



**An-Najah National University  
Faculty of Graduate Studies**

**TRANSLATION AND SITUATIONALITY:  
REGISTER ANALYSIS OF MUSTAFA  
KHALIFA'S "*THE SHELL*"**

**By  
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**This Thesis is Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master  
of Applied Linguistics and Translation, Faculty of Graduate Studies, An-Najah National  
University, Nablus, Palestine.**

**2025**

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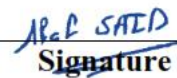
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## **Dedication**

To the destined sequence of coincidences that led me back to my English department and guided me throughout my 2-year journey.

To the rebellious spirits that write and revolt and inspire us to read and contemplate.

To the broken soul of “Musa” and all prisoners who endure the cruelties and injustices of this world.

To my family and friends who always supported me.

To my supervisor, who brought out a version of me that has been long buried and hidden.

Lastly, to that little girl inside. This is all for you.

## **Acknowledgments**

Since this journey of hard work, dedication and constant push-throughs is coming to an end, it is worthwhile giving those who deserve the credit. First and foremost, I wholeheartedly thank my supervisor, Dr Rami, because despite the endless arguments we had, he was the inspirational figure that brought the academic version of me to light. He was one of the most influential people who crossed my path, and seeing the potential in me was something that completely and ultimately changed the course of my life. For that, I will forever be grateful.

I am also grateful for having my family beside me, for their support and encouragement. The companions with whom I shared this long path. The great minds who shaped and enriched the way I perceive the world around me, my professors. To the journey itself, by which I discovered who I am and where I want to be in this life.

I grieve the fact that this is coming to an end, yet I take pride in all the achievements and steps I have taken through it all.

This work, in so many peculiar ways, has become a part of my identity. I hope it can contribute to the world of research, knowledge and intellectuality.

## Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that I submitted the thesis entitled:

### **TRANSLATION AND SITUATIONALITY: REGISTER ANALYSIS OF MUSTAFA KHALIFA'S "*THE SHELL*"**

I declare that the work provided in this thesis, unless otherwise referenced, is the researcher's own work, and has not been submitted elsewhere for any other degree or qualification.

**Student's Name**

**Hiba Aqrouq**

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**Signature:**



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**Date:**

**14/12/2025**

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# TRANSLATION AND SITUATIONALITY: REGISTER ANALYSIS OF MUSTAFA KHALIFA'S "*THE SHELL*"

By

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## Abstract

This study examines the translation of register as a meaning-determining linguistic phenomenon in Mustafa Khalifa's *The Shell*. The novel relies heavily on variation between formal and informal registers, including the Syrian dialect, to construct character voice and identity and to situate the narrative within a specific socio-political context.

Adopting a systemic functional perspective, the study investigates how register functions in the source text and whether these functions are preserved in translation. It addresses the question of how register-based meaning is affected in the target text and what consequences this has for the novel's overall meaning and reception.

The analysis draws on register analysis, supported by discourse and stylistic analysis, to examine selected examples and the strategies employed by the translator. The findings show that insufficient sensitivity to register in translation can lead to the homogenisation of character voices and the loss of crucial contextual and political meanings. The study concludes that attention to register is essential for preserving the force, authenticity and multidimensionality of politically and socially charged literary texts.

**Keywords:** Translation, Literary works, Register, Situationality, Context, Socio-political

# Chapter One

## Introduction and Literature Review

### 1.1 Introduction

Translation of literary works is notoriously a big challenge and a demanding task. Unlike technical or pragmatic translation, literary translation does not only aim towards achieving accuracy or equivalence, but requires the translator to be able to recreate, to an extent, the textual world for the TT reader to re-live. Features that define literature, such as aestheticness, cultural and functional layering of meaning, tasks the translator to go beyond the propositional meaning of the work. As Almanna (2013, p.14) notes, the expressive dimension of literary language is deliberately designed to leave a lasting impression on the reader, which places on the translator the responsibility of employing multiple strategies to preserve both the aesthetic force and functional integrity of the discourse. At the same time, however, being faithful to the source text and its author has been a stable expectation, with great scholars such as Newmark (1981) advocating for approaches that are text-oriented, such as semantic translation, to prioritise maximum recreation of contextual meaning while minimising any deviation. In addition to the dilemma of preserving the meaning and faithfulness to form, there are more demanding challenges, such as the cultural references that are heavily present in literary works, the narrative style, and most importantly, register, which is a crucially functional element in building meaning within the literary genre, yet still understudied.

Register, as defined by (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 23), is the configuration of meanings typically associated with a particular situation. This linguistic phenomenon is deployed in literature to build situational contexts which underpin the narrative world. Shifts and variations in register are essential for constructing character identity, signalling power dynamics, and embedding the story within its socio-historical and geographical setting. As Bakhtin (1981) reminds us, the literary text is a polyphonic space where multiple social registers coexist and compete, contributing to the dialogic richness of the work. Yet this very multifunctionality of register, central to the process of meaning construction, presents a formidable challenge in translation. Dialects, sociolects, and temporally or

geographically bound registers often lack direct equivalents in the target language, creating a risk of flattening the text see (Almanna, 2013; Munday, 2008). This may distort the literary identity of the work, given that “register is inseparable from identity” (Srieh, 2023).

Despite this pivotal role of register in constructing meaning, it is still a subject that is considered understudied and has attracted little scholarly attention. The phenomenon is still overlooked even when it performs a major role in determining meaning. This study aims to address this gap by examining this functionality and the challenge it creates in translation. More importantly, the effects translation may have on the intended functions of register in the original text. Variation between formal and informal registers, the deployment of Syrian dialect, and the deliberate use of typographical elements collectively serve to construct character voices, convey ideological stances, and dramatise the power relations within the prison context. Register here is not a mere stylistic ornament but a primary meaning-making resource. Adding to the linguistic aspect, the narrative it puts forward is sensitive and critical. The intricate socio-political background, the straightforward opposition and the portrayal of governmental figures all add to the value of the work as a piece of literature.

The English translation, published in 2017 by the British scholar Paul Starkey, raises important questions about how these layered functions of register are negotiated in translation. How are character voices and identities carried over into the target text? Are the socio-political and geographical markers embedded in dialect preserved, adapted, or lost? What happens to the typographical features that contribute to the novel’s visual and dramatic impact? And ultimately, how does translation affect the reader’s experience of a work so deeply rooted in its political, cultural, and linguistic context?

To answer these questions, the study employs a comparative methodology that utilises register analysis, along with other tools from discourse analysis and stylistics. Each function of register is categorized with the corresponding passage that exemplifies it. The first section illustrates how register played a crucial role in giving characters in the novel their voice, assigning them with an ideology and a stance in the political context and

shaping the power dynamic of the prison. The second focuses on register as a tool to build context and provides readers with information on the temporal and geographical aspects of the story. The third section addresses the visual element of register, which manifests in the typographical elements employed throughout the novel. In each section, the analysis evaluates the translator's strategies and procedures with a particular focus on their impact on the intended functions of register and the readership experience for the TT readers.

By situating the translation of register at the center of analysis, this study not only illuminates the complexities of translating politically charged literature but also contributes to broader debates in translation studies regarding the negotiation of form, function, and ideology in literary texts.

## **1.2 Literature Review**

### **1.2.1 Conceptual framework**

#### **1.2.1.1 The political manifestations of literature**

Literature and Politics share a rather expected yet stimulating connection. Any work of literature is partly a product of sociological and political factors; conversely, important literary works throughout history have greatly impacted societies (Lindberg, 1968, p. 164). So, both literature and politics influence each other simultaneously. The degree and direction of influence, however, can vary. The political context can be a mere source of inspiration for a literary work or it can function as a mould that frames its features. At other times, it can be the primary objective behind a piece of writing. George Orwell, one of the most renowned and probably the most-read political writers, enlists political purposes as one of the biggest motives for writing. He explains that a "sense of injustice" was always his starting point when writing a book. that there is either a lie he wishes to expose or a fact to shed light on and that the initial purpose is to get a hearing (1998, p.319).

What makes political purposes, as motives for writing, more contentious than other motives like self-expression or aesthetic enthusiasm, for example, is that it is believed to have the power to influence. Or as Marks (2012) phrases it, political literature has the ability to "push the world in certain directions". It is argued that such a topic in literature

can generate a response in the reader's mind, one that influences the process of belief formation, affects the perspectives of the audience and even triggers the desire for action. Literature does that by “Setting up or destroying taboos, conventions, and social prejudices”, thus contributing to a change in values and as a result, inciting political and social change on a collective level (Lindberg, 1968, p. 164). Referencing Leavis’s (1963) notion of the subjective response of readers, Brown (1977) explains that stimulating a reactive response in the minds of individuals is intrinsic to political literature (Brown, 1977, p. 568).

With such power, political literature has always been controversial and is treated with a rather guarded attitude. This attitude is not by any means recent. It dates back to the times of Socrates, who was suspicious of the effects such works may have on his community, so he actively only allowed works that were hymns praising gods or known manly figures to be read in his republic (Jowett, 1944, p. 537).

