

Fred or farīd, bacon or bayḍun ('egg')? Proper Names and Cultural-specific Items in the Arabic Translation of Harry Potter

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Article abstract

This paper investigates the transfer of proper names and references to food in the Arabic translation of the first three *Harry Potter* volumes. The focus of the study is twofold: (1) What is the relation between the different transfer procedures employed in the translation process and the formal, semantic and cultural properties of the source text material? And (2) what is the effect of the applied procedures on the textual and stylistic features of the target text? The major finding that emerges from the investigation is that the main translation strategy is that of simplification. Occasionally, foreignisation is involved as well, but domestication is virtually absent. The findings broadly concur with converging evidence from the translation of other cultural-specific items in the corpus such as references to school and education, kinship and family ties, and the use of dialect and slang, which additionally demonstrate the role of attenuation and normalisation.

Fred or farīd, *bacon* or bayḍun ('egg')? Proper Names and Cultural-specific Items in the Arabic Translation of *Harry Potter*

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RÉSUMÉ

Le présent article décrit les procédés mis en œuvre pour transférer les noms propres et noms de produits alimentaires dans la traduction arabe des trois premiers volumes de *Harry Potter*. Les deux questions centrales de l'étude sont les suivantes: Quelle est la relation entre les procédés employés et les traits formels, sémantiques et culturels des données de base dans le texte de départ? Quels sont les effets textuels et stylistiques de ces procédés dans le texte d'arrivée? L'analyse met en évidence l'importance d'une stratégie visant à simplifier un grand nombre de données du texte anglais original. L'étrangéisation est un procédé parfois employé, mais les vernacularisations sont rares. L'analyse est par ailleurs enrichie d'exemples relatifs à l'école, à l'éducation, à la famille et à la parenté, ainsi que de variations dialectales ou argotiques. Ces exemples constituent des illustrations supplémentaires des stratégies d'atténuation et de normalisation utilisées.

ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the transfer of proper names and references to food in the Arabic translation of the first three *Harry Potter* volumes. The focus of the study is twofold: (1) What is the relation between the different transfer procedures employed in the translation process and the formal, semantic and cultural properties of the source text material? And (2) what is the effect of the applied procedures on the textual and stylistic features of the target text? The major finding that emerges from the investigation is that the main translation strategy is that of simplification. Occasionally, foreignisation is involved as well, but domestication is virtually absent. The findings broadly concur with converging evidence from the translation of other cultural-specific items in the corpus such as references to school and education, kinship and family ties, and the use of dialect and slang, which additionally demonstrate the role of attenuation and normalisation.

MOTS-CLÉS/KEYWORDS

références culturelles, nom propre, terminologie alimentaire, littérature pour enfants, stratégies de simplification

culture-specific items, proper name, food terminology, children's literature, simplification strategies

1. Introduction

In this paper we investigate how proper names and references to food are conveyed in the Arabic translation of the first three volumes of the *Harry Potter* series. Proper

names and references to food are traditionally categorised as *culture-specific items* or *cultural markers*, although certain scholars maintain that proper names should not be regarded as culture-specific items. For example, according to Davies (2003: 72), there are “many problems concerning the translation of proper names which may not plausibly be subsumed within a discussion of culture-specific references” (see also Aixelá 1996). It is true that culture-specific items are intimately tied to specific relations between source and target language and pose a major challenge to translators because they reflect the material and intellectual culture from which a source text emerges, whereas names are first and foremost a universal, functionally highly complex part of speech (Willems 1996; 2000). However, one of the most striking properties of names usually assumed in the literature, namely, their lack of dictionary meaning, only holds for prototypical names, and from the point of view of translation studies specific problems arise when it comes to so-called telling names. Moreover, fictional proper names conventionally serve as *cultural markers* in certain cultures (Nord 2003: 184).

Over the past few decades much research has been devoted to children’s literature as well as to the translation of the genre. Not surprisingly, the popular *Harry Potter* series has been the subject of extensive investigation, and the same is increasingly true of its growing number of translations. However, in the Arab world the study of children’s literature and its translations is still in its infancy. Not only does children’s literature have a low cultural status, but there is also a gap between the peremptory norms of written language, which ultimately depend on Koran-based *religious literacy* (Goody 1987) and the Arabic vernaculars. Arabic authors are generally hesitant to write children’s literature in the everyday spoken language. Moreover, children are taught to read using texts written in classical Arabic, including the Koran. The reading of secular literature is often restricted or discouraged (Pellowski 1996: 672). Abu-Nasr (1996: 789) senses a certain “unwillingness to appreciate children’s needs and interest,” but she points out that, since 1987, there have been efforts to promote both the production and translation of children’s books in a number of Arabic-speaking countries, especially in Egypt and Lebanon.

Mdallel (2003) and Faiq (2000) are very critical of the quality of most present-day Arabic translations, especially when compared with the great Muslim tradition of translation from back in the Middle Ages (Faiq 2000; Baccouche 2000). Mdallel (2003: 300-301) in particular points out that one of the key aims of Arabic children’s literature is to communicate Islamic moral values. As a consequence, strict criteria must be met if children’s books, animated cartoons etc. are to be translated into Arabic.¹ According to Athamneh and Zitawi:

In addition to excluding children’s animated pictures that contain overt love scenes and scenes of violence, horror and crime, any children’s animated pictures that include reference to betting or gambling, alcoholic drinks, derogatory references to Islam, indecently dressed characters, monarchy, spirits, ghosts and magic should also be excluded (Athamneh and Zitawi 1999: 130).

The word *pig*, for instance, is translated as **harūf** (*sheep*),² even if what is seen in the cartoon is a piglet:

Obviously, this is due to religious reasons; for, in Islamic culture, ‘pigs’ are viewed as filthy, unclean, and prohibited animals. But the translator has not taken into consid-

eration that the child who watches this scene and listens to the dialogue realizes that what he/she sees is not a sheep (Athamneh and Zitawi 1999: 144).

Another example is the translation of *magic carpet* as **bisāṭun ṭā'irun** (*flying carpet*) (Athamneh and Zitawi 1999: 135). However, the Arabic translation of the *Harry Potter* series, which is rife with magic, shows that there are different degrees of acceptability in terms of translational *freedom* throughout the Arab world. Also, the (occasionally conflicting) translational norms (see Toury 1998) governing children's literature are not confined to just this genre, and children's books, while being clearly directed towards children, are also directed towards an adult audience (see Oittinen 2006: 35 on "dual audience").

Aside from names, culture-specific items considered to be highly indicative of the cultural identity of a source text include the following: references to food (which are particularly prominent in the first volume of the *Harry Potter* series), expressions related to schooling and education, kinship and family ties, the use of dialect and slang, and so on. Such culture-specific items significantly contribute to the overall outlook of a text and therefore constitute a particularly interesting object of analysis within the field of translation studies. Because it is not possible to investigate all of the relevant categories within the confines of a single article, the present study focuses on the transfer of proper names and on references to food, both of which are particularly instructive categories. The translation of other culture-specific items will only be touched upon briefly. In our investigation, we focus on two questions:

- (1) are there specific aspects that can be identified in the source text that motivate the adoption of certain transfer procedures with reference to the encountered culture-specific items; and
- (2) what are the effects of the employed procedures on the target text as a whole in comparison to the original?

To answer these questions, 18 chapters³ taken from the first three *Harry Potter* volumes⁴ were analysed. Volumes 1 and 2 have been translated by a different translator than volume 3. However, no detailed references will be made to the volumes at hand, and we will not be concerned with differences in translation that have arisen due to the switching of translators.

The structure of the paper is as follows. Section 2 gives an overview of the transfer of proper names after first briefly discussing their various forms and text functions. Section 3 deals with references to food in much the same way. Both sections are organised according to the transfer procedures emerging from the corpus. Section 4 provides converging evidence from other culture-specific domains (references to school and education, kinship and family ties, and the use of dialect and slang) supporting the main findings reached in the previous two sections. Section 5 rounds off the paper with a general conclusion.

2. Proper names

2.1. Text functions and transfer procedures

The translation of proper names (henceforth *names*) is a frequently debated issue within the domain of empirical translation studies because of the intricacies translators usually have to take into consideration. The general term *name* is used here to

refer to the category of proper names broadly construed, including personal, animal, place and brand names, names of spells, names of school houses etc.⁵ As it is customary to distinguish two general classes of names in the literature, we will make the same distinction: names are said to be either conventional or telling (*loaded*). Conventional names such as Harry Potter, Ron Weasley, Hermione Granger, Ted, James, Tom, Hedwig, London, Kent, etc. are usually morphologically non-transparent and generally correspond to prototypical names, even though conventional names, too, “may arouse certain expectations” about their bearers (Bertills 2002: 74). Telling names, on the other hand, are suggestive of certain meanings. They present properties that can be interpreted as descriptive features, recalling other words or conferring additional discourse functions. While the distinction is theoretically practical, there is no strict boundary between the two classes (see below for examples from *Harry Potter*).

