

Conceptual Narratives in Translated Discourse: Ideology and social values at an intersection or crossroads

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الملخص

يعد الخطاب - استخدام اللغة كممارسة اجتماعية- أداة فعالة لإيصال الأفكار ونشر القيم في السياقات الاجتماعية. وبما أن الخطاب والفكر ("الأيدولوجية") لا ينفصلان عن بعضهما البعض، فإن السرديات التي قد يجلبها الخطاب المترجم إلى الثقافة الهدف أثناء عملية الترجمة قد تمر دون أن يلاحظها أحد، وفي كثير من الحالات، تصبح مفاهيم رائج غير قابلة للتشكيك والتساؤل. تناقش الورقة الحالية عبر منهجية التحليل النقدي المعرفي للخطاب والقائمة على المتون اللغوية المحوسبة (المدونات الحاسوبية) كيفية مساهمة سرديات الخطاب المترجم والتي تترجم التعبير النسوي الغربي "سنقل ماذر" في انتشار "نماذج اجتماعية معرفية" معينة في الثقافة الهدف، على سبيل المثال، الثقافة العربية، إلى الحد الذي قد تؤدي فيه الترجمة "الأمينة" للنص المصدر إلى نوع من الهيمنة الفكرية لنماذج فكرية ("أيدولوجيات") معينة بصرف النظر عن الغرض الأصلي للترجمة. كما كشفت النتائج كيف يمكن للترجمة الحرفية لمثل هذا التعبير الأجنبي أن تؤدي إلى اختراق النموذج الاجتماعي المعرفي للثقافة الهدف من خلال توطين رواياتها المفاهيمية في اللغة الهدف، أي الخطاب العام باللغة العربية. تختتم الدراسة الحالية بتوصية لمزيد من دمج التحليل النقدي المعرفي للخطاب في دراسة سرديات الخطاب المترجم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: السرديات، الخطاب المترجم، التحليل النقدي للخطاب، الترجمة الثقافية، المصطلحات النسوية،

الفكر.

Abstract

Discourse- language use as a social practice- (Fairclough, 1995) is an effective tool for communicating ideas and spreading values in social contexts. Given that discourse and ideology are indivisible, the narratives that a translated discourse may bring to the target culture may pass unnoticed and, in many cases, unquestionable. The current paper is a cognitive corpus-based critical discourse analysis of how the narratives of translated discourse translating the Western feminist expression ‘single mother(s)’ can contribute to the spread of particular ‘socio-cognitive models’ (van Dijk, 1998) in the target culture, e.g., the Arabic culture, to the extent that ‘a faithful’ translation of the source text may lead to a kind of an intellectual dominance of certain ideologies apart from the original purpose of translation. The findings revealed how a literal translation of such a foreign expression may lead to penetrating the socio-cognitive model of the target culture by localising its conceptual narratives in the target language i.e., Arabic public discourse. The current study concludes with a recommendation for further incorporation of cognitive critical discourse analysis in studying the narratives of translated discourse.

Keywords: *narratives; translated discourse; critical discourse analysis; cultural translation; feminist expressions; ideology.*

Introduction

In their book *Philosophy in the Flesh*, Lakoff and Johnson (1999) proposed a way forward to unpack how philosophy can be understood through tools from cognitive linguistics such as metaphors and metonymies e.g., *scouse*, *rednecks*, and *single mothers*, etc. These examples are forms of language use as a social practice (discourse) (Fairclough, 1995) that have their Extra-linguistic Cultural References (ECRs, henceforth) (Pedersen, 2005) and narratives about some communities and their members. Idiomatic expressions and figurative language have culture-bound connotations and implications; they convey certain ideologies and values shared by community members through discourse (Faiq, 2019). A single lexical choice or metaphoric phrase can be a whole discourse, as in the Qur'anic discourse ALLAH IS THE LIGHT (Charteris-Black, 2004), which encodes a whole socio-cognitive model/system of thought, narrative about behaviour, and ideology. *Ideology* refers to any organised mental system of thoughts and beliefs shared by a particular society or group (van Dijk, 1998), including their culture (Katan, 1999), which is a values-driven system that provides its narrative about the optimal roles of a society and its members.

Through this values-driven system of thought the meaning of identity, culture, what is 'right' and 'wrong' what is 'accepted' and what else to be 'rejected' is constructed and conveyed mainly through language use i.e. discourse. In this context, the way we call social actors '*freedom fighter*', '*terrorist*' and /or '*a rebel*' is "a **lexical choice** that is very much dependent on our opinion of such a person, and such an opinion, in turn, depends on our ideological position, and the attitudes we have about the group that person belongs to" (van Dijk, 2000) (emphasis is mine). Recent research on translating Western feminist terms and discourse from English into Arabic (Alsharekh, 2022; Al-Awawdeh, 2023; Kamal, 2023) has always shown that the translation of feminist discourse is problematic due to the culturally incompatible narrative it brings into Arabic. In this regard, Baker (2005, 2006/2019, 2014) has always stressed that translators play a decisive role in subscribing to or spreading foreign or harmful narratives travelling from a source into a target culture through the translated discourse they produce. A claim that Lambert (2023) has called 'the moral responsibility' of the translator imposed by the narratives they transfer from the source language into the target language. Given that discourse and ideology are indivisible, the narratives a translated discourse may bring to the target culture may pass unnoticed and, in many cases, unquestionable. The current paper, based on corpus-based evidence, argues that the translated media discourse translating the feminist expression '*single mother(s)*' exercises a socio-cultural activity through which it can spread foreign narratives and re-constructions/ penetration of the target culture's public discourse through translation.

Previous studies

Narratives in discourse

Narratives in discourse can contribute to shaping our philosophy of life, expectations, and ways of thinking. Baker (2006/2019) citing Somers and Gibson (1994) listed three types of narratives: *ontological*, *public*, and *conceptual* narratives. While the first type i.e. *ontological narratives* are the ones we tell ourselves about reality, the world, and our roles in it, *public narratives* are stories narrated and circulated by public institutions and bodies about the world and our roles in it. She added that *conceptual narratives* could be "more broadly defined as the stories and explanations that scholars in any field elaborate for themselves and others about their object of inquiry" (p. 15).

