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Mind Style in Translation: A Cognitive-Stylistic Framework for Analyzing Characterization Shifts in English–Arabic Literary Translation

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Abstract

Background: Mind style — the linguistic encoding of a character's cognitive habits and worldview — is central to literary characterization, yet studies of English–Arabic fiction translation have tended to examine single novels or single devices, leaving the cumulative effect of small shifts on characterization under-theorized. Aim: This article asks how mind style is transformed in English–Arabic literary translation and what this reveals about the translator's voice. Method: Working within the cognitive-stylistic tradition of Roger Fowler and Elena Semino, it analyzes a purposively selected corpus of thirty-one parallel English–Arabic passages, drawn chiefly from Herman Melville's Moby-Dick, Vladimir Nabokov's Lolita, and Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights, with comparison material from Arabic literary sources and with Jane Eyre considered through existing scholarship. Each passage is classified by translation strategy and cognitive effect. Findings: Three categories of shift emerge: structural parallelism, which accounts for exactly half of all instances; deictic repositioning, at 26.7%; and lexical or moral repositioning, at 23.3%. Literal translation tends to preserve formal architecture, yet small adjustments to clause structure or deictic anchorage can perceptibly alter the translator's voice. Deictic explicitation tends to draw readers closer to a character's interiority, while the eroticized and euphemized rendering of taboo material in Lolita can quietly reassign moral responsibility among characters. Conclusion: Frequency and consequence run in opposite directions: the least frequent category carries some of the most consequential effects. Cognitive stylistics thus offers translation scholars a workable method for tracing how small linguistic decisions accumulate into substantial interpretive consequences.

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Keywords: mind style; cognitive stylistics; literary translation; English–Arabic; deixis; translator's voice; characterization

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الملخص

الخلفية :يُعدّ أسلوب الذهن (Mind Style)، المتمثّل في التشفير اللغوي للعادات الإدراكية للشخصية ورؤيتها للعالم، عنصراً محورياً في بناء الشخصية الأدبية .ومع ذلك، اتجهت الدراسات التي تناولت ترجمة الرواية بين الإنجليزية والعربية إلى التركيز على روايات بعينها أو وسائل أسلوبية منفردة، مما أدى إلى عدم إيلاء الأثر التراكمي للتحوّلات اللغوية الطفيفة ما يستحقه من تأصيل نظري في سياق بناء الشخصية.

الهدف :تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى استقصاء الكيفية التي يتحوّل بها أسلوب الذهن في الترجمة الأدبية بين الإنجليزية والعربية، والكشف عمّا تعكسه هذه التحوّلات بشأن صوت المترجم.

المنهج :تستند الدراسة إلى تقاليد الأسلوبية المعرفية لدى روجر فاولر وإيلينا سيمينو، وتحلّل مدوّنة لغوية مختارة قصديّاً تتألف من واحد وثلاثين مقطعاً متوازياً باللغتين الإنجليزية والعربية، مستمدّة أساساً من روايات موبي ديك لهيرمان ملفيل، ولوليتا لفلاديمير نابوكوف، ومرتفعات وذرينغ لإميلي برونتي، مع الاستعانة بمواد مقارنة من مصادر أدبية عربية، فضلاً عن تناول رواية جين إير في ضوء الدراسات السابقة .ويُصنَّف كل مقطع وفقاً لاستراتيجية الترجمة والأثر المعرفي المترتب عليها.

النتائج :كشفت الدراسة عن ثلاث فئات من التحوّلات، هي :التوازي البنيوي، الذي يمثّل نصف الحالات المرصودة بالضبط؛ وإعادة التموضع الإشاري، بنسبة بلغت 26.7%؛ وإعادة التموضع المعجمي أو الأخلاقي، بنسبة بلغت .23.3%وتميل الترجمة الحرفية إلى الحفاظ على البنية الشكلية للنص، غير أن التعديلات الطفيفة في بنية الجملة أو في المرتكز الإشاري قد تُحدث تغييراً ملحوظاً في صوت المترجم . كما تميل الزيادة في التصريح بالعناصر الإشارية إلى تقريب القرّاء من العالم الداخلي للشخصية، في حين يمكن للمعالجة ذات الطابع الإيروتيكي، أو للتلطيف اللغوي عند ترجمة المضامين المحظورة اجتماعياً وأخلاقياً في رواية لوليتا، أن تعيد توزيع المسؤولية الأخلاقية بين الشخصيات بصورة ضمنية.