#### **1.2.1.2 Functions of register in literary works**

All existing definitions of register agree that a register patterns language use and that each pattern then operates conventionally in social settings. Halliday (1978) defines it as “the set of meanings, the configuration of semantic patterns, that are typically drawn upon under the specific conditions, along with the words and structures that are used in the realization of these meanings” (Halliday, London, p. 23). The socio-cultural part of the definitions suggests that there is a conventionalized function that is agreed upon within a society for each pattern. With one being aware of or even familiar with that function, he becomes consciously selective of the language pattern that is supposed to be incorporated. Speakers thus have a scale of patterns and items at their disposal to choose from, per what is most appropriate for the situation of use (Halliday, London, p. 93).

A register is mainly recognized through linguistic features and forms, which are used due to their consistency with the function of that register. This creates an association with the form and the situation, thus creating the pattern that makes this language use conventional to that situation. Biber & Conrad (2019) emphasize this conventionalization, explaining that linguistic features employed in a register are always functional and their frequent

occurrence in that register is attributed to their well-suitedness to the purpose and the situational context (Biber & Conrad, 2019, p. 6).

Because the notion of register suggests that the how in language use is as important as the what, register hence is of great significance when it comes to literature. Being able to recognise and interpret register can be instrumental when reading or writing a literary work; a reader or a writer knows that choosing a register means choosing a purpose and that any deviation from the standard or expected register will certainly have an effect or perform a certain goal in the text (Butler, 1999). So being aware of the register is the first step to both establishing and understanding meaning in a literary text.

Register can be used as a tool for building as well as deconstructing elements of a literary work. The vocabulary, structure, and embedding contribute to establishing the text's setting and the characters' voices in it. If we think about any work of literature that we ever enjoyed, we'll find that each character had a peculiar register, one that we could almost hear and envision, this voice is what gives the character its spirit and makes it an independent entity. "Register in literary work gives voice to the character, the way it thinks and sounds" (Butler, 1999, p. 17). It is register that gives the reader the ability to draw mental images of characters, imagine the place where events are taking place, and interact with the fluctuating flow of emotions and thoughts throughout the text. Register then makes the reader more involved by pushing him towards the right interpretations, and also enables the writer to produce a distinguished piece of literature (Butler, 1999).

Register can also give each genre of literature its distinctive features. Although the notions of register and genre may sometimes be confused with each other, they are different in the sense that genres are "conventional instances of organised texts" as Coutre calls them (1986, p.80), while register is the "expression plane" of a genre (Martin, 1985). A genre thus typifies a text as a whole, while register typifies the linguistic choices that are used in the process of artistic production of a text, which falls under a genre. An epic, for example, is a genre of literature; its register is usually formal and excessively metaphorical. It uses this register because it is an epic, and one of the reasons that it is recognized as one is its register.

### **1.2.1.3 Register and its interconnection with translation**

The notion of register is deeply rooted within translation studies and translation as a practice. As an analyst and a producer of the TT, the translator is expected to be able to digest the meaning of the linguistic choices made by the writer and systematically relate these choices to an expanded sociocultural framework (Munday, 2001, p. 90). In other words, a good translator will pay attention to registral considerations, observe the variations and their functions, and accordingly, employ the translation techniques that shall preserve the function while also minimizing loss.

This sensitivity to a text's register will push the translator to view it in regard to the situational context, and ask the questions: what is being communicated? By whom? And to whom? A text is hence treated as a macro-structure with a communicative purpose, a sign. This view of the text as a communicative event implies that a translator's duty is not limited to capturing the meaning of words and transferring them to another language. Rather, s\he must embody assumptions, presuppositions and conventions that reflect the way a given text constructs and partitions reality (Hatim & Munday, 2004, p. 84). Hatim and Mason (1990) further support this statement, for they consider viewing a text not as a static entity but as a negotiation between participants as key to translation, its understanding, teaching and judgement (Mason & Hatim, 1990, pp. 64-65).

Halliday was the one to put forward the register theory in 1964. His theory suggests analyzing texts using the three variables of field, mode and tenor. This premise has had a great impact on translation studies ever since. "The field of a text is associated with ideational meaning, which is realised through transitivity patterns (verb types, active/passive structures, participants in the process, etc.)" (Munday, 2008, p. 91). Through field, there are mental images of a reality that are being constructed and world experiences being expressed linguistically. The importance of studying transitivity choices in translation lies in maintaining these mental images, depicting the participants' roles, and, as a result, guaranteeing a somewhat accurate translation. The second variable, tenor, is defined as "the addresser's temporal, geographical and social provenance as well as his intellectual, emotional or affective stance (his 'personal viewpoint')" (House, 1997, p. 101). The reader\ receiver can infer certain information about social status, power

dynamics, social roles, and the relations between participants through a text's tenor. Here, notions like formality, social distance, personalization, accessibility and others, come into practice. To maintain the relations, statuses and attitudes throughout the process of translation, the textual selections should be made congruously (Bayer, 2007).

Lastly, the mode of discourse, which is "the channel used by the writer\ speaker to carry the message, a medium that can be written or spoken" (Al-Manna', 2013, p.133), is also deemed necessary to take into consideration when translating. A translator's progress is slowed down when analyzing the medium of the text and attempting to reproduce the characteristics it creates in the TT (ibid).

In the view of translation as a cross-cultural act, register plays a major role. The definition given to culture as the form of things in people's minds, their models of perceiving and how they say and do things according to their sociocultural norms (Goodenough, 1964, pp. 39-40) takes us back to the conventionality of register. Translating a text that is rich with a cultural load requires the translator to be an insider in both cultures and languages and that s\he are familiar with the patterns of register, especially those that are marked (dialects and sociolects). This way, a translator would know when it is appropriate to use a functional equivalent, when to use a communicative one, or when to translate literally, for instance, ensuring that the language and content of the TT will allow its reader to interact in a parallel or proximate fashion to the ST reader (Hall, 2008, p. 224).

The relationship between register and translation is even more intricate when it comes to literature. A literary work is highly dependent on its stylistic aspect, which is its register. "Register and genre and their inherent connections with the social and ideological factors, in fact, prove to be decisive in matters of translation" (Peinado & Membrives, 2012, p. 121). The functionality of register -that is discussed earlier- in constructing the elements of a literary work explains why it is crucial to its translation; "A literary work is speakable, and its speakability is not sentence-based but voice-based" (Banfield, 1982). Translation of a literary work, then, does not require mere conveyance of meaning; preserving the effect and the aesthetics is just as important. The translator thus needs to be focused and actively involved in reproducing the "fictional space" (Peinado & Membrives, 2012, p. 121).

#### **1.2.1.4 Situationality as a feature of textuality and a tool of translation assessment**

Situationality is one of the seven features of textuality. It explains how a text has a profound relationship with the context in which it occurs, creating a situation. This feature determines the meaning of the text within a specific social, cultural and temporal setting. It can be defined as “the location of a text in a discrete sociocultural context in a real time and place” (Neubert & Shreve, 1992, p. 85), emphasising that the situational meaning of a text inherently gains its meaning from the sociocultural environment. Similarly, Dressler (1992) describes situationality as “a general designation for the factors which render a text relevant to a current or recoverable situation of occurrence” (136), explaining that readers interpret a text by integrating situational evidence with prior knowledge and expectations about how the world is organised. In this sense, situationality accounts for the interaction between language and its real-world context, ensuring that the text functions as a coherent communicative act rather than a detached linguistic artefact.

In literary texts, situationality plays a vital role in establishing the contextual framework that gives rise to character, setting, and thematic depth. The meaning of characters’ utterances, narrative tone, and stylistic nuances are all contingent upon the situations in which they occur. A literary text is thus embedded in multiple layers of situation: the fictional context that governs character interaction and the broader sociocultural context that informs the author’s linguistic and ideological choices. Understanding these situational dimensions is crucial for both interpretation and translation, since the situational relevance of linguistic features determines how readers perceive social relationships, power dynamics, and cultural realities within the text. Consequently, situationality serves not only as a textual feature but also as a means of reconstructing the socio-political and cultural world represented in literature.

The concept of situationality closely intersects with that of register, which Halliday & Hasan (1976) define as the configuration of linguistic features that correspond to the variables of a situation—field, tenor, and mode. These variables respectively describe what is happening, who is involved, and how communication is taking place. Register, therefore, functions as the linguistic reflection of situational context, encoding the social roles, relationships, and communicative purposes that constitute a particular setting. As

Halliday & Hasan (1976) observe, “register is used to portray characters’ situations and their environment and culture through their speech” (p.138). In literary work, the manipulation of register becomes a stylistic resource for character construction: differences in vocabulary, syntax, and tone often signal distinctions in class, education, profession, or ideology. From this perspective, situationality underlies the use of register as a tool for representing social reality, shaping how readers access and interpret the fictional world.

In translation, situationality becomes a decisive factor in achieving textual and functional equivalence between the source and target texts. It has been described as “an aspect of equivalence that should be achieved or assessed” (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1958/1995), since translation involves reproducing the situational relevance of the original text within a new linguistic and cultural system. Vinay & Darbelnet (1995) note that equivalence arises when different languages describe the same situation through distinct stylistic or structural means. House (1997) also emphasises that the situational dimension created by register serves as a tool for translation assessment, as the failure to reproduce it may result in a “covertly erroneous” translation. Mikhchi (2011) also highlights that “situationality is the central issue in translatability,” since a translation succeeds only when it re-establishes the situational function of the original text in the target culture. In this sense, Neubert & Shreve’s (1992) observation that translators employ procedures such as explicitation, compression, and textual rearrangement to preserve the text’s intentionality and functionality underscores the importance of situational equivalence. Thus, situationality constitutes a fundamental measure of translational adequacy, especially in literary translation, where preserving the situational and register-based nuances is essential for maintaining the integrity of character portrayal and the socio-cultural fabric of the original narrative.