Hermans (1988: 13-14) distinguishes several ways of transferring proper names from one language into another (compare also with Van Coillie 2006):

- 1) proper names can be *copied*, i.e., reproduced in the target text exactly as they were in the source text;
- 2) they can be *transcribed*, i.e., transliterated or adapted on the level of spelling, phonology etc.;
- 3) a formally unrelated name can be *substituted* in the target text for any given name in the source text;
- 4) and insofar as a proper name in a source text is enmeshed in the lexicon of that language and acquires *meaning*, it can be *translated*;
- 5) *non-translation*, i.e., the deletion of a source-text proper name in the target text;
- 6) the replacement of a proper noun by a *common noun* (usually denoting a structurally functional attribute of the character in question);
- 7) the insertion of a proper name in the target text where there is none in the source text;
- 8) the replacement of a source-text common noun by a proper noun in the target text.

(Hermans 1988: 13-14)

Out of these procedures, 2, 4, 5, and 6 are employed in the Arabic translation of *Harry Potter*, as will be illustrated below. Before examining any examples in detail, however, we will first clarify the category *names* and assess its importance for the present study.

Many scholars argue that names ought not to be translated, neither in adult nor in children’s literature. Aixelá (1996: 59-60) observes that “in the case of conventional names, there is nowadays a clear tendency to repeat, transcribe or transliterate them in primary genres”; loaded names, on the other hand, “seem to display a tendency toward the linguistic (denotative or non-cultural) translation of their components”; see also O’Sullivan (2000: 230), who states that the current tendency is to leave proper names untranslated. As far as children’s literature is concerned, the argument generally goes that the foreignising effect of names that are left untouched in translation does not bother the children who are concentrating on the book’s story line. Other scholars, however point out that foreign proper names may impinge on the child’s reception of the text. According to Jentsch (2002: 295), who has investigated the German, French and Spanish translations of the first two *Harry Potter* volumes, important connotations

associated with names, in particular telling names, may be lost if they are not translated adequately (see also Valero Garcés 2003: 133). This observation not only applies to proper names of people but also to toponyms, thronyms, etc.

Telling names are particularly frequent in *Harry Potter*, although many names cannot straightforwardly be assigned the conventional or telling label. Consider, e.g., *Albus Dumbledore* and *Severus Snape*. In Antiquity, *Severus* was a common first name, Lat. *severus* can signify /severe, serious/ or /cruel, heartless/, Lat. *albus* signifies / (matt) white/; *dumbledore* is the designation of a bumblebee in Old-English. Obviously, such names are transparent to a certain degree only, in particular to a younger public, unless additional explanations are conveyed. While these names can become transparent upon closer investigation, matters are even more complicated with names (or parts of names) such as *Snape* and *Quirrell*. *Quirrell* is often associated with *querulous* or *squirrel*, possibly in view of the character's nervous inclination. *Snape* has been associated with the word *snake*, but this association has met with considerable resistance. Brøndsted and Dollerup (2004: 69), for instance, argue that “[t]he Italian translator [...] appears to have misread the English ‘snape’ for ‘snake,’” having translated *Snape* as It. *Piton*, and they give as a reason that Rowling herself has claimed that *Snape* is the name of a small town in Suffolk. However, there is a difference between an author's intentions and the associations and connotations that emerge from the name and which may vary among readers. Davies (2003: 79) observes that the consonant cluster *sn-* suggests “vaguely unpleasant connotations.” This is an important observation because the actual form of the name is taken into account. The consonant cluster *sn-* is a so-called *phonestheme*, a term introduced by Householder (1946: 83) to designate a recurrent submorphemic sound-meaning association in a language, or, as Householder puts it, “a phoneme or cluster of phonemes shared by a group of words which also have in common some element of meaning or function, though the words may be etymologically unrelated” (e.g., *snail*, *snake*, *snare*, *sneak*, *sneer*, *snipe*). Other prominent examples of names having such a submorphemic sound-meaning association in the *Harry Potter* series are *Peeves*, *collective* names such as *Muggles* and *Squib*, etc.

Another phonosemantic class of words relevant to our discussion is formed by so-called *ideophones*. Ideophones are highly expressive linguistic elements with a strong tendency for iconicity, created to simulate a sensory perception, emotion or event. Not restricted to the realm of auditory perception and aptly referred to as *vocal gestures* by Voeltz and Kilian-Hatz (2001: 2-3), the iconicity of ideophones is to be understood in a much broader sense. A telling example in the *Harry Potter* series is the name *Whomping Willow*, which is suggestive of the ability of the tree to strike people hard with its strong branches.

The reference to phonesthetic and ideophonic names is particularly relevant for our purposes because, as we will show in the next sections, the (admittedly sometimes elusive or vague) connotative or associative values of more or less telling names in the English original of *Harry Potter* are most often conveyed by means of precise lexical meanings in the Arabic translation, e.g., *Whomping Willow* > **āš-šajaratu l-‘imlāqatu** (*the gigantic tree*). In doing so, the original telling name is being simplified to an *unambiguous* name (Davies 2003: 79 and House 2004: 696).

Aside from the use of names to arouse certain expectations, names are also sometimes used to convey humour (Wylter 2003: 9), in children's literature in par-

ticular. In the famous *Astérix* comics, for instance, much of the humour derives from the names used (Embleton 1991: 176). Both the expression and meaning of a name may give rise to humour. An age-old and still popular formal technique is alliteration (Aschenberg 1991: 63), of which many examples can be found in Rowling's books, e.g., *Severus Snape*, *Moaning Myrtle*, *Marauding Map*, *Time-Turner*, *Bertie Bott's Every Flavour Beans*, etc. Because of their language-specific make-up, these names often pose considerable challenges to translators. It should also be noted that it is not always easy for a translator to decide whether a name is actually a telling or a conventional name. Moreover, there is always the possibility that a name is coincidentally suggestive. This may partly explain some of the occasional inconsistencies found in translation. In our corpus, for instance, the first occurrence of the name *Sirius Black*, in the first chapter of the first *Harry Potter* volume, is rendered as **sīryūs** (or **sīrīs**) **al-'aswadu** (*the Black Sirius* or *Sirius the Black*) in translation, i.e., partly as a name and partly as a common noun (procedure 6 in Hermans' taxonomy referred to above), testifying to the translator's doubt as to whether the surname *Black* is to be rendered as a telling name or not. From the third volume, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, onwards, it is consistently rendered as **blāk**, i.e., as a conventional name.

In the following sections we survey the four procedures adopted for the translation of names in the first three *Harry Potter* volumes, namely transliteration (2.2), translation proper (2.3), the replacement of the name by a common noun or paraphrase (2.4), and non-translation (omission) (2.5), and we describe the effects they produce on the target text as when compared to the English original.

2.2. Transliteration

The procedure called transliteration consists of the replacement of source language "graphological units" by target language "graphological units" (Catford 1965: 66), so as to obtain a copy of the unit to be transferred. The basis of transliteration is "the phonetic substance, in that it is the sound and not the shape of the letter which is translated" (Aziz 2003: 70). However, this procedure faces certain problems when used in Arabic translations. First of all, transliterating English names into Arabic necessarily implies a certain amount of approximation, because the two languages differ considerably in their phonological and orthographic systems. For example, in the Arabic phonological system there are no counterparts for English consonants such as /v/ and /ŋ/, vowels such as /e/ and /o/, and certain diphthongs. Alternative letters have to be used in the Arabic script to approximately convey these English sounds (Aziz 2003: 74-75). Secondly, Arabic orthography lacks capitalisation, one of the primary orthographic features of names in many languages, including English. In Arabic, names are generally marked by double inverted commas, underscoring or brackets. Aziz (2003: 76) observes that "as the foreign proper noun is gradually adopted into the language and becomes part of it, these distinguishing marks are left out" in written texts. As far as the Arabic translation (and editing) of *Harry Potter* is concerned, the standards are not uniform. For instance, throughout the first and third volume, conventional names, transliterated names and telling names are usually marked with double inverted commas (occasionally brackets), whereas translated names or replacements by common nouns are only marked as names upon their first occurrences in the text, i.e., once or twice, with the exception of the newspaper name

the Daily Prophet, which is translated as **al-mutanabbi'u l-yawmiyyu** (*the daily prophet*) and consistently marked as a name throughout the corpus. In the second volume, on the other hand, the orthographic marks of names tend to be used with conventional and transliterated names only when they are introduced for the first time in the text. After that, orthographic marks are virtually always absent.

