SOME PROBLEMS OF RENDERING ENGLISH PERSONAL REFERENCES INTO ARABIC: A TEXTUAL ATATEMENT*

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1. Introduction

Halliday and Hasan (1976) argue that cohesion is a semantic relation and, like all components of the semantic system, it is realised through the lexicogrammatical system of the language. Research has shown that the categories of cohesion and the way the various cohesive devices are distributed vary from language to language. For example, Simmons (1979) finds out that substitution is not a viable process for cohesion in Russian. Chanawangsa (1986), working

on cohesion in Thai, states that although the categories of cohesion in English and Thai are very similar, the devices used to realise them can be quite different. Even when there are comparable devices, the two languages still differ in the restrictions on their uses. Such finding are considered significant for the universal linguistic description of the system of cohesion, and thus constitute a motivation for examining cohesion in English and Arabic.

This paper is restricted to one category of cohesion: reference. This is a major category of devices with several subtypes and further subdivisions. Quantitatively, it is characterized with a high frequency of occurrence in text compared to the other types grammatical cohesion, viz., substitution, ellipsis and conjunction. Because of the diversity of the referential devices, it is expected that they differ across English and Arabic in the way they relate textual elements and the differences may sometimes disable rather than enable effective cohesion when a text is translated from English into Arabic.

2. Aims

This paper aims at:

a. investigating the type of strategies adopted when rendering personal reference of an English narrative text into Arabic;

b. finding out how variations in the way reference is realised in the two languages may affect cohesion when an English text is translated into Arabic.

3. Hypothesis

It is hypothesised that the differences in the ways the personal referential system is realised in the two languages may create a negative effect on text cohesion when an English narrative text is translated into Arabic.

4. Data

The narrative text selected as data for analysis is Hemingway's *The Old and the Sea* and its Arabic translation by the well-known Arab translator and lexicographer Munir Balabaki. A number of passages in the source text and their Arabic counterparts have been selected for close investigation.

5. Personal Reference in English

In English the category of personal reference includes the three classes of personal pronouns, possessive determiners and possessive pronouns. The significance of the person system as stated by various grammarians (inter alia, Quirk et. al., 1985; Sinclair, 1973; Close, 1975) is that it is the means of referring to relevant persons and objects. Halliday and Hasan (1976: 45) divide the system according to the distinction between the persons defined by their roles in the communication process on

the one hand and all other entities on the other. The first is labelled "speech roles"; these are the role of the speaker and addressee. The second is called "other roles". The diagram in Fig.(1) summarises the major divisions of the system of personal pronouns in English.

The speech roles are assigned by the speaker. Halliday and Hasan (ibid.) use the term addressee in preference to "hearer" or "listener" in order to suggest the meaning " person designated by the speaker as recipient of the communication". This is in conformity with the term that Arab grammarians use for the role of the addressee, iz., المخاطب . other roles include all relevant entities other than speaker or addressee. In Arabic grammar this class is referred to as الغائب (literally, "the absent"); this should be taken to mean "not involved in the roles of either the speaker or the hearer" rather than "not present in he context of the situation". The other roles could either be specific or generalised human. If specific, then it intersects with the category of number: singular or plural. If singular, then the role is either human or non-human. If human, then it is either a male, to which the referential item used is "he" or a female, to which "she" is used. If the singular referent is non-human, then the referential item used is "it". If the specific role is plural then the

referential item used to refer to it is "they". The referential item used to refer to the generalised human is "one".