#### **1.2.1.5 Functionality of typographical elements in literary works**

The graphical circumstances of a text, including its punctuation, have been given a cold shoulder in linguistic studies (Nunberg, 1990, p. 5). This neglectfulness is attributed to the common perception that punctuation marks, along with other stylistic devices, are supposed to be “inconspicuous” and remain unnoticed (Adorno & Jephcott, 1990) and that

their only purpose is to give a sense of structure to a written text. Language historicization and standardization of language, however, tells us that this subsystem arose to make written language as communicative as the spoken one (Nunberg, 1990, p. 7). This system of conventions hence has the function of indicating elements of speech that cannot usually be put on paper (Markwardt, 1942), this interrelation in its turn, plays a major role in constructing and interpreting texts, one that is as significant as the role of lexical content (Nunberg, 1990, pp. 5-6).

There have been multiple views on categorizing punctuation and its role. Bloomfield (1976) subsumed punctuation among visual or typographical stylistics, because of the visual effect it creates and its contribution to the text's aesthetics. He says that eye movement that comes from punctuation and spacing, the arrangement of letters and the shapes on paper all generate different responses from the reader. He even adds that such use of stylistic effects, such as repetition and parallelism, is an attempt from the writer to impose meaning on the meaningless (pp. 275-282). Others, like Summey (1919) have a unique look at the subject. To Summey, punctuation is an "art", not a "code" nor "a matter of mechanical correctness", and it serves as a vehicle for transferring cultural information. Brody (2008) does not just see punctuation as an art but as an art form, a performance, and considers punctuation as the material manifestation of the sculpture that is a text.

Thorndike (1948), on the other hand, takes the conversation to a whole new place. He argues that there is a psychology behind punctuation and that by viewing punctuation marks as "symptoms", they can operate as an index to the author's personality and character (p. 222-228). He argues that punctuation can also indicate the fashion of each writing era and its customs of class (p. 222). A textual outlook on the matter is presented by Gracia (1995), in which he stresses that there is a layer of meaning that belongs to the text and its cohesion specifically. He says that "punctuation, emphases, spaces (or silences), ...can be considered a sign constituting meaning" (Gracia, 1995, p. 13).

In literary works specifically, punctuation can be of even greater significance. Whether used conventionally or unconventionally, it can help produce rhythm, tone, and mood. It can also be used to shape meaning and add depth and complexity to the text

(Egamnazarova, 2023). Some even argue that punctuation can help add a sense of human presence, because it acts as a shorthand for human emotions, and gives character to the text whilst characterising the characters within it (Toner, 2011). To further explain, spacing, for instance, can function as a visual sign of abruptness, which in turn becomes a visual sign of the character's self. Another character's lack of punctuation, on the other hand, can be used to illustrate a failure to speak decorously and eloquently, which in turn gives information about the character's background (ibid). Brody (2008) adds that punctuation in a literary work can help the reader imagine gestures. She explains that even the absence of punctuation can be of function because it allows space for performance, a brief pause in which the reader is given time to reflect on tone and visualise body movements (p.76), "Punctuation has the ability to exist alone as an imagined gesture, a communication of effect, an independent performance of personality" (Leigh, 1840).

#### **1.2.1.6 Translation of punctuation marks**

Punctuation is one of the many factors that give a text its textual cohesion and texture (Bernárdez, 1982). It is, however, one of the features of textual cohesion that are constantly being ignored (Baer & Bystrova, 2009). Newmark (1988) says that "Punctuation is potent but is also easily overlooked" (p.58). It is no different when it comes to the translation of punctuation. There has been no scientific corpus that provides a clear guideline for translating punctuation marks, and most research done on the subject focuses on the grammatical\ syntactic function while dismissing the semantic aspect and connotative nature of punctuation marks. This marks a gap in translation studies, because communication and cognition are crucial to the form and function of punctuation (Granger & Lefer, 2020, p. 101). Punctuation "delimits units of locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary value, contributing to building the text structure and identifying the focus of the sentence, and guides the reader in decoding the hierarchy of information" (ibid).

When translating a text that employs punctuation as part of the communicative message, the translator thus faces a dilemma and is put on the spot to decide whether it is more important to sustain the syntactic or communicative function. It is then, "the letter vs. the spirit" (Nida, 1964, p. 3), meaning it becomes a dilemma of either prioritising the message or the form in which the message is originally presented. Baker (1992) suggests that

“Translators must develop sensitivity to the various signalling systems available in the language they work with” (p.151). Translators, in other words, need to have the skills that enable them to interpret the use of punctuation correctly and translate accordingly.

### **1.3 Previous studies**

Register and its analysis have been a growing subject of interest for researchers over the years. They are especially present in literary and translation studies. The theory of register analysis has been proposed as a method for translation betterment and assessment, while the notion of register as a linguistic concept has been used as a deconstructing tool that allows for a profound and more complex understanding of literary texts. This paper will combine the two premises comprehensively, bridging some major existing research gaps.

In a recent study, Ignacio, Temporas-Salundagit & Ilustre (2022) explain how discourse and register analysis could improve translation products for their new target audience, especially in classic literature. The paper demonstrates how the three register components (field, mode and tenor) can be used as parameters for translation assessment by comparing ST and TT profiles. It also proves the effectiveness of considering register in the translation process because it indicates the socio-cultural context, power relations, the author's attitude and background and many other aspects present in a piece of literature. This multidimensional facet of register is a main standpoint in this research since the case study narrates a controversial socio-political reality, and the theoretical framework is thus highly comparable. According to the authors, this incorporation of register per se can contribute to future studies aiming for the betterment of translation products. This reveals that the topic is, to an extent, still understudied. The paper, however remains rather theoretical with no demonstrative application of the proposition.

Yuan, 2017; Yang, 2019 put forward two papers where register as an assessment tool is actually applied to case studies. Yuan (2017) applies the notion to assess the translation of the novel *The Second World War*, searching for violations in field, tenor and mode equivalences followed by a discussion on the effects of these violations on the functional value of the text. The analysis proves the feasibility of employing register analysis in literary translation for it ensures the production of a functionally equivalent text with an

equivalent contextual meaning, thus an equivalent readership experience for the new reader. Following the same methodology, Yang (2019) conducts an assessment of the translation of *Beiyang* by Zhang Peji. He believes that register is an interface between linguistic and social meaning, and that is why a thorough analysis of it may guide the translator in selecting the most adequate strategies to achieve equivalence, unity of form, and communicativeness. Although the two studies acknowledge the intricacies of register in producing and assessing a TT, their analysis seems oversimplified with scarce reflection on the social and situational dimensions and a visible neglect of the textual aspect, particularly the cohesive graphical elements. This is problematic because the stylistic and visual aspects play a major role in interpreting and engaging with texts and have a significant functionality in literary works (Yirsaw, 2016, p. 3).

A more in-depth and different analysis of register is seen in White's (2016) paper on the translation of *L'Étranger*. Register here is regarded as a meaning-constructing element that establishes a social situation and invokes attitudinal variability. The study combines literary criticism and translation assessment, overviewing six different translations of selected portions of Camus's novel. The analysis discusses the effects register shifts can have on constructing a social situation within the text, concluding that attention to register is vital in understanding the communicative impact of translation choices on the ST. This focus on register and situationality and the effects of translation on both is the focal point of this research. The analysis White puts forward inarguably tackles a more dynamic, social and intertextual aspect of register, but is restricted to word level and still overlooks the importance of the textual dimension.

Previous research has also addressed the translation of politically and culturally charged Arabic fiction through the works of Elias Khoury. An illustrative example is a documented account of the translation of Khoury's *Rijāl Yashbahūnī* (*A Man Like Me*), which presents translation as a dialogic and collaborative process involving close interaction between the author and the translator. The study highlights how translation choices were shaped by historical, political, and cultural considerations rather than by linguistic equivalence alone. This approach foregrounds the translator's role in negotiating narrative voice and contextual meaning in texts that are deeply embedded in socio-political realities. Although

the study does not focus explicitly on register as a linguistic concept, it underscores challenges closely related to register-based meaning, such as the preservation of authorial voice, contextual specificity, and ideological nuance in translation. Such findings are relevant to the present study, which similarly examines how linguistic variation functions as a carrier of meaning in politically charged literary texts and how this meaning is affected in translation.

From register and translation to a more literature-focused view on the subject, Mahllberg & Egbert (2020) review the features and functionality of register variations in fiction. The study employs Multi-dimensional Analysis (MDA) to investigate the assumed difference between narration and fictional speech (conversation), register-wise. It showcases multiple examples to compare the informative and descriptive features of narration on one hand, and the involved production. A feature of characters' speech on the other. This debate of "registers within text" as opposed to the more common "texts within register" allowed for a systemised and comprehensive description of register in terms of features. The discussion this research incites raises bigger questions for the study of register. Moreover, it shows how the situational variation and complex context within fiction, generally, and novels in particular, have been ignored by most register studies.

