

Restylization in Ibrahim Jabra's Arabic Translation of *Macbeth*

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Abstract

This paper analyzes Ibrahim Jabra's 1980 Arabic translation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* as a case of restylization, examining the adaptation of the original English text's poetic and dramatic features to align with the rhetorical and aesthetic conventions of Modern Standard Arabic. Levy (2011) and Leech and Short (2007) were adopted as an integrated textual analysis to investigate Jabra's account of fidelity to Shakespeare's literary style, in addition to considering the cultural relevance for Arabic-speaking audiences. The analysis focuses on Jabra's strategies for rendering poetic rhythm, ambiguity, metaphor, and cognitive synonymy. The results show that Jabra's translation represents an amalgamation of literal and domesticating approaches, proving his profound literary sensitivity. This also reflects his awareness of the cognitive and affective dimensions inherent in the process of translation. This framework represents a subtle understanding of dramatic language. Thus, translation is viewed as both a significant linguistic achievement and a culturally adaptive rewriting that effectively reimagines *Macbeth* for contemporary Arabic readers and performers.

Keywords: translation, drama translation, restylization, cultural and linguistic differences



1. Introduction

Restylization or transcreation in translation refers to the process of changing the stylistic features of a source text (ST) into the target language (TL), going beyond the literal translation. Doing so is achieved while preserving meaning, intent, and communicative effect. It extends beyond the lexical and syntactic levels, requiring a subtle comprehension of the source text's tone, register, rhetorical structure, and aesthetic qualities, i.e., achieving both the micro-level and the macro-level of the text to be translated. The present study examines restylization as a concept and underscores its strategies and implications in the process of translating *Macbeth* into Arabic. It also highlights the role of translation in conveying the right equivalence as the most suitable *tertium comparationis*. Restylization is often scaffolded by the translator's *skopos* (purpose) or intended function of the translated text (Reiss & Vermeer, 2014). According to Nida (1964), functional equivalence allows for stylistic flexibility as long as the effect on the target audience is preserved. In addition, Boase-Beier (2006) refers to the importance of the translator's stylistic intuition in reproducing the literary tone and rhythm of the source text.

As a process, restylization involves adapting stylistic elements such as tone, formality, rhythm, and literary devices in the target text (TT). It is common knowledge that translation might reiterate the semantic aspect, but restylization ensures the acceptance of the TL version in the same way the original text is accepted by its readership. Thus, restylization is paramount in literary translation, where style impacts the response and interpretation of a given text. Restylization is especially significant in contexts having cultural and linguistic discrepancies, where the target audience is significantly different from the source audience. In addition to that, there are source text



features and implications, e.g., metaphors, that lack correspondence, and translators are in a position to preserve the author's voice and coherence in TL requires reformulation (Nida, 1964; Baker, 1992; Hatim & Mason, 1997; Boase-Beier, 2006; Reiss & Vermeer 2014). All these considerations apply to translating Shakespeare's *Macbeth* into Arabic by Jabra. For example, a sarcastic tone in English might need to be restylized as ironic or subtly critical in Arabic, depending on socio-pragmatic norms.

Restylization, which involves altering the stylistic elements like tone, rhythm, and cultural references, is widely understood as paramount in translation to picture the same communicative effect and audience response (Baker, 1992; Boase-Beier, 2006; Hatim & Mason, 1997; House, 2015; Nida, 1964; Reiss & Vermeer, 2014; House, 2015). All these authors have referred to strategies that are important in restylization in the process of translation. These include requirements such as register shift, rhetorical adjustment, cultural substitution, and syntactic reordering.

The researchers try to provide potential answers to the following research questions in light of the results of the analyses of this topic:

1. How does Jabra manipulate the stylistic restylization in reproducing *Macbeth* in Arabic?
2. To what extent does Jabra succeed in producing Levý's principle of "equivalent effect" in rendering the psychological and symbolic elements of the source text?
3. How does the application of Leech and Short's stylistic levels reveal the performative and rhetorical changes in Jabra's Arabic translation of the significant dramatic passages from *Macbeth*?



