

Critical Language Awareness in Translation: Towards A Critical Cognitive Corpus-Based Training of Translators

Fahad Ahmed Otaif

Department of English, College of Languages and Translation, King Khalid University
Abha, Saudi Arabia

otaiiff@kku.edu.sa; otaiiff@gmail.com
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9832-4289>

Received: 02/03/2025; Revised: 07/09/2025; Accepted: 25/09/2025

الملخص

على الرغم من الدراسات السابقة عن الوعي اللغوي في مجال الترجمة، لا يزال هناك نقص في الاعتراف من قبل الممارسين بأهمية الوعي اللغوي النقدي (فيركلاف، 2013/1992) بالجانب المعرفي/الإدراكي للمعنى، والذي يُعد جوهرياً في عمل المترجمين. سواء كانوا متدربين أو مهنيين يعملون أو يدرسون ويُدرِّبون في مجال الترجمة. تناولت الدراسة الحالية مدى الوعي النقدي لدى المترجمين المتدربين وإدراكهم للبنى المفاهيمية/التصويرية في كل من اللغة المصدر واللغة الهدف وذلك عند ترجمة العبارات المجازية في الخطاب الشعري من العربية إلى الإنجليزية. هدفت الدراسة إلى تقديم توصيات تعليمية لتحسين تدريب المترجمين، مستندة إلى أدلة تجريبية مستخلصة وفق منهجية تحليل الخطاب النقدي المعرفي للمتون المحوسبة لترجمات المتدربين.


كشفت النتائج عن تشوهات مفاهيمية واسعة النطاق لدى المترجمين ناتجة عن ضعف وعيهم بالمعاني المجازية، والمخططات التصويرية/المفاهيمية، والسرديات الثقافية للنص الأصل. كما أظهرت بيانات مجموعات التركيز والمقابلات أن هذه الأخطاء غالباً ما ترتبط بالاعتماد المفرط على القواميس الثنائية اللغة، وضعف المعرفة التاريخية، وانعدام الوعي النقدي بعالم الخطاب للنص المصدر/الأصل. ختاماً تسلطت النتائج الحالية الضوء على مزايا دمج التحليل النقدي المعرفي والمبني على المتون المحوسبة للخطاب المترجم في طرق تعليم المترجمين وتدريبهم لتعزيز وعيهم اللغوي النقدي. وذلك ليس فقط لتطوير مهاراتهم ومسيرتهم المهنية فحسب، بل أيضاً لتجنب الوقوع في ترجمات غير دقيقة قد تهدد تماسك النص وتشوّه المعنى المقصود في النص الأصل.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الثبات التصويري واللفظي، تدريب المترجمين، التحليل المعرفي القائم على المتون المحوسبة، الوعي اللغوي النقدي، الخطاب المترجم.

Critical Language Awareness in Translation: Towards A Critical Cognitive Corpus-Based Training of Translators

Fahad Ahmed Otaif

Department of English, College of Languages and Translation, King Khalid University
Abha, Saudi Arabia

otaiff@kku.edu.sa; otaiff@gmail.com
 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9832-4289>

Received: 02/03/2025; Revised: 07/09/2025; Accepted: 25/09/2025

Abstract

Despite previous studies on language awareness in translation, there remains a lack of acknowledgement, among practitioners, of how critical language awareness (Fairclough, 1992/2003) of the cognitive side of meaning is essential to the work of translators, both trainees and professionals working or teaching and training in the field of translation. The current study examined the extent to which trainee translators demonstrate critical awareness of conceptual structures in both the source and target languages when rendering figurative lines from Arabic poetic discourse into English. The aim was to offer pedagogical recommendations for enhancing translation training through empirical evidence drawn from a cognitive corpus-based Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of trainees' translations.

The findings revealed widespread conceptual distortions stemming from inadequate awareness of the Source Language's (SL) metaphorical meaning, conceptual schemas, and cultural narratives. The focus group and interview data revealed that these errors were often linked to an overreliance on bilingual dictionaries, limited historical knowledge, and a lack of critical awareness of the discourse world of the source text. The current findings shed light on the merits of incorporating cognitive corpus-based analysis of translated discourse in translators' pedagogy and training to enhance their critical language awareness, not only to develop their skills and careers but also to avoid chances of arriving at inaccurate translations that may threaten their cogency and distort the intended meaning of the original (source) text.

Keywords: *conceptual and lexical invariance, translator training, cognitive corpus-based critical discourse analysis, critical language awareness, translated discourse.*

Introduction

Throughout the last two decades, research on language awareness has inspired many practitioners in the field of language learning and teaching to think ‘critically’ about the appropriate ways a foreign language should be taught (Taylor, et al., 2017). However, with regard to other fields of language studies that deal with language use in social contexts, such as translation studies (Munday & Zhang, 2017), there remains a lack of acknowledgement among practitioners on how critical language awareness is essential to the work of translators, both trainees and professionals working, teaching, and training in the field of translation. Although the concept of language awareness has been clearly stated in early work in translation studies, such as Faber’s (1998) where she stated that “one of the most difficult things translators have to learn is how to extract conceptual meanings from source texts, so that they base their translations on reformulations of those meanings, rather than on the words or structures that codify them” (Faber, 1998, p. 9), the notion of language awareness has not yet received sufficient momentum in translation studies. Apart from the contributions of Zabalbeascoa (1994, 1997), Faber (1998), Malmkjær (2017), and, more recently, Liu and Chen (2021), this lack of recognition could be attributed to the dominant prevalence of functional approaches, which have dominated translation studies throughout the last decades since the 1970s. Therefore, this study investigates how a cognitive corpus-based critical analysis (Fairclough, 1995) of translated discourse (Otaif, 2024, 2025) can contribute to the enhancement of translation training protocols. It emphasises empirically driven critical language awareness among trainee translators, particularly in improving their ability to identify and preserve conceptual meaning when rendering figurative and culturally embedded texts from Arabic into English.

Literature Review

Language Awareness in Translation

The importance of language awareness in any language pedagogical theory emerges from the simple fact that curricula should help learners become critically aware of language and its features (Fairclough, 1992/2013). Otherwise, learners will continue to make the same mistakes until they become aware that this is not the right way to do things. When Fairclough (1992/2013) introduced the concept of critical language awareness, he stated that the term ‘language awareness’ was limited to the context of education and applied linguistics, denoting ‘knowledge about language’. Therefore, he expanded the concept by drawing a dichotomy between ‘language awareness’ and what he called ‘critical language awareness’. He stated that language capabilities (competence) can be seen as an ‘awareness of language’, yet it is only when this awareness/competence is used and practised in a ‘purposeful discourse’ (emphasis is mine), such as translated discourse, that we become mindful of whether this language awareness is critical or not.

Regarding translation, Faber (1998, p. 9) stated that “but for translation students, it [language awareness] is a vital necessity. Arguably, consciousness of the underlying patterns of meaning in language (in its generic sense) stands in direct relation to the relative ease with which students acquire translation skills”. Likewise, Gutknecht and Rolle (1996) in their book *Translating by Factors: The Missed Encounter* stated that while “retention of conceptual meaning is an invariance demand, linguistic variation of expressions is a variance demand” (p.

303). They grounded their argument on Lyon's (1981) assertion that in translating a book, a translator should ensure that the conceptual meaning is retained while lexical variations can be used to avoid repetition and adhere to the target language style.

Liu and Chen (2021) investigated whether a brief instructional intervention on linguistic ambiguity could enhance trainee translators' ability to detect ambiguity in translation, addressing a notable gap in empirical research on metalinguistic awareness. The results showed a significant improvement in identifying ambiguous items, affirming the pedagogical value of fostering language awareness, even with short interventions. However, the study also revealed a tendency to overinterpret unambiguous items, highlighting the need for a deeper conceptual understanding alongside noticing. These findings suggest that training in critical language awareness benefits translators of different proficiency levels.

Corpus-Based Approaches and Language Awareness in Translation

Although some researchers in translation studies have stressed the importance of training translators (see Baker, 1993, 1995, 1996, 2000; Nord, 2005, 1996; Pym and Hao, 2025; Schäffner, 2000; Wendland, 2019; among many others), some of these approaches have focused on the overall procedure of the translation process but have not examined subtle conceptual variances and their role in reconstructing SL meanings, particularly in translating literary texts. For example, while translation-oriented text analysis (Nord, 2005) demands an analysis of all factors inside and outside the text, corpus-based approaches, such as Baker (1993, 1995, 1996, 2000) and Bowker (1999), can reveal much about the importance of language awareness in translation studies by comparing and contrasting the conceptual and lexical variances produced by translators. This is evident in studies such as Bowker (1999), Rodríguez-Inés (2012), Al Zumor (2021), and Otaif (2024, 2025).