الخاتمة :تتباين معدلات التكرار مع حجم التأثير؛ إذ تحمل الفئة الأقل تكراراً بعضاً من أكثر الآثار أهميةً وتبعاتٍ تأويلية .ومن ثمّ، توفّر الأسلوبية المعرفية للباحثين في دراسات الترجمة منهجاً إجرائياً قابلاً للتطبيق لتتبّع الكيفية التي تتراكم بها القرارات اللغوية الطفيفة لتفضي إلى نتائج تأويلية جوهرية.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and problem

Literary translation is sometimes described, rather too simply, as an act of linguistic substitution — the swapping of one language's words for another's. It is better understood as an act of cognitive mediation. At the heart of a novel's artistic integrity lies what Roger Fowler termed mind style: the pattern of linguistic choices through which a character's or narrator's cognitive state and worldview become perceptible on the page (Ghazala, 2018). Moving a text from English into Arabic — two languages separated by considerable typological and cultural distance — forces a translator to make continual decisions about syntax, deixis, and lexis, decisions that are rarely neutral with respect to characterization, however routine or invisible they may seem in the moment of drafting.

1.2 Research gap

Existing scholarship on English–Arabic fiction translation has produced valuable but largely separate lines of inquiry. Studies have examined deictic and person shifts in Arabic renderings of Wuthering Heights (Abualadas, 2015,

2019a, 2019b; Abualadas & Ahmad, 2018), the eroticization of Nabokov's Lolita (Saideen et al., 2022, 2024), the strategies used to retain parallelism in Moby-Dick (Ikbal et al., 2016), the translation of direct speech and of expressive verbs in Wuthering Heights (Al-Safawi & Nasser, 2023; Yahya & Hasan, 2024), and language games in Jane Eyre (Özcan, 2025). Four limitations follow from this pattern, at least within the literature reviewed for the present study.

Fragmentation. Each study typically concentrates on one novel or one device, so the findings are not easily compared across levels of language or across texts.

Limited use of mind style as an organizing concept. Mind style is rarely used as the common frame that links syntactic, deictic, and lexical choices to a single question about characterization.

No integrated account of frequency and consequence. It is seldom asked whether the most common kind of shift is also the most consequential for how a character is read.

Limited theorization of the translator's cumulative presence. The notion of the translator's voice (Hermans, 1996) is invoked, but the way small shifts accumulate across levels into such a presence is rarely modelled for the English–Arabic pair.

This article addresses these limitations by applying one cognitive-stylistic framework across three linguistic levels and across several texts, and by reporting both how often each kind of shift occurs and what it does to characterization.

1.3 Aims and research questions

The study aims to trace how the linguistic architecture of mind style is rebuilt when a text moves from English into Arabic, and to determine what this reveals about the translator's voice. It is guided by three research questions:

RQ1. Which types of linguistic shift (syntactic, deictic, lexical or moral) accompany the rendering of mind style from English into Arabic in the corpus, and how frequently does each occur?

RQ2. How does each type of shift alter the reader's likely construction of a character's cognition, perspective, and moral standing?

RQ3. What picture of the translator's voice emerges when these shifts are considered together, and to what extent can they be distinguished from constraints imposed by the Arabic language itself?

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Mind style: from linguistic criticism to cognitive stylistics

The term mind style originates with Fowler (1977), who used it to describe the distinctive linguistic representation of an individual consciousness — what he

called the ‘cumulation of consistent linguistic choices’ that together produce a recognizable cognitive perspective (as cited in Ghazala, 2018). The notion belongs to a longer tradition of stylistic inquiry that treats patterns of syntax, lexis, and transitivity as evidence of how a narrator or character construes events (Leech & Short, 2007). Semino (2002) later brought the concept into closer contact with cognitive linguistics, arguing that mind style concerns not merely a character’s manner of speaking but the perceived reality that manner constructs for the reader. On her account, a mind style is typically recognized as distinctive against the background of the reader’s own, more conventional ways of construing the world. Cognitive poetics more broadly (Stockwell, 2002) reinforces the point that such effects arise in the interaction between textual patterning and the reader’s mental processing. On this view, style is not decoration laid over a pre-existing character; it is, in a meaningful sense, how the character’s mind comes to exist for us at all.

2.2 Cognitive stylistics and translation

Within translation studies, cognitive stylistics treats the translator as the text’s first and most attentive reader — someone who must interpret a character’s mind style before reconstructing it, necessarily imperfectly, in another language. Boase-Beier (2006) develops this position most fully, arguing that the style of a text reflects the cognitive state of its author or narrator and that translating style therefore means reconstructing, rather than merely copying, that state. Tabakowska (1993) had earlier shown, from a cognitive-linguistic standpoint, that languages differ in how they construe the same scene, so that even a formally accurate translation may present a situation from a subtly different perspective. Ghazala (2018) similarly frames the translator as a cognitive-stylistic agent whose interpretive decisions shape the target text.