My disagreement with this type of classification is that it neglects the fact that narratives are not power-free. The power of a hierarchal socio-political organisation within a society, tribe, or village can determine which *ontological narratives* may become a ‘reality’ and which of them is to be shared about individuals and their identities in a way that makes a particular narrative seem both *public* and *ontological* at the same time. This observation was also noticed in Baraldi, et al. (2009, p. 30) work on narratives where he stated that “the distinction between ontological and public narratives seems to be difficult to be asserted”. Therefore, the current research argues that *public narratives* have a dialectal relationship with the so-called *ontological narratives* where each one contributes towards shaping the other to the extent that they may seem the same in many cases.

On the other hand, the claim that conceptual narratives are the ones researchers adopt to represent reality- under investigation- is limited. Instead, language itself is conceptual (Lakoff and Johanson, 1980) and conceptualisation is based on language use i.e. discourse which, in turn, is a vehicle that is not always ideology-free (van Leeuwen, 2008). Baraldi et al. (2009, pp 30-31) stated that “conceptual narratives may be observed as another specific kind of public narratives concerning the scientific system and its internal differentiation”, yet, they continued that “[m]oreover conceptual narratives can be translated into social representations ... which are produced in daily life and in common discourses e.g. debates about environmental problems, or economic crises”. In this vein, the term *conceptual narratives* will be used in this paper, to specify ways in which language is being used to (re)construct a particular worldview of individuals and their lives that is different from the norms of a given society i.e. the so-called *ontological narratives* - through translation. The specific pursuit of this paper is to unravel how conceptual narratives travel through translating culture-bound terms that belong to a Western school of thought (mainly feminism) into Arabic culture (primarily that of Muslims). The aim is to shed light on how the translated discourse translating the feminist expression ‘*single mothers*’ may transfer and spread a different ideology (socio-cognitive model) through which individuals can perceive new narratives about their – ‘wanted-to-be’ (Otaif, 2019) – reality, who they are and their optimal roles in society. However, due to the limitations of this paper, and for clarity of discussion, the analysis will be restricted to the translation of this expression and its derivations to see how it was transferred through translation into Arabic, including its public discourse.

Feminist discourse and the roles of women before feminism

And divorced women remain in waiting for three periods, and it is not lawful for them to conceal what Allah has created in their wombs if they believe in Allah and the Last Day. And their husbands have more right to take them back in this [period] if they want reconciliation. And due to the wives is similar to what is expected of them, according to what is reasonable. But the men have a degree over them [in responsibility and authority]. And Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise. (Holy Qur’an, 2024, 2: 228).

According to the Islamic scripture above, women who separate (separated) from their husbands are called divorced women. In this vein, marriage has been the only legal form of sexual relationship between men and women, especially in religious societies such as Muslims and Christians. However, after the Second World War, in the 1960s, liberal feminism spread competing and sometimes targeting all labels of religiously derived modes of relationship to ‘free’ women. Therefore, it replaced the words ‘*marriage*’ with *partnership*, *husband and wife* with *partner*, and *divorced* and *widowed* women (with children) with *single mothers*, see Diduck & O’Donovan (2007) and Bullock (2007).

In the United States, Martha Albertson Fineman – who is an American lawyer and feminist activist- through her Feminism and Legal Theory Project since the early 1980s supported a legal shift in public discourse by being an advocate of how a feminist perspective of women's role in society should be conveyed through language in opposition to the patriarchal discourse of family and ‘subordination’ to the ‘fathers’. In this context, Olsen (1995, p. 557), who is a feminist American professor of law at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), discusses how Fineman expressed her views on this matter:

The representation of single motherhood as pathological to patriarchal ideology which defines mother and child by their relationship to fathers. Single mothers are considered deviant because they reject the primacy of sexual affiliation as the basic organizing concept of the family. Professor Fineman concludes that the condemnation of single mothers in current poverty reform discourse is primarily a reflection of patriarchy. (Olsen ,1995, p. 557).

Fineman, through her Feminism and Legal Theory Project, supported a legal shift in public discourse by advocating how their feminist perspective on women's roles in society is conveyed through language use i.e. discourse (ibid). She stated that discourse is not a language or text but deeper than this; it is about a system of thought and ideology [a conceptual narrative] through which individuals perceive their optimal roles in society.

Translating feminist discourse into Arabic

The “viability of a translation is established by its relationship to the cultural and social conditions under which it is produced and read” (Venuti, 1995/2008, p. 14). In other words, translation is a socio-culturally bound practice, and its meaning and quality can be judged by considering the culture of both the source and target texts. Venuti (1995/2008) adds that this “relationship points to the violence that resides in the very purpose and activity of translation: the reconstitution of the foreign text in accordance with values, beliefs, and representations that pre-exist it in the translating language and culture, always configured in hierarchies of dominance and marginality, always determining the production, circulation, and reception of texts” (p. 15).

In this vein, recent research on translating feminist discourse has always shown that the translation of feminist discourse into Arabic is problematic because of the foreign narratives it carries into the target culture (see Alsharekh 2022; Al-Awawdeh, 2023 and Kamal, 2023). Alsharekh (2022) stated that engaging “in the act of translation in a linguistic and cultural vacuum means that the translator becomes an active agent in developing and shaping concepts associated with Feminism, while simultaneously conveying the social and moral values that are associated with the quest for female empowerment in the West”. Accusing the Arabic culture of having a ‘linguistic and cultural vacuum’ with regard to women’s rights as given in Alsharekh’s (2022) words above, gives us an example of how translation can be ‘violent’ (Venuti, 1995/2008), ‘coercive’ and ‘imperialistic’ (Niranjana, 1992) socio-cultural practice that can produce invading conceptual narratives through translated discourse. In this regard, Alsharekh (2022) continues her feminist agenda through translation saying:

Examining the translated choices in the Arabic language and in India’s regional languages gives us a vivid example of this protracted wrangling between translating the social act and actually engaging in social action. Feminism is deeply rooted in social service and social justice, and therefore contains an implicit invitation to overthrow existing social systems that are oppressive to women as a weaker social group. The universal application of the gender issue frames the national in the international, the personal in the political, thereby making the implicit call for action, an explicit one. Feminism’s disruptive properties in traditional Indian and Arab societies caught up in

preserving “family values” that centre on inherited sexual hierarchies and gender roles can be seen in its challenging of attitudes, behaviours, laws, policies and institutional frameworks that seek to keep women occupied within a rigidly controlled domestic space. In the shift from source to translated language feminism’s focus on inclusion, fairness and equal opportunity and its challenges to notions of manhood, gender, language and family are subjected to critical analyses by the interpreter. (Alsharekh 2022, pp 3-4)

Al-Awawdeh (2023), on the other hand, used various databases such as ProQuest and Google Scholar to explore Arab(eastern) feminist studies published between 2000 and 2021. This study aimed to explore the translation strategies used by feminist translators to convey their feminist messages. He concluded that ‘the translator’s interventions and strategies reshape the translations so that the force of the feminist message is amplified in some places and mitigated in others’ (p.1344), as evident in the use of various Arabic translations for the term *gender* in these studies. Al-Awawdeh (2023) added that although the feminist theory was born in the West, it is now undergoing an appropriation in the Arab world “despite the severe challenges coming from religion, society, and policymakers” (p.1351). In this vein, Kamal (2023, p. 7) explains that a “feminist translation process does not only relocate feminist theory into Arabic language and discourse” but “also produces feminist theory and knowledge in Arabic” language and discourse.

Critical discourse analysis and translating ‘culture-bound’ terms

Previous and recent research on feminism and translation has always shown that translation is used as a socio-cultural practice of (re)constituting thought, social values, and identities in a way that dominates the existing ones, including religion and family values, to make them serve the Western feminist narrative through translated discourse (see Alsharekh, 2022; Al-Awawdeh 2023). In this vein, Al-Hejin (2012), in a corpus-based critical discourse analysis of the translated news stories, found that the narrative of the translated discourse given to the English readers of the BBC website about Saudi Muslim women substantially differs from the source Arabic discourse given by the interviewees (Saudi girls), where their discourse about wearing a hijab to please God and obey their religion was transformed into the domain of obeying and following cultural traditions in the target language i.e. the translated discourse. He concluded that the translated discourse re-constructed the narrative through a translation that perpetuates the image of Muslim women as being ‘oppressed’ and ‘submissive’ and called forward to integrating translation studies with critical discourse analysis to study translated discourse.

Therefore, there is no wonder that translation was described as a ‘transformative’ (Venuti, 2019) practice that “wields enormous power in the construction of identities” (Venuti, 1995/2008, p. 14) and cultures, see also Lambert (2023) and Freeth and Treviño (2024). While the translation of Western feminist expressions such as *gender studies*, *single mothers*, etc., is viewed in translation studies within the domain of translating ‘culture-bound terms’, see Newmark (1988), critical discourse analysis posits translation within its wider context as a socio-cultural practice that is largely influenced by the translator agenda, ideology and socio-political perspectives, see Al-Hejin (2012), Faiq (2019) and Elewa (2019).

Venuti (1995/2008) viewed translation as a process of ‘forcible replacement’ of linguistic and cultural differences between the source and target language. This replacement can either 1) lead to transferring the source cultural meaning partly or entirely to fit the reader’s beliefs and ideology (i.e., domestication) or 2) foreignises the source text or term in a way that “signifies the differences of the foreign text, yet only by disrupting the cultural codes that

prevail in the translating language” (i.e., foreignisation) (Venuti, 1995/2008, p. 15). Pedersen (2005) classified these strategies as either a 1) source language (SL)-oriented translation (foreignisation) or a 2) target language (TL)-oriented translation (domestication). Although researchers in translation studies are trying to overcome the problem of cultural inequivalence and incompatibility through these strategies, discourse-oriented translation researchers such as Munday and Zhang (2017), Kang (2017), and Wendland (2019) see that these strategies are not sufficient to deal with some texts and cultures, for example, see Matsushita (2019) on translating Western news from English into Japanese.

Kang (2019), for example, states that translation “assessment that disregards the complex negotiation of meaning and the intricate selection of target expressions, both of which entail a translator’s reflection on cultural differences, issues of power and language hierarchies, and distinct reading positions, **fails to consider critical points in the translation process**” (p.146) (emphasis is mine). Munday and Zhang (2017, p. 9), on the other hand, acknowledge that “the potential performance of various discourses¹ through different interventions and meaning-making selections [such as translation between two languages and cultures], is central to purposeful communication, the exercise of power and the construction of identity”. This explains how other extralinguistic and cultural factors are important to the translation process beyond the simplistic binary dichotomy of *foreignising* (SL-oriented) versus *domestication* (TL-oriented) strategies. In this regard, Wendland (2019) disagrees with Venuti (1995/2008) that the foreignisation of culture-bound terms will be sufficient to mitigate or avoid the dominance of the source culture saying:

A rather different notion of what ‘translation’ is, or should be, arises from Lawrence Venuti’s sociopolitical agenda under the theme ‘domestication and foreignisation’. For Venuti, the problem of overly ‘fluent’ translations (into English) is due to a policy of gratuitous domesticating, which occasions ‘an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to [Anglo-American] target-language cultural values’ by means of an ‘invisible style in order to minimize the foreignness of the TT’ (Munday 2008: 144). A ‘foreignising’ approach, on the other hand, which is Venuti’s ideal, adopts the deliberate strategy of ‘resistancy’, that is, ‘a non-fluent or estranging translation style designed to make visible the presence of the translator by highlighting the identity of the ST and protecting it from the ideological dominance of the target culture’ (145). However, one might seriously question whether a ‘foreignised’ version is able to accomplish all that Venuti hopes for it, especially in a non-Western setting. A far more likely outcome is that the translator would simply be judged to be technically poor or even incompetent due to the grossly ‘foreign sounding’ text that she or he has put forward for publication. (Wendland, 2019, p.14)

It is clear from the discussion above that a discourse analysis-oriented view of translation goes beyond the simple dichotomy of foreignisation (SL-oriented) versus domestication/localization (TL-oriented) of translation strategies, see also Freeth and Treviño (2024). Therefore, the current research will examine – through a critical corpus-based analysis – how the feminist expression ‘*single mother(s)*’ travelled through translation from the Western English discourse into Arabic public and media discourse, trying to understand whether this

¹ They used the term discourse to denote both context and other extralinguistic factors including culture.

has resulted in its feminist conceptual narrative about life and our roles in it being adopted or rejected in the discourse of the target culture i.e. Arabic. The paper will also shed light on what translation strategies were used to (re)construct the conceptual narratives of the feminist expression '*single mother(s)*' in Arabic.