First, Bowker (1999, p. 160) acknowledged the importance of language awareness in translation but stated that it is not "always easy to help students refine this faculty". She found that corpora helped raise translators' language awareness and contributed to minimising their resistance to correcting mistakes. She added that "the principal advantage afforded by concordancing tools is that they allow translators to see terms in a variety of contexts simultaneously, which in turn allows them to detect various kinds of linguistic and conceptual patterns that are sometimes difficult to spot in isolated printed resources (e.g., meanings of terms, related terms, typical phrasal patterns)" (Bowker, 1999, p. 165). Baker (2000), on the other hand, attempted in a small-scale exploratory study to use corpus linguistics tools to show if they can reveal the style of literary translator(s) with the aim of finding out what is distinctive in the language they use. She concluded that although it was "methodologically difficult, it is possible in principle to identify patterns of choice which together form a particular thumb-print or style of an individual literary translator. It is also possible to use the description which emerges from a study of this type to elaborate the kind of world that each translator has chosen to recreate" (p. 260).

Rodríguez-Inés (2012) observed that the use of corpora increased the awareness of translators translating from Spanish into English. The study highlighted the importance of using corpora in training translators who are non-native speakers of English and shed light on how "a corpus-based SL-oriented exercises can also help demonstrate the relative value of native-speaker intuition and make students aware of the importance of using documentary resources such as electronic corpora to back up their decisions" (p. 237). Chen and Shen (2025) conducted a qualitative study to address a notable gap in translation education research: the

lack of empirical insight into how large-scale, corpus-based, project-based learning (PjBL) initiatives shape student translators' language awareness and competence development. Drawing on data from reflective journals and semi-structured interviews with 97 student translators and 15 instructors at a Chinese foreign language university, this study explored the pedagogical impact of a two-year corpus-construction project involving military tribunal texts. The findings revealed that students significantly enhanced their language awareness through mastering legal terminology, refining translation strategies, and engaging in bilingual text alignment using CAT tools. This heightened awareness extended to syntactic precision, semantic equivalence, and ethical sensitivity in handling historically charged content, underscoring the transformative role of authentic collaborative translation tasks in fostering metalinguistic insight and critical reflection.

Al Zumor (2021), in a corpus-based analysis of Arabic translations of academic papers that were originally written in English by Arabic authors, found that the passive structures in the English abstracts (STs) were rendered into different Arabic grammatical structures, including active verbs and verbal nouns. Although this study primarily focused on the differences between SL and TL grammatical structures, its findings can also be extended to illustrate how varying grammatical structures, which exemplify lexical variance between the SL and TL, may lead to different realities (i.e. conceptual variances that diverge from the original meaning conveyed in the source text).

This type of variance in conceptual meaning can be seen as a violation of the demand stated by Gutknecht and Rölle (1996), which is that of the conceptual meaning invariance mentioned above. In other words, in Al Zumor's (2021) study, the conceptual meanings of Arabic structures varied and differed from the meaning of the English (SL) passive structures. Although Al Zumor (2021) has shown, based on corpus-based evidence, an example of how lexical variance can occur when translating texts into Arabic, he did not explain the conceptual variances of these variant lexical choices, which is an area that requires a cognitive account from cognitive linguistics that corpus-based approaches lack (see Baker, 2010).

This raises the question of whether a corpus-based analysis of translations is sufficient to attain a better level of awareness of how the conceptual level of meaning is rendered in the target language. The question raised here is a common and recognised problem of corpus-based approaches to text analysis; Baker (2010) admitted that although corpus-based approaches can help us understand commonalities and variant patterns in texts, they need a cognitive account to interpret these findings. This is an area where cognitive corpus-based approaches to critical discourse analysis, such as Koller (2006) and Charteris-Black (2004, 2021), have been helpful. These approaches have shown how a combination of cognitive linguistics, corpus linguistics, and critical discourse analysis can provide a better and more in-depth understanding of metaphorical meanings and conceptual structures in texts, as well as explain their socio-semantic functions within a given discourse or culture. In other words, they can explain how a text composer is critically aware of the text they produce in their translated discourse (Otaif, 2024).

Cognitive Corpus-based Critical Analysis of Translated Discourse

In this vein, with specific reference to translation studies, there is a growing recognition of the roles played by 1) cognitive linguistics in translation studies (cf. Rojo and Ibarretxe-Antuñano, 2013; Ji et al., 2025), and 2) critical discourse analysis and its importance in raising critical language awareness in translation studies (cf. Al-Hejin, 2012; Elewa, 2019; Daghigh &

Guo, 2024). Using cognitive corpus-based critical discourse analysis, Otaif (2024) found that translators used different translation procedures and ‘cognitive mechanisms’ (Ji et al., 2025; Otaif, 2024, 2025) to transfer or override culturally incompatible narratives, including their conceptual representations. Depending on their critical language awareness of what narratives the source language texts will convey to the target culture through their translated discourse, some translators have modified some parts of the conceptual representations embodied in culturally incompatible terms.

In this vein, Otaif (2024), using a cognitive corpus-based critical analysis of translated discourse, found that some Arabic translators, driven by their critical language awareness, made lexical choices that brought about conceptual variances when translating feminist terms such as ‘single mothers’ into Arabic; their used strategies were neither localising nor foreignizing but ‘cognitive mechanisms’ that enabled them to adhere to the socio-cultural norms and values of the target culture. For example, some translators were found to use ‘breastfeeding mums’ (TL text) to translate the English feminist term ‘single mums’ (SL text); they chose this strategy to avoid invading the TL with a foreign narrative that is incompatible with the Islamic and Arab culture. Although the strategy used here has rendered the status of the women as being responsible for feeding their children through a culturally equivalent (Newmark, 1988) TL lexical choice, the translation used has rendered a different conceptual reality from the one that was given in the SL. This was done through cognitively selecting certain elements from the conceptual meaning of the SL term and neglecting or overriding others, resulting in conceptual and lexical variances between the two (the SL and TL terms).

Ji et al. (2025) acknowledged that there is an emerging trend within translation studies that draws heavily on cognitive linguistics, focusing on how translators and interpreters interact with and render conceptual structures of the SL meaning into the TL, especially when translating metaphors, metonymies, image schemas, and related linguistic patterns. They added that this approach offers vital insights into the different ways translators navigate the deep semantic and conceptual structures that underpin language, which are essential for conveying meaning across diverse linguistic and cultural contexts.

Therefore, a cognitive approach to the analysis of translated discourse would serve to illuminate why certain translations or mistakes are committed by translators and what conceptual realities they convey from the SL to the TL’s sociocultural contexts. The current study aimed to show, through a cognitive corpus-based critical discourse analysis of trainees’ translations, how the triangulation of tools and analytical concepts from cognitive linguistics, corpus linguistics, and critical discourse analysis can inform language awareness in translation, with particular reference to translator training. Specifically, it aimed to answer the following research questions:

- 1- To what extent do the trainees’ translations reflect critical awareness of conceptual representations in the source text/discourse?
- 2- To what extent can critical cognitive corpus-based discourse analysis inform and improve translation training protocols?

Methodology

A mixed-methods design was employed within a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) analytical framework. The current study used 1) a translation task, 2) a focus group, and 3) interviews to collect data. Each method was employed at a different stage of data collection, respectively, as will be explained in this section later. First, a translation test was used to investigate the extent to which the trainees' translations reflected their critical awareness of the conceptual variances their lexical choices may bring about when rendering the source text into the TL. Second, the focus group and the interviews were conducted to provide an explanation of why certain lexical choices or mistakes were committed by the participants. The chosen methods are in line with the analytical procedure of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995), where an analyst should 1) identify (in our study, through the outcome of the translation tests) a sample for discourse analysis, 2) interpret its common patterns and irregularities (through concordance software and analytical concepts from cognitive linguistics and translation theories), and finally 3) explain the findings within their socio-cultural context (through the focus group and interviews). Therefore, it is worth noting that the main methodological approach used in the current study was cognitive corpus-based critical discourse analysis, which is a recent approach that analyses text/discourse based on a triangulation of analytical concepts and tools (Charteris-Black, 2019, 2021; Otaif, 2019, 2024, 2025¹). This triangulation adopts analytical concepts and tools from 1) critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995), 2) cognitive linguistics, such as metaphors and schemas (see Evans, 2009, 2010; Evans and Green, 2006; Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, Talmy, 2000), and 3) corpus linguistics, such as concordance software (Baker, 2023).

Data Collection

From my five-year experience in teaching translation to postgraduate students and trainees, both novice and experienced translators were usually found to face difficulties in translating the figurative language used in literary texts, especially poems. Therefore, one of the poems that the trainees usually found difficult to translate into English was selected for this study. The chosen text is loaded with figurative poetic meanings and images (conceptual and metaphoric representations), which pose challenges in their translation. Therefore, the text is expected to render lexical and conceptual variances in trainees' translations. The quality of translators' translations is expected to vary based on their critical awareness of the figurative language used in the text, its cultural discourse, and the historical world of the text. Below is a copy of the first seven lines chosen for the translation test (Table 1). The chosen text was handed to the trainees only in Arabic to be translated into English (see Table 1 for the source text with a model translation of each line).