Speaker only *I*

Speaker plus *We*

Speaker

Speech Roles

Addressee(s) *you*

Personal

Male *he*

Human

Female *she*

Singular

Non-human *It*

Specific

Plurl *They*

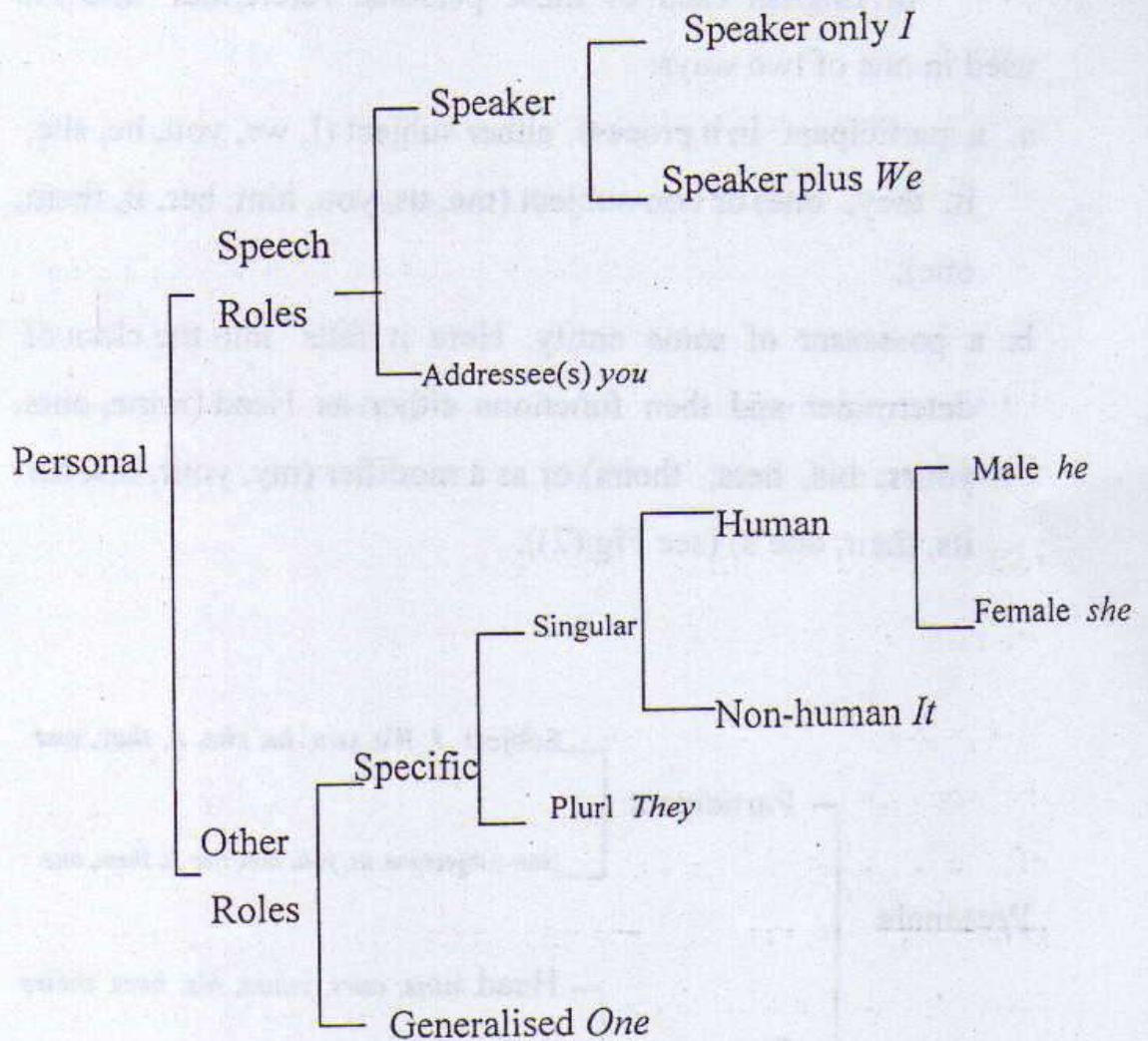Other Roles

Generalised *One*

Fig.1 Classification of the system of personal reference

in English

(from Halliday and Hasan, 1976: 45)

In English each of these personal referential forms is used in one of two ways:

a. a participant in a process, either subject (I, we, you, he, she, it, they, one) or non-subject (me, us, you, him, her, it, them, one);

b. a possessor of some entity. Here it falls into the class of determiner and then functions either as Head (mine, ours, yours, his, hers, theirs) or as a modifier (my, your, his, her, its, their, one's) (see Fig.(2)).