The aim is to answer the following research questions:

- Q.1. Through which translations and translation strategies is the narrative of the Western feminist expression '*single mother(s)*' re-constructed in Arabic?
- Q.2. Does the translated discourse impose a source-culture or target-culture narrative of reality on readers of the target language?
- Q.3. What implications does the current analysis provide for future research?

Methodology

Research design and methodology

The current paper is a cognitive corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis (Koller, 2004, 2006; Charteris-Black, 2004, 2019) where samples of translated discourse are analysed from public discourse to answer the research questions given above. The analytical approach uses tools from cognitive linguistics, corpus linguistics, and translation studies in a critical analysis of public discourse. A critical analyst should first identify samples for the analysis (identification stage), then interpret them (interpretation stage), and lastly explain how the found translations are used as a socio-cultural practice in public-discourse domains (explanation stage) (Fairclough, 1995).

Data collection

One of the most difficult tasks in CDA is to identify relevant data for analysis (Fairclough, 1995). Throughout the last decade, there has been an increase in the use of feminist terms and expressions in Arabic media and public discourse. Most of these terms are not originally Arabic but have been brought through translated news and public discourse travelling from English countries into Arabic. Therefore, online platforms that use translated discourse (i.e. public discourse translating from English into Arabic) were searched to examine how these terms were translated into Arabic. After consulting and searching many sources, parallel bilingual corpora were found to be a good source for the scope of this research for two reasons: 1) they show the source and target text, and 2) they retrieve a large number of translations through which more quantitative insights about the translation of the expression '*single mother(s)*' in public discourse can be reached. A parallel bilingual corpus is an electronic collection of source language (SL) and target language (TL) texts that can be viewed online or through corpus analysis software, in which SL texts are viewed next to their TL translations. Parallel corpora are very informative to translation studies and are "particularly useful when it comes to revealing cross-linguistic equivalences" (Malamatidou, 2017, p.10). They can provide insights into the different ways in which the expression '*single mother(s)*' was translated into Arabic.

First, in the identification stage, public discourse publishing in Arabic was noticed to use expressions such as *single mum* and *single mothers*. These expressions were keyed into a large English-Arabic parallel corpus to check how they were translated into Arabic in public discourse. Then they were filtered and interpreted according to how they were translated as

given in the identified sample. Finally, the identified translations were explained within a wider perspective of language use as a socio-cultural practice.

Baker (2010, 2023) pointed out that public discourse which is published and retrievable, such as news discourse, is a good source for corpus-based researchers to start from, however, with the right acknowledgements of its sources. In this vein, the study’s corpora came from various public platforms; some of them were bilingual parallel corpora, while others were monolingual ones (Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1
The Parallel Bilingual Corpora Used

Corpora	Website	Size and type
UN: available on Sketch-engine	https://app.sketchengine.eu/	A United Nations Parallel Corpus (UNPC) – Arabic which is retrievable along with other multilingual parallel corpora available on Sketch Engine. It includes a large parallel corpus of translated United Nations news discourse among them are English – Arabic discourse which consists of 545549235 tokens/ words.
Reverso	https://www.reverso.net/	An AI-powered parallel corpus that deals mainly with translated discourse. It is also used as a translation and dictionary tool by Arab translators. The size of the corpus is unknown.

Table 2
The Monolingual Corpora Used

Corpora	Website	Size and type
Google	Google.com and https://books.google.com/	A billion words corpora of different books and news published in different languages among them are Arabic and English.
X (formerly Twitter) platform.	https://x.com/home	A billion words multimodal corpora of different books published in different languages among them are Arabic and English.

Data analysis procedures

First, the study’s parallel corpora were searched to see how the expression ‘*single mothers*’ has ‘travelled’ (Matsushita, 2019; Kamal, 2023) from English into Arabic discourse through translation. Second, the monolingual corpora listed in Table 2 were searched to check for instances of the most frequent Arabic translations found for the expression ‘*single mothers*’ and how they spread in different genres of Arabic public discourse (including novels, human development books, and media discourse).

Pedersen’s (2005) classification of the main strategies used in translating culture-bound terms was adopted. Following Venuti (1995/2008), Pedersen (2005) classified these strategies as 1) *source language (SL)-oriented translation*, 2) *target language (TL)-oriented translation*, and 3) *omission*. Since language is a vehicle of culture through which culture is constructed in public discourse and re-constructed through translated discourse (see Katan, 1999; Shamma, 2009; Alwazna, 2014; and Scammell, 2018), the focus of the analysis was to see whether the used translations were 1) *source-culture-oriented* ones through which the source culture narrative is imposed on the target readers resulting in ‘cultural narcissism and imperialism’ in Venuti’s words (1995/2008) or could it be 2) *target culture-oriented translations* that re-

construct the narrative according to the target culture narratives and cultural norms, including religious classification of marriage and divorce.

Then the cognitive mechanisms that underlie the Arabic translations used were investigated to explain how their conceptual narratives act as socio-cultural practice(s) in the target culture. Since narratives are about the socio-cultural context of being i.e., who we are and how we should live (see Baraldi et al., 2009), the focus of the analysis was to discuss corpus-based evidence more than looking for decontextualised numbers of occurrences. Nevertheless, quantitative insights were always provided at the identification stage to guide the analysis towards the most frequent translations found in the corpora. In the identification stage, the study's parallel corpora were searched first to identify how the phrase '*single mother(s)*' was translated into Arabic discourse. After identifying the Arabic translations found, the nature of their translation procedures/strategies was interpreted according to the source and target languages and their cultures before the analysis finally moved to explain how different translations act as socio-cultural practices in Arabic public discourse. The spread of these translations in the target culture was then examined by searching the study's monolingual platforms/ corpora of Arabic public discourse (given earlier in Table 2).

