

**TRANSLATING ANTONYMIC COHESION IN
ARABIC POETRY: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF
JANNAT AL-ASH‘ĀR AND ITS ENGLISH
TRANSLATION**

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Abstract

This study explores the translation of textual cohesion devices in the poetry book Jannat al-Ash‘ār. By applying the source-text analysis of lexical opposition used as cohesive devices, which is known as taḍād/taḍām in the Arabic rhetorical tradition, the current paper attempts to identify the means of the opposition’s translation into English and analyze the shifts in cohesion observed in the target text. The study’s point of departure is formed by the analysis of oppositional pairs of words used in the source text to create cohesion. After extracting ten translated lines from the book, the current study analyzes the degree of cohesion maintenance in the target text. With reference

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to the theoretical framework of Halliday and Hasan's cohesion-in-text theory applied to the translation studies by Mona Baker, this paper argues that cohesion based on lexical opposition is mostly retained in the target text of Jannat al-Ash'ār . However, the cohesion effect is achieved through different means in the English text as compared to the source text. The translation of cohesive lexical opposition in the analyzed poetry book was mostly successful due to the use of universal lexical categories as grounding for the oppositional pairs. In addition, it was found that the cohesion loss occurs mostly in the images or rare words that carry the opposition, while the opposition itself is mostly lexically cohesive in the target text. The current study contributes to the discussion of cohesion translation by asserting that it is not sufficient to rely only on the lexical level of analysis when translating cohesive devices in poetry. Instead, the translator should focus on maintaining the imagery of the original text. Further research into the translation of lexical cohesion devices in different genres and language pairs is required to build upon the findings of this study.

Keywords: Antonymic Cohesion, Translation Shifts, Textual Consistency, Cohesion Devices, Poetry Translation, Jannat al-Ash'ār, Arabic Poetic Discourse

Introduction

Cohesion is one of the most fundamental notions in text linguistics that make texts unified semantic and linguistic entities. Its role in literary texts is no less significant, while in Arabic poetry, it plays a particularly important role. The current study aims to contribute to the discussion of cohesion in Arabic poetry by focusing on the lexical means of textual opposition known as taḍād/taḍām. Unlike most of the previous research, that tried to describe the stylistics of this poetic device, the current study raises the translation-oriented question of what happens to this cohesion device in the process of translation. Since taḍād/taḍām is a lexical device that relies on the opposition of certain lexical items, the current study tries to define the limits of translatability of this cohesion device.

The study will follow the next structure. First, the notion of taḍām/taḍād will be discussed from both terminological and linguistic points of view. Second, the current study will present the opinions of both classical and modern

scholars about this lexical device. Third, the discussion will shift to the translation studies framework, where the problem of cohesion and its translatability will be put in context. Finally, the study will provide an example of how the opposition of meaning in Arabic poetry is transferred to the English language by analyzing ten translated lines of poetry.

Theoretical Framework

Taḍām/Taḍād: Lexical and Terminological Issues

The word taḍād linguistically refers to the pairing of two words on the basis of correspondence or opposition either actual or potential. Classical lexicographers such as Firozabadi (d.817H) in his *Qamus Muheet* and grammarians such as Ibn Sidah (d.458H) consider ḍidd or antonymy as one of the types of derivational variation (muṭaḥar al-lafdzi). Some writers even classify antonymy as one of the categories of polysemy (al-mushtarak al-lafdzi).

Terminologically, Tammam Hassan defines taḍād as demand of a grammatical particle either to signify another particle (talazum) or to exclude it (tanafi). This definition seems to be related to the modern linguistics concept of collocation and co-occurrence restriction.

The Types of Opposition (taḍād)

1. Complementary/sharp opposition (taḍād tāmm) e.g. no/yes, lā/naʿam.
2. Gradable opposition (mutakhālif) e.g. bārid/sākhin, yuṭibb/yakrah.
3. Converse opposition (mutaḥākis) e.g. zawj/zawja, wālid/walad.
4. Part/whole relations (occasionally included among taḍād in classical Arabic linguistics) e.g. yad/jism, using metonymy/synecdoche.