¹ Otaif (2024, 2025) incorporated theories and analytical concepts from translation studies in his critical study of translated discourse, and the emerging approach was named a cognitive corpus-based critical analysis of translated discourse.

Table 1

The Source Text: Granada Poem by Nizar Qabbani

Line 1	في مدخل الحمراء كان لقائنا At Alhambra's entrance, we met,	ما أطيّب اللقيا بلا ميعاد how sweet (wonderful) it is to meet <u>out of the blue</u> /without a rendezvous
Line 2	عينان سوداوان في حجريهما Two Black eyes, in their sockets,	تتوالد الأبعاد من أبعاد dimensions breed/multiply from other dimensions.
Line 3	هل أنت إسبانية؟ ساءلتها "Are you Spanish?", I said	قالت: وفي غرناطة ميلادي "And was born in Granada", She replied
Line 4	غرناطة؟ وصحت قرون سبعة Granada! And seven centuries awakened	في تينك العينين.. بعد رقاد inside those [beautiful] eyes, after a long sleep/ slumber
Line 5	وأمية راياتها مرفوعة And the Umayyads' flags are highly hoisted	وجيادها موصولة بجياد and their steeds are connected to other steeds
Line 6	ما أغرب التاريخ كيف أعادني How strange history is!	لحفيدة سمراء من أحفادي When it returned me/ took me back to a brown granddaughter of mine
Line 7	عانقتُ فيها عندما ودعتها As I farewelled her, I embraced in her a man	"رجلاً يُسمى "طارق بن زياد" named Tariq ibn Ziyad

The model translation was done by the researcher and peer-reviewed by two experts in literary translation, who are all professors of translation studies; one of them is a winner of a prestigious award in translation. Based on their feedback, the translation was improved by adding alternative words, such as *slumber* in Line 4.

Study Sample

The study had two main groups of participants for each stage of data collection (Table 2).

Table 2

The Study Sample

Method	Translation Task	Focus Group and the Interview
Sample size	54 MA in Translation students	8 MA Students and 2 MA Instructors

First, 60 postgraduate students enrolled in an MA in Translation program at a Saudi university, all with a minimum IELTS score of 6.5, participated in the translation task. Twenty students from each class of the program participated over a period of two and a half years, with one class per year in 2021, 2022, and 2023. The trainees were given the translation task, usually during the first week of the 2nd year of their translation program. This step was taken to ensure that the participants did not have any homework, exam pressure, or other commitments while completing the task. They were also given the opportunity to use their phones to look up the meanings of equivalent words in the target language; however, their use was restricted to online bilingual dictionaries. This restriction was to ensure that they do not consult online parallel corpora that may increase the quality of their translations based on viewing previously published translations. The aim was to determine the extent to which they were aware of the

conceptual variances evoked by their translation choices. The time given for this task was two hours (120 minutes); it was noticed that most of the trainees submitted their translations in less than 90 minutes, usually between 60 and 80 minutes. Despite the fact that the time of task completion would be of relevance, it was not collected, especially because the main aim of the current study was to investigate the pedagogical implications that the analysis may offer concerning language awareness in translation. The translations were then compiled, classified, and coded before being fed into the concordance software, WordSmith Tool 8. The final research corpus comprised 54 returned translations with a total size of 4895 tokens/words (Table 3).

Table 3

The Research Corpus

Number of Trainees	60
Number of submitted translations	54/ 60
Total Corpus Size	4895 tokens/words

The names of the translators were coded using middle name initials and family name initials. Other non-relevant notes were removed from the corpora (Figure 1).

Figure 1

A Sample of The Corpus-Based Analysis of The Trainees' Translations

me back to a brunette granddaughter of mine. Give her a hug when you say goodbye to her dbye to her	Tr. L.A.txt
to one of my lovely places, When I bid farewell to her, I hugged, A man called "Tariq bin Zeiad" Nizar Gabbani	Tr. F.Ash.t
her , it seemed To some man who called (Tariq bin Ziyad) i hugged riq bin Ziyad) i hugged	Tr. S.Ash.t
helped to reunion With one of my dark skin grandchildren I hugged her to say Good bye and I felt as if I hugged a man	Tr. A.S.txt
grandchildren I hugged her to say Good bye and I felt as if I hugged a man called Tareq ben Zeyad Tareq ben Zeyad	Tr. A.S.txt
our race.. In thar familiar face.. When I see her off, I hugged that nobel man.. Who's name is "Tariq Ibn Ziad" ..	Tr. B. A.txt
me back, To a brunette one of my descendant. Once I embraced her to a farewell, Evoked memories of one	Tr. M. Ae.t
golden-skinned beauty, one of my grand daughters I embraced in her a man called "Tariq Ibn Ziyad" as I	Tr. R.A.txt
of yore When I bid her adieu when I knew I was going, I embraced Tariq ibn Ziyad in her. q ibn Ziyad in her.	Tr. S.H.txt
to an east granddaughter, from my pedigree of yore I embraced in her soul when I was leaying A man called	Tr. A.As.tx
granddaughter of my grandchildren? Farewell , I embraced a man called "Tariq bin Ziyad." " nked their	Tr. H.O..txt

The Procedural Steps of The Analysis

The main procedural steps of the analysis were identifying, interpreting, and explaining samples of conceptual and lexical variances found in the trainees' translations, which in turn can reflect their level of critical language awareness of the source text and the target language (see Figure 1 above). The corpus data were first analysed, focusing on how certain meanings, which entail unique conceptual representations (i.e. figurative or metaphoric meanings), were conveyed by different translators into the TL and in what conceptual and lexical forms. In cognitive corpus-based critical discourse analysis, the role of the critical discourse analyst is manifested in three steps: 1) identify (see Figure 1), 2) interpret, and 3) explain (Fairclough, 1995). While corpus linguistics tools such as concordance software were mainly used to help automatically and systematically identify (stage one) samples for the analysis (Koller &

Mautner, 2004), cognitive linguistics tools such as metaphors and schemas (see Charteris-Black, 2021; Evans, 2009, 2010; Evans and Green, 2006; Talmy, 2000) were used to interpret (stage two) how the source text's conceptual meaning was reconstructed in the target language. After identifying and interpreting samples of lexical and conceptual variances (stages one and two), the analysis moved to explain (stage three) the findings within the critical paradigm of critical discourse analysis (CDA; Fairclough, 1995), where linguistic choices and strategies are not always arbitrary but meaningful within a particular social context (Charteris-Black, 2021; Fairclough, 1995; Otaif, 2024, 2025; van Leeuwen, 2008).

In other words, the corpus-based textual analysis aimed to identify whether the translators had extracted the conceptual meanings of the source text and transferred them correctly, as evident in their translations and explained by the focus group and interviews. The textual analysis was followed by a focus group, where eight of the participants/trainees and two instructors were invited to a virtual meeting (Table 2). The findings of the study were presented to them in the focus group, where they were then given the opportunity to try to explain and comment on them (explanation stage), followed by a 15-item structured interview schedule to elaborate on the outcome of the focus group discussions. It is worth noting that the focus group included eight trainees (almost three from each class/cohort) (Interviewees 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, and 9) of the study sample and two instructors (Interviewees 6 and 10) who were teaching in the selected MA in Translation program.

Ethical Considerations

Participants in all stages were given a consent form to sign, where they were asked to give their consent and informed that they had the right to withdraw, and that their responses would be used anonymously and solely for research purposes.

Methodological Limitations

It is worth emphasising here that, unlike Baker (1993, 1996), the current study was limited to the merits of building a monolingual corpus for the analysis of trainers' translations, where target texts (the trainees' translations) were always compared to the source text.

Findings and Discussion

Corpus-based Findings

The cognitive corpus-based analysis revealed that, although all participants were native Arabic speakers with a minimum IELTS score of 6.5, many lacked critical awareness of how their lexical choices brought about variant conceptual realities in the TL (English). In Line 1 (Table 1), the Arabic preposition "في" pronounced *fi* was mistranslated by 9/45 trainees as "in the entrance", evoking containment rather than location. In contrast, 39/45 trainees correctly used "at the entrance", while two opted for "at the door of" and "at the entry of". These differences underscore a schematic misunderstanding of English prepositions by some, where "in" suggests enclosure and "at" denotes spatial positioning, evoking conceptual differences in the TL.