Findings and discussion

The phrase '*single mother(s)*' was found to appear in various lexical forms (Table 3).

Table 3

Uses of Single Mum/ Mother in Each Corpus.*

Form	UN	Reverso
Single mum	10	20
Single mums	0	0
Single mother	111	410
Single mothers	1072	862
Size of each corpus in words/ tokens	95960	60684

First, the expression '*single mother(s)*' was found to be used in its source discourse, i.e. English, mostly in the plural form i.e. *single mothers* more than the singular form. This suggests that the expression is referring to/talking about a wide but coherent group called *single mothers*. The expression applies an *indefinite aggregation* (van Leeuwen, 2008) to facilitate a communicative purpose in discourse which is that of exaggerating or anonymising the number of the talked-about groups (ibid).

The retrieval of these forms, as found in the research parallel corpora (see Table 3 above), reveals that the concept is widely used in translated discourse from English into Arabic. When exploring the concordance lines in each platform, various translations were found. These translations represent various categories of women which are grouped under the umbrella of being currently unmarried women who have babies to care and provide for. The found translations were as follows (see Table 4).

Table 4*The Translations Found in Each Parallel Corpus.*

No.	Arabic Translation	Its Meaning in English	UN	Reverso	Strategy
1	عزباء / عازبة / عزبة	Single woman	47	323	Source-culture oriented
2	عازبات / عزباوات / عزبات	Single women	334	374	Source-culture oriented
3	وحيدة	Alone woman	86	206	Source-culture oriented
4	وحيدات	Alone women	323	212	Source-culture oriented
5	تعول	Provides for the family	13	10	Target-culture oriented
6	المعيلات	Provides for the family	14	12	Target-culture oriented
7	دون / بلا زوج	Without a husband	0	7	Target-culture oriented
8	دون / بلا أزواج	Without husbands	7	3	Target-culture oriented
9	غير متزوج*	Unmarried	22	17	Target-culture oriented
10	أرملة	Widow	8	12	Target-culture oriented
11	أرامل	Widows	29	26	Target-culture oriented
12	مطلقة	Divorced woman	4	12	Target-culture oriented
13	مطلقات	Divorced women	31	21	Target-culture oriented
14	مفصلة	Separated woman	1	1	Target-culture oriented
15	موضع هجران/ مهجورة	Abandoned woman	1	1	Target-culture oriented
16	حامل/ حوامل	Pregnant	59	5	Target-culture oriented
17	مُرضعة/ مُرضعات	Breastfeeding	2	32	Target-culture oriented

The quantitative data given above shows how the source-culture-oriented translations overwhelmingly outnumber the target-culture-oriented (translations). In the TC-oriented translations, a number of ‘cognitive mechanisms’ (Otaif, 2019) were used as attempts to ‘profile’ (van Leeuwen, 2008) these women through their 1) *financial responsibility of providing for their kids* (No. 5 and 6 in Table 4 above), 2) *husband(s)* (No. 7 and 8), 3) *their marital status* (No. 9 - 15) and lastly 4) through their *biological and physical status* (No. 16 and 17).

In cognitive critical discourse analysis terms, the translator who employed the translations (5-17) has attempted to adhere to the target culture’s (Arabic) socio-cognitive models through several cognitive mechanisms (see Otaif, 2019) that include conceptual metonymies that work based on the *part-whole relationship* where the PART (action/ biological and physical attributes/ marital status) is used to represent the WHOLE IDENTITY/ GROUP of these individual women. Unlike the Western feminist expression ‘*single mothers*’, this cognitive mechanism evokes an image of a coherent group of social actors that are compatible and acceptable in the target culture through a translation that adheres to the target culture socio-cognitive model e.g. *breastfeeding mothers*.

On the other hand, the literal translation of the expression ‘*single mother(s)*’ (No. 1-4, in Table 4 above) (see Newmark, 1988), underlies the cognitive mechanism of indefinite aggregation where the expression is vague and used to construct an image of one large coherent ‘active group with similar conditions and demands’ (see Olsen, 1995). The strategy of literal translation (Newmark, 1988) has re-constructed, in Arabic, the narrative of the Western feminist expression ‘*single mother(s)*’. The findings (in Table 4) also suggest that the source-culture term, including its Extra-linguistic Cultural References (ECRs) (Pedersen 2005), has spread overwhelmingly in the target culture through the translated discourse. The most frequent translation found was a literal translation strategy (1-4, Table 4) that did not only override the

available ‘cultural equivalents’ (Newmark, 1988) but also transferred the source discourse fallacies through the literal translation of the expression/cloaque *single mother(s)* into Arabic.

As seen in the random sample taken from the UN corpus, the expression ‘*single mother(s)*’ - in Concordance Line (Con. L., henceforth) 60 (in Figure 1) below- was translated into “*الأمهات العزباوات*” which is the most frequent source-culture oriented translation given in Table 4 (No.2) above.

Figure 1

The UN Parallel Corpus: Lines 60-63

60	<s> Rising infertility rates in some countries , the widespread use of contraceptives , legalization of abortion , and changing mores which now enable single mothers to keep their children are factors which have drastically reduced the number of children who would otherwise be available for adoption locally . </s>	<s> و ارتفاع معدل العقم في ب عض البلدان , و انتشار استعمال و سائط منع الحمل , و اباحة الإجهاض و تغير العادات و التقاليد التي باتت تسمح الآن للأمهات العزباوات بالاحتفاظ ب اطفال هن , كل ها عوامل ادت الى انخفاض عدد الأطفال المتوفرين للتبني محليا انخفاضا جذريا . </s>
61	<s> (f) Programmes and initiatives should be established to address the issue of stigmatization of single mothers and to empower them to keep their children , should they so desire ; </s>	<s> (و) ينبغي وضع برامج و اتخاذ مبادرات ل معالجة مسألة و صم الأمهات غير المتزوجات و تمكين هن من الاحتفاظ ب اطفال هن اذا رغب ن في ذلك ; </s>
62	<s> Discriminatory provisions regarding unmarried women , as well as single mothers , persist in social security provisions and in land inheritance rights under the agrarian reform law . </s>	<s> و لا تزال الأحكام التمييزية المتعلقة ب المرأة غير المتزوجة و الأم غير المتزوجة قائمة في احكام الضمان الاجتماعي و فيما يتعلق ب حقوق و رائة الأرض في اطار قانون الإصلاح الزراعي . </s>
63	<s> Women 's overall high unemployment rate , the particularly insecure situation of domestic workers and of single mothers are also of concern to the Committee . </s>	<s> كما كان ارتفاع معدل ب طالة المرأة العام و حالة عدم الأمن البالغة التي تعانيها العاملات في المنازل والأمهات غير المتزوجات من مصادر قلق اللجنة . </s>

