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# Eco-translatology in the English translation of two contemporary Arabic novels: Sunset Oasis and The Old Woman and the River

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## ABSTRACT

This study applies Hu Gengshen's eco-translatology to the English translations of two contemporary Arabic novels: *Bahaa Taher's Wāḥat al-ghurūb (Sunset Oasis,* translated by Humphrey Davies, 2009) and *Ismail Fahd Ismail's Al-Sabiliyat (The Old Woman and the River,* translated by Sophia Vasalou, 2019). Eco-translatology views translation as the translator's adaptive selection within a translational eco-environment and evaluates it by its degree of holistic adaptation and selection across linguistic, cultural and communicative dimensions. Although scholars have widely applied the paradigm to Chinese–English translation, they have rarely tested it on English translations of Arabic fiction. Using a qualitative, descriptive-comparative design, the study analyses 31 aligned source–target items together with each translation's paratext. The most demanding challenges arise from diglossia and dialect, culture-bound social and religious vocabulary, and passages whose meaning depends on implicature or comment on language. Davies leans on the source ecology, retaining Siwan terms and compensating for diglossia through register, but his historical glossary leaves key local terms unexplained. Vasalou leans on the target ecology, producing fluent English and preserving the novel's ecological lexicon, while generalising some cultural items and softening the agency behind the novel's man-made drought. Neither translation achieves full eco-balance. The study extends eco-translatology to Arabic–English literary translation and proposes a sociolinguistic sub-dimension and closer attention to the ecological content of source texts.

**KEYWORDS:** Eco-translatology, Arabic–English literary translation, adaptation and selection, three-dimensional transformation, culture-specific items, Sunset Oasis, The Old Woman and the River

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## 1. Introduction

The translation of contemporary Arabic fiction into English has grown steadily since the International Prize for Arabic Fiction (IPAF) began in 2008, yet bringing these novels into English remains a demanding cross-cultural undertaking. Arabic literary texts are embedded in specific landscapes, social structures, religious idioms and dialectal registers, and each of these must be renegotiated when the text reaches an English-speaking readership. Idioms, historical references and social values require particular care if the meaning and impact of the original are to survive the transfer (Alkhawaldeh et al., 2025, p. 2). The challenge is sharper still when the novel's world is shaped by a particular environment, such as an oasis or a river delta. In such texts, place is not a backdrop: it organises social life, belief and conflict, and its vocabulary resists easy equivalence.

Eco-translatology, the paradigm developed by Hu Gengshen from 2001 onwards, offers a framework suited to this complexity. It presents itself as "a systematic study of adaptation and selection" (Hu, 2003, p. 283, as cited in El-Masry, 2024), in which the translator adapts to, and selects within, a translational eco-environment comprising the source text, the two languages, the author, readers and commissioners (Hu, 2004, 2020). The paradigm places the translator at the centre and evaluates a translation by how far the translator's choices across the linguistic, cultural and communicative dimensions restore balance between two textual ecologies (Hu & Tao, 2016; J. Wang, 2020). It has since been applied to a wide range of genres, from political documents to children's literature and world fiction (see Section 2.2).

Almost all of these applications, however, concern Chinese–English language pairs, and Hu himself names "the advance of 'internationalization'" as one of the paradigm's three priorities (Hu, 2020, p. 280, as cited in El-Masry, 2024). Arabic is markedly under-represented. The few studies that include it either examine translation *into* Arabic (El-Masry, 2024) or treat Arabic as one of several target languages (Younis et al., 2024). To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no study has applied the model systematically to the English translation of contemporary Arabic novels. A related gap concerns ecological language itself. Arab-region translation students report serious difficulty with ecological and culturally rooted expressions (Alkhawaldeh et al., 2025), but how established professional translators resolve such difficulties in published literary translations has not been examined. That is the question the present study addresses.

The study examines two contemporary Arabic novels and their published English translations: Bahaa Taher's واحة الغروب (*Wāḥat al-ghurūb*, 2007), translated by Humphrey Davies as *Sunset Oasis* (2009), and Ismail Fahd Ismail's السبيليات (*Al-Sabiliyat*, 2016), translated by Sophia Vasalou as *The Old Woman and the River* (2019). Both are IPAF novels: *Sunset Oasis* won the inaugural prize in 2008, and *Al-Sabiliyat* was shortlisted in 2017. Both are set in Arab borderlands whose ecologies are under pressure from empire or war, the Siwa oasis of the 1890s under British-controlled Egyptian administration and the Shatt al-Arab villages during the Iran–Iraq war, and both are dense with culture-bound vocabulary, religious formulae and dialectal speech. Their translators, however, worked under strikingly different conditions: Davies's translation includes a translator's note and a glossary, whereas Vasalou's includes no translator's apparatus. This contrast between two translational eco-environments makes the pair an apt test case.

The study addresses three research questions:

1. What linguistic, cultural and communicative challenges do the translational eco-environments of *Sunset Oasis* and *The Old Woman and the River* pose for their English translators?
2. What adaptive selections do Davies and Vasalou make across the three dimensions, and how do their selections differ?
3. To what degree do these selections achieve holistic adaptation and selection, and what does the comparison reveal about the applicability of eco-translatology to Arabic–English literary translation?

Section 2 reviews the relevant research, Section 3 presents the theoretical framework and analytical model, and Section 4 describes the corpus and method. Section 5 presents the analysis, Section 6 discusses the findings in relation to the research questions, and Section 7 concludes.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Eco-translatology as a paradigm: development and debate

Eco-translatology began as Hu Gengshen's theory of "translation as adaptation and selection", first presented at the Third Asian Translators' Forum in 2001 and published in English in *Perspectives* (Hu, 2003). The theory combined the Darwinian notions of natural selection and the survival of the fittest with the traditional Chinese ideal of harmony between humanity and nature (Tao & Chen, 2020; X. Zhang, 2021). Hu's monograph *An Approach to Translation as Adaptation and Selection* (2004) systematised the model, and his later books (Hu, 2013, 2020) expanded it into a full paradigm resting on three propositions: translation as adaptation and selection, translation as textual transplant, and translation as eco-balance (Q. Wang, 2023, p. 312).

Hu and Tao (2016) argue that eco-translatology constitutes a distinct paradigm because of its ecological research perspective, its philosophical grounding in eco-holism and Oriental eco-wisdom, its threefold research focus on textual, translational and "translation community" ecologies, its method of metaphorical analogy, its own terminology and its eco-translational ethics. On this account, the paradigm examines translation as a whole system rather than from the standpoint of language, culture or communication alone (Hu & Tao, 2016; Q. Wang, 2023).

