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## Translation as a Means for Preserving and Disseminating Oral Heritage

Mahir Hussein Ali

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# Translation as a Means for Preserving and Disseminating Oral Heritage

Mahir Hussein Ali

Of the 7,000 languages spoken today, fully half are not being taught to children. Effectively, unless something changes, they will disappear within our lifetimes. Half of the languages of the world are teetering on the brink of extinction. Just think about it. What could be more lonely than to be enveloped in silence, to be the last of your people to speak your native tongue, to have no way to pass on the wisdom of your ancestors or anticipate the promise of your descendants. This tragic fate is indeed the plight of someone somewhere on earth roughly every two weeks. On average, every fortnight an elder dies and carries with him or her into the grave the last syllables of an ancient tongue. What this really means is that within a generation or two, we will be witnessing the loss of fully half of humanity's social, cultural, and intellectual legacy. This is the hidden backdrop of our age. (Davis 2009: 3)

## Summary

Protecting the heritage of communities is a means to revive them. The goal of the current paper is to explore how translation can be utilised as an effective tool for the preservation, survival, and dissemination of the oral heritage of marginalised communities within the Iraqi context.

**Keywords:** Translation, preserving, disseminating, oral heritage, culture, language endangerment.

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# 1 Introduction

As a Kurd belonging to a population that exceeds 7 million, out of the total Iraqi population of 41 million, and speaking a dialect called Kurmanji (Badini), I am very well aware that in my youth, I came across people who represented a moving and living history which encompasses the treasures of authentic customs and traditions. Kurmanji is spoken by the citizens of the Dohuk governorate and other neighbouring areas of Iraq to the west of the river Tigris (including northeastern Syria and southern Turkey), as opposed to the Sorani dialect which is spoken in the Erbil and Sulaymaniyah governorates and in the bordering areas inside Iran.

Those people from my youth differed from contemporary society in the folk and heritage garments they wore for special events, holidays, celebrations, and occasions and in their use of vocabulary and unique pronunciation that was different from that used today.

The same applies to many of the crafts they practised; namely, knitting by hand (*tazhee*), constructing mud ovens for baking bread, and pressing wool to make pure wool mattresses (*kulav*) as well as the bulk of the customs and traditions that are barely noticed by us today, if not already abandoned. The Kurmanji dialect and vocabulary that my grandfather used to speak 40 years ago is no longer heard within the present generation.

According to the *Text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (UNESCO 2003), one can conclude that there are a multitude of reasons for the fading of heritage languages and dialects: namely, and most importantly, globalisation, the emergence of the internet, living in wider society with a different culture that obliges people to borrow from and imitate a foreign community, mingling with and perhaps marrying into that community, and studying in a language different from one's mother tongue (for more detail, see Fernando, Valijärvi and Goldstein 2014).

The three main threats to language diversity as listed by Bernini (2014: 164) are:

1. Linguistic imperialism and globalisation, which leads to the dominance of some languages and the abandonment of local or minority languages by their speakers, who see them as impractical and unimportant.

2. National language policies that prioritise ethnic identification and linguistic homogeneity, in keeping with European philosophies that underpin nation-state formation.
3. Language shifts that occur primarily as a result of urbanisation, globalisation, social dislocation, and cultural dislocation of speakers, which can lead to the loss of languages, that in turn leads to identity loss.

Migration to work or study and the unsatisfactory and weak provision of fundamental services are further reasons for abandoning one's own native community (including its heritage) and living in a new community, where a person can feel that there are no deep roots or true feelings of affiliation.

Al-Kandori (2018) argues that there is another type of deliberate sabotage of Iraqi heritage, carried out by the ideological regimes that ruled Iraq, either with the intention of trying to eliminate the historical meaning of the heritage or with indifference.

Based on the above, heritage conservation has become vitally important. One of the heritage conservation tools is translation. Translating heritage into other languages allows the natives of the target language to become familiar with the heritage of counterpart minorities in other societies. This is expected to attract the attention of external stakeholders who are interested in languages, monuments, architecture, and heritage, to help these minorities and communities in their attempts to preserve and sustain their heritage in all its forms. In spite of the fact that translation is not an easy task in transferring the heritage and culture of a minority or society to another society, due to the cultural, linguistic, social, and other differences, it remains one of the main means of transfer of culture between different nations.

## 2 Aims of the research

The present paper is an attempt to understand and conceptualise the role of translation in preserving and disseminating oral heritage represented by languages and dialects, and consequently keep them far from extinction within the Iraqi context. The significance of preserving Iraq's oral heritage stems from the country's long history of wars and conflicts. A good example is ISIS' vandalism and displacement of numerous components in the Nineveh governorate, as well as the killing of many old people who were the sources of oral heritage.

### 3 Significance of the research

Attention to the collection and codification of oral heritage by scholars and historians has become important and essential for the preservation of a large and deep heritage stock that has become forgotten in the age of modernisation and globalisation. The significance of this study stems from the fact that it is one of the first studies in Iraq on the use of translation to begin to preserve the oral heritage of the Yazidi Kurmanji dialect through the documentation and translation of one of their folk-songs.

### 4 Methodology

The procedure followed in this research is both theoretical and practical. It is theoretical in its exploration as to the role of translation of heritage as a means of preservation, and practical in exploring the tools with which this may be undertaken. To do this, I have selected a song from Yazidi folklore. While there are many Yazidi songs in the Kurmanji dialect, such as 'Siyabend and Khaji', 'Mem and Zeen', 'Firhad and Shireen', and 'Darwish and Edele', as well as myths and proverbs that need to be documented, archived, and translated to prevent them from extinction, in this study, I tackle two stanzas of the Darwish Evdi epic, a Yazidi folk-song that combines the themes of love and war. The reason behind the selection of this song is that the Yazidi folk-song was instrumental in transforming the historical event into a myth, an icon, and a massive historical and documentary record that narrates the Yazidis' tragic past, with each song telling a true story. Despite its significance, there are no known translations of this song in English. Therefore, through its documentation and translation, this paper could also begin to contribute to the preservation of Yazidi oral heritage.

The epic songs of the Yazidis have become one of the historical sources for describing true events from various periods of time. As a result, because it encompasses their heroic epics, history, and dreams, folklore singing has included much of Yazidi history and has kept it alive (Al-Youssef 2014). The song is considered to be the lung of the Yazidi person, through which they breathe their air to provide themselves with the elements of durability and life (*ibid.*). Folk-song was therefore a way of preserving the Yazidi language, as well as reflecting their traditions, ways of thinking, relationships, morals, values, and subsequently their survival. In these ways, Yazidi culture and language have remained firm in the face of genocide (*ibid.*).



I transcribed the song after I had listened to a recording of it at least 20 times. Because I speak the Kurmanji dialect, I conducted the transcription myself. I consulted my parents, relatives,<sup>1</sup> friends, and Yazidi students who additionally asked their parents about the correct pronunciation and meaning of the song's words whenever they were unsure, (either because of some culture-specific words or words that belong to specific communities or regions). I then translated the song by adopting Newmark (1988) as a model, and began my analysis.