Subject *I, We, you, he, she, it, they, one*

Participant

Non-subject *me, us, you, him, her ,it, them, one*

Presonals

Head *mine, ours, yours, his, hers, theirs*

Possessor
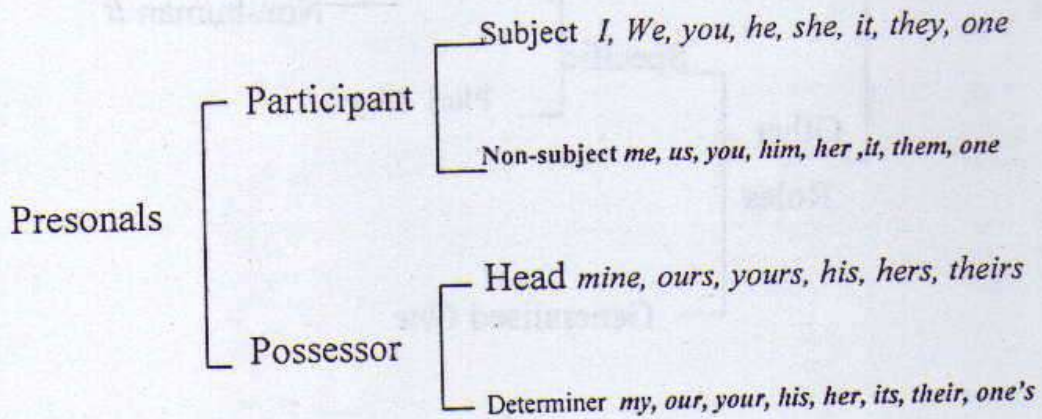
Determiner *my, our, your, his, her, its, their, one's*

Fig.(2) Classification of forms of personal referential items in English (from Halliday and Hasan (1976: 45)

According to Halliday and Hasan (ibid.), personals referring to speech role (speaker and addressee) are typically exophoric: this includes *I, you* and *we*. They become endophoric (i.e., textual), in quoted speech; hence, they are normally anaphoric in narratives. This is because in a narrative there are name and designations to which the pronouns *I* and *you* of the dialogue can be related. However, in first person narratives, the writer normally refers exophorically to himself. Similarly, *I, you* and *we* may refer exophorically in letter-writing, advertising, notices and official documents addressed to the public.

Personals referring to other roles (persons or objects other than the speaker or addressee or addressee) are typically endophoric. They may be exophoric whenever the context of situation provides interpretation of the referent in question.

6. Personal Reference in Arabic

In Arabic the system of personal reference is classified according to participant roles and then subclassified according to the categories of number and gender. The same major division into two classes of roles, speech roles and other roles, applies here. Speech roles are those of the speaker (s) or addressee (s). Speaker roles refer to (a) the speaker only, realised linguistically as the independent (i.e., free morpheme)

personal pronoun أنــــا (ana), or the connected (i.e., bound morpheme) personal pronoun ت‏ (tu) or ي (i) (see Fig.(3)); (b) speaker plus one or more other participants including the addressee, realised by the independent referential item نحــن (nahnu) or the connected referential item نا (na).

If the speech role is that of the addressee, then it can be one of three sub-types: (a) addressee only, (b) addressee plus one other participant, and (c) addressee plus more than one other participant. The detailed typology of this role, with the different referential items that are associated with it, signals a noticeable difference between the system of personal reference in English and Arabic.

If the role is that of the addressee only, then a distinction is made according to whether it is a male or female. If the role is that of a male addressee, then it is referred to linguistically either by the independent (free) pronoun أنت (anta) or by the connected (bound) pronoun ت‏ (ta) or ك (ka). If the role is that of a female addressee then it is referred to by the independent pronoun أنتِ (anti) or the connected pronoun تِ (ti) or كِ (ki).

If the role of the addressees refers to the addressee plus one other participant (i.e., two participants addressed), a dual form of pronouns, which are unaffected by the male/female distinction, is used. The pronoun can either be independent, أنتما (antuma), or connected, تُما (tuma) or كُما (kuma).

The speech role of the addressee plus more than one participant is divided into two: (a) male or mixed (i.e., male and female) participant, and (b) female participant. In the case of (a), the personal pronoun can either be independent, أنتم (antum) or connected, تُـم (tum) or كُـم (kum). In (b), reference to female addressee is made by the independent pronoun أنتُنَّ (antunna) or the connected pronoun تُنَّ (tunna) or كُنَّ (kunna).

Fig.3 Classification of the system of personal reference in

Arabic

7. Strategies of Rendition

Reference as a semantic category translated by whatever linguistic means should contribute to text cohesion and therefor stability. With characteristics as such, referential equivalences can hardly correspond to what we find in a bilingual dictionary. A translator therefor should try a set of compensatory strategies that might render referential devices relevant to the text type and cohesion as they are actually used in the source text.

In the data, the translator has used several strategies: total equivalence, omission and conversion. The first two types are usual strategies used not only with this categories and the like (see Jakobson, 1959).