Line 2 exposed even more lexical and conceptual variance. The term "حجرَيْهما" pronounced as *hijraiehma* (their sockets), was accurately rendered by only 9 translators out of 54. Two translators mistranslated it into "stones" (F=2), likely due to phonetic similarity with the Arabic word "hajariehma", which means their stones in English (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Concordance of *their...stones*

N	Concordance	File
1	certain date Two black eyes in theirs eyes stones which can see far away Are you	As. Qa. OBT
2	without an appointment. Black eyes in their stones , born from the dimensions of ... Are you	Lat .Moh..txt

Other variants included "frames" (F=4), "orbs" (F=5), "orbits" (F=5), "depths" (F=4), and "embraces" (F=1). Notably, 14 translators (F=14) deleted the phrase entirely, suggesting avoidance, perhaps due to lexical uncertainty or lack of TL linguistic competence.

In Line 3, the term "غرناطة" pronounced as Ghurnata, which means the city of Granada, was correctly translated by 30 trainees. On the other hand, 14 chose to omit it (F=14), while others produced distorted versions, such as "Garnada" (F=3), "Granda" (F=4), and "Grenata" (F=1). These errors point to cultural unfamiliarity and a lack of historical background on the Andalusian civilisation and how it can be reported in the TL. The failure to recognise Granada as a historically significant city reveals a disconnect from the poem's discourse world and undermines its narrative coherence in the TL.

Likewise, Line 4 translations presented further lexical divergence. The phrase "seven centuries awakened" was rendered with verbs like "woke up" (F=7), "awoke" (F=5), "awake" (F=3), "revived" (F=7), and "aroused" (F=3). While some verbs aligned with the metaphor of sleep, others, like "revived", suggested resurrection, distorting the intended meaning. The second clause of Line 4 received translations such as "from a sleep" (F=23), "from a slumber" (F=10), and "from a slumbering" (F=13), with inaccurate choices such as "from a nap" (F=1) and "from somnolence" (F=1) which varied in terms of the nature and length of the sleeping act. These choices reflect varied conceptual variances and inconsistent conceptual interpretations.

On the other hand, Line 5 revealed striking misreadings. The word "أمية" (Umayyad) was mistranslated as "illiterate(s)" by seven trainees (F=7), likely due to confusion with the Arabic word "Umieeah", which means an illiterate woman. This surprisingly indicates that these translators misread the word and translated it into another Arabic word that is pronounced similarly, namely أمية Umiee. Umiee, in Arabic, refers to an illiterate person who has not learned to read or write, as shown in the concordance lines in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Concordance of *illitera**

N	Concordance	File
1	centuries in these eyes after a long sleep. An illiteracy girl raised her banner, and her horses	Am. Ass..txt
2	centuries awoken by her eyes after rest Her illiteracy is raised Her horses are attached to	As. Shai. N..txt
3	woke up, In those eyes after sleeping, A illiteracy whose flags are raised, And its	Rag A. Esh.txt
4	seven centuries. In those eyes, after slumber.. Illiterate's banners raised up high. Her Steeds	Raw BA.txt
5	awaken*** in those eyes after long hibernate Illiterate with a high flag***and her horses	F. Ha..txt
6	horns awakened after slumber in those two eyes illiterate with raised banners and their horse is	Ree. Ash..txt
7	after a long time of sleeping And a flashback of illiterate women raising her flags Whose	Am .Fo.txt

Some of these seven translators seem to process the word *Umayyaton* as ‘a proper name of a girl who is both illiterate and whom they think the poem is talking about’ (ConcLs 1, 5, and 7 in Figure 3). Ten translators (F=10) interpreted it as a girl’s name, while others used transliterations such as "Uma" (F=28) and "Om" (F=5). Additional variants included "Umay’ah" (F=1), "Bani Ummah" (F=1), and "nation" (F=2). Six translators (F=6) skipped the line (Line 5) entirely. These errors may suggest a lack of historical and linguistic competence, resulting in a conceptual distortion of the poem’s ideological references and cultural nostalgia narrative.

The phrase "جياها موصولة" (their steeds are connected) (Line 5, Table 1) was translated with terms like "horses" (F=36), "stallions" (F=2). Conversely, a wrong translation that reflected poor L1 competence was "her good is connected to good" (F=1). In contrast, 14 translators (F=14) deleted the clause or the entire line. While "stallions" evoked the image of Arabian horses, the phrase "good is connected to good" indicated a complete misreading of both the vocabulary and the metaphor of the connected cavalry of warhorses. These inconsistencies reflect a failure to grasp the symbolic and historical depth of the poem.

In Line 6, the phrase "returned me to a brown granddaughter" was rendered as "brought me back" (F=20), "bring(ing) me back" (F=4), "took me back" (F=9), "returned me" (F=7), "got me back" (F=3), and "sent me back" (F=2). Many examples exhibited tense errors, such as translating the SL past tense into present simple and continuous, as in "bringing", "gets", and "sends" (Figures 4-9).

Figure 4

Concordance of*brought me back**

N	Concordance	File
1	other horses How strange history is How it had brought me back to my brown grand-daughter I	Arw Qo..txt
2	horses too How amazing history is! How it had brought me back To the dark-skinned beauty,	Ay Sh..txt
3	to another How bizarre history is! How it brought me back To this dark-skinned girl, one	Rih Ele.txt
4	chained to each other How strange how history brought me back to a dark grand daughter of	Ab. Shu..txt
5	with others How strange is history when it brought me back*** to a one of my brunette	F. Ha..txt
6	horses lined together How strange that history brought me back to a dark-skinned	Na Ja..txt
7	at one with their stallions How amazing history brought me back To the dark skinned, one of	AbEL. Q..txt
8	are numerous. How strange is history; how it brought me back . To a dark-skinned	An. Ash..txt
9	united they were What a strange history that brought me back To a brunette granddaughter	Ar. Ah..txt
10	attached to horses how strange is history, how it brought me back to a brown granddaughter of	Ass. Sh..txt
11	is knotted with steed it is strange how history had brought me back to my dark-skinned	Je Ash..txt
12	banners and horses What a history! How it brought me back to one of my beautiful grand	RnQ.txt
13	their stallions How amazing history is! how it had brought me back To the dark-skinned beauty,	MZ Add..txt
14	strange history is how the brown granddaughter brought me back from my grandchildren.	Raz. Jaf..txt
15	by other horses What the strange history! How it brought me back to the brunette	As. Qa. OBT.
16	to other horses How strange the history that brought me back to a brown grandchild of my	As. Shai. N.
17	are tied to each other Strange history how it brought me back to a Brunette granddaughter	Th. Bar..txt
18	linked their horses What a strange history ! How brought me back to a brunette granddaughter	Ha. Ot..txt
19	breeds, in their speed. How a strange history had brought me back , To a brunette one of my	Mea. Ele..txt
20	other are linked How strange is history how he brought me back To a brunette grandchild of	Saw. Ash..txt

Figure 5

Concordance ofbring(ing) me back*

N	Concordance	File
1	her horses What is the strangest history, how did it bring me back ? For a brown granddaughter I	Am. Add.
2	the warrior horses lined up together how did history bring me back with dark-skinned one of my	Ath Qa.txt
3	is connects with its rider How strange is history to bring me back to a brown granddaughter, one of	Ree. Ash.
4	on to their horses How extraordinary history can be! bringing me back to the golden-skinned beauty,	Ru . Haj.

Figure 6

Concordance oftake/took me back*

N	Concordance	File
1	tied to my steeds. How strange is history... To take me back to a brunette grandchild of mine.	Raw BA.txt
2	at one with their steeds. How strangely the history took me back , to a memory of a dark-skinned	Ree Os.txt
3	whose banners are rising ... How oddly the history took me back to a dark-skinned granddaughter of	Shq Aa.txt
4	horses were in rows lined How strange history is it took me back To a beautiful dark-skinned	Waf Qs.txt
5	Granada as well. She said How strange history is to take me back to one of my grandchildren I said	Abdu. Ash.
6	supported by other horses Its wiered how history took me back To a brown granddaughter of mine	Ss.txt
7	with other horses, How strange when the history took me back , To a brown granddaughter of my	Rag A. Esh.
8	are followed by horses What a weird history , how it takes me back to a brown-skinned granddaughter	H. As..txt
9	are followed by horses how strange how history took me back to a brunette grandchild of mine	Ja. En..txt

Figure 7

Concordance ofreturn/turn me back*

N	Concordance	File
1	its justice were remains how strange is history it returned me to one of my granddaughter	Ab Qa. txt
2	to each other. What a strange history that returned me to a brunette granddaughter which	Am. Ass..txt
3	pour How strange is history, how is it that I am returning To a beautiful granddaughter, from	Sad. Hus..txt
4	_____ How weird the history was when it Returns me to one of my brown granddaughters	Nu Ass..txt
5	horses How strange is history! How It returns me to an east granddaughter, from my	SU. Sae.txt
6	..I have to brag.. How wondrous that history turned me back.. To remember our race.. In	Bas. Mih.txt
7	reigned and strong Oh how strange how time turned back to think that you're my	M. Hal.txt

Figure 8

Concordance ofgot me back*

N	Concordance	File
1	attached with horses. What a strange history that gets me back To a brunette granddaughter from	Ab Ham.1.txt
2	with other horses What a strange history when he got me back To a brown granddaughter of mine I	M. Alma.txt
3	good. The strangest thing about history is how he got me back to a brunette granddaughter of mine.	Lat .Moh..txt

Figure 9

Concordance ofsend me back*

N	Concordance	File
1	are linked with a horse. How strange is history! Send me back to a tawny granddaughter from	Ran H.
2	with a horse What a strange history, how did it send me back To a brunette granddaughter	H. Qa.