This paper will employ register analysis as a translation assessment tool for literary works, taking into consideration the social, situational and semiotic aspects of the novel "*The Shell*". The analysis shall incorporate the severely understudied textual aspect, represented in the graphical organisation of texts and the use of typographical elements. It will also contribute to the discussion on register variation functionality in literary works while also linking it to translation studies.

## Chapter Two

### Methodology

#### 2.1 Research approach and data collection

This study adopts a qualitative comparative approach with reliance on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and literary stylistics. The objective is to investigate the effects of translation on the functionality of register in Mustafa Khalifa's *The Shell* (ST) and determine whether these functions were altered, compensated or completely lost, and how their loss would affect the text as a literary work that narrates a socio-political reality. In other words, the effects of translation on the function of register in building a situational context.

The chosen novel sets a great example of how register shifts and variations can be intentionally used in creating a situational context, not to mention the political motivations and social background of the novel, which makes the meaning-building process richer and more vigilant. The author shifts between formal and informal registers while also employing the Syrian dialect dynamically in character building, constructing a specific geographic and temporal context. Khalifa also employs typographical elements in dramatising even the visual dimension of the text. These features of functionality pose a significant translation challenge that this research aims to examine.

The selected data for analysis were extracted from the ST and its translation by Paul Starkey. The samples chosen all exemplify the three categorised functions of register: character building, context building and dramatising of the visual aspect. A total of sixteen excerpts were chosen, including narrative passages, dialogues and typographically indicative sections. The criteria for data selection were the functionality of register shifts, the use of dialects or sociolects, and instances where typographical elements (such as punctuation marks, repetition) contributed to the textual meaning.

## **2.2 Analysis procedures**

The analytical procedure operates on three interlinked levels: word, clause and text.

### **Word Level**

Discourse analysis was employed to examine lexical choice and how it functions within register itself. The analysis takes the assumption that lexical items are not chosen randomly but are rather selected systematically as a starting point (Biber & Conrad, 2012). This was evident in the systematic selection of lexis and incorporation of dialect to give clues about characters and context. Both connotative and denotative meanings of these items are investigated as well as their contribution in building a situational context. This level of analysis was especially applied to character building, illustrating how characters, power dynamics and other cues of distance/intimacy were built through intentional lexical patterns and registers.

### **Clause Level**

This level of analysis was informed by Halliday's (1967) work on theme-rheme and transitivity. Processes, topicalization and sequencing of information were investigated, demonstrating how certain grammatical structures and distribution of information contribute significantly to building contextual meaning. By imposing emphasis on participants rather than processes or vice versa, events are portrayed within the novel, and agency is allocated. The intentional foregrounding and backgrounding throughout the novel played an essential role in the construction of context. The translation of these elements and their reconfiguration within the clause were all assessed, enabling an assessment of the effects of this reconfiguration on the ideological and experiential dimensions of the novel.

### **Text Level**

At the textual level, graphical elements and stylistic elements were put under scrutiny as elements constructing the meta-fabric of the text. This level views the text as an entity that is to be perceived visually and is supposedly carrying a rhetorical force. This visual aspect is visible in the text through elements like repetition, parallelism, deviations, etc, which

are configurations that guide interpretation (Nunberg, 1990). The stylistic analysis at this stage draws upon the works of (Bloomfield, 1976; Thorndike, 1948), offering a framework for interpreting how textual arrangement and stylistic devices function in literary contexts.

The three levels of analysis are systematically applied to the parallel dataset of ST and TT passages. By comparing word, clause, and text-level features, the study identifies and interprets changes in how characters are constructed and represented, how socio-political and geographical contexts are established, and how the text functions as a cohesive whole composed not only of lexical but also graphical and structural elements. This multi-layered approach allows for a nuanced evaluation of the translator's strategies and the broader implications of register shifts on the reproduction of socio-political reality in the TT.

## Chapter Three

### Data Analysis

#### 3.1 Register builds character, translation rebuilds?

##### 3.1.1 Introduction

This analysis section focuses on the role register plays in character building, examines the translation of these registral elements and whether it alters their function in building literary characters. The discussion below reviews the most prominent register functions regarding character construction and representation within the ST then attempts to evaluate their translation observing any potential change in the elements of functionality.

The process of analysis that depended mainly on lexical choice analysis, analysis of register shifts and formality, and stylistic analysis of typographical elements reveals how such use of functional register variations dynamically and meticulously builds literary characters. Most importantly, how overlooking these register intricacies in translation, whether done consciously or unconsciously, can considerably affect the character's build, the role a character plays within the text, and its function as a semiotic sign that connects the text to an outside text reality.

The notion of a literary character is regarded as somewhat ambiguous (Margolin, 1987, p. 107), it is, however, inarguably one of the most important components of a literary work; if there are no characters, there is no text (Cohen & Cixous, 1974, p. 386). The common semantic meaning of a literary character subsumes signifying an individual via proper names, a location in time and place points, and human-like ascriptions such as intentions, belief sets, knowledge and attitudes (Margolin, 1987, p. 107).

Characters in *The Shell* are built through register functionality and a peculiar narration style. The author uses register's function in giving characters a spoken voice (Butler, 1999, p. 17) to build a text dynamic of contrasting individuals with different backgrounds and affiliations. He managed through register mostly, to ascribe the personas with political ideologies and stances, as well as a compelling psychological depth (Ahmedzai Kemp, 2013). The parallel (mini)environment he created is intended to simulate a socio-political

reality outside the text, and this is where an assessment of the text's translation becomes significant.

The construction of characters within the text performed three main functions: establishing a power dynamic through the visible contrast between jailors and prisoners, constructing an identity for characters through idiosyncratic language use, and utilising the individualisation of the second function to produce a spectrum of characters.

This analysis chapter will scrutinize each of the functions mentioned above, reviewing how they are manifested in the text through illustrative examples, followed by an examination of their translations, to question if the translation process sustained, altered or even distorted the intended function.

- **Establishing a power dynamic through contrast**

The constructed contrast between jailors and prisoners through register is one of the most prominent functions detected in the ST. A sense of polarity is created through their speech and language use, mainly in the lexical choices made. The authority that jailors possess is manifested in their use of expletives and swearwords as a means of deteriorating prisoners, in what becomes a deliberate and jarring abuse of power. Prisoners, on the other hand, display inferiority in their reluctant selection of words, which illustrates a lack of power and agency. This distance between the power holder (and abuser) and the object of power exploitation (prisoners), creates a power dynamic which the novel revolves around.

The global strategy that the translator employed in instances portraying this power dynamic is a formal, or a semantic one, where in both, sustaining the denotative meaning of keywords is prioritized (Newmark, 1981; Nida, 1964). Although this depiction is rich in cultural, social and political nuances, which a foreign reader may not easily comprehend, there was rarely, if ever, any employment of dynamic translation techniques and procedures such as explanation, addition, footnotes or even communicative or connotative equivalents. This approach was adequate only when cruelty or inferiority were depicted on a denotative level or through other contextual elements. It was problematic, however, when the meaning relied mainly on the connotative force related to the cultural and social use of language. In these cases, disregarding the connotative layer of meaning

caused a loss of some nuances of character portrayal and affected the broader implications that the characterization of prisoners and jailors has. This is an example where a denotative equivalent was functional enough to capture the jailor's cruelty:

"-ولا حقير... هَلِّقْ بِدِكَ تَنْهَقُ مِثْلَ الْحَمَارِ!"

يَنْهَقُ السَّجِينِ الطَّوِيلِ. تَضْحَكُ الشَّرِطَةُ.

"-ولا حقير... هَلِّقْ بِدِكَ تَعْوِي مِثْلَ الْكَلْبِ!" (88)

***"You wretch! Come on, now you're going to bray like a donkey! The tall prisoner brayed, and the policemen laughed. Come on, you wretch! Now you're going to bark like a dog" (59).***

In this example, the jailors are commanding prisoners to mimic animal sounds for their amusement in a scheduled session of collective torture. This mockery shows both the derangement of jailors and the dehumanization of prisoners. The cruelty here lies not only in the act of mimicking itself but also in the intentional use of words. Both "dog" "كَلْبٌ" and "donkey" "أَحْمَارٌ" are negatively connotated in the Arabic culture and are usually used to insult and attribute people with filthiness and stupidity. As can be seen, these two words were rendered to their direct denotative equivalents, as well as "حقير" which is rendered directly to "wretch". The connotative meaning induced by the intentional selection of animals is not reproduced because of cultural differences; however, the contextual meaning that portrays the jailor's cruelty and possession of power is sustained. This is due to the presence of other contextual elements that contribute to the situational meaning.

Conversely, this does not apply to instances where cruelty is embedded mainly in the connotative meaning of words. In such instances, a denotative equivalent failed to capture the multifacetedness of cruelty, which in turn affected the intended image of the jailor. In the two examples shown below, the deterioration when speaking about prisoners' deaths is not obvious for the TT reader:

"وين هادا الفطسان؟ يلا! زتوه لبره!" (80)

*"Where's the body? Come on, get it outside!" (53)*

- "ميتين ولا شهداء؟"

-ميتين سيدي.. ميتين.