2.3 The translator’s voice, explicitation, and normalization

It is in the act of reconstruction that what this article calls the translator’s voice becomes visible. Hermans (1996) argued that translated narrative contains a ‘second voice’ — the discursive presence of the translator — which is usually concealed behind the narrator’s voice but can be detected in specific textual signals. The term is used here in a related but broader sense: the narrative presence that emerges, often unintentionally, through the countless small shifts a translator makes in moving between languages (Abualadas, 2015, 2019b).

Two further bodies of work frame the analysis. The explicitation hypothesis holds that translations tend to make explicit what the source text leaves implicit (Blum-Kulka, 1986), and Baker (1993) grouped explicitation with simplification and normalization as candidate general tendencies of translated language. Venuti (1995) related the pressure toward fluency to the translator’s ‘invisibility’, since a smooth target text conceals the interpretive work that

produced it. Whether such tendencies are universal remains debated; this study treats them as tendencies observed in English–Arabic fiction translation (Abualadas, 2015) rather than as laws, and asks what they mean specifically for characterization.

2.4 Translation shifts and the three levels of analysis

The analysis draws on the concept of the translation shift, understood as a departure from formal correspondence between source and target (Catford, 1965), and on the descriptive procedures of transposition and modulation proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet (1958/1995). Its descriptive orientation is consistent with the aim of Descriptive Translation Studies to explain what translators actually do rather than what they ought to do (Toury, 1995). Individually, shifts may appear trivial; Munday (2008) shows, however, that small and apparently routine choices can accumulate into significant effects on a text's style and ideological orientation. In this article the shifts are grouped at three linguistic levels:

Syntactic — changes to clause structure, parallelism, and word order (Besbes, 2013; Ikbal et al., 2016).

Deictic — alterations to the spatial, temporal, and personal markers that anchor a narrator relative to the characters (Abualadas, 2019a; Abualadas & Ahmad, 2018).

Lexical and semantic — choices of vocabulary, metaphor, and intensity that carry moral or emotional weight (Al-Safawi & Nasser, 2023; Saideen et al., 2022).

2.5 English–Arabic typological considerations

Interpreting a shift requires some sense of what the target language makes easy, difficult, or obligatory. Arabic allows both verb-initial and subject-initial clauses, and its verbs are inflected for person, number, and gender, so that a subject pronoun is often not expressed separately (Dickins et al., 2002; Holes, 2004). Arabic prose also commonly relies on coordination, lexical repetition, and parallelism as cohesive and rhetorical resources, and its classical rhetorical tradition prizes devices such as rhymed prose (saj‘) (Abu Nada & El Haj Ahmed, 2016; Dickins et al., 2002). These contrasts mean that what is unmarked in one language may be marked in the other, which complicates any simple equation of a ‘shift’ with a translator’s ‘choice’ — a point taken up in Sections 5 and 6.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

The study adopts a descriptive, qualitative design with a quantitative component. Parallel English–Arabic passages are analyzed interpretively using the Fowler–Semino framework, and the resulting classifications are then

summarized as simple frequencies. The design is purposive rather than statistical: it aims to identify and illustrate recurring patterns, not to estimate their prevalence in English–Arabic literary translation as a whole.

3.2 Corpus-selection criteria

Passages were selected according to the following criteria.

Literary status. Source texts are canonical or widely studied works of English fiction, or, for comparison, established Arabic literary authors, so that their mind styles are recognized and the translations are likely to have been read and discussed.

Salient mind style. The passage displays a describable cognitive pattern, such as Ishmael's contemplative rhythm or Humbert's aestheticizing manipulation, that can be linked to characterization.

Available parallel text. A published Arabic rendering (or, for the comparison material, the Arabic original) exists, and the correspondence between source and target passage can be established without ambiguity.

Analytical relevance. The passage shows at least one potential shift at the syntactic, deictic, or lexical level, so that it can be assigned to one of the three categories.

Manageable scope. Passages are short enough, typically a clause to a sentence, to be analyzed closely and interpreted without extended context.

Range of narrative situations. Together the passages cover different narrative situations, including retrospective first-person narration, frame narration, and third-person description, so that findings are not tied to one narrative mode.

Passages were excluded where the available Arabic text was an abridgement or adaptation that left no clear correspondence with the source. Because the criteria are purposive, the corpus should be understood as a structured sample of illustrative cases, not as a representative sample of English–Arabic fiction translation.