Additionally, the second clause of Line 6 received different translations. The found TL translations "سمرء" pronounced as *sammraa* included "brunette" (F=14), "brown" (F=13), and "dark-skinned" (F=14). Each translation evoked a different conceptual and cultural narrative. While "brunette" evoked a conceptual image aligned with Western norms of hair and skin colours, "brown" and "dark-skinned" preserved the poem's original narrative that refers to a woman of Arabian origins (Figures 10-12).

Figure 10

Concordance of*brunette granddaughter, grandchild, etc.*

N	Concordance	File
1	. What a strange history that gets me back To a brunette granddaughter from grandchildren of	Ab Ham.1.txt
2	. How strange is history... To take me back to a brunette grandchild of mine. grandchild of mine.	Raw BA.txt
3	history when it brought me back***to a one of my brunette granddaughters I hugged in her at	F. Ha..txt
4	. What a strange history that returned me to a brunette granddaughter which is one of my	Am. Ass..txt
5	a strange history that brought me back To a brunette granddaughter of mine In whom a man	Ar. Ah..txt
6	a strange history, how did it send me back To a brunette granddaughter from my grandchildren I	H. Qa..txt
7	strange history! How it brought me back to the brunette granddaughter of mine I hugged a man	As. Qa. OBT..txt
8	how strange how history took me back to a brunette grandchild of mine when I bid her	Ja. En..txt
9	other Strange history how it brought me back to a brunette granddaughter of mine I hugged in her	Th. Bar..txt
10	, victory and our glory These black eyes and the brunette such an Arab, they were her	Ar. Hana.txt
11	a strange history ! How brought me back to a brunette granddaughter of my grandchildren?	Ha. Ot..txt
12	thing about history is how he got me back to a brunette granddaughter of mine. Give her a hug	Lat .Moh..txt
13	How a strange history had brought me back, To a brunette one of my descendant. Once I	Mea. Ele..txt
14	strange is history how he brought me back To a brunette grandchild of mine When I said	Saw. Ash..txt

Figure 11

Concordance of*brown granddaughter, grandchild, etc.*

N	Concordance	File
1	history is How it had brought me back to my brown grand-daughter I saw Damascus face I	Arw Qo..txt
2	a strange history when he got me back To a brown granddaughter of mine I hugged her	M. Alma.txt
3	strange history is brought to me, the meeting of brown granddaughter. With her I felt the	Mish H..txt
4	strange is history, how it brought me back to a brown granddaughter of my grandchildren I	Ass. Sh..txt
5	bright me back to one of my grand-daughters browned-skinned grand-daughter I hugged in her	Naj. Ash..txt
6	horses Its wiered how history took me back To a brown granddaughter of mine When I send her	Ss.txt
7	strangest history, how did it bring me back? For a brown granddaughter I hugged her when she	Am. Add..txt
8	the history was when it Returns me to one of my brown granddaughters I holded in her a man	Nu Ass..txt
9	strange when the history took me back, To a brown granddaughter of my grandchildren, I	Rag A. Esh.txt
10	to horses How strange history is how the brown granddaughter brought me back from my	Raz. Jaf..txt
11	rider How strange is history to bring me back to a brown granddaughter, one of my grandchildren.	Ree. Ash..txt
12	strange the history that brought me back to a brown grandchild of my grandchildren In our	As. Shai. N..txt
13	What a weird history , how it takes me back to a brown-skinned granddaughter of my	H. As..txt

Figure 12

Concordance of*dark-skin* granddaughter, grandchild, etc.*

N	Concordance	File
1	How strange that history brought me back to a dark-skinned granddaughter of mine I bid her	Na Ja..txt
2	rising ... How oddly the history took me back to a dark-skinned granddaughter of my	Shq Aa.txt
3	How amazing history brought me back To the dark skinned , one of my grand daughters	AbEL. Q..txt
4	linked to each other ... her flag is raised To dark skinned granddaughter to my	Na. Qa..txt
5	history is! How it had brought me back To the dark-skinned beauty, one of my grand-	Ay Sh..txt
6	bizarre history is! How it brought me back To this dark-skinned girl, one of my grand daughters	Rih Ele.txt
7	strange history is it took me back To a beautiful dark-skinned grandchild of mine When I bade	Waf Qs.txt
8	history is! how it had brought me back To the dark-skinned beauty, one of my grand	MZ Add..txt
9	strange is history; how it brought me back. To a dark-skinned granddaughter that is one of my	An. Ash..txt
10	strange how history had brought me back to my dark-skinned granddaughter I let her entrusted	Je Ash..txt
11	that history has helped to reunion With one of my dark skin grandchildren I hugged her to say	Am .Fo.txt
12	to the past >> to one of my grandchildren she is dark-skin granddaughter. I hugged her when I	Am. Qar..txt
13	the history took me back, to a memory of a dark-skinned granddaughter of mine. hter of	Ree Os.txt
14	up together how did history bring me back with dark-skinned one of my granddaughters e of	Ath Qa..txt

These choices illustrate how grammatical and lexical variances can distort the conceptual reality of a source text (Figure 4-12).

Lastly, the metaphors in Line 7 presented a rich site of metaphorical complexity and conceptual divergence. The word "عانقتُ", pronounced in Arabic as *anaqto*, was most frequently translated as "hugged" (F=23) and "embraced" (F=17), yet these choices evoked markedly different schematic and conceptual scenarios (Figures 13 & 14).

Figure 13

Concordance of *hug**

N	Concordance	File
1	a brunette granddaughter of mine. ¶Give her a hug when you say goodbye to her" ~N.Q. ¶	\Lat .Moh.txt
2	grandchildren ~¶When I gave her a good-bye hug , I saw in her a man called Tariq Ibn	\Gh Q.txt
3	I hugged her to say Good bye and I felt as if ~¶I hugged a man called Tareq ben Zeyad ~N.Q.	\Am .Fo.txt
4	back to the brunette granddaughter of mine ~¶I hugged a man called Tareq Bin Zyad when I	\As. Qa. OBT.txt
5	beauty, one of my grand- ~¶daughters. I ¶ hugged her when she called her a man called	\Ay Sh..txt
6	a man named Tariq bin Zeyad I saw ~¶When I hugged her goodbye ~N.Q. ¶	\Ar. Ah.txt
7	who are one of my granddaughters. ¶¶I hugged her when I said my goodbyes, a man	\Ra A.txt
8	she is dark-skin granddaughter. ¶¶I hugged her when I was left from a man called	\Am. Qar..txt
9	skinned granddaughter to my grandchildren ~¶I hugged her when I said goodbye ~¶A man	\Na. Qa..txt
10	back ~¶To a brown granddaughter of mine ~¶I hugged her when leaving and through her ~¶I	\M. Alma.txt
11	me back? ¶¶For a brown granddaughter ~¶I hugged her when she said goodbye to him ~	\Am. Add.txt
12	~¶With one of my dark skin grandchildren ~¶I hugged her to say Good bye and I felt as if ~	\Am .Fo.txt
13	of my grandchildren. ¶¶When I said goodbye I hugged her.....a man named "tariq bin zyad"	\Ree. Ash.txt
14	grandchildren ~¶When I said goodbye to her, I hugged in her ~¶A man called Tariq Ibn Ziad	\Shq Aa.txt
15	back to a Brunette granddaughter of mine ~¶I hugged in her when I said goodbye a man	\Th. Bar.txt
16	browned-skinned grand-daughter ~¶I hugged in her when I said goodbye a man	\Naj. Ash.txt
17	grandchild of mine ~¶when I bid her goodbye I hugged in her a man called Tariq ibn Zyad ~	\Ja. En..txt
18	granddaughter that is one of my own. ¶¶I hugged in her as I bade farewell. ¶¶A man	\An. Ash..txt
19	a one of my brunette granddaughters ~¶I hugged in her at goodbye*** a man called	\F. Ha.txt
20	~¶To some man who called(~¶Tariq bin Ziyad) i hugged N.Q. ¶	\Saw. Ash.txt
21	back to think that you're my granddaughter ~¶I hugged something within her and said	\M. Hal.txt
22	In ¶¶thar familiar face.. When ¶¶I see her off, I hugged that nobel man.. ¶¶Who's name is	\Bas. Mih.txt
23	a brown granddaughter of my grandchildren, ~¶I hugged while I was saying goodbye to her, ~	\Rag A. Esh.txt