-قول نفقوا.. ولا جحش.

نفقوا سيدي.. نفقوا." (140)

*"Corpses or martyrs?"*

*Corpses, sir, corpses!*

*Just say they died, you ass!*

*"They died sir, they died!" (91)*

In those examples, the jailors use two words that are commonly used for the death of animals to refer to the death of prisoners. In the first example, the word "فطسان", is a colloquial term which connotatively means that the animal's dead body is in bad condition and has a revolting smell as a result of it being left for a long time. In the second example, "نفقوا", is a verb in classic Arabic that means died, but is exclusively used for animals. This reference to animals is not reproduced in translation. In the first example, the word "فطسان" is rendered to "body", which discounts the connotative meaning just mentioned. In the second, "نفقوا" is translated to "died", which does not replicate the use of that word to refer to animals.

This discrepancy on the connotative level between the ST and the TT will inevitably cause a discrepancy in the emotional response induced in their readers (Hatim & Munday, 2004,

p. 38). The words presented in the two texts stand in different semantic spaces. If we are to apply the good-bad scale suggested by Nida & Taber (1969), "فطسان" for example, easily classifies as bad, while "body" stands neutrally in the middle; the same applies to "نفقوا" and "died".

The loss also extends to a semiotic level beyond the text itself. The character of the jailor is, after all, a semiotic figure that performs the function of representation (Cohen & Cixous, 1974, pp. 384-385); it is a social sign that an Arabic reader well recognises. His image stimulates an individual and collective memoir of a tyrannical regime and a tragic shared reality. This function is comprehensible for the Arabic reader because he possesses the knowledge of a set of messages on another level, a semiotic one. On the other hand, the TT reader may not possess such knowledge, so he will not be able to make a place for the message or set it in a context where it has a profound meaning (Hodge & Kress, 1988, p. 4). For him, the message given about the jailor is restricted within the linguistic limits of the text, which, as the analysis shows, is not meticulously reproduced.

Prisoner's inferiority is just as semiotic, and sometimes as miscaptured. The tenor of the prisoner's speech shows a lack of power and authority, and their commitment to an inferior stance as opposed to the jailors serves as a means of self-protection. They serve as representatives of the oppressed collective. This representativeness usually carries a social and psychological depth that cannot be equivalently captured through a formal translation. This example shows how such a one-dimensional rendering not only downplayed the multilayers of inferiority but also resulted in an unintelligible portion of the text.

*"يا سيدي دخيلك! دخيل أختك! بس كلمة وحدة..!"*

*"يا سيدي أنا ماني مسلم. أنا مسيحي. أنا مسيحي. يا سيدي دخيلك. أبوس ايدك. أبوس رجليك. أنا مسيحي!!"*

*.(52)*

*"Sir, please, your sister. Just a word!..."*

***Sir, I'm not a Muslim, I'm a Christian, sir, please, I'll kiss your hand, kiss your feet, I'm a Christian!" (32).***

Here, the prisoner is trying to explain to the jailer that his imprisonment as a member of the Muslim Brotherhood does not make sense because he is a Christian. He is begging hysterically in that scene because he is being dragged into a session of torture. It can be noticed that the prisoner is maintaining an inferior stance by addressing the jailor with the term of respect "سيدي", which is colloquially equal to "my master", but is translated to "sir", and also in stating that he's willing to "kiss his hand and feet".

However, we see that the word "دخيلك", a colloquial word usually used for asking someone for something and carries the sense of begging, is translated to a somewhat functional equivalent, "please". Resorting to a functional equivalent is a good choice, but it is not enough to fully capture all aspects of meaning. The main issue with such rendering is that the tone of desperation is a bit downplayed because the begging sense that the word "دخيلك" carries cannot be reproduced with "please" alone. There is an urgency, subservience and admittance to inferiority in the Arabic word; it positions the jailor as the one to decide the fate of the prisoner. Whereas "please" hardly displays any tonality or emotion, and more importantly, any indication of a position in a power dynamic.

Moreover, the word is used twice, the second time with "sister". Using "sister" in that case can be an attempt from the prisoner to hit a sensitive spot for any Arab man: woman. A woman in Arab societies is symbolic of honour, this specific association is employed frequently throughout the novel. By incorporating a symbol of honour to induce a response from the jailor, the begging and desperation of the prisoner seem even more intense. But because "دخيل" is not rendered the second time, the phrase "your sister" stands meaninglessly in the TT, and the cultural association of its use is completely lost. The semiotic sense of the phrase, which influences how the hearer interacts with the utterance (Hatim & Munday, 2004, p. 84) is no longer present in the translated text.

To put this differently, the rendering of the word "دخيلك" using "please" seems functionally adequate and can give the TT text reader the gist of what is happening in that portion of the novel. But it does not capture all layers of meaning because the connotative part that is linked to shame, honour and humiliation is not present. The inferiority of the prisoner in the ST thus seems to have deeper socio-psychological roots than it does in the TT

- **Building distinctive identities for characters**

In the novel, the author employs the functionality of language variations and register shifts to give characters peculiar identities. This idiosyncratic use of language is most prominently used to show characters' position in a political context, to show their ideologies and the stance they are taking. Characters affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood, "the opposing" party in the situational context of the novel, for example, use a mix of registers, alternating between colloquial and formal language. These characters shift from using a formal and highly religious register, which incorporates expressions related to the Quran, the Hadiths and a general use of classic Arabic, to a common and informal register with informal grammatical and phonological features. This duality of register occurs within single sentences, giving the impression that the character speaking possesses a compound identity. The register variation also gives indications of membership, social role, and distance.

The overall approach employed by the translator in these instances of register shift is Neutralization, where nonstandard marks and variations are translated with neutralized standard marks instead of the expected recreation (Berezowski, 1997). So, what was read and "heard" by the ST reader as a double register is translated into a singular flat one. This removal of contrast, which makes a register recognizable in the first place (Widdowson, 1973, p. 34), distorted the functionality of the shifts along with the indications embedded within them.

The first indication compromised is the implication of an intellectual superiority attributed to the characters of the Muslim Brotherhood. The way these characters incorporated formal expressions and classic Arabic, which is not commonly employed by other prisoners, gave an impression of educational elitism; the character is portrayed as

possessing knowledge that other characters do not. The example below demonstrates this indicative function:

"-يا أخي حاول ألا تحك! مهما حكك جسمك لا تحك... وأرجو لك من الله الشفاء. ولا تخاف هذا المرض مزعج بس مانو خطير." (194).

*"Try not to scratch, my friend! However much your body itches, try not to scratch.... I pray to God to heal you, but do not fear. This is an irritating disease, but it is not dangerous." (127).*

The character speaking in this instance is a doctor imprisoned with the charge of being a member of the Muslim Brotherhood. He is reassuring another prisoner with Scabies about his condition. He opens his speech with the term of address "يا أخي", which means "my brother", conveying a tone of warmth. The translator renders this as "my friend", which does not recreate the same tenor, since "brother" in the Arabic culture carries a deeper sense of affection and openness. It has the connotation of a willingness to help; this does not apply to "my friend". He then proceeds to give the patient some medical advice and switches to a rather formal and religious register. He utters a supplication in which he wishes God to heal the patient: "وأرجو لك من الله الشفاء", which is rendered formally to "I pray to God to heal you". The latter functional tenor of formality shows that the character assumes the role of the informer (Hatim & Munday, 2004, p. 81), automatically assigning the "other" the role of the receiver. This opposition of roles further asserts the separate identity of Muslim Brotherhood prisoners, after all, "an identity exists in a relationship with the other that validates its existence" (D.E Hall, 2024, p.5).

What is most noticeable here is that the transition between registers is not detectable. The translation of "يا أخي" to "my friend" not only fails to perform the same interpersonal function, but it also reduces the contrast of register. Furthermore, rendering almost all linguistic tokens such as "مانو خطير", which has visible dialectical features indicating

informality, to a standard and “frozen” register, “*it is not dangerous*”, cancels the functionality mentioned above.

Membership is another important functionality of register shift impacted by this inattention in translation. The use of religious expressions and references serves to reflect a membership to what, in the first place, is a religious organization or at least one that operates on and adheres to and promotes a religious Islamic ideology. This is thus an identification of the self through an identification with a discursively defined group in a social context (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 42). Since this membership essentially has political implications, this use of language can also be regarded as a strategy to make oneself and one’s interests visible and included (Spivak, 1990). The characters through this active discourse seem to say: this is what I believe, this is where I stand in this conflict. We see, as Wodak explains (2002), a “political dimension of the self”. This example further explains these two functions:

“-وجادلهم بالتي هي أحسن ولا تأخذوا الناس بالشبهات. (71)

-يا زاهي...خود هالشخص لمكانه. (72)

*“-Converse them in a civilized way and do not entertain suspicions of people! (47).*

*-Zahi, take this man to his place!” (48).*

This example shows two consecutive utterances by the same person within the same conversation. This character, called Shiekh Mahmoud, is a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, and a symbol of wisdom and knowledge among prisoners. He is being consulted in matters of ruling and judgment within the dormitory in this portion of the text. He incorporates verse {125} from Surat Al-Nahal with a part of a Hadith together in one sentence. He used the referential value of the two to show his refusal of the ostracization of a prisoner. From this highly intertextual and religious register, he shifts back to the informal use of language giving directions to another fellow prisoner in: يا

“يا زاهي...خود هالشخص لمكانه” which is translated to “Zahi, take this man to his place”.