The paradigm has not escaped criticism, most of it directed at its Darwinian metaphor. Robinson argues that the first stage of the model, in which the eco-environment "selects" a translator, is only loosely analogous to natural selection, and that the second stage, the translator's adaptation and selection, "would appear … to have nothing whatever to do with natural selection" and is "simply the ordinary professional activity of the translator" (Robinson, 2013, as cited in El-Masry, 2024). Zhu (2014, as cited in El-Masry, 2024) adds that the paradigm claims to integrate ecological, linguistic and cultural approaches without explaining how, and Fang (2020, as cited in El-Masry, 2024) concedes that some of its ideas are difficult to grasp. Hu himself calls for wider application, greater precision and internationalisation (Hu, 2020, p. 280, as cited in El-Masry, 2024). El-Masry (2024), applying the model to Arabic, concludes that its use of Darwin's law in the first phase needs revision but that it retains real explanatory power. The present study shares this position and treats the ecological vocabulary as a heuristic for describing the translator's situated decisions, not as a biological claim.

### 2.2 Applications of eco-translatology to literary and cultural texts

Most eco-translatological research is applied rather than theoretical (Chen, 2024, p. 23). Tao and Chen's (2020) analysis of the English version of China's 2019 Government Work Report shows the model's descriptive potential: domestication dominated, and the translation's governmental eco-environment, including its initiator, purpose and audience, shaped a deliberately cooperative national image. Their study underlines a point central to the present research, namely that the eco-environment includes institutional and commercial agents, not only languages and texts. Tang and Chen (2023) used the three dimensions to examine culture-loaded words in the subtitles of a Chinese costume drama, recommending flexible combinations of transliteration, literal translation and foreignisation.

Literary applications show how the target readership reshapes the eco-environment. Xu (2020), reflecting on her Chinese translation of Bruce Pascoe's *Mrs. Whitlam*, added footnotes to explain a biblical idiom and the Australian banksia, an ecological item that required paratextual support (pp. 51–52). Guo (2021) compared two Chinese versions of *Peter Pan* and showed how differing adaptive selections produce translations of different fitness for young readers. Q. Zhang (2020) found that the English translator of the web novel *Battle Through the Heavens* added logical connectors, merged or omitted clauses, and highlighted or obscured cultural information, and evaluated the translation by Hu's degree of holistic adaptation and selection. Zhou (2023) applied the same framework to the English translation of Liu Cixin's *Ball Lightning*.

Three studies are particularly relevant because they deal with culture-specific items in novels rooted in a specific place. X. Zhang (2021) classified the culture-specific items in Howard Goldblatt's translation of Alai's *Red Poppies* according to Nida's five cultural categories, including ecological items, and found that foreignisation dominated, typically through transliteration with annotation, as when *hada* became "Khatag, the Tibetan silk offering" (p. 29). Zhang and Umeanowai (2023) analysed the Chinese translation of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, adding aesthetic and rhetorical dimensions to Hu's three. They showed that a literal rendering of "three or four markets" left Chinese readers unable to grasp an Igbo measure of time even with a footnote

(p. 5), which demonstrates that paratext alone does not guarantee communicative success. Susidamaiyanti et al. (2023) examined the English translation of a Gayo legend using Hu's strategies of "compensating" and "leaning on" the source or target ecology. They found that generalisations, such as rendering *pawang*, a ritual hunt leader, as "hunter", lost cultural connotation through excessive leaning on the target ecology (pp. 129–132). Together, these studies suggest that culture-specific items tied to place are where adaptive selection is most visible, and that paratext and in-text glossing distinguish translators' approaches.

A further strand links the paradigm to the representation of nature. Chen (2024) argues that eco-translatological studies of classical Chinese poetry have prioritised linguistic translation, with minimal attention to the ecological concepts in the poems themselves (p. 22), and evaluates whether translators preserve the poems' natural imagery. Younis et al. (2024) similarly show that the English and Arabic translators of Pamuk's *My Name is Red* represent nature through lexico-cultural choices that reflect each target language's ecology. These studies point to an under-theorised overlap between eco-translatology's metaphorical "ecology" and the literal ecology of the source text (see Section 2.4).

**2.3 Eco-translatology and Arabic**

Arabic remains marginal in this literature. El-Masry (2024) is one of the few full-length applications of the model to Arabic. Analysing an Arabic translation of Tom Hanks's *Uncommon Type*, she assesses how far the translator's decisions restore balance in the eco-environment and judges the translation's holistic degree of adaptation and selection. Her study is methodologically valuable but concerns translation *into* Arabic, while Younis et al. (2024) include Arabic only as one of two target languages for a Turkish novel.

The closest work on Arabic fiction lies in neighbouring frameworks. Halimah (2018) proposes an eco-cultural approach to translating Arabic ecological terms, and Sinno (2013) shows through an ecocritical reading that ecological concerns are integral to modern Arabic narrative. Closer to the present corpus, AbuRumman and Haider (2025) examine the English translation of the metaphors in Naguib Mahfouz's *Awlad Haratina* through cognitive linguistics, and Shuhaiber and Haider (2023) identify the strategies used to subtitle Egyptian idioms and proverbs into English. Alkhawaldeh (2024) reads Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* through postcolonial bioregionalism, arguing that culture derives from place, so that rituals, traditions and local knowledge evolve with the ecosystems communities inhabit (p. 3), and that a "postcolonial sense of place" exposes how ecosystems changed during and after colonisation (p. 4). His analysis of water-wheels giving way to electric pumps, and local acacia (harraz) to imported timber, in Salih's village (pp. 11, 13) shows how Arabic fiction records environmental change through the material vocabulary of a specific place.

Pedagogical research has begun to address the translation of such vocabulary. Mazidah (2023) used the three dimensions to assess the translation competence of Indonesian undergraduates. In the Arab context, Alkhawaldeh et al. (2025) surveyed 1,800 translation students. The most widely reported difficulties were preserving the literary style of ecological expressions (71.4%), rendering expressions tied to arid landscapes (69.7%), interpreting symbolic ecological meanings in Arabic literary texts (65.2%) and finding reliable reference materials (61.8%) (p. 8). Students with more coursework used a wider range of adaptive and explanatory strategies, and the authors recommend treating ecological translation as a specialised skill (Alkhawaldeh et al., 2025, pp. 9–10). What remains undocumented is the repertoire of solutions professional literary translators actually adopt, and how different eco-environments shape those solutions.

**2.4 "Eco" in two senses**

The term "eco" now names two related but distinct enterprises. Hu's eco-translatology uses ecology as a metaphor for the translation system, in which the "eco-environment" is the totality of linguistic, cultural, social and human factors that condition translation (Hu, 2004; Hu & Tao, 2016). Ecocritical approaches to translation, by contrast, such as Cronin's (2017) *Eco-Translation* and Scott's (2023) account of the ecological function of literary translation, ask how translation represents and affects the natural world. Alkhawaldeh et al. (2025) situate ecological translation within this ecocritical tradition, noting that "nature and culture are inseparable" (p. 3). Several studies reviewed above move between the two senses without marking the shift. The present study keeps them distinct: Hu's model supplies the analytical framework, while the novels' representations of oasis, river and drought are treated as cultural and communicative content that the translators must transplant.