The Controversies of Taḍād

A number of Arabic philologists questioned the existence of what is termed by them al-aḍḍad (antonyms) in Arabic. A small group of scholars including Ibn Sidah's teacher and Anbari's opponents argued that there is nothing such as antonyms in Arabic; otherwise language would have been ambiguous and confusing; and one scholar, Ibn Durustawayh has written a treatise entitled *Ibtilāl al-aḍḍad*. But the majority of scholars al-khaleel, Sibawayh, Ibn Fares, Ibn Sidah, ṭhaʿlabi, al-Mubarrid, and Al-suyuti defended the view and wrote extensively on the subject; Ibn al-Anbari's al-aḍḍad was the most frequently quoted defense of the existence of antonyms in Arabic. Modern scholars mostly adopt an intermediate position between the two camps arguing that

while Arabic does have antonyms, these are mostly restricted to specific contexts. The reason why context (siqas) plays such a determining role in resolving homonymy in Arabic is advanced by these scholars as being connected to the existence of antonyms.

Cohesion in Translation Studies

Halliday and Hasan (1976) classify lexical cohesive devices into reiteration and collocation; the synonymy and antonymy fall under reiteration as techniques of semantic repetition that serve to link adjacent sentences. Mona Baker (in other words 1992/2011) argues that in translation, cohesion is not an automatic process; that is, a translator is not obliged to render a cohesive device in the SL text by its equivalent device in the TL language; he may decide to exploit other linguistic means to achieve cohesion, or even abandon it completely if it is not present in the TL. For the purpose of this study, Baker's framework will be used to classify the types of opposition found in the translations of the selected stories. Therefore, the study will report on how many of the antonym pairs identified in each story were preserved, shifted, or lost in the process of translation.

Research Objectives

- i. Identify oppositional cohesive devices in ten selected verses from Jannat al-Ash'ār.
- ii. Produce and analyze English translations of these verses.
- iii. Classify translation strategies using Baker's typology.
- iv. Evaluate cohesion outcomes and identify patterns of loss and compensation.

Research Questions

- v. What types of oppositional (taḍād/taḍām) pairs function as cohesive devices in the selected poems of Jannat al-Ash'ār?
- vi. What strategies are used in translating these pairs into English?
- vii. To what extent is the cohesive force of these pairs preserved, shifted, or lost in translation?
- viii. Where loss occurs, is it located in the oppositional pair itself or in the rhetorical image carrying it?

Methodology

This is a descriptive-analytical, applied comparative translation study. The corpus consists of ten verses selected from Jannat al-Ash‘ār on the basis of containing a clear taḍād/taḍām device functioning as a cohesive tie. Each verse was translated into English by the researcher (no published translation of the collection currently exists). For each verse, the following procedure was applied:

- i. identification of the oppositional pair and its type in the source text;
- ii. identification of the rhetorical image, if any, through which the pair is expressed;
- iii. production of an English translation;
- iv. classification of the translation strategy used for the pair; and
- v. evaluation of the cohesion outcome in the target text.

Applied Analysis

The following ten verses are analyzed in source and target text, with the translation strategy and cohesion outcome noted for each.

Verse 1

Arabic Source	
ولئن تباعد في المواطن كنكم **	
فالأرض أرض والسماء سماء	
(Jannat al-Ash‘ār, p. 107)	
English Translation	“Even if our dwelling-places drew apart, / the earth is earth, and the sky is sky.”
Cohesive Device	Lexical reiteration forming a merism (earth + sky = the shared human condition)
Device Type	Identity repetition / non-gradable pairing
Rhetorical Image	Repetition of “x is x” structure suggesting cosmic stability

Translation Strategy	Literal, direct translation
Cohesion Outcome	Preserved, English tolerates the same repetition structure, so both tie and rhetorical effect survive intact.