Figure 14

Concordance of *embrac**

N	Concordance	File
1	of my granddaughters. When I said goodbye, I embrace a man called Tareq bin Ziyad. Ziyad.	Am. Ass..txt
2	When I bid her adieu when I knew I was going, I embraced Tariq ibn Ziyad in her." ibn Ziyad in	Sad. Hus..txt
3	grandchild of mine When I bade farewell to her I embraced in her That Arab hero by the name	Waf Qs.txt
4	daughters The last one: When I said goodbye, I embraced in her Tariq ibn Zaid Tariq ibn Zaid	Rih Ele.txt
5	east granddaughter, from my pedigree of yore I embraced in her soul when I was leaving A	SU. Sae.txt
6	me back to a dark grand daughter of mine I embraced in her someone called tariq bin	Ab. Shu..txt
7	beauty, one of my grand daughters I embraced in her a man called ""Tariq Ibn	Ru . Haj..txt
8	of my grand daughters When I said goodbye, I embraced in her A man by the name of Tariq	MZ Add..txt
9	of my grand daughters When I said goodbye , I embraced In her A man by the name Tariq Bin	AbEL. Q..txt
10	grandchild of my grandchildren In our farewell, I embraced in her A man named Tariq bin Ziyad	As. Shai. N.
11	, To a brunette one of my descendant. Once I embraced her to a farewell, Evoked memories	Mea. Ele.txt
12	to a brown granddaughter of my grandchildren I embraced her when l waving her a man named	Ass. Sh..txt
13	to a tawny granddaughter from my grandchildren I embraced a man, who is Tariq Bin-ziyad , when	Ran H.txt
14	a brunette granddaughter from my grandchildren I embraced a man in her When I saw her off !	H. Qa..txt
15	whom she denoted to were my grandparents I embraced a man called "Tareq ibn Ziyad" In	Ab Ham.1.txt
16	granddaughter of my grandchildren? Farewell , I embraced a man called ""Tariq bin Ziyad."" ette	Ha. Ot.txt
17	a good meeting without a date Black eyes in their embraces Born the dimensions from the	As. Shai. N.
18	granddaughter of mine I bid her farewell embracing with/ within her, A man named	Na Ja..txt

While "hugged" implies physical contact and emotional intimacy, "embraced" can suggest either symbolic acceptance or physical contact (LDCE, 2025; OOLD, 2025). In addition to the translations given above, eight translators (F=8) chose to omit the line entirely, likely because of the difficulty in grasping its layered meanings. Less frequent translations included "evoked memories of" (F=1)", felt the presence of" (F=1), and "was reminded of" (F=1), each reflecting attempts to capture the metaphor's emotional resonance without resorting to physical imagery.

Focus Group and Structured-Interview Findings

When asking the interviewees *Why do you think some translators chose to skip or delete some of the source text in their translations?* The majority of the respondents (9 out of 10 = 90%) reported that they think this is due to the trainees' low competence in English. Yet, an informative answer came from one of the two instructors (Interviewee 10) who reported: *it might be that these trainees did not find an equivalent in the target language or maybe run out of time (usually trainees skip the last parts of the text if they ran out of time).*

Regarding the many (24/54) translators' failures to translate the name of 'Granada' correctly, Interviewees 2 and 3 commented that *"I think they[the translators] thought these are the names of Arabic cities and should be transliterated into English because they may not have English equivalents, as in the name of the holy city Makkah"*. A claim that Interviewee (3), disagreed with, stating that: *"they should have searched for equivalents before submitting their translation"*. However, Interviewees 4 and 5 attributed this to the lack of historical background on Muslim civilisation in Andalusia. In fact, when asked *Why do you think some translators failed to convey the historical meaning of the source text in their translation* (Question 11 in the interview schedule), nine out of ten respondents (90 %) attributed this to the trainees' lack of historical information about Andalusia.

When discussing this mistranslation of *Umayyaton/Umayyad* into ‘Umieeah’, which means ‘illiterate girl’ or illiteracy, Interviewee 3 thought *that Umayyaton was the name of a place*. On the other hand, Interviewee 4 stated that she ‘had no idea what the word referred to’. However, Interviewee 5 knew that it referred to the Islamic Umayyad Caliphate (661-750 AD). While Interviewees 3, 4, and 5 attributed this mistake to the trainees’ poor linguistic competence in Arabic (their L1), Interviewees 7, 8, and 9 attributed such mistranslations to the trainees lack of the required linguistic competence as well as the historical background information about the text world, a possible reason that was also given by the two instructors (Interviewees 6 and 10).

As for the mistranslation of “their steeds are connected to other steeds” which was omitted by many translators (F=14), Interviewee 1 saw that the deletion strategy occurs in the translation “*because of the translators’ low linguistic competence in English, usually when not being able to find an English equivalent*”. On the other hand, Interviewee 2 attributed translating this phrase wrongly into “her good is connected to good” to a lack of awareness of the Source Text’s discourse historical world.

As for rendering the wrong tense in translating Line 6, such as ‘takes me back’ (Figures 4-9), Interviewee 2 reported that it might be understood that “*these lexical variances are related to the trainees’ linguistic competence in the target language; however, using the wrong tense might be because they were in a hurry to submit their translations*”.

When asked about the reason behind the mistake of translating the brown-skinned girl into ‘brunette’ (Line 6), some interviewees (seven out of 10) referred to the use of Arabic-English dictionaries that have translated this wrongly, offering them a limited variety of the possible conceptual variances each choice can evoke. This raises the question of whether these bilingual dictionaries are written based on critical cognitive awareness of the differences between these lexical choices across the two languages and cultures.

When the interviewed students were asked the following question regarding their use of Arabic-English dictionaries, *I usually use a bilingual English-Arabic (Arabic-English) dictionary but do not consult monolingual dictionaries* (Question 1 in the interview schedule), all of them answered ‘yes’.

The translations *brown* granddaughter* (F=13; see Figure 11 above) and *dark-skinned granddaughter* (F=14; see Figure 12 above) represent better translation choices for foreignizing the meaning of the source text to the target reader in a way that brings him to the flavour and original scene given in the Arabic poem in comparison to the translation *brunette*.

When commenting on these lexical choices, Interviewees 1, 2, 3, and 5 did not spot the difference and thought that *brunette* was a good equivalent. On the other hand, Interviewees 4, 7, 8, and 9 reported that the use of *brunette* was not appropriate.

However, while Interviewee 7 thought that dark-skinned is an appropriate alternative translation, Interviewees 6, 8, and 9 stated that *brown* is a better choice because it can be used to refer to some Arabs, while *dark-skinned* may be used to refer to Africans.

On the other hand, Interviewees 1 and 3 argued that *hugged* was a good lexical equivalence for translating Line 7 (Figure 13) before they became surprised when told about the conceptual differences their lexical choice may evoke in comparison to ‘embraced’ (Figure

14). In fact, all the Interviewees, i.e., 10 out of 10 agreed that *the trainees were not always aware of the conceptual variance their translations can evoke in the target language* (Question 10 in the interview schedule).

Additionally, Interviewees 4 and 5 suggested *met*; when asked about their choice, the latter (Interviewee 5) stated that *met* is a safer choice, as it will not evoke physical or romantic scenarios that may distort the original meaning of the source text, as *hugged* may evoke. Interviewee 3 chose '*embraced*'.

As discussed earlier, the interviewees agreed that consulting Arabic-English dictionaries was their first practice when translating and *that they do not spare the use of machine translation in their daily practices* (Question 3 in the interview schedule, Q.3, henceforth). This may have reduced their TL understanding of the conceptual variances each choice may evoke. On the other hand, 90% (9/10) agreed that *the use of parallel corpora* (Q.4) or *monolingual dictionaries in the target language* (Q. 2) was not regularly their first choice when translating an Arabic text into English.

Overall, the interviewees agreed, based on the presented findings, that 1) *the cognitive corpus-based analysis of the trainees' translations was very helpful* (Q.5), and 2) *the cognitive corpus-based analysis of the translators' translations could raise their critical language awareness* (Q. 7). However, when asked *whether their MA program in translation included similar critical corpus-based training* (Q. 13), 80% of the respondents, including one of the instructors, stated that they did not have similar critical training. However, two interviewees disagreed and attributed the use of similar training to the efforts of one of their outstanding instructors.