### 2.5 Research gap

The review reveals three gaps. First, eco-translatology has scarcely been applied to the translation of Arabic fiction into English, despite Hu's call for internationalisation. Second, literary applications usually analyse a single translation; comparative designs that set two translators' eco-environments side by side, including paratext, publishing context and readership, are rare, although the paradigm's emphasis on the eco-environment invites them. Third, research on Arabic ecological and culture-bound language has focused on learners' perceptions rather than on published professional translations. The present study addresses all three.

## 3. Theoretical Framework

The study draws on four interlocking concepts of Hu's eco-translatology, namely the translational eco-environment, translation as adaptation and selection, translator-centredness and three-dimensional transformation, together with its evaluative criterion, the degree of holistic adaptation and selection. The framework is used descriptively and comparatively, to explain why two translators facing similar material made different choices, rather than to rank one translation above the other.

### 3.1 The translational eco-environment

Hu defines the translational eco-environment as "the world constituted by the original text, source language, and target language, namely, the interconnected and interactive whole of language, communication, culture, society, author, reader and consigner" (Hu, 2004, p. 13, as cited in Xu, 2020, p. 45). Its elements are interdependent, and the aim of translation is to maintain or restore balance among them (J. Wang, 2020, p. 15). Later formulations distinguish textual ecology, the ecology of the "translation community" (author, translator, readers, publishers and commissioners) and the ecology of the translation environment (Hu, 2020; Hu & Tao, 2016). Following Tao and Chen (2020), who showed how a translation's initiator, purpose and audience shape its linguistic selections, the present study treats each translation's publisher, paratext and readership (Section 4.2) as part of its eco-environment rather than as external context.

### 3.2 Translation as adaptation and selection

Hu (2004) models translation as a two-stage process. In the first stage, the eco-environment, with the source text as its typical element, "selects" the translator, who adapts to it. In the second, the translator selects the form of the target text on behalf of the eco-environment (Hu, 2004, p. 222, as cited in Tao & Chen, 2020, p. 3). The two moves are known as *selective adaptation* and *adaptive selection* (J. Wang, 2020, p. 14). Because the first stage is the one most open to the criticism reviewed in Section 2.1, the analysis concentrates on the second: the translators' observable adaptive selections in the published texts. The language of "survival" and "fitness" is used metaphorically, to describe whether a translation can function well in its target environment.

### 3.3 Translator-centredness and translator responsibility

Eco-translatology treats the translator as the only living agent in the triad of source text, translator and target text: a reader and re-creator entitled to decide, but responsible for keeping the eco-environment in balance (J. Wang, 2020, pp. 15–17). Hu (2014, as cited in J. Wang, 2020) later reframed translator-centredness as translator responsibility, stressing accountability for the consequences of choice. This principle justifies the study's focus on the two translators as decision-makers while preventing it from attributing every shift to personal preference: each selection is read as the product of a translator situated in a particular eco-environment.

### 3.4 Three-dimensional transformation

Since no translator can adapt to every element of the eco-environment at once, Hu operationalises adaptive selection through three dimensions of transformation (Hu, 2006, as cited in J. Wang, 2020, p. 15; Tao & Chen, 2020, p. 3).

The **linguistic dimension** concerns language form at the lexical, syntactic, stylistic and discourse levels. Arabic and English differ in their preference for parataxis and hypotaxis, in the representation of speech and, above all, in diglossia, the coexistence of Standard Arabic and colloquial varieties, which English cannot directly reproduce. The distance between the varieties is wide enough that intralingual subtitling from a vernacular into

Standard Arabic has been studied as an aid to comprehension for Arabic audiences themselves (Ghassan & Haider, 2025), and the choice of variety can itself carry meaning: in intralingual subtitling, Modern Standard Arabic has been used to tone down taboo vernacular dialogue, functioning as a means of euphemism (Haider & Hussein, 2022). Studies of other paratactic source languages show translators adding subjects, connectives and logical markers to meet English expectations (Q. Zhang, 2020; Susidamaiyanti et al., 2023).

The **cultural dimension** concerns the transmission of cultural connotation. Following typologies that include ecology, material culture, social culture, religion and language as categories of culture-specific items (Newmark, 1988, as cited in Susidamaiyanti et al., 2023; X. Zhang, 2021), the study examines terms for social roles and institutions, religious formulae and Quranic intertexts, customs, toponyms, flora and food. Such items carry place-based knowledge in the bioregional sense, since local cultures evolve in accordance with the ecosystems they inhabit (Alkhawaldeh, 2024, p. 3).

The **communicative dimension** concerns whether the source text's communicative intention, including its emotional force, irony, implicature and thematic argument, is realised for target readers (J. Wang, 2020, p. 18). For the present corpus this includes the novels' ecological arguments, as well as titles and paratexts, because a translator's note or glossary redistributes the burden of explanation between the text and its margins (Xu, 2020; Zhang & Umeanowai, 2023).

Within each dimension, the study draws on two of the eco-translational strategies Hu (2020) describes, as applied by Susidamaiyanti et al. (2023): *leaning on* the source-text ecology (a foreignising orientation) or the target-text ecology (a domesticating orientation), and *compensating* for losses through addition or explication. These macro-orientations are cross-referenced with micro-level procedures such as transliteration, calque, literal translation, generalisation, substitution, explicitation and glossing, so that findings remain comparable with the wider literature.

### 3.5 Eco-balance and the evaluative criterion

Eco-translatology conceives of translation as the transplanting of a text into a new ecology, and of a successful translation as one that achieves eco-balance between the two (Hu, 2020; Q. Wang, 2023). Its criterion of quality is the *degree of holistic adaptation and selection*: the more dimensions a translator adapts to, and the more appropriately, the better the translation's chance of "surviving" in the target environment (Tao & Chen, 2020, pp. 3–4). Q. Zhang (2020) operationalises this degree through three reference values, namely the translator's quality, readers' feedback and the degree of multi-dimensional transformation (p. 167), and El-Masry (2024) applies the same criterion to an Arabic translation. The present study adopts the third value as its primary measure, assessed item by item. The first is considered through the translators' profiles (Section 4.2), while readers' feedback lies beyond the scope of a product-oriented study and is left for future research.

### 3.6 Analytical model

Table 1 sets out the analytical model that guides the categorisation and evaluation of the items in Section 5.

**Table 1.** Analytical model

| Dimension | Focus in the corpus | Strategies examined | Evaluation question |
|---|---|---|---|
| Linguistic | Speech representation and syntax; diglossia and dialect; code-switching; register of religious and formal speech | Restructuring, normalisation, compensation through register and narrator tags | Does the target form adapt to English norms while keeping the source's stylistic and sociolinguistic signals? |
| Cultural | Social roles and institutions; religious formulae and Quranic intertexts; customs; toponyms; flora, food and landscape terms | Transliteration, in-text gloss, glossary, calque, literal translation, generalisation, substitution, explicitation | Is the cultural connotation carried across, and at what cost in accessibility or accuracy? |
| Communicative | Irony, humour and implicature; names and titles; the novels' ecological arguments; paratextual framing | Adaptation, modulation, functional substitution, translator's note | Does the target text achieve the source's communicative intention for English readers? |

| Dimension | Focus in the corpus | Strategies examined | Evaluation question |
|---|---|---|---|
| Holistic | Each translation's eco-environment: translator, publisher, paratext, readership | Overall orientation: leaning on source or target ecology | What degree of holistic adaptation and selection does each translation achieve, and why do the two differ? |

The first three rows address RQ1 and RQ2; the holistic row frames the comparative evaluation in RQ3.