3.3 Corpus composition

The corpus consists of thirty-one parallel examples, listed in full in the Appendix and summarized by source in Table 2. Herman Melville's Moby-Dick supplies material for examining the rhythmic, quasi-biblical mind style of the narrator Ishmael; Vladimir Nabokov's Lolita offers a case study in the manipulative, highly aestheticized voice of Humbert Humbert; and Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights supplies evidence of deictic shifting and changes in narrative mood. Arabic literary classics — Taha Hussein's Al-Ayyam and the work of Mikhail Naimy among them — serve as a point of comparison, allowing the analysis to ask how indigenous mind styles read against their translated counterparts, rather than only how foreign ones are rendered into Arabic. Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre is considered mainly through existing

scholarship (Habjan, 2023; Özcan, 2025) rather than through passages in the Appendix.

Table 2

Composition of the Corpus by Source

Source	Examples No	Appendix nos.	Role in the study
Melville, Moby-Dick	10	1–10	Rhythmic, parallelistic mind style of the narrator Ishmael
Brontë, Wuthering Heights	5	19–21, 29, 30	Deictic shifting and narrative mood
Nabokov, Lolita	3	11–13	Lexical and moral repositioning of an aestheticized, unreliable voice
Palahniuk, Fight Club	2	14, 26	Agency and first-person assertion
Taha Hussein	2	27, 28	Indigenous Arabic comparison material
Mustafa	3	17, 22, 23	Lexical precision, modulation, imagery
Hemingway; Lightman; Naimy; Mahmoud; Dickens; generic example	6	15, 16, 18, 24, 25, 31	Single illustrative examples of parallelism, imagery, and genre marking
Total	31	1–31	

Note. Counts are taken from the Appendix. The heavy weighting of Moby-Dick reflects the corpus's emphasis on structural parallelism and should be borne in mind when reading Table 4.

3.4 Analytical procedure and coding scheme

Each example was analyzed using a comparative pragmatic approach in two steps. The first step identifies the translation strategy at work (literal rendering, transposition, modulation, and so on), using the labels given in the Appendix. The second step assesses the strategy's cognitive effect through the Fowler–

Semino framework, asking how the shift is likely to alter the reader's mental representation of the character's cognition, perspective, or moral standing. The examples are then assigned to one of the three categories defined in Table 3, and the category frequencies are reported in Section 4.1.

Table 3

Coding Categories for Shifts in Mind Style

Category	Operational definition	Illustrative examples (Appendix)
Structural parallelism	Changes to clause structure, word order, or repeated patterning, including compensation at another linguistic level.	Nos. 1, 3, 4 (Section 4.2)
Deictic shifts	Changes to the spatial, temporal, or personal markers that anchor narrator, character, and reader.	Nos. 19, 20 (Section 4.3)
Lexical / moral positioning	Changes of vocabulary, register, metaphor, or intensity that alter agency, culpability, or perceived innocence.	Nos. 10, 11, 13, 14 (Section 4.4)

3.5 Validity, transparency, and ethical considerations

Because the analysis rests on interpretive judgment, validity depends on transparency. All thirty-one examples, with their assigned strategies, are reproduced in the Appendix so that readers can inspect and challenge the classification. Claims about reader effects are framed as theory-based inference, not as measured outcomes. The study uses published texts and short quotations for scholarly analysis, and all sources are acknowledged.

4. Findings

4.1 Overview of shift types

The distribution of shift types across the corpus is summarized in Table 4 and displayed in Figure 1, in answer to RQ1.

Table 4

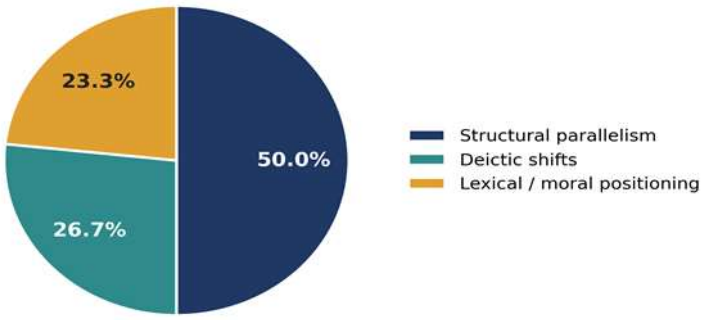
Distribution of Shift Types in the Corpus

Shift category	Share of corpus	Primary effect on characterization
Structural parallelism	50.0%	Preserves rhythmic and rhetorical intensity; reinforces a character's habitual patterns of thought.
Deictic shifts	26.7%	Repositions narrator and reader relative to characters; widens or narrows emotional involvement.
Lexical / moral positioning	23.3%	Alters perceived agency, culpability, and innocence — the smallest category but arguably the most consequential.

Note. Percentages are those reported for the corpus. The category descriptions summarize the interpretive analysis in Sections 4.2 through 4.4.