The translator tries to mimic and replicate the formal and religious portions of the speech. For instance, he uses the imperative structure “*converse them*”, and “*do not entertain them*”, a structure well-associated with religious scriptures. Yet fails to recreate the same smooth but tangible shift in register. The shift is instantly detected in the ST, due to the recognition of intertextuality, of course, but also because of the variable phonological and grammatical features that separate the two registers. For example, the speaker uses the formal form of imperative; a classic Arabic structure in “*لا تجادلهم*”, then switches to an informal form in the colloquially structured verb-like term “*خود*”. Since there is no employment of such variation in the TT, the shift is not tangible. As the function of membership noted earlier is mainly concluded from this diversion, it may be backgrounded for the TT reader due to this failure in reciprocation.

Another loss the two examples above share is the duality of identity. As explained earlier, the double register creates a compound identity for characters of the Muslim Brotherhood. A performative identity that takes pride in intellectuality and membership and assumes the role of the superior, and another that tries to fit seamlessly with the common using their words and language. With the register shift not being reproduced in translation this sense of compoundness is lost.

The compound identity of prisoners is also affected by an unjustifiable use of typographical elements in translation. In the example shown below, we see the translator using quotation marks to highlight the shift of formality:

“-ليس بيدك أو بيدنا يا أبو حسين إلا أن نقول: حسبنا الله ونعلم الوكيل, وستأتي ساعة نقف فيها جميعاً بين

يدي الله, ويا وليه من تلك الساعة.” (146)

**“There is nothing we or you can do, Abu Hussein, except to say: ‘God is our judge and the best of helpers. The hour will come when we shall all stand before God, and oh, woe to that hour!’ ” (95).**

The formal part of this prisoner's speech can be seen in his use of the formal Arabic verb "وستأتي" which the translator renders in a similar formal syntactic structure (Will+ verb), and the religious expression "حسبنا الله ونعم الوكيل" that is rendered formally to "God is our judge and the best of helpers". It can be noticed that the translator uses speech marks at the beginning of that shift to formality and use of a religious register. This insertion of a typographical element that is not originally present in the ST might seem trivial at first glance but has a huge impact on the textual meaning of the instance. These marks are usually used to introduce a quotation or an argument from an outside source (Thorndike, 1948, p. 223), the instance above is neither. The TT reader might get the wrong impression that the speaker is quoting someone or something, when in fact it is his idiolectic use of language that provides information about his religious and political views.

The use of speech marks can also create a sense of distance and separation between the speaker and the speech (Butler, 1999, p. 19). It gives the impression that the character does not necessarily abide by, believe in or stand by what he is saying. Even if he adopts the discourse, he is not fully integrated with it as in the ST. This division does not align with the fact that the speech of these characters particularly is ideologically motivated and is indicative of a separate identity. This can result in the fragmentation of the unity of the emphasised compoundness. What was essential to the character's identity in the ST is made to seem like it is being "disowned" in the TT.

- **Producing a spectrum of characters**

So far, this analysis section illustrated through exemplification how register played a pivotal role in constructing characters within the ST. The vulgar register constructed the character of the cruel jailor, the timid use of language constructed the character of the inferior prisoner and the indicative register shift constructed the compound character of Muslim Brotherhood prisoners. The intricacies of register are further used to attribute characters with certain qualities and background information. This contributed to enlarging the spectrum of characters whose contrasts and peculiarities allow them to interact meaningfully and purposefully within the text.

### a) Register in showing emotional and mental capacities

One of the most peculiar employments of register was showing characters' emotional and mental capacities. The author went beyond the semantic dimension of register in characterization to systematically employ the textual aspect and its functionality. A pattern of intentional punctuation marks usage along with stylistic elements like repetition and pausing, which enhance the lexical meaning, can be observed throughout the text.

There has been an inconsistency in the translation of these elements, however. Sometimes the translator replicates the use of these textual elements, sustaining the effects they create. At other times, their functionality is lost due to inattention or discrepancy in replication. The overall result is that characterisation-wise, the ST is richer in the textual and visual aspects than its translation. In his translation of the example below, the translator managed to maintain the portrayal of a character's emotional capacity via graphical mimicking:

"-العمش... ولك شو هاد؟! ولك, شلون كنت عم تتحمل هيك مناظر؟ العمش ولك شوف! شوف! شو هذا يلي عم بصير؟" (226).

**"God damn! What is this? How could you bear these sights? Now then! Look, look, what on earth is going on?"(152)**

The character speaking here, Nasim, is one of the most influential characters in the text. He is attributed with high sensitivity and emotional tenderness, which drew the main character, Musa, to him and made their bond grow deep after years of Musa being treated with ostracisation and coldness. Nasim's sensitivity is depicted in his reaction to some of the incidents that happened in the dormitory. This example shows Nasim's reaction after Musa introduces him to the peephole that he used to spy on jailors and watch execution rituals. His rather emotionally intense shock at what Musa has been watching for years shows that he possesses far less tolerance than Musa and has a faint heart compared to his best friend.

The emotional breakdown the character is facing is depicted graphically in the use of a question mark along with an exclamation mark in "شو هاد؟! ", for example. This intensifies the sense of shock. The employment of repetition as well, in the repetition of "شوف" which means literally "look", emphasizes Nasim's disbelief. He asks Musa to look twice as if he needs someone to validate that what he saw is true. In both times "شوف" is followed with an exclamation mark, "which expresses the emotion that lies behind, and in a speaking voice" (Toner, 2011, p. 11). One of the emotions expressed via an exclamation mark is indignation (ibid), which matches and enhances the character's emotional state in this example.

The translator in this instance attempted to match the visual representation of Nasim's state, by incorporating the use of repetition in repeating "look", exclamation marks as in "God damn!", and question marks as in "What is this?". The textual replication is not identical, but it can be considered sufficient in conveying the tone of shock and disbelief, and more importantly, the sensitivity which is the main feature Nasim holds as a character.

This replication success is not consistent throughout the novel. There are instances where the translator pays no attention to the graphical representation, which conceals the indications it carries. At times, he employs different typographical elements, altering the function intended. See this example:

"شوف... هون كوتيس... إنت تعرف إنه عندي فرس أصيلة لونها أحمر, وعندني تياب كلها بيضا, أبيض بأبيض... إستنى شي كم يوم بتشوف أخوك يوسف لابس أبيض بأبيض... وراكب عالفرس الحمراء, وواقف بنص موسكو, بالساحة الحمراء..." (123).

*"Look, it's nice here. You know that I've got a red thoroughbred horse and clothes that are all white, whiter than white. Just wait a few days and you'll see your brother wearing clothes whiter than white and riding a red horse, and standing in the middle of Moscow, in Red Square!" (82).*

In this portion of the novel, the author introduces Yousef, a character who became mentally unstable due to the intensity of torture. This instability is explicitly stated in the text but is further illustrated in the incoherent gibberish-like manner in which the character speaks. This indicative incoherence is depicted graphically in the ST in the overuse of ellipsis which creates frequent pauses and silences in the character's speech. According to Toner (2011), pauses and silences can be considered a visual sign of abruptness which becomes a visual sign of the character's self (76), showing in this case an impairment in both cognition and speech.

As can be seen, the translator substitutes every ellipsis with a comma or a full stop. This alters what was intentionally meant to be an incoherent speech of an unstable character to a perfectly coherent and structured one. This inattention on behalf of the translator eliminates the role played by the textual dimension in this case of characterization, making that of the ST more compelling and perceptible.

#### **b) Register in giving background information**

Register, with its wide set of features, is also employed to give specific pieces of information about prisoners. These pieces of information build a background of their social status, educational level, or even geographical roots. In some portions of the text, the author introduces characters (mainly prisoners) from different parts of Syria. The north, the east, the cities, the urban, and sometimes even Bedouins; all differentiated discursively. This grouping of characters from different backgrounds in the same prison with the same charge has an implied derision of the arbitrariness of the imprisonment system.

In the majority of these instances, the translator fails to reproduce these elements of informativity. This is primarily due to their marked nature, but also to a lack of translation techniques incorporation. This is an example where the author introduces a Bedouin character, and the translation seems to lose the indicative feature of "audibility":

*"ولله يا أخوي، تهمة باطلة. نحن بدو بديرة الله. جام "أتوا" جماعة علينا: وعلى عادة العرب رحبنا بيهم، ضيفناهم*

*من الميسور، بعدين ياخوي سألونا عن الدرب. دليناهم، هاي فيها شي ياخوي؟..*

له.. له.. له.. ياخوي ما يصير تحجي هيچ" (271).

*"By God, my brother, a groundless charge. We are Bedouins, who wander God's earth. A group came to us, and we welcomed them in the customs of Arabs... .*

*-No, no, no! My brother, you should never talk like that, he replied in a broad dialect" (186).*

The Arabic reader of the ST would "hear" not only read that the character speaking is a Bedouin through phonologically marked expressions like "هيچ" and "جام". These rather dialectical features are the hardest to reproduce in translation. That's why we see the translator using, in one of the very few times addition as a procedure to compensate for the loss. He adds the phrase "*he replied in a broad dialect*" to inform the TT reader that the speaker has a different way of speaking from other characters. Otherwise, the reader would never have concluded that information from the translation of the text alone. The information about the character's background is embedded in the registral feature explained, which makes its audibility automatic and its function comprehensible. The addition technique utilized in this example may compensate for informativity but does not compensate for the feature of audibility.