Con. Ls 61 and 63 used the translation of *unmarried mothers* “*الأمهات غير المتزوجات*” where the word *single* in the expression ‘*single mothers*’ was substituted with a cultural equivalent (Newmark, 1988) that adheres to the target culture’s (Arabic and Muslims’) socio-cognitive model. A similar strategy was used in Con. L. 62, however, the form was changed from the plural *single mothers* into the singular form “*المرأة غير المتزوجة*” which means an *unmarried mother*.

On the other hand, a random sample was taken from the Reverso parallel corpus (Figure, 2).

Figure 2

The Reverso Parallel Corpus: Lines 85-89

85	Of course not all single mothers had the same experience.	لكن الأمهات الحوامل لا يعيشن كلهن التجارب نفسها.
86	I've seen single mothers work three jobs just to be able to pay rent.	رأيتُ أمهات يعملن في ثلاثة وظائف فقط ليكنّ قدرات على دفع الأجر.
87	For single mothers , this is particularly difficult.	بالنسبة للأمهات المرضعات , هذا أمر خطير بشكل خاص.
88	I can't even imagine what single mothers go through.	تم اني لست ادري ما معنى الامهات العازبات .
89	Income insecurity is one of the most pervasive issues affecting poor or single mothers .	ويشكل عدم ضمان الدخل أحد المسائل الأكثر شيوعا التي تؤثر على الأمهات الفقيرات أو العازبات .

As seen in Figure 2, the expression ‘*single mother(s)*’ was translated into “الأمهات الحوامل” i.e. *pregnant mothers* to overcome the difference and incompatibility in the socio-cultural perspective between the two cultures (Con. L. 85). The substitution here was made to make the translated text acceptable to the readers i.e. in coherence with the target culture norms. In Con. L. 86 the expression ‘*single mother*’ was translated into Arabic as “أمهات” *mothers* where the word *single* was deleted/ omitted from the Arabic text. The omission (Pedersen 2005) strategy was used here to overcome the cultural incompatibility caused by the word *single* in the expression ‘*single mothers*’. Nevertheless, although the omission strategy is difficult to spot without qualitative browsing of the parallel concordance lines (as shown above), it has proven to be important for the translation of such culturally incompatible terms. In this vein, while Pedersen (2005) classifies this strategy as neither an SL-oriented nor a TL-oriented strategy, the findings here suggest that it should be classified as a TC-oriented translation for the reason that omission was committed here to avoid penetrating the socio-cognitive model of the target receiver by localising foreign and culturally incompatible concepts in the TC discourse.

On the other hand, in Con. L. 87, the word *single* was substituted with the word *breast-feeding* to produce the Arabic translation “الأمهات المرضعات” *breast-feeding mothers*. Lastly, in Con. L.s 88 and 89 the expression was translated through literal translation into “الأمهات العازبات” which means *single mothers* (see translation number 2 given in Table 4 above); which as discussed earlier was the most used translation in the research corpora (see 1-4 in Table 4). While some may say that it is ‘a faithful’ literal translation of the source text (see Nord, 2005), the findings of this paper oppose this limited view of translation; translation between two languages is an act of intercultural communication, and the role of “journalist-translator” should be that of an “inter-cultural communicator” (Scammell, 2018, p.35). This applies to translators translating such culturally incompatible terms into Arabic public discourse, while some were cautious about the foreign narrative that the SL contained, as in Con. Ls. 87 (Figure 2), the majority adopted a literal ‘faithful’ translation of the source text that brought about the spread of a culturally alien narrative. Al-Awawdeh (2023) found that translators use different strategies when translating feminist discourse into Arabic while some use strategies to mitigate the feminist message others use translation strategies that intensify the feminist message. Therefore, Baker (2006/2019) and Kang (2019) have always stressed the importance of the translator’s critical role in selecting translations that show his/her critical assessment of the source-discourse narratives.

The most pervasive and recurrent strategy used to translate the expression ‘*single mothers*’ into Arabic in this research (1-4, Table 4) is thought to have contributed to the spread of the source culture feminist perspective in Arabic public discourse. In this regard, the monolingual corpora given in Table 2 above were searched to see how this expression and its narrative have spread in the target culture and become part of the ‘recent’ Arabic discourse about women.

The first example came from Arabian media news outlets.

Table 5

Example from Arabic Media Discourse

The Example	Date and source
خمسة آلاف "أم عزباء" في الدار البيضاء المغربية بأعمار تبدأ من 14	العربية نت Alashraf, H. (2008) www.alarabiya.net
Translation of the Arabic title: <i>Five thousand “single mothers” in Casablanca, Morocco, with ages starting from 14.</i>	Retrieved from: https://www.google.com/

In this example, the expression became part of the formal news language (Arabic) used to describe the situation of young and teen girls between 14-26 who have babies! These different girls were described using the ‘literal translation’ “أم عزباء” (Table 5) which is a translation procedure that led to the replacement of the national socio-cultural narrative about our Arabian (mainly Muslim) communities. Instead, our public discourse began to talk about local problems and social issues through a Western feminist discourse brought from a foreign culture with incompatible values and ideology. Van Leeuwen (2008) emphasised that including some representations at the expense of excluding others is a socio-cultural practice that is essential to how social actors are represented in public discourse.