Figure 1

Share of Each Shift Category in the English–Arabic Corpus



Note. Structural parallelism accounts for exactly half of the corpus, deictic shifts for 26.7%, and lexical or moral positioning for 23.3%.

As Figure 1 shows, structural parallelism occupies half of the chart, while deictic and lexical or moral shifts divide the remainder almost evenly, with the deictic category slightly larger. The pattern is not altogether surprising given the corpus's composition (Table 2), which includes a substantial body of Moby-Dick material chosen for its rhythmic patterning. It does, however, suggest a rough hierarchy of translator intervention: structural choices are the most frequent site of adjustment, deictic choices the second most frequent, and lexical or moral repositioning is the least frequent. The sections that follow

show that this order of frequency is nearly the reverse of the order of consequence for characterization.

4.2 Structural parallelism and clause-level shifts

Parallelism functions as a major rhetorical resource in both English and Arabic, valued in each for the emphasis, clarity, and emotional charge it lends to prose ("The Translation of Parallelism," 2022). Jakobson (1960) described the poetic function of language as projecting the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection onto the axis of combination, which makes recurrent syntactic and phonological patterning a basic marker of heightened, patterned style. Where a narrator's mind style is built on such patterning, as Ishmael's is, the translator has to decide whether to rebuild it formally, relocate it, or let it dissolve. The syntactic rules governing parallel structures diverge sharply between English and Arabic, and translators resolve that divergence in three main ways.

4.2.1 Literal retention and synonymy

Where Melville's narrator relies on repeated syntax to build a slow, contemplative rhythm, translators sometimes preserve that rhythm directly:

> ***English (No. 1):*** *"...when the Sperm whale was almost wholly unknown in his own proper individuality..."*
>
> ***Arabic:*** حين كان حوت العنبر في صورته المتعيّنة مجهولاً أو يكاد...

The translator keeps the formal structure intact while varying the connective (حين rather than عندما) to avoid mechanical repetition (Ikbal et al., 2016) — a small substitution that leaves Ishmael's contemplative, almost scientific cast of mind untouched (Abualadas, 2015).

4.2.2 Compensation at the phonological level

Elsewhere, syntactic parallelism cannot survive the crossing intact, and translators compensate at another linguistic level entirely:

> ***English (No. 3):*** *"Skies the most effulgent but basket the deadliest thunders"*
>
> ***Arabic:*** والسماء أشد شيء إشراقاً إلا أنها تحتقب أشد الصواعق فتكاً

Here the English syntactic parallel gives way to an Arabic phonological one, built on a rhyme between the closing words of each clause (Ikbal et al., 2016). The poetic intensity of the original mind style survives the shift, though it now rests on a mechanism more native to Arabic rhetorical convention (Abu Nada & El Haj Ahmed, 2016) — a reminder that fidelity to effect and fidelity to form are not always the same commitment. The device at work resembles saj', the rhymed prose of the Arabic rhetorical tradition, in which closing syllables echo one another across clauses; the translator, in other words, draws on an indigenous resource to reproduce a foreign effect.

4.2.3 Clause restructuring

Arabic's preference for verb-initial (VSO) word order regularly forces clause-level restructuring, as in the following example:

English (No. 4): *"But they worked rather slow and talked very fast..."*

Arabic: ...إلا أنهم كانوا يعملون في بطء يتكلمون في عجلة...

The English SVA pattern becomes an Arabic verb–subject–circumstantial construction (Ikbal et al., 2016). The adverbs shift position, but the cognitive picture — characters working sluggishly while speaking in a rush — survives through the lexical parallelism between في بطء and في عجلة. What is lost in surface syntax, in other words, is regularly recovered in lexical rhythm. The Arabic also uses the periphrastic past with kana and an imperfective verb (كانوا يعملون), which conventionally presents the activity as ongoing or habitual; the English simple past leaves that nuance open, so the rendering adds a small durative colouring to the characters' behaviour (Dickins et al., 2002; Holes, 2004).

Taken together, the structural examples suggest that this category rarely damages mind style, because the formal changes are largely dictated by Arabic grammar and are typically compensated at another level.

4.3 Deictic repositioning and narrative perspective

Deixis — the linguistic marking of space, time, and person — does much of the quiet work of situating a narrator's point of view relative to the events and characters of a story (Abualadas, 2019a; Abualadas & Ahmad, 2018). The classic account distinguishes person, place, and time deixis, to which social deixis is often added (Levinson, 1983). Shifts along any of these dimensions change not what happens but from where, and by whom, it is seen. Because deictic choices are rarely forced by grammar alone, they are also one of the more revealing sites of translator agency: a place where the translator's own reading of the text leaves a visible trace.