Several researchers have proposed a variety of translation methods to assess and investigate the linguistic differences that a translator creates during the translation process. As a result, Newmark's model of translation operations is used in this study because it is a comprehensive model. Newmark developed 13 translation procedures: transference, naturalisation, cultural equivalent, functional equivalent, descriptive equivalent, synonymy, through-translation, shift or transposition, modulation, recognised translation, compensation, paraphrase, and couplets (*ibid.*). I have therefore tried to detect the linguistic and cultural differences between the source text (in Yazidi) and the target language (English) in order to translate the song efficiently and accurately.

## 5 Literature review

### 5.1 What is heritage and what are its types?

Heritage can be described as that which we have inherited from previous generations, which we appreciate and enjoy in the present, as well as adapt and preserve to pass on to future generations.

Heritage comprises two main types, namely tangible and intangible. The terms 'tangible' and 'intangible' when referring to cultural heritage have been adopted by UNESCO. While tangible heritage (e.g. our historical sites, buildings, monuments, objects in museums, artefacts, and archives) represents the heritage of physical artefacts, intangible cultural heritage refers to oral traditions and expressions, such as language, the performing arts, social activities, rituals, and celebrations; knowledge and practices about nature and the

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<sup>1</sup> The reason behind consulting my parents and relatives is because they lived in areas bordering Yazidi communities and they have a shared Kurmanji dialect. As a result, they would also listen to Yazidi folk-songs and share in aspects of this Yazidi heritage practice.

universe; and traditional craftsmanship. This term also encompasses the instruments, goods, art objects, cultural locations, and living habits that allow culture to be transmitted from one generation to another.

## **5.2 Language endangerment: a challenge to the preservation of oral heritage**

The preservation of heritage, as viewed by UNESCO on the basis of the term 'safeguarding' is defined as 'measures aimed at ensuring the viability of the intangible cultural heritage, including the identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission... particularly through formal and non-formal education, as well as the revitalisation of the various aspects of such heritage' (UNESCO 2003, articles 2, 3). In Iraq, for example, UNESCO has performed many initiatives to preserve and safeguard Iraqi cultural heritage. In 2017, UNESCO called on the international community to help revive Iraq's cultural heritage. The main goal of the initiative was to preserve Iraq's rich, diverse archaeological sites, its museums, religious heritage, and historic cities. However, the initiative did not address the preservation of oral heritage. This can also be applied to the 2018 initiative 'Revive the Spirit of Mosul'. As a result, an important element of heritage has been overlooked by such efforts (Isakhan and Meskell 2019).

In general, most languages have two facets: the written form and the spoken form. Speaking and listening abilities are required for spoken language, whereas reading and writing skills are required for written language. The primary distinction between spoken and written language is that written language is more formal and complex. The relationship between a spoken language and a written language can be described thus. The written language becomes 'the point of departure' for one's considerations, or, in other words, the spoken language's units and items are 'seen through' the written language's units and items (Hammarström 1976).

Sawant (2013: 94) illustrates that scholars and researchers have handled these two levels concurrently (the written and spoken forms) for the sake of finding ways to preserve the language and enable it to survive. He suggests that translation is one of the most reliable and dependable tools for regenerating and reforming a language for language preservation, among many other tools and methods. In his study, Sawant (*ibid.*) focuses on languages that have both a spoken and written form. He asks the question, 'Why is translation so significant?'. For him, the significance comes from the fact that we are

familiar with the literature of ancient civilisations such as the Greeks, Romans, and Indus. How did these ancient literatures travel from one part of the world to another? What kind of medium did they use? Sawant (*ibid.*) argues that 'the medium was nothing but translation'.

In multilingual countries, translation can perform a number of functions, such as preserving languages, literature, and culture, serving as a communication bridge between a variety of languages, enriching original languages and literature, and so on. The extent of the function of translation has been expanded, and the concept of language preservation and dissemination through translation has acquired popularity due to the sociocultural changes in translation studies and global perspectives on translation. It has thus been understood for many years that translation plays a significant role in the survival of literature (Sawant 2013: 94).

Because translation is a human activity and people are social beings, it must include a social/cultural component. Language is a medium of communication invented by humanity to promote peaceful social relationships and co-existence. To this end, the mastery of language is required, which entails not only the ability to comprehend an infinite number of completely new statements 'on the spot' but also the ability to recognise deviant statements and, on occasion, impose an interpretation on them (Ukpong 2017: 81).

If a translator or interpreter is to be a competent translator, they cannot hide behind the nitty-gritty details of language proficiency. They must maintain a high level of proficiency in the target language, including everything from the cultural aspects to semantics and syntax. There is a need to pay more attention to cultural differences and the role they play in the determination of truth via language at the level of cross-cultural translation. This is when linguistic terms such as idioms, proverbs, collocations, riddles, and so on come into play, allowing a word to be translated into something completely new. Should the translator be content with the degree of similarity or equivalence in this case? (*ibid.*: 81).

Because of the amount of knowledge of the language to be uncovered, the social/cultural dimension of translation also poses a difficulty to translators' ability to translate effectively and competently. This is because translating entails not only the transfer of two languages but also the transmission of a culture. As a result, because translation has a social/cultural dimension, as has been shown, it becomes a *sine qua non* for this

social/cultural dimension to be examined and contextualised properly. If this is accomplished, it will be easier to remove the hurdles that obstruct successful translation (*ibid.*: 82).

It is undeniable that translation studies have undergone a revolution, especially after the 1970s. The area of translation expanded into the government and private sector, in addition to literature and education. Due to globalisation, translation has become one of the means by which businesses are able to succeed in various geographic and linguistic areas. 'It is a proper channel of communication not only between two different languages but also between two distinct cultures: a cross-cultural communication' (Sawant 2013: 94–95).

With the rise of translation as a unique area of study, the entry point for minor and native literatures of every language across the globe has risen significantly: 'It controls [the] monopoly of languages and make[s] them interact with other native languages' (Sawant 2013: 95). Translation did not have the same status as creative writing prior to the 1970s, but thanks to various developments in translation studies, translation scholars' perspectives, globalisation effects, and the increasing need for translation in almost all fields of human activity, translation has gained a status comparable to, if not greater than, creative writing (*ibid.*).

Translation has greatly enriched literature by allowing individuals who speak different languages access to it. Consider what would have happened to great works of literature if they had not been translated; they would have been restricted to the language in which they were written. In a sense, translation involves rewriting and thus the reproduction of the source language into the target language (*ibid.*). For example, the translation of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* into Arabic or English (Foster, Frayne and Beckman 2001) has encouraged many readers to explore the ancient way of life.

### ***5.2.1 Endeavours to minimise language endangerment and decay***

The world's most experienced field linguists are working hard to find living speakers of the world's endangered languages, recording as much information about them as possible in order to work towards reviving these languages in the future. Reviving a language means for it to become active or flourishing again, while preserving a language means to keep it alive, intact, or free from decay. Nettle and Romaine (2000: 213) state that there are now a number of organisations dedicated to the preservation of endangered languages,

including Terralingua and Partnerships for Linguistic and Biological Diversity. A number of professional linguists' associations, such as the Linguistic Society of America, Linguistic Society of Japan, and the German Linguistic Society have established committees dedicated to endangered languages.