Secondly, on another public platform, which is that of X, a young woman recently posted a tweet of herself and her daughter along with the following phrase in Arabic:

Table 6
Examples from Social Media Platforms

The Example	Date and Source
<p data-bbox="359 828 790 862">"كل سنة وأنا أفضل أم عزباء لأجمل فتاة في الدنيا"</p> 	<p data-bbox="1093 828 1236 862">X platform:</p> <p data-bbox="973 862 1348 929">*The link to the source was removed for ethical consideration.</p> <p data-bbox="965 952 1356 985">Retrieved from: https://x.com/home</p>

Translation of the Arabic phrase:

Every year, I am the best single mother of the most beautiful girl in the world.

Thirdly, in a human development book that targets Arabic women, the author used the expression ‘single mother’ to refer to the widowed woman and the mother of the Muslim scholar Imam Muhamed ibn Idris Alshafea who lived between 767-820 CE (150 AH-204 AH), see Table 7 below.

Table 7*Example From Human Development Books*

The Example	Date and Source
<p>الأم العزباء: وفي مشاهد صناعة الرجال، سأسلط أضواء كاميرا التصوير على المرأة وحدها، سألهمك بتجربة الأم العزباء التي أنتجت للمجتمع مبدعاً اسمه محمد بن إدريس، الشهير بالشافعي.</p>	<p>Al-Awadi, Hisham (2010). Be Different (A Human Development Book written in Arabic). Retrieved from: https://books.google.com/</p>
<p>Translation of the Arabic text: <i>A Single mother: In the scenes of men's industry, I will zoom in the camera on the woman alone,...I will inspire you with the experience of the single mother who produced for society an innovator named Muhammad bin Idris, known as Al-Shafi'i.</i></p>	

This incorrect use of the expression 'single mother' (Table 7) to refer to the widowed woman and the mother of the Muslim scholar Imam Muhamed ibn Idris Alshafea can be seen as an offensive insult in the target culture of such an honourable figure in Islamic history. The narrative that was conveyed through the literal translation of the expression 'single mothers' reminds us of Kang's (2019) emphasis, mentioned earlier, that translation "assessment that disregards the complex negotiation of meaning and the intricate selection of target expressions, both of which entail a translator's reflection on cultural differences, issues of power and language hierarchies, and distinct reading positions, fails to consider critical points in the translation process" (p.146).

Fourth, in an Arabian novel, the author, who is a girl, uses the expression 'single mother' in a dialogue that also reflects the incompatible perspective and contrary conceptual ('ontological') narratives (Baraldi et al., 2009) that this expression has brought to the target culture.

Table 8*Example From Arabic Novels*

The Example	Date and Source
<p>قبل أن تدفع ثمن الثياب التي انتقته، أعادتها جميعا واستبدلت بألوانها ألوانا أكثر حيادية مثل الأبيض والأسود والبيج، سألتها: لماذا؟ قالت: لأنني أم تعيش وحدها وتسكن في شقة إيجار. لا أريد أن أكون لاقنة بين جيراني حفاظا على أولادي وسمعتي..... ضحكت وهي تحكي عندما سألتها أمهات في أحد اجتماعات المدرسة عن زوجها، فردت عليهن: لا، أنا «أم عزباء» (سنجل مانر). فشبه بعضهن، وسألتهن إحداهن على انفراد: - تقصدي إنك خلقتي من غير جواز؟ وهكذا تعلمت صديقتي أن تقول بوضوح: - أنا مطلقة. أنظر إلى ثيابي في الخزانة، المعاطف الثقيلة كلها هدايا منه وجودها في حوزتي يؤلمني....</p>	<p>Sami (2021) (a novel written in Arabic) Retrieved from: https://books.google.com/</p>
<p>Translation of the Arabic text: <i>Before paying for the clothes she had selected, she returned them all and replaced them with more neutral colours such as black and white. And the beige, I asked her: Why? She said: Because I am a mother who lives alone in a rented apartment. I don't want to be eye-catching among my neighbours to protect my children and my reputation..... She laughed as she talked about when mothers asked her at a school meeting about her husband, and she replied to them: No, I am a 'single mother'. Some of them gasped, and one of them asked her in private: Do you mean that you delivered a baby without getting married? Thus, my friend learned since then to say clearly: - I am divorced. I look at my clothes in the closet, the heavy coats are all gifts from him and it hurts me to have them in my possession.....</i></p>	

As we have seen, Arabian Muslim women have started to view and re-construct their reality and identity by using this foreign expression that is culturally and religiously incompatible with their own (Tables 6 and 8). Munday and Zhang (2017) stressed that meaning-making through translation between two languages is central to meaningful communication, power dominance, and the construction of identity.

To answer how problematic is importing such a foreign narrative? Reham Alrashidi, a Kuwaiti female trainer in femininity posted on the X social media platform on April 14, 2024, the following:

“A woman who, as soon as she ‘breaks up’/ separates without giving the father of her kids an opportunity to participate [in growing up their kids], calls herself *Single mother*, [by doing so], she deprives her children of the sense of belonging and support from the father’s masculine energy. She also deprives herself of the bliss of her feminine energy by [not] getting help; she does all this just to join the heroic ‘*single mother trend*’. 🚫 Note, this tweet is applicable if the father is present and willing to cooperate, however in the event of his death or intentional absence, she is then a Hero mother”. (Alrashidi, 2024)

See the original Arabic tweet in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3

A Commentary on the Single Mother Narrative (Alrashidi, 2024)



The findings discussed above have shown that translation is not merely an act of ‘literal faithful’ transfer of meaning but a socio-cultural practice that may lead to bringing an alternative conceptual and ontological narrative to the target culture through which the individual reconstructs the way they talk and present themselves in public discourse. The problem of adopting such a foreign narrative is that the user of this expression will inherit its Extralinguistic Cultural References (ECRs) which are an inadvisable part of its public discourse. Talking about or suggesting the financial misery, and life difficulties for ‘*single mothers*’ was a recurrent scene that we have seen in all the Arabic discourse that adopted the expression regardless of its genre (News discourse in Table 5, Human development books in Table 7, social media platforms Table 6 and Figure 3 and lastly Arabic novels in Table 8). This was also noticed in the writings of Finman, the American professor of Law given in Olsen (1995). Therefore, adopting such a foreign term in Arabic public discourse will bring with it

not only its Extralinguistic Cultural References (ECRs) but also its ontological and conceptual narratives (Baraladi et al., 2009). The dominant use of this literal translation can be attributed to either 1) a feminist agenda or 2) the limited view of seeing translation as a process of conveying the source meaning ‘literally and faithfully’ (see Nord, 2005) between two languages, or perhaps to both. If it is the latter then a ‘faithful translation’ may act in similar contexts as a practice of cultural ‘transformation’ (Venuti, 2019) due to ignoring and excluding (van Leeuwen, 2008) the local and national socio-cognitive model and values of the target community. For example, in Muslim communities, a father is obliged by law to provide for his divorced woman and his kids a house and food which is a well-known thing in all Muslim societies and courts.