In the Arabic translation of *Harry Potter*, English place names are usually transliterated. The transliteration of *London* as **landan** (Wehr 1980: 879) is a conventional exonym, but the procedure of transliteration is also used for less well-known place names, e.g., *King's Cross* > **kīnjiz krūs**, *Kent* > **kīnt**, *Yorkshire* > **yūrksāyir**, *Dundee* > **dūndī**. This is remarkable given that the target audience may be familiar neither with the names nor with the places to which they refer. Incidentally, this is the reason why, in the Brazilian translation of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, the names of the three U.K. cities Kent, Yorkshire and Dundee in the first chapter are omitted (Wyler 2003: 11). In our corpus, the name of the street where Harry Potter lives, *Privet Drive*, is initially partially transliterated, partially translated: **šārī'u brīfīt** (*the street Privet*), but from the third volume onwards, it is transliterated as **brīfīt drīf**. Other toponyms such as the name of the magical bank *Gringotts* or the magical prison *Azkaban* are invariably transliterated: **jrīnjūts** and **azkābān**.

Conventional proper names for people and animals are also transliterated: *Harry Potter* > **hārī būtr**, *Lee Jordan* > **lī jūrdān**, *Hermione Granger* > **hīrmiyūn jrīnjir**, *Vernon Dursley* > **fīrnūn durslī**, *Minerva McGonagall* > **minīrfā mākjūnjāl**, *Errol* > **'irūl**, *Hermes* > **hīrmiz**. Because standard Arabic does not have the vowel /e/, phonological adaptation may occasionally be carried out along with the transliteration. For instance, transliterating the name *Fred* as **frīd** yields the possible reading **farīd** in Arabic, which happens to be a common Arabic first name. In this (admittedly exceptional) case, transliteration coincides with the substitution procedure (procedure 3 in Hermans' list), but this may be purely coincidental.⁶

Most of the names that are not straightforwardly analysable as either conventional or semantically loaded names are also transliterated. Remarkably, the same holds true of many telling names that are readily transparent. The latter group is comprised of names of spells derived from Latin or Pseudo-Latin words. Below is a non-exhaustive list of such names and their transliterations, ordered according to increasing transparency:

1) Personal names

- *Voldemort* > **fūldumūrt**
- *Draco Malfoy* > **drākū mālfiyū**

2) Names of spells

- *Expecto patronum* > **'iksbiqtū bātrūnām**
- *Lumos* > **līmūs, lāmūs**
- *Obliviate* > **'awblīfiyīt**
- *Petrificus Totalus* > **bitrifikās tūtālās**
- *Caput Draconis* > **kābūt drākūnīs**
- *Expelliarmus* > **'ikslārmūs** (clearly erroneous) and **iksbiiliyārmūs**

3) Place names

- *Gryffindor* > **jrīfindūr, jrīnfidūr**
- *Hufflepuff* > **hāfalbā**
- *Slytherin* > **sīldirīn, slīdirīn**
- *Ravenclaw* > **rāfanklū**

- *Hogwarts* > **hūjwūrts**
 - *Hogsmeade* > **hūjsmīd**
 - *Shrieking Shack* > **šrikinj šāk**
- 4) **Brand names of brooms**
- *Cleansweep Seven* > **klinswīb** √
 - *Nimbus Two Thousand* > **nīmbūs** √... (with the numbers in Arabic).

Occasionally, capitalised common nouns are also transliterated, e.g., the plant name *Mandrakes* > **al-māndraks**, the words uttered by Dumbledore on the occasion of a banquet: *Nitwit! Blubber! Oddment! Tweak!* > **nītwīt, balābar, 'awdmīnt, twīk!**, and the first part of Hagrid's exclamation *gallopin' Gorgons* > **jālūbīn jūrjūn**. Again, this is rather exceptional.

In contrast to many other translations (e.g., to Romance or to other Germanic languages), in which the telling names are, as a rule, rendered as such in the target text, the Arabic translators do not seem to have paid much attention to the descriptive dimension of the names, the majority being treated as conventional names. Since transliteration is carried out without short vowel diacritics, Arab readers without knowledge of the original English text are likely to face serious difficulties in pairing the names with a correct expression. As a consequence, the many associations, connotations, and the occasional humour of a number of names in *Harry Potter* are lost to Arabic readers, especially those who have little or no access to extra information about the book series (e.g., through the Internet). Jentsch (2002: 299) has pointed out that the Spanish translation of *Harry Potter* "is hampered mostly by the appearance of so many words in English (sometimes in italics)," and that semantically loaded names in particular cannot be satisfactorily interpreted if copied (the first procedure in Hermans' list), although in Jentsch' corpus, explanations of names are occasionally inserted by the translator (Jentsch 2002: 295). In the Arabic translation, no additional explanations are provided. The conclusion must be that the numerous transliterations of names in the Arabic translation of *Harry Potter* have a considerable foreignising effect on the target text.

2.3. Translation proper

If a telling name consists either entirely or just partially of one or more English common nouns, the appellative part of the name is usually treated as a transparent designation and translated accordingly, e.g.:

- 1) **Names of spells**
- *Leg-Locker Curse* > **la'natu rabṭi l-'arjuli** (*the binding of the legs curse*)
 - *Memory Charm* > **ta'wīdatu n-nisyāni** (*the forgetfulness charm*), **ta'wīdatun li-faqdi d-dākirati** (*the loss of memory charm*)
 - *Anti-Cheating spell* > **ta'wīdatun ḍidda ġ-ḡašši** (*anti-deceit charm*)
 - *Flame-Freezing Charm* > **siḥrun bi-tabrīdi ḥarārati n-nīrāni** (*a charm to cool the heat of the fires*)
- 2) **Names of magical objects**
- *Pocket Sneakoscope* > **jihāzu stiš'arin li-l-jaybi** (*the pocket equipment of awareness*), **jihāzu tajassusin** (*the spy equipment*)
 - *Sorting Hat* > **qubba'atu t-tansīqi** (*the arranging hat*)
 - *Elixir of Life* > **'iksīru l-ḥayāti** (*elixir of life*)

3) Names of magical plants

- *Devil's Snare* > **maḥālību š-šayṭāni** (*Devil's claws*)

4) Place names

- *the Forbidden Forest* > **al-ġābatu l-muḥarramu** (*the forbidden forest*)

5) Brand names

- the name of the broom *Firebolt* > **as-sahmu n-nāriyyu** (*the fire arrow*)

6) Names of sweets, pastries, etc.

- *Chocolate Frogs* > **šikūlātatu ḍ-ḍafādi'** (*chocolate of frogs*)

- *Pumpkin Pastries* > **faṭā'iru l-qar'i** (*pumpkin pastries*)

- *Cauldron Cakes* > **ka'ku l-kūldrūn** (*Cauldron cake*, with the component *Cauldron* transliterated; note that *Cauldron* is translated in **al-mirjalu r-rāšihū** [*Leaky Cauldron*])

- *Drooble's Best Blowing Gum* > **al-labānu l-mutafajjiru** (*the explosive gum*, with non-translation of the component *Drooble's Best*)

- *Bertie Bott's Every-Flavour Beans* > **fulu ḥalwā "bartī büt" bi-kulli n-nakhāti** (*Bertie Bott's every-fragrance candy beans*, with only the transliterated part in inverted commas).

Other examples include the blend *Remembrall* (*the name of a crystal ball*), translated as **kuratu t-tadkīri** (*the reminding ball*), and the name of the newspaper *the Daily Prophet* > **al-mutanabbi'u l-yawmiyyu**. Interestingly, the latter translation derives from the verb **tanabba'a** (*to predict; to claim to be a prophet, to pose as a prophet*, Wehr 1980: 937), not from **nabiyun**, the religiously loaded Arabic noun for *prophet* (Wehr 1980: 941).

Combinations of transliteration and translation proper also occur, for example, when names are only partially descriptive, as in *Eeylops Owl Emporium* > **sūqu 'aylūbs li-l-būmi** (*the Eeylops market for owls*), *Diagon Alley* > **ḥāratu diyājūn** (*the Diagon quarter or side street*, without the lexical association in the original), *Hogwarts Express* > **qitāru ḥūjwūrts as-sarī'u** (*the Hogwarts express train*).