In Paris in 2003, the UN General Assembly adopted the 'Endangered Languages Project' as a UNESCO project. The project takes the necessary steps to ensure the preservation of intangible cultural heritage in each part of the state; with the assistance of communities, groups, and relevant non-governmental organisations, the project identifies and defines the many elements of intangible cultural heritage present in the particular territory. The project also elaborates the measure of safeguarding by obliging the state party to (a) adopt a general policy aimed at promoting the function of intangible cultural heritage in society and incorporating its safeguarding into planning programmes; (b) designate or establish one or more competent bodies for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage present in its territory; (c) foster scientific, technical, and artistic studies, as well as research methodologies, with the goal of effective safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage; in particular, the intangible cultural heritage in danger; and (d) take suitable legal, technical, administrative, and financial means to achieve the following goals:

1. encouraging the establishment or strengthening of institutions for training in the management of intangible cultural heritage and its transmission through forums and spaces dedicated to its performance or expression;
2. ensuring access to intangible cultural heritage while respecting customary practices governing access to specific aspects of such heritage; and
3. establishing documentation institutions for intangible cultural heritage.

Preservation techniques have an impact on future interpretation, so they must be carefully considered. Narratives can be found in all forms of oral history. Making ancient language content accessible to modern-day speakers of the same language, as well as English speakers necessitates some translation that leaves a contemporary and narrative imprint on the archives. Furthermore, one should keep in mind that such a project necessitates a significant amount of money and labour. As a translator, for me, the expense and effort is worth it.

## 6 Oral heritage and translation

The concept of translating oral heritage is not a new one, but it has not been thoroughly considered – maybe because such a consideration would necessitate the collaboration of a linguist, an anthropologist, a folklorist, and a translator. Myrsiades and Myrsiades (2012: 45) state that any translation that does not take this into account will not be able to accurately reproduce the values, function, or effect of the original text. They add that if, as Abrahams, John Roberts, Brian Sutton-Smith, and A. Kendron claim (cited in Myrsiades and Myrsiades 2012), the product of oral art justifies itself primarily in relation to the culture in which it is encountered, and if folklore is itself a strategy of persuasion that directs its audience to certain approved emotive meanings, values, and actions, translations that do not translate what is culturally significant to the group that uses those products have lost their own value, not merely as culture transmitters, but as viable translations.

It is clear that what is proposed here is the use of Nida's dynamic equivalence<sup>2</sup> rather than formal equivalency with the original. The semantic, emotional, cultural, implicit, valued, communal, contextual connotations of the item would be exploited rather than its grammatical, denotative, literal, informative, individual, and textual implications in such a translation. Isolating a text from its communication event and that event from the framework of its society leaves us with unintelligible relationships and effects, just as isolating a word from its context deprives us of the knowledge needed to measure that word's core purpose.

A cultural translation, then, must preserve the relationship between the source of the material (folk culture), the transmitter (a performing member of the folk), and the ultimate arbitrator of that material (the folk audience itself) rather than just translating words or grammatical structures. The effect of performance content on its audience, which occurs in a real context, under realistic restrictions, and with some inherent freedoms, is the best

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<sup>2</sup> There are two types of equivalence, according to Nida (1964): formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence. Formal equivalence aims to stick as closely as possible to the original text, without including the translator's ideas and thoughts in the translation. Dynamic equivalence, on the other hand, is a translation method in which the original language is translated 'thought for thought' rather than 'word for word', as is the case with formal equivalence. Dynamic equivalency entails converting each sentence (or thought) from the original text into a sentence in the target language that conveys the same meaning but does not necessarily follow the precise phrasing or idioms of the original. The goal is to increase readability by rephrasing constructions that would be problematic if translated directly, while maintaining some faithfulness to the original text rather than constructing a complete paraphrase.

example of this interaction. The dual goal of this type of translation must thus be to convey insight into the culture, as well as to recreate the effect of the original text (Myrsiades and Myrsiades 2012: 45–46).

Myrsiades and Myrsiades (2012: 52–53) clarify that after the selection procedure is completed, the translator can focus on their primary task of translating the texts into the target language. However, before they can begin the actual translation process, they must address the difficulties that come with translating from an oral medium, the first of which is the nature of the performance language. The performance's vernacular speech is a significant cultural component in transmitting the Yazidi oral tradition. The language of the selected text for interpretation and analysis reflects the culmination of Sinjar's popular speech development. Second, and most importantly for the purposes of this paper, the difficulties associated with oral delivery must be considered. The dialects used in Yazidi performance have no written form.

On the basis of what has been stated above, this research is expected to be of significance to scholars, researchers, and organisations who are interested in the study of oral heritage, including all aspects of the daily life of different minorities. It will be of interest to those who are aiming to familiarise themselves with circumstances and conditions that might negatively impact such aspects and lead to the extinction of this oral heritage.

### **6.1 The role of translation as a means of transferring intangible cultural heritage**

Translation functions as a representational agent between two separate languages, cultures, and even societies, contributing to both the source (SL) and target languages (TL) by forming a communicative survival bond. For Parthasarathy, translation is an endeavour to give voice to the world's unspoken languages (2007: 169–70). It is a method for empowering an at-risk language by giving power to the powerless; for example, Yazidi traditional folk-songs can be translated into English.

In writing this paper, one of the most important challenges I have faced has been the lack of sources related to the translation of heritage. With regard to Iraq, it has been challenging to find information concerning government initiatives or attempts to preserve oral heritage, except for Iraq's Constitution of 2005, section 1, article 4/First:

The Arabic language and the Kurdish language are the two official languages of Iraq. The right of Iraqis to educate their children in their mother tongue, such as Turkmen, Assyrian, and Armenian shall be guaranteed in government educational institutions in accordance with educational guidelines, or in any other language in private educational institutions.

(Constitute 2005: 4)

, in addition to the Kurdistan Regional Constitution, Part I, article 7:

- (i) Kurdish shall be the official language of the Kurdistan Region.
- (ii) Official correspondence with the federal and regional authorities shall be in both Arabic and Kurdish.
- (iii) The teaching of Arabic in the Kurdistan Region shall be compulsory.
- (iv) The Turkmen language shall be considered the language of education culture for the Turkmen in addition to the Kurdish language. Syriac shall be the language of education and culture for those who speak it in addition to the Kurdish language.

(UNPO 2004)

, and legislation no. 12, 24 August 2009 (Accession of the Republic of Iraq to the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage).<sup>3</sup>

The legislation shows the importance of Iraq having its own national cultural register of intangible heritage protection and revival. This is in addition to some initiatives in Iraq and Kurdistan to preserve the language of minorities by teaching these languages in schools (e.g. Syriac and Turkmen) and establishing academies for Syriac and Turkmen in Kurdistan or Iraq.