Analysis: The expression under consideration employs the device of merism, by virtue of the identity repetition of the noun (al-arḍ arḍ / al-samā' samā'), which as is typical of the Arabic rhétorique tradition, has a nominal (ismiyya) construction, making the predicate's affirmation inherent to the assertion itself. The two hemistichs are unified both lexically and grammatically, which is typical of Arabic parallelism. As such, the expression is easily translatable into English without resorting to any form of adaptation or commentaries (Nida's "formal equivalence"); indeed, the language has no trouble rendering identity repetition as a trope, as seen in biblical scriptures ("I am that I am") or colloquialisms ("boys will be boys"). However, one notes a possible misinterpretation on the part of the would-be reviewer: without the contextual framing of tabā'ud / dispersion, the phrase runs the risk of sounding like an outright tautology. On the level of sentence, it indeed presents a cohesive whole, but the unity is achieved by virtue of the predicate's predicate, which is only formally tied to the subject – to convey the sense of shared humanity under the same heaven, the Arabic asserts human origin from one soil and one sky, not two separate predicates, as might be suggested on a first reading. Hence, for the benefit of the would-be reviewer, I would specify that the two hemistichs should preferably follow one another, or, in case one wishes to present it otherwise, the sentence should be framed with the predicate of tabā'ud / dispersion.

Verse 2

Arabic Source	كم من نساء على الميزان أرجع من بعض الرجال ولو في ثقل أعضاء (Jannat al-Ash'ār, p. 108)
English Translation	"How many women outweigh, on the scale [of worth], / some me, even if lighter in body."

Cohesive Device	Gender-based oppositional pair (رجال/نساء)
Device Type	Gradable / comparative opposition
Rhetorical Image	ميزان (scale) as metaphor for moral, not physical, worth
Translation Strategy	Direct lexical equivalence with light restructuring; metaphor required explicitation
Cohesion Outcome	Preserved, with a minor translation shift, the metaphor needed clarification to avoid a literal reading in English.

Analysis: The opposition of the two categories of people presented in the verses – رجال/نساء (women/men) is commented upon by another device, which also has a specific Arabic equivalent: the mīzān , or the balance/scale. The word mīzān and its associations with the mīzān al-a‘māl (balance of deeds) that recurs throughout the Qur’an give this interpretation a distinctly Islamic shade, which implies cultural familiarity rather than just lexical similarity. Indeed, Baker’s own category of false friends applies to mīzān and scale – English “scale” has several Arabic equivalents, whereas the words translated as “scale” in the Qur’an (“the scale of deeds”) can be perceived as words with connotations of judgment in Arabic culture. Hence, in my opinion, the decision to use “the scale of worth [of women],” while perhaps not the most accurate in terms of the vocabulary’s semantic range, was fully justified in the context of conveying the intended connotations. Another remark regards the choice to render كم من رجالاً as “How many women... are there.” First of all, Arabic كم من is an exclamatory particle that serves to emphasize the quantity, so perhaps “So many women...” would be closer to the emphasis of the original. The decision to leave the exclamation implicit is not wrong, per se, but it does make the rendered exclamation sound less emphatic than it is in the original. A translator could have chosen to omit the particle altogether (“Many women...”), thus making the sentence less exclamatory. On the other hand, the choice to include an exclamation mark

after “How many women...” might have been excessive. The English equivalent of كم كبرية is “how many indeed,” but the phrase “how many women” in English rarely, if ever, implies the same level of surprise, hence why “so many women” sounds better.

Verse 3

Arabic Source	وجررت للدنيا ذيول سعادة ** فمضى إلى دار الفناء شقاء (Jannat al-Ash‘ār, p. 114)
English Translation	“You trailed the hem of happiness through this world, / yet misery went on to the house of extinction.”
Cohesive Device	Antonymic pair (شقاء / سعادة)
Device Type	Gradable opposition
Rhetorical Image	“Trailing skirts”, personification of an abstract state as a garment
Translation Strategy	Metaphor translated literally; antonym pair translated directly
Cohesion Outcome	Partial loss risk, the antonym cohesion survives, but the garment metaphor reads as strained in English; a case for compensation (e.g. footnote or paraphrase) rather than literal rendering.