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1 Research design

The study adopts a qualitative, descriptive-comparative case study design. It is product-oriented: the translators' decisions are inferred from the published translations and their paratexts, read against the Arabic source texts, rather than from interviews or drafts. This follows most applied eco-translatological research (Chen, 2024; Tao & Chen, 2020; Zhang & Umeanowai, 2023) and extends it with a comparative design in which two translators' eco-environments are examined side by side.

### 4.2 Corpus

The corpus comprises two novels and their published English translations (Ismail, 2016, 2019; Taher, 2007, 2009), summarised in Table 2.

**Table 2.** The corpus

| Source text | Edition used | Translation | Translator's paratext |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bahaa Taher, واحة الغروب (*Wāḥat al-ghurūb*) | Dar al-Shorouk, Cairo; 1st ed. 2007 (later printing) | *Sunset Oasis*, trans. Humphrey Davies (Sceptre, 2009) | Translator's note on Egyptian history (1860s–1882); glossary of 14 entries |
| Ismail Fahd Ismail, السبيليات (*Al-Sabiliyat*) | Nova Plus, Kuwait; 2nd printing 2017 (1st ed. 2016) | *The Old Woman and the River*, trans. Sophia Vasalou (Interlink, 2019) | None; only the author's foreword is translated |

The novels were selected for their literary standing (both are IPAF works), for settings whose physical environment structures the narrative, for their density of culture-bound, religious and dialectal material, and for their contrasting translational eco-environments. Davies is a prolific, prize-winning translator of Egyptian and Levantine fiction, and his translation appeared with a British trade publisher. Vasalou, an academic specialist in Islamic thought, translated *Al-Sabiliyat* as her first novel after serving on the IPAF jury that shortlisted it, and her translation appeared in an American world-fiction series without explanatory apparatus.

### 4.3 Data selection

Both novels were read in full in Arabic and English, and passages were identified in which linguistic or cultural difference demanded a visible decision from the translator. The English texts were also searched electronically to establish the frequency of recurrent items: *agwad* occurs 73 times and *zaggala* 36 times in *Sunset Oasis*, and the donkey's name "Good Omen" 208 times in *The Old Woman and the River*. As in corpus-assisted discourse studies, such frequency data were used to guide and check close reading rather than to replace it (Haider, 2019a, 2019b). From this pool, a purposive sample of 31 aligned items was drawn, 17 from *Sunset Oasis* and 14 from *The Old Woman and the River*, so that every category of the analytical model was represented. All 31 items are analysed in Section 5. Sixteen are presented as numbered examples with their full source and target passages; the other 15 are discussed within the numbered example with which they share a passage or phenomenon. Appendix A lists every item with the example under which it is treated.

### 4.4 Analytical procedure

Each item was aligned with its Arabic source by locating the corresponding page in the Arabic edition, and the source passage was transcribed in Arabic script; page numbers refer to the editions in Table 2. The analysis then proceeded in four steps:

1. **Classification**: assigning each item to one or more dimensions, using the categories in Table 1.
2. **Strategy identification**: describing the translator's procedure and its macro-orientation, leaning on the source or the target ecology (Hu, 2020; Susidamaiyanti et al., 2023).
3. **Contextualisation**: relating the decision to the translator's eco-environment, including paratext, publisher, readership and translator profile (Tao & Chen, 2020).
4. **Evaluation**: judging whether the decision preserves, compensates for or loses the item's linguistic, cultural or communicative value, as a contribution to the translation's degree of holistic adaptation and selection (El-Masry, 2024; Q. Zhang, 2020).

Steps 1, 2 and 4 are reported item by item in Sections 5.1–5.3; step 3 is reported in Section 5.4 and drawn together in Section 6.2.

**4.5 Limitations**

Because the study is product-oriented, it can infer but not confirm translators' reasoning. The scanned Arabic copies are later printings, so minor variants from the first editions cannot be excluded. The selection and evaluation of items also rest on the researcher's judgement; electronic searches of the kind used here reduce this subjectivity but do not remove it (Haider, 2019c). A purposive sample of 31 items supports qualitative comparison, not statistical claims about the translations as wholes; frequency counts are therefore reported only where they come from complete searches of the English texts.

**5. Analysis**

The 31 items are discussed under the three dimensions, followed by the paratextual framing of each translation. In each numbered example, the Arabic source text (ST) is given with its page number, followed by the published English target text (TT).

**5.1 The linguistic dimension**

The linguistic challenges in both novels stem less from vocabulary than from the sociolinguistic texture of Arabic: diglossia, embedded foreign languages and conventions of speech representation that differ from those of English prose.

**Example 1** (*Sunset Oasis*)

ST (p. 112):

قلت له: إصباح الخير. فرد باب تسامة غم تصبة: الخير.

TT: 'Good morning!' I said to him. 'Good morning,' he responded, with a forced smile.

Catherine, the English wife of the district commissioner, greets a Siwan boy with a pronunciation she has learnt from local children, which Taher marks in the spelling إصباح rather than the standard صباح. The boy's clipped reply, الخير, replaces the standard صباح النور. Both markers signal Catherine's attempt to enter the Siwan speech community and the boy's guarded response. Davies normalises both turns to "Good morning", and nothing in the passage compensates, so the sociolinguistic negotiation disappears. The same exchange also flattens Egyptian colloquial: when Catherine asks the boy "in the simplest Arabic possible" كويس؟, the word becomes the neutral "Nice?" (p. 112). In both cases, Davies leans on the target ecology for readability, at the cost of signals the source treats as meaningful.

**Example 2** (*Sunset Oasis*)

ST (p. 166):

داوجألا باب وه بابلا اذه نأ نيفرعت الأ ،همان اي اوفع ... ةحيصفلا ةيبرعب ءوده ب لاق

TT: … he said to me calmly in his classical Arabic, … 'Your pardon, madame. Are you aware that this gate is that of the agwad?'

ST (p. 167):

ارشً كب داوجألا ديري ال .يبضغت ال :ةيرصم ةجهلب ينطاخو نم برقت ا

TT: He approached me and said with an Egyptian accent, 'Don't be upset. The agwad don't mean you any harm.'

Here, by contrast, Davies compensates for diglossia. Sheikh Sabir's Standard Arabic is rendered in a formal, slightly archaic English ("Your pardon, madame", "that of the agwad"), while the old man who follows speaks plain modern English. The contrast is carried by register and by the narratorial tags "in his classical Arabic" and "with an Egyptian accent", which Davies retains from the source. The same technique appears when Sergeant Ibraheem "said in his village accent, 'Fate and fortune!'" (for عفرفف رأسه وقال بلهجته القروية: عجبت للزمن, p. 62). A feature with no structural equivalent in English is thus relocated into register and narration rather than lost.