Some universities have attempted to collaborate with state parties on the preservation of heritage. For example, in 2011, Al-Basrah University initiated a project that is considered the first of its kind in Iraq. It aimed to collect the oral heritage of Basrah's folk heritage, such as local songs, poems, and folk tales. The National Book and Documentation House held workshops and seminars, and attempts are being made by the AMAR international organisation project to preserve Yazidi music.<sup>4</sup> Looking at these programmes, workshops,

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<sup>3</sup> [www.moi.gov.iq/uploaded/4134.pdf](http://www.moi.gov.iq/uploaded/4134.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> See [www.amarfoundation.org/our-work/music-project](http://www.amarfoundation.org/our-work/music-project).



and projects, we find that the translation aspect of the preservation of oral heritage has not been addressed and has been overlooked.

Translation helps to save endangered languages – albeit not completely but to a greater extent – and generates not speakers but at least readers of that language (Sawant 2013: 96).

One of the best ways of making visible a country's culture and history and disseminating it is by translating the intangible cultural heritage of its songs, stories, myths, and so forth.

Liu (2014: 1334) states that 'the external publicity of English translation of the intangible cultural heritage is an important means of dissemination of Mongolian history and culture to foreigners, which has the function of information transmission and cultural transmission.' So for Liu, the basic tool to bring the focus of tourists and those interested in heritage is translation.

The main goal of translation is to transfer facts and information from one language into another in order to understand the source message correctly and to evoke a feeling embodied in the source text. To do this, the translator has to bridge the gap between the two languages, for example, Arabic and English, by using different translation strategies; namely, equivalence, transliteration, or a combination of both. Resemblance between a word (or expression) in one language and its translation in another is known as translational equivalence. This resemblance is due to overlapping reference ranges. A translation equivalent is a word or expression in another language that has the same meaning. The term 'transliteration' refers to the representation or spelling of a word in characters in the characters of another alphabet.

For the sake of achieving the translation goal (which is the interest of the readers in the target language), Liu (2014: 1335) suggests that compilation is to be used as a translation strategy and method. Compilation is a term that refers to the process of combining compiling and translating. This is not a word-for-word translation. The translators can output irrelevant information and provide some important background information for the sounding words. It is a type of communicative translation and one of the most liberal translation types. Its goal is for the translation to have the same effect on the target audience that the original material did on its audience.

It is clear that such a translation method is useful for translating intangible heritage through the inclusion of context and the intentionality behind the text.

Therefore, Liu (2014: 1335) proposes that the translation of intangible cultural heritage should be similar to the translation of world cultural heritage, in that both aim to improve English readers' understanding, attract public attention, and gain protection for the vanishing language. As a result, the translation of intangible cultural heritage should be classified as an informational and induced text, with the primary goal of allowing foreigners to comprehend, for example, Chinese intangible cultural heritage.

For example, to translate 'Site of Xanadu' appropriately, Liu (2014) suggests some strategies to translate vocabularies (geographical, historical, and cultural), phrases, and sentences. Those strategies are the following:

1. Transliteration: the process of moving a word from the alphabet of one language to another. Transliteration helps in the pronunciation of foreign words and names; for example, the Arabic أَحْمَدُ كَانَ لَهُ قَصْرٌ to the transliteration *aḥmad kāna lahū qaṣr* to the English, 'Ahmad had a palace'.
2. A combination of transliteration and explanation: زكاة *zakaṭ*, 'the wealthiest are obliged to pay a tax to help the needy'.
3. Annotation: explanatory comments.
4. Omission: removing a word or words from the source language text while translating. For example, the phrase 'From all over the Gulf and Middle East', من شتى أنحاء الشرق الأوسط, becomes 'from all over the Middle East'. Since 'Middle East' covers the Gulf countries as well, 'the Gulf' has been deleted as a repeated word in the target text) to maintain culture.

Because of the differences in historical and cultural backgrounds, the translator should keep in mind that there is a distinction between internal propaganda and translation for a worldwide reader when translating. The translator's primary goal while translating between two languages is to transmit information rather than just conduct a language translation. To obtain the same reading effect, translators must take into account the characteristics of the two languages, cultural differences, and use different translation procedures for different problems (Liu 2014: 1336–39).

Newmark (2001) divides the texts into three types: expressive texts (such as serious imaginative literature, authoritative statements, autobiographies, and personal correspondences); informative texts (including textbooks, reports, papers, articles, memos, minutes, legal documents, and so forth, with scientific, technological, commercial, industrial, and economic content); and vocative texts (such as notices, propaganda, publicity, and popular fiction). In translating each one of them, the translator should follow a certain translation method.

Newmark illustrates that expressive texts usually introduce the source language culture, through conveying the original semantic content, and suggests keeping the source language's emotional colour, writing style, and structure. Here, the semantic translation should be the translator's choice. However, in informative texts, the choice should be a communicative one because here we are emphasising what the readers need to elicit. The objective is that 'expressive' materials, such as serious imaginative literature, and authoritative and personal statements, must be faithfully translated, matching the original writing of the text, good or bad. Informative texts, statements that are primarily concerned with the truth, with the true facts of the situation, must be translated in the best style that the translator can reconcile with the style of the original text (Newmark 2001: 16).

In contrast, instead of documenting and inventorying living heritage, some scholars argue that we should focus on helping local communities in their development so that they can enjoy and sustain the cultural activities that contribute to their cultural identity. Promoting the development of local languages as a means of conferring this identity is critical in this scenario.<sup>5</sup> In the process of translating, far too much meaning is lost. The authentic transfer of knowledge and traditional skills could be ensured by designing curriculum materials in the vernacular, and including cultural practices, customs, and traditions considered by communities to be their living heritage as part of school education taught in the original languages that produced them (Bialostocka 2017: 24). Regardless of the aforementioned, translation remains an essential component in the translation of intangible oral heritage. Oral history is unavoidable, especially in societies where material

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<sup>5</sup> For more detail, see <https://ich.unesco.org/en/project> which outlines initiatives and programmes (around 251 projects and 156 benefiting countries) aimed at preserving intangible cultural heritage, and which have been conducted in collaboration with UNESCO.

resources are limited. To be preserved, such projects require financial support and oversight from local or government committees, as well as long-term sustainability.

## 7 Translation and culture

The Longman English Dictionary defines culture as ‘the beliefs, way of life, art, and customs that are shared and accepted by people in a particular society’, ‘activities that are related to art, music, literature, etc.’, or ‘the attitudes and beliefs about something that are shared by a particular group of people or in a particular organization’ (Longman n.d.).

Newmark (1988: 94) describes culture as a way of life and its expressions that are unique to a community that expresses itself through a specific language. He differentiates ‘cultural’ from ‘universal’ and ‘personal’ language in more detail. The words ‘die’, ‘live’, ‘star’, ‘swim’, and even almost ubiquitous artefacts like ‘mirror’ and ‘table’ are universals due to the fact that there is a word for them in each language; there is generally no problem with translation of them. ‘Monsoon’, ‘steppe’, ‘dacha’, and ‘tagliatelle’ are cultural terms; there will be a translation challenge unless the source and target languages have cultural overlap. The challenges posed are primarily caused by: (1) a lack of familiarity with cultural expressions; (2) an inability to attain equivalency in the target language; (3) ambiguity in some cultural expressions; and (4) a lack of understanding of translating techniques and strategies (Dweik and Suleiman 2013: 47). For Aixelá (1996: 53), ‘cultures create a variability factor the translator will have to take into account’. He claims that the translator’s job is to bridge the cultural gap generated by the difference between the two cultures.