The emphasis of this paper is on the third type of these strategies, i.e., conversion. It is this type of strategy that is most likely to create instability in the target text. A problematic translation is more harmful to literary texts since they represent relatively incomplete medium, and readers of a foreign language need to reconstruct the relationships between a sequence of conventional symbols (though not necessarily conventionally used) (cf. Beaugrande, 1978: 29). Due to non-ordinariness in the language used in literary narrative certain textual signals, e.g., personal referential devices may play a great role in text continuity. Any erroneous rendition of these textual signals may deprive the text from and communicative its interactive aspects.

The following is a brief account of the strategies used for rendering personal reference as identified in the data. We have made use of Beaugrande's (ibid.: 14) criteria of equivalence that "the translation is a valid representation of the original in the communicative act". The representation is guided by three sets of strategies. The strategies identified are:

7.1 Total Equivalence

This is a one-to-one equivalence of personal reference in terms of language material used when the text is rendered from English into Arabic, without introducing any stylistic or language specific addition, modification, omission or conversion. This type of strategy can be represented by the

formula: R $\longrightarrow$ R where the arrow should be read as "is rendered into". In the example below, the personal pronoun *he* in the ST is rendered (هو), its immediate equivalence in Arabic.

and he had looked at the arm and hand of the
negro and at the negro's face

كان هو قد رنا الى ذراع الزنجي ويده ووجهه.

7.2 Omission

In this type of strategy, a personal referential device that exists in the source text is dropped in its Arabic rendition. The target text reader can retrieve the missing information singnalled by the referential item from the context by making use of available clues such as affixation attached to the verb showing gender, person, number, etc. The formula is represented as R $\longrightarrow$ O where O indicates the omitted referential item. For example:

Then *he* began to pity the great fish .

ثم شرع (O) يأسى للسمكة الكبيرة.

7.3 Conversion

Two types of conversion have been identified in the data:

a. Conversion by lexicalisation

According to this strategy, a referential item in the source text is convert into an appropriate lexical means in the

target text. The lexical items selected signify the identity of the reference and are target text internally determined. The translator's selection of a competent lexical item reflects both stylistic and semantic maturity of choice. The formula for representing this strategy is

R ——————► LID where LID stands *for lexical identity device.* The following is an example that illustrates this strategy:

When betters were asking that *it* be called a draw ...

ساعة أصر المتراهنون على أن يعتبر الفريقان متساويين ...

In this example, the referential item *it* is lexicalised when translated into Arabic. The item that is selected is الفريقان (two teams). This may sound an inefficient rendition since the referential item *it* refers to *the hand game*, translated as لعبة اليد الحديدية which appears early in the source text, rather than *the two teams* الفريقان. The immediate equivalence هما is eliminated in the target and the lexical choice الفريقان may, in our opinion, reflect the tendency in Arabic to use a clear identity device instead of what might seem a spatially distant referential item and therefor cumbersome. The choice is dictated by the way the translator decided to render expression *a draw* into an adjective متساويين

meaning *equal*. The translator, for stylistic reasons, prefers this rendition to a possibility of using the expression.

ان تعتبر نتيجة المباراة تعادلاً بين الفريقين

b. Conversion by contra-rendition

The second type of conversion, unlike the first, may be caused by language specific constrains relevant to the rendition of the personal reference into the target language. Disturbance in the target text could be due, for instance, to incongruity of gender. The example below illustrates this point:

Then he began to pity great fish he had hooked.

He is wonderful and strange ...

ثم شرع يأسى للسمكة الكبيرة التي اوقعها في شركه، وقال في نفسه انها فاتنة عجيبة.

Here the generic word سمكة in Arabic is feminine in gender, but may be used male and female fish. In the source text the fish is a male and therefore a masculine referential item is used. To overcome this problem, the translator occasionally resorts to using the expressions السمكة الذكر (the male fish) and

السمكة الانثى (the female fish), but in both cases the referential items used are of a feminine gender and therefore signify a female.

This type of conversion is supported by the choice of collocating lexical items that are female specific. In the example above the adjective "wonderful" is gender neutral, i.e., it can collocate with a male, e.g., " a wonderful man" or a female, e.g., " a wonderful woman". But since السمكة (the fish) is treated as female, owing to its feminine gender, the translator selects a feminine biased epithet to render the word "wonderful". This is the word فاتنـة which collocates with females rather than males; i.e., native speakers normally say امرأة فاتنة but not رجل فاتن.