**Example 3** (*Sunset Oasis*)
ST (p. 11): *Interesting. Very interesting* [in Latin script within the Arabic text]
TT: … muttered 'Interesting, very interesting' to himself every now and then.
Taher has the British official Mr Harvey speak English in Latin script inside the Arabic text, which marks his foreignness and condescension at a glance. In English translation the marker cannot survive, because the inserted language has become the matrix language. This is a loss imposed by the language pair rather than a translator's error: Harvey's foreignness must be carried by other means, such as his patronising lecture on Sparta, which Davies renders in full.

**Example 4** (*The Old Woman and the River*)
ST (pp. 30–31):
قالت لهم. ال تقلقوا بشأني. توسلوا. ليس بوسعنا أن نتركك تذهبي هكذا. ابتسمت بمحبة المأ. إن شئتم تعالوا معي.
TT: "Don't you worry about me," she said to them. / "We can't let you go just like that," they pleaded. / She smiled at them tenderly. "You can come with me if you wish."

Ismail runs dialogue into the narrative without quotation marks or paragraph breaks, with speech tags placed before the words they introduce, so that the exchange reads as Um Qasem's recollection rather than a staged scene. Vasalou restructures every such passage into conventional English dialogue and adds subordination where the Arabic is paratactic: تنتهي الحرب، تعودون للبيت، تجدون أمكم بانتظاركم becomes "When the war is over, you'll come home and find your mother waiting for you" (p. 31). Smaller normalisations follow the same pattern, as when the Levantine–Iraqi month name in انصرم شهر شباط becomes "February came and went" (p. 16). This is the largest formal shift in the translation and a clear case of leaning on the target ecology: the English is fluent, but the novel's distinctive narrative voice is lost.

**5.2 The cultural dimension**
Culture-specific items are where the two translators diverge most clearly. Davies tends to retain Siwan and Egyptian terms; Vasalou tends to find English equivalents or descriptive renderings.
**Example 5** (*Sunset Oasis*)
ST (p. 63):
هل تعرفان؟ طلب البدو من الزجالة أن يحيوا لنا الليلة حفلة طبل.
TT: 'Did you hear? The Bedouin asked the zaggala to put on a drumming party for us tonight.'
ST (p. 63):
الأجواد يستعدون لي ويجب عليّ أنا أيضًا أن أستعد لهم.
TT: The agwad are getting ready for me and I must get ready for them.

The agwad, the council of notables, and the zaggala, the class of labouring cultivators and guards, are the two poles of Siwan society and drive much of the novel's conflict. Davies transliterates both throughout (73 and 36 occurrences). He glosses zaggala once in the text, as "cultivators, zaggala", but never glosses agwad. Neither term appears in the glossary, although the translator's note states that it defines the words left untranslated. The strategy leans on the source ecology and preserves the Siwan social vocabulary, but the paratextual compensation is incomplete, so readers must reconstruct the oasis's social order from narrative cues. The drumming party itself shows a different choice: the reed pipes played by the zaggala, مزمار بدائية, become "primitive oboes" (p. 63), a cultural substitution that gives the Siwan music an incongruously European colour.

**Example 6** (*Sunset Oasis*)
ST (p. 183):

الغولة قبلت صدري!

TT: 'The ghoul-woman kissed my breast!'
In Siwa, a widow lived in seclusion for four months and ten days and was called al-ghoula, because she was believed to carry the angel of death. Davies coins the calque "ghoul-woman", which is immediately intelligible, keeps the supernatural menace of the Arabic and avoids an opaque transliteration. The custom itself is explained in Catherine's narration ("whoever saw the ghoul-woman, as the widow was called, during that period was destined to perish"), so the cultural load is shared between the calque and an explanation already present in the source. This is the most successful cultural solution in the sample.

**Example 7** (*Sunset Oasis*)
ST (p. 68):

... بدلًا من مجلسنا اليومي في السقيفة عند مدخل شالي.

TT: … instead of at our daily meeting place under the open lean-to at the entrance to Shali.
"Open lean-to" renders the physical sense of السقيفة accurately. For Arabic readers, however, the word may also recall the Saqifa of Banu Sa'ida, where the succession to the Prophet was decided, an apt resonance in a chapter about a council of notables split into factions. Whether Taher intended it is a matter of interpretation, but the English removes the possibility of such a reading. Davies's place names follow his general orientation: the women's gate باب قدومة becomes "the Qaddouma Gate" (p. 166), transliterated without a gloss.

**Example 8** (*Sunset Oasis*)
ST (p. 69):

وتحث سأرلا تسكنم ةأرملا هذه لبنوباءتا وكأ نم يرتلاه ترتيًّلا :متكتوب أيتاه لأرضا أن أيتي عليك وقت تكونين فيه أرملة من تحت رأس تدوس بأقدامها ... وتأتون الفواحش ما ظهر منها وما بطن، وتقتلون أنفسكم بأيديكم؟

TT: He chants them as though he were reciting from the Koran: 'It is written, O Earth, that a time shall come when you shall be as a widow who strews dust upon her bowed head … perpetrate abominations both open and concealed, and deliver yourselves to perdition with your own hands?'

Sheikh Sabir's prophecies are steeped in Quranic diction: ترتلها implies the measured recitation of scripture, and ما ظهر منها وما بطن echoes Quran 6:151. Davies makes the connotation of ترتيلًا explicit ("as though he were reciting from the Koran"), renders the prophecies in an archaic, King James-like register, and shifts تقتلون أنفسكم ("you kill yourselves") towards "deliver yourselves to perdition", which recalls the related verse 2:195. English readers recognise the register as scriptural, but the specific Quranic allusions go unsignalled, so their authority becomes a generic biblical solemnity: cultural substitution at the level of register. Rendering Quranic vocabulary in English is demanding even in dedicated translations of the Quran, where terms with overlapping meanings must be distinguished accurately and consistently (Al-Abbas & Haider, 2020). Not all religious language in the chapter is elevated in this way. Sheikh Yahya, the chapter's narrator, answers the prophecies with the prayer أن تسبق رحمة ربنا غضبه علينا، وأن يرحمنا قبل كل شيء من عيق الغربان, rendered literally as "May the mercy of God reach us before His anger, and may He spare us above all from the cawing of crows!" (p. 69). The image survives, but the echo of the hadith in which God's mercy outstrips His anger, and the crow's status as an omen of ruin, are left for the reader to infer.

**Example 9** (*The Old Woman and the River*)
ST (p. 30):

استغرق قاسم ساعتين عاد مصطحبًا شيخ دين ... إكرام الميت في بنقله لمقبرة النجف الأشرف.

TT: It took Qasem two hours to return, accompanied by a religious man. … "You do honor to the deceased by taking him to Najaf's noble graveyard."