Similar to previous research on translating feminist discourse into Arabic (see Alsharekh 2022; Al-Awawdeh, 2023; and Kamal, 2023), the translation of the feminist expression ‘*single mothers*’ into Arabic was found problematic mainly in one of two ways: it either changed the intended meaning of the source text for the sake of protecting the target culture’s socio-cognitive model or surrendered to its narrative through which an invading and incompatible narrative was brought to the target culture and its public discourse (see Alsharekh, 2022; Al-Awawdeh, 2023).

Unlike Alsharekh’s (2022) who accused the Arabic culture of having a ‘linguistic and cultural vacuum’, because it does not lend itself to translating feminist discourse into Arabic, the current research provides insight into how literal translations in such context can be ‘transformative’ (Venuti, 2019), ‘coercive’ and ‘imperialistic’ (Niranjana, 1992) socio-cultural practice when translating feminist discourse into Arabic (see Tables 5-8 and Figures 1-3). The literal translation of the feminist expression (claque) carried a culturally incompatible ‘conceptual narrative’ (Baraldi et al., 2009) in comparison to those of the target culture. Although the discussed literal translation used Arabic words it has culturally domesticated the use of this expression in Arabic public discourse carrying with them their extra-linguistic cultural references (ECRs) into the target language mainly because the claque “*الأمهات العازبات*” i.e. ‘*single mother*’ never existed in Arabic before. Therefore, journalists and those working with translated discourse should always have critical assessments of the target-culture translations they produce (Shamma, 2009; Scammell, 2018), assess their choices exercising their ‘decisive roles’ (Baker, 2006/2019) in the ‘negotiation of meaning’ and making the ‘intricate selection’ of target language expressions (Kang, 2019) in ways that reflect their awareness of the cultural differences and conceptual narratives these choices may produce.

Conclusion

The findings revealed that the literal translation of the feminist expression ‘*single mother(s)*’ into Arabic has led to the spread of a culturally incompatible narrative that belongs to a foreign culture. Other attempts to avoid bringing this foreign narrative were, rare but, made through other translation strategies that employed a number of ‘cognitive mechanisms’ (see Otaif, 2019) to profile these women (‘single mothers’) in ways that do not invade the target culture’s socio-cognitive model (see No. 5-17 in Table 4). The dominant use and spread of the literal translation of the expression ‘*single mother(s)*’ in translated discourse can be attributed to either a feminist – ‘hidden’- agenda like that of Alsharekh (2022) and Kamal (2023) or the limited view of seeing translation as a process of conveying the source meaning ‘literally and faithfully’ (Nord, 2005) or both.

The findings of this study draw attention to how ‘foreignisation’ as a translation strategy may not always protect the target culture from invading narratives, a claim that Wendland (2019, p. 14) stressed saying “however, one might seriously question whether a ‘foreignised’ version is able to accomplish all that Venuti [(1995/2008)] hopes for it, especially in a non-

Western setting”. Translating the foreign expression ‘*single mother(s)*’ literally into Arabic as “*الأمهات العازبات*” may have slightly indicated its foreignness to the TL, especially in the early days of transferring the English expression into Arabic. However, since this claue/expression never existed in Arabic before, translating it literally into Arabic has resulted in naturalising its use in the TL and invading the target culture, including its public discourse, with a foreign and culturally incompatible narrative (see Tables 5-8).

Other ‘resistant’ (Venuti, 1995/2008) but rare translation attempts have used the cognitive mechanism of PART TO REPRESENT THE WHOL to refer to the women denoted by the expression ‘*single mothers*’ through their 1) *financial responsibility of providing for their kids* (No. 5 and 6 in Table 4 above), 2) *previous husband(s)* (No. 7 and 8), 3) *their marital status* (No. 9 - 15) and lastly 4) through their *biological and physical status* (No. 16 and 17). In translation studies’ terms, these are non-literal translations and can be seen as either ‘cultural equivalents’ or ‘inadequate’ and ‘unfaithful’ translations, but, in cognitive critical discourse analysis terms these are target-culture-oriented translations that aim at preserving the target culture from the conceptual narratives that oppose its socio-cognitive model of thought (ideology including religious values and beliefs) and behaviour. Therefore, the current paper calls for further integration of cognitive critical discourse analysis into translation studies to critically assess and study foreign narratives travelling through translated discourse.

In this regard, while Lambert (2023) similarly called translators towards viewing the foreign/invading conceptual narratives within the domain of translation ethics, the current study, like Freeth and Treviño (2024), calls for extending the agency of the translator’s decisive role beyond the limited concept of ‘translator’s invisibility’ (Venuti, 1995/2008). As for the methodological implications learned from the current research, future research in translation studies should use critical perspectives when studying the narratives provided by the translated discourse (see Al-Hejin, 2012; Kang, 2019; Elewa, 2019). While the use of parallel corpora was informative in revealing both the dominant and less frequent translations used, the use of cognitive critical discourse analysis explained how some of these translations can act as a socio-cultural practice through which power, cultural dominance, and re-construction of identities are exercised.

The current study was limited to translated discourse retrieved from the UN corpus and the Reverso platform (Table 1). Future research should examine other parallel bilingual corpora to investigate the spread of similar narratives into the Arabic public discourse. Finally, it is hoped that through this cognitive corpus-based critical analysis, a light was shed on vital issues for translators and critical discourse analysts. Most importantly, the issue of viewing translation as a socio-cultural practice where our conceptual (ontological) narratives (Baraldi et al., 2009) are at a crossroads in which they either remain distinctive signifiers of a unique cultural identity and its values or become swept, melted, and transformed into another foreign culture through such translation practices forever.

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