The examples of translation proper provided so far bear out Davies' (2003: 75) observation that "where a name contains clearly recognizable descriptive elements, translators often opt to preserve the descriptive meaning of a name rather than its form, and go for a literal translation: thus *Wormtail* becomes *Wurmschwanz*" in the German translation of *Harry Potter*. In our source material, translation proper occasionally goes hand in hand with shifts in denotation. For instance, while names such as the *Leaky Cauldron* > **al-mirjalu r-rāšihū**, the *Chamber of Secrets* > **ḥujratu l-'asrāri** or **al-ġurfati s-sirriyyati** (*the secret chamber*), the *Bloody Baron* > **al-bārūnu d-dāmiyyu**, and the *Fat Lady* > **as-sayyidatu l-badīnatu** are translated *literally*, other translations introduce additional denotative clarifications, e.g., *Nearly Headless Nick* > **nīk šibhu maqtū'i r-ra'si** (*[with a] head that is almost cut off*), or display subtle shifts in denotation, e.g.: *Invisibility Cloak* > **'abā'atu l-'ihfā'i** (*the concealment cloak*), *Moaning Myrtle* > **mirtil al-bākiyyatu** (*weeping Myrtle*), *Devil's Snare* > **maḥālību š-šayṭān** (*Devil's claws*), *Godric's Hollow* > **kahfu jūdrīk** (*Godric's cave*). Occasionally, different translations of one and the same name are given, e.g., *Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry* and *Dark Wizard*. The latter name is either translated as **sāḥīrun šarīrun** (*bad magician*) or as **sāḥīrun 'aswadu** (*black magician*).

Finally, translation proper is also a common procedure with telling names containing additional phonosemantic or similarly connotative properties (see section 2.1):

- *Floo Powder* > **al-būdratu ṭ-ṭā'iratu** (*the flying powder*)
- *Whomping Willow* > **šajaratu š-šafsāfi** (*the willow tree*) or **aš-šajaratu l-'imlāqatu** (*the gigantic tree*)
- *Parselmouth(s)* > **alladāni yatakallamāni luḡata l-'afā'i** (*the two who speak the language of the snakes*)
- *Parseltongue* > **luḡatu l-'afā'i** (*the language of the snakes*), **al-luḡatu ṭ-tu'bāniyyatu** (*the snaky / snakelike language*).

As can be seen from these examples, the phonosemantic or connotative properties are lost in the target text.

The effect of the translation procedure is arguably contrary to the foreignising effect of the transliteration procedure discussed in the previous section, without, for that matter, being straightforwardly domesticating since conventional components of many names are preserved in the translations. As a rule, the translation procedure draws on the denotative value of the lexical components that make up the telling names, occasionally employing near-synonyms. Moreover, the focus on meaning is at the expense of a focus on form. Instances of alliteration, iconicity, punning and other forms of wordplay, e.g., the allusion to the word *diagonally* in the street name *Diagon Alley*, are not preserved in the translation, which may cause a loss of humour. Likewise, certain nuances in style or register are lost in translation, for instance, when *Emporium* is translated as **sūq**, the plain Arabic word for *market*.

2.4. Replacement of a name by a common noun or paraphrase

The replacement of a name by a common noun generally implies that the target structure is not marked by inverted commas and that its original proper name status in the source text is ignored in the target text. Replacing a conventional name by a common noun is rather exceptional in the Arabic translation of *Harry Potter*. One of the few examples is the theonym *Fawkes* which is rendered as **al-'anqā'u** (*the griffon*) or **ṭā'iru l-'anqā'i** (*the griffon bird*). The replacement procedure is more common with non-conventional names, e.g., *Put-Outer* > **walā'atun** (*lighter*), *Muggle(s)* > **al-'āmmatu** (*the common people*). In particular, Latin and Pseudo-Latin based names for certain living beings and creatures are often replaced by common nouns. An *Animagus* is a witch or wizard who can turn into an animal at will (see Lat. animal and magus), and a *Dementor* is an evil creature that causes people to feel depressed and despaired or makes them lose their minds (see Lat. mens). Not only are the referents of these names very prominent in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, but it is also imperative for readers to fully understand the meaning of the names. The replacement of *Animagus* by **lahu l-qudratu 'ala t-taḥawwuli** (*he has the power to transform*) or **mutaḥawwilun** (*the transforming one*)⁷ puts stress on the quality of transformation but says nothing about the change into an animal. Likewise, replacing *Dementor* by **ḥāris** (*guard, keeper*) leaves no room for alluding to the Dementors' uncanny ability to destroy feelings of happiness and hope in human beings with a single kiss. Moreover, the common noun **ḥāris** not only serves as a translation of *Dementor*, but the same word also denotes Hagrid's function as a gamekeeper and the function of a simple goalkeeper in the *Quidditch* game. Similarly, replacing both the name of the spell *Patronus Charm* and the conjured *Patronus* by **ta'widatun** (*charm, spell*) makes no reference to the fact that a protector (Lat. patronus) appears once the spell is cast.

Certain names are either translated or replaced by a paraphrase or common noun on different occasions. A case in point is *Petrified*, which is used as a proper name. *Petrified* designates the particular state into which living beings turn by the gaze of the Basilisk, a mythical giant snake; it is not to be mistaken for the common form *petrified*, hence the capital letter in the source text. In the Arabic translation, *Petrified* is not only translated by the verb **taḥajjara** (*to petrify*) but also by the verb **tajammada** (*to freeze, to harden*) and several paraphrases such as **taḥawwala 'ilā ḥajarin** (*to turn into stone*). On other occasions it is replaced by **hā'ulā'i lladīna yarqudūna fi l-mustašfā** (*those persons lying in the hospital*) or **al-mardā** (*the sick*). Again, the focus is on meaning, not on form, and the simplifying effect is even more apparent than with the procedure of (partial) translation discussed in the previous section. This is obvious from other examples as well. For instance, *Bonfire Night* is rendered in general terms as **iḥtifalātun ḍaw'iiyyatun** (*the light festivities*), and the names of the magical game *Exploding Snap* and the magical *Filibuster Fireworks* are replaced by a single general paraphrase: **'al'abun siḥriyyatun** (*magic games*). These examples show that the replacement procedure is among those techniques that have a considerable effect on the layering of the story, since many associations and instances of wordplay in the source text are not preserved in the target text. However, the ensuing simplification of the text as a whole again does not necessarily imply domestication, as the denotative layer is largely left untouched.

2.5. Omission

Most names that are partially or entirely omitted are names that occur only once in the source text or in secondary textual situations (“i.e., names with a secondary importance for the understanding of the text or the development of the plot,” Aixelá 1996: 74), e.g., names of institutions or spells (*Committee for the Disposal of Dangerous Creatures*, the *Body-Bind curse*), victims of Voldemort (the *McKinnons*, the *Bones*, the *Prewetts*), witches and wizards on the cards that come with the *Chocolate Frogs* (*Morgana*, *Hengist of Woodcroft*, *Alberic Grunnion*, *Circe*, *Paracelsus*, *Merlin*), etc. In the case of witches and wizards, simplification verges on domestication and transferring some of these well-known (at least to a Western readership) conventional names by transliteration, e.g., *Circe*, *Paracelsus*, and *Merlin*, would arguably have a foreignising effect. It is, in our view, however, not necessary and perhaps even far-fetched, to explain such omissions on the basis of norms of the target language or certain cultural values and sensitivities. It is more likely that they relate to general concerns of simplification and translation processing, including considerations of redundancy and economy.

2.6. Conclusion

The results of the different procedures used in the Arabic translation of *Harry Potter* in order to come to terms with the bewildering range of names in the source text do not point in a single direction. The descriptive conclusion is that conventional names are often, though not exclusively, transliterated, whereas telling names are translated, replaced by a common noun or paraphrase, or transliterated. This conclusion supports Aixelá's (1996) observation that conventional names tend to be preserved in translation, but it does not fully mesh with Aixelá's other claim that telling names

tend to be given a linguistic translation. In our source material, translations and transliterations of telling names are roughly equally frequent. Moreover, a number of telling names are omitted.

As for the effect of these procedures on the target text, the conclusion is not quite clear-cut. Whereas transliteration undoubtedly has a strong foreignising effect, the replacement of names by common nouns or paraphrases, their omission or translation contribute to a significant simplification of the text. Occasionally, omission and translation also have a domesticating effect, but then largely in a negative sense. The strategy that is arguably the most domesticating one in a positive sense is the third procedure in Hermans's list, "a formally unrelated name can be *substituted* in the target text for any given name in the source text," in particular when a foreign name is substituted for a domestic one. However, the possibility to read **frid** as **farid** is the only example in our corpus that would fit into the domestication strategy in a positive sense, albeit not without qualifications (as explained in section 2.2). Other translations of *Harry Potter* take a completely different tack, e.g., the Dutch translation, in which the majority of names are substituted by either existing Dutch names or new creations that are immediately recognisable as possible Dutch names (Van Coillie 2006: 136). Needless to say, the effect of such a substitution procedure is decidedly domesticating.