2. Literature Review

There are significant scholarly works on Arabic translations of Shakespeare's plays, with a special focus on *Macbeth* as translated by Ibrahim Jabra, Khalil Mutran, and Mohammed Ameen. It relies on important studies that analyze comparative translation strategies, theatrical and performative issues, lexical choices involving cognitive synonyms, and the management of ambiguity. The discussion is also based on Jiří Levý's model of restylization from *The Art of Translation* (1963/2011), which provides a theoretical framework for understanding the stylistic changes that happen during translation. Another framework is that of Leech and Short (2007).

2.1 Restylization in Literary Translation: Jiří Levý's (1963//2011) Framework

According to Levý (1963//2011), translation is viewed as a process of "restylization", a case where the translator adapts the stylistic and communicative features of the source text to suit the norms, expectations, and aesthetics of the target culture. For him, translation is not only a linguistic manipulation but also an aesthetic reproduction. This involves handling linguistic, cultural, and communicative factors accurately. There are three interconnected aspects: intention, realization, and reception. By intention, it is meant that the translator should accomplish the aims of his translation; realization concerns the production of the translation, while reception refers to how the translated text is interpreted in the target culture. In literary translation, Levý emphasizes that the translator has to reproduce both the semantic content and the stylistic configuration of the original. It is a process that requires intentional restylization.



Levy's perspectives on the translator's decision-making process solidify the discussion of how Arabic translators of Shakespeare balance faithfulness to form with adaptation to target-language norms. Jabra's translation of *Macbeth* reflects an elevated formal register and a poetic sensibility aligned with Levy's notion of literary restylization. These varying strategies align with Jabir's (2021), which shows the significance of the morphological and syntactic choices, i.e., handling semi-active participle adjectives. This helps translators succeed in producing the intended ideological and stylistic representation in Arabic translation. In correspondence with this, Jabir (2020) study demonstrates how a translator should handle the interpersonal metafunction to formulate the translator's voice and the stylistic and cultural framing considerations (Jabir, 2020). According to Jabir's findings, translators can benefit from Levy's model to strengthen their role as cultural mediators and linguistic reproducers.

2.2 Cognitive Synonym Translation and Lexical Nuance

Rendering Shakespeare's complex plays in terms of their lexical fields is a hard task. Ishrateh (2021) compares how different translators make a selection between literal and functional equivalents. His study shows that Jabra frequently aims for achieving lexical precision based on formal equivalence, even at the cost of connotative richness. This selection copes with Levy's observation that literary translation often involves an adjustment between the semantic integrity of a term and its pragmatic correspondence in the TL.

2.3 Handling Ambiguity: Strategies of Neutralization and Domestication

Ambiguity represents a central dramatic device in *Macbeth*. It poses unique obstacles in translation. In this regard, Khider (2022) describes how Arabic translators examine the multiple interpretive layers woven inside the



Shakespearean text. The findings reveal that strategies like domestication should align with literal approaches to maintain suspense and communicative weight. As for Jabra, ambiguity is maintained by adopting lofty diction and cognitive phrasing, though clarity might be reduced. Levý's theory scaffolds this as a stylistic negotiation: the translator is apt to either preserve the foreignness and ambiguity of the original or adapt for comprehension and effect in the target culture.

Regarding restylization, Levý's theoretical accounts represent a useful framework for handling the stylistic strategies adopted by translators such as Jabra. whose translations emerge as good instances of formal restylization. He focuses on lexical fidelity and rhetorical elegance. Through the insights of Al Allaq, Ishrateh, and Khider, it can be demonstrated that some translators negotiate the complexities of performability, synonymy, and ambiguity. These features contribute effectively to the Arabic Shakespearean tradition.

3. Methodology

Levý's (2011) model of translation considers translation as a decision-making process. Together with Leech and Short's (2007) stylistic framework, this study investigates the ways in which the stylistic features in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* are translated in the Arabic translation by Jabra. This integrative approach helps explore both linguistic form and translational agency, emphasizing how stylistic equivalence is negotiated under literary and cultural constraints.