Discussion

While the corpus-based analysis identified substantial conceptual and lexical variances in the translators' translations, the interviews and focus group discussions explained the corpus findings, offering insights into the cognitive and pedagogical reasons underlying these translation errors. Most respondents attributed mistranslations and deletions to low English competence, lack of historical knowledge, and overreliance on bilingual dictionaries. The findings of this study align with previous research that underscores the importance of critical language awareness in training translators. While Gutknecht and Rolle's (1996) conceptual invariance principle posits that retaining conceptual meaning is a fundamental requirement for translation, the study's cognitive corpus-based analysis revealed that translators often violated this principle. They violated the conceptual invariance principle (Gutknecht & Rolle, 1996) by producing unintended conceptual shifts, such as misrepresenting spatial relationships through incorrect prepositions or culturally misinterpreting historical and figurative elements (Figures 1-14).

For example, the problem encountered by nine trainees in translating the clause *في مدخل الحمراء كان لقائنا*, which means *At Alhambra's entrance, we met* (Line 1), indicates that they tended to find the English preposition *in* (but not *at*) as an equivalent to the Arabic preposition *في* *fi*. While this can be true in other contexts, its current use is a mistranslation because it evokes a different schematic/conceptual representation of the source meaning given in Line 1. This can be attributed to the claim that trainees lack the required awareness of the variant spatial and schematic meanings that each of the prepositions *at* and *in* can evoke/denote in English.

While the preposition *at* can denote the meaning of a location (usually used to describe *arriving at cities/places*), the use of the preposition in this context is inaccurate. It denotes the containment of something inside a container (Evans and Green, 2006; Talmy, 2000). For discussions of similar mistranslations and difficulties encountered by Arab translators translating into English, see Al Yaari and Aajami (2019), Almaflehi (2013), and Hummadi et al. (2020).

Another example is the lexical variance found in translating Line 6 through variant lexicogrammatical patterns and tenses (Figures 4-9). This grammatical variance explains how the cognitive unawareness of the schematic meaning² evoked by ‘different lexicogrammatical structures’, such as those in Al Zumor (2021) may result in numerous conceptual variances. Therefore, variances in rendering the grammatical structure can also violate the conceptual invariance demand stressed by Gutknecht and Rolle (1996) and result in an inaccurate reformulation of the SL conceptual meaning (Faber, 1998).

Therefore, based on the many examples discussed above (Figures 1-14), it can be concluded that the translators in the current study demonstrated divergent linguistic choices that modified the source text’s conceptual reality.

While Bowker (1999) posited that corpora enhance translators’ linguistic awareness and reduce resistance to corrective feedback, the present study advances this perspective by illustrating how cognitive corpus-based critical discourse analysis uncovers both lexical and conceptual variance. The results have direct implications for Baker’s (2010) argument that corpus-based approaches require cognitive analysis to fully interpret the linguistic patterns found. These discrepancies highlight a gap in training methodologies, suggesting that translators need more exposure to cognitive corpus-based critical discourse analysis to refine their critical awareness.

Cognitive Corpus-Based Critical Discourse Analysis in Translators’ Training

When interviewees were asked about the merits of this methodology, i.e. *How did you find the use of the critical corpus-based discourse analysis methodology in translator training?* (Q. 15), their responses were categorised and summarised as follows:

1. It increases the trainees' critical awareness of language and their mistakes (Interviewees 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, and 10) by presenting and discussing their translations in the light of critical cognitive corpus-based analysis. This is similar to Bowker (1999, p. 160), who found that the use of corpora helped in raising the translators’ language awareness and contributed to minimising their resistance to mistake correction.

² Not the schematic meaning of the used lexical items alone, but also the meaning evoked by the grammatical structures used as given in the source text, e.g. *when it sent me back to/took me back to/bringing me back to.*

2. It improves trainees' critical understanding of the conceptual variances their lexical choices might inaccurately evoke in the target language and culture (Interviewees 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, and 10). This supports the conclusions drawn by Rodríguez-Inés (2012), who found that corpus-driven exercises help translators recognise lexical and conceptual discrepancies.
3. *It provides friendly critical feedback, where the trainees can see their mistakes without being embarrassed* (Interviewees 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, and 10), especially since their names were coded and anonymised in this type of collective training.
4. *It improves trainees' translations and their linguistic competence by exposing them to alternative translations made by their peers* (Interviewees 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, and 10).
5. It improves the trainer's instructions by enabling them to identify common patterns and errors or misinterpretations made in translations, which, in turn, can allow for targeted improvement and refinement of instructions (Interviewee 9).
6. It helps the teacher/trainer deliver feedback collectively and anonymously by coding the names of the trainees in the corpus concordance software (Interviewees 3 and 10).
7. It encourages translators to stop their overreliance on bilingual dictionaries and consult the available online parallel corpora (Malamatidou, 2017) to understand the discourse world of some collocations and phrases, as well as 'pack up' their translation decisions (Interviewees 3, 6, and 10).

This reminds us of Rodríguez-Inés' (2012) argument that "a corpus-based SL-oriented exercise can also help demonstrate the relative value of native-speaker intuition and make students aware of the importance of using documentary resources such as electronic corpora to back up their decisions" (p. 237). Lastly, the findings of this study contribute to the broader argument for the need for a cognitive corpus-based approach in translator training. Instances in which trainees struggled with choosing the right lexical choices or lexicogrammatical structures, such as rendering "Umayyaton" and "took me back to a brown-granddaughter" inaccurately or misinterpreting spatial and historical elements (Figures 1-14), support Fairclough's (1992, 2013) claim that critical language awareness is necessary for understanding language use in its wider context. The responses from the interviewed instructors and trainees further indicated that these translation issues stemmed not only from linguistic incompetence but also from a lack of historical and cognitive familiarity with the discourse world of the SL text.

The findings support Liu and Chen's (2021) call for instructional interventions to enhance the critical awareness of trainee translators and align with Ji et al.'s (2025) emphasis on incorporating cognitive linguistics in translation studies, as well as Otaif's (2024, 2025) premise that triangulating cognitive linguistics, corpus linguistics, and critical discourse analysis can 1) improve translators' critical awareness of the conceptual variances their translations may introduce, and 2) strengthen the translator training protocols by equipping translators with deeper conceptual and linguistic awareness.

Conclusion

Overall, the current study demonstrates that critical language awareness in translation is a prerequisite that extends beyond basic linguistic proficiency, requiring critical cognitive knowledge to identify conceptual and lexical variances between source and target texts. Previous studies, such as Bowker (1999), Baker (1993, 1995, 1996, 2000), Rodríguez-Inés (2012), and Chen and Shen (2025), have emphasised the importance of corpus-based approaches; however, the current study extends these insights by showing how violations of Gutknecht and Rolle's (1996) conceptual invariance principle impact translation quality in a way that may distort the source text's conceptual coherence and cultural narrative. The findings also indicate that incorporating cognitive critical corpus-based training can strengthen translators' abilities to assess their TL lexical choices, including their conceptual representations, with greater accuracy. Future research should explore pedagogical frameworks that integrate cognitive corpus-based critical discourse analysis, ensuring that trainees not only refine their linguistic skills but also enhance their awareness of socio-semantic structures, thus fostering more precise and culturally attuned translations.

Given that Faber (1998) stressed the importance of critical language awareness in translation but admitted that it is 'difficult' to help trainees 'refine this faculty' (Bowker, 1999), the current approach offers a way forward to train novice translators and professional trainers to overcome this difficulty, consult online corpora, and avoid chances of arriving at inaccurate translations that may threaten their cogency and distort the intended meaning of the original (source) text they are translating, especially when it comes to literary translation. While the findings of the current study were limited to translating literary texts and one MA program, they could be of great relevance to other programs and texts. Future research should expand across multiple genres and institutional contexts, investigating how cognitive corpus-based methods function in domains such as legal or scientific translation. This could reveal genre-specific conceptual variances and their socio-political implications in real-life situations, which can inform tailored pedagogical interventions in translator training. Finally, in light of the current study's findings, future research may examine affective or motivational variables, such as anxiety, confidence, or identity, which may influence the translator's translation behaviour, especially after receiving cognitive corpus-based feedback and training.

Acknowledgements

As the world currently celebrates Teachers' Day on the 5th of October every year, I dedicate this piece to my trainees and students, whose commitment to excellence remains a source of inspiration. Always remember that mistakes are indispensable and essential catalysts for growth. I also extend my appreciation to the editorial team of the JRLT for their professional support throughout the review process.

Funding

This research received grant No. 93/2022 from the Arab Observatory for Translation (an affiliate of ALECSO), which is supported by the Literature, Publishing & Translation Commission in Saudi Arabia.