As for personal language, this is highly optimised to the needs of one person, for when we express ourselves in a personal way. For example, when a person is weaving (and creating conversation at the same time), children’s words such as ‘little bunny’, the word ‘cuz’ (short for ‘because’), ‘cutie pie’ or ‘cupcake’ (for a baby or loved one), ‘dude’ (typically slang for male), and so on. These kinds of words fall into Newmark’s (1988) social-culture category but they are not used by the whole community; thus it is called personal language.

Because they are associated with a certain language and cannot be translated literally, most ‘cultural’ words and phrases are easily recognisable, but many cultural customs are described in everyday English (‘topping out a building’, ‘time, gentlemen, please’, ‘mud in

your eye'), where a literal translation might distort the meaning and a translation may need to contain an appropriate descriptive-functional counterpart (Newmark 1988: 95). To clarify further, let us tackle 'topping out a building' as an example. A project milestone is 'topping out', which is when the last structural steel beam or last roofing piece is installed on a structure. To mark the occasion, many contractors plant an evergreen on top of the structure, which is often decorated for the holidays. The evergreen normally remains on top of the structure until it is completed. This construction festival has a long history. Ancient Scandinavian societies are credited with the practice of planting a tree on top of a new building to please the tree-dwelling spirits of their ancestors who had been displaced, or cutting trees for lumber (the Teutonic tribes) to ward off evil spirits (the origin of the Christmas tree tradition).

## 8 Cultural categories

Any idea expressed in the source language that is absolutely unknown in the target language culture is referred to as a cultural concept (Baker 1992). These ideas can be abstract or concrete.

Newmark (1988: 95–96) focuses on the literal translation<sup>6</sup> of 'foreign' cultural terms. For example, the English proverb 'Tell me who you go with and I'll tell you who you are' is translated literally into *قل لي من تذهب معه وسأقول لك من أنت* (Alhaj 2015: 22). Newmark (*ibid.*) categorises cultural terms and gives some typical examples, adapting Nida (1964):<sup>7</sup>

1. Ecology: flora, fauna, winds, plains, hills: 'honeysuckle', 'downs', 'sirocco', 'tundra', 'pampas', '*tabuleiros*' (low plateau), 'plateau', 'selva' (tropical rain forest), 'savanna', 'paddy field'.
2. Material culture (artefacts):
  - (a) Food: 'zabaglione', 'saké', 'Kaiserschmarrn'
  - (b) Clothes: 'anorak', 'kanga' (Africa), 'sarong' (South Seas), 'dhoti' (India)

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<sup>6</sup> Literal translation (or word-for-word translation) is a method of translation which means 'The source language grammatical constructions are converted to their nearest target language equivalents but the lexical words are again translated singly, out of context' (Newmark 1988: 46). In this method, the translator focuses on the form rather than the content.

<sup>7</sup> Eugene A. Nida (1914–2011) was an American linguist and one of the pioneers of the contemporary discipline of translation studies. He is the developer of the dynamic-equivalence Bible-translation theory.

- (c) Houses and towns: 'kampong', 'bourg', 'bourgade', 'chalet', 'low-rise', 'tower'
  - (d) Transport: 'bike', 'rickshaw', 'Moulton', 'cabriolet', 'tilbury', 'caliche'.
3. Social culture – work and leisure: '*ajah*', 'amah', 'condottiere', '*biwa*', '*sithar*', 'raga', 'reggae', 'rock'.
  4. Organisations, customs, activities, procedures, concepts: (a) Political and administrative: 'the FBI' (b) Religious: 'dharma', 'karma', 'temple' (c) Artistic: for instance, the term 'art nouveau' in English and French is translated into 'Fugendstil' in German and subsequently to '*stile libert *' in Italian.
  5. Gestures and habits: 'Cock a snook', 'spitting'.

The translation of all cultural words is governed by a few general considerations. First and foremost, you should respect the cultural achievements mentioned in the source language text, as well as respecting all foreign countries and traditions. There are usually two translation procedures available: transference, 'the process of transferring a source language word to a target language text' (Newmark 1988: 81), which provides local colour and atmosphere in literary texts, and specialist texts, which enable the readership (some of whom may be more or less familiar with the source language) to quickly identify the referent – particularly a name or a concept – in other texts (or conversations).

Transference limits comprehension since it highlights the culture while ignoring the message; some would argue that it is not a translation mechanism at all. For example, the word جهاد is translated as 'Jihad'; such a procedure is used when there is no target language equivalent. On the other hand, Newmark proposed componential analysis, which he described as the most accurate translation approach. This technique ignores the culture and emphasises the message because of the importance of the translation process in communication. In linguistics, componential analysis means analysing or splitting up the various senses of a word into sense components that may or may not be universals; in translation, the basic process is to compare a source language word with a target language word that has a similar meaning but is not an obvious one-to-one equivalent, by demonstrating first their common and then their differing sense components (Newmark 1988: 114). Due to the fact that the technique neglects culture, it is inappropriate to render oral heritage.

Newmark (1988: 81–91), in addition to the two methods of translation (namely, communicative and semantic)<sup>8</sup> suggests 13 procedures for sentences and smaller units of language. He handles these procedural concepts in terms of the methods used in the translation process. The procedures are as follows:

### 8.1 Transference (loanword, transcription)

This is a method of transforming a source word to a target language as a translation approach. It is similar to Catford’s (1965) transference, but it also includes transliteration, or the translation of various alphabets into English, such as Russian (Cyrillic), Greek, Arabic, Chinese, and other languages. The term is then referred to as a loanword. The following examples demonstrate this procedure:

Source language	Target language
Video	فيديو
Mall	مول

The process of converting a source language word into a target language term is known as transference (transcription, transliteration). This happens for a variety of reasons, including the lack of a correspondence or stylistic and rhetorical considerations, such as proper names, newspapers, geographical and institutional names, and so forth.

### 8.2 Naturalisation

According to Newmark (1988: 82), naturalisation adapts the source language word first to the usual pronunciation and then to the normal morphology of the target language:

Source language	Target language
Television	تلفزيون
Philosophy	فلسفة

The difference between the transference and neutralisation procedures is that the former is a procedure whereby the translator decides to use the source language word in the target language without any change. In English-Arabic translation or even Kurdish-English translation, transference is quite common, especially when translating terms that the target readers are familiar with. The latter, that is, naturalisation, is identical to that of transference. While transference simply converts source language words or phrases into

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<sup>8</sup> Communicative translation attempts to produce for the target language readers an effect as close as possible to that obtained for the readers of the source language, whereas semantic translation attempts to render, as closely as the semantic and syntactic structures of the target language allow, the exact contextual meaning of the original.

the target language without modification, this process modifies source language terms to conform to target language rules. It converts the source language word to its usual pronunciation first, then to the target language's typical morphology or word structures.