4.3.1 Explicitating deictic knowledge

Translations of Wuthering Heights show a consistent tendency to make deictic relationships more explicit than the source text leaves them:

English (No. 19): *"I walked toward the window."*

Arabic: مشيتُ نحو النافذة.

This looks, at first glance, like a neutral rendering. Abualadas's work on the novel's Arabic translations suggests otherwise: such choices tend to tighten the deictic anchorage between narrator and character, drawing the two into closer mental and social proximity (Abualadas, 2015, 2019b). For the Arabic reader, the effect is a more subjective narrative mood and a stronger sense of involvement in the character's interior world (Abualadas, 2019a; Abualadas & Ahmad, 2018) — an effect achieved not through any added commentary, but through the placement of a single spatial marker.

The grammar of the Arabic rendering is part of the explanation. In مشيتُ the first-person subject is encoded in the verbal suffix, so an independent pronoun is not required; person deixis is, so to speak, built into the verb, and any additional independent pronoun would carry emphasis (Holes, 2004). The apparent neutrality of the example is thus partly a product of Arabic morphology, which is why the interpretation of such shifts must remain cautious (see Section 6).

4.3.2 Distance and detachment

The reverse effect is equally available to translators, and equally invisible on the surface:

English (No. 20): *"Heathcliff stood in the shadows."*

Arabic: وقف هيثكليف في الظلال.

A spatial deictic shift of this kind can heighten a character's mystery or widen the distance a frame narrator like Lockwood keeps from the story's events (Abualadas, 2015). Deictic shifting, in other words, cuts both ways: it can pull a reader in or hold them at arm's length, and either move reshapes how the character is mentally positioned in the reader's imagination (Abualadas, 2019b).

4.4 Lexical choice, metaphor, and moral positioning

Vocabulary and metaphor offer the most direct route into a character's cognitive habits and, often, their moral standing — and it is at this level that the translator's interpretive hand is hardest to disguise.

4.4.1 Eroticization and moral agency in Lolita

The Arabic translations of Lolita illustrate how far lexical choice can travel from strict semantic equivalence toward a more editorializing kind of rendering:

English (No. 11): *"Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins."*

Arabic: لولايتا، ضوء حياتي، نار أحشائي.

Mola's translation leans into a more visceral, eroticized register than the English original strictly requires (Saideen et al., 2022). Saideen, Haider, and Al-Abbas (2024) trace a related pattern across the text: language that dysphemizes Humbert's expressions while quietly stripping away markers of Lolita's innocence, as when 'plain Lo' (No. 13) becomes لو العادية ('Lo the ordinary') rather than a phrase that preserves her plainness as childlike rather than reductive. The cumulative effect, in their reading, is a text that softens Humbert's culpability and recasts Lolita closer to a knowing participant than a victim (Saideen et al., 2022, 2024) — a striking illustration of how lexical choice, accumulated across a novel, can quietly redistribute moral responsibility among its characters.

The stakes of this shift are heightened by the narrative situation. Humbert is a classic unreliable narrator, whose rhetoric the reader is invited to resist (Booth, 1961). A rendering that amplifies his erotic register or softens the markers of

his victim's innocence may therefore weaken precisely the cues that allow readers to read against his account, so that a lexical decision becomes, in effect, an ethical one.

4.4.2 Metaphorical retention and agency

Literal translation of metaphor, by contrast, tends to leave a character's cognitive profile largely intact, as in the following pair:

English (No. 10): *"The whale was a mountain of flesh."*

Arabic: كان الحوت جبلاً من لحم.

No loss occurs in the threat and scale the metaphor is meant to convey (Ikbal et al., 2016). A similar preservation of agency appears in Palahniuk's Fight Club (No. 14), where 'I am not a victim' becomes انا لست ضحية — a structural choice that keeps the narrator's assertion of control intact even as his psychological state unravels around it (Abualadas, 2019b). These two examples suggest that lexical fidelity, unlike the deictic and syntactic shifts discussed earlier, is often the path of least interpretive interference, though as Section 4.4.1 shows, it is by no means the path translators always take.

5. Discussion

5.1 Answering the research questions

RQ1 asked which shifts occur and how often. The corpus shows three recurring types, with structural parallelism accounting for half of all instances, deictic shifts for 26.7%, and lexical or moral positioning for 23.3% (Figure 1). Given the purposive composition of the corpus (Table 2), these figures describe the data analyzed, not the language pair as a whole.

RQ2 asked how each type alters characterization. Structural shifts generally preserve mind style, because the changes they involve are largely forced by Arabic syntax and are compensated at the phonological or lexical level. Deictic shifts alter the perspective from which a character is seen, drawing the reader closer to or farther from the character's interiority. Lexical and moral shifts alter what a character appears to value, intend, or deserve, and are therefore the most consequential for characterization.