As far as we can judge, the fact that in the Arabic translation of *Harry Potter*, a small number of names are rendered inconsistently in the target text (e.g., translated or transliterated on different occasions) has a bearing not on the question of foreignisation versus domestication, but rather on the internal coherence of the text (see Schreiber 1993: 163, and Aziz 2003: 83, who observe that inconsistency in translation fosters confusion and lack of coherence). The same can be said of the findings that the Arabic translation has considerably fewer names than the English original, due to the many replacements and omissions,⁸ and that, unlike the English original, the Arabic translation does not pay much attention to aspects such as alliteration, word-play, associations, connotations, and instances of humour regularly arising from them. This has a considerable effect on the eventual style of the target text.

However, it would be wrong to jump to the conclusion that these latter findings can be subsumed under the heading of domestication. We concur with O'Sullivan (2000) that the traditional dichotomy between foreignisation and domestication is not entirely adequate because it does not do justice to the actual output of transfer procedures, in particular when several procedures, possibly with different outcomes, are used to produce one target text. With respect to our corpus of names, transliteration clearly has a foreignising effect, yet the other procedures do not result in domestication but rather in what O'Sullivan (2000: 237) terms *neutralization*, with the effect that the foreign elements of the source text are levelled out. The three strategies that O'Sullivan distinguishes are *foreignisation* ("exotisierende-dokumentierende Übersetzung"), *neutralisation* ("neutralisierende Übersetzung"), and *domestication* ("adaptierende" or "einbürgernde Übersetzung").⁹ In our corpus, the neutralisation effect is achieved through the replacement, omission, and translation of names.

In the next section we turn to culture-specific items related to food. As in our analysis of names the focus is on the relation between particular source text items and the procedures employed in the translation, and on the effects of these procedures on the target text compared to the source text.

3. References to food

3.1. Text functions and transfer procedures

It is widely accepted among researchers of children's literature that references to food (including beverages) play an important role in books intended for children. Nikolajeva (2000) points out that food is often used in children's literature as "a means of gaining entry to the other world, as a symbol of community and shared union, and as a central symbol of security" (see also Inggs 2003: 289). The *Harry Potter* series is no exception, in particular the first volume, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, which pays much attention to magical sweets, banquets at the beginning and the end of school terms, the Christmas table, etc. As the later volumes address a readership that is steadily growing older, the references to food decrease in number.

References to food unequivocally fall under the heading of culture-specific items in current translation studies.¹⁰ As with names, several procedures are available to transfer culture-specific items to a target text (Bödeker 1991; Aixelá 1996; Davies 2003). One of the most elaborate lists of procedures is presented by Kujamäki (2004). Although his classification partly overlaps with Hermans' (1988) list of procedures for the transfer of proper names (see section 2.1), it may be useful to have a closer look at Kujamäki's list, if only to demonstrate that in our corpus only a few procedures are actually used. Building on previous scholarship, Kujamäki (2004: 921-924) distinguishes the following procedures, which can be grouped into four categories:

- 1) copy or lexical borrowing ("Direktübernahme")
- 2) translation, including several techniques, among which:
 - the use of a hyponym or hyperonym
 - loan translation ("Lehnübersetzung"), e.g., as when the Finnish word for a traditional bread with a hole in the middle, **reikäleipä**, is rendered as *Lochbrot* in German
 - localisation or naturalisation ("Analogieverwendung"), i.e., translation by means of an analogue designation, e.g., Finnish **sauna** > German *Badestube*, or an autonomous, target language-specific creation
- 3) omission
- 4) addition in the form of an extra- or intratextual gloss, with the purpose of uncovering tacit knowledge presupposed in the source text, or a paraphrase.

In the Arabic translation, three procedures are used: omission, translation proper, and copying, the last in the form of transliteration. Again, a single source text item is sometimes rendered by different procedures throughout the volumes under investigation.

3.2. Omission

Many references to food are omitted. Interestingly, this is true irrespective of whether the food products are to be considered common or special. References to common products omitted in the translation include *chips*, *lamb chops*, *peas*, *carrots*, and a range of different, often amusing flavours of *Bertie Bott's* sweets: *chocolate and peppermint and marmalade*, *spinach and liver and tripe*; *bogey-flavoured*, *sprouts*; *toast*, *coconut*, *baked beans*, *strawberry*, *curry*, *grass*, *coffee*, *sardine*, *pepper*, *vomit-flavoured*. Examples of more culture-specific products that are not mentioned in the translation

are *sherbet lemon*, *mint humbugs* and *corned beef*, as well as certain dishes that are popular in parts of Great-Britain but possibly unknown in many other countries, e.g., *Yorkshire pudding*, *treacle tarts*, *trifle* and *jelly*. For the sake of comparison, references to *Yorkshire pudding* are also omitted in the French translation (Davies 2003: 80), whereas they are transliterated in the Russian translation (Inggs 2003: 293), copied in the German translation and rendered by an analogue designation in the Dutch translation.

As a rule, references to culture-specific dishes pose a major challenge to any translator, not only pertaining to the *Harry Potter* volumes. However, more important is the observation that, in the first three volumes of *Harry Potter*, there are many passages with detailed references to food and eating processes that greatly contribute to the realism and overall appeal of the text (especially for children). Davies (2003: 91-92) and Feral (2006: 470-471) point out that parts of these passages are either omitted or rendered in simplified form in the French translation. The same can be observed in the Arabic translation. For instance, *ice-cream (chocolate and raspberry with chopped nuts)* is reduced to **'āys krīm**; *pudding: a huge mound of whipped cream and sugared violets* to **tūrtatun ḡahmatun muḡaḡḡātun bi-l-krīmati r-rā'i'ati** (*a huge cake covered with gleaming cream*); *after a tea of turkey sandwiches, crumpets, trifle and Christmas cake* to **ba'da š-šāyi d-dāfi'i wa ka'ki l-'idi l-ladīdi** (*after some hot tea and delicious Christmas cakes*). Other examples of reduction include:

- (1) A hundred fat, roast turkeys, mountains of roast and boiled potatoes, platters of fat chipolatas, tureens of buttered peas, silver boats of thick, rich gravy and cranberry sauce – and stacks of wizard crackers every few feet along the table. [...] Flaming Christmas puddings followed the turkey.

(Rowling 1997: 220)

mi'āt min-a l-'aḡbāqi n-nādirati l-fāḡhirati
(*a hundred of excellent and splendid plates*)

(Rowling 2005a: 176, translated by Rajā' 'Abdullāh)

- (2) They got all the way through the soup and the salmon without a single mention of Harry's faults; during the lemon meringue pie, Uncle Vernon bored them all with a long talk about Grunnings.

(Rowling 1999: 34-35)

fa-qaḡaw l-waḡta fi tanāwuli ṡ-ṡā'āmi dūna 'an yaḡkurū šay'an 'an 'aḡṡā'i "hārī," wa taḡallala l-'iṡā'a ḡadiṡu l-'ammi "firnūn" 'an "hurninj"

(*they spent the time eating the meal without mentioning something about Harry's faults, and Uncle Vernon's talk about Grunnings accompanied the entire dinner*)

(Rowling 2003: 30, translated by 'Aḡmad ḡasan Muḡammad)

- (3) said Fudge, pouring out tea, [...] Fudge buttered himself a crumpet and pushed the plate towards Harry.

(Rowling 1999: 52)

tumma nāwala "hārī" ka'katan
(*and he passed Harry the cakes*)

(Rowling 2003: 47, translated by 'Aḡmad ḡasan Muḡammad)

- (4) He revived a bit over a large bowl of porridge, and by the time he'd started on toast, the rest of the team had turned up.

(Rowling 1999: 190)

wa bada'a 'iftārahu
(*he began to eat his breakfast*)

(Rowling 2003: 183, translated by 'Aḡmad ḡasan Muḡammad)

Regularly, entire passages with references to food are deleted, for example:

(5) Ron had a piece of steak-and-kidney pie halfway to his mouth, but he'd forgotten all about it.

(Rowling 1997: 166)

(6) said Harry, shovelling pie into his mouth.

(Rowling 1997: 166-167)

(7) said Fudge, now buttering himself a second crumpet, [...] waving his crumpet impatiently.

(Rowling 1999: 53)

(8) asked Fred, as they tucked into a sumptuous chocolate pudding.

(Rowling 1999: 72)

According to Feral (2006: 471), omissions and / or simplifications of this kind change the narrative point of view of the text. She claims that the perspective offered in the French translation of *Harry Potter* is no longer that of a child but of an adult. Analysis of the Arabic translation does not necessarily support this conclusion. Omissions tend to flatten the text's descriptive subtleties and richness of detail in favour of its narrative development and story line (see section 2.1). We consider it unlikely that these are adaptations that reflect an adult perspective. On the other hand, they definitely make the text more accessible to those readers, children or adults alike, who are first and foremost interested in the suspenseful plot.