3.1 Jiří Levý's Model of Literary Translation



According to Levý's (2011) conceptualizations, a translator is apt for considering the constraints that underlie the process of literary translation. These constraints encapsulate both micro- and macro-levels, including linguistic structure, literary norms, and socio-cultural expectations. A translator is viewed as an active agent who can combine both fidelity to the source text and creative adaptation. Thus, translation is "a process of conscious decision-making among a series of functionally equivalent variants" (Levý, 2011, p. 148). This model is highly applicable to the translation of dramatic literature, such as *Macbeth*. In such tasks of translation, a translator is entitled to maintain linguistic density, rhetorical nuance, and dramatic rhythm. Jabra's translation is a typical example of such projects, which require handling the shifts that align with cultural expectations and Arabic literary aesthetics.

3.2 Leech and Short's Model of Stylistic Analysis

According to Leech and Short (2007), the stylistic features of a literary text are organized around four categories: lexical, grammatical, figurative, and contextual. This systematic framework helps shape meaning through language. In *Macbeth*, for example, metaphoric expressions as a stylistic feature (e.g., "sleep that knits up the raveled sleeve of care") are central to the text's dramatic atmosphere and psychological intensity.

By drawing upon this model, the study examines the strategies used by Jabra to render such features into Arabic: for example, he sometimes maintains metaphors, or sometimes he adapts them culturally, or sometimes he replaces that metaphoric expression entirely. In addition, he tries to preserve the rhythmic features represented by prosodic devices in Arabic. Significantly, the dramatic voice and tone are manipulated via the use of grammatical and lexical decisions.



3.3 Integration and Application

By integrating Levý's and Leech and Short's models, this study considers translation as a stylistically informed act of interpretation. It describes how Jabra's translation manipulates the requirements of form and poetic style within the constraints of Arabic dramatic language and culture. This integration can also handle potential shifts in genre conventions, reader expectations, and rhetorical traditions. For instance, in instances where Shakespeare employs condensed metaphor expressions, Jabra is in a position to reframe the text to correspond to Arabic rhetorical norms. According to Levý, "stylistic equivalence" is a functional notion, rather than a formal one. At the same time, Leech and Short's categories solidify the specific linguistic levels where these shifts are necessary in vocabulary, syntax, figurative language, or discourse structure.

This dual-theoretical framework enables a subtle analysis of the ways in which the aesthetic, dramatic, and ideological dimensions of *Macbeth* are rendered into Arabic translation.

4. Scene Analysis

In this section, the researchers tried to analyze the scene of the Dagger Soliloquy and Lady Macbeth's "Out, damned spot!" (Sleepwalking scene) in light of the integrated models referred to above.

4.1 The Dagger Soliloquy ("Is this a dagger which I see before me...?")

In this line, the meter is iambic pentameter, which encapsulates a rhetorical question and hesitations. Here, Shakespeare illustrates Macbeth's psychological complex situation. In Arabic, Jabra transforms this meter into



a classical Arabic *qasida* (poem) in a meter called *al-bahr al-taweel*, which consists of monorhyme and hemistichic structure. In Arabic poetry, each line of verse is divided into two hemistichs: *sadr* and *ajiz*. This maintains the dramatic tension while enhancing sonic beauty for Arabic readership. Now, let us compare these lines along with their Arabic rendition:

**“Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand?”**

Jabra’s Arabic (approximate):

هل هذا هو النصل الذي أرى أمامي،
”يذه نحو يدي؟“

Jabra uses the item “النصل” (blade) instead of the literal equivalent “خنجر” (dagger), thinking that he is reflecting classical diction and symbolic resonance. However, the item (خنجر) is the most suitable correspondence, even if the classical diction is to be maintained. This rendition has certain effects:

1. Maintaining formal fidelity, trying to retain syntactic correspondence,
2. Achieving Poetic elevation where classical meter lavishes dramatic musicality familiar to the Arab readership, and
3. Ensuring the expressive clarity in that the literary diction adopted aligns with stage eloquence.

Literal translation, creative re-stylization, and the principle of “equivalent effect” are methods used by Levy. As a feature of his approach, he amalgamates syntactic correspondence with a kind of elevated lexical substitution. For example, he tried to avoid the commoner expression (خنجر) by (نصل). He thought that this lexical selection reflects a classical Arabic terminology.