### 8.3 Cultural equivalent

According to Newmark, this is an approximation translation whereby a source language cultural phrase is translated by a target language culture term (1988: 82). Examples of how to carry out this procedure are as follows:

Source language	Target language
Like father, like son.	فرخ البط عوام. هذا الشبل من ذاك الأسد. من شابه أباه ما ظلم.

A group of words recognised as a unit of usage whose meaning cannot be derived from its constituent words is referred to as an idiom. Idioms, according to Baker (1992: 63), are frozen patterns of language that allow little or no form modification and often hold meanings that cannot be derived from their individual components. The main issues that idiomatic expressions cause in translation, according to Baker (1992: 65), are the ability to recognise and understand an idiom correctly, as well as the difficulty in expressing the many components of meaning that an idiom conveys into the target language. Therefore, if we translate 'like father, like son' literally, the translation will be مثل الاب، مثل الأبن. This translation is meaningless. The meaning of the idiom 'like father, like son' is unrelated to the particular meanings of the words 'father' and 'son' that comprise it.

Native speakers of a language are believed to have a significant advantage in terms of knowing a large range of idioms and how to utilise them appropriately in context. The appropriate strategy for translating idioms is to translate the source language idiom into an equivalent target language idiom. Thus, 'like father, like son' can be translated into فرخ البط عوام, هذا الشبل من ذاك الأسد, and من شابه أباه ما ظلم. Because Arabic is marked by eloquence and diversity in terminology, it is obvious that the English idiom has more than one counterpart in Arabic.

### 8.4 Functional equivalent

As claimed by Newmark (1988: 83), 'This standard practice, applied to cultural terms, involves the use of a culture-free word, often with a new specific term; it, therefore,



neutralises or generalises the source language word'. In the following examples, this procedure can be identified:

Source language	Target language
Pork	لحم خنزير

Functional equivalence means the use of a neutral cultural word. 'Pork' is translated into its Arabic equivalents, adding the word لحم (meat) in front of pork to refer to food and without adding endnotes to explain what this meat is (Tanjour 2011: 133).

### 8.5 Descriptive equivalent

According to Newmark (1988), the definition of a culturally bound notion can be clarified in several different ways during the translation process. The following example demonstrates this procedure:

Source language	Target language
الخلع	Divorce initiated by the wife

### 8.6 Synonymy

According to Newmark (1988: 84),

This technique is used for a source language word where there is no simple one-to-one counterpart, and the word is not significant in the text, in particular for adjectives or adverbs of quality that are in theory beyond the grammar and less important than other components of the sentence.

Examples of how to carry out this method are as follows:

Source language	Target Language
Halloween	عشية عيد جميع القديسين

When there is no clear one-to-one equivalent, a near target language equivalent is used. For example, 'Halloween' is translated into Arabic as عشية عيد جميع القديسين which means 'the evening of the Holyday of All Saints' (Tanjour 2011: 53).

### 8.7 Through-translation

This process is defined by Newmark (1988: 84) as the literal translation of popular collocations, names of organisations, and components of compounds. This approach can be demonstrated using the following examples:

Source language	Target language
UNAMI	يونامي
UNESCO	اليونسكو

### 8.8 Shifts or transpositions

This procedure involves a change in the grammar from the source language to target language. For example, changing from singular to plural, the change required when a specific source language structure does not exist in the target language, the change of a source language verb to a target language word, the change of a source language noun group to a target language noun, and so forth (Newmark 1988: 85); that is, shifts or transpositions that are in word order, parts of speech, word choice, tense, number, and voice. This procedure is demonstrated in the following examples:

Source language	Target language
Before he comes back	قبل عودته (أبدال الفعل باسم)

In the above example, the word 'comes' is a verb and its Arabic equivalent عودة is a noun.

### 8.9 Modulation

This technique refers to the reproduction of the source language message in the target language text in accordance with the target language rules (Newmark 1988: 88). This approach is demonstrated in the following example:

Source language	Target language
She lived with her step mother	عاشت مع زوجة أبيها

Here, the English noun in the sentence 'She lived with her step mother' is translated into a noun equivalent in meaning عاشت مع زوجة أبيها, it is a change of message of the source text in the target language text because of different viewpoints in the source language and target language (Al-Saleh 2018).

### 8.10 Recognised translation

This technique is used when a translator uses the official or widely accepted translation of an institutional term. This procedure is demonstrated in the following examples (Newmark 1988: 89).

Source language	Target language
Jesus	عيسى
The end justifies the means	الغاية تبرر الوسيلة

### 8.11 Compensation

Newmark (1988: 90) demonstrates the application of a target language-oriented technique when 'the loss of meaning in one portion of a sentence is compensated in another part of that sentence'. This approach is demonstrated in the following example:

Source language	Target language
You wrote the letter O shaykh	كتبت الرسالة يا شيخ

'O' is used here to compensate for the vocative يا.

### 8.12 Paraphrase

This clarifies or elucidates the significance of a particular textual passage. It is employed in 'anonymous' texts when the writing is poor or when there are significant implications and omissions (Newmark 1988: 90). The following is a better illustration of this procedure:

Source language	Target language
I spilled the beans	أفشيت سري

Here, 'I spilled the beans' is rendered into Arabic as أفشيت سري. Paraphrase is used to illustrate the meaning of a part of a text: particularly when there are significant implications.

### 8.13 Couplets

For Newmark (1988: 91), 'This procedure implies the use of two or more different procedures to deal with one problem'. The following translation of the Arabic culturally distinctive word below is a better example of how to explain this procedure:

Source language	Target language
Idda (the waiting period following a divorce)	عدة

## 9 The Yazidi oral tradition

The Yazidis of Iraq and their faith have attracted researchers and Western scholars since the sixteenth century. Much of what has been written is about their origins, beliefs, and traditions. This has been accomplished in part through ethnography (Al-Jabiri 1981; Murad 1993; Ahmad 1975) but also by treating their religious texts as examples of oral tradition (Kreyenbroek 1995).

Oral tradition is crucially important for the Yazidis, as amongst their many religious taboos was a traditional ban on literacy. They communicated with their neighbours, and passed on their community history, literature, wisdom and religious texts to their descendants, orally.

(Allison 2001: 3)

The spoken forms and means of transmission of this oral material, as well as its content, have a close relationship (*ibid.*).

For a minority group such as the Yazidis, who speak Kurdish (the Kurmanji dialect) and do not have a written language (script), the oral tradition is considered the medium for the transmission of their history and heritage.

In her book entitled *The Yazidi Oral Tradition in Iraqi Kurdistan*,<sup>9</sup> Allison (2001: 200) tackles three important themes in the Yazidi oral tradition; namely, war, love, and death. The most commonly circulated stories and songs inevitably mirror the main contemporary problems expressed by the Yazidis in various ways, and they must serve the community that uses them or these stories and songs will perish.

