's view to his target readers. This failure is due to his inaccurate translation of the target phrase *perfect English gentleman*. The use of the word *complete* in the TT as a near synonym of the word *perfect* in the ST is not successful or idiomatic in this specific context. In Arabic, for this word to be used with reference to people, it needs to be part of a noun phrase;

hence, its translation in the example above is awkward to target readers and does not make much sense. Another strategy to minimize this awkwardness is literal translation.

In example (13), the translator's strategy is not justified and caused more damage to the translation product than that in example (12). The translator misrepresented the appropriateness of context. According to the ST, the male character cannot praise his male friend openly; otherwise, he would be mistaken for a homosexual 'faggot'. This meaning was completely altered in the TT by incorrectly using the word *dervish* which originally referred to a Sufi aspirant, then acquired a new cultural meaning to refer to a person easily fooled for being too kind-hearted. The translator incorrectly altered the intended meaning, thus falling into the trap of false synonyms. Consider the following:

- (12) But Cohen had read and reread "The Purple Land"...It recounts splendid imaginary amorous adventures of a **perfect English gentleman** in an intensely romantic land... (Hemingway: 17)

لكن كون قرأ ثم قرأ (الأرض الأرجوانية)...ففيه تترادف المغامرات الغرامية الرائعة الخيال، يقوم بها (جنتلمان) كامل انكليزي، في بلد رومانتيكي صرف... (حقي: 14)

[But Con read then read (the purple land)...in which splendid imaginary love adventures are happening to a **complete English (gentleman)**, in an intensely romantic land]

- (13) "Listen. You're a hell of a good guy ... I couldn't tell you that in New York. It'd mean I was a **faggot**" (Hemingway: 121)

"اصغ إلي. انت شخص طيب، على نحو هائل...لن يكون في ميسوري ان أردد هذا في (نيويورك) لئلا يحمل كلامي على انني (درويش)" (حقي: 151)

[Listen to me. You are a kind person; hugely... I will not be able to say this in New York so that my words will not be understood as though I am a (**Dervish**)]

According to Pike (1990: 29), "*appropriateness of an emic unit includes the feature of its relevant occurrence in relation to the total cultural pattern of an individual or society.*" Feleppa (1990: 105) calls this an 'indeterminacy of translation' and points out that the indeterminate area of meaning could be modified by context, which may "*narrow, widen, or change the meaning to some degree.*"

## 4.2 Discussion

This section discusses the findings aforementioned and then compares the results to previous research studies. We first discuss the translation product when a translator translates into his language of habitual use. Being a native speaker of Arabic and translating into Arabic, the translator, investigated above, was already a local insider to the target culture (i.e. one who knows and uses its emics innately and appropriately). Aided by this emic knowledge of the TT and its culture, the translator used different etic tools or translation strategies—which were in a way his *imposed etics*. These etic tools included: footnotes, transliteration, metaphoric expressions, honorifics, euphemism, disambiguation of linguistic terms, keeping the foreign flavor in the TT, providing some common background information and accounting for context-sensitive expressions in the ST. During his search for appropriate etic tools, the translator moved into a deeper understanding of the emics of both ST and TT. He related the common features in both texts/cultures faithfully and he revisited his emic knowledge of the TT not only to find matching equivalents, but also the best cultural equivalents that would provide an insider's view of the ST to

target readers (see example 11 above). As such, the translator was able to act like a cultural insider, a cultural mediator, and a linguistic negotiator between the two languages, accordingly and effectively completing the cycle of etic-emic-etic. This gives further support to the generally held belief that translators best translate into their language of habitual use.