This lexical choice reflects a classical Arabic diction, aligning with poetic tradition and enhancing symbolic resonance. Doing so helps him achieve both cognitive content and the dramatic effect in the target culture.

As for Leech and Short's stylistic framework, the lexical analysis shows that the item (نصل) is a stylistically marked lexical item, which enables the translator to evoke a literary register. Furthermore, this substitution reveals the inner conflict inside Macbeth. On the grammatical level, Jabra successfully reproduces Shakespeare's syntactic parallelism and question structure, reflecting Macbeth's rhetorical hesitation. The very use of the Arabic phrasing "...هل هذا هو النصل" preserves the same dramatic immediacy. Phonologically, the translator adopts the classical Arabic meter al-baḥr al-tawīl, to achieve parallelism with the English iambic pentameter. On the pragmatic level, the performative and interpretive effects are satisfied.

4.2 Lady Macbeth's "Out, damned spot!" (Sleepwalking scene)

Scholars (e.g., Al-Abdullah & Tajdin (2005), Asi (2018), and Hussein (2020), noticed that Jabra makes use of domestication to reflect the psychological distress in a culturally matching imagery. The selected example reads:

"Out, damned spot! out, I say!"

"أطفئي يا نجس البقعة! اطفئي، أقول"

As for mood and modality, Jabra uses the imperative mood to represent the modality of expressiveness: ("أطفئي"). In addition, he employs a culturally vivid adjective, which is ("نجس"). By so doing, he recreates urgency and the same performative force. Again, Jabra adopts Venuti's strategy of domestication to transform "damned" into the culturally charged "نجس",



which means (impure/defiled). The adverbial particle (out) is rendered as this imperative verb. It can be seen as a dynamic metaphor of fire. To levy, this is read as creative equivalence, which underlies cultural metaphors to reflect Macbeth's psychological intensity and contextual relevance.

According to Leech and Short's stylistic analysis, the lexical item "نجس" is semantically informative in Arabic. This lavishes a layer of moral disgust on the physical stain. The imperative verb "أطفي" metaphorically symbolizes purification or denial. Pragmatically, Jabra reiterates the abrupt, divided rhythm of the original, which reflects Lady Macbeth's mental disintegration. On the phonological level, the amalgamation of the imperative verb with this adjective can enhance the auditory tension of the line, maintaining its performative strength.

5. Results and Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that Jabra's Arabic translation of *Macbeth* is not merely a linguistic task but an act of restylization that reflects the poetic, dramatic, and cultural complexities of Shakespeare's original text. Jabra produces a text that is both faithful to the spirit of the original and corresponding to the Arabic poetic and theatrical tradition.

Formally, Jabra recycles the English iambic pentameter into al-baḥr al-ṭawīl, which is a metrical pattern of Arabic classical poetry. This reconstruction scaffolds both the sonic and performative qualities of the translated text. This makes the translated version more acceptable and aesthetically familiar to Arabic-speaking audiences. Leech and Short (2007, p. 87) view this shift as a "stylistic re-orientation," a case in which the translator reconfigures the form to recreate communicative function within



the target culture. Jabra's selection of classical meter achieves precisely this aim: it reproduces the rhythm of dramatic tension pictured by Shakespeare to make it expected of Arabic poetic drama.

Selecting such lexical items reflects a stylistic elevation while keeping both literary convention and stage diction. For example, the rendering of "dagger" as "النصل" demonstrates a deliberate representation of Shakespeare's metaphor into a culturally familiar poetic gravitas. From the perspective of Levý's theory of translation, this approach copes with the principle of "equivalent effect," where the translator reshuffles lexical items to reproduce a similar emotional or aesthetic response in the target readership (Levý, 1967/2011). Arriving at such decisions reflects a subtle balance between literal fidelity and domestication.

In the second extract, the rendering of Lady Macbeth's iconic line—"Out, damned spot! Out, I say!"—further reflects Jabra's stylistic and cultural sensitivity. The very use of the clauses "أطفئي يا نجس البقعة! أطفئي، أقول" corresponds to the English "damned" with the culturally loaded adjective (نجس). In Arabic, this rendition recreates the connotation of impurity with moral and religious undertones. Such lexical choice both intensifies the psychological drama of the scene and domesticates it into a more comprehensible and affective form for an Arab reader. Leech and Short's pragmatic stylistics strengthens this account, highlighting how choices at the level of word connotation create the performative force and implied meaning of dramatic utterances (Leech & Short, 2007, p. 102).