3.3. Translation

Translation is another important transfer procedure used to convey references to food in the Arabic translation. Not all techniques described by Kujamäki (2004) are used. Literal translation occurs, for instance, when the biscuits that Hagrid has baked, referred to as *rock cakes* in the original, are called **ka'kun ṣahriyyun** (*stony, rocky cakes*) or **al-ka'ku ṣ-ṣulbu** (*the hard cakes*). The use of hyperonyms is also quite frequent. A hyperonym has a more general meaning than the source reference, as, e.g., in:

- a bit of fried egg > **aṭ-ṭa'āmu** (*the food, meal*)
- hamburger > **'aṣā'un** (*supper*)
- steak > **al-laḥmu** (*meat*)
- a piece of toast > **qiṭ'atu ḥubzin** (*a piece of bread*).

The technique whereby a source culture-specific item in the domain of food is conveyed by a target culture-specific item that can be regarded as a culture-specific analogue is resorted to in the following examples:

- *bun* > **faṭīratun** ("a cake-like white bread or a pastry made of water, flour and shortening," Wehr 1980: 720);
- *jam doughnuts* > **faṭā'iru l-murabbā** (*jam pastry*);
- *rice-pudding* > **muhallabiyatun** (a typical Arabic dessert "resembling blancmange, made of rice flour, milk and sugar," Wehr 1980: 1031);
- *pie* > **ṣaṭīratun** (the word for //sandwich// and //steak// according to Wehr 1980: 917).

Ben-Ari (1992: 227) calls this technique *cultural conversion*, and he emphasises its importance in the translation of children's literature in general. However, in the

Arabic translation of *Harry Potter*, conversion norms of the kind intended by Ben-Ari do not appear to play a prominent role, except for certain taboo references (see below).¹¹

In section 2.3, we observed that a single designation in the source corpus is not necessarily associated with one and the same translation throughout the target corpus: e.g., *Dark Wizard* is either translated by a word meaning //bad magician// or //black magician// in the Arabic text. Conversely, we found that different items in the source text may also be conveyed by a single translation, for example, as when the *Dementor*, a gamekeeper and the keeper in the *Quidditch* game are invariably designated by the general Arabic word for //guard, keeper//. In the transfer of references to food, the alternation between different procedures for the designation of a single item and the tendency to reduce the lexical variation of the source text is even more obvious. For example, **faṭīratun** is used as a translation of *bun* and *doughnut*, and **tūrtatun** as a translation of *pudding* and *cake*; *pudding* in turn is either rendered as **tūrtatun** or **ḥalwā**, and *cake* as **tūrtatun** or **ka'katun**; the latter noun is also the translation of *crumpet*. Both *gravy* and *ketchup* are translated as **ṣalṣātun** (sauces); **ḥalwā** (sweets) is used as the translation of *porridge*, but at the same time it is a fairly frequent word in the target corpus and equally serves to refer to other sweet products, e.g., *pudding*, *sweets*, and *home-made fudge*.

Moreover, the use of an analogue, a hyperonym or simple omission may also alternate. For instance, *jam doughnuts* are called not only **faṭā'iru l-murabbā** (jam pastry) but also **ṭa'āmun** (plain for //food, meal//) or the designation is simply left untranslated. Interestingly, this kind of alternation between different procedures can also be observed in the treatment of references to food that are arguably taboo in the Arabic culture, in particular references to pork (and all food products derived from pigs and hogs) and alcohol. The word *bacon* is either omitted or translated as **bayḍun** (egg), a reference to *pork chops* is omitted, and *roast pork* is translated hyperonymically as **al-laḥmu l-mašwiyyu** (roasted meat). Aziz (1982) confirms that certain culture-specific items pose serious problems for translators, in particular

lexical items referring to objects that are forbidden in the target language [...] Pork, ham and bacon are almost impossible to render into Arabic, where only the generic term, *lahem al-khanzir* [pork], exists and is charged with unfavourable emotive meaning for a Moslem reader (Aziz 1982: 29).

The same holds for references to alcohol, with the difference that

several names of spirits and liqueurs have become part of the vocabulary of the Arabic language, e.g., *beera* (beer), whisky, gin and brandy. Many other terms for beverages, e.g., sherry and cider [...], are unknown in the Arab world, and therefore pose a problem for the translator (Aziz 1982: 27).

In the Arabic translation of *Harry Potter*, almost all potential taboo references are left out, with a few exceptions. For example, in a passage where Hagrid fails to transform Dudley into a piglet, the reference to a piglet is preserved:

- (9) When he turned his back on them, Harry saw a curly pig's tail poking through a hole in his trousers.

(Rowling 1997: 69)

wa ra'a hāri dayla hinzirin yahruju min halfi banṭalūnihi
(and Harry saw a pig's tail sticking out from behind his trousers)

(Rowling 2005a: 56, translated by Rajā' 'Abdullāh)

- (10) Meant ter turn him into a pig, but I suppose he was so much like a pig anyway there wasn't much left ter do.

(Rowling 1997: 69)

kuntu 'argabu fi 'an 'uḥawwilahu bi-l-kāmili 'ilā hinzirin walākin yabdū kaḍālika 'alā 'ayyati ḥālin

(I meant to turn him into a pig, but he is already much like one anyway)

(Rowling 2005a: 56, translated by Rajā' 'Abdullāh)

In accordance with the didactic nature of children's literature in the Arab world, references to alcohol are deleted or altered: *sherry*, *four pints of mulled mead* and *redcurrant rum* are omitted, *brandy* and *wine* are either omitted or translated as **šarābun**, which can designate //wine//, //fruit juice, fruit syrup// or simply //beverage, drink// (Wehr 1980: 462). The word for the very popular drink in the magic world, *Butterbeer* (a proper name), which is usually drunk hot and does not make wizards drunk, is either omitted or translated as **šarābun** or **mašrūbun** (drink). When on the occasion of Aunt Marge's visit to the Dursleys, Vernon *uncorked several bottles of wine*, this reference is rendered as 'aḥḍara [...] 'anwā'an muta'addidatan min-a š-šarābi (he fetched various sorts of beverages).

Virtually all the passages referring to Hagrid's chronic alcohol abuse are left untranslated (e.g., *and every now and then he gets drunk; Hagrid was drinking deeply from his goblet; he kept buyin' me drinks; he'd got Hagrid drunk; I'll never drink again!; A large bottle was swinging from his hands; meander tipsily*). However, there is one exception. When Hagrid is sad and his friends pay him a visit to cheer him up, the sentence *One look told them that Hagrid had been drinking a lot* is not omitted but translated as 'arafū 'annahu qad tanāwala l-kaṭīra min-a š-šarābi (they knew that he had got many drinks). The other references to Hagrid's drunken condition in this passage are not retained (*and he seemed to be having difficulty in getting them into focus; he said thickly; taking a huge gulp of whatever was in the tankard; 'I think you've had enough to drink, Hagrid,' said Hermione firmly*).

3.4. Copy

Finally, a handful of food references are copied by means of transliteration. As a rule, the designations exist as loanwords in the Arabic language, e.g.: *sausages* > **sūsīs**, *sandwiches* > **sandwiṭṭšāt**, *ice-cream* > 'āys krīm, *chocolate* > **šikūlāta**, *dog biscuits* > **biskwiṭ al-kilābi**, *cake* > **ka'katun**. The transliteration of *earwax* (one of the many awkward flavours of *Bertie Bott's sweets* referred to above) as 'irwāks is probably due to an error.

3.5. Conclusion

Designations of food contribute to a considerable degree to the general outlook of the first three volumes of *Harry Potter*. References to pork and alcohol constitute particularly salient illustrations of "cultural constraints" (Shavit 1994: 12) when it comes to the question of how they are to be dealt with in the Arabic translation. To the extent that such references are part and parcel of the entire setting in the *Harry Potter* series, Nord (1997: 38) argues that, in the translation, their intended text function should take priority over their denotative value as well, rendering, e.g., **bayḍun**

(egg) an adequate translation of *bacon*. However, Coseriu (1978) has pointed out that an adequate transfer procedure cannot – and, we would like to add, should not – be established once and for all. If the colour of mourning and death is black in certain cultures but white in others, Coseriu argues, then the translator has to make a choice between the message (or *sensus*, German *Sinn*) of the text that he is translating and the denotative value (*Bezeichnung*) of certain words. Both techniques are legitimate in and by themselves:

Will er [the translator] den Sinn beibehalten, wird er die Bezeichnung ändern müssen; will er hingegen die Bezeichnung beibehalten, wird er eventuell außerhalb der Übersetzung selbst (z.B. in einer Fußnote oder in einem erklärenden Kommentar) angeben müssen, dass die gleiche Bezeichnung in der dem Originaltext entsprechenden Sprachgemeinschaft einen anderen Sinn hat (Coseriu 1978: 26).¹²

If the Arabic translation as a whole is compared to the English original, the references to pork and alcohol turn out to have rather limited cue validity for an accurate overall assessment of the Arabic target text. It is important to stress that, also in the domain of food designations, attempts at domesticating the text are rare in the Arabic translation of *Harry Potter*. This is consistent with the observation that the neutralising effects emerging from procedures such as omission, including reductions, and translation techniques such as the use of hyperonyms are much more pervasive than the attempts at domestication. By and large, therefore, the results of this section on references to food dovetail with the results of our analysis of the transfer of names in section 2. Rather than domesticating the text by using culture-specific analogues, the Arabic translation of *Harry Potter* relies heavily on the strategy of simplification. Laviosa-Braithwaite (1998: 288-289) points out that simplification may manifest itself at different levels, namely, the lexicon, syntax, and style. The concomitant effect of the procedures that we have been discussing on the style of the text is indeed very similar to that described in the previous section: as with the names, the richness of detail, the humour and the many connotations associated with food, flavours and aromas in the source text are only rarely reproduced in the target text.