Vasalou generalises شيخ دين, a cleric, to "a religious man", dropping the title that signals his role in a Shi'i community. She renders الأشرف literally but attaches it to the graveyard rather than to Najaf, the city whose honorific it is. The first choice is defensible, since "sheikh" might mislead, but the second relocates a religious-geographical marker, and the absence of paratext leaves neither compensated. On the same page, by

contrast, the sons' address to their mother, ايمأ, is rendered literally as "Oh Mother", a choice that works because the standard form has a direct English counterpart and keeps the formal tenderness of the farewell.

**Example 10** (*The Old Woman and the River*)
ST (p. 15):

.ريخ مدق ميمسن .هرارقلا لصخ .ظوظحم شحج اذه

TT: "This little donkey is good luck." The decision came to him. "We'll call him 'Good Omen.'"

The donkey's name, قدم خير, draws on the idiom of a person whose arrival (مدق, literally "foot" or "step") brings good fortune. Vasalou translates the name for its sense rather than transliterating it, so English readers grasp at once why the animal is cherished; given its 208 occurrences and its importance to the plot, the choice is well adapted to the target ecology. What is lost is the play on مدق, apt in a novel built around a long trek home on foot. Vasalou nevertheless retains the Gulf–Iraqi kunya وب اقسم as "Bu Qasem" (p. 17), which shows that her domesticating orientation is selective rather than absolute.

**Example 11** (*The Old Woman and the River*)
ST (p. 16):

... كميةم نم التمر النانشف عم عموملا الطحين باالزيت واالسكر وعبوة ماء شرب.

TT: … some dry dates and tahini pastries with oil and sugar, a can of drinking water.

The Arabic describes pastries made of flour (طحين) with oil and sugar; "tahini pastries" appears to read طحين as طحينة. The slip is small, but it alters a detail of material culture, and it confirms the observation of Susidamaiyanti et al. (2023) that cultural transfer can fail through misreading as well as generalisation, a failure that a translation without paratext gives readers no means of detecting.

**Example 12** (*The Old Woman and the River*)
ST (p. 38):

.بةقنأو ،حمدان ،مهيجارن ،السراجي ،القروخ ،ىربك راهنأ قسمخ كانه ... يدربلاو بصقلاب امحزدم هلحاس تأر

TT: Her gaze soaked it all in, the river and its bank, matted with reeds and papyrus plants. … there were five big rivers—Al-Khoura, Al-Saraji, Muhaijran, Hamdan, and finally Hebaba.
ST (p. 70):

... أغصان السدرة البمبماوية ... بعض ثمار النبق

TT: … the branches of the Bambawi Christ's-thorn tree … some of the nabk fruit

Vasalou's ecological lexicon is precise. القصب والبردي become "reeds and papyrus plants", and the sidr tree and its fruit are rendered through a hybrid of an English botanical name ("Christ's-thorn") and transliteration ("Bambawi", "nabk"). The river names are transliterated without explanation, so their function as a map of Um Qasem's lost world is kept, though their referents remain opaque. Against her general tendency, Vasalou here leans on the source ecology, and the texture of the Shatt al-Arab landscape survives largely intact.

**5.3 The communicative dimension**

The communicative dimension concerns whether the force, irony and argument of the source reach English readers. Several of the most consequential decisions in the sample fall here.

**Example 13** (*Sunset Oasis*)
ST (p. 112):

!نيتغللا نيب اضًيأ كتشرتشم «رافك» قمكفك نذإ ... !رافك :بضغ في لوقي وهو قروصلا على قصب ثم

TT: Then he spat on the image, saying angrily, 'Unbelievers!' … 'So "unbelievers" is another word that's common to both languages.'

Catherine's bitter remark depends on the boy using the Arabic word رافك while otherwise speaking Siwi: the one word the two languages share is a word of rejection. Rendered as "Unbelievers", the boy's word belongs to no particular language, and Catherine's comment loses its logic. A transliteration ("*Kuffar!*") or a brief explicitation would have preserved the irony. Leaning on the source ecology at the word level does not guarantee communicative survival when a text comments on its own languages.

**Example 14** (*Sunset Oasis*)
ST (pp. 62–63):
قال محمود: ربنا يعطيك طول العمر اي إبراهيم. فرّد بضحكة صغيرة: ثاني؟! كل ما أطلب من الله أن يعيدني مرة أخرى سالمًا إلى بلدي.
TT: ‘God grant you long life, Ibraheem,’ said Mahmoud. He replied with a small laugh, ‘More life? All I ask of God is that He send me back safe to my village.’

Ibraheem, who has lost his children to cholera, answers the conventional blessing with a rueful ثاني؟! (“again?!”). Davies adapts it to “More life?”, which picks up “long life” and keeps the dark humour. In the same speech, the popular name for the Urabi revolt, الهوجة, becomes “the Riots” (p. 62): the pejorative folk label is replaced by a neutral English one, and the translator’s note supplies the history it presupposes. Ibraheem’s reference to his commander, الأمير الاي سعيد بك، الله يستر, becomes “Brigadier General Saeed Bey, God protect him” (p. 62). The blessing is kept literally, preserving the speaker’s piety, while the Ottoman–Egyptian rank is mapped onto an approximate modern English title. The scene thus remains readable, and the paratext carries the historical background.

**Example 15** (*The Old Woman and the River*)
ST (p. 37):
لاحظت يابس الترع والجداول، الماء لا يجف دون فعل فاعل، الحرب بحد ذاتها لا توقف جريان شط العرب.
TT: She noticed that the ponds and creeks had run dry. Water doesn’t dry up for no reason. The war alone wouldn’t stop the Shatt al-Arab from flowing.

This is the ecological crux of the novel. The phrase دون فعل فاعل invokes the grammatical concept of the agent (الفاعل): water does not dry up without someone doing it. The phrase points to a human culprit, and the plot later reveals that the army has dammed the tributaries. Vasalou’s “for no reason” shifts the claim from agency to mere causation and loses the accusation that the source plants and the plot confirms. The surrounding ecological vocabulary is rendered precisely: يابس الترع والجداول becomes “the ponds and creeks had run dry”, زنخ رطوبة الشط “the damp musty scent of the Shatt”, and Um Qasem’s possessive شط انطاحف بالماء “Our Shatt is brimming with water” (p. 38). The modulation in one phrase nevertheless softens the novel’s environmental argument at the moment it is first stated.

**Example 16** (*The Old Woman and the River*)
ST (p. 31):
هل أُسقط في أيديهم فانعقدت ألسنتهم؟ … أراكم على خير … نلتقي..
TT: Was it shock that robbed them of the power of speech and made their tongues cling to their throats? … “Look after yourselves.” … “I’ll be seeing you…”

The Quranic idiom أُسقط في أيديهم (cf. Quran 7:149), expressing dismayed realisation, is rendered by its sense (“shock”) and expanded with an English idiom echoing Psalm 137. The formulaic farewell أراكم على خير, literally “may I see you in good health”, becomes the functionally equivalent “Look after yourselves”. Both are effective substitutions, and the first parallels Davies’s practice in Example 8: both translators reach for biblical English where the Arabic draws on the Quran.