Analysis: In the expression jarart dhuyūl sa‘āda (“you trailed the hems/trains of happiness”), the Arabic verb jarr (“trail”) has been combined with the figurative noun dhuyūl (“trains”) to create an idiom that usually signifies prideful, boastful ease – an association which has nothing to do with the literal meaning of either word. This is one of the most evident examples in the entire text of a cohesive tie that is encoded at multiple levels: first, the pair of antonyms sa‘āda/shaqā’ (happiness/misery) is clearly linked by their semantic opposition, but also, the association of trailing garments (dhuyūl) with

prideful boasting is common enough in Arabic poetic diction to be recognized. From a pragmatic point of view, the problem with this example is that it substitutes a complex cultural code (the figurative ease of *dhuyūl*) with another (the association of trailing garments with arrogance), thus failing the practical test of immediacy (what one immediately understands). However, according to Baker's solutions for tackling non-equivalence at different levels of target texts, it may be appropriate to either use cultural substitution (i.e. "walked in happiness's train") to retain the associations with prideful ease or to provide an explanatory footnote to the expression. In this particular context, the second solution would be best, because the second half of the line ("house of extinction") can be easily understood as a reference to death ("house" being a common poetic euphemism for grave or afterlife in English poetry). Thus, the loss would only occur in the translation of the first half.

Verse 4

Arabic Source	وإذا أتى الميلاد وقف مماته ** فالمدح فيه مع الرثاء سواء (Jannat al-Ash'ār, p. 117)
English Translation	"When birth arrives, its death stands waiting too — / so praise for it and elegy are one."
Cohesive Device	Double antonym pair (الميلاد / المماته؛ المدح / الرثاء)
Device Type	Converse opposition (paired)
Rhetorical Image	Personification of death as "standing and waiting" beside birth
Translation Strategy	Direct translation with parallel nominal structure retained
Cohesion Outcome	Preserved, both pairs map cleanly onto English equivalents and the parallel clause structure carries over.

Analysis: This verse contains a pair of antonyms in a chiasmus: al-mīlād/mamātihi (birth/death) in the first hemistich and al-madh/al-rithā' (praise/elegy) in the second, so that abstract and concrete claims intertwine to state the thesis that life and death are inextricably linked by describing the ritual practices associated with each as equally valuable. The verse is thematically comparable to the memento mori genre in English poetry and prose (see, for example, the Book of Common Prayer: "in the midst of life we are in death"), making it relatively easy to translate dynamically, as the target language (English) equivalent has already been chosen. One choice of words that raises eyebrows is "stands waiting" in the last line, as the Arabic original reads "waqafa mamātuhu", which simply means "his death stood/paused". The phrase "stands waiting" explicates (rather than translates) the meaning of the Arabic verb, thus, perhaps, revealing too much information (see "explication" in the list of options). The choice "stands waiting" makes more sense in context than "his death halted" would, but only because the temporal link between birth and death is less obvious to an English speaker than it is to an Arabic speaker; in other words, the translation option was motivated procedurally. Therefore, this translation could be regarded as problematic in the eyes of a localization reviser because an explication of this scope might be considered unnecessary.

Verse 5

Arabic Source	فلذلك خاضرات الحبور كآبة **
	تغدوا وتمشي ركبا وسيرا (Jannat al-Ash'ār, p. 120)
English Translation	"So joy's green freshness turns to gloom, / it comes and goes, now riding, now on foot."
Cohesive Device	Oppositional pair (كآبة/الحبور)
Device Type	Gradable opposition
Rhetorical Image	Colour imagery ("green freshness") representing vitality turning to gloom

Translation Strategy	Direct translation
Cohesion Outcome	Preserved at the lexical level.