On the grammatical level, Jabra preserves syntactic parallelism and rhetorical repetition, which represent key features of Shakespeare's original style. Mixing both interrogatives and imperatives reinforces the dramatic effect and psychological realism. According to Levý (2011), this syntactic



reconfiguration, together with such lexical items that are culturally accessible to the Arab readership, adds to the overall vivid picture created by the translator. This constitutes stylistic fidelity, achieving both formal literalism and interpretive freedom. Furthermore, Jabra's adoption of elevated diction across both soliloquies and dialogic exchanges reflects an awareness of what Leech and Short name "functional foregrounding" (2007, p. 56). In such attempts, using marked linguistic features recreates a distinct stylistic purpose and heightens the emotional and aesthetic effect of the performance.

Ultimately, a reader can view Jabra's translation not only as a performable reproduction of *Macbeth* but also as a static textual product of translation. By amalgamating classical Arabic meter, culturally parallel metaphors, and effective diction, he ensures that the Arabic *Macbeth* is both a literary achievement and a viable theatrical text. This aligns with Levý's notion of translation as a "decision process" controlled by aesthetic and communicative intents (Levý, 2011, p. 148). Doing so proves that Jabra reflects a coherent strategy that ensures dramatic vitality, cultural adaptation, and poetic expressiveness with equal impact.

6. Conclusion

Restylization is a key factor in professional and literary translation. Though the translated version is a betrayal of the source, it is a creative and strategic reproduction that elevates textual production in the Arabic version. Its eloquent production requires linguistic expertise, cultural sensitivity, and stylistic competence. The translator capitalizes on literal translation, domestication, and neutral rendering to make a balance between ambiguity representation and making readability accessible. Sometimes, literal wording



often preserves interpretive openness. In instances that are culturally opaque, Jabra tries to clarify things to maintain comprehension.

Jabra's *Macbeth* is a good example of restylization in translation in his competence of amalgamating of formal accuracy, poetic enhancement, and performability. In cases of ambiguity, his approach adequately reflects the translator's creativity as a creative mediator. Restylization can defy the role of the translator as a transparent mediator. It also signifies the translator's interpretive agency, especially in dramatic texts where style is essential to meaning.

Jabra's Arabic rendition of *Macbeth* shows a subtle balance between faithfulness to the original form and suitability to Arabic literary sensibilities. Structurally, Jabra generally tries to maintain the sentence order and rhetorical structure of the source text. This contributes to retaining the Shakespearean syntactic and dramatic feel (Jabra, 1980). Soliloquies are often reproduced in the classical Arabic poetic form, producing suitable Arabic rhythmic patterns and sonic effects. As for figurative language, Jabra frequently adopts domesticating metaphors by recreating Shakespeare's imagery through culturally familiar Arabic tropes. Doing so will ensure clarity and cultural accessibility without deviating from the intended meaning. But, in cases of near-synonyms and semantic nuances, Jabra tends to manipulate formal equivalence rather than interpretive subtlety. This tendency occasionally leads to the loss of the structured connotations and psychological depth that creeps into the original text (Jabra, 1980). Jabra's restyling of *Macbeth* combines fidelity and creativity.



In *Macbeth*, Jabra translates by employing stylistic strategies that ensure both fidelity to the English text and adaptation to Arabic literary norms. Structurally, Jabra follows closely the original sentence constructions, achieving the rhetorical rhythm and syntactic density of Shakespeare; much of the play's dramatic texture can be maintained through this alignment (Jabra, 1980). In terms of poetic form, Jabra rebuilds key soliloquies in the style of the classical Arabic poem, enriching the translation with a rhythmic and sonic resonance that suits Arabic literary traditions. Moreover, in rendering metaphor, Jabra often resorts to domesticating Shakespeare's figurative language by manipulating culturally familiar Arabic poetic imagery. This strategy ensures both clarity and cultural accessibility, resulting in adequacy and acceptability on the part of the Arabic readership and audience.



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