Allison studies the oral traditions of the Yazidis within their social setting. Dundes (1964: 274) defines social context as 'the specific social situation in which that particular item is actually employed'. For example, the Kurmanji lyrical song, also known as *stran* or *lawik* and one of the most prominent kinds of Yazidi oral tradition, is sung from memory rather than written in performance (Allison 2001: 12).

## 10 Analysis and discussion

Several researchers have developed various models of translation methods to analyse and examine the linguistic differences that a translator produces during the translation process. As a result, because Newmark's (1988) model of translation operations is a comprehensive model, it is used in this current research. Transference, naturalisation, cultural equivalent, functional equivalent, descriptive equivalent, synonymy, through-translation, shift or transposition, modulation, recognised translation, compensation, paraphrase, and couplets are among the 13 translation procedures introduced by Newmark (1988).

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<sup>9</sup> This is the first study of Yazidi, and indeed Kurdish, secular oral traditions within their social context.

The sample text, as stated previously in the methodology, is the source text which is a Yazidi song. The song is entitled ‘Dewrêşê Evdî û Edûlê’.

The source text (Yazidi)	The target text (English)
1. Delalê min way delal, delalê min way delal, delalê min way delal, delalê min way delal, way delal, way delal	My beloved. Alas my love. My beloved. Alas my love. Alas my love. Alas my love.
Wez nemînim, wez nemînim, wez nemînim lo lo Derwêşo	I wish I die, I wish I die, oh Darwish
Derwêşê dilê min suwar bû li derê mala bavê min peya bû	My heart Darwish mounted and got down from his horse at my father’s house
Derwêşê dilê min suwar bû li derê mala bavê min peya bû	My heart Darwish mounted and got down from his horse at my father’s house
Xwedê xerebike destê min ji agirê cixarê, fîncana hatin û çûyina mêvana xalî nebû,	God ruins it. My hand didn’t free from cigarette fire and from serving coffee to the guests
Min dî keçika cîrana xebera nexêrê ji min ra di anî	The girl, my neighbour, was providing me with bad news
Digo: lê lêê por kurê ma tu nizane?	She said: ‘O short-haired, do you know or not?’
Derwêşê dilê te xeyidî ber bi mal bû	Your heart Darwish has been angry and left home
Awê gavê çavê min mîna tavîya berf û baranê ji hêsa xalî nebûn	At that time, my eyes just like a snow and rain thunder were full of tears
Wez nemînm, wez nemnîm, wez nemnîm, wez nemnîm lo lo delalo ax	I wish I die, I wish I die, oh my beloved Darwish
2. Delalê min way delal, delalê min way delal, delalê min way delal, delalê min way delal, way delal, way delal!	My beloved. Alas my love. My beloved. Alas my love. Alas my love. Alas my love.
Wez nemînim, wez nemînim, wez nemînim lo lo Derwêşo	I wish I die, I wish I die, oh Darwish
Derwêşo lawo were mala bavê min bi mêvanî	Darwish, my darling young man, come and be a guest at my father’s house
Derwêşo berxo were mala bavê min bi mêvanî ax	Darwish, my beautiful young man, come and be a guest at my father’s house, oh
Wezê ji Derwêşê dilê xwe ra dînim kulavekî sorî xuristanî <sup>10</sup>	I will furnish for my heart Darwish the Khuristan red felt carpet (wool mattress).
Wezê ji Derwêşê dilê xwe ra serjêkim mîha sor ser beranî,	And I will slaughter for my heart the red sheep best than the ram (male sheep).
Gava kalê bavê min û pîra dayîka min gotin: lê lê por kurê kanî mîha sora ser beranî ax, wezê bibêjim korbûno şivanê me lawikê xelkê bû, şev bû tarî bû ba bû baran bû, ji çolê ne anî gura xwarî	When my grandpa and grandma asked me: ‘Hey, the short-haired, where is the red sheep best than the ram, oh?’, I will tell them my dear shepherd was the son of another people, in the dark, windy, and rainy night, didn’t bring it from the prairie. It was eaten by wolves.
Wez nemînim, wez nemînim, wez nemînim lo lo delaloo ax!	I wish I die, I wish I die, oh my beloved oh!
...	...

<sup>10</sup> xuristanî: place proverbially used in depicting wealth and beauty, universe, cosmos (Chyet 2003: 669).

There are many differences between Kurmanji and English since they have different linguistic systems, though they belong to the same Indo-European language family. Therefore, translators have to apply translation procedures and strategies in the translation process to overcome the linguistic differences between the two languages. In what follows, the researcher analyses the Yazidi text after transcribing it and its English translation.

Musical interludes or pauses between stanzas distinguish them, and songs can be introduced in a variety of ways. The most popular of these is to begin with words that indicate intense emotion, such as '*lo lo Derwêşo*' which means 'oh Darwish', '*lê lêê por kurê*' which means 'O short-haired', and '*lo lo delaloo ax*' which means 'oh my beloved oh'. Although many of these words have literal meanings and are not 'nonsense syllables', they are not always interpreted in terms of these literal meanings by their audience, but they do provide emotional colour (Allison 2001: 95).

Allison (2001: 214) states that the usual Kurdish device of combining two nouns with very similar meanings is not always natural in English; I have used English pairs with similar meanings where available. Thus, '*Delalê min way delal, delalê min way delal, delalê min way delal, delalê min way delal*' is rendered as 'My beloved. Alas my love. My beloved. Alas my love' and '*Wez nemînim, wez nemînim, wez nemînim*' is translated into 'I wish I die, I wish I die': the meaning is not identical, but the impact is similar.

It is obvious from the translation that there are no challenges in rendering the universal language (i.e. universal words) due to the fact that each word in the source language has the same word in the target language. For example, '*derê*', '*mald*', '*sofî*', '*mîhd*', '*gurd*', and so on have been translated into 'door', 'house', 'red', 'sheep', and 'wolves', respectively.

For proper names such as 'Derwêşê' and 'Derwêşo', I have transcribed and then naturalised both of them into 'Darwish' instead of 'Darwishi' or 'Dawrişo' since they refer to the same name. Due to the fact that I am aware that there are no proper names in Yazidi called 'Darwishi' or 'Dawrişo', I have kept to the common English norms, that is, I use the naturalisation method. I have also applied the naturalisation procedure by transferring the Yazidi place-name 'xuristanî' into 'Khurustan' which conforms to English pronunciation and morphology. In addition, the footnote 'place proverbially used in depicting wealth and beauty, universe, cosmos' to make the meaning clearer in the target language has been included. Thus, I have conveyed the meaning effectively.

It is apparent from the translation that I have arranged the English sentences using the same word order as the Yazidi sentences. The translation is effective because it is meaningful and respects the rules of English grammar. Consequently, this procedure can be used between Yazidi and English since they belong to the same linguistic family. The most typical use of literal translation is in translation between closely related languages. For instance, to render the source text '*Digo: lê lêê por kurê ma tu nizane?*' into 'She said: O short-haired, do you know or not?' and '*Derwêšo berxo were mala bavê min bi mêvanî ax'*' into 'Darwish, my young beautiful man, come and be a guest at my father's house, oh', it is crystal clear that the literal translation method has been used. The translation is correct since the meaning is conveyed while maintaining the syntactic and stylistic characteristics of the target text.