The two answers together reveal an inverse relation between frequency and consequence. The most frequent category is the least damaging to mind style, and the least frequent is the one that can redistribute moral responsibility among characters. This is the main substantive finding of the study, and it suggests that frequency counts alone are a poor guide to the interpretive weight of a translator's interventions.

5.2 The translator's voice and the reader's mental representation

RQ3 asked what the shifts reveal about the translator's voice. The shifts traced in Section 4 do not operate in isolation; their cumulative effect across a novel is what this article calls the translator's voice. Abualadas (2015) identifies a

broader tendency in English–Arabic literary translation toward explicitation and standardization, a tendency that produces a more cohesive, more fluent target text, but often at some cost to the source text's original stylistic variation — its rough edges, its ambiguities, its studied vagueness. The tendency is consistent with the explicitation and normalization patterns discussed in Section 2.3 (Baker, 1993; Blum-Kulka, 1986) and with the fluency-oriented practice that Venuti (1995) describes.

For the Arabic reader, this has real consequences for how characters are mentally represented. When a translator resolves free indirect speech — as happens in some renderings of Jane Eyre — into plain direct or indirect speech, the original ambiguity of the character's voice narrows considerably (Habjan, 2023). What results is often a flatter, more standardized sense of the character's inner life than the source text intended (Abualadas, 2015). The translator's voice, on this account, is not a flaw to be eliminated so much as an inevitable byproduct of interpretation — the price of moving a mind style across a considerable typological distance.

Seen through Hermans's (1996) distinction, the three shift types differ in how visible they make the translator. Structural shifts rarely draw attention, because they tend to be dictated by the target language. Deictic shifts are subtler still, since they alter perspective without adding any words that a reader could point to. Lexical and moral shifts are the most exposed, because they alter what a character appears to value or deserve. The answer to the second part of RQ3 is therefore graded: structural shifts are the most likely to reflect language constraints, lexical and moral shifts the most likely to reflect the translator's own interpretation, and deictic shifts lie between the two.

5.3 Implications

For translator training, the findings suggest that attention to mind style, and especially to deixis and lexical intensity, should form part of the close reading that precedes translation. For editors and reviewers, they suggest that fluency should not be the only criterion of quality, since a smooth text may conceal a narrowed characterization. For translation criticism, they offer a way to describe such effects in observable linguistic terms instead of in impressionistic ones.

6. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Several caveats apply. First, claims about 'reader involvement' rest on cognitive-stylistic theory rather than on empirical psycholinguistic testing with Arabic readers, and they should be read as informed inference rather than measured outcome. Second, it is not always possible to separate the translator's voice from constraints the Arabic language itself imposes; some shifts may reflect what Arabic syntax and rhetoric will tolerate as much as any choice on

the translator's part (Akan et al., 2019; Besbes, 2013). Third, the corpus is purposive and heavily weighted toward a small set of canonical English works, chiefly Moby-Dick, Wuthering Heights, and Lolita (Table 2), so its frequencies cannot be generalized. Fourth, as a structured qualitative analysis the study does not report inter-coder agreement, and the assignment of examples to categories involves judgment; where an example could plausibly fall under more than one category, the boundaries are necessarily porous.

These limitations point to several directions for further work. Reader-response studies, for example comprehension and perspective-taking tasks with Arabic readers, could test whether the effects inferred here are actually experienced. Comparing several translations of the same source passage would help separate individual translators' preferences from pressures common to the language pair. Larger, systematically annotated corpora, with more than one coder and a chance-corrected measure of agreement such as Cohen's (1960) kappa, would make the frequencies more robust, and would allow the extension of the framework to contemporary and non-Western literary translation (Abualadas, 2015; Özcan, 2025; Saideen et al., 2024). Finally, the framework could be applied to other genres and to translation in the opposite direction, from Arabic into English.

7. Conclusion

Mind style sits close to the core of literary characterization, and it is correspondingly sensitive to what happens in translation. This study set out to fill a gap in English–Arabic translation research by applying a single cognitive-stylistic framework across syntactic, deictic, and lexical levels. It has traced that sensitivity across a range of strategies — from the syntactic retention of parallelism in Moby-Dick to the moral repositioning at work in Lolita — and has shown that structural shifts are the most frequent but the least consequential, whereas lexical and moral shifts are the least frequent but the most consequential.

Deictic explicitation and structural transposition help translators bridge the considerable typological gap between English and Arabic, but they carry a risk alongside their benefit: standardizing cognitive profiles that were never meant to read as standard. Continued work at the intersection of cognitive linguistics and translation studies remains the most promising route to a source text's mind style being not just translated, but genuinely reconstructed for its new readers.