4. Further evidence from other culture-specific domains

Apart from names and references to food, there are other culture-specific items that provide converging evidence for the importance of the neutralisation strategy. In this section, we briefly look at the domains of schooling and education, kinship and family ties, and the use of dialect and slang. For reasons of space, our account of these domains is necessarily cursory and serves mainly to illustrate the effect of translation strategies that add to neutralisation, and in particular, attenuation and normalisation.

It is generally acknowledged that the references to the boarding school that Harry Potter attends are a major factor in the development of a typically *British* atmosphere in the book series. It is striking, therefore, that many designations related to this domain are not rendered in a consistent way in the target text: *term*, for instance, is translated as **dirāsātun** (study), **‘āmun dirāsiyyun** (year of study) or **faṣlu d-dirāsati** (term), *summer term* as **al-‘āmu** (year), and *first years* as **al-‘awlādu** (the children), **at-talāmīdu** (the pupils) or **talāmīdu ṣ-ṣiffi l-‘awwali** (the pupils of the first grade). Similar lexical variation can be noticed with *dormitory*, translated as **‘anbaru**

n-nawmi (sleeping compartment), **ḥujratu n-nawmi** (bedroom) or **‘anābiru** (compartments), and *common room*, translated as **baqiyyatu l-manzili** (the rest of the house), **bahwun ra’isiyyun** (the principal room, living room), **qā’atun** (room, hall), **al-ḥujratu l-‘ammatu** (the public room) or **al-bahwu l-‘aḍḥīmu** (the great hall). Given this variation, it is unlikely that readers are able to locate certain sites of events or actions correctly (see also Inggs 2003: 294, who gives examples of similar lexical variation in the Russian translation of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*). Conversely, the differentiation between *detention* and *to suspend* is not preserved in the target text, both being rendered by the hyperonym **‘āqaba** (to punish), and function designations such as *Head Boy* and *Prefect* are translated as **aṭ-ṭālibu l-mitāliyyu** (the model student) and **ra’isu t-talāmīdi** (the head of the pupils) respectively. Compared with other translations, e.g., *Schulsprecher* and *Vertrauensschüler* in German, *hoofdmonitor* and *klassenoudste* in Dutch, *premier de la classe* and *préfet* in French (with an additional gloss for *préfet*, “c’est un élève chargé de maintenir la discipline,” Davies 2003: 77), the Arabic translation testifies to the lack of attention that the translators have paid to the hierarchy expressed by these designations.

While the transfer of references to school points to neutralisation, designations related to kinship and family often add attenuation to neutralisation. Attenuation means that the translators “omit or soften ‘blunt’ or ‘strong’ expressions” (Ben-Ari 1992: 226). The importance of this strategy is particularly evident in the transfer of negative, contemptuous or downright humiliating remarks about certain people in the source text. In the target text, these remarks are either couched in less offensive words or (partially) omitted. For instance, when James Potter, Harry’s father, is referred to as a *good-for-nothing husband* or a *wastrel*, these references are omitted in the translation, and when Aunt Marge calls him a *no-account, good-for-nothing, lazy scrounger*, the translation is attenuated to **mujarradu ṣabiyyin kasūlin** (nothing but a lazy lad). When Petunia Dursley talks of her *dratted sister*, the derogatory adjective is replaced by a neutral one: **ṣaḥīqatun rāḥilatun** (deceased sister).

A particularly salient case in point is the tendency towards attenuation in passages related to Marge Dursley (Aunt Marge), who often uses strong language. First, *Miss Dursley* is a *Missis* (**as-sayyidatu** //Mrs.//) in the target text. Second, descriptive passages such as *She even had a moustache, though not as bushy as his, she wiped her moustache* and *She burped richly* are left out. Third, much of what she says is either omitted or else rendered in an attenuated form. For example, the sentence, *Ripper [her dog] can have some tea out of my saucer, said Aunt Marge* is omitted, but this may primarily be due to the lowly status of dogs in Arabic culture. Not surprisingly, Aunt Marge’s comment on Harry’s origins in terms of kennelling (“*You see it all the time with dogs. If there’s something wrong with the bitch, there’ll be something wrong with the pup* –”) is not translated either, and her criticism of the soft way to deal with boys like Harry at school, *this namby-pamby, wishy-washy nonsense*, is rendered as **bi-hādihi l-kalāmi** (with these words). Other attenuated translations of humorous or cheeky comments by other characters include:

- (11) PETUNIA DURSLEY. Then she met that Potter at school and they left and got married and had you, and of course I knew you’d be just the same, just as strange, just as – as – *abnormal* – and then, if you please, she went and got herself blown up and we got landed with you!

(Rowling 1997: 63)

wa hunāka fi l-madrasati qābalat man yud‘ā “būtr” .. wa tazawwajathu .. wa wāṣalā ḥayāta s-siḥri .. ḥattā kānat nihāyatuhuma l-qāsiyatu!
(and there, in the school, she met the man named Potter and she married him and they led a life of magic until their cruel death)

(Rowling 2005a: 52, translated by Rajā’ ‘Abdullāh)

- (12) VERNON DURSLEY. I accept there’s something strange about you, probably nothing a good beating wouldn’t have cured – and as for all this about your parents, well, they were weirdos, no denying it, and the world’s better off without them in my opinion – asked for all they got, getting mixed up with these wizarding types – just what I expected, always knew they’d come to a sticky end –

(Rowling 1997: 66)

‘innanī lan ‘asmaḥa laka bi-‘an ta’iša šaḥṣan ḡayr ṭabī’in .. wa lan ‘asmaḥa bi-‘an tantahiya kama ntahā wālidāka bi-ḥādihi n-nihāyati s-saḥifati!
(I will not allow you to live like an abnormal person, I will not allow that you end up in the same stupid way like your parents)

(Rowling 2005a: 54, translated by Rajā’ ‘Abdullāh)

- (13) DRACO MALFOY. My father told me all the Weasleys have red hair, freckles and more children than they can afford.

(Rowling 1997: 120)

‘aḥbaranī ‘abī ‘anna kulla ‘usratin “wizli” ḥamrā’u š-ša’ri .. wa n-namašu yamla’u wujūhahum!
(my father told me that all the Weasleys have red hair and that their faces are covered with freckles)

(Rowling 2005a: 94, translated by Rajā’ ‘Abdullāh)

The attenuation strategy is so pervasive that it is also applied when the text is about villains, e.g., as when Voldemort says about his father: *‘You think I was going to use my filthy Muggle father’s name for ever?’* and *‘I keep the name of a foul, common Muggle, who abandoned me even before I was born, just because he found out his wife was a witch?’* These sentences are not retained in the translation.

Finally, some domains of culture-specific items provide evidence of normalisation in the Arabic translation, most conspicuously those items that are related to special language uses such as dialect, informal language and slang. Normalisation reflects a “tendency towards textual conventionality,” in particular when the representation of spoken language in the source text “is adjusted towards the norms of written prose” (Laviosa-Braithwaite 1998: 289-290; see also Hellegren 2005: 13).¹³ The importance of normalisation is generally acknowledged in the literature on children’s books. According to Even-Zohar (1992: 232), until very recently it was considered inappropriate to have non-standard language in Hebrew books for children. As a matter of fact, the rejection of non-standard language in children’s literature had been the norm in Europe for a very long time as well (O’Sullivan 2000: 185-186). We find that the same holds true for the Arabic translation of *Harry Potter*. All instances of non-standard language in the source text are either transferred into standard Arabic or else omitted altogether. For example, the West country accent of Hagrid and the Cockney accent of Stan Shunpike and Ernie Prang are not preserved, although these linguistic features serve to characterise the individual characters (e.g., Hagrid – Jentsch 2002: 290-292) and often are a source of humour in the original. Also informal language use is consistently ignored, for example:

- *Mum – geroff.* > Ø;
- *Aaah, has ickle Ronnie got somefink on his nosie? said one of the twins.* > Ø;
- *Are you ghoulie or ghostie or wee student beastie?* > Ø;
- *Me dad’s a Muggle.* > *‘abī min-a l-‘āmmati ...* (my father belongs to the common people);
- *Ickle firsties!* > *‘talāmīdu l-faṣli l-’awwali* (the pupils of the first grade).