In this example, '*Derwêşê dilê min suwar bû li derê mala bavê min peya bû*' is translated into 'My heart Darwish mounted and got down from his horse at my father's house'. The word 'horse' is added to the target text in this case. The goal of this strategy, that is, addition, which is part of the paraphrasing method, is to make the sentence more comprehensible to the reader of the target text. It is predicated on the assumption that there were no 'cars' or other modes of transportation available at the time. Why not 'camels' or another animal, one may wonder? The answer to such a question is that camels are rarely, if ever, seen in this area, i.e. Sinjar (Shingal), and because Darwish is a well-known and heroic figure, he will, of course, ride a horse and nothing else.

As for the cultural challenges in translating culture-specific terms or phrases such as '*Derwêšo lawo*' and '*Derwêšo berxo*', for example, '*lawo*' is translated into 'my young darling', whereas '*berxo*' is translated into 'my beautiful young man'. To return to the translation of both words in Yazidi, '*lawo*' means 'my son', while '*berxo*' means 'the lamb'. It is semantically unacceptable for the lover to call his beloved 'my son' or 'the lamb'. In these examples, the translator rendered the Yazidi nouns into 'darling young man' and 'beautiful young man' in English. I have applied cultural equivalence by replacing the words which made the meaning more comprehensible in the target language.

Suffice it to say, translating such a song poses a variety of challenges for the translator, yet it is not untranslatable. The challenges are in relation to style, linguistic problems, sociocultural equivalence, and understanding the proper context. I have taken all these aspects into consideration; therefore, the translation conveys the intended meaning adequately.

# 11 Observations on translating oral heritage

One of the challenges facing the translator when translating the oral heritage of minorities in Iraq is how we will succeed in translating cultural influences, ideas, thoughts, and feelings from the vernacular into the language he or she wishes to translate into. As we have seen, the difficulties in translating elements of our oral heritage into their equivalents can be traced back to irreconcilable language and cultural imperatives.

Below are some challenges to translating oral heritage:

- It is hard to find a translator of oral heritage who is well acquainted with both the source and target texts, i.e. with knowledge of the grammar, vocabulary, and so forth.
- The translator's ability to reconstitute the source text into the target language.
- The translator's ability to preserve the style or tone of the original text in the target text. Also, it should be as easy to read as the original version.
- The translator must read and understand well the oral heritage he wishes to translate before he embarks on the process of translation.
- It is difficult to find a single version of the material to be translated, and since it is an oral heritage, the narrative may change and one may even find dozens of versions of the same oral heritage (e.g. the story of Darwish and Edele).
- The difficulty of transcribing the oral heritage. I had to consult older speakers to understand this heritage and then try to write it with the correct phonetic transcription. It can take several days to convert a short oral text. We can imagine how long it would take to translate a whole oral heritage!
- Some of the vocabularies in the text are difficult to translate because of the age of the terminology and the lack of dictionaries containing the vocabularies and their use in the correct contexts.
- The difficulty of finding an equivalence for some vocabularies in the target language. In these cases, one should resort to transference.

From the above, one can say that translating oral heritage is not an easy task and may take a long time to document and translate.



## 12 Conclusions

This paper has provided a detailed account of the different aspects that are pertinent to the preservation of oral heritage. First, light has been shed on the role of translation in preserving and disseminating such heritage. Secondly, it was noted that there has been a loss in translation and its impact on maintaining heritage. Thirdly, language endangerment and the strategies to minimise it have been discussed.

The study concludes that:

- In translating oral heritage, it is very clear that there are two types of translation challenges: linguistic and cultural. Linguistic problems include grammatical differences, lexical ambiguity, and meaning ambiguity; cultural problems correspond to various situational aspects.
- The translator throughout the transcription of the oral heritage source texts encounters many problems; namely, the style of delivery, the recording quality, and the pronunciation of the words. It is also impossible to sit with the speaker and ask him or her about every sentence and phrase to know its exact pronunciation and meaning (here we should not forget the intentionality beyond the text). The problem of the grammar, of course, is something inevitable (i.e. to keep the rhyme pattern at the end of lines, word endings are often modified).
- The translator should be well aware of the oral heritage and highly qualified, one of the same community or someone who is familiar with the dialect and way of life of the community. This increases the translator's ability to communicate more effectively with community members and then transfer the message to the target text.
- The role of the translator is to ensure that the reader of the target text has the same reaction as the reader of the source text. They do this by taking into consideration the grammar and the style of the target language. The oral heritage expresses specific intentions through words, phrases, and sentences. Readers might not understand them correctly even if they are properly translated due to cultural differences. Herein lies the role of the competent translator to preserve the style of the target text.

## 13 Recommendations

The present research suggests that heritage can be preserved and disseminated in many ways. First, teaching these languages in schools where the majority of the population are people who speak the endangered language (e.g. Syriac and Yazidi), or where there is a density of this population; in addition to writing and publishing dictionaries, whether electronic or hard copy, which is another means of preserving and disseminating languages to other societies that contain two or more languages.

Secondly, collecting oral histories from elders (males and females) and focusing on customs, traditions, and rituals previously practised at various religious and social ceremonies and events. Then preparing sound or video recordings and converting them into written texts, and recruiting professional translators with expertise in heritage translation in order to obtain real and realistic heritage. These collected and translated materials have to be kept in authentic national and international libraries as well as posted on websites to be accessible to linguists, heritage organisations, and the public; either to revive that language or enable it to be studied it by those interested.

The purpose of translation is to attract possible funders who are interested in maintaining the language(s). It is worth mentioning the use of digital technology to establish a public and easily accessible archive of endangered languages after translating them, in order to serve a large community (that is, the community of an endangered language), and an English archive, to ensure that the archive is useful both to endangered language readers/speakers and English readers. Of course, digitising the oral heritage is not an easy task. It is not simply a matter of translating oral heritages and making them available online. Rather, the project requires creativity and innovation in explaining the archived content; and it requires a deep understanding of the written form of an endangered language. Those translating an endangered language must be fluent in its complex written language system; all of which has been reflected in the way this current research has been conducted.

Thirdly, the preservation of the oral heritage of minorities should be a priority for governments and organisations with a relationship to heritage, for example, the Ministry of Culture, and academics. Moreover, endangered languages should be the responsibility of the general public, educators, scholars, and researchers who all need to be aware of endangered languages. Likewise, scholars should be encouraged to start endangered

language translation projects. Language preservation should be the goal of translation. In order to survive and thrive, translation initiatives for languages require sufficient funding and support from a variety of agencies, organisations, and, of course, the government.

Finally, one can say unreservedly that without language translation, it is extremely difficult to renew an endangered language. The process of gathering heritage and translating it must be performed with the assistance of a native speaker or the communities themselves, as they already understand the various forms of communication, or an interpreter who helps us to better understand the community. If the translation is performed by a non-native speaker, the text must be revised by a specialised native speaker through reading, criticising, and advising.

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