To shed more light on this point, we refer to Jakobson (1959) who, citing Boas (1938),who observes that grammatical patterns of a language determine those aspects of each experience that must be expressed in the given language. He states that we have to choose between these aspects, and one or the other must be chosen. Jakobson confirms that in order to translate accurately the English sentence "I hired a worker" a Russian needs supplementary information whether this action was completed or not and whether the worker was a man or a woman. He concludes that a grammatical category such as gender plays a great role in mythological attitudes of speech community, and that ways of personifying or metaphorically interpreting inanimate nouns are prompted by their gender.

In the source text (*The Old Man and the Sea*), personification of the word "fish" is reflected through the use of two personal pronouns "he" and "she" according to whether the fish is a male or a female. But due to the grammatical constraints of gender in Arabic, the translator has rendered personification by using feminine referential items only: هي، هما, thus following a strategy that can be represented by the formula:

$R\ m/Rf \longrightarrow R'f, R'm$ where an object that can be personified as a male (m) or a female (f) is rendered into one gender, either male or female according to the gender specification of the object in the target language.

Language specific restriction of this type has created three kinds of disturbance in the target text:

a.   It distorts a clear image of comparison in the source text. In this image, the old man. Compares himself to the great fish. Consider the following lexical items that clearly draw the lines of comparison presented by the author in the source narrative text and their counterparts in the Arabic translation. The connected lines indicate congruent comparison as presented in the source text, while the dotted lines indicate incongruent or disturbed comparison as displayed in the target text:

The Old Man	The Great Fish	السمكة الكبيرة	الشيخ
He —————	He	هي	هو

Old ———— Old	كبيرة	هرم
Lonely ——— Lonely	وحيدة.................	وحيد
Male ——— Like a male	كأنها ذكر.................	ذكر
Desperate —— Desperate	يائسة ————————	يائس

b.   Another disturbance that language specific restriction creates is that of the symbolic antitheses of human-animal conflict in the novel. The erroneous rendition of the personal reference has mitigated the effect of the conflict on target text readership. In the target text the fish, as explained above, is a female (a noun of a feminine gender signaled by feminine referential items through the text) and not a male as intended in the source text. Generally a fight with a male animal is more dangerous than one with a female animal as it is confirmed by the author in this extract:

> The hooked fish, the female made a wide panic-stricken, despairing fight that soon exhausted her.

The strength of the male fish is clearly stated in the following extract:

> He could ruin me by jumping or by a wild rush.

c.   A third disturbance occurs in the line of continuity in the target text between the exterior word of the old man at sea and his interior world of this illusions, dreams and memories. The exterior symbolic antithesis, i.e., the old man against the male fish is related to another interior symbolic antithesis, which

exists only in the mind of the old man. While the old man is struggling with the fish he remembers an incident which happened a few years back when he was younger. He was at the tavern playing the hand-game with a negro. The negro was a very strong man and the game went on for one day and one night. This interior episode is related to the exterior episode in a four-term homology in the source text to form a unified continuous whole. The homology can be expressed in the following way: if A is opposed to B and X is opposed to Y then one can, in seeking further unification, set these oppositions together in a four-term homology and say that A is to B as X to Y (cf. Culler, 1975: 16). The following is an application of the above formula in both the source and target text.

	Exterior Episode				Interior Episode	
	A	*B*	is related to		*X*	*Y*
	human	animal			white man	black man
	old man	fish			Santiago	the negro
source text	he	he	————		he	he
target text	هو (he)	هي (she)	··············		هو (he)	هو (he)

The dotted line in the diagram above shows that the target text suffers from disturbance in maintaining the binary

opposition that is used for ordering the most heterogeneous elements. Binarism, it should be noted, is pervasive in literature. When two things, entities, objects, people, are set in opposition to one another, the reader is forced to explore the qualitative similarities and differences, to make connections so as to derive meaning from the disjunction. The reader proceeds from one opposition to another, trying them out, and determining which is pertinent to a unified thematic structure and, thus, requires the reader to undertake a symbolic reading which exploits the oppositions and gives them a place in a larger symbolic structure (ibid.).

In the example we have discussed, the problematic rendition of the personal referential item هو (he) into هي (she) interrupts the line of continuity of this episode of the novel and leads to discrete rather than continuous interpretations of the fundamental and supporting events.

One may argue that a literary work can have more than one interpretation and therefore other avenues for resolving the problem are available to the translator. Mutable interpretations are frequently possible in literary texts. In narratives, however, one can resort to some basic notions in an objective literary criticism. Schmidt (1975: 165, cited in Beaugrande, 1978: 35) postulates that a scientific quality of interpretation can only