According to Leppihalme (2000: 259-261), normalisation provides evidence of what Toury (1995: 267-268) calls a “law of growing standardization” in favour of “[more] habitual options offered by a target repertoire.” However, even though normalisation fits the global strategy of neutralisation or even domestication, Leppihalme (2000: 266) points out that “the elements weakened or lost – the sociocultural context, humour and individualization of characters – may not be readily missed if the reading experience is emotionally satisfying in other ways.”

5. General conclusion

According to Dickins, Hervey, *et al.* (2002: 96), “the question is not whether there is translation loss (there always is), but what it consists in and whether it matters.” In keeping with this descriptive perspective, the research reported in this article establishes several findings that enable us to relate the transfer procedures employed in our corpus:

- 1) to specific formal, semantic and cultural properties of the source text material; and
- 2) to textual and stylistic features of the target text.

With respect to the source text properties, we have shown that transliteration, although mainly used as a procedure to transfer conventional names, is applied to a number of other items as well, in particular telling names containing Latin, Pseudo-Latin or other foreign elements. These names are copied in the target text and adjusted to the conventions of the Arabic script and phonological system. Occasionally, telling names are replaced by common nouns, but most telling names consisting of English words are translated (even though an alliterating, phonosemantically loaded and lexically transparent name like *Shrieking Shack* is transliterated). Culture-specific references to food may be translated by general hyperonyms or transferred by culture-specific analogues. However, one of the most pervasive procedures across all items that we have investigated is clearly omission. On the one hand, we have adduced evidence that many semantically and / or culturally loaded items or text passages, and to a lesser extent also formally distinctive items, are left untranslated. On the other hand, however, it is clear that neutralisation and attenuation cannot account for all of the instances of omission in the data. Regularly, portrayals of certain characters or general descriptions intended to create a certain atmosphere are omitted or considerably abbreviated, not because of semantic or cultural reasons but primarily because of economy and, so it seems, a fairly liberal attitude towards those parts in the source text that are apparently considered redundant for the plot. By and large, this conclusion holds for all three volumes of the series that we investigated (especially volumes one and two), and the omissions are more frequent in the first parts of the books than in the latter parts.

The upshot of our investigation, then, is that although the transfer procedures employed in the Arabic translation of *Harry Potter* are not committed to a single translation strategy, the research findings indicate the overall importance of the neutralisation strategy. In our corpus, neutralisation is achieved mainly through simplification (the principal procedures being omission, the replacement of names by common nouns and hyperonymic translation), occasionally supplemented by procedures of attenuation and normalisation. This conclusion crucially relies on the omission procedure. The “process and/or result of making do with less words” (Blum-Kulka and Levenston 1983: 119) has a particularly profound impact on the end result of the translation process. Yet, neutralisation does not altogether exclude instances of foreignisation and domestication, although it should be noted that in our corpus the foreignising effect of a considerable number of transliterated names by far outweighs the domesticating effect of the few cultural conversions through the introduction of culture-specific analogues. It is beyond the scope of this paper to explore the question whether the Arabic translation of *Harry Potter* fits into an established tradition within the field of Arabic translation of children’s literature or not.

According to O’Sullivan (2000: 237), neutralisation is midway between foreignisation and domestication, universally regarded as the two dominant strategies of translation (Venuti 1998). If Venuti (2008: 19) is right in stating that the “terms ‘domestication’ and ‘foreignization’ indicate fundamentally ethical attitudes towards a foreign text and culture, ethical effects produced by the choice of a text for translation and by the strategy devised to translate it,” then the conclusion must be that the Arabic translation of *Harry Potter* is largely neutral in an ethical sense as well. Be that as it may, with respect to children’s literature neither a neutralisation strategy carried out to the extreme nor a radical domestication strategy seems to be a safe bet in the long term (Oittinen 2006). Nikolajeva’s (2006: 278) recent assertion that children perhaps are “less tolerant toward alien elements in their reading” and that we “should be aware of the risks of translated literature being rejected by readers as too ‘strange’” may be unwarranted. Recall what Astrid Lindgren said decades ago:

Certains vous diront que le livre d’enfant, plus que tout autre genre, est solidaire du pays dans lequel il est écrit, qu’il dépeint des types humains et des milieux que les enfants d’un autre pays, pris au filet de leur petite expérience, sont incapables de comprendre, avec lesquels ils ne peuvent pas s’identifier. Vraiment? Vous croyez? Je suis convaincue du contraire – convaincue que les enfants ont une prodigieuse faculté d’adhésion, qu’ils savent vivre les choses et les situations les plus insolites pour peu qu’un bon traducteur les y aide... (Lindgren 1969: 98).

NOTES

1. Certain restrictions apply, to be sure, to the translation of adult literature as well, in particular in certain countries of the Arab world (Amin-Zaki 1995).
2. Litteral back-translations are indicated in the parentheses.
3. Chapters 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 12, 16, and 17 from the first volume, chapters 1, 16, 17, and 18 from the second volume, and chapters 1, 2, 3, 20, 21, and 22 from the third volume.
4. ROWLING, Joanne K. (2005a): *hārī būtr wa ḥujru l-faylasūfi*. (Translated by Rajā’ ‘ABDULLĀH). Cairo: Nahdat misr. English Original: ROWLING, Joanne K. (1997): *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*. London: Bloomsbury.
ROWLING, Joanne K. (2005b): *hārī būtr wa ḥujratu l-’asrāri*. (Translated by Rajā’ ‘ABDULLĀH). Cairo: Nahdat misr. English Original: ROWLING, Joanne K. (1998): *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*. London: Bloomsbury.

- ROWLING, Joanne K. (2003): *hāri būtr wa saǰīnu ʿazkābān*. (Translated by ʿAḥmad Ḥasan MUḤAMMAD). Cairo: Nahdat misr. English Original: ROWLING, Joanne K. (1999): *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Here, as henceforth, transliteration of Arabic largely follows the DIN standard. Note that the transcription of short vowels may be subject to variation.
5. We will not address the somewhat difficult question of the criteria used to distinguish proper names from common nouns. Although this discussion is of considerable theoretical importance (see Willems 1996; 2000; Van Langendonck 2007), we accept the possibility of different classifications for different empirical purposes.
 6. At times, phonological adaptations seem to take place in a haphazard way in our corpus, e.g., when the name *Cedric (Diggory)* is first transliterated as *kīdrīk* and later as *sīdrīk*.
 7. On rare occasions, *Animagus* is transliterated as ʿ*īnimāǰī*.
 8. Note, moreover, that many names from the source text are substituted by unequivocal coreferential pronouns in the target text.
 9. “Bei der Übersetzung von Fremdmarkiertem sind verschiedene Vorgehensweisen zu beobachten: die exotisierende-dokumentierende Übersetzung, die versucht, das Fremde zu bewahren, die neutralisierende Übersetzung, die versucht, das Fremde zu entkonkretisieren und die adaptierende bzw. einbürgernde Übersetzung, in der aus der Kulturspezifik des Fremden eigenkulturelle Elemente werden” (*Different approaches can be observed in the translation of foreign items: foreignizing-documentary translations, which try to preserve the foreign items, neutralizing translations, which try to render the foreign items less specific, and domesticating translations or adaptations, in which the cultural specificity of the foreign items is turned into familiar cultural elements* – our translation) (O’Sullivan 2000: 237).
 10. Certain food references, e.g., *Yorkshire pudding* and *Butterbeer*, also belong to the category of names analysed in section 2. For the sake of clarity, they are discussed, together with the other references to food, in the present section.
 11. On one occasion, the reference to a dish is replaced by the reference to a drink in our corpus: *as he poured sugar on his porridge* > *yašrabu š-šāya* (as he drank tea).
 12. “If the translator wants to preserve the ‘sensus’ of the text, then he has to change the denotation. Conversely, if he wants to preserve the denotation of the text, then he may have to specify (for instance, in a footnote or an additional explanation) that this denotation corresponds to another ‘sensus’ in the linguistic community in which the original text is set.” (Translated by the author.)
 13. Ben-Ari (1992: 226) subsumes the avoidance of slang and the modification of “jargon” into “proper” language under attenuation.

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