This audibility of register in the ST is what's mostly missing in the translated version, making the spectrum of characters in the original wider and also more incorporating of the imagination. This can give the ST reader a more interactive and inclusive experience than that of the TT, where its reader stands at a distance from the text, deprived of important contextual information.

### **3.2 Register in building context**

#### **3.2.1 Introduction**

In this section, the analysis addresses the role register plays in creating both an immediate textual and extra-textual context in a literary work. The functions of context building are identified and explained, followed by a review of their translation to inspect whether the choices made in the process contributed to any contextual changes or alterations. By

employing a combination of register analysis, transitivity and theme-rheme analysis, this section proves how inattention to register in translation can significantly impact context-building, both on micro and macro levels, which can distort the original composition of a text.

The interconnection between context and register is profound. The use of language depends mainly on the context of the situation (Halliday, 1981, p.7). This dependency makes the associations between “register clusters” of recurrent co-occurrences and their context-related functions the heart of register variation studies (Biber & Conrad, 2019, p. 10). To put this differently, the context of the situation determines language use (register), which means that studying register can identify and signify context. The novel employs this interconnection on micro and macro levels, creating a multi-dimensional context with a political semiotic value. Register shift separates the narrator’s voice from the narrated incidents, creating two different time lapses. Then the thematic distribution of information contributing to the ideational function is used to direct and steer the reader’s focus and outline his/her frame of interpretation. This section reviews these functions and their translation to evaluate the potential effects translation had on context building.

- **Distinguishing narration from speech**

The author shifts between two main registers throughout the novel: a literary, narratory, and very formal register to an informal, vernacular, and distinctively dialectical one. This shift in itself separates the narration from the narrative. The first register gives the narrator a voice and an identity, detecting the relationship between him and the reader through his use of language (Fairclough, 1989), where he narrates his story to his reader retrospectively. The second establishes a context with specific temporal and geographical dimensions; the time, place and circumstances of imprisonment, where characters interact within this situational context constructed discursively. The shift also performs another function of separating the period of post-prison from the period in prison. Through that shift, the reader time-travels from a time and place where only the narrator can be heard to a time and place where the narrated incidents are actively taking place.

The translator rarely tries to replicate or highlight the informal register's phonological and grammatical markedness, reducing the contrast between the two registers. The colloquial and dialectal register is mostly translated to a standard English equivalent in what Berezowski (1997) classifies as Neutralization. So, the two registers are rendered into a single and integrated one. According to Albir (2001), this omission of contrast leaves out some essential functions in the original text (583), which is, in this case, the classification of situations coming from contrasting textual patterns (Ure, 1982, p. 5-23). The loss of this shift between two time and place lapses massively affects the original composition of the ST as well as the TT reader's reception of it.

The informational nature of the narration register is different from the interactive and involved nature of the characters' speech (Biber & Conrad, 2019). This is seen in the employment of classic Arabic for narration. The language used for narration is rather formal, aesthetic and rhetorical. There is also an excessive use of adjectives due to the descriptive nature of narration and the exclusive use of the first-person pronoun, indicating the presence of a single speaker. Characters' speech, on the other hand, highly resembles spoken language See (Mahlberg & Egbert, 2020). This is visible when a combination of second and first pronouns is used, indicating an exchange of conversation. Furthermore, using a Syrian dialect for the characters' speech further enhances the resemblance to a spoken register, in addition to it possessing a semiotic value that alludes to a geographically and temporally specific political period. As explained before, this hybrid register separates the narration from the incidents being narrated. The alteration endures throughout the novel, giving an intentional frame for how the events are introduced. The following example showcases a non-recurring yet significant impact of inattention to these two registers, losing the vocaliser's voice and continuity of perspective:

"متل مانك شاييف يا أبو حسين: الناس جوعانه. واذا ما تحسن الأكل بالسجن, مستحيل حدا يطيب من هالمرض, بالعكس المرض بدو يشتد أكثر, وعدد المرضى بده يزيد. وانه يفكر جدياً بأن يطلب إعفاءه من هذا العمل." (155)

*"As you can see Abu Hussein, people are hungry and if the prison food doesn't improve it's impossible for anyone to recover from this illness; on the contrary, the illness will*

*become even worse, and the number of patients will increase. I'm seriously thinking of asking to be relieved of this work."* (101).

This example shows a conversation between a doctor prisoner and another fellow prisoner, who also happens to be the head of the dormitory, infused with a side comment from the narrator. The two prisoners' speech is very dialectical, with phonologically colloquialized terms like "يَبُو" which means "it will", and "مثل" which corresponds to "مثل" in classical Arabic and is equivalent to the conjunction "as". Then the narrator interferes with the character's speech to add a piece of information in the last phrase, shifting to a formal register with formal structures, as in "إنه يفكر جدياً" can be translated literally to "is seriously thinking". Diacritics in the last phrase, like the "Shaddah ّ" and the "Tanween ً", also indicate formality, because diacritics are exclusively used in classical Arabic.

While features of narration and speech mentioned earlier are sustained, the resemblance to the spoken register is no longer detected. The informal register's phonological and structural dialectical features performing the transition function are not reproduced and are thus lost. The distinction between Musa's voice and the prisoners having the conversation is instantly and patently recognised in the ST. In contrast, the voices in the TT read homogenously, causing the separation between narration and speech to be obscured. The translator also changes the *Sensor* of the mental cognitive process, *considering* from the "he" implied in "إنه" to "I", changing both the grammatical voice and the ideational function of that instance, completely omitting the shift. This omission also causes the narrator's voice as an external focalizer directing the perspective of the narration to be lost in translation. As a result, the original perspective is discontinued. Moreover, losing the first function automatically cancels the second function of separating the period of in-prison and post-prison. This interwind double use of register takes the reader back and forth between two temporal spans, foreshadowing the fact that Musa (the narrator and main character) makes it out of prison and is presently and retrospectively telling his story. This crucial information, as can be seen, is backgrounded in translation. Compensating for the comprehensibility of this information alters the whole reading

experience for the TT recipient, especially since this shift in voice is consistent throughout the novel.

- **Sequencing of information**

The distribution and sequencing of information in the ST have a major role in constructing the immediate textual and extra-textual contexts, often carrying a rhetorical value. Through intentional and meaningful thematization and phrase structures (Halliday, 1967, p. 213), the author adds another layer of meaning that shapes the context in a particular way, directing and steering the reader's focus and influencing their perception of the narrative. This pattern of sequencing is often unnoticed and marginalized in translation. With every marked thematization or phrasal structure lost, an intended and functional meaning is also lost in the process. In some instances, the loss mainly affects the rhetorical force the text carries as a literary work. At other times, it has an immediate effect on the construction of the novel's context. In the following example, the focus established through personification is omitted:

*"البرد يجمدنا , الجوع يضنينا" (141)*

*"It was freezing cold and the hunger was wearing us down" (91).*

Here, "البرد" and "الجوع", which mean "coldness" and "hunger" respectively, both assume the role of the *actor* of the two material processes "يجمد" "freezes" and "يضنني" "wears out or exhausts". Placing them in a tropicalized position, the author brings more focus, conveying that both were so intense that they possessed a degree of authority, constructing a mental image of the harsh prison circumstances. This rather metaphorical representation of the information further emphasizes the extremeness and cruelty of hunger and coldness. In other words, there is intentionality in the foregrounding of these specific words. The parallel structure also creates an echo-like effect, suggesting that they both were equally ruthless.

The translator changes this functional sequence by replacing the thematized "البرد" with the third-person pronoun "it". The translation thus deprives the coldness of its agency and changes it to a mere adjective. The phrase in the original carries way more force as it personifies the coldness, which builds the cruel atmosphere of the desert prison that the author is aiming for. The translation may carry the same semantic information, but the mental image drawn by the ST better aligns with the flow of the narrative and may have a bigger impact on the reader, even if only on a rhetorical level. The accumulation of such loss, however, affects the narrative on a macro level. The force and weight of the text as a literary work, after all, depend on these rhetorical elements. These little details that are created with such sequencing choices contribute to how a reader comprehends and consequently interacts with the text. This is another example that further explains the effects of this subtle yet significant loss:

*"دقائق كانت طويلة..." (166)*

*"For several long minutes..." (107)*

The author here thematizes "دقائق" which means "minutes" when its normal position is in theme position after "كانت". This marked structure creates emphasis that gives the meaning that these minutes were longer than usual, further stressing the heaviness of the passage of time, which brings the reader closer to the character's temporal perception. With it being the topic of the sentence, "minutes" seems to be new information, as if it has changed in nature. This unusual word order is replaced with a more common one in translation. The translator removes the focus on the "minutes" by placing it at the end of the phrase. The function of sequencing that builds anticipation and makes "minutes" a tangible entity in the ST is consequently lost.

