Confronting Cultural Realia in The Translation of American Literary Texts into Arabic

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Abstract
Incorporating trans-cultural elements as integral part of translation, Peter Newmark defines culture as "the way of life and its manifestations that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression" (Newmark 1988). Caught between the complicated intricacies of SL and TL cultures, translation often engages "two languages and two cultures" (Toury 1978) because "no language can exist unless it is steeped in the context of culture, and no culture can exist which does not have at its centre, the structure of natural language" (Lotman 1978). Because "language is part of a culture" (Vermeer 1989), translation theorists emphasize the significance of linguistic and cultural variations in the process of translation from SL into TL. In this context, the paper explores the linguistic and cultural hurdles embedded in the translation of African-American literary texts into Arabic due to differences in cultural and linguistic traditions. Since "differences between cultures may cause more severe complications for the translators than do differences in language structure" (Nida 1964) and because the attempt "to impose the value system of the SL culture onto the TL culture is dangerous ground" (Bassnett 1991), more emphasis will be given to translation problems rooted in cultural transfer. On this basis, the paper starts with a systematic methodology and an entrance to translation strategies suitable for rendering SL culture-specific regalia into TL context. Then, a survey of potential semantic and cross-cultural problems encountered in the translation of literary texts will be conducted using The Slave, an African–American drama, as an example of literary texts which often present challenges to translators.