We now turn to comparing the findings of this study to the findings of previous research (for a detailed discussion of these findings, see Al-Masri (2010: 145-150)). In the previous study, Arab translators translated outside of their language of habitual use i.e. Arabic into English—as shown earlier in table (1). The investigation of their translation products showed that some Arab translators succeeded in fulfilling their roles as cultural mediators and informed their target readers about the source (Arabic) culture. Instances of this represent the translation of idiomatic phrases referring to Arab customs by Mikhail (ibid:131), and the translation of religious-based beliefs by Wassef (ibid: 130). On the other hand, some Arab translators failed to assume the role of a cultural insider. They were not only less faithful than their English counterparts<sup>4</sup> in presenting the emics of the Arab culture, but they also negatively affected the aesthetic value of the TT. Illustrative instances were: the complete deletion of idiomatic cultural phrase in the translation of El-Gabalawy (ibid:128), changing the pragmatic forces of the ST by explicating the implicit reference of cultural words, as reflected in the translations of Wassef and El-Gabalawy (ibid:119-120), and the deletion of literary stylistic and rhetorical features of the ST as in the translation of Mikhail (ibid:141.) In the same study, the English translators who translated into English (their language of habitual use) were generally more idiomatic and maintained the descriptive, anecdotal and metaphoric structures of the ST (Arabic) than their Arab counterparts. In some specific examples, English translators even surpassed the Arab ones in transferring the Arab culture into English, such as Cachia's skillful handling of cultural phrases that are particularly hard to translate (ibid: 132.).

In a similar study, Abdel-Hafiz (2003) investigated the cooperation of two translators translating the same work to see if this would reduce the problems that are often encountered in translation. His analysis was based on the translation of Naguib Mahfouz's novel *The Thief and the Dogs*. Two translators translated the novel into English: Le Gassick, a native speaker of the TT (English) and Badawi, a native speaker of the ST (Arabic). His findings indicated that both linguistic and pragmatic problems continued to occur in the translation product. In particular, translators failed to fully account for pragmatic factors like context, politeness maxims, conventional implicature, and presupposition. It is worth noting that although Adel's study gives a fresh perspective into translational challenges, the process of cooperation between his two translators remains vague and there is not enough evidence of their roles as insider and outsider of both ST and TT.

In summation, the findings provide evidence that when a translator translates into his language of habitual use, his linguistic/cultural background readily makes him an insider to the ST. This facilitates using his emic knowledge, as an outsider analyst, to analyze and find the closest equivalents, which becomes his new etics that facilitate rendering the ST into a TT that reflects the local flavor of target readers. In a nutshell, idiomaticity was the hallmark in the translator's translation product. We find supporting evidence of the major findings in this paper in the following quote of the well-known translator Roger Allen:

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<sup>4</sup>The English translators were: Roger Allen, Pierre Cachia and Denys Johnson-Davies. They all translated into their language of habitual use.

The Palestinian novelist, Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, whose novels I translated with Adnan Haydar in the 1970s and '80s, told us that he had once tried to translate his poetry into English (the poem "Urkudi urkudi ya muhrati" -and his knowledge of English language and literature was, of course, superb), but decided never to do it again (personal contact).

## 5. Conclusion

This paper has examined the conventionally held claim that translators best translate into their language of habitual use. To this effect, translators who share the same linguistic/cultural background (Arabic) were studied and compared; once when translating *into* their language of habitual use, and once when translating *outside* their language of habitual use to see if this had any effect on their translation product and cultural equivalence.

The findings give support to the general translational assumption that translators rendered more idiomatic and more target language oriented translations when translating into their language of habitual use, rather than outside of it. Those translators demonstrated more ability than their counterparts to translate onto two levels of associations: understanding the emics of the source culture and understanding the emics of the target culture, then relating both faithfully. Another finding is that cultural equivalence is better achieved when the translator assumes not only the role of a cultural mediator but also that of a cultural insider (in the sense identified in section 4.1 of this paper). A good translator, to us, is the one who takes her/his target readers into the new world of the ST in an enjoyable way that preserves the local-insider flavor.

Finally, following the emic-etic approach—with its epistemological framework—the approach had its merits for cultural translation. It provides us with tools to uncover the translator's process of thinking, and gives scientific guidelines on how translators could be insiders to a particular culture.

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