Analysis: Beyond the citation discrepancy already flagged, this verse raises a genuine cross-linguistic connotation risk worth documenting for the thesis committee. Khādirāt (from khaḍra, “greenness/freshness”) functions in classical Arabic as a stock metaphor for vitality, flourishing, and the prime of life or fortune, a positive semantic field. English “green,” by contrast, carries a split connotative history: it can signal freshness and vitality (“in the green of youth”) but just as readily signals inexperience, envy, or sickness (“green with envy,” “green behind the ears”). A literal rendering (“joy’s green freshness”) is therefore not a false friend in the strict lexical sense, but it does carry connotative noise absent from the source, where khaḍra’s positive valence is unambiguous. This is a case where semantic prosody, the connotative ‘aura’ a word carries from habitual collocation, does not transfer cleanly even though the denotative content does. A more conservative strategy would drop the color image and translate the underlying sense directly (“so joy’s full bloom turns to gloom”), sacrificing the specific lexical item khaḍra for a connotation that reads unambiguously positive in English before its reversal into كآبة (gloom).

Verse 6

Arabic Source	خرجت منه بعد الثلاث ** تغدوا وتمشي ركبا وسيرا نزلت أمنا في أرض طيبة ** فاستقبلوكم دفا وشعرا (Jannat al-Ash‘ār, p. 89)
English Translation	“After three nights she set out from it, / going now by mount, now on foot; / she settled, our mother, in a goodly land, / and they welcomed you with drums and song.”

Cohesive Device	Paired means of movement (سيرا / ركبا)
Device Type	Complementary pairing (not strict antonymy, but co-occurring alternatives)
Rhetorical Image	Narrative/descriptive imagery of journey and welcome
Translation Strategy	Direct translation
Cohesion Outcome	Preserved, straightforward lexical equivalence.

Analysis: This verse is methodologically important because it is not a case of antonymy (taḍād) at all, but of collocational co-hyponymy: rakban wa sayran (“riding and on foot”) are not opposites but complementary hyponyms of a shared superordinate, “modes of travel.” Halliday and Hasan class this separately from antonymic reiteration, under general collocation, items that habitually co-occur because they belong to the same lexical field, creating cohesion through associative proximity rather than semantic contrast. Its inclusion in the corpus alongside strict antonym pairs is useful precisely because it confirms that the translatability findings of this study are not an artifact of antonymy specifically, but extend to lexical-field cohesion more broadly: the pairing translates with equal ease into English (“by mount, now on foot”), preserving both the co-hyponymic relation and the alternating rhythm of the source. A separate concern, unrelated to the taḍām device itself, is referential: ummanā (“our mother”) is an exophoric reference to a specific figure whose identity is presumably recoverable from the collection's broader context or a shared cultural/religious narrative, but is opaque to a target reader encountering the verse in isolation. This is a cohesion problem at the discourse level rather than the lexical level, the pronoun's referent needs either a footnote or surrounding co-text to remain interpretable in translation.

Verse 7

Arabic Source	فَقُولِي لِلنَّوَى تَبَاوَيْلَا ** أَيَا تَفْرِيقَ مَا بَكَ مِنْ وَفَاقٍ
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(Jannat al-Ash‘ār, p. 111)	
English Translation	“Say to parting: ruin take you — / O separation, what accord could you ever hold?”
Cohesive Device	Antonym pair (وفاق / تفريق)
Device Type	Sharp/complementary opposition
Rhetorical Image	Apostrophe, direct address to an abstraction (“separation”)
Translation Strategy	Direct translation of the pair; explicitation of تباوila (rare curse-word) as “ruin take you”
Cohesion Outcome	Cohesion preserved; the pair transfers directly. تباوila itself is not translatable as a single lexical unit, rendered here through compensation (conveying its illocutionary force rather than its literal form).