**5.4 Paratext, publisher and title**

The two translations differ most sharply in their framing, which reflects their eco-environments. Davies’s translation, published by a British trade house, closes with a translator’s note on Egypt from the 1860s to 1882 and a 14-entry glossary of historical figures, institutions and a few material and religious terms (*gallabiya*, *dhikr*, *dahabiya*, feddan). The apparatus is historical rather than ethnographic: it explains the Egyptian national context of a historically dense novel, but not the Siwan social vocabulary on which the plot depends (Example 5).

Vasalou’s translation, published in an American world-fiction series aimed at a general readership, has no translator’s paratext. Its main framing decision is the title. السبيليات, with its subtitle ما لم يذكر من سيرة حياة أم قاسم (“What has not been told of the life of Um Qasem”), foregrounds a place and the recovery of an untold story. The Old Woman and the River drops both and foregrounds instead the protagonist and the

ecological relationship at the novel's heart, in a form that recalls The Old Man and the Sea. This communicative adaptation to the target market makes the ecological theme more visible to English readers, at the cost of the original's local anchoring and testimonial framing.

## 6. Discussion

### 6.1 The challenges posed by the two eco-environments (RQ1)

The most demanding challenges in both novels are not isolated lexical gaps but features of the source texts' linguistic and cultural ecologies. In the linguistic dimension, they are diglossia and dialect, embedded foreign languages and conventions of speech representation (Examples 1–4). In the cultural dimension, they are the vocabulary of local social organisation, religious intertextuality and the lexicon of a specific landscape (Examples 5–12). In the communicative dimension, they are passages whose meaning depends on implicature, irony or comment on language (Examples 13–16). These are the same difficulties that Arab-region translation students report (Section 2.3). The present study shows that they also confront experienced literary translators. What distinguishes professional practice is not that the difficulties disappear, but that each translator resolves them through a consistent, if contrasting, orientation.

### 6.2 Two patterns of adaptive selection (RQ2)

Table 3 summarises the two translators' adaptive selections.

**Table 3.** Adaptive selections of the two translators

| Dimension | Davies (*Sunset Oasis*) | Vasalou (*The Old Woman and the River*) |
|---|---|---|
| Linguistic | Keeps source dialogue form; compensates for diglossia through register and narrator tags (Ex. 2); normalises dialect where no tag exists (Ex. 1) | Restructures speech into conventional English dialogue; adds subordination; normalises regional usage (Ex. 4) |
| Cultural | Transliterates social and place terms (Ex. 5, 7); coins calques (Ex. 6); archaic, biblical register for Quranic diction (Ex. 8) | Sense translation of names (Ex. 10); generalises religious roles (Ex. 9); precise ecological lexicon with hybrid botanical terms (Ex. 12) |
| Communicative | Adapts humour (Ex. 14); loses metalinguistic irony (Ex. 13) | Effective functional substitution of formulae (Ex. 16); softens the agency behind the drought (Ex. 15) |
| Paratext and framing | Historical note and glossary; key Siwan terms unexplained | No translator's paratext; retitled to foreground the protagonist and the river |
| Overall orientation | Leans on the source ecology, with partial paratextual compensation | Leans on the target ecology, except in the ecological lexicon |

Davies's orientation resembles the pattern X. Zhang (2021) found in Goldblatt's *Red Poppies*, in which foreignisation dominates and is supported by transliteration and annotation, except that Davies annotates historical context rather than local terms. Vasalou's orientation is closer to the domesticating tendency Tao and Chen (2020) identified, although here the shaping factors are a general-readership series and a translator who had judged the novel for the IPAF. Both patterns bear out the eco-translatological claim that selections respond to the whole eco-environment, not only to the source text (Hu, 2020; J. Wang, 2020): a historically dense novel published with a scholarly apparatus invites a source-leaning strategy, and a short war story aimed at a wide readership invites fluency.

The comparison also confirms two findings from earlier studies. First, paratext is not sufficient in itself: like the footnote on Igbo market days examined by Zhang and Umeanowai (2023), Davies's glossary is silent where help is most needed. Second, generalisation and misreading are distinct sources of cultural loss, as Susidamaiyanti et al. (2023) found, and both appear in Vasalou's "a religious man" (Example 9) and "tahini pastries" (Example 11).

### 6.3 Holistic adaptation and selection (RQ3)

Judged by the degree of holistic adaptation and selection (El-Masry, 2024; Q. Zhang, 2020), neither translation

achieves full eco-balance, and each is strong where the other is weak. Davies attains the higher degree of cultural adaptation: The Siwan world survives as a recognisably foreign society, and his handling of register is the most effective response to diglossia in the corpus. His losses fall where foreignising choices go unexplained (Example 5) or where the source comments on language itself (Example 13). Vasalou attains the higher degree of linguistic and communicative fluency, and her rendering of the Shatt al-Arab landscape is exact. Her losses fall on the novel's narrative voice (Example 4), on religious and material culture (Examples 9 and 11) and, most significantly, on its ecological argument (Example 15).

That last loss shows why the study distinguishes the two senses of "eco" (Section 2.4). Within Hu's model alone, Example 15 is a minor communicative modulation. Read alongside the novel's environmental content, it changes how the translation represents environmental harm and who is responsible for it. Through Alkhawaldeh's (2024) postcolonial bioregional lens, both novels depict communities whose sense of place is disrupted by external power, imperial administration in Siwa and a national army at war in the Shatt al-Arab, so choices that blur the agents of disruption weaken the ecological meaning the texts are built to convey. This supports Chen's (2024) call for attention to the ecological content of source texts, with evidence from professional prose translation.

The comparison also bears on the paradigm's applicability to Arabic–English literary translation. The concept of the translational eco-environment proved explanatory, accounting for the two orientations more fully than a binary of foreignisation and domestication because it brings paratext, publisher and translator profile into the analysis. Two adjustments, however, seem necessary. First, the linguistic dimension as usually operationalised, centred on lexis and syntax, does not capture diglossia and dialect, the source of the clearest losses in both translations; a sociolinguistic sub-dimension would make these choices visible. Second, consistent with the criticisms reviewed in Section 2.1, nothing in the analysis depended on the claim that the eco-environment "selects" translators. The framework's value lay in its second stage, the translator's situated adaptive selection, and in its evaluative criterion.

## 7. Conclusion

This study applied Hu Gengshen's eco-translatology to the English translations of Bahaa Taher's واحة الغروب (Sunset Oasis) and Ismail Fahd Ismail's الشيخ والبحر (The Old Woman and the River), analysing 31 aligned items across the linguistic, cultural and communicative dimensions. The most demanding challenges proved to be diglossia and dialect, culture-bound social, religious and landscape vocabulary, and passages whose meaning rests on implicature or comment on language (RQ1). Davies leans on the source ecology and compensates for diglossia through register, while leaving key Siwan terms unexplained; Vasalou leans on the target ecology, producing fluent English and a precise ecological lexicon, while generalising or misreading some cultural items (RQ2). Neither achieves full eco-balance: Davies attains the higher degree of cultural adaptation and Vasalou the higher degree of linguistic and communicative fluency, but a single modulation in Vasalou's translation softens the novel's central environmental argument (RQ3).