Bio

Dr. Fahad Ahmed Otaif is an Associate Professor of Linguistics: Discourse Analysis and Translation at King Khalid University. He worked as vice dean for Quality and Academic Development at the College of Languages and Translation at King Khalid University, and as a lecturer in semantics and cognitive linguistics at the University of Bangor, UK.

He publishes and writes about language use, thought and translation. He is the author of:

Otaif, F. (2023) *Riwayah, A Journey into Literary Translation*. Madarik Publishing House.

References

- Aajami, R. F. (2019). A Cognitive Linguistic Study of the English Preposition 'in'. *Journal of College of Education for Women* 30(3), 37-49. <https://doi.org/10.36231/coedw.v30i3.1231>
- Al Yaari, A. S., & Almaflehi, N. (2013). The Problem of Translating the Prepositions at, in and on into Arabic: An Applied Linguistic Approach. *Journal for the Study of English Linguistics*, 1(2), 256-273. <https://doi.org/10.5296/jsel.v1i2.4744>
- Al Zumor, A. Q. (2021). Exploring Intricacies in English Passive Construction Translation in Research Articles' Abstracts by Arab Author-Translators. *Sage Open*, 11 (3), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244021104755>
- Al-Hejin, B. (2012). Linking critical discourse analysis with translation studies: An example from BBC News. *Journal of Language and Politics*, 11(3), 311-335. <https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.11.3.01alh>
- Baker, M. (1993). Corpus linguistics and translation studies: Implications and applications. In M. Baker, G. Francis, & E. Tognini-Bonelli (Eds.), *Text and technology: In honour of John Sinclair* (pp. 233–250). John Benjamins.
- Baker, M. (1995). Corpora in translation studies: An overview and some suggestions for future research. *Target* 7(2), 223–243. <https://doi.org/10.1075/target.7.2.03bak>
- Baker, M. (1996). Corpus-based translation studies: The challenges that lie ahead. In *Terminology, LSP and translation: Studies in language engineering*, in Honour of Juan C. Sager, ed. H. Somers, 175–186. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Baker, M. (2000). 'Towards a Methodology for Investigating the Style of a Literary Translator', *Target* 12(2), 41–66. <https://doi.org/10.1075/target.12.2.04bak>
- Baker, P. (2023). *Using Corpora in Discourse Analysis*, 2nd ed. London: Continuum.
- Bowker, L. (1999). Exploring the Potential of Corpora for Raising Language Awareness in Student Translators. *Language Awareness* 8(3/4), 160-173. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09658419908667126>
- Charteris-Black, J. (2004). *Corpus Approaches to Critical Metaphor Analysis*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Charteris-Black, J. (2021) *Metaphors of Coronavirus Invisible Enemy Or Zombie Apocalypse?*. Cham. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Chen, Y., & Shen, L. (2025). The implementation of a corpus-construction project on student translators: Competence development and challenges. *Amazonia Investiga*, 14(86), 103–113. <https://doi.org/10.34069/AI/2025.86.02.9>

- Daghigh, A. J., & Guo, L. (2024). A socio-cognitive account of ideological manipulation in Chinese translation of political opinion articles. *Journalism Practice*, 18(5), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2024.2373183>
- Elewa, A. (2019). A critical discourse analysis of ideological translations of Arabic quotations in English language newspapers, *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 19(5):393-406. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2019.1569672>
- Evans, V. (2009). *How Words Mean: Lexical Concepts, Cognitive Models and Meaning Construction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Evans, V. (2010). Figurative Language Understanding in LCCM Theory. *Cognitive Linguistics*, 21(4): 601–662. <https://www.degruyterbrill.com/document/doi/10.1515/cogl.2010.020/html>
- Evans, V., & Green, M. (2006). *Cognitive Linguistics: An Introduction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd.
- Faber, P. (1998). Translation Competence and Language Awareness, *Language Awareness*, 7(1): 9-21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09658419808667097>
- Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical Discourse Analysis, the Critical Study of Language*. 1st ed. New York: Longman Group Limited.
- Fairclough, N. (1992/2013). *Critical Language Awareness*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge.
- Gutknecht, C., & Rolle, L. (1996). *Translating by Factors: The Missed Encounter*. SUNY series in Linguistics Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Hummadi, A. S., Mat Said, S. B., Hussein, R. M., Sabti, A. A., & Hattab, H. A. A. (2020). Rhetorical Loss in Translating Prepositional Phrases of the Holy Qur'an. *Sage Open*, 10(1):1-13.
- Ji, M., Fu, J., & Wang, F. (2025). Comparative and cognitive dimensions of corpus-based translation stylistics. *Studia Neophilologica*, 97(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00393274.2025.2489936>
- Koller, V. (2006). Of critical importance: Using electronic text corpora to study metaphor in business media discourse. In A. Stefanowitsch & S. T. Gries (Eds.), *Corpus-Based Approaches to Metaphor and Metonymy* (pp. 237–266). Mouton de Gruyter.
- Koller, V., & Mautner, G. (2004). Computer applications in critical discourse analysis. In C. Coffin, A. Hewings, & K. O'Halloran (Eds.), *Applying English Grammar: Functional and corpus approaches* (pp. 216–228). Hodder & Stoughton.
- Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: Chicago University Press
- LDCE, (2025). *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.ldoceonline.com/> [Accessed 06 Jan. 2025]. Pearson.
- Liu, C.-T., & Chen, Y.-S. (2021). Awareness of linguistic ambiguity and translator training. *SAGE Open*, 11(4), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440211068467>
- Lyons, J. (1981). *Language, Meaning and Context*. Netherlands. Fontana Publisher
- Malamatidou, S. (2017). *Corpus Triangulation: Combining Data and Methods in Corpus-Based Translation Studies*. Abingdon: Routledge.

- Malmkjær, K. (2017). Language awareness and translation. In P. Garrett & J. M. Cots (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Language Awareness* (pp. 450–466). Routledge.
- Munday, J., & Zhang, M. (2017). *Discourse Analysis in Translation Studies*. 2nd Edition. Amsterdam, Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Newmark, P. (1988). *Approaches to Translation*. Hertfordshire: Prentice Hall.
- Nord, C. (2005). *Text Analysis in Translation: Theory Methodology, and Didactic Application of a Model for Translation-Oriented Text Analysis*, 2nd Edition. Amsterdam, Rodopi.
- OOLD. (2025). *Oxford Learners Dictionaries*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com> [Accessed 09 April. 2024]. Oxford.
- Otaif, F. A. (2019). *Semantic Associations, Epistemic Priming, and Cognitive Mechanisms in Media Discourse* [Doctoral thesis, Bangor University, UK]. Bangor University Research Portal. <https://research.bangor.ac.uk/en/studentTheses/semantic-associations-epistemic-priming-and-cognitive-mechanisms->
- Otaif, F. A. (2024). Conceptual Narratives in Translated Discourse. *Journal of Research in Language & Translation*, 4(2), 117-235. <https://doi.org/10.33948/JRLT-KSU-4-2-11>
- Otaif, F. A. (2025). The Cultural Alterity in Translated Media Discourse. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*. 16 (3), 911-923. <https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.1603.21>
- Pym, A. & Hao, Y. (2025). *How to Augment Language Skills: Generative AI and Machine Translation in Language Learning and Translator Training*. Routledge
- Rodríguez-Inés, P. (2012). Using corpora for awareness-raising purposes in translation, especially into a foreign language (Spanish–English). *Perspectives: Studies in Translation Theory and Practice*, 20(3), 222–241. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0907676X.2012.685239>
- Rojo, A., & Ibarretxe-Antuñano, I. (Eds.). (2013). *Cognitive Linguistics and Translation. Advances in some theoretical models and applications*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter
- Schäffner, C. (2000). Discourse Analysis for Translation and Translator Training: Status, Needs, Methods. *Current Issues in Language and Society*, 7 (3), 177-184. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13520520009615580>
- Talmy, L. (2000). *Toward a Cognitive Semantics*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Taylor, S. K., Despagne, C., & Faez, F. (2017). Critical language awareness. In John I. Liontas, Editor in Chief (Project Editor: Margo DelliCarpini; Vol. Ed.: Shahid Abrar-ul-Hassan), *The TESOL encyclopedia of English language teaching: Teaching speaking and pronunciation in TESOL* (pp. 1–32). John Wiley & Sons.
- van Leeuwen, T. (2008). *Discourse and Practice*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Wendland, R. (2019). Translating ‘translation’: What do translators ‘translate’? In S. Faiq, (Ed.) *Discourse in Translation* (pp. 8–30). Abingdon. Routledge.
- Zabalbeascoa, P. (1994). Awareness in translation. *Language Awareness*, 3(3-4), 161–174. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09658416.1994.9959854>
- Zabalbeascoa, P. (1997). Language awareness and translation. In L. Van Lier & D. Corson (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Language and Education* (Vol. 6, pp. 199–213). Springer.