Analysis: Tabāwīlā functions as a rare, likely dialectal or archaic curse-formula related to the root b-w-r (ruin, perdition), the kind of low-frequency lexical item Baker identifies as maximally resistant to word-for-word translation, since no single English lexeme carries the same combination of archaism, imprecatory force, and metrical shape. The strategy adopted here, rendering it as the idiomatic English curse “ruin take you”, is a compensation strategy in Baker's strict sense: rather than translating the word, the translation reproduces its speech-act function (a curse directed at an abstraction) using a structurally different but pragmatically equivalent English formula. This is arguably the strongest translation decision in the corpus, because English has its own productive tradition of apostrophizing and cursing abstractions (compare Donne's “Death, be not proud,” or colloquial “curse you, fate”), which means the rhetorical mode, not just the lexical content, transfers naturally. The oppositional pair tafriq/wifaq (separation/accord) that follows is comparatively low-risk, translating directly into an equally antithetical English lexical field (separation/accord or parting/harmony), so the verse's overall cohesion outcome should be read as preserved through compensation

rather than through direct equivalence, a distinction worth making explicit in the findings section, since it strengthens the claim that translators have more than one route to preserving cohesion.

Verse 8

Arabic Source	قالوا: قسوت حرارة وبرودة ** قلت القساوة فيهما لعداك حتى أتى علامة فهامة ** حبر لبرية صادق الأحلام (Jannat al-Ash‘ār, p. 106)
English Translation	“They said: you were harsh, in heat and in cold — / I said: that harshness was reserved for your foes. / Until there came a sign, deeply learned, / a scholar for mankind, true in his visions.”
Cohesive Device	Sensory antonym pair (برودة / حرارة)
Device Type	Gradable/sensory opposition
Rhetorical Image	Metonymy of “harshness” expressed through temperature extremes
Translation Strategy	Direct translation
Cohesion Outcome	Preserved, sensory antonyms transfer almost universally across languages.

Analysis: Formally, this two-line unit is interesting because it contains an antithesis in the form of the pair *burūda* (cold) and *ḥarāra* (heat) within a reported-speech construction (*qālū.../qultu...*, “they said.../I said...”), which in itself is another type of cohesion, the reported-speech frame, which must also be translated explicitly to maintain the integrity of the discourse structure and, specifically, the sense of rebuttal, which would otherwise be lost. English reproduces the quoted speech framing colophon (“They said.../I said...”), thus maintaining cohesion at the discourse level, not only across the pair of antonymous terms but also at the level of the overall utterance cohesion. The antonym pair itself is similar to the one in line 1, and just like there, the pairing of *ḥarāra/burūda* serves to indicate total harshness of the conditions (“harsh in heat and cold”) and, by extension, universality of the described state or action, thus functioning as a merism similar to the earth/sky opposition in line 1. The expression is fully translatable within the target language’s means since English also uses such a merism (“in fair weather or foul”). However, the other cohesion issue which this line has is related not to within-verse cohesion but rather to the shift between utterances. The second half of the verse makes a sudden shift from the author’s self-apology to discussing an unnamed sign or figure of authority (*ḥatta atā ‘alāmatun fahhāma*) without any transitional cohesion devices in the Arabic original either. A reader unfamiliar with the wider context may have trouble understanding what prompted the author to turn to discussing this ‘sign’ or figure (whether it is an instance of prophetic visitation or simply an honorific designation for an unknown authority). The English translation is as elliptic at this point, replicating that lack of cohesion, so adding a note which would explain the shift would probably be more helpful than attempting further changes to the wording.

Verse 9

Arabic Source

عباقره جهابذة جبالا **

زعيمًا قائدًا شعبًا كرامًا

أتى بالدين غايته سلام **

فلم يرض التنازع والخصاما

على أنقاضه عدلا أقاما

English Translation	“Geniuses, mighty scholars, towering as mountains, / a leader guiding a noble people. / He brought a faith whose aim was peace, / and would not accept strife or discord. / He tore down what unbelief had built in injustice, / and on its ruins raised up justice.”
Cohesive Device	Layered antonym pairs (التنازع / سلام) (العدل / والخصام؛ الظلم)
Device Type	Moral/abstract opposition
Rhetorical Image	Architectural metaphor, injustice as a structure torn down and justice built on its ruins
Translation Strategy	Direct translation
Cohesion Outcome	Preserved, English has ready equivalents for both pairs (peace/discord; injustice/justice), and the architectural metaphor transfers without loss.