### 3.3 Typographical and visual elements

#### 3.3.1 Introduction

This section moves the analysis to the textual level, where elements like punctuation and stylistic devices are taken into consideration as a crucial part of the text, the visual aspect. A review of the elements intentionally employed is given. Then an evaluation is conducted for how they were treated in translation. Using stylistic analysis, the discussion shows how turning a blind eye to typographical elements caused a noticeable loss in the textual value of the text as a literary work, and the rhetorical force these elements have on readers and on the reading experience in general.

The most prominent tools and elements spotted in the text were selected with an illustrative example of their use, followed by the reciprocating translation from the TT.

- **Ellipses**

The author uses ellipses frequently throughout the novel, employing the meaningful openness this tool creates (Adorno & Nichol森, 1990, p. 304). The moment of silence that follows the three dots is used as a dramatic tool to encourage contemplation or emphasise a certain message (Toner, 2011). This subtle, yet very meaningful employment of ellipses was not always respected in translation. The obvious neglect of the functionality of this typographical element causes a major loss in the textual one, involving eye movement, pauses and all the implied nuances of meaning that accompany them. Such loss makes the text as a literary piece less aesthetic and conveys a different experience for its two audiences. The following example stands as evidence:

*الألم.. الضعف.. القهر.. القسوة.. الموت..!! (51)*

*Pain, weakness, violence, force, death. (31)*

The example above is extracted from one of the first chapters of the novel, where Musa, our protagonist, remains in disbelief and is absolutely traumatised by what he saw during his time in prison. He used five words that he thought summarized the agony and pain he felt at that moment. We see ellipses separating every word from the next. This pause, this

moment of silence, allows every word to take its space, giving each time to be fully felt and well-received by the reader. The effect here is not merely visual; it is a way to add an emotional load to what the author is trying to convey. It is noticed, however, that the translator substitutes the ellipses for a comma each time. The five words are matched with their direct equivalents, preserving the semantic message, but the use of commas makes the words read as a list. The effect explained earlier is thus lost, making the force of the Arabic text far larger than its translation. The Arabic text also has two exclamation marks following the five words, adding to that feeling of disbelief and horror; these are also disregarded in translation.

This choice of substitution is not systematic either; the translator does not make a systematic choice of substituting all ellipses with a comma, sometimes it's the opposite. This showcases the complete marginalization of the functionality of these typographical elements and causes confusion about what meanings they were meant to carry. See how they are also neglected at the end of the novel:

”أغلق ثقبها لأحول نظري بالكامل إلى الداخل .

إلي أنا .. إلى ذاتي..!

وأتلصصُ .” (383)

***“I close the gaps in order to focus my gaze entirely towards the inside, toward me, toward myself!***

***And I peep...” (252)***

These are the very last few lines in the novel, in which the narrator expresses the persistence of his inner imprisonment and that although he is free, he is still peeping through a hole to see the world around him. Enforcing that message of continuation, the author ends the last word “*I peep*” with a full stop in the Arabic text, signalling that the text *ends* with the absurdity and tedium of peeping. This definiteness of absurdity is lost in translation. The substitution of the full stop with an ellipsis gives room for different

interpretations and might give the reader the impression that the end is open and that change is a possibility; that there is something besides the redundancy and pointlessness of peeping that may occur. This small change has a huge impact, especially since this is the ending of the novel. The way this ending is constructed, in all of its details, even the visual, determines how the reader leaves the world of the novel and the emotion he carries closing the last page.

- **Repetition**

Repetition is also one of the stylistic tools that was prominently employed in the novel. It has a rhetorical significance of emphasis and also draws back to creating a temporal dimension for the reader to experience. There were many instances, however, where repetition was overlooked. In some instances, the translator completely deletes repeated words or phrases. Take the following as an example:

"الزمن ثقيل.. ثقيل.. حالة من اللاتصديق تتابني." (15)

*"Time weighed heavily, and I found myself in a state of disbelief." (6)*

Once again, the author aims to get his reader involved in all aspects of the imprisonment experience, even the temporal. The idea of time and how slowly it moves was one of the most recurrent themes. We see that meaning embodied textually in the repetition of "ثقيل", which means literally "heavy", and that is used to describe the passage of time. This repetition is omitted in the TT, and so is that temporal aspect.

In other instances, the translator employs other techniques to replicate repetition, such as addition, which may reduce a loss of functionality but still sacrifices the rhetorical meaning created by it.

"انتظار، انتظار، ثم تنطلق السيارات سوية." (38)

*"A wait, a longer wait, and then the trucks moved off together." (21).*

We see the translator here adding “*a longer*” in the translation of the second “انتظار”. The issue here is not the additional information of the second being longer, when it is not necessarily that in the ST. It is the loss of monotonic effect, which resembles the monotony of waiting itself. It is the intentionality that creates a sensory temporal context for the reader that is being lost over and over throughout the text.

## Chapter Four

### Conclusion

This thesis is set out to examine the translation of Register in Mustafa Khalifa's "*The Shell*". The analysis investigates the potential impact of translation on the functionality of the linguistic variations employed in the novel, unveiling the importance of sensitivity to register intricacies when it comes to literary translation. Through a methodological framework that depended mainly on register analysis, the study shows discrepancies in these functions between the source and target texts.

In the ST, Register operates as a powerful tool in building characters' identities, establishing power dynamics, displaying emotional capacities and providing background information. It also plays a dynamic role in separating the voice of the narrator from the narrative as well as sequencing the information in an intentional and meaningful order. The translated version of the text, however, seems homogenised and flat, where there is less noticeable distinction between characters and key elements in their creation are often lost. The translator's reliance on a narrow set of strategies, combined with the neglect of register's multifunctional role, results in the loss of much of the novel's rhetorical weight. This diminishes the political sharpness and cultural specificity of the text, leaving the English reader with a narrative experience that is markedly less forceful than that of the source.

This study has thus demonstrated that translation of register and linguistic variations, specifically in literary works, requires deep sensitivity and cognisance in the rooted social and cultural layers of meaning that go beyond semantics. The analysis comes to the conclusion that texts similar to the researched novel are multi-layered in nature. Their construction is often both inspired by and alludes to larger political and cultural dimensions that are intentionally embedded in form. Their translation thus should go beyond the linguistic transfer; it should function as a negotiation of power, voice and identity. The choices made in translating such politically charged texts are then more crucial, because they determine whether the text will be able to travel to other languages, along with the history, struggle and resonance it carries.

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قدمت هذه الرسالة استكمالاً لمتطلبات الحصول على درجة الماجستير في اللغويات التطبيقية والترجمة  
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## الترجمة والموقفية: تحليل استخدام الانماط اللغوية في ترجمة "القوقعة" لمصطفى خليفة

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### الملخص

يناقش هذا البحث ظاهرة الأنماط اللغوية باعتبارها تحدٍ للترجمة. يتجلى استخدام هذه الظاهرة في الرواية السياسية المثيرة للجدل "القوقعة"، التي كتبت على شكل مذكرات لسجين سجن بهتانا بتهمة أنه ينتمي للأخوان المسلمين. يوجه النص انتقاداً لاذعاً للنظام الحاكم في سوريا في فترة الثمانينات، ويفضح ما واجهه السجناء في تلك الفترة من قسوة.

يوظف الكاتب مصطفى خليفة هذه الأنماط بطرق مختلفة، من تنقل بين الفصحى والعامية و من استخدام ممنهج لهجة السوروية بذاتها، لإضفاء البعد المكاني والزمني للرواية، ولوظائف عديدة أخرى كإعطاء الشخصيات هويتها وإرساء ديناميكية القوى بين السجن والسجين. يوظف الكاتب أيضاً الجانب المرئي من الأدب المتمثل في علامات الترقيم وترتيب المحتوى على الصفحات كأداة درامية تشارك في بناء المعنى وتؤثر على تلقي القارئ.

هذا كله يعدّ عملاً شاقاً للمترجم، حيث أن الظواهر اللغوية الموظفة ترتبط ارتباطاً وثيقاً بالمعنى المنبثق من التجربة الاجتماعية والسياسية في سياق زمني ومكاني محدد. حساسية الموضوع الذي تتناوله الرواية يشكل عبءاً أيضاً، حيث أن إي خسارة لهذا الزخم في المعنى يعدّ انتقاصاً من قيمة النص كعمل أدبي ذا هدف ووظيفة محددان.

تقوم هذه الدراسة بتقييم ترجمة رواية القوقعة، بالتركيز على الأنماط اللغوية بشكل خاص، كيفية نقلها للإنجليزية وتأثير عملية الترجمة على وظائف هذه الأنماط في النص. تناقش آليات الترجمة وتأثيرها المحتمل على النص كعمل أدبي زاخر بالمعاني المعتمدة على السياق.

تطرح الأطروحة أسئلة لم يتم التطرق إليها بشكلٍ كافي في دراسات سابقة. وتجلب إلى طاولة البحث موضوع مثير للاهتمام وهو الأنماط اللغوية ووظائفها في العمل الأدبي وتأثير الترجمة على تلك الوظائف. نهدف إلى أن يكون هذا البحث تمهيداً لمزيد من الأبحاث التي تتناول هذا الموضوع أو ما يشابهه.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الترجمة، الأعمال الأدبية، الأنماط اللغوية، الموقفية، السياق، اجتماعي-سياسي.