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Appendix: Parallel Literary Examples

The thirty-one parallel examples below (English and Arabic) illustrate the translation strategies and characterization shifts discussed throughout this article.

#	Source	English	Arabic	Strategy
1	Melville, Moby-Dick	"...when the Sperm whale was almost wholly unknown..."	حين كان حوت العنبر في صورته المتعيّنة مجهولاً أو يكاد...	Literal translation
2	Melville, Moby-Dick	"Their hands met; their eyes fastened; Starbuck's tears the glue."	وتلاقت يداهما، والتحمت عيونهما وكانت دموع استاربك هي الغراء...	Literal / parallelism
3	Melville,	"Skies the most effulgent but	والسماء أشد شيء إشراقاً إلا	Phonological

#	Source	English	Arabic	Strategy
	Moby-Dick	basket the deadliest thunders”	أنها تحتقب أشد الصواعق فتكاً	shift
4	Melville, Moby-Dick	“But they worked rather slow and talked very fast...”	...إلا أنهم كانوا يعملون في بطء يتكلمون في عجلة...	Clause shift
5	Melville, Moby-Dick	“To dress in the dark, and eat in the dark...”	...أن يلبس في الظلام ويأكل في الظلام...	Lexical parallelism
6	Melville, Moby-Dick	“Doubts of all things earthly, and intuitions of some things heavenly”	الشكوك في الأمور الأرضية، والحدس في الأمور السماوية	Transposition
7	Melville, Moby-Dick	“If this ship come to any deadly harm...”	إذا لقيت هذه السفينة أذى بالغاً مميتاً	Syntactic shift
8	Melville, Moby-Dick	“...washed by waves, and cooled by breezes...”	...تغسله الموجات وتنعشه النسمات...	Passive-to-active shift
9	Melville, Moby-Dick	“Call me Ishmael.”	نادني إسماعيل.	Literal
10	Melville, Moby-Dick	“The whale was a mountain of flesh.”	كان الحوت جبلاً من لحم.	Metaphorical retention
11	Nabokov, Lolita	“Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins.”	لولايتا، ضوء حياتي، نار أحشائي.	Eroticization
12	Nabokov, Lolita	“My sin, my soul.”	خطيئتي، روحي.	Literal moral positioning
13	Nabokov, Lolita	“She was Lo, plain Lo, in the morning.”	كانت لو، لو العادية، في الصباح.	Characterization dilution
14	Palahniuk, Fight Club	“I am not a victim.”	أنا لست ضحية.	Agency shift
15	Hemingway	“The sea was a vast, blue expanse.”	كان البحر ممتداً، أزرقَ شاسعاً.	Atmospheric retention
16	Lightman	“Time is a circle.”	الزمن دائرة.	Conceptual parallelism
17	Mustafa	“He was a man of great resolve.”	كان رجلاً ذا عزم كبير.	Lexical precision
18	Naimy	“The cuckoo clock struck twelve.”	دقت ساعة الوقواق اثنتي عشرة دقة.	Cognitive bridge

#	Source	English	Arabic	Strategy
19	Brontë, Wuthering Heights	“I walked toward the window.”	مشيتُ نحو النافذة.	Deictic shift
20	Brontë, Wuthering Heights	“Heathcliff stood in the shadows.”	وقف هيثكليف في الظلال.	Spatial shift
21	Brontë, Wuthering Heights	“The wind howled across the moors.”	عوت الرياح عبر المروج.	Subjective mood
22	Mustafa	“He was a good man, but misguided.”	كان رجلاً طيباً، لكنه ضل الطريق.	Moral modulation
23	Mustafa	“I saw the light fading.”	رأيت الضوء يخبو.	Imagery shift
24	Generic	“It was a dark and stormy night.”	كانت ليلة مظلمة وعاصفة.	Genre marking
25	Mahmoud	“The truth is often hidden.”	غالباً ما تكون الحقيقة مخفية.	Rhetorical balance
26	Palahniuk, Fight Club	“He laughed, a cold, dry sound.”	ضحك، بصوت بارد وجاف.	Mechanical shift
27	Taha Hussein	“I will never forget.”	لن أنسى أبداً.	Anaphoric emphasis
28	Taha Hussein	“Life is a struggle of opposites.”	الحياة صراع بين الأضداد.	Chiasmus
29	Brontë, Wuthering Heights	“He is more myself than I am.”	إنه أنا أكثر مني.	Identity deixis
30	Brontë, Wuthering Heights	“I am Heathcliff.”	أنا هيثكليف.	Equative mind style
31	Dickens	“It was the best of times...”	كان أحسن الأزمان...	Structural parallelism