The study makes three contributions. First, it extends eco-translatology to Arabic-to-English literary translation, responding to Hu's call for internationalisation and complementing the small body of Arabic-related work (El-Masry, 2024; Younis et al., 2024). Second, it shows the value of a comparative design that treats paratext, publisher and translator profile as part of the eco-environment. Third, it proposes two refinements to the model: a sociolinguistic sub-dimension to capture diglossia and dialect, and an explicit link between Hu's metaphorical "ecology" and the literal ecology of literary texts, so that the environmental meaning of translation choices can be evaluated.

The findings also have pedagogical implications. The difficulties Arab-region students report with ecological and culturally rooted expressions (Alkhawaldeh et al., 2025) persist in published professional translations, so translator training would benefit from analysing such translations through the three dimensions, with particular attention to dialect, Quranic intertext, culture-bound social vocabulary and the ecological arguments of texts. This matters all the more now that students turn to AI tools for feedback on their English (Haider, 2026a) and professionals weigh whether to trust and adopt AI translation (Haider, 2026b): trainees need to recognise when automated output, like the human translations examined here, flattens dialect or blurs an ecological argument. Training also takes place in a changing technological eco-environment, in which cloud-

based platforms are being evaluated against traditional translation and subtitling workflows (Haider et al., 2025).

Further research could address the study's limitations (Section 4.5). Interviews with translators and editors would show how their eco-environments shaped specific decisions, corpus-based studies of complete translations could test the patterns identified here, and reception studies with English-speaking readers would allow readers' feedback, the reference value this study could not assess, to be measured directly. Extending the model to other Arabic novels shaped by desert, river and sea would further test whether eco-translatology can become a productive framework for Arabic literary translation studies.

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**Appendix A: Inventory of aligned items**

Dimensions: L = linguistic, C = cultural, Cm = communicative. Arabic page numbers refer to the editions in Table 2. The last column gives the example number in Section 5 where the item is discussed.

**Table A1.** The 31 aligned items

| No. | Arabic (p.) | English rendering | Dim. | Strategy | Ex. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| O1 | الأجواد (63) | *agwad* | C | Transliteration, no gloss; absent from glossary | 5 |
| O2 | الزجالة (11, 63) | "cultivators, zaggala" | C | In-text gloss on first use, then transliteration | 5 |
| O3 | *Interesting. Very interesting* in Latin script (11) | Plain English | L / Cm | Code-switch neutralised by the language pair | 3 |
| O4 | الهوجة (62) | "the Riots" | C | Domestication; history supplied in Translator's Note | 14 |
| O5 | الأمير الاي سعيد بك؛ الله يستره (62) | "Brigadier General Saeed Bey, God protect him" | C | Rank equivalence; literal blessing formula | 14 |
| O6 | ربنا يعطيك طول العمر / اثنين (62–63) | "God grant you long life" / "More life?" | Cm | Adaptation preserving irony | 14 |
| O7 | مزمير بدائية (63) | "primitive oboes" | C | Cultural substitution | 5 |
| O8 | السقيفة (68) | "open lean-to" | C | Literal-descriptive; possible historical echo lost | 7 |
| O9 | يرتل ما ترتيل (69) | "as though he were reciting from the Koran" | C | Explicitation | 8 |
| O10 | ما ظهر منها وما بطن / تقتلون أنفسكم بأيديكم (69) | "abominations both open and concealed" / "deliver yourselves to perdition with your own hands" | C / L | Archaic register; intertext unsignalled; shift from killing to perdition | 8 |
| O11 | تسبق رحمة ربنا غضبه … نعيق الغربان (69) | "May the mercy of God reach us before His anger … cawing of crows" | C | Literal; hadith echo and omen left implicit | 8 |
| O12 | إصباح الخير / الخير (112) | "Good morning" / "Good morning" | L | Normalisation of Siwi pronunciation and reply | 1 |
| O13 | كويس؟! (112) | "Nice?" | L | Egyptian colloquial flattened | 1 |
| O14 | كفار … مشتركة بين اللغتين (112) | "Unbelievers!" … "common to both languages" | L / Cm | Literal; metalinguistic irony lost | 13 |
| O15 | بعربيته الفصيحة: «عفو أيها السيدة» / بلهجة مصرية (166–167) | "in his classical Arabic, 'Your pardon, madame'" / "with an Egyptian accent" | L | Compensation through register and narrator tags | 2 |
| O16 | باب «القدوم»! (166) | "the Qaddouma Gate" | C | Transliterated toponym, no gloss | 7 |
| O17 | الغولة (183) | "the ghoul-woman" | C | Calque; custom explained in narration | 6 |
| W1 | خير … ظحوظ شحج … نسمي قدم (15) | "good luck … 'Good Omen'" | C / Cm | Sense translation of name; wordplay on قدم lost | 10 |
| W2 | طابش رمش مرنا (16) | "February came and went" | L | Normalisation of regional month name | 4 |
| W3 | كسرة السكر والزيت والطحينة مع (16) | "tahini pastries with oil and sugar" | C | Apparent misreading of طحينة as طحين | 11 |
| W4 | بو قاسم (17) | "Bu Qasem" | C | Retention of kunya | 10 |

| No. | Arabic (p.) | English rendering | Dim. | Strategy | Ex. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| W5 | Dialogue run into narration without tags or quotation marks (30–31) | Conventional quoted dialogue with tags | L | Restructuring; added subordination | 4 |
| W6 | شيخ ديّنٌ (30) | “a religious man” | C | Generalisation | 9 |
| W7 | مقبرة النجف الأشرفٌ (30) | “Najaf’s noble graveyard” | C | Literal, but honorific shifted from city to graveyard | 9 |
| W8 | اي أميٌ (30) | “Oh Mother” | Cm | Literal address form | 9 |
| W9 | هل أسقط في أيديهم فانعقدت ألسنتهمٌ (31) | “Was it shock that robbed them of the power of speech …?” | L / C | Sense rendering of Quranic idiom, with expansion | 16 |
| W10 | أراكم على خيرٌ / نلتقيٌ (31) | “Look after yourselves” / “I’ll be seeing you” | Cm | Functional substitution of formulae | 16 |
| W11 | الماء ال يجف دون فعل فاعلٌ (37) | “Water doesn’t dry up for no reason” | Cm | Modulation; implied agent lost | 15 |
| W12 | يباس الترع والجداولٌ / زنخ رطوبة الشطٌ (37) | “ponds and creeks had run dry” / “damp musty scent of the Shatt” | L | Ecological vocabulary retained | 15 |
| W13 | شطنا طافح بالماءٌ / القصب والبرديٌ / river names (38) | “Our Shatt is brimming with water” / “reeds and papyrus plants” / transliterated names | C | Possessive kept; toponyms transliterated without gloss | 12 |
| W14 | السدرة البمبابويةٌ / النبق (70) | “Bambawi Christ’s-thorn tree” / “nabk fruit” | C | Hybrid: botanical term plus transliteration | 12 |