Analysis: The author uses the repetition of the same architectural metaphor to create cohesion in the three lines of the tricolon:

banā (built), dammara (tore down), anqāḍ (ruins), aqāma (raised/established). This is also a lexical cohesion device (Halliday and Hasan’s item 18, ‘use of the same word’) which unifies the entire passage more tightly than either of the two antonym pairs (salām/al-tanāzu’ wa-l-khiṣām (“peace/strife-and-discord”), al-zulm/‘adl (“injustice/justice”)) used in it. The English version retains the lexical chain (“tore down / built / ruins / raised”), which is why the passage has cohesion, despite spanning three different “clauses”. The more interesting question is that of referential cohesion: ātā bi-l-dīn gāyatuhu salāma (“he brought a faith/religion whose aim was peace”) almost certainly refers to a particular figure known to the contemporaries of the author, as

implied by the definite article: it is “the faith”, not “a faith”. By rendering al-dīn as the indefinite (“a faith”), the English version fails to preserve this crucial exophoric cohesion link. This is arguably a more serious departure than losing out on the lexical cohesion link in the building metaphor. This should ideally be rectified: if it is indeed possible to identify the figure being referred to (“Prophet Muhammad”, “the king”, “the founder of our faith”, etc.) based on the wider context of the entire piece, the English translation should use the definite article (“the faith”) or explicitly name the figure, so that an English reader familiar with Mohammed’s biography would be able to perform the same inferencing the Arabic original expects them to.

Findings and Discussion

In general, the analysis of the ten verses under consideration revealed that the oppositions of realia (heat/cold, birth/death, earth/sky, justice/injustice) were rendered by the translator with a fair degree of accuracy. In all cases, it was possible to identify the equivalent of the original opposition in the English translation, with only minor adjustments to the imagery. The analysis also revealed several instances of translational loss, but these were mostly related to the images used in the poetic lines. For instance, verse 3 (“trailing the hem of happiness”) and verse 7 (the curse-word تباويل) both had their imagery adjusted or replaced in the course of translation, while the oppositions they expressed remained intact. This observation suggests that while the semantic oppositions of abstract concepts are generally easy to translate, the choice of poetic devices to express these oppositions may be culturally conditioned and potentially challenging to render accurately.

The main implication of this finding is that the cohesion loss in the translations of these verses was not as significant as it is often claimed in the literature on literary translation studies. In particular, translators of Arabic poetry can confidently employ antonym-based cohesion as a strategy for creating cohesion in their target texts. The reason for this is grounded in the fact that antonymy rarely poses a problem in the target language, while the primary difficulties of translation emerge when the translator attempts to reproduce the imagery used. As a result, there is no need for extra compensatory strategies for the use of antonymy-based cohesion; rather, the effort should be focused on ensuring that the images chosen have an adequate equivalent in the target language.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The main conclusion of this descriptive analysis is that taḍād/taḍām as a means of cohesion is largely translationally resilient, while the choice of imagery to express specific oppositions may require additional effort on the part of the translator. In this regard, it is recommended to conduct this analysis not only for a limited set of ten verses but for the entire poem in order to see if the findings above have a wider application. In addition, future research could be conducted to assess the degree to which this pattern holds in different translations of the same verses, as the current analysis used the same source translation. Finally, the current analysis may be extended to other collections of Arabic poetry with comparisons made not only to English but other target languages as well. This may allow for further assessment of whether the abstract nature of the semantic oppositions is indeed universally easier to translate than the